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IMPROVING ACCESS TO MINISTERIAL TRAINING THROUGH  
THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES: A QUALITATIVE  
STUDY OF EDUCATORS IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

Andrew John Beaty

209 Pages

This study was based on the concern that in developing nations, the vast majority of pastors in local churches have no training to prepare them for the duties they are expected to carry out as ministers. With the increase of technology being available around the world, the questions have arisen as to whether or not technology can be utilized to help improve access to this training.

A qualitative approach was employed to interview 13 people involved in global theological education in developing nations and to learn from them as to the trends that they see being utilized in regards to educational technology in the training of pastors in remote areas. From these interviews, issues such as barriers to the use of technology as well as models that are being investigated and being utilized in various parts of the globe were reviewed.

The results of this study reveal that there are several methods that are beginning to be used in training pastors in rural areas of developing nations that have potential to continue to expand to train pastors throughout the world.

**KEYWORDS:** online education; theological education; rural education; majority world; developing nations; pastoral training; ministerial preparation; global South; colonialism; pastors; higher education; educational technology

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THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES: A QUALITATIVE  
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ANDREW JOHN BEATY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

School of Teaching and Learning

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2018

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IMPROVING ACCESS TO MINISTERIAL TRAINING THROUGH  
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STUDY OF EDUCATORS IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter One will give an overview of the history of ministerial training and the use of online delivery systems in higher education. It will also address the research problem, the purpose statement for this study, the key research questions the significance of the study, and a definition of key terms.

### **Overview of the Study**

Since the beginning of Christianity, the Church has been concerned with equipping leaders to perform various tasks in the congregation and in the community. With its roots in Judaism and the extensive training that took place among the Jewish religious leaders, this practice continued during and after the time of Christ (Penner, 2001; Syiemlieh, 2006). In the last words that Jesus spoke to His followers, He instructed them to “...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19 English Standard Version). He also explained that they needed to tell people “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) about what they had learned from following Him.

For nearly 2,000 years, the followers of Christ have worked in various ways to obey these commands by teaching believers in local congregations about Christianity and its key values. In order to effectively do this, it is necessary to have trained leaders who understand the message of the Scriptures and are able to clearly communicate it to members of Christ-followers around the world. Furthermore, trained ministers are needed to be able to fulfill the various sacramental functions of the church according to the specific traditions of differing religious groups. In some areas of the world, it is relatively easy to provide this training for pastors or ministers. In most developed nations in the West, there are an abundance of schools that offer Biblical and

theological education that effectively offers this ministerial training for pastors. For instance, in the United States and Canada, the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities recognizes over 175 member schools that each offer training that leads to ministerial credentialing (“Members & Affiliates,” 2016.). Similarly, the Association for Theological Schools has over 275 member and affiliate graduate schools and seminaries in North America that provide training for varieties of Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Islamic clerical leaders (“Member Schools,” 2016). Likewise, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recognizes nearly 150 seminaries that train Roman Catholic priests in the United States (“Seminaries and Organizations,” 2016). The World Council of Churches has identified over 650 colleges, universities, and seminaries that provide ministerial training in the United States ([www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net)). While these organizations do not represent a comprehensive list of all schools that offer theological training, they give an indication that there are multiple accrediting agencies in North America that guarantee the quality of theological training in various colleges, universities and seminaries. They also demonstrate that there is a wide variety of options available for those who desire to prepare for pastoral ministry to find the training that they need.

However, in the country of Ghana, with a population of about 29,000,000 people (“Ghana Population,” 2018), the World Council of Churches identifies fewer than 60 schools that offer theological training ([www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net), 2016). Of these, the Ghanaian National Accreditation Board identifies fewer than 25 schools that are officially accredited to offer either undergraduate or graduate theological training for Christian, Islamic, or Jewish faiths (“List of Accredited,” 2018). Likewise, the country of Peru, with approximately 32,000,000 residents (“Peru Population,” 2018) has a similar population to Ghana, and they have fewer than 60 theological schools ([www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net), 2016). The disparity is also seen by the size of

theological schools in these countries. While the Peruvian Baptist Convention, the largest Baptist denomination in Peru, operates five seminaries, they only have “10 to 100 students in each” school (Taylor, 2011, first section). At the same time, the largest Baptist denomination in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention, operates six seminaries which range in size from over 800 to over 2600 students with a total enrollment of almost 11,000 students (Association of Theological Schools, 2015). This raises two series of questions as to whether theological education is readily accessible to residents of countries outside of the Western world, or if there are fewer pastors seeking formal training through Bible colleges and seminaries.

Buitendag (2014) laments that in South Africa half of the theological training schools in public universities have closed since the 20th century. At the same time that these schools are closing, the need is growing for more ministers. Naidoo (2013) explained, “The growth of the Church in Africa has been so enormous that the need for leaders far outstrips the ability of Bible and theological institutions, seminaries, and correspondence programmes to supply them” (p. 2). She also stated, that there is an urgent need for additional ministerial training programs. This is especially true for training programs that are culturally relevant (Naidoo, 2013, p. 3). Part of this decline is due to the need of higher educational institutions to find different revenue streams, and traditionally, pastoral training has provided a lower return on investment than programs such as ones focused on business or computers (Nguru, 2014).

Throughout 2011-2013, the World Council of Churches studied a wide variety of ministerial training across the globe (World Council of Churches, 2013). In the report from this study, the first finding was that:

There are not enough theological schools in the regions of the world where Christianity is growing rapidly (Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia). In Europe and North America

there is a much better match between the need for theological education and the number of institutions and programs (World Council of Churches, 2013, p. 2).

As a result, in many developing countries, the affordability, accessibility, and practicality of potential pastors leaving their homes to attend school so they can be formally trained for this important position is much more difficult. In fact, Christian leaders state that upwards of 75% of the pastors that they work with have never had any formal training to prepare them to be ministers (Beaty, 2014). Based on research done through the World Council of Churches, Todd Johnson, the director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity claims that even fewer pastors, perhaps as few as 5% across the globe, have received formal ministerial training (personal communication, January 18, 2016).

With the population of Christians growing most rapidly in the southern hemisphere (Nkonge, 2013; Phiri and Werner, 2013), Wahl (2013) noted that developing nations across Africa, Latin America, and Asia account for over half of the world's Christians (p. 267). It is hard to imagine other fields such as medicine or education where only somewhere between 5% and 25% of the professionals in the field would have received formal training for the tasks that they are expected to do. This raises serious questions about how the global Church is doing at fulfilling the mandate from Christ and the early apostles to train ministers who would be able to effectively train others all around the globe. If the current methods of ministerial training are not accomplishing the goal of preparing enough clergy, are there other available methods that can be utilized in new ways to help those who have a more difficult time getting trained?

## **Historical Aspects of Ministerial Training**

### **The Impact of Colonialism on Training Ministers**

While Christianity originated in the Middle East, Jesus challenged his followers to take the message to "...Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As time went on, Christianity indeed expanded around the world. However, over the course of time, Christianity became identified more with Europeans who integrated their faith with their politics, and often, it was hard to distinguish between the church and the state (Gonzalez, 2010).

As countries in Europe began to expand their colonial empires, they took Christianity with them and in that process established both seminaries and universities in the new lands (Reed & Prevost, 1993; Gonzalez, 2010). Whether it was universities in South America or universities such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton in North America, the primary purpose for most institutions of higher education in the various colonies of European countries was to prepare ministers to pastor the new and growing number of congregations that had been started.

Disregarding the culture of the people in various colonies, many governmental and Christian organizations during these colonial periods sent missionary educators around the world to provide a formalized Western Christian education for these people groups (Akanle, 2011; Davies, 2007; Matemba, 2010). In describing the training for early missionaries, Jenkins (2012) explained how they were trained in their own formalized educational methods, but nothing was mentioned about preparing these educators for adapting to the cultures of the people they were going to serve. As a result of their own educational experiences being influenced almost exclusively by Western thought, these educators approached their new tasks from a background that was full of erroneous presuppositions.

As they worked to prepare ministers to serve congregations, they made the assumption that the Western model of formalized education was the correct model to export all over the world. There are multiple examples of how, after attending schools that were designed after a Western model, it became hard for the graduates to return into their culture and serve the people there because of the extreme difference between their communities and the way they had been educated (Kallaway, 2009). Sadly, instead of preparing ministers to serve in the local contexts where they were living, ministers were often trained to serve in environments that did not exist.

Kallaway (2009) carried this further in explaining that at times it became difficult for these schools to get funding from churches in the West, so they were forced to get more funding from the national governments which then led them to leave their primary purposes of religious and ministerial education in order to train students to become part of the new economic order of the European colonialists. In this process, the schools moved towards becoming part of the colonial system instead of staying focused on preparing ministers. In looking at some of these perspectives, Nesson (2010) stated:

Attitudes of cultural superiority, ethnocentrism, claiming the “right” to impose Western views, and convictions about the inferiority and depravity of other cultures were normal. Missionary work was too often intricately intertwined with colonialism. Negative examples of failing to carefully examine and critique cultural assumptions on the part of missionaries are plentiful (p 187).

While Nesson identified the struggles of the colonialist mindset of early missionary educators, he was also quick to acknowledge that for the most part that those who worked to provide theological education during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in India operated out of this ethnocentrism from a position of ignorance and of not listening to the people they were charged

with training. His perspective is that if these educators would have spent more time listening to the nationals they worked with, they would have been more effective. Furthermore, had they come with the heart of a servant instead of the heart of pride and arrogance that many seemed to exhibit, their impact probably would have greatly increased.

Although the era of colonization is now largely in the past, the effects of it are still very present in the training of clergy today. When discussing pastoral training in the 21st century, Higgs (2015) asserts that the colonial influence on ministerial training continues to have a large impact on theological education today, even though the colonial period ended decades ago (p. 43). Higgs contends that it is time for a change in how ministers are trained in Africa and that the systems that were put into place by the Western governments and Western missionary educators have marginalized the perspectives of African churches and their needs in what ministerial training should look like in an African context.

### **The Late 20th and Early 21st Century**

Higgs' (2015) concerns reflect on the ongoing practice of mission agencies and denominations from the West sending professors overseas to teach classes to train ministers in formal settings, such as seminaries, that they have established over the past two centuries. This includes both professors who go overseas as a career, and those who may reside in the West, but occasionally go overseas to teach short-term modular courses. In discussing this group of missionaries, Coleman (2014) explained that as they move to places like Latin America that they are often hindered in their effectiveness due to the culture in which they grew up, but which is much different than the one in which they are trying to teach and minister in. As a result, instead of these faculty teaching and preparing ministers for effective ministry in the students' own cultures, the Western educators can cause confusion whether that is in the area of how ministry

“looks” in a particular culture, how language is used, or even the specific responsibilities of ministers in a given region.

As part of moving from a past of Western dominance in the training of ministers, Beaty (2014) reported that educators believe that the time has come for institutions in the West to turn the process of training ministers over to indigenous leaders since they understand the culture in which pastors are being trained and they are much more aware of the needs of the students that they are preparing for ministry. Ministerial students desire training that is culturally relevant and that goes beyond training established in the West and translated or superficially repackaged for students in developing nations. Furthermore, Beaty reported that one participant (from an African nation) felt like the ministerial education that students in his country received from organizations in the West gave them, “lots of answers but the answers are to questions people aren’t asking where they’re coming from. And they don’t have the answers for the questions people ARE [emphasis in original] asking where they’re coming from” (p. 23).

However, this continues to raise issues of how developing nations who desire to have more autonomy in the training of their pastors, without relying on organizations from the West telling them what and how to teach and even supplying the educational framework to make the training possible, can move towards effective ministerial training within their settings. Naidoo (2013) recognizes this struggle between the massive needs for training more ministers, but providing that training without being held to a theological perspective that is largely based in Western thought and Western practices. She argued that it is time to reevaluate how ministerial training is being provided in countries such as hers where the needs are large, but the concepts of continuing to be under Western direction is not a positive solution to training ministers. She



believes, that it is long past time for the African Church to be led by African pastors and theologians instead of continuing to be dominated by the Western Church.

### **Looking Forward**

In reviewing the history of ministerial training, it is obvious that there has been a consistent process of equipping new ministers for serving congregations that they have been called to. It is also apparent that methods which were implemented in previous generations are not functioning as well as they did (or even as well as they appeared to be doing) in the past. Combined with the needs of the Church growing rapidly in many areas of the Southern Hemisphere and the lack of available options to prepare enough ministers, it seems like the time is right to investigate if it could be possible to integrate newer technologies in order to better train ministers around the world. In particular, is it possible to utilize electronic devices as part of helping train more clergy through distance learning. For instance, can educational tools like online delivery systems, mLearning through smart phones, or radio technology increase the ability to take biblical and theological training to remote places in developing nations where it has historically been difficult for ministers to be adequately prepared for their professional roles in their congregations and communities? As technology has advanced across the globe, is it possible for universities and seminaries in developing nations to expand their reach by utilizing these delivery systems to train more ministers within their own countries or with their own regions without the need to depend on Western models of pastoral training? Can these technological advances allow for better partnerships in the training process that would on one hand open up opportunities for theologians from various parts of the world to serve the Church in a given area, but on the other hand serve that population without imposing views that come

across as a hegemonic statement of “our way is the right way, and we are going to make sure that you do it the ‘correct’ Western way”?

Over 90 years ago, Moody Bible Institute started utilizing their Radio School of the Bible to augment their correspondence courses with lessons taught by the campus faculty. They experimented with several different formats, but the primary purpose was to allow students in remote parts of the United States the ability to get Biblical and theological education through one of the newest technological mediums of that time. They broadcast these lessons across their network of over 250 radio stations throughout the United States. Although this program ended in 2002, it demonstrated one way that technology could be leveraged in creative ways so that individuals who were unable to relocate to a physical educational campus could still participate in theological higher education from a distance (Vincent, 2011). Throughout the years, the content of these courses was archived so that students could go back and request tapes, CDs, or eventually digital downloads as the technology changed. Recently, these radio broadcasts have been revised, translated for language and cultural issues, and a pilot project is underway to use this content on digital audio players to train clergy who are largely oral learners in remote areas in the country of Ghana (“Moody Radio Uses Solar-Powered Devices,” 2016). Similarly, some Islamic universities such as the American Open University experimented with the use of radio and television technology in the 1990s to provide Islamic studies to students across the United States and into other countries; however other religious groups did not seem to utilize these technologies although most religions have experimented with various forms of distance learning (Rogers and Howell, 2004).

While the use of radio technology worked for decades in American theological higher education, times have changed and in recent years, there has been an explosion of colleges and

universities that have entered into offering courses and degrees through online programs (Maddix, 2013). This expansion of delivering a college education in a digital format has allowed these institutions of higher learning to reach many students who may not have traditionally been able to attend their “brick and mortar” facilities. By offering online courses, students are able to take classes wherever they are able to get access to the Internet. Students are also able to maintain their current home and job without the stresses of relocating for the purposes of continuing their educational journey (Hines et al. 2009; Maddix, 2010). Wright, Dhanarajan, & Reju, (2009) also listed several reasons for using modern technology to expand education into other areas. They explained that this technology can grant the learners more access to information, offer learning in both synchronous and asynchronous options, create more and better partnerships, and allow the learner to continue his or her education while maintaining their work and family commitments. Delmarter, Gravett, Ulrich, Nysse, and Polaski (2011) outlined the variety of online delivery models that colleges can use: classes that imitate face-to-face courses with lectures being delivered via video; online versions of correspondence courses; hybrid courses that involve both online and face-to-face components; and courses that function in an asynchronistic format for students in a variety of places and times to participate.

The use of distance learning via the online environment is continuing to grow. In fact, after over a decade of following online trends in higher education, Allen and Seaman (2015) explain that the enrollments for online classes continue to increase much more than the enrollments of higher education in general. However, while over 95% of public colleges in the United States report offering online courses, less than 65% of private not-for-profit colleges, including those that focus on theological education, offer courses through an online delivery system (p. 46). Some of these schools are making serious efforts to increase their presence in the

online educational realm. For example, a recent Association of Theological Schools' report states that the number of member seminaries that offer online programs has grown from less than 10% to over 50% in the last decade (Tanner and Brown, 2015). Frye (2012) expressed that there is a close relationship between distance education and education designed to train religious leaders. He further explained that despite the general use of online tools, the majority of religious groups focus their online presence on things like organizational websites, and devotional sites where adherents can read devotionals written by rabbis about the Torah or ask an Imam questions about Islam. While he acknowledged that religious organizations could use online delivery systems for training clergy, he also pointed out that it is not a high priority for most groups.

Currently, some institutions are experimenting with offering their online courses to students in other parts of the world (Wright et al. 2009). By doing this, they are able to train students wherever they are located, as long as they are able to meet the base requirements and have the technology to participate in the learning process. As more colleges and universities experiment with expanding the borders of their online course offerings, it raises the potential for training more ministerial candidates across the globe.

At the same time that institutions of higher education are looking at ways to reach more students around the world, there are countries that have a growing number of students who desire to attend college, but the existing schools are unable to meet the needs of everyone who wants to get an education (Oteng-Ababio, 2011). Wright et al. (2009) state, "Educators in developing countries have employed distance education successfully to provide accreditation to teaching and health professionals..." (p. 3). Likewise, Ruggeri, Farrington, and Brayne (2013) discuss how online learning has been successfully utilized in training people at multiple of levels within a variety of healthcare fields. They also explain that when looking at the alternatives of no

training, distance learning is remarkably effective, and in many cases is at least as effective as what students would receive in more traditional settings. This success might be transferrable to other educational arenas such as ministerial training. Naidoo (2013) recognizes the potential for using online delivery systems for training ministers in Africa, but she also clearly stated that “More research still needs to be done on how theological training institutions should make proper use of modern communication and information technologies for theological teaching” (p. 6).

### **Statement of Problem**

Leaders in various religious settings report that there is a lack of available options for training pastors, especially those coming from remote areas in developing nations (Beaty, 2014; Naidoo, 2013). Naidoo (2012) explained that many denominations across rural Africa have utilized correspondence courses to give a certificate level of ministerial training to lay people in order to give some basic theological training since there are not enough trained or ordained ministers to meet the needs of their churches. While this need is recognized, the options for providing more training in these areas are just beginning to be discussed. However, while discussions are taking place, there is no literature that addresses ways to increase the accessibility of ministerial training in these areas. Naidoo (2012) further explained, “...there is very little scholarship on teaching and learning theology within distance higher education in South Africa and Africa as a whole” (p. 66).

As theological institutions and denominations continue to evaluate ways to improve their training options for new pastors in developing nations, there is the need to conduct broader research to explore the feasibility of sustaining such trends or opportunities especially for global student populations. In 2004, Rogers and Howell stated, “the use of distance learning by

religious institutions is a relatively unexplored and un-researched area” (p. 13). Sadly, over the past decade, it appears that this is still an accurate statement. After doing extensive research, Ogilvie (2009), Etzel (2014), and Ferguson (2016) raised concerns that there has not been much research done nor best practices developed for utilizing various forms of distance education including online options in training clergy. This is further complicated because the “...role of online education has been one of the primary avenues of criticism in Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries” (Maddix, 2013, p. 141). As a result of the resistance in many spheres of utilizing online learning for ministerial training, the availability of research on theological online education is still quite limited.

While the specifics might vary from continent to continent and from region to region, there may be needs that could be met by using online education to help train pastors in these areas. As religious leaders start to evaluate ways to address the lack of formal training for ministers in remote areas, some are starting to think about investigating newer ways of deploying that education. Leaders from several different denominations have repeatedly asked members from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois for suggestions and help in providing ministerial training via online formats for a wide variety of religious leaders in the country (S. Asare, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

With the lack of literature on the subject, it was unclear whether the greatest need was to provide ministerial education aimed at the certificate, undergraduate or graduate level. It was also considered that this level of ministerial training may vary from area to area depending on what the most critical aspects of ministerial training are for particular religious groups. Therefore, it became critical to obtain more information from those integrally involved with preparing ministers in these remote areas in order to be able to more fully understand the needs

and the potential solutions that are being explored. In the process of working on the literature review, Rogers and Howell's assessment about the scarcity of research available was found to be quite true as hours were spent scouring articles, papers, books, and dissertations for information that specifically addresses religious online education. Again, while their article was written a decade ago, not much has changed in the research since then.

Hines, McGee, Waller and Waller (2009) stated that for theological education, "Online delivery promises to expand outreach into a potentially limitless global market in a cost-efficient manner" (p. 32). Hege (2011) expressed the opportunities available for seminaries to be able to enroll students from a variety of settings who would have previously not been able to get trained for the ministry. Ogilvie (2009) explains that online theological education offers the opportunity to increase access to those who want to prepare for ministry in non-traditional settings.

Despite his own beliefs that web-based theological education can have a significant impact on training students, Esselman (2004) also identified that many of those in theological education do not believe that using technology in ministerial preparation is compatible with effective spiritual training. In fact, he went so far as to say that some theological educators consider "instructional technology for ministry" (p. 169) to be an oxymoron. Raybon (2012) continued this thought when he stated:

Theological higher education has been hesitant to accept the possibilities of online education because of specific concerns about the quality of interaction and the capacity for community, barriers to achieving the affective learning goals of theological education, including transformational learning, and the theological compatibility of a medium that is essentially disembodied (pp. 5-6).

Blier (2008) expressed the fact that it has been difficult to engage those involved in theological education because many of those in key educational leadership as well as faculty, are suspicious about whether or not theological training can appropriately be taught in an online format.

However, Cartwright (2014) rationalized that, "...distance is inevitable in seminary education. It is a matter of choosing which distance is preferable, distance from faculty (online education) or distance from one's in-context community (residential education)" (p. 104). These two perspectives show the interesting balance that is out there. On one hand, the potential for success in using various forms of online learning or other technologically driven tools to train clergy seems limitless, but without the research, models, or people and organizations willing to lead the way, that possible success is unlikely to come to fruition.

Nessan (2010) and Coleman (2014) both express concern as well that for much of the time that Westerners have been establishing and teaching in theological institutions in developing nations that the primary method has been to export the way things are designed and taught in the West with little or no thought given to how that training may or may not work in a different culture. As a result, Naidoo (2013) and Nkonge (2013) express the need for a different model which starts with the needs in a particular culture and allows the pastoral training to be developed within the region or country where the pastors will serve.

The scarce research about online education in a specifically theological setting points to the fact that there is a large need to investigate the current situation and to then evaluate the various elements that are inherently intertwined in this field. Furthermore, the initial forays into research on the topic lean towards an incredible potential for transforming the field globally. In order to ascertain both the risks and benefits, there are several compelling arguments for proceeding with additional research in this area.



## **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate both the current options that are available for training ministers in remote areas of developing nations as well as to see if there are ways that utilizing educational technology could assist in training ministers. While global Christian leaders decry the lack of formal training options for preparing ministers for their work, it seems that overall, the process continues to attempt to try the same methods over and over expecting different results without investigating other options that might be available to train more ministers across the globe.

In researching this issue through the literature review and through an earlier pilot research project that the author did (Beaty, 2014), it was discovered that while the literature is scarce in discussing ways to address the training issues for ministers, there are several effective models that are being used in these remote locations to train people in other fields such as agriculture, medicine, and education. Through this study, the hope is to be able to take information from these other fields in the literature review and evaluate whether they could be useful in equipping future ministers.

A qualitative research method utilizing interviews was used. Religious leaders in developing nations who are aware of the needs in their area and who could also speak to the opportunities and limitations to using educational technology to educate those who want to enter into pastoral ministry participated in the study. By interviewing a variety of educators from different settings and from multiple developing nations, ideas were shared on ways to better use various technological tools to increase the accessibility of ministerial training for people in these remote areas. From these interviews, the findings were developed and additional areas that can be researched in order to move the body of knowledge forward were also identified.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the current landscape of global ministerial training in developing nations?
2. How is technology currently being utilized for ministerial preparation in remote locations?
3. How could online delivery systems help meet the needs of training clergy?
  - a. What are the barriers and benefits to offering online training?
  - b. What cultural components need to be considered in offering online education?

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Developing Nations:** although various agencies provide different definitions of what developed, emerging and developing nations are, this study classifies developing nations as those where the majority of individuals have low income levels and there are limited infrastructures throughout the country (International Monetary Fund, 2017).

**Technology:** any electronic methods that are implemented to enhance the teaching and learning process. This includes such modes as radio, cellular phones, computer based, or other such tools.

**Ministerial Preparation:** an education that contains a combination of elements of theological, Biblical, vocational, and personal spiritual formation leading to the ability to lead aspects of church ministry (Naidoo, 2012).

**Remote Locations:** communities that have limited access to major cities, technology, higher education, transportation, or social and medical services. The exact definition maintains some fluidity in various countries and parts of the world.

**Clergy:** While the author recognizes that different religious groups utilize different terms to identify their religious leaders (such as imam, rabbi, pastor, minister, etc...), this study will

utilize the term minister to identify various clergy members. The understanding in this research is that the author is both learning from other religious traditions as well as offering ideas that can be utilized by other traditions as they evaluate the ways in which they train their religious leaders.

Online: this includes the potential for education to take place via the Internet in either asynchronous or synchronous manners. This could take place in several different formats from courses that require daily interaction with a highly interactive web interface to programs that are driven primarily by email delivery systems or even programs that focus on disseminating content through cellular phone technology.

### **Significance of the Study**

In the study of the literature, there have been relatively few references to current models for training pastors in developing nations. Furthermore, there has not been information that has collected these options and has reported it to a larger audience. This study has gathered information from multiple continents to give an overview of various methods around the globe that are working. More specifically, there have not been any studies that investigate the use of online learning to expand the ability for ministers in remote locations of developing countries to be able to obtain this critical education. Furthermore, researcher after researcher has stated, there is an extreme dearth of information about religious online education in general, let alone research focusing on expanding the reach of ministerial training to remote areas.

Due to the lack of research on this area of ministerial training in general and online education specifically, this study adds to the knowledge base as one of the foundational blocks upon which more research can be built. Theological organizations such as religious colleges or seminaries, denominations, mission agencies, and even universities that have religion

departments, around the world that are responsible for training ministers will benefit from this research, as it will give them a basis from which to start discussions about the potential for offering ministerial training in an online format for students in remote areas.

The hope is that this study will provide the necessary information to determine to what extent ministers are currently obtaining formal education as they prepare to serve their congregations. It is further desired that this study will help determine what the potential need is for online theological education in remote areas of developing countries and also to understand what it will take to make this education sustainable.

Global theological institutions may find this information helpful as they evaluate new learning methods that may be available to them in an online format. Higher educational institutions that currently have online programs will find this research beneficial as they evaluate expanding their educational impact to the global educational community.

This research has the potential to launch an entirely new discussion among educators on a global perspective. It has the ability to expand ministerial education across political and cultural borders so that future pastors around the world can gain access to additional educational options that currently do not exist.

### **Organization of Study**

Chapter One has provided a broad overview to the issue of online theological education being delivered globally. It has also raised the issue of the need to evaluate ways to more effectively train clergy in developing nations. Chapter Two, will review relevant literature about the growth of online education, the use of online education in religious schools of various religious persuasions, and how educational technology is being utilized in other disciplines to provide training to those in remote areas. The third chapter, will explain the methods that were

utilized in order to obtain and analyze information about the training of ministers in remote locations in developing nations and how educational technology might be helpful in providing additional educational opportunities. Chapter Four will address the information gleaned to answer the first research question. Chapter Five, will provide information from the second and third research questions. Finally, Chapter Six will give key conclusions in response to the research questions, and suggestions for future study.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will investigate the needs for improving access to ministerial training in developing nations, review ways that online learning is being utilized in some theological training, and then look at ways that online education is currently being utilized in other fields in developing nations.

### **The Need for Additional Methods of Training**

While it can be difficult to understand the needs for access to higher education when one lives in a well-developed nation, educators in less developed countries are calling for help to address the growing desires of students in their countries to acquire tertiary education. However, the push to rapidly expand educational opportunities often leads to a lower quality of education that will not effectively prepare students for the future. Lindow (2011) explained:

Massive population growth and growing middle classes in countries like Nigeria and Tanzania have given rise to huge demands for university education, compelling universities to admit larger numbers of students--often beyond what they can really sustain. This, in turn, has led to overcrowding and facilities that are rundown and inadequate, along with complaints of diminishing educational standards. (p. 5)

Similarly, recently in Kenya, Nguru (2014) reported that over 80,000 high school students graduated with exam scores that were high enough to gain them entry into a university, but the country was only able to accommodate 10,000 of these students due to space and financial constraints. While additional students were offered the opportunity to attend the state universities by paying tuition and some were able to attend private schools, still less than a third of those qualified were able to enroll in a higher education program due to the severe limitations in available classes.

One of the options that has been popular for students in developing nations is to leave their country to earn advanced degrees in more developed countries. However, this causes more difficulties in several aspects of the educational process. Lindow (2011) lamented, that many of the students and future educational leaders end up leaving Africa only to get their education and remain in the West. She quotes a Kenyan professor who explained the struggles this way, “We sent people overseas, but just one or two per year. But once you go to the US or Europe and work in their laboratories, coming back to Kenya becomes a problem--people don’t come back....” (Lindow, 2011, p. 200).

While the need for more educational options inside of developing countries and the desire to see more students retained within these countries are both evident across disciplines, they are also prevalent specifically within theological training. Naidoo (2013) contends that “The growth of the Church in Africa has been so enormous that the need for leaders far outstrips the ability of Bible and theological institutions, seminaries and correspondence programmes to supply them” (p. 2). Complicating this issue is the fact that while the public universities in South Africa have historically had theology departments that were focused on training pastors, those departments have been greatly reduced, and several universities have closed their theology departments. While the traditional options of obtaining ministerial training through state universities are shrinking, at the same time, schools specifically developed to prepare pastors are reducing their emphasis on this critical area of their original mission. Due to the increased need for more access to higher education across disciplines, there is a trend for colleges who were started to train ministers to develop programs that generate more income such as business, education, or computer technology. However, in the process of expanding these new financially

profitable majors, many schools have reduced their focus on training ministers, which was their original mission (Nguru, 2014).

The World Council of Churches (2013) did an extensive study of ministerial training across the globe and the first major finding was that, “There are not enough theological schools in the regions of the world where Christianity is growing rapidly (Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia)” (p. 2). Secondly, they raised the concern that there are significant issues with funding theological education in developing nations around the world. Nkonge (2013) gave a specific example of the results of these two issues when he wrote that in Kenya, among the four largest Christian denominations, there is on average just one trained minister for about 4500 congregants (p. 232). The combination of the high costs for congregations to help potential pastors get educated combined with few options to obtain that education raises serious concerns about how to resolve the critical shortage of trained ministers.

As it relates to the number of students leaving developing countries, never to return, Beaty (2014) identified that individuals involved in theological education in several different developing nations consistently saw over 75% of the students who left their countries for theological training in the West never return to their countries. Byaruhanga (2013) claimed that in addition to the “brain-drain” (p. 158) caused by promising ministerial students going to the West for training and not returning, it also raises several other issues for those who go to the West and do return. He cited examples such as the much higher cost for the Church to pay for students to study abroad for training that is usually done in ways not contextually aligned with local ministry needs. Often times, this results in a tendency for pastors and denominational leaders who have remained to distrust and struggle to work alongside those pastors who received their training in the West.



As a result, at a time when there is a growing need for more ministers in developing nations, there is at the same time reduced access to ministerial training due to a wide variety of influences. Raising money and sending potential pastors to the United States or Europe brings additional unintended consequences that can offset any gains that were originally thought to be benefits. So, with a situation that needs help, are there additional ways that could be investigated in order to meet the needs of training clergy throughout developing nations? One method that may have some promise is the use of online delivery systems to provide this training to students in their current locations without the constraints of facilities and without the need to leave their countries.

### **Current Research on Online Theological Education**

As other researchers have stated (Blier, 2008; Delamarter et al., 2011; Etzel 2015; Ogilvie, 2009), there is neither substantive quality or quantity of studies that have been done to establish the current status of higher educational institutions who are actively involved in theological online education. In recent years, theological researchers (Cartright, 2014; Etzel 2015; Morris, 2017; Naidoo, 2013, 2017) have reviewed the literature for dissertations and articles, and the majority of their citations point back to information written at the end of the past century or in the first five years of this century. Jackson (2015) identified that there is a need to do additional research in areas dealing with online theological education due to the lack of information that he was able to identify in his studies. While Raybon (2012) acknowledges there is a growing body of literature from the first part of this century, he also explained:

the vast majority of literature regarding theological education online is anecdotal and positional rather than empirical. Arguments are well-reasoned and well-written but not

necessarily supported by verifiable data...in the more specific area of theological continuing education the field of research is still scant. (pp. 33-34)

The common theme is that there is a dearth or “paucity of ...work in the field” (Raybon, p. 34) available to help establish a firm foundation for where online delivery systems are effectively being utilized in equipping clergy to pastor their congregations. While much has changed in online learning in the world since Delamarter or Rogers and Howell wrote articles in 2004-2006, the consensus is that little has changed in the past decade, at least from a literature perspective, in regards to utilizing technology in better ways to prepare ministers (Cartwright, 2014; Etzel, 2015; Jackson, 2015).

Furthermore, the research is even scarcer in regards to online theological education on a global perspective. In order to be as thorough as possible, multiple databases were scoured in order to find appropriate articles, papers, presentations, books, and dissertations. Reference lists from these sources were also evaluated in order to glean more connections that could help in the thorough research necessary for this study. The recurring theme throughout this research is that nearly every relevant researcher explained that there is a serious lack of information available for online theological education and expressed the need for additional research on all aspects of the topic.

### **History of Online Collegiate Education**

Clardy (2009) traced the history of distance learning back to correspondence courses that were completed and exchanged through postal systems in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It continued as various organizations began to deliver distance education through broadcast methods such as television and radio programs that combined audio and visual elements to the initial written method. As technology continued to expand, other audio-visual methods such as cassette tapes

were utilized for various studies. The next stage provided distance education through emerging technologies such as videoconferencing.

As better and more sophisticated technological advances occurred, educators were early adopters in utilizing the computer and Internet for distance learning. Harasim (2000) outlines the beginning stages of online distance education beginning in the mid-1970s as email and computer networking first started being used. She detailed that the first adult education course presented in a totally online format was offered in 1981, with the initial online college classes following soon thereafter in 1984, and graduate courses in 1985. Then, in 1989, a university in Great Britain launched the first “large scale online course” (p. 43).

While the data does not exist on a global level, statistics from the United States can give an idea as to the potential use of online delivery systems to provide higher education. In the United States, online course enrolments have continued to grow as Parker, Lenhart, and Moore (2011) reported that nearly twenty-five percent of college graduates in the United States have taken online classes. Furthermore, “the share doubles to 46% among those who have graduated in the past ten years” (p. 1). Allen and Seaman (2015) reported that over the past decade the number of students who have taken at least one online course has grown an average of 15.2% per year. This continued growth demonstrates that the use of technology to provide education to students in a distance learning format is a viable option that can expand the opportunities for students who for one reason or another choose to not attend classes in a traditional brick and mortar setting.

### **Growth of Religious Schools Using Online Learning**

Parker, Lenhart, & Moore (2011) noted that Bible schools and seminaries did not offer online options nearly as much as other colleges and universities. Esselman (2004) echoed these

thoughts as he identified that many seminary leaders doubt that it is possible to help future pastors be adequately prepared for ministry when they study in an online format instead of in a traditional face-to-face setting. He continued, “many theological educators, particularly those preparing candidates for priesthood and full-time lay ecclesial ministry, have misgivings about the usefulness of instructional technology for theological teaching and learning” (p. 159). Mark Senter, the recently retired department chair of Educational Ministries at one of the largest seminaries in the United States, also expressed intense doubt whether schools with a theological focus would be able to effectively make the move to vibrant online education (personal communication, February 13, 2012). This viewpoint has not changed during the past five years as Nichols (2015) remarks that despite the fact that his research shows that online theological students are growing spiritually as well as those in traditional settings, there is still strong resistance by many in Christian higher education.

Blier (2008) expressed the struggle that theological education in an online environment faces as educators in many of these schools have continued to use the same traditional teaching methods that they have used for decades instead of embracing newer forms of technology. This reliance by many on the need for theological education to be delivered in a setting where students see “the instructor as the primary (or only) source of knowledge” (p. 28) and where the only valued pedagogy is face-to-face instruction limits the investigation of using other models of instruction such as hybrid or online delivery options. He also expressed the need for schools that are primarily focused on theological education to purposefully reevaluate the traditional modes of the teaching/learning process as new methods and new student needs arise.

Hines et al. (2009) expressed the paradox related to online theological education by pointing out that on one hand the use of online education has the ability to train pastors around

the world and it also offers the opportunity for seminaries to enroll more students; however, many in theological education only see the complications and hurdles that online courses offer and they often focus more on the difficulties than the opportunities. Yet, while authors like Bogart (2017), Cloete (2015), Etzel (2015), Frye (2012), Jackson (2014), and Naidoo (2012) describe significant resistance towards online learning from faculty and administration in many schools that focus on theological education, there are indeed positive examples coming from people in the field. For instance, Jackson (2014) also relayed how a new seminary has started with its entire purpose being to offer online ministerial training. Tanner and Smith (2015) detailed how the Association of Theological Schools has seen schools who offer online programs continue to grow as they have granted exceptions for the residency components of the accrediting process. In fact, "...the eight schools granted exceptions to the one-third residency requirement for professional MA programs, six experienced an amazing average growth of 94 percent this past year (vs. 4 percent growth for all MA programs)" (pp. 2-3). Maddix (2010) rebutted the concerns that community and accountability cannot be developed in the lives of ministers via an online delivery system with examples from the seminary programs his school offers that provide additional assistance to the pastors that participate in their online programs. Another example was stated by Hanna (2008) as he detailed how after nearly forty years of involvement in global theological education, he discovered that teaching theology in an online format is superior in many ways to the traditional face-to-face format. He explained how teaching online opens up the ability for better professor/student interaction as well as expanding the reach of the courses to people across the world. These emerging stories give credence to the concept that online theological education is indeed making inroads and is slowly building up

supporters who at some point could be advocates for increased focus on this mode of teaching and learning.

### **Growth of Schools Experimenting with Overseas Education**

Hines et al. (2009) advocated for the teaching of theological courses in a global setting because the potential opportunities are nearly endless, and it grants flexibility for students who will not need to relocate to a particular seminary. These authors also strongly affirm the belief that eventually, most theologically focused schools will develop online courses. Tanner and Smith (2015) confirm the predictions of Hines et al. when they outlined the significant growth of schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools that offered online programs in 2014 vs. those that did so in 2009. Furthermore, they reported that nearly half of the schools that added online education during this period had double digit enrollment growth, and they leveraged that fact to encourage other schools to consider the potential number of ministerial students that can be taught by offering their degrees in the online format. Similarly, the World Council of Churches' (2013) report stated that in Latin America, church leaders and theological educators prefer online training over the more traditional residential pastoral training model.

While Senter (2002) foreshadowed the challenge for theologically based schools to move to utilizing eBooks, as they would someday seek to penetrate the global market, he also expressed doubt as to whether or not these institutions would have the passion and vision to move forward with such a concept. While it took over a decade to see Senter's thoughts brought to fruition, some theological schools outside the United States are now experimenting with even newer models of online education. Shubert and Shubert (2012) reported how a seminary in Nairobi, Kenya is experimenting with a system that allows students to take theological courses on their cellular phones. This educational breakthrough allows students to utilize the capabilities

of a smartphone to read eBooks, watch lectures, take quizzes, complete assignments, and interact with other students and the professor wherever they can connect to wireless service, which is much more accessible than Internet access on computers.

Selwyn (2011) researched students on all six major continents (including 17% who were studying theology) who were taking online courses from a school outside of their country and reported that students around the globe saw the benefits of being able to access alternative educational options instead of being limited to the local options. They also expressed some of the struggles of the cultural differences between the educational institution and their particular setting. However, this study points to the fact that the benefits outweigh the negative aspects. Wright et al. (2009) express the need to look at online education in order to improve, “access, equity, and the distribution of quality products to a wide audience” (p. 3), because there may or may not be a large financial savings from these courses. They outline the fixed costs of staff and technology as expenses that are still present whether courses are operated inside a traditional building or via online learning systems. They also detail the extreme limits of getting economical and reliable Internet services to largely rural areas where even electricity might be in limited supply. In addition, they warn about the need to be mindful of the cultural and lingual differences of the students who will be taking courses.

### **Concerns About Effective Ministerial Training in a Postcolonial World**

While the literature clearly explains the needs to train more ministers throughout developing nations, there is also a deeply held concern that the answer looks different than ones that have previously been offered by organizations in the West who felt like it was their responsibility to come in and tell fellow believers how to do things the “right way”. Byaruhanga (2013) explained that although European and American missionaries had good intentions when

they brought Christianity to Africa, they brought not only Christianity as a system of faith, but they brought their version from North America or Europe with them and erroneously forced their interpretation of what Church should look like on the people they were coming to help.

Higgs (2015) explained the depth of the struggles that currently faces training ministers in countries where colonialism had a large part to play in their past:

Theological education during the colonial period in Africa was hegemonic and disruptive to African cultural practices, indigenous epistemologies, and ways of knowing....theological education in post-colonial Africa is still to a large extent confronted by the legacy of colonial forms of theological education that remained in place decades after political decolonisation....Consequently, there is an existential and humane need today to decolonise theological education in Africa by means of post-colonial forms of theological education that will reclaim indigenous African voices through curriculum reforms and the transformation of theological discourses. (p.43)

Mugambi (2013) concurred with this evaluation when he described this past reliance on Western influence as being a struggle for Africans because the majority of the missionaries who came from the West to prepare pastors did not understand the context into which they were coming to train pastors. They made assumptions about how their Western version of Christianity should look in Africa without being careful to evaluate the culture of the people they were coming to serve alongside. Morris (2017) explained that the Western missionaries often confused religious beliefs and cultural beliefs. Therefore, they attempted to force people to not only follow the Western perspectives of Christianity in the Church, but also pushed people to view their culture as insufficient and substandard to Western culture. In some cases, this was further complicated by Westerners assuming that all of a region was identical in their history and



culture. However, in much of the world, there were (and still are), a variety of tribal groups that looked at life differently from their neighbors in most aspects of their cultural identity and the missionaries did not take that into account as they worked to convert people (Curtis, 2016).

Kaunda (2015) challenges his fellow Africans that in order to effectively equip African pastors that they must step back and look at the larger picture where they do not continue to train pastors in a colonial model, nor should they look at training as something that can be done in a post-colonial model. Rather, in order to escape the consequences of the hegemonic colonial powers, they must step back to a time before the West colonized the continent and become decolonialized so they are able to establish theological education from a truly African context that allows pastors to be trained in ways that will work within the cultural framework of Africa, free from Western dominance.

It is obvious that teaching religious concepts from a position of hegemonic power is not an appropriate way to engage people around the globe. If Western institutions are going to participate in training ministers in developing nations, whether in a traditional or an online format, lessons from the past need to be learned and changes need to be made for the future.

In order to address the hegemonic issues that Higgs (2015), Mugambi (2013), and Pintchman (2009) raised, others like, Nessian (2010) challenge Western missionaries to listen before they act and to participate in active listening so they can hear what the problems are and then respond to the concerns instead of continuing to push their own pre-established agendas.

Another key of effective ministerial training in developing nations is for those from Western nations to remember to keep the focus on the needs of the people they are working with instead of assuming that their perspective is always the correct way. (Akanle, 2011). Westerners who want to be part of training ministers in the 21st Century must work extra hard to avoid any

appearance of using power since there is such a history of misuse of that power. Pintchman (2009) reminds religious educators that the issues of power are much more complex now than they were during the initial days of missionary education, and so, effective theological educators must learn to evaluate power structures and to carefully navigate how those from the West can serve the Church in developing nations instead of coming as the people with all of the right answers that need to be imposed on those from other countries.

It is also necessary to evaluate the culture in which prospective ministers are being taught. As the respondents to this author's initial study were so vocally passionate about, it is no longer possible to take Western cultural Christianity and export it as a package and expect it to be a "one size fits all" for people around the world. In order to be effective today, that education must be relevant to the culture where the education is taking place and that successful educators must be students of the culture where they are teaching (Akanle, 2011; Davies, 2007; Edgell, 2007; Nessian, 2010). Naidoo (2017) also expresses concern that Western missionaries who come to teach in the third world must avoid assuming that their versions of theology and their interpretation of the Bible are the only correct ones. They need to listen to the people in the culture where they go to teach before making wholesale assumptions. In contrast to earlier days where missionary educators viewed the majority, if not all, of non-Western culture as bad, Paredes (2007) states that missionaries need to remember that even though the cultures they are going to are different, they need to identify and celebrate the positive aspects of them. He argued that God has established cultures and they are an important part of every people group that should not be dismissed.

Learning about and teaching in light of other cultures can take on several different methods. Harries (2010) advocates that missionaries should learn to teach in traditional African

languages instead of English in order to convey the concepts more precisely. Even when the national language is English, Naidoo (2017) warns that care must be taken to realize that the majority of the texts, journals, and organizations which publish theological content originate in the West and do not necessarily take other cultural contexts into consideration. Morris (2017) also expressed frustration that much of the religious literature used to train pastors in Latin America is translated directly from English to Spanish and it never gets translated into the languages of the indigenous churches let alone getting translated culturally into their particular setting. Furthermore, it is impossible to convey theological truths to people who live and think in a holistic world via a language (English) that is designed to be used in a dualistic world (Harries, 2010). Niuatoa (2007) argued that Christian theology in Samoa must be taught in light of the understanding that their cultural values influence their understanding of what the Bible says and that in turn influences how they live out their faith in their specific cultural environment. In order to understand the various nuances of the holistic world of the Samoan islands, an educator would need to understand both the language and the culture in order to effectively teach theology in that setting.

Another aspect of looking at the cultural background of both the teacher and the student revolves around the worldview that forms the basis for educating ministers. Edgell (2007) argues that religious education needs:

...a meta-theory of spiritual integration [that] should include vectors of (1) worldview/philosophical formation, which is fostered by cognitive pedagogies like critical thinking pedagogies; (2) identity formation, which is facilitated by social-psychological approaches; and (3) spiritual integration that is learned in practice, using experiential learning pedagogies. (p. 52)

Likewise, Tyndale (2008) suggested that there may be important concepts that can be learned from the liberation theology movements in Latin America. He believed that educators must keep a focus on both the theological side of the training as well as the important issues within the community from a non-Western perspective as they navigate the integration of culture and biblical understanding. While acknowledging that there are some major differences between Protestant Christianity and Marxism or Critical Theory, Newell (2009) described areas where Westerners who are teaching theological education could learn from these other theoretical systems as they strive to be culturally relevant. Newell also believed that by working together with nationals and by looking at the issues of power, it is possible for this process of training ministers to serve as a counterhegemonic action to the hegemony that may still be intrinsically held by state sanctioned and state run schools.

From a different perspective, Kim (2012) offered another view of how religious educational ventures could change in the future. She postulated that in the coming years, there may be a totally different face to missionaries who are going to train pastors in various countries. For instance, currently, there are growing numbers of missionaries that are being sent around the world from places in Asia, South America, and Africa. As this takes place, it could reduce some of the previous problems of Western colonialism as Christians from around the world partner together to provide a culturally relevant religious educational experience that does not carry with it the negative connotations of Western hegemony.

Wahl (2013) suggested that the Church in developing nations should also start to evaluate ways that it can make training pastors a native, self-sustaining process that no longer forces Bible colleges and seminaries in Africa to rely on Western funding to keep them sustainable. By doing so, they could reduce their dependence on the Church in the West, which would reduce some of

the tension that arose from previous interactions in generations past. Furthermore, he believed that by taking more ownership of the ministerial training, new pastors would have a more authentic and relevant education that will better prepare them for serving people in their context instead of reflecting the priorities and values of the Western Church.

Bellon (2017) explains that the majority of Bible colleges and seminaries that have been started by Westerners in developing nations were based on the financial models that were so successful for them in the West. The seminaries that he has worked with in Africa do not enjoy the same revenue streams from denominational churches, large donors, grants, and other such sources. Rather, once the Westerners established the African schools on that model, they made the new schools dependent on those resources in the West. However, once the organizations in the West started pulling out of Africa, the theological schools were left unable to continue to support the training of pastors within their own countries.

From the perspectives of nationals who are currently involved in the educating of ministers in developing nations, it is obvious that one of the areas of great concern is whether the hegemonic practices of the past will allow the Church in the West to assist their spiritual brothers and sisters in these countries. Have too many bridges been burned or is it possible for educators who are more self-aware to be able to serve beside theological educators in developing nations without acting as if they know everything and know how to develop clergy better than those who are from that culture? While the literature is clear that this is a primary concern, there does not seem to be a consensus as to what the options are moving into the future. This appears to be one of the major gaps in the literature that warrants more investigative work.

## **Current Models of Ministerial Training in Developing Nations**

While there are concerns about the influence of Westerners on the theological education of ministers in developing nations, there are several models that are currently in place around the world. These various educational settings cover the spectrum from informal to very formal. They also rely to varying degrees on faculty from the West and faculty from within developing nations.

One of these models is called Theological Education by Extension. As the title states, this type of theological training is based on instructors going to extension sites where church leaders can come in order to be equipped to lead the congregations they serve. Winter and Jeynes (2012) described how as they were working to train leaders in Guatemala that they first established a traditional seminary in Guatemala City, but soon discovered that the church leaders they wanted to equip were unable to leave their homes throughout the country to come to the capital in order to be trained in a typical residential setting. Instead, they took the training out to various communities once a week to train the new ministers in smaller groups. Carey (2012) reported similar concerns about ministers being unable to attend a seminary in Pakistan. They set up three extension sites in other parts of the country and were able to take ministerial training closer to the pastors they desired to equip. Both Carey (2012) and Winters and Jeynes (2012) discussed how their seminaries soon realized that there was a need for a variety of levels of training pastors and a variety of linguistic needs. As a result, in both Guatemala and Pakistan, courses were developed to train pastors at certificate levels, the college level, and the graduate level. They also discovered that when they took the education out to extension sites, it became easier to teach pastors in the regional or tribal language that they best knew instead of forcing all the training into a primary national language. Yet, at the same time, Theological Education by Extension is

struggling in other parts of the world due to the expenses of sending instructors out to the smaller communities and the cost of administrating these programs and offering courses in multiple locations (Nkounge, 2013). While originally driven largely by Western missionaries, Theological Education by Extension has seen a large increase in national ownership and involvement (Winters and Jeynes, 2012; Tan, 2017).

Another option for theological education is public universities who train ministerial candidates for various clergy roles. While this model is popular in countries across Africa, it too is facing difficulties. Originally some nations worked in conjunction with churches in their country to provide ministerial training at the public universities (Landmann, 2013). However, in some areas there has been a conflict about the roles that the church and the state should hold and how the content should be designed and delivered (Naidoo, 2013). Furthermore, there are increasing concerns that the universities are not staying true to their focus on training ministers, but are rather providing, “a more general study of religion” (p. 4). Buitendag (2014) echoed this concern as he challenged universities to return to emphasizing “the distinction between ‘theology’ and ‘religious studies’” (p. 5). However, Naidoo (2013) also explained that as a result of some of the struggles that are occurring between the Church and the universities, there has been better cooperation between various denominations as they are forced to work together to come up with better ways to partner to train the ministers that they need. Buitendag was also convinced that training clergy in the university system allows for a more authentic expression of theology that relies less on Western theological influences since it is taught within a cultural context by nationals from within the country instead of relying on Western missionaries and educators.

While the extension sites meet some needs and some countries have public universities that prepare ministers, there are also traditional Bible colleges and seminaries in developing nations. Some of these schools for training clergy date back hundreds of years. For instance, in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the Catholic missionary Francis Xavier started schools to train national priests in countries in Asia (Reed & Provost, 1993). Likewise, the missionary efforts of Europeans established seminaries in developing countries across Asia, Africa, and South America throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Bivin, 2010; Carey, 2012; Eguizabal, 2013; Naidoo, 2017; Nessian, 2010; Nkonge, 2013). Many of these schools were established by organizations (denominations, mission societies, and educational institutions) in the Western world, and a majority of these schools continue to rely largely on Westerners as the instructors in these schools (Beaty, 2014; Nkonge, 2013). The failure of expatriates to fully understand the cultures of the people that they are preparing ministers for continues to cause friction between what professors from the West believe are critical aspects of ministerial training and what the Church inside the countries where these schools are located believe to be necessary (Naidoo, 2013). Coleman (2014) further explored this concern when she explained that often North American educators who come to teach in seminaries in Latin America think that they will be able to easily transfer the content that they learned in the seminary they attended to a seminary in another culture without evaluating how to effectively contextualize the delivery of the ministerial training that they hope to accomplish. As a result, the training of clergy suffers though not intentionally. When they demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the cultures where they are serving, ministers, new or old, are unprepared to lead these congregations Furthermore, Eguizabal (2013) stated that the majority of theological schools are still located in the major cities in Latin America, and that reduces the accessibility for many who want to be trained to become ministers.



Despite the struggles that surface in these Bible colleges and seminaries, there are a growing number of national leaders who have been trained to take over the leadership of the schools and the passing of the leadership from expatriates to people who understand the cultures where these schools are operating (Eguizabal, 2013). Carey (2012) detailed how a seminary in Pakistan has also recently transitioned to the place where all of the administrators are Pakistani, and there are no longer Western missionaries directing the school. Heliso (2013) chronicled how a seminary in Ethiopia which was originally founded and staffed by missionaries from Europe and North America is now being led by national leadership. As a result of the seminary being turned over to Ethiopian leaders, there has been an increase in cooperation with other seminaries in the country and has opened the doors for preparing ministers from several other denominations. As more and more of these schools begin to turn the leadership over to leaders from within the countries, many of the concerns about the focus of the preparation of clergy being driven by leaders from the West can be overcome and the schools are able to develop training that is highly practical and relevant to the clergy and to the congregations they serve.

While these various options exist throughout most developing countries, the overwhelming consensus is that there are not enough Theological Education by Extension, college, university, or seminary programs to effectively train pastors (Beatty, 2014; Carey, 2012; Eguizabal, 2013). Repeatedly throughout the literature (Eguizabal, 2013; Higgs, 2015; 2012; Mugambi, 2013; Naidoo, 2013; Nguru, 2014), there are calls raised about the need to discover better ways to equip pastors across Latin America, Asia, and Africa. There is especially a need to work at training pastors who are unable to come to a major metropolitan area for an extended time to receive theological training. This theme carries through from continent to continent, and

authors consistently state the importance of continuing to train pastors for the rapidly growing Church (Carey, 2012; Winters and Jeynes, 2012).

### **Use of Online Delivery Systems for Other Disciplines in Remote Areas**

#### **Utilizing Distance Education Modes for Training Healthcare Workers**

When researching the use of online delivery systems in various disciplines, the area of healthcare appeared as one where a variety of people are experimenting with varying degrees of success. Liyanagunawardena and Williams (2014) report that a partnership between the University of Michigan and experts on tropical diseases from Malawi and Ghana are developing collaborative Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that allow collaborative training to take place so that professionals in both African and North America are able to get more advanced education that prepares them to practice medicine better. Furthermore, there is work within this system to offer certifications and various continuing education credits.

Koole, McQuilkin, and Ally (2010) outline how:

...mobile learning is particularly promising for health care professionals who are completing their practica in remote communities. Using mobile devices, supervisors can monitor, interact with, and assess a learner's progress when direct observation is not possible. In such instances, learners could have access to a variety of tools including medical reference manuals, patient histories, progress notes, and medical experts. (p. 61)

They explain that while there can be some drawbacks with the technical limitations of mobile devices, the benefits greatly outweigh the lack of any training and the lack of being able to interact with professors and supervisors in this particular graduate level nursing program.

The use of MOOCs to train health care professionals is continuing to grow. Albrechtsen et al. (2017) reported on a training course that they developed to train health care providers

around the world about how to prevent and treat issues with patients who have diabetes. They had over 50,000 participants signed up for the course and nearly 30,000 completed the course. As they worked through the surveys at the end of the course, they discovered that 94% participants from developing nations stated that they had learned information that would help them in their medical profession. This number was higher than for those from developed nations, and they believe the reason is that there has been so little information available for health care providers in developing nations that it is especially beneficial for them.

Park (2011) also addressed the role of mobile learning as she evaluated a postgraduate program in applied anthropology that works with students in extremely remote areas of Australia. In this particular program, the students utilized a variety of mobile devices such as laptops, phones, and iPods to receive all of the written and multi-media course resources as well as being able to participate with classmates in discussion boards.

Park (2011) also referenced another partnership that exists between a university in India and one in the United States where medical students who were serving in remote places in India were able to access a wide variety of information from the medical college in the States. This partnership allows these medical students to have more resources than they would from the school in India and ultimately, better health care is provided to patients in rural areas of India. In reviewing this same partnership, Vyas, Albright, Walker, Zachariah, and Lee (2010) detailed how using online delivery systems has greatly expanded the way these two schools are able to prepare students for their medical work. They posit that:

Mobile learning represents an important opportunity to reach learners in the developing world in the classroom and in clinical settings where access to content, particularly just-

in-time content, is critical to maximizing learners' experience. It can also facilitate feedback in environments where faculty time and learning resources are limited. (p. 215)

One of the major issues in developing nations is the struggle to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS. Zolfo et al. (2010) have worked with training health care workers in remote areas of Peru. They explained that there is a lack of trained workers to who are able to serve the needs of the people in their area. As a result, they have developed HIV/AIDS training materials for minimally trained workers so they can have information available on smartphones and so that they can utilize various social media platforms to get help in dealing with more challenging cases. The availability of the training being accessible at all times for these rural workers helps compensate for the lack of formal training that regional schools can provide. It has also been recognized as being very helpful in the process of continuing to improve health care throughout the region.

Miah, Hasan, and Gammack (2015) detail how there are very few doctors available for people in Bangladesh, and in the rural areas where the majority of the population lives, there is extremely poor health care available. They are working on an e-health platform that will allow doctors in the urban centers to assist with diagnosing and treating patients in the rural areas by working in conjunction with the small rural clinics that are not staffed by physicians. This will allow lower skilled health care workers to get treatment information from the medical doctor and assist patients who would otherwise not have access to the healthcare that they need.

### **Utilizing Distance Education Modes for Training Agricultural Workers**

An area that is investigating alternative training in remote areas is that of agriculture. Balasubramanian, Thamizoli, Umar, and Kanwar (2010) have worked to develop a training program delivered via cell phones. They have recorded "...nearly 500 audio messages of about

60 seconds each on topics such as buying goats, feed management, disease and health management, and marketing management” (p. 194). By developing and distributing these messages on a daily basis, illiterate women are being trained on how to operate all aspects of their livestock ventures. In addition to these audio messages, the veterinary university has developed other multimedia tools such as videos, pictures, and PowerPoint presentations that the women are able to watch on their phones. In addition to the tools available to them on the smartphones, they get together for both weekly and monthly meetings at local and regional sites where they are able to get other training on raising their goats and are also able to interact with other women who are going through the same training courses.

Patel et al. (2012) highlight another study that they implemented to test the effectiveness of using smartphones for training farmers in another area of India. Like Balasubramanian et al. (2010), Patel et al. discovered that the use of smartphones provided training for farmers in ways that they could immediately implement to improve their farming techniques. They also discovered that the use of the smartphones allowed illiterate farmers to gain the knowledge that they needed in order to improve their skills. Their study also discovered that in some aspects of the training, farmers were more likely to respond positively to new information from peers than from the scientists who teach agriculture at area universities. This is an interesting cultural perspective from this setting that should be evaluated in other situations to see if the class structure in other developing nations leads to this kind of discrimination against “experts” in a particular field.

Gaikwad and Randhir (2016) believe that with the Indian population having an illiteracy rate of above 25%, that it is possible to use various methods of electronic learning that will be able to train even illiterate individuals as they are able to access training through electronic

devices whenever it is convenient for them. Their belief is that with the advances that have been made and that continue to be made, that online delivery systems stand to really aid those in the rural and remote areas of the country where students will be able to access education that is currently not available to them.

In exploring ways that training can be deployed in remote areas based on computer services in “the Cloud”, Patel and Patel (2013) described how utilizing this technology allows greater ease in providing training in national and local languages as well as making content easier to access. In looking at training in rural India, they reported how the use of web-based tools allowed farmers to access a wide variety of content from differing platforms, whether a computer or a smartphone. Training farmers by using programs and information via the Internet allows the flow of information to reach farmers in even the most rural villages across India and allows them to access educational opportunities through the technology that is available to them.

Although Farmer Voice Radio started training farmers primarily through radio programs in four countries in eastern Africa, Christensen, Allen, and Tjasink (2016) discovered that farmers were able to learn more when they could ask questions of the agricultural extension experts via text messages on their phones and that their learning could be further improved as the agricultural agents responded with targeted answers to farmers who were dealing with varying issues on their farms.

### **Summary**

As international universities investigate participating in the process of training clergy, there is a very loud and clear voice coming from those within the developing nations that the hegemonic practices of the past cannot be part of this process. Any theological training must be developed with the needs of ministers from their own countries and be implemented in such a

way that it equips ministers to serve “their people” and not to give “their people” what seminaries or ecclesiastical bodies in the West think they need to know. As part of this process, it is not enough to just translate ministerial training from schools in the West into various languages and to then expect the training to be effective for the ministers who will be pastoring their congregations in differing contexts.

Furthermore, despite the limited amount of current research on global theological education, there is great consensus on several points. The most obvious aspect is that nearly every article that addressed ministerial training in developing nations discussed the need for additional research on the topic. Secondly, there is agreement that the need for training pastors is immense throughout developing countries. This means that institutions within developing nations need to continue to evaluate how they can be involved in the process and then develop a plan of action to fulfill the educational needs in an area where they feel they are ablest to do so. At the same time, institutions in the West, who desire to be part of the solution need to be aware of the hegemonic practices of the past as they seek to be part of the current solution. In addition, the literature expressed the concern that American colleges and seminaries that focus on theological education are reluctant at best, and more likely resistant, to try to engage the global culture through online learning. This suggests there is a need for people within these institutions to step out as pioneers in the field in order to address the needs in a culturally relevant manner.

With many questions about how to fill the needs of training ministers, but few answers on how to best accomplish that, I will outline in the next chapter the methodology I used to select and interview people involved in ministerial training in developing nations in order to get a better understanding of options that might resolve some of these issues.

## CHAPTER III: METHODS

### **Introduction**

This dissertation focused on learning how online delivery methods and electronic educational tools could assist in the process of training more ministers in developing nations. While information was discovered in the process of the literature review, there were also significant gaps that pointed to the need to obtain more information about what options are currently available and how online learning could assist in that process while being cognizant of barriers and benefits that this type of training may present as well as investigating what role cultural components play in the process. This chapter, will explain my process for gathering additional information that will provide answers to the study's research questions. It will also explain the design and methodology utilized in the study.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the current landscape of global ministerial training in developing nations?
2. How is technology currently being utilized for ministerial preparation in remote locations?
3. How could online delivery systems help meet the needs of training clergy?
  - a. What are the barriers and benefits to offering online training?
  - b. What cultural components need to be considered in offering online education?

### **Research Design**

For this study, I gathered data through a qualitative research method that Merriam (2009) identifies as an example of the “basic qualitative design” (p. 23). In particular, personal interviews took place with theological educators in developing nations. Merriam (2009) explains that interviews are used extensively in qualitative research because they allow a “person-to-



person encounter” (p. 88) which functions as a conversation whereby people are able to effectively exchange information. Due to the international focus of this study, it was not possible for me and the interviewee to physically be in the same room for the majority of the interviews. However, two of the participants were able to meet face-to-face with the interviewer when they happened to be in the United States. By utilizing video conferencing for the majority of the interviews, a strong personal encounter was still achieved during the interactions which allowed both parties to effectively communicate throughout the interview process. Furthermore, both the audio and video portions of the interviews were recorded so that I was able to review the interviews. This made it possible to continue to learn from individuals after the actual interview was concluded.

For this study, a “semistructured” interview approach was used for the interaction with the participants (Merriam, 2009, p. 89). In this method, the focus is on a balance between using a “highly structured” and an “unstructured” approach (p. 89). This approach worked well, because while there were several general questions that were asked in order to obtain answers to the research questions, the study’s participants also had additional information from their contexts and their global experiences which provided deeper answers to the overall study (Vogt, Gardner, Haeffele, & Vogt, 2014).

Creswell and Clark (2007) further explain that utilizing the semi-structured format allows “...participants to supply answers in their own words” (p. 6). By interviewing educators in developing nations, the participants were given a voice to share their expertise so that the interviewer did not come across as the “expert” who was telling them how things should best work. As a result, the study participants interacted in the research process because they saw their participation in the process as highly valuable to this research, which ultimately could be

extremely helpful for them, and the people they serve. In fact, each of them were highly engaged in the process and expressed hope that their participation in the study would allow others around the world to learn from their experiences and that together more pastors could be trained. By utilizing a semi-structured interview method, the interviewee also had some say in the direction of the questions and answers and that too gave them a voice in the research process.

The semi-structured interview process was chosen due to the fact that it better fit the needs of this study than the use of highly structured or unstructured interviews would. Merriam (2009) explains that highly structured interviews focus on control of how the interview is deployed and there is little or no room for exploring issues that come up in the interview process. On the other end of the spectrum, the unstructured format does not have enough form to be able to supply the data needed for this research. With a semi-structured format, general questions were developed by me. They were then evaluated by seven international educators and my dissertation committee in order to make sure that the questions were culturally sensitive in a variety of settings as well as to confirm that they would gain the information that would help answer the research questions. They were developed in such a way that they provided a direction to the conversation, but also allowed the participants to interject their own opinions or to even bring up additional questions or comments which they viewed as important to the research process.

### **Research Context and Participants**

Religious leaders who have experience preparing ministers in developing nations were contacted and asked to participate in this study. I chose participants with experience in different developing countries who demonstrated a knowledge of training pastors. The goal was to conduct interviews with leaders from multiple countries across different continents in order to

get a broad perspective of how ministerial training is being conducted as well as to get responses from areas with differing quality of training taking place. This goal was met by being able to interview educators from four different continents. Of these educators, two have been engaged with theological training across all Spanish speaking countries in Latin America as well as with Spanish speakers in other parts of the world. One has interacted with Portuguese speakers in South America, Europe, and Africa. Two have been involved with theological education in developing nations throughout all four continents. Others have worked within their country and several others in their geographic region. Combined, they have been part of training pastors in the majority of developing nations throughout the world. By interviewing leaders from differing denominational and educational backgrounds, the status of theological education was better understood because the participants each brought their own perspectives to the interview.

An initial list of potential participants was generated based on individuals that I knew through personal contacts and from two organizations of which I am a member (The International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education and the Christian Adult Higher Education Association). These initial contacts generated over 200 potential participants who were active in preparing clergy for ministry in developing nations, and they were invited to join the study. I sent an email (see Appendix A) to these people in order to solicit their voluntary assistance in the study. In addition to the initial emails generated by the above means, other educators were invited to join the study based on recommendations of those who responded to the initial emails. This process known as snowball sampling allowed someone to suggest a study participant based on their expertise in pastoral training (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). Originally, the goal was to engage between 10 and 15 participants for the study, and ultimately 13 were able to complete the interview and be included in the research.

Educators from multiple branches of Christianity were invited to join the study. The 13 participants who completed the study included people from 12 different denominational and organizational backgrounds. Of these one served primarily in Central and Eastern Europe, three were from Asia, 3 trained pastors in Latin America, and six were engaged with ministerial training in Africa. There were seven participants who were from developing nations, and six Americans who have trained pastors in developing nations for years. On average, these educators have invested 30 years of their lives training pastors. As a group, they have an extensive knowledge of pastoral training in multiple countries as 12 of them have worked with their school or organization in at least one other country, and several of them were part of teaching and consulting with other schools across multiple countries. Eight of the participants either have served or are serving as a dean or president of a Bible college or seminary, and four of them have served on national, continental, or global accreditation agencies (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Demographic Information of Research Participants*

Information	No. Represented
Denominations/Organizations	12
Main Teaching in Asia	3
Main Teaching in Africa	6
Main Teaching in Europe	1
Main Teaching in Latin America	3
From a Developing Nation	7
From the United States	6
Served as a Seminary Dean or President	8
Served with Major Accreditation Bodies	4
Average Number of Years in Pastoral Training	30

Consent from these participants was secured with a letter (see Appendix B) that described the purpose and benefits of the study. The letter explained there was a minimal level of risk that the research subjects should expect by consenting to participate in this study. Participants read and signed the consent form prior to interviews taking place.

Since each of the participants was training pastors in developing nations, the majority of the interviews did not take place face-to-face. Most of the interviews utilized Skype for a video call. A couple of them took place over the phone due to technical constraints. Two of the participants were in the United States during the time of their interview, and they chose a

confidential location that they selected and I was able to meet them personally to do the interview.

In the process of setting up the appointment for the interview, some participants sent me information about the school or organization at which they work. This provided me with the opportunity to have some background information about their work with theological education prior to the official interview. This information allowed me to ask some more specific questions during the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. During this time, some personal information was exchanged as well as their responses to the interview questions. While each participant was only interviewed once, I did follow up with additional questions with several of them to get additional information that was relevant to answering the research questions. Each of the interviews took place in English. All but one of the international participants had completed graduate studies through an American school, and so they were comfortable doing their interview in English. The other international participant does the majority of his work in English and frequently travels and speaks to audiences in the United States, so he too was able to communicate well in English.

### **Data Analysis**

Upon completion of the interviews, the audio recordings of the dialogue were carefully transcribed so I could carefully evaluate and analyze the conversations. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) state that it is important for qualitative researchers to be able to compare and contrast the information that they obtain through semi-structured interviews. This allowed me the ability to explore the survey results that each participant shared and to evaluate how each of the responses contributed to gaining a better understanding of how ministerial training was taking place from

their experiences and in the various locations where they have been engaged with theological education.

Merriam (2009) gives detailed guidelines on how researchers are to carefully read the transcripts of the interviews and then make various notes and observations about what is seen in each interview. In particular, she specifies that researchers need to capture “reflections, tentative themes, hunches, ideas, and things to pursue that are derived from [the]...data” (p. 170). Having listened to the audio files multiple times during the transcription process, the interviewer was familiar with some of the themes that repeated from participant to participant. In the process of reading through each transcript, I identified comments that stood out and that related to various key concepts that related to the research questions in this study. I made notes on these concepts in the margins of each transcript as I carefully studied them. In the process of reviewing each of the transcripts, Merriam’s (2009) assertion that themes will emerge and Fraenkel and Wallen’s (2009) statement that the analysis of the information from the interviews would become clearer and would start to provide answers to a study’s research questions did indeed happen.

By reviewing what the interviewees said multiple times, it was easier to truly understand their answers and to accurately evaluate what they said. The advantage with transcribing and coding the information is that key thoughts and concepts were identified not only from one interview, but those key concepts which were similar across all of the interviews became clearer. As I started making the notes on each transcript, I also started a list of common themes that occurred across the various interviews. For instance, as different interviewees gave examples of how pastoral training was taking place in their area of the world, I identified “current models” that were being used. Eventually, as I studied this large concept of “current models”, I was able to separate the models into “formal” and “non-formal” models. Then, as I looked at the non-

formal models, I was able to combine examples of Theological Education by Extension that were being used in different countries. This process of developing codes helped in the analysis process because some of the participants did not label their training as Theological Education by Extension, but it fit into the same category that other participants had used when they identified their training with a specific title. By moving from the broad idea of “current models” to “non-formal” models on how theological training is taking place, I was able to divide that category into an even smaller subsection that gave a clearer picture of distinct models that were working. Likewise, each participant listed multiple barriers to training pastors in developing nations. I first identified the various “barriers” and then was able to group similar barriers into different sub-categories such as “sustainability”, “literacy rates”, and “technological issues” that provided answers to either general barriers or specifically related to using technology to train pastors. By being able to engage with the interviews in this manner, the views about theological education were better understood. While there were areas that came across from everyone, the transcriptions also allowed comments from individuals to still be part of the study so that their voices were heard both personally and corporately. This was especially seen in the personal stories that various participants shared. Corporately, the participants came to similar conclusions on several themes, but their life stories took them to those conclusions in different paths and they expressed those differences within the similarities through their own personal and cultural viewpoints.

Merriam (2009) explains how the process begins with using an inductive process in the beginning of the analysis to be able to discover what the participants are stating. Then the coding process moves towards a more deductive process after the initial notes have been made in the transcripts. I continued to sort, combine, and subdivide the smaller pieces of data into larger



categories with sub-categories until I got to the point where all of the relevant information from the participants fit into a specific category that was useful for answering the research questions. Then I organized the various categories so that I could take the data from the different transcripts and incorporate that information into the responses to the discussion questions in the coming chapters of the dissertation.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility of Data**

I utilized multiple strategies as suggested by Merriam (2009) to promote trustworthiness and credibility throughout the research process. Prior to initiating the research portion of this study, I asked members of the dissertation committee, and selected individuals familiar with global ministerial training, to review elements of the research questions, interview questions, and study methods. As a result of this process, the research questions and the interview questions were adjusted in order to make sure that the right questions were being asked and to work towards obtaining the desired information for the research study.

In the interview process, forms of member checking or respondent validation were also utilized (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). I solicited feedback and asked clarifying questions of the participants. This improved the accuracy of the answers from the participants since unclear responses were revisited. Each participant was willing to answer additional questions after the interview was completed and I did follow up with some of the participants in order to make sure that I understood a particular response and I also asked for additional clarification about particular elements of pastoral training in developing nations from the participants.

In order to further develop trustworthiness in the study, I reviewed external sources such as websites referenced by the interviewees and other sources cited. This helped verify both information about the participant's school or organization as well as other organizations and

educational technology tools that they referenced in their responses. In addition, the data that the participants presented was evaluated in light of related literature to assess how their responses compared with others who have written about preparing clergy for ministry in developing nations.

An additional area that I incorporated into the study to assist with understanding positionality in the research was to assess my strengths and biases. While I have much experience in ministerial training (described in the following section) that are strengths of my understanding of the research topic, I also wanted to make sure that I was able to minimize any impact that my previous understanding of this topic might have on the research. In order to prevent my own ideas from leading participants to provide answers that would concur with my own hypotheses, I engaged both my committee and international theological students to review and make adjustments to the interview questions to make sure they did not lead to certain preconceived responses. Prior to starting the interview process, I researched concerns about the role of Western influence in theological education so that I was aware of the historic concerns and so that I could complete the interviews without presenting myself as a Westerner who already had all of the correct answers. Each of the interviews was recorded and transcribed so that my own personal feelings or recollections of what had been stated in the interview would not be used instead of the actual words that the participants spoke. By doing such, I was able to work towards as neutral of a position as possible while I did the research and wrote the dissertation. This was necessary in order to make sure the research accurately reflected the situations studied instead of reflecting any potential preconceptions that might have existed with what I hoped the data would reveal. In the end, I discovered several conclusions that were different from my initial thoughts, and I was able to report those fairly without resorting to my own beliefs.

In order to improve the credibility of the paper, I took diligent care to develop rich and thick descriptions so that the readers of the dissertation will be able to determine whether the conclusions of this particular study have any application and transferability to their setting (Merriam, 2009).

### **Researcher Context**

When working on an extensive research project such as a doctoral dissertation, it is critical to carefully evaluate the perspective that the researcher brings to the research process in order to minimize any potential for bias (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). I have completed multiple courses on research and statistics as part of my doctoral studies. These courses have prepared me for doing effective research for a project of this scope while being careful to observe any particular bias that may arise in the process.

Glaser and Strauss (1999/2017) explain that having a “theoretical sensitivity” (p. 46) to the topics being studied allows researchers to be able to continually think about, study, and evaluate various aspects of the theory that they are working on over multiple years. It is from this perspective that I have been “conceptualiz[ing] and formulat[ing] a theory as it emerges from the data” (p. 46). The following life experiences have played into my understanding of and my ongoing questions about training pastors for over two decades. In that process, I saw various concepts emerge and I was able to wrestle with these concepts as I developed some hypotheses which helped guide me in the data collection process without locking myself into a pre-determined course of action.

Having worked as a youth pastor, school counselor, professor, and college administrator, I have interacted with students who are preparing to become ministers in both the academic and the church realms. This background has given me both a sensitivity to the needs of future

ministers as well as the needs of schools that are working to train these men and women to become clergy. By teaching in three different theological institutions, one Catholic and two Protestant, I have encountered a wide variety of students in the Biblical, theological, ethical, and practical ministry courses that I have taught to students, many of whom were preparing to enter the ministry in some form. This teaching has taken place in traditional face-to-face classrooms as well as in blended and fully online courses.

In the process of preparing future clergy members, I have been able to teach dozens of students who were taking classes while they lived in other countries. By interacting with these students from multiple nations, I have developed skills to work with those from other nations and cultures and have listened to their stories about pastoral training in their environments. This experience has given me a broad awareness of the needs of those in other countries who have desired to gain additional training to prepare themselves for being effective ministers. The initial exposure over a decade ago to students from developing nations who left their families and churches for 3-4 years to attend seminary in Europe began the process of questioning how the training of ministers could be improved. Then as I continued to teach more online students from developing nations, the desire to continue to study this topic in more depth intensified. I have studied this topic, published an article, written multiple papers in my doctoral courses, and presented in a variety of conferences about the status of pastoral training in developing nations over the past seven years and throughout that process of interacting with others who have continued to challenge me to think deeper and to continue in my quest for understanding this topic in more depth.

At the same time, with this amount of knowledge and experience with the topic at hand, I have had to resist the temptations to build my research off of what I have already studied without

continuing to review available literature. This has forced me to continuously return to read new research and to interact with others who are interested in similar areas of international ministerial training.

Likewise, despite working to invite participants to his study from other religious backgrounds, I was only able to recruit participants from within the broad category of Protestant Christians. Since this is the religious group that I most closely identify with, it could have been easy to only consider research that aligns with my particular theological or philosophical views. In order to combat that, I made sure to include information in the literature review that included information from other branches of Christianity as well as from other religious groups.

### **Instrumentation**

This research relied on a series of open-ended questions that the interviewer asked the participants in order to obtain answers to the research questions. Information gleaned from the literature review and a previous pilot study (Beatty, 2014) informed the process as it related to the content needed in order to answer the study questions. Previous course work in research methods and works by Merriam (2009), Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), informed the design of the questions. After developing the initial questions for this study, they were sent to several theological educators in developing nations on three different continents. Seven of these educators responded with suggestions for improvement. In addition, members of my dissertation committee reviewed the questions and made suggestions to clarify the questions even more. This feedback was sought out in order to make sure that the questions would accurately ask for the information needed for the study. In this process of receiving feedback from these educators, each of the questions was adjusted, and some were even replaced and added to make sure that the questions were clear and to avoid any semblance of hegemony in the process of gathering data.

In the final version of the research instrument (Appendix C), there were 13 open ended questions that allowed the interview participants to respond to the questions while still allowing them to add additional thoughts related to the original questions or additional thoughts that the questions raised for them.

I sent a copy of the questions to the respondents prior to the actual interview so that they had the opportunity to think about the questions and formulate clear answers for the purpose of the research. By using this approach, the participants were also able to develop some questions and several of them pulled together other information that they wanted to share about the topic. With the semi-structured format, I was able to ask some additional questions of the respondents as well as being able to delve into some of the respondents' answers more in-depth (Merriam, 2009).

The first and second questions (see Appendix C) in the interview document focused on obtaining some basic demographical information as well as being utilized to build a sense of rapport between myself and the interviewee. They allowed the participants to start the interview by sharing about their own lives and how long they had been engaged in training pastors. I felt that this was important to allow them to begin the conversation telling about things that were important to them before answering questions that might be perceived to only be for the benefit of my research.

Questions 3-5 (see Appendix C) addressed how the participant had been personally engaged in training pastors within developing nations as well as explaining how pastors in both urban and rural areas of their country typically were prepared to become pastors. These questions provided the answers to my first research question by helping to establish what is happening around the developing world in the way of ministerial training. By obtaining information from

individuals across multiple continents, the information from these answers was able to give a broad perspective of what is happening in a variety of locations.

Questions 9-11 (see Appendix C) gave further perspectives on how effective the participants believed distance education was being utilized in their areas. These questions also helped answer the first research question because they gave more detailed information about how training was taking place outside of traditional residential campuses. This was an important part of this study since the majority of the available research has focused primarily on more traditional methods of educating pastors, and there was a need to obtain information about this particular area of theological education. These questions also provided some initial information about the use of technology as part of distance education, so they helped set the stage for answers to the second and third research questions.

The focus of questions 6 and 7 (see Appendix C) was on how the participants have personally utilized technology in their own teaching as well as how they see educational technology being utilized to train pastors in the areas where they work. By asking how they personally were engaged with the utilization of technology, I was able to gain an understanding of some of the differences between what technology was available to be used, what others have used, and then to determine how engaged the participant was in utilizing technology. This assisted me in sorting out whether technology is truly accessible to those who are actively engaged in training pastors or whether it was only something that is theoretically available, but not being used.

The eighth question (see Appendix C) was specifically designed to obtain answers to the third discussion question to gather information as to how educational technology in general, and online options in particular could be utilized to train more pastors. The more general use of

“educational technology” allowed participants to explain different online options that they saw being used in their worlds. This interview question also provided answers to research question 3a in regards to benefits that additional use of technology would bring to the equipping of ministers.

Question 12 (see Appendix C) was designed to answer the barriers aspect of research question 3a. Participants were asked about the barriers that they have seen in their particular countries that prevent online education from working effectively. This question provided an incredible amount of information about the difficulties that educators have when they various technological tools in developing nations. However, it also gave participants the opportunity to express that while they acknowledged struggles with technology, they also firmly believed that various online technologies need to continue to be explored and implemented.

The last question asked about cultural issues and the relevancy of the training that distance learning models of education provided to pastoral students. This provided answers to research question 3b. It was in the responses to this question that much of the concerns about colonialism and erroneous assumptions made by religious educators in the West were raised. This question also brought up the need to address the differences between urban and rural ministry and between majority and minority languages within a country. What was originally designed to focus primarily on lessons that people in the West could learn about as they sought to train ministers in developing nations included much more information that covered issues within countries and regions, not just those caused by the influence of those from the West.

### **Limitations of the Research**

In the process of reflecting on the research for this dissertation project, there were some areas that needed to be acknowledged as limitations that must honestly be addressed.



Since there was limited published research on the topic of using online education to train ministers in developing nations, this dissertation focused on information obtained from interviews with leaders around the world. While this gave a solid reflection of the thoughts of a few individuals who were highly qualified to speak to the issues, it was again a small sample size that was not representative of all theological educators regarding the utilization of the Internet or other educational technology tools to expand ministerial training around the globe. While diligent care was taken to develop thick and rich descriptions based on the information received from the study participants, it was still obvious that not every person involved with ministerial training in developing nations was interviewed. Furthermore, while the participants came from a variety of continents and countries, not every country nor continent was represented. Yet, several of the participants had significant experience in pastoral training across multiple countries and even continents which allowed me to gain insight into theological education outside of just a dozen specific individuals.

In addition, due to the networking available, the individuals who participated in the study came primarily from an evangelical Christian perspective. There are many other perspectives available inside other Christian traditions as well as from differing religious traditions outside of the Christian faith. Attempts were made to include other viewpoints by specifically inviting educators from different Christian traditions through the organizations I belonged to. Furthermore, snowball sampling was utilized to make contact with others outside of evangelical Christianity. Several Catholic and Orthodox Christians were invited to participate, but they did not. Even so, followers of other traditions will be able to benefit from the results of this study as they seek to enhance the training of their religious leaders around the globe.

Another potential limitation of this research is that the author only speaks English. As a result, interviews with others around the world had to take place in English. This limited participants to those who were able to communicate effectively in English in order to interact in the discussion process. Thankfully, the majority of the participants taught primarily in English, and many of those from developing nations completed at least one advanced degree in the United States so they were able to complete the interviews with limited difficulties.

A fourth issue that was a limitation was the use of a tool such as Skype for these interviews. While the use of Skype, FaceTime, and Google Hangouts have been utilized by the author for international calls, not everyone has easy access to high speed Internet (Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). Prior to starting the process of interviewing participants, I talked with numerous international educators, who assured him that most educators should not have problems with slow Internet connections. However, despite each of the participants initially stating that calls on Skype were perfectly fine, several of the calls experienced some technical difficulty that required either reverting to only using the audio feature of Skype or relaunching it to be able to complete the interview. While recognizing limitations such as access to the Internet and a lack of familiarity with a particular tool such as Skype, Iacono, Symonds and Brown (2016) explained how the use of these technologies open up the possibilities for international research because researchers such as this one can engage interview participants in their setting instead of relying on interviews that can only take place in the researcher's context or in places to which the researcher or the participant can easily travel. This was true in the interviews for this study because I was able to conduct interviews with educators in four different continents who I would not have had the opportunity to meet in person. Likewise, Seitz (2015) acknowledges that while there are some potential challenges regarding the technical aspects of

using a tool like Skype and that some potential adjustments may be needed for video interviews, these are all able to be overcome by being aware of them ahead of time and taking steps to mitigate the differences between an interview in the same place and one done across distance. This too was experienced in this study where steps were made by both me and the participants to prevent technological problems, and when they did occur, adjustments were made that allowed the interviews to continue smoothly.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I explained the why I utilized a qualitative methodology in order to answer the research questions that were set forth to study. A description was also given on how I interacted with educators across the globe so that I could better understand the opportunities for training ministers in areas where it is difficult for them to get formal education. Furthermore, I explained how I carefully analyzed the information from the participants and how I studied that information and then incorporated it into the dissertation.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

### **Introduction**

Chapter Four will describe each of the individuals who participated in the study and their qualifications to participate in this study. It will also review and synthesize the information collected from the interviews that is pertinent to this particular research project. This data will then be used to provide answers to this study's specific research questions in Chapter Five.

### **Description of Study Participants**

The original plan set forth in the dissertation proposal was to interview between ten and fifteen educators from around the world. After reaching out to over two hundred individuals, thirteen individuals were able to complete the interview process. The individuals involved in the interviews had extensive experience in pastoral and theological training across Africa, Europe, Asia, and South America. The breadth of their knowledge lends credibility to their input on the status of global theological training (see Table 2). It is from their integral understanding of theological education among rural church leaders across many nations that their insights provide answers for this study's research questions. The following section will explain the settings for each of the members of the study. Pseudonyms were used in order to protect the privacy of each of the individuals involved.

Table 2

*Specific Demographic Information on Participants*

Educator	Continent Taught	Country of Origin	Yrs. Training Pastors	Administration Experience	Accreditation Experience
Scott	Latin America	Brazil	25	Executive Director	National
Stan	Latin America	USA	34		
Paul	Latin America	Venezuela	40	Rector/Executive Director	
Jeannette	Asia	Philippines	31	Dean & President	
Brent	Asia	Philippines	40	President	
Keith	Asia	Philippines	16	VP & Dean	National
Ron	Europe	USA	22	VP of Educational Development	
Brandon	Africa	Ghana	31	Executive Director	
Doug	Africa	USA	25		
Gale	Africa	USA	25		
Frank	Africa	USA	42		
Marlin	Africa	USA	37	Executive Director	Continental & Global
Stephen	Africa	Democratic Republic of Congo	21		Continental & Global

## **Scott**

Scott is a Brazilian who teaches in a traditional seminary in a town of over half a million individuals in Brazil. He was part of the initial team that helped start this seminary nearly twenty-five years ago. While the seminary was originally started to primarily provide formal training for members of a particular mainline denomination, it expanded to provide pastoral training to members of a variety of denominations and independent congregations. Scott had to leave Brazil in order to earn his PhD in the United States many years ago because there were no PhD level programs in Brazil to prepare faculty in biblical and theological areas. He expressed that this was difficult for him, “Because [it is] one thing to have a chat in English or read, but [to] follow a full course and do and write...this is a problem.” In addition to his teaching and administrative duties in the seminary, Scott became part of the Brazilian national accreditation council, SINAES, in 2005, and continued to serve schools across Brazil in this capacity. This position allowed him to be integrally involved in the evaluation of theological training at both seminaries and national universities.

The original vision of the seminary was to provide traditional face to face graduate education to prepare pastors for serving across Brazil, but they discovered that there was a need to train church leaders in other ways. One of the largest programs that they developed was for lay people who already had careers in other professions, but who realized that they needed more biblical and theological training to assist the pastors in their churches. These students were generally from near the city and they had typically attended the residential program during evenings and other times to improve their ability to lead well in the churches. They generally enrolled in one of four MA programs instead of the longer professional ministry training programs. They also developed a graduate modular program that Scott described as “...mostly

pastors coming from all over the country” to attend classes at the seminary four times a year for two weeks of intensive course work.

Due to Brazilian accreditation requirements implemented in 2016, theological schools were required to have an established and accredited residential program before they established a distance education program. Students were required to physically travel to the campus once a year to complete their exams. Despite these requirements, their online undergraduate student population grew rapidly over the past five years and it trained Portuguese speakers around the world. They enrolled students in Africa, Asia, and Europe, and many of these students lived in rural areas of their countries. They enrolled about 100 students in their traditional bachelor’s and master’s programs and over 800 in their various certificate, undergraduate, and graduate online programs.

## **Stan**

Stan is an American who started with an interest in using technology to train pastors when he was a missionary in Europe in the 1980s. As he was working with teens in Spain and saw their response to the typical religious training of that day, he realized, “The methodologies of the past aren’t going to work for this generation. This generation can only be reached through media.” Therefore, he was determined to develop new ways of providing religious training through technology.

After living in Peru for almost a decade, Stan was promoted in his organization to oversee the development of technology to train pastors for all of Latin America. In this role, Stan developed a variety of apps, and other technological tools to provide non-formal theological education in multiple languages throughout Latin America. While the original plan was to focus the technology on training illiterate people in the rural areas of Central and South America, their

organization quickly discovered that there was a need for similar non-formal theological training in many of the cities with individuals who were semi-literate and even those who were literate.

Throughout these years of evaluating the needs and preparing tools for training others, he utilized a wide variety of educational technology tools. Yet, he realized that the specific tool is not the ultimate answer. He explained that:

Being a media content person, I'm not really about the technology, because we've gone from tape to disc to RAM chips. Every five or 10 years, we go through a major shift, so the technology is just a tool. It's a means to the end.

Through all of these changes, Stan was committed to seeing the electronic tools that he utilized so they can be used to train others and he recognized that they will continue to change as technology and needs evolve. Due to the success that he achieved with his work with using apps for phones and tablets, he was recently promoted to being the global director for mobile technology for his agency. The lessons that he learned with his work throughout all of Latin America had now been leveraged to train rural pastors across the world. While his work originally focused on mostly illiterate rural church leaders, in recent years, he partnered together with seminaries as well. In this role, he helped them evaluate ways of utilizing more technology to train pastors in more formal settings. Furthermore, the work that he did to establish the foundational framework for training in various languages allowed him to train others across Latin America and around the world so they were able to develop training that served people groups who speak a variety of minority languages and who did not understand the majority language of their nations well. For many of these language groups, this was the first time that they have had any biblical or theological training materials in their first language, and for many, it's the first training of any sort in that language.



## **Paul**

Paul is from Venezuela and he attended college and graduate school in the United States. After completing his seminary training, he returned to Venezuela where he taught at a seminary and worked with an organization that trained pastors and started new churches in Venezuela and across Latin America. After 12 years of teaching, he left his full-time teaching position at the seminary to become the national director for his organization's religious work in Venezuela, and then eventually for all of Latin America.

During the late 1990s, Paul, national church leaders, and members of their organization from North and South America realized that there was a need to train pastors who could not come to the Bible colleges or seminaries that were established throughout Latin America. He explained:

One of the reasons why we launched [the online seminary] and this whole thing of distance learning and online education was because of the many leaders that just had no access. They were bi-vocational pastors. People that were very intelligent. They had their own bachelor's and master's degrees. Some of whom are physicians, attorneys, architects, engineers. They were also planting [starting] a church or pastoring in a church. So, they worked together with partners in Latin America, Europe, and North America to launch a fully online seminary that taught all courses in Spanish. The seminary's headquarters was established in Costa Rica and they have employed instructors and enrolled students from around the world to enhance their ability to effectively pastor churches.

In his role as rector or executive director of the seminary, Paul was able to develop partnerships with traditional seminaries across Latin America who utilized some of the online courses to augment the courses they offered in their traditional face-to-face settings. He also

worked to develop global accreditation for the seminary with both a global theological accreditation agency as well as with a seminary in South Africa which provided accreditation for the online programs throughout Africa, Europe, Latin America, and North America. They found that by training pastors at the graduate level that the students were then able to train other pastors in rural settings in the areas near where the online students were physically located. Their philosophy was that if they are able to train pastors to think deeply both philosophically and theologically in a graduate program that they will then be able to develop strong contextualized applications for a variety of church settings in their area.

### **Jeannette**

Jeannette is from the Philippines. She came to the United States to study and she earned a master's degree at two different seminaries, and then later earned a third master's and a Doctor of Theology at seminaries in the Philippines. She has worked in theological higher education for the majority of her adult life:

I have been involved in theological education for about 30 years now. For so many years, I was a professor at [a seminary in the] Philippines. I worked there...as a Christian Education professor, and then I did admin work. My last post was as President of the school. Then, I took on from retirement [at the] end of 2012. I was invited to come to Hong Kong after that.

The seminary she served at in the Philippines was a traditional seminary in the northern part of the country. While the primary focus of that seminary was on residential students, over the years, they developed some distance learning programs that took theological training out to some mid-sized towns where they equipped pastors from those communities and smaller surrounding villages. In her last few years at the seminary, they started utilizing more technology-based tools

to deliver content out to those teaching centers. However, even though the model of distance theological education was in practice for decades in the Philippines, they were never able to meet the needs of training all of the pastors in the mid-sized and large communities, let alone those in the rural areas.

After retiring from her work at the seminary, she moved to Hong Kong where she started training Filipino nationals who are in that country. This program was designed as a joint venture between her former school and a seminary in Hong Kong. This partnership was started over 15 years ago when Jeannette used her influence from the Philippines to help start this new seminary to work with Filipinos around Asia. This program was developed primarily to train women who are full-time domestic helpers, but who are also pastors and leaders in churches within China. A handful of pastors from other countries in Asia enrolled in the program, but they were a small minority. Since the focus was on training bi-vocational leaders, they had to be creative in setting up their training. Their students had been actively engaged in pastoring and leading their churches on Sunday mornings, and then they met at the seminary for four hours every Sunday evening for their training. This training was done in person by qualified Filipino professors. The course content was uploaded online so the students could work on the class throughout the week in order to be ready for their face-to-face studies on the weekend.

Due to the extreme limits on the time available for studies, it took students a long time to complete any of the training programs. Students were only able to take a maximum of eight courses a year, and many students were only able to take four due to their other responsibilities.

## **Brent**

Brent is also from the Philippines and he spent nearly fifteen years teaching in a traditional seminary near Manila in the center of the nation. He left the Philippines and earned

his master's degree in South Korea and then earned his PhD in the United States, but he returned home to be a professor in his own country. During those 15 years of teaching, he was involved primarily in traditional face-to-face formal education to prepare pastors in the larger cities of the country. While there are a number of seminaries in Manila, Brent explained that many students who attended the seminaries chose to not become pastors. Instead, they became chaplains "with the military and the police and other sectors of society." In these roles, the graduates provided spiritual guidance and support for the individuals in their organization as well as others with whom they interacted as in the role of chaplain, such as families who must be notified of a death of a family member, or to support members of the police department or military after a tragedy. Brent also stated that others have gone "...into some kind of NGO [Non-Governmental Organization] or other types of non-profits...." These graduates were able to take classes in leadership areas that allowed them to lead both Christian and non-sectarian organizations but where they did not provide traditional pastoral duties, such as preaching or serving sacraments. This means that even though the seminaries had been teaching students, they had not prepared nearly enough pastors to serve in the churches. Brent also explained that some denominations in Manila had done non-formal training within their churches, but had not required pastors to go through formal theological training.

He left the traditional seminary to start a theological school that focused on non-formal theological education that primarily trains women who are going into other countries in Asia and the Middle East as either English teachers in universities or as domestic helpers in homes of these countries. He partnered with other Filipinos who had the collective goal of training one million Filipinos who were serving as teachers, domestic helpers, medical personnel, and other positions across the globe. The goal of this school was to train religious leaders to be able to start

churches not only in China where the majority of Brent's students went, but also throughout, "...the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, and Abu Dhabi, and Dubai." The majority of the pastors they had trained were bi-vocational pastors who worked a traditional job during the day and then they started new churches, where they served as lay pastors outside of those hours. This model allowed those who teach in the universities and those doing domestic duties to start churches everywhere from the largest university towns to the most rural villages of the countries they were in.

Since many of these educators and domestic workers went to countries where their emails, social media, and phone calls were monitored, he designed his school to focus more on providing a solid Biblical foundation for his students that they would then be able to keep building on by only utilizing their own copy of the Bible instead of using other print or online theological tools like commentaries or systematic theology books.

### **Keith**

Keith grew up in a rural village in the central part of the Philippines. After graduating from high school, he felt called to become a pastor and left his village to go to Bible college. The closest one to him was over eight hours away by car and ferry, so he understood first-hand the struggles of obtaining theological education for people living in rural areas of a developing nation. After completing his bachelor's and master's degrees, he began teaching first as an adjunct and then as a full-time professor at the Bible college where he attended. Later, he completed his Doctorate of Ministry through a program that combined face-to-face classwork in the United States and in Thailand. After completing this phase of his education, he became the vice president of the college and the dean of the graduate theology school. While other churches and organizations offered theological training in this area of the country, Keith's school was the

only one that earned official accreditation from the Philippine government in the central part of the Philippines. Keith's Bible college and seminary continued to focus primarily on traditional face-to-face students. However, they also worked to develop some non-formal training for pastors from the rural areas of the country.

Even though English is a national language of the Philippines, the majority of pastors in rural areas did not know English and they could never study theology in English. Keith stated that they had, "translated [the pastoral training] to the dialect so you know it is accessible to everyone. Instead of just using English because none of them can understand English."

The Philippine government had different levels for academic accreditation, and only the largest state schools were permitted to offer fully online courses. So, Keith's school continued to investigate ways to train more pastors in smaller communities and even bi-vocational pastors in the larger cities. They also offered some non-credit informal pastoral training at the seminary to provide more training for pastors who did not have the educational background to be admitted to either the college or seminary.

## **Ron**

Ron is an American who invested about a decade teaching in a seminary in Slovakia. He also taught:

in Central and Eastern Europe with several institutions teaching as an adjunct, coming in and teaching something. I saw the pluses and the minuses of that kind of approach. As a foreigner, at times speaking through translation, those dynamics were always frustrating to me.

As he evaluated his own teaching experiences, he came to the conclusion that there had to be a better way to develop educational models that were sustainable without relying on professors

from the West coming to train pastors in developing nations. He worked with a number of others to evaluate the needs of formal Bible colleges and seminaries in developing nations, and together, they developed an organization that consulted with and assisted these institutions so that they were able to develop theological education that worked well in the individual settings in which these schools were located.

As they worked together with these schools, they discovered that much of the colonial mindset was still in place and it was easy to see where the Westerners who developed the schools came from. In fact, it was common to see entire pastoral training programs that looked like they were taken directly from a catalog of a Bible college or seminary in the West. Ron's teams went into these schools around the world and helped them evaluate the knowledge and skills that pastors needed in their particular context and then worked with them to help develop a curriculum that was customized for a particular country or region so that the courses that were being taught reflected a culturally relevant expression of biblical guidelines that pastors needed for being effective in leading their churches. Through this process in countries across the globe, they discovered that:

It opens the door for that handing the keys over, so to speak. This is yours, we want you to succeed. This isn't under our umbrella. You can run with it. God has put you there. We believe that you have the capacity to learn and grow and to make sense of things that we can't as outsiders. Just that relinquishing of authority and control and ownership is a huge statement that we want to come in and listen. We want them to be the drivers.

As a result, they found that the leadership in various theological schools felt honored and empowered as they were able to develop programs that they believed would work much better

than the ones that were originally just imported from the West with the belief that they would automatically work in other cultures just because they worked in the West.

## **Brandon**

Brandon was from Ghana, West Africa. He was involved for over thirty-five years training pastors throughout West Africa. The organization that he started focused on using audio for Biblical understanding and training of pastors. For instance, they made recordings of the Bible that people could listen to, and he started radio stations that cover most of Ghana and had also reached into neighboring countries. These stations provided a balance of theological, agricultural, health, and educational training, music, and other programs that help rural villages with community development.

As they received feedback from people in these villages, they learned that while the theological training that they were offering on the radio was good, the majority of pastors still did not have any specific or systematic training on how to be effective pastors to the people in their villages. He met with some educators in the United States, where the idea was raised to utilize some specific pastoral training that a college had used in various ways for decades on their radio stations in the West. After much work, a plan was developed to take the content from the American college, the content was translated and it was made culturally relevant for pastors in rural villages in Ghana. Combining technology that had been developed for other educational disciplines such as agriculture and health fields, the content was placed on solar powered MP3 players that had both the Bible and four college level pastoral training courses on them. The MP3 players were designed with controls on them that allowed pastors to easily move between various sections without needing to read anything. In order to make sure that the pastors who were involved in this training program had done their studies, Brandon's organization sent out quizzes



on the students' cell phones every ten days and the students responded to multiple choice and true/false questions by pressing the numbers on their phones. This allowed pastors with limited formal education to get a theological training orally.

When Brandon originally planned this program, he hoped for 200 pastors to sign up for the courses. However, they had so many sign up that they allowed 281 to participate in the initial pilot program. Of those, a nearly unheard of 280 pastors completed the program. These pastors earned a certificate jointly presented by the college in the United States and Brandon's organization. During the second year, another 250 pastors started those first four courses, and 150 pastors from the first group moved on to take a second year of four additional courses. As a result of this success, Brandon stated that:

We now have people from several other language groups in our country, and people from outside Ghana who are asking for us to translate the training into their languages so that those who live in remote areas can get the same kinds of training that these initial pastors have received.

This was a major educational breakthrough since pastors who could not read and who may not have had easy access to an audio version of the Bible had been forced to travel miles to another village just to hear someone read a passage of the Scriptures for them and then they would return to their village to preach a message at their church.

### **Doug and Gale**

Doug and Gale had been married for over thirty years and for twenty-five of those years, they worked at training pastors and church leaders in the country of South Africa. The missions organization that they worked with had originally planned on establishing three regional training centers that would function as traditional, residential Bible colleges to provide training for

pastors and church leaders within a particular denomination in South Africa. Doug stated, “One of the things that we knew that we needed to do was to do Bible training, because..., many [of the pastors] are not biblically trained.” While this denomination was started by Western missionaries in the early 1900’s, there had not been an emphasis on providing training. Doug also explained that, “They [pastors] have verses that they might know and the [Bible] stories that they know, but they were just storytellers.” In conjunction with leaders of the denomination, Doug and Gale’s mission organization opened a Bible school in 1995 in South Africa. However, as they continued to evaluate where the greatest needs were for pastoral education in and around South Africa, they soon discovered that the largest need was not for additional formal Bible colleges or seminaries, but for non-formal training to meet the needs of the masses of unprepared pastors. This training was developed with the specific needs of rural pastors in mind and was delivered through a partnership between the mission agency and the African denomination. Due to the growing need of training all of these pastors in rural areas, as of 2017, they had over 65 regional training centers across four countries.

The training program lasts for four years, and students must attend classes one weekend each month. While the program was not accredited, students received a certificate upon completion of the program. They translated their biblical, theological, and practical training into six different languages that are used throughout the southern parts of Africa. The ability to offer the courses in various languages was very beneficial to the training of pastors. Doug stated, “Even with university students that come to our schools, where people that graduated [from English speaking programs], they still pick Zulu as the lesson that they'll take and not English.”

Initially, the instructors in this program were all Western missionaries who taught through the use of translators. However, as of 2017, about 35 of the 50 instructors were African

pastors. Since the numbers of Africans teaching the courses had increased, they were able to make sure that the course content was all culturally relevant to different areas. Furthermore, with the additional instructors in a variety of locations, they were able to make the training more accessible to pastors in these rural areas who are bi-vocational. Yet, they continued to turn groups of pastors away who requested another center be established in their area, because they still had not been able to recruit enough trained instructors.

### **Frank**

Frank is an American who planned to move to Kenya soon after completing his doctorate, in order to teach at a traditional seminary with an African man who was a classmate in Frank's PhD program. This friend of his planned to start two different seminaries and was looking for Americans to join him. Frank wanted to teach college for a couple years in the United States prior to moving to Africa, so that he could hone his teaching skills. However, during those two years of teaching in the US, his friend in Nairobi tragically drowned and the dream of teaching in Africa died with him. As a result, Frank ended up teaching at an American Bible college for over 35 years. During this time, Frank continued to make connections with others and prepared for the day that he would be able to teach in Africa. As of 2018, he taught at a traditional Bible College in Rwanda for five years. Unlike other Bible colleges that were started by Westerners, this school was started by and continues to be operated by Rwandans.

However, soon after arriving, he realized that while they had a great formal program at the college, "...90% of Rwandan pastors could never come to our College. They can't leave for very long because they're subsistence farmers and pastoring on the side and don't have the money anyway." While the official Bible school trained about 100 pastors at a time, it was not able to meet the needs of the growing church, and with the majority of pastors not being able to

attend the college, they needed to develop more avenues to train pastors. A further complication to providing pastoral education had been that most of the pastors in rural areas had a limited educational background.

### **Marlin**

Marlin is an American who taught at a traditional seminary in Nigeria, West Africa for over 25 years. During his time at the seminary, he got involved with national, continental, and global accreditation agencies. He was primarily involved in a global accreditation organization that works with Bible colleges and seminaries. He eventually began working with a group who focused on assisting about 130 seminaries in developing nations. They worked through a network of regional directors across Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa and provided coaching to help seminaries “become more effective in their context.” From his work with these seminaries across the world, he was able to identify some schools in Latin America, South Africa, and the Middle East who experimented with distance education in order to train pastors who were unable to attend seminary in the large cities within particular countries.

One of the areas that changed in the past few years was the type of the content found in online courses offered by seminaries. There was a time when the leaders at these schools might have decided to work with a seminary in the West to utilize some kind of online education that was designed as a “one-size-fits-all,” which was then translated into the language of instruction. However, Marlin stated that schools realized:

...there may be some advantages for using that for a time, and there may be ways to contextualize it, modify it, add, subtract, substitute, but all of them recognized that that in the end that's not ideal. And the more effective theological education is going to be more

fit for the context...and so a lot of them [are beginning] to develop materials for themselves.

Similarly, Marlin saw a move towards more authors writing pastoral training books from the contexts of developing nations. This allowed seminaries, “to address those issues in language, in stories, illustrations, whatever that are peculiar to that context” instead of relying on books written from a strictly Western perspective.

### **Stephen**

Stephen is a pastor and educator who was originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, due to the civil war in 1996, Stephen and his family had to leave the country in order to stay safe. He was able to move to Kenya and did an informal leadership training with his denomination. He later completed two master’s degrees and started teaching in the denomination’s Bible college, as well as serving as an overseer for several countries in East Africa. In that process, he became involved in the primary accreditation agency that accredits seminaries in Africa, ultimately becoming the executive director of that agency.

While he was working on a PhD in South Africa, there was a change in the government and increased violence towards foreign nationals. During that time, he was attacked for being an immigrant. He moved to the United States and worked with the United Nation’s High Commission for Refugees to gain permanent residency in the United States for him and his family. He hoped to be able to complete his PhD through a seminary while living in the United States, because returning to South Africa did not seem likely at this point.

He believed that the Western missionaries brought their version of seminary to Africa to prepare pastors to be serve in a very Western model, which did not prepare them at all when they returned to their village, because the training had very little in common with the Western

education they received. As Western organizations reduced their financial support for their seminaries in Africa, the African nationals inherited campuses and extensive programs that they were unable to sustain without the funding they once received. Therefore, more cost effective methods of equipping pastors needed to be explored and implemented. With the growth of the Church in Africa, Stephen believed that the original concept that focused solely on training ordained full-time ministers was no longer a realistic option. Instead, there was a need to train lay ministers and those who will probably be bi-vocational pastors throughout their ministry. These church leaders were not able for multiple reasons to attend the seminaries and so change needed to happen. However, many of the faculty, even African faculty, at these seminaries were very resistant to this major change in how theological education had been done for well over one hundred years.

### **Findings**

After interviewing these participants and reviewing their comments about their experiences with theological education in developing nations, each one had a specific recommendation that they believed was important for improving pastoral training in developing nations (see Table 3). In addition, several key findings emerged. Some of these findings will be covered in depth in Chapter 5 as part of answering the research questions of this study instead of in this section. Yet, several other themes were prominently discussed by the participants, and those will be addressed in this section. These findings include answers to the needs of pastoral training at different academic levels, barriers to providing the training in developing nations, the need for schools and organizations to develop new and stronger partnerships, and some current models of pastoral training that had involved low technological engagement.

Table 3

*Primary Contribution to Ministerial Training and Recommendations from Participants*

Educator	Training Pastors	Primary Contribution	Recommendation
Scott	Brazil & Portuguese Speaking	Started traditional seminary; now doing distance options	Partner with other denominations in order to train more pastors
Stan	Latin America	Developed training apps in pastors' first language	Use technology to improve training in minority languages
Paul	Costa Rica & Spanish Speaking	Started fully online seminary	Share resources with other seminaries
Jeannette	Philippines & Hong Kong	Trained lay pastors in partnership between two seminaries	Offer both certificate and degree options to meet the needs of students
Brent	Philippines & China	Trained lay pastors to start churches in China	Keep training simple for those working in dangerous countries
Keith	Philippines	Transitioned his seminary to hybrid training options	Seminaries should offer non-degree options for bi-vocational pastors
Ron	Global	Consults with seminaries around the world	Empower administrators and professors to
Brandon	Ghana & West Africa	Pioneered MP3 & phone training for oral learners	Need to develop sustainable models within Africa to increase access to pastoral training for oral learners
Doug	South Africa & Near Countries	Pastoral training increased to new languages and denominations	Make sure to provide pastoral training in the pastors' first language
Gale	South Africa & Near Countries	Realized the need to train pastors outside of formal options	Offer training for any pastor who comes, even if they are illiterate
Frank	Rwanda	Taught at Bible college, but also ran rural program	Many pastors will never attend formal training, so offer alternatives
Marlin	Global	Helped seminaries be successful in their setting	Make sure seminaries are culturally relevant, not Western driven
Stephen	Africa	Accrediting agency director	Accredited seminaries need to offer non-formal pastoral training

## **Different Levels of Pastoral Training**

In the process of starting this study, it was unclear what options were most needed for training pastors in rural areas of developing nations. Throughout the interaction with the study participants from around the world, it became clear that there were at least two different levels of training that were used to prepare pastors for ministry, and each level demonstrated some variations depending on the location and on the organization providing the training.

Traditionally, the standard for graduate theological education in the West had been the 90 credit hour Master of Divinity degree which provided a balance of biblical, theological, and practical ministry training to prepare pastors to work in churches. This degree plus the 120 credit hour Master of Theology and various 30 to 60 credit hour Master of Arts degrees were also made available at formal educational institutions around the world. Many Bible colleges in developing nations also offered a variety of bachelor's degrees and diplomas. These undergraduate institutions also provided a balance of training for pastors, but not at the depth of a graduate program. The second area is that of non-formal or certificate level training. This training occurred in many different forms and was taught at a wide variety of academic levels with varying degrees of structure from formal programs to informal seminars. The participants in this study addressed both of these levels of training and they explained the ways that each was used to train clergy in their areas.

**Formal training.** The seminary that Paul started in Costa Rica only offered courses at the graduate level. Many of their students had already earned graduate degrees in other fields, but as they became more engaged in pastoring churches as bi-vocational pastors, they believed that they should study to be prepared to lead their church or churches well. As Paul shared about the impetus to start a fully online seminary, he relayed the challenge of two doctors that were



also pastoring churches and overseeing other pastors who wanted his mission organization to start new residential colleges in their areas:

Really, it was two conversations, one in Mexico, one in the Dominican Republic. One a medical doctor in Mexico, and the one a psychologist in the DR. They both said, "We think that your mission can really help us. We can't leave our countries. We're not going to study in another language. Could you just set up a Bible Institute for our pastors?" We said, "No, we can't do that. It's just too much work, but what we can do is come up with something that will make it accessible to you and someday we'll have it ready."

After Paul developed the online seminary, professionals like those who approached him out of a bi-vocational setting were able to take the courses when it was convenient for them and still be able to practice medicine, law, or some other profession in about 25 countries around the world. Another issue that Paul saw in Latin America was that formal theological education was difficult to access for pastors:

Most seminaries in Latin America are in the capital cities or in the large cities. Very few things in secondary cities, the smaller cities over 100,000, [or] 200,000. They do exist but they're probably denominational. They're not accessible. Anyways, that was a concern of ours and out of that then came the vision for [their online seminary] and how to make it accessible at the master's level, and we started intentionally at that level.

The lack of accessibility made it very difficult for someone who has had a high paying professional job to leave their city and relocate to the capital in order to get their theological training and then to return and resume their job after they finished seminary. However, even with the convenience that allows Spanish speakers to obtain a master's degree from anywhere in the world, the enrollments were not large. Paul stated that in 2017:

We've got 56 enrolled in the master's program right now. It makes [the seminary], if not the largest grad program in the evangelical schools of Latin America, it's one of the top three in terms of size. There are very few seminaries in Latin America that have 56 grad students.

Due to the small number of student enrollments in all of the seminary programs across Latin America, they were not able to meet the need of providing trained pastors with graduate degrees for the growing number of churches across Central and South America. In order to try and train more pastors, they had recently started offering graduate level certificate programs to provide at least some options for clergy who were willing to complete a shorter course of study that could be transferred to a degree program at a later date.

Historically, it was difficult for Bible colleges and seminaries to find qualified national professors to teach in their schools. This was a complicated process as professors from the West retired or moved to different roles in their mission organizations. As a result, there was a shortage of professors in many schools. Even with the ability to recruit online professors from anywhere, Paul stated, "It's not easy to find somebody with that degree [PhD in Bible or theology] that can teach in Spanish that has a passion for online education." In Latin America, there were a few programs that offer doctorates in Bible and theology areas, but many times those teaching in the seminaries had to get their doctorate in a closely related secular area that they could apply to ministerial preparation. For instance, Scott stated:

...we have two of our professors who had PhD in History, that was History and they are theologians, so they did some history from a religious perspective or are using some kind of an interaction between theology or religion in history.

Only about half of the faculty in Scott's seminary were able to earn their doctorates in Brazil. Therefore, many of the faculty had to learn English well enough to be able to complete a PhD in the United States and then return to teach at the seminary. Even for very determined academics who had a desire to teach at the graduate level, it had proven to be quite difficult to study abroad. Scott explained:

The other main problem is the language. It's all offered in English and we're not that fluent or proficient in English. Most of the pastors, too. Because [it is] one thing is to have a chat in English or read, but [to] follow a full course and do and write.... This is a problem. You cannot find easily Brazilians who are fluent in English at that point to follow a program and finish it because of the requirement. Even TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] would be pretty hard to pass.

Scott's seminary offered both undergraduate and graduate programs, and they recently started offering the Doctor of Ministry degree. They had about one hundred residential students enrolled in their undergraduate and graduate programs. They also developed a growing online program for their undergrad students. In contrast to Paul's school which is fully online, Scott's also utilized a different form of distance learning which allowed pastors from all over Brazil to fly in for two week intensive modular courses four times a year. Of course, this was more expensive, but most of their students came from one of the large population centers where finances were less of an issue.

Marlin's organization did some studies on graduate level seminaries in developing nations, and he reported that as of 2017, things were in the process of changing:

You know twenty years ago you could count the number of institutions that were offering doctoral level programs on one hand, and now there are well over two dozen of those

programs. So students do not need to go to the West, and there are opportunities in their own regions for the highest level of theological training and so that's what's happening is we're seeing an amazing growth of those programs especially at the doctoral level. And fewer and fewer are coming to the West for that level of training.

While the majority of these schools that Marlin referenced were located in Asia and Africa, improvements had also been made in other parts of the globe. Because the students that Jeannette taught worked full-time and led a church, they had to move through their programs quite slowly. For those who desired to be an ordained pastor, Jeannette explained that her school, "...[has] had bachelor of theology graduates and a few students are working on Master of Divinity." However, in order to complete the 90-hour Master of Divinity degree prior to ordination, it took students about a decade to finish all of the course work. This is in contrast to the three years that it would normally take to complete in a traditional residential seminary.

Throughout the developing world, there has been an ongoing struggle to have enough trained pastors. This shortage has existed for several reasons. One reason has been the common ebb and flow of pastors retiring, leaving the ministry, or moving from one area to another. Another reason has been due to the growth of existing churches who needed to add additional pastoral staff to their congregation. A third reason has been because more churches are being started that need new pastors. Previously, the traditional seminaries were at least marginally keeping up with the needs from the first two reasons, but the rapid growth of new churches has resulted in a large gap between the need and the supply of trained pastors (Eguizabal, 2013; Mugambi, 2013; Naidoo, 2017). Stan explained what this training gap looked like across Latin America:

There tends to be, in the major cities, one or two of those seminaries-- I should say in the satellite major cities, one or two of those seminaries and they're running at full capacity training 20 kids, 25 or 30 graduates every two years. They're graduating seven, eight, nine kids a year. So, it's completely inadequate for the real need. And the church continues to grow, there's new churches being planted [started] all the time.

Brandon echoed this same idea for the schools across Africa:

The Bible schools and seminaries are not training enough pastors for churches in the cities, and there is very little being done by those trained in the cities to help train those in the rural areas of our country. Since schools have not been able to train enough pastors to meet the needs of the current churches, let alone the growing number of churches, there needs to be additional options evaluated to train additional pastors outside of the traditional formats.

When Jeannette was asked whether the Bible colleges and seminaries were training enough pastors in the Philippines as compared to the need for distance learning models, she laughed, and replied:

There's never enough leaders in the churches, but we have been, I can use the word successful in that venture in the sense that we were able to reach a lot of the leaders in the local churches. When you have to uproot a person from the family, from the job, and bring the person to a resident program, there is a big difference between letting the person just do the regular income generating job and being with the family and being in the church, being able to serve at the [church].

**Non-formal.** The area that received the most focus from the study's participants was that of the non-formal or certificate level. Due to factors such as the high cost of formal training in a

traditional Bible school or seminary, low literacy rates, rapid growth of churches in rural villages, and more, the largest need that participants raised was to develop ways to train pastors outside of the historic models that were in place since the colonial days. They echoed Naidoo's (2013) concerns that it had been impossible for all of the various formal methods of pastoral training to ever meet the needs of the rapidly growing Church in developing nations.

Keith's seminary in the Philippines started a Theological Education by Extension program much like those that Tan (2017) described. This allowed them to send a professor from the school out to rural areas on other islands in the country. While these rural pastors did not receive a full pastoral training program through this model, Keith explained what training he provided and some of the hurdles that prevented the students from attending the seminary:

So when they [rural pastors] invite us we provide a faculty to meet with these pastors where they are. So we do some training in the area of hermeneutics, preaching, and some of those issues they are dealing with. And many of these pastors have not finished college. They're probably in their high school and some in elementary, but they're not able to finish high school or elementary and so that's our way also of helping them outside the classroom setting. ...it's translated to the dialect so you know it is accessible to everyone, instead of just using English because none of them can understand English.

Keith stated that with this model, they went out to different islands and villages in the central and southern parts of the country in order to provide basic pastoral training. With their limited educational background these pastors could not be admitted into a Bible college or seminary, but they still wanted to receive training on how to be an effective pastor. Jeannette's seminary in the Philippines also utilized Theological Education by Extension over the years in much the same way that Keith's had. She explained the importance of this format because, "The students will

not have to go far, and [be] uprooted from their jobs, from their families.” They used a number of local churches across their area of the Philippines and have expanded these centers to about a dozen official locations in the Philippines and around a dozen international locations as well. She also explained that the seminary in Hong Kong developed some specific certificate programs for training lay pastors. They offered them with various foci that help pastors get the training that they need for a particular element of pastoral ministry. These included a “certificate in church music, a certificate in Christian leadership, and a diploma in Christian leadership.”

Gale stated that their organization realized that the general masses of pastors across the southern part of Africa had no training, but they also had little or no formal education of any kind. That made it impossible for many of these pastors to attend formal Bible colleges because they had not achieved the academic background necessary to get admitted into a formal degree program. Therefore, their training program did not have any prerequisite educational requirement. Students only had to be a leader in their church who desired to learn how to be a better pastor. Another advantage of providing their training at a certificate level was that they had translated the training into multiple languages that most pastors could understand, instead of using English which a formal accredited school would require.

Frank encountered a similar situation in Rwanda where he estimated that in the last group of pastors that he trained, “...most of the rural pastors of this group of 40, probably 35 have a third-grade education.” The genocide in 1994 disrupted the educational journey for the vast majority of the population and as a result, most people never completed school. So, Frank worked with several Rwandans to develop a certificate level pastoral training. Frank explained about the level of the training:

So again, at the certificate level, there's no accreditation for that. They're happy it's happening, but they don't even look at it. So we use the standards of our college, and then raise the standards quite a bit because these students, when they finish the certificate, they got nowhere to go. There's nothing else. There's nobody that will take them. So we kind of lift it as high as we can since it's going to do the only education they can have. On the other hand, it has to be accessible to them. ...so we require only that, in Kinyarwanda the local language, that they can read and write. And then away we go.

Throughout West Africa, Brandon had seen similar patterns where the vast majority of pastors in rural areas had no training of any kind. Since they came from an oral culture with few people being literate, they had to design pastoral training that would meet the needs of pastors who would not be able to attend Bible school in the capital or another large regional city. He stated, "it is somewhat rare for people to be able to have the ability to leave their village to come to a city where they can study the Bible and theology in English." Since studying pastoral training in a third or fourth language was difficult for even the best trained pastors, providing training in a certificate model, in their first languages made the most sense.

Even though he served as the continental director of seminary accreditation across Africa, Stephen advocated that formal accredited schools needed to increase the options for non-traditional pastoral training. He said:

During my time in [the accreditation agency], we've been proponents of the whole idea of distance education, which is now informal education. The reason for me to support that and-- We ended up even changing the [accreditation agency] standards for accreditation by including distance education and other forms of non-formal education, nonresidential education.... My personal position, I'm in of supporting non-residential program. Was



because it's cost-effective. People can learn in those programs while they are doing other things, while they're working at the same time and taking care of their families since we don't have, again, full scholarship that can be given like they were being given during the time of the missionaries. Also, it has an advantage in my own understanding, that it allows a person to remain within his community. He can receive the courses if he studies well and he's well-disciplined and apply them in the community.

Brent had a different perspective on the informal training than the other participants reported. While he worked primarily with women who already had a bachelor's and/or a master's degree, he believed that his pastoral training program functioned better by providing them with non-formal training that they could use as they traveled to other Asian or Middle Eastern countries to teach English or work in medical professions. He developed his own training that specifically targets ways for these people to utilize their primary profession as an entry point into another country. They started churches wherever they were located in these countries as a function of being a lay minister instead of an ordained clergy. His focus was to prepare these women to lead a scaled back version of church that could meet in the homes of the lay pastors instead of larger, more formal churches that most pastors and congregations are used to. This method worked well since the vast majority of his students served in countries where it could be dangerous if the government discovered they were pastoring a church.

### **Barriers to Theological Education in Developing Nations**

In much of the literature review in Chapter 2, authors raised concerns about the barriers that existed to provide pastoral training to ministers in developing nations. Therefore, it was not a surprise that the participants in the interviews expressed their concerns about topics such as sustainability, the impact of literacy on the level of possible training, pastors leaving rural areas

and not returning to their villages after being trained, the impact of governmental changes, and technological difficulties on multiple levels. Their thoughts cover a variety of concerns about these issues which make pastoral training difficult in remote areas of developing nations. These issues provide a foundation to specific answers to the research questions about barriers which will be answered in Chapter 5.

**Sustainability.** Each participant in the study expressed concerns about the barriers of sustainability for training pastors. The concerns covered all continents and all educational levels of pastoral training. This was reflected in concerns about the cost of tuition, the cost of travel in country or out of country, the loss of wages for pastors who leave home for training, the costs for professors to go to rural areas to teach, and on and on the concerns went.

Paul discussed the high costs for students to be able to leave their homes in order to attend a residential seminary campus. As a result, it was hard for schools to remain open because the expenses prevented students from attending. He stated, "...if you want to expect droves of students to enroll, it's not going to happen because of the cost." Brandon also explained, "It costs so much money for people to attend a traditional seminary, that it becomes hard for pastors and churches to afford that, even when it is subsidized by those in the West." Stephen explained that the transition from Western funding to African funding of theological schools has been difficult:

Many mission agencies have left Africa. Many schools that were created or established by missionaries have been handed over to national leadership. The biggest challenge is the flow of funding that was coming from the West to Africa is no longer available. Some national leaders have inherited situations that are very, very difficult, where there were big infrastructures and investments that were made but which they're unable to manage

because they didn't have the means or they were not prepared on how to make the transition.

So, while a school might have had a beautiful campus and a history of excellent pastoral training for over a century, the national leaders could not raise the funds within their country and could not charge students enough to cover the expenses to operate the schools. Stephen echoed the concerns that Bellon (2017) addressed about the way that those in the West set up training systems that could not be sustained in the long-term without an ongoing significant investment by people in the West.

One of the key goals of Ron's organization was to help schools develop plans to become more sustainable. During his years of working with various seminaries around the world, he has seen a large reduction of funding coming from Europe and North America. This resulted in the closure of a number of seminaries due to their inability to survive without these funds. Ron's team worked to help schools address sustainability issues by pooling resources in a variety of ways, from developing open education resources that reduced the need to purchase text books, to sharing information technology resources, to sharing instructional design functions for curriculum development. They discovered that if they could assist with some of the infrastructure pieces, that money was freed up for other parts of training pastors.

As Nkounge (2013) described, Keith's seminary in the Philippines incurred significant expenses for the professors that it sent out to train rural pastors. There was a large cost for transportation and training materials that the seminary had to cover, as well as the professors' salaries. Even though the trainings were held out in various regions, the pastors from small villages must still be able to pay their transportation and food expenses in addition to paying something for the training materials. This model was hard to sustain. Even though the college did

not charge students much for the training, it was still difficult for some rural pastors. Keith explained:

So the TEE program is not really that expensive except that for some of these pastors, because they are very poor, so it might be expensive for them to travel from their place to the meeting place. So sometimes the location is not where everyone can just go there because it's not accessible to everybody. So sometimes if you hold it on one particular island, and many of these pastors come from different islands ...the cost, the boat fare and the bus fare is probably higher for some because they are coming from a remote place in the province.

The issue of the expenses for the training was further complicated by the fact that most of the rural pastors were bi-vocational, and it was difficult for them to leave their job for a weekend of training.

Frank's seminary struggled with the concepts of sustainability since they initially started with full scholarships for students to attend their Bible college or seminary programs. However, despite being able to afford it at one point, they were no longer able to provide that full support for their students. So, even though they still provided about a 90% scholarship, students, especially from the smaller towns, could not afford the 10% that they are required to pay. Recent changes in accreditation standards in Rwanda caused more distress in the sustainability area.

Frank explained:

African accreditation requires that you reach a standard where half of your funds come from Africa. So one of the standards that we will now have to meet is going from almost nothing to fifty percent coming from own continent.

As a result of this change, they were forced to reduce their scholarships even more due to the need to decrease their reliance on the West for financial support. This was part of the impetus that drove them to develop a more sustainable model of taking the training out to the villages. In this new model, professors from the college went to a location chosen by the group of pastors and then taught six modules of five days each, spread out over a year. The college was able to keep the costs low because the host location provided a place for pastors to lay mats down to sleep at night, each church sent food with their pastor for the week, and the college paid the expenses for the professor. Unlike the training in the Philippines which often required pastors to travel to training by bus and ferry between islands, most of the pastors in Rwanda were able to ride a bicycle to the training, and that kept the costs very low for the pastors and for the churches.

While Doug had serious concerns about sustainability in the past, his organization saw some improvement as they turned more of the training over to African pastors and teachers in various regions who have been paid by churches in Africa. This resulted in less dependency on money from the West. A number of the missionaries with their organization continued to raise their financial support in the West, which covered the overhead of administering the training schools as well as their own salaries. Still, Doug was encouraged that they made progress in developing a more sustainable model.

**Literacy rates and language difficulties.** One of the aspects in training pastors in rural areas I had not anticipated was the high level of illiteracy for rural clergy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. While many countries around the world have at least one of their official national languages that includes English, French, and/or Spanish, many of those who live in rural areas did not have skills in that official trade language. Rather, they interacted in most facets of their

lives in a tribal language that might be particular to their village or region, or it might be a language that was used across multiple countries. However, the participants also explained that the majority of rural church leaders that they worked with had limited abilities to read or write even in their tribal language.

It was this realization that drove Brandon to start recording the written Scriptures into audio forms that people in remote areas could understand. He realized that although the Bible had been translated and printed into many of the tribal languages, “The majority of the copies of the Bible sit on shelves because people do not read well and most of the rural areas are made up of people who are primarily oral learners.” Over time, his organization recorded Bible translations in over 300 languages for various tribes throughout the African continent so that people who cannot read were able to at least listen to the Bible in their primary language.

Stan initially started working for his mission agency by assisting with the technological aspects of translating media into the first languages of minority people groups. It was in this process that he realized that throughout Latin America that “...once you get five to ten miles outside of any city, your literacy rate drops to anywhere from 50% of the population to maybe 5% of the population...” As he got to know pastors who were unable to read and write, but were trying to lead a church, he began to develop a large passion for finding ways to provide pastoral training via audio and video tools. Even for those pastors who were literate in their first language, it was extremely rare for there to be books, such as theology texts or biblical study tools available in that tribal language, So, they were functionally illiterate in a language that would allow them to prepare to become a pastor.

For the rural pastors that Frank trained in Rwanda, he required that they were able to at least read and write in the local language of Kinyarwanda. He provided seven theology books in

Kinyarwanda that the rural pastors used as part of their training and that they were able to keep after the training. Yet, with most of the pastors had a maximum of a third-grade education, they still struggled to understand books that are written at a much higher reading level. Doug explained that many of the pastors in the rural villages of South Africa were illiterate, and by offering a non-formal education, they could allow all pastors to come and study without needing to be able to read text books or write assignments. Doug said, “We offer a solid Bible training, but we don't require them to take tests or to write papers, but they have homework from each lesson.” Gale clarified this by explaining the needs of the students:

We don't have any educational requirements to come, other than you're a leader in your church.... We also have students that are illiterate and they come, they sit in the classes, they get the notes and then in order to do the homework they have someone at home read it to them and write it down for them.

**Leaving the rural area for pastoral training.** Beaty (2014) and Byaruhanga (2013) identified that there has been a large propensity for pastors who left their home in a developing nation to study in the West, never to return home. The participants in this study affirmed that and even expanded that concern to include pastors who left their village and went to a large city within their own country.

Frank reported on two different particular situations that demonstrate the problem with key pastors not returning to Africa:

So yeah they'd go to one of those places [seminaries in Nairobi, Kenya], or if they're able to the US or to the UK and obviously I mean just about everybody is aware of the fact that when someone goes to one of those two places there's a good chance they're not coming back. So you just, you end up having brain drain where your best people leave

and don't come back. One man that I knew, just a brilliant African theologian, his church sent about 15 top students to the US for training and he said three of them returned. So about all that happened was you took your best people and you gave them away, hoping they were going to come back, and they didn't. Then I got a call from a school in Austin [asking me to be a reference for a student]...and they said, "do you think that he, if he comes, will go back?" And I said I think so, but as you know, nobody knows how America is going to affect the person. And they said they had ten Africans come to the program only one had returned, and that was not the purpose. So that's a huge problem!

Paul reported a similar situation where a dozen students from the seminary where he taught in Venezuela went to the United States for graduate programs, and only two returned. Stan reported that he had known a few pastors who left rural areas in Latin America to go to the United States for education who returned to their country, but none of them returned to their villages. Due to their higher level of education and their experience in the West, they wanted to live at that same level of comfort as they did during their studies abroad.

One of the issues that was raised by the study participants is that even when a pastor from the rural areas was able to qualify academically to attend a Bible school in a major metropolitan area of their country, and somehow had been able to afford it, they rarely returned to their village. Stan explained that in Latin America, "There's tons of need in those cities and there's tons of churches looking for pastors there." Therefore, those who have gone to the city for training, have usually stayed there. The churches in the city generally paid enough so a pastor did not have to work another job and be bi-vocational. The ability to focus totally on being a pastor was very appealing. Brandon explained what he had seen throughout West Africa:



While it is somewhat rare for people to be able to have the ability to leave their village to come to a city where they can study the Bible and theology in English, the majority of those who do come to the city do not want to return home. They get used to having electricity, running water, easy shopping and the other conveniences of the city, and returning home to their village without any of those things is really hard.

While he did not fault pastors for not returning to their rural homes, he realized that the process of training pastors in the cities contributed to removing the best and brightest pastors from the rural communities.

Stephen framed some of this change in a slightly different manner by saying that many across Africa who left a remote village to study in the city began to think of themselves as moving up in the socioeconomic world. The fact that they were able to escape their village to study in an urban area, reinforced achievement of that urban status. He heard a variety of arguments against going back to the village that include things like pastors' children would not be able to thrive back in the village; their family was used to speaking English after several years in the big city and they did not want to go back to their tribal language; their family adjusted to a very different standard of living; and the reasons continued to grow. Stephen was troubled at the brain drain that occurred as key pastors left and did not return to their villages. This also challenged him as the director of the African accreditation body, to encourage seminaries to take training out to the rural villages, and make sure that pastors in these areas had training accessible to them.

**Impact of wars and governmental changes on theological education.** Although it may be difficult for Western pastors to relate to, educators in several of the developing nations discussed the barriers that various wars have had on the ability to train pastors. Stephen

described how the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo cut off pastors like himself from their denominational leaders and caused pastors and those who were training pastors to flee the country due to safety concerns for their lives. Years later, Stephen was forced to leave South Africa after there were changes in the government and violent attacks on immigrants. As of 2017, he worked to lead pastoral training networks in Africa while living in exile as a refugee. Living in the United States greatly complicated his ability to provide quality theological training for those in his denomination, and for the schools that he oversaw.

Frank explained that in Rwanda the genocide disrupted the entire educational system and as a result, most people only had about a third-grade level of formal education. It was not due to their inability to learn, but rather the crisis of the war that made people focus on survival and not on education. One of the other impacts of the changing government in Rwanda was the official languages were changed. When Rwanda was under the colonial rule of Belgium and in the decades after independence, French was the language that education and government were conducted in until 2008, when it was changed to English. Because few Rwandans understood English well, and most higher education was taught in English, it was quite difficult for pastors living in rural areas to study in a different language. Ron also talked about problems in another war-torn country:

There were actually missionaries that were using helicopters to kind of fly in and out of some pretty war torn areas and provide training for emerging pastors in those places. In Liberia...there was a school. There were several schools there that had experienced some of the tragedies in the civil war.

Countries in Africa were not the only ones where wars and political change disrupted theological education. Ron also relayed how a particular seminary in Ukraine was taken over by

the Russians when they invaded a few years ago. Everything from buildings to academic records to an extensive library was destroyed during the invasion, and the seminary no longer had any of the infrastructure to operate as a school for training pastors. As a result, they had to investigate their options for starting all over in a different format that could function in a non-traditional educational institution without all of the elements that they lost. Likewise, Ron worked with a school in Moldova that is developing a method to train pastors in parts of Croatia and other countries where the government had outlawed pastoral training.

**Technological issues in pastoral training in developing nations.** A variety of concerns were raised about the use of technology in developing nations. Some related to the use of various devices, some to the security of technology, some to the accessibility of technology, some to the lack of training on how to use various devices, and some to infrastructure within the country.

One of the areas that each of the participants agreed on was the fact that in most rural areas of the world, there was sufficient cell phone coverage to be able to utilize phones or tablets with cellular capabilities. Brandon reported that they found very few areas in West Africa where pastors are unable to get a signal, and thus had to walk a mile or two to get to a place where they can interact with the content on their phones. Scott said that villages throughout Brazil, except for some of the deeper areas of the Amazon River area, had good coverage. Doug stated, “Every African has a cellphone. I might be exaggerating, but that’s the way it feels.” Stephen shared the story of his wife’s grandmother who lived in one of the most remote areas of the Congo over 10 years ago, and even in her late 90s, she had a cell phone and was able to use it in her rural village. So, cellular access was not a major limiting factor for equipping pastors in the vast majority of the world, but it does take creative work to determine how best to utilize it in the training process.

Even though cell phones had become accessible in developing nations, there continued to be some complications with using cell phones for pastoral training. For instance, Ron expressed some concerns because the, “Cell phone is a tricky educational device, just because of the screen size. If you're doing any reading, it becomes problematic.” As a result, he stated that, “Primarily what we see thus far is that most of what is being done is being done either on computer or tablet.”

Another issue that impacted the use of cellphones in pastoral training was the costs for the phones and the data packages. While Jeannette’s students in Hong Kong were able to obtain data packages rather easily and cheaply, the students that Gale worked with in South Africa and those that Brandon engaged in West Africa, had a harder time affording the data that they would need to do extensive studying on their phones.

Since Brent’s students were prepared to train other pastors in limited access countries, he expressed concerns about the security of the information that was loaded onto phones or the ways that they might have used their email or social media accounts. So, while the technology was available for them to use their phones in rural areas of the countries where they are working, he has encouraged them to limit their use in order to stay safe. Marlin and Ron also identified similar concerns for students who lived in countries where they were required to utilize secure connections to remain safe. While Marlin saw more pastors enrolled in online training programs in places like in Cuba, China, and countries in the Middle East and former Soviet Union, there was concern about the risk in which pastors placed themselves, since several governments continued to try and gain access to even the most secure virtual private networks.

Many of the participants expressed concerns about the digital divide between what is available in the larger towns and cities of their countries where the Internet was generally fast

and reliable. For instance, Jeannette stated that the Internet in the major Filipino cities and in Hong Kong is “ultra-rich and ultra-modern,” but there were limitations to Internet speeds and options for Internet providers in the rural areas of the Philippines. The students that she teaches in Hong Kong had access to both cell phones and computers:

...most of our students use their iPhones or their cellphones to see the materials. When you have many pages to read, it makes it more difficult to read from a mobile phone so they have to use a laptop or a desktop. But you see, the students that we have here in Hong Kong, many are working in homes. We use the term domestic helpers. They are household helpers and so they have also to face some limitations like, they can only use a computer after work hours maybe late in the evening or early in the morning but they have their mobile phones with them, practically the whole day with Internet access.

Keith stated that due to the much slower Internet speeds in the more remote areas of the Philippines, “...texting [is] no problem at all but you know doing Skype like this is going to be terrible.” However, on the campus of the seminary in a larger town, they had great Internet speeds and utilized a lot of technology in their teaching and learning. Students were able to use laptops, tablets and cellphones for most aspects of their learning. He was even able to Skype with students in other metropolitan areas for independent study courses.

This was echoed by Scott, Brandon, and Stephen who discussed how pastors in the cities were able to take fully online courses due to the more reliable and faster Internet speeds.

Brandon stated, “In the cities, they are able to do online classes on their laptops whether from schools in Ghana or in other parts of the continent or world.” While electricity and the Internet were less reliable in Rwanda than many other countries, Frank knew people in Kigali who took online courses, but it was frustrating at times, because the Internet may cut out in the middle of

working on an assignment. However, the Internet was unreliable or even unavailable in the majority of the rural areas, so students from villages were not able to participate in online training programs that were dependent on accessing content from the Internet.

Another aspect of the digital divide was the ability for rural pastors, who were often bivocational and struggled to take care of basic necessities, to be able to afford more advanced technology. In contrast, most of Scott's students in Brazil came to the seminary with laptops and tablets in addition to their phones when they attended class. This was because the majority of their students came from the large population areas and had more available money to invest in technology. Likewise, the seminary students that Keith worked with had more access to technology. He stated:

In our school, we use technology a lot as it is available, and we have a decent Internet connection. So we have seen students especially in the graduate level they are bringing their laptops with them in class. So they're using it and a number of them they have Bible software on their laptops and they're using their cell phones there are Bible apps there, free apps, and they probably bought it from Amazon some of those apps. And so, yeah, students are basically using technology in their research, in writing papers, and preparing sermons, things like those. And so from us, also as teachers, we have been using these tools in our teaching as well as preaching. So, this is available in our context.

Frank and Stephen recognized the expensiveness of using laptops in rural areas. They investigated the use of less expensive tablets like Amazon Kindles that can be preloaded with content. Pastors were also able to download additional resources when they traveled to a larger city where they were able to access the Internet. Frank stated that he had been "pushing for tablets" and he believed that this kind of tool would be something that people would be willing

to purchase for pastoral students. He believes that both those from the West, and people inside Africa would see tablets as a relatively inexpensive investment that could give rural pastors access to many more resources than were currently available.

Even though computers were used more in the cities for training pastors, Stephen worked with several seminaries across Africa who struggled with the expenses necessary to implement technology. He stated:

The biggest problem is the cost. That's what I wanted to mention. One of the challenges also with many seminaries is also the cost, the cost of equipment and putting the works support system, electronic support system available. It will cost money. It will require a continual upgrade in terms of this equipment because a computer laptop you have used after two or three years, you can really start feeling like it's out of date. Those constant challenge are not easy.

However, at the same time Stephen believed that the seminaries should move beyond experimenting with using tools such as cell phones and tablets and even laptops only for formal education in the cities. He saw an opportunity for these tools to be utilized in their non-formal distance education settings. His belief was that pastoral training could be significantly improved if seminaries would develop more training options for rural pastors which could be delivered through various technological methods. For instance, he stated:

People spend hours and hours and hours on Facebook in Africa, in villages in Africa. Why can't we change that and in turn, have some kind of online programs or whatever that are available where people can go and access and read some courses?

However, the denominations and seminaries were slow to take advantage of similar technology to train pastors. He thought that the next venue for training pastors in rural villages should incorporate some kind of training delivered via phones, because:

People are getting to learn these things, even those who did not go to school. It's possible to have some recorded message, some kind of orality.... Even if they don't read it, they can hear it and they can follow the teaching on it. For me, in the rural villages, when it's some kind of training is that way too, because cell phones have gone places where we never thought. A telephone will arrive. Because it doesn't need cables and it's easy accessible.

Despite Stephen's belief that technology could and should be utilized more in the rural areas, other participants avoided utilizing available technology when training pastors in remote parts of their countries. For instance, most of the participants mentioned that Bible colleges and seminaries in their areas utilized PowerPoint, online videos, and some have even used Skype to bring in students or guest instructors from another part of the country or the world to participate in a more traditional class. However, when they went to rural areas to train, Doug said they tried not to use PowerPoint, because the cost of computers and projectors was not something that rural African pastors and churches could afford to purchase in their settings. Therefore, Doug's organization was careful to not set the technological expectations at a point where the national leaders could not successfully meet them. Frank and Keith expressed the concern that while they were sometimes able to provide their rural training in churches that did have electricity where a computer and projector could be used, they had often ended up in places where there was no electricity, so the dependence on educational technology was not always reliable.



Since a large percentage of rural pastors were illiterate, they had not learned how to type on a computer or read assignments that might be presented on a monitor. Even for rural pastors who learned to read and write, they generally had not been familiar with how the technology works and so it required more training to help them understand how to use the technology in their learning process. Gale noticed this even with those who were in leadership roles within their organization. With the rapid change of technological tools and the difference in how systems work, leaders often got confused and decided that they did not want to utilize computer technology in the training. As Bogart (2017) and Etzel (2015) noted in their research, Stephen also saw this hesitancy to use technological tools among professors and administrators in colleges and seminaries. He related a situation in one of the Bible colleges where he worked in South Africa:

But you could sense resistance because people are not used to it. One of the resistance was it required all the professors to, within a year, every course that they want to teach to have it put on an electronic format and make it available to the committee and to review it in such a way that it will be an easy to read course that can be sent to anyone. That was a challenge for the professors to be able to finalize that work and provide it to the institution.

Marlin also explained how he heard that people discussed the need to provide more pastoral training via educational technology; however, he was quick to state that seminaries were generally technologically far behind other professional educational programs that train their practitioners in other fields.

In response to concerns about the digital divide, Stan recently worked with a newer technology that allowed people to take a small computer box, powered by a battery and charged

by solar power, on which a variety of training materials could be placed. Then, this information was taken out to the furthest remote villages and pastors download the training to their phone using Wi-Fi or Bluetooth technology. Another version of the hardware was developed so that it had the capability to copy the training onto SD cards or flash drives that were put into phones, tablets, or computers and used over and over again. This allowed for the information to be rapidly transferred to clergy throughout an entire area as they had the ability to share the training materials through multiple channels.

### **Increasing Need to Partner Together to Train Pastors**

Stephen explained that when the Western missionaries came to Africa, that they were largely concerned with starting institutions that would train pastors like they were trained in the West. Each organization came and set up their own college or seminary where everything was set up with courses, faculty, and buildings that mirrored the schools in the West. When churches and organizations in the West were underwriting the majority of the costs of the schools, everything worked well. However, now that many of those organizations have left Africa, it was nearly impossible for national leadership to maintain the schools in the same way they were run for over 100 years. The reduction in external funding resulted in the need for schools across Africa to re-evaluate whether they could work independently or if there was a need for them to partner more.

Other participants echoed this new willingness to allow and even to embrace partnering together to train clergy instead of being committed to training only people of a particular people group or a particular denomination. Brandon's original plan was to train a certain group of pastors within a particular language group and within a particular denomination. However, as the word spread that their training program was being very successful and that pastors were

receiving the training in an oral manner, they had several other mission agencies and African denominations who approached them about doing the training in both the current language as well as in other language groups both inside and out of Ghana.

The organization that Doug and Gale served with originally started their training for pastors in one particular denomination in South Africa in one language. However, that changed as the word spread. Doug explained:

We've opened the door that we didn't exclu-- we never excluded, but we always target the Zionists and that's what we tell people, but they continue to come. They're coming from all the other AIC [African Independent Churches] churches and also some of the big denominations [like] Apostolic Faith Mission send a lot of their pastors to us.

This required that they also translate the materials into several other languages and work with people who could do the training in those other languages. They discussed how this was a major shift for denominations that historically had not worked well together, but due to the common desire to have their rural pastors trained, they became excited to collaborate. In fact, they were often asked:

"Can't you come and start one in our area?" We would tell them, "Well, if you get all the leadership together in that area, we'll come up and talk to them and see what happens." It just exploded that way and we constantly get requests to start new schools.

Frank's school realized that they were not meeting the needs of training pastors by waiting for them to come into the seminary, so they purposefully started building relationships with various denominations, bishops, and groups of churches to see if they would be interested in the training they could bring to the rural pastors. Frank was skeptical as they started to discuss training partnership with others. He explained:

Because we weren't sure when we sat down with two denominations, we expected them to say we can't do that, we can't come up with the food, we can't come up with the housing, and our answer was gonna be, well then our program is not helpful to you. But they didn't. We sat down with them and they said you're going to bring free education if we do these things? And we said you get those things setup; you invite us; it's free. You will not pay a cent for it, but you have to set the whole structure, and their response almost immediately was we can do that, and we want this really bad. So at this point we probably have a hundred or hundred and fifty waiting in line with no advertising.

With the support and encouragement of the denominations and bishops, the completion rates were higher than anybody ever thought would happen in their culture. Frank explained:

...the norm in Rwanda is if you start with forty, you're gonna be happy to end with twenty or twenty-five... But so our Africans are amazed because so far we got 38 out of 40 who had made it through four modules and I think one of the other two it's because of sickness.

In a country that had a large number of denominations started by various evangelists or bishops from different theological persuasions, the partnerships that were established to train pastors across traditional boundaries was exciting for Frank and his school.

In more formal settings, Scott reported the same thing for his seminary. Their seminary in Brazil was founded by Presbyterians, but they now had a large number of students coming to the seminary from various Pentecostal, Adventist, Baptist, and independent churches. These groups realized that Scott's seminary was providing high quality graduate training, and they were not able to fund their own schools, so by cooperating, pastors from multiple Christian backgrounds were able to get trained. Similarly, Paul's seminary started working with other seminaries across

Latin America to share resources with online courses so that students at other seminaries could take advantage of classes that were already developed. By sharing these courses, many more students were able to participate in online classes, and as the schools started working together, they saw the value of their students interacting with others from different theological and cultural backgrounds as part of their pastoral training.

Keith saw this changing pattern of increasing denominational cooperation in the training of pastors in the Philippines as well. Although there were still a number of Bible colleges in his area that were operated by Nazarenes, Presbyterians, Christian and Missionary Alliance, a few Baptist groups, and others, they all sent their leaders who desired graduate level pastoral training to the seminary operated by what was originally the Swedish Baptist denomination. By refocusing on working together to train pastors instead of remaining focused on minor points of doctrine, this partnership gave the seminary the critical mass of students needed to keep the seminary open. As a result, each denomination benefitted by having graduate level training available for their pastors.

Jeannette's school in the Philippines developed a partnership with a school in Hong Kong that primarily served women from the Philippines who worked in China and were being trained to be pastors while they were there. This partnership included everything from sharing professors to sharing course offerings and collaboration on certificates and diplomas through all levels of training. She explained that some of this partnership was driven by the fact that many of the missionaries from the West retired, and the Southern Baptists had very few Western missionaries still involved in the seminaries. This meant that the Filipino leadership needed to make adjustments in how they staffed their programs, and how they worked with other schools both across Asia and in other countries on other continents.

As Ron's organization partnered with faculty and administration around the world, they began to collect a large repository of open educational resources that had the ability to be adapted in various cultures. This allowed educators from around the world to design and share particular course curriculum with other schools who had then been able to modify those resources to work best in their own particular setting. This allowed schools in both urban and rural settings to obtain educational resources for free, which helped them to be more sustainable. Furthermore, since they partnered with schools in many different countries, these resources were developed and shared in multiple languages and from multiple settings. This allowed educators in other countries to find materials that were written in their preferred language and were compiled by others who live in settings more closely linked to their own than just using materials from the West that were translated into a different language. These resources were stored in an Internet cloud system that allowed both educators and students to access them from cell phones, tablets, or laptops in any area of the world where they had access to the World Wide Web.

Another way that Ron's team developed partnerships in developing nations was by helping faculty and administrators improve in their skills. He stated:

...we also are working in two professional development areas. Not only curriculum development, but faculty professional development. What kinds of ideas can we expose educators to so that they become more effective teachers, that they understand their own identity and integrity as a teacher? And how I can maximize my strengths and minimize my weaknesses as I am encouraging learning at whatever format that takes?

He further explained the categories of the training opportunities that they utilized in their partnerships with seminaries:

...[we] provide training for their leaders so every year we provide training in the areas of curriculum development, of governance, of fundraising, of sustainability issues, of innovation in education, and then periodically would have workshops in the region and we would invite their faculty for workshops on pedagogy for instance. ...and sometimes they would ask us for help in a particular area you know. Distance education [would] be a good example there. They're [a particular seminary in Kenya] actually probably doing more in distance education there than probably any other school in East Africa. So, so we might even go to them and say, "You know we'd like to get three or four schools together who understood learning on this." They've done some very innovative work on mobile devices, and so we get people together and say, "You would like to learn together this area, and because of your experience maybe you could help lead this kind of training."

Due to the complicated nature of the required infrastructure needed for schools to utilize a learning management system in their courses, several different partnerships started to help schools with these needs. For example, Paul's school was part of a consortium that had about two dozen schools who all used the same Sakai platform for their courses. Ron's organization had, "...a common learning management system [Moodle] that we have been able to have someone design for us that allows the smaller schools to participate without having to pay for the entire system themselves." They also worked with groups like More than a Mile Deep and Third Millennium who developed open education resources that Bible colleges, seminaries, and denominations can use to train their students in biblical, theological, and practical skills to be an effective pastor. In addition to working on technological partnerships, Marlin and Ron each worked for organizations that focused on developing partnerships between seminaries in developing nations that allowed collaboration on various elements of the educational process.

They found that by bringing seminary leaders together for workshops on topics like accreditation, distance learning, online learning, pedagogy, funding and sustainability issues, etc... that each of the seminaries got better. Because both of these organizations worked with seminaries across the globe, they were also able to develop networks and partnerships between schools on different continents who experienced similar needs or successes which allowed schools around the world to continually improve.

### **Current Low Tech Models to Provide Ministerial Training in Remote Locations**

While the focus of this study was primarily designed to investigate the use of various educational technology tools to effectively train pastors, several participants explained models they had used without the integration of much technology. Since this was addressed by several members of the study, it deserved investigation.

Whether they utilized the term Theological or Seminary Education by Extension or just referred to it as their own program, there were some similar methods that were utilized to take pastoral training to people in rural villages. Jeannette and Keith both discussed how their seminaries established outreach programs that took training from the larger cities in the Philippines to locations on other islands or even other parts of the world. They each served in leadership positions in their schools that specifically worked on distance education models to meet the needs of the rural pastors. Jeannette's school has, "...the students gather in the local churches or in some centers, and the teacher is the one who goes there." The majority of the teaching in these settings was done in a traditional face-to-face setting with a lecture format and no technological tools like PowerPoint or videos. Keith's experiences with his school's extension program were very similar, but a few of the professors from his seminary took a laptop and



projector with them to show some PowerPoint slides as part of the training, but that is not something that every instructor did.

Brent also trained pastors and trainers of pastors in the Philippines, but he used a different model. Students come to his school where he prepared them to start churches and to train pastors in more restrictive countries in Asia. Since the students had limited access to technology once they leave the Philippines, he provided training in very traditional methods. His students focused on reading books, listening to lectures, engaging in dialogue with the instructors and other students, and practice teaching English, but they did not use much technology throughout this process.

In South Africa, Doug and Gale also did their training out in the rural villages primarily through traditional teaching methods. Of their teaching team of about fifty instructors, only a couple used PowerPoint in their teaching. The majority have taught via lectures and printed handouts that the pastors can take home with them. In Rwanda, Frank utilized a variety of teaching methods as he provided the training for pastors:

And we know the rural pastors are not used to school and it's really hard for them. So we just try to do a variety of things: small groups, we will read books in the Bible aloud in small groups, and have them respond on two key verses that meant something to them; and praying; we'll have discussion groups; so we'll have a variety of things to help them make it through the day.

He also explained how he incorporated teaching and learning that relied on acting out parts of the Bible and even drawing key elements of the Biblical story with great success, because it connected with their preferred learning styles. Although he included textbooks that his students

got to keep, they did not use any computer-based programs at this point to augment their teaching.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The members of this study have been engaged in training pastors across five continents and have each been engaged in training pastors in at least one developing nation. The majority of the participants have trained pastors in multiple countries and have experience in training in different settings. Combined, they have nearly 400 years of experience in preparing ministers to serve congregations around the world. From their perspectives, there is an incredible need to train more pastors in order to meet the needs of the Church in developing nations.

They stated that while the traditional Bible colleges and seminaries have struggled to train enough pastors for just the churches in the cities, the need for training pastors in the rural areas has continued to be a major crisis due to the limited training options that have been accessible to them. Part of the struggle has involved the changing relationships between churches and organizations in the West who have reduced their funding to formal schools which has left schools in developing nations in a quandary of not being able to sustain the level of training that occurred when they had substantial income from the West.

However, at the same time several of this study's participants expressed hope that through a new interest in developing global partnerships among schools in developing nations that there could be a significant improvement on pastoral training that would be more culturally relevant than the curriculum that had often times been directly imported from Bible colleges or seminaries in the West. They also reported being encouraged by the number of schools in developing nations who have started advanced graduate degrees, which could reduce the number

of pastors who felt the need to travel to the West for training, with the probability that many of them would not return to their countries.

While those interviewed raised concerns with various barriers that they have seen in training pastors, they also described several methods that they believed could help reach more pastors. In particular, they expressed ways that technology could provide training to pastors living in the remotest villages of the globe. also addressed various technological

This chapter focused on the qualifications and experiences of the study's participants, and it demonstrated their expertise in training pastors in multiple settings around the world. It also provided insight into key findings from what they shared in their interviews. Chapter 5 will build upon the information learned from the participants and will utilize that to address the specific research questions that this study set out to investigate.

## CHAPTER V: ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### **Introduction**

Chapter Five will review the information that has been gathered in the interviews with the study's participants and will utilize that data to address answers to the study's research questions. These responses will set the stage for Chapter 6 which will address conclusions drawn from the research and make suggestions for further study.

### **Research Question 1: What Is the Current Landscape of Global Ministerial Training in Developing Nations?**

One of the exciting elements of this study was being able to interact with participants from around the world who acknowledged the fact that there were major struggles with theological education, but who also gave a realistic picture of how training pastors in developing nations has indeed worked. This section gives an overview of what the participants identified as the current status of training clergy in developing nations. In particular, it will look at how while many of the methods for training pastors in developing nations have not changed over the years, some educators have experimented with and have implanted innovative methods which have made a difference in how pastors were trained through their school or organization.

### **Methods for Training Pastors Have Changed for Some Educators**

When the missionaries brought theological training to the various colonies around the world, there was no way for them to anticipate the changes that would take place in the ensuing decades and even centuries. The models of pastoral training that they imported were based on what had worked well in Western nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Higgs, 2015). However, as Stephen explained, the models relied on making nationals not only qualified pastors, but also

that they would look and act like Western Christians. Thankfully, the participants in this study identified ways in which that perspective has changed.

Stephen shared how the accreditation agency he served on began to challenge traditional residential seminaries to evaluate how they could train pastors in ways other than just the way they had always done it through face-to-face lectures in a brick and mortar campus. While Ron and Marlin expressed that many of the changes they saw were related to sustainability issues, they also believed that there was a genuine interest in many seminaries to go back to the foundations of what pastors needed in order to be prepared to minister without a dependence on how the Westerners had originally established their schools. Kaunda (2015) and Naidoo (2013, 2017) also advocated that schools needed to develop a more African driven method of training pastors than the ones that had been inherited from Western organizations. Jeannette, Keith, Frank, Scott, Doug, and Gale also described the changes in their organizations since national leadership had taken over more leadership of pastoral training. This was exhibited in Scott's and Frank's schools which were started by nationals, and not Westerners. Jeannette and Keith discussed how the leadership of their seminaries had changed as more and more Western missionaries had retired and were replaced with national leaders. Doug and Gale explained how their school grew when they used additional national instructors to train the pastors and allowed them to take leadership for training in various areas of their region. This change from Western dominance to Western partnership and even having Westerners like Frank serving national leadership, is evidence that the concerns that Higgs (2015) and Mugambi (2013) raised about the hegemonic past of theological education in developing nations exists.

Another major change that occurred was the introduction of more distance education models. Carey (2012) and Winter and Jeynes (2012) discussed how Theological Education by

Extension was used in various locations in Asia and Latin America. That model as well as several others were identified by a number of this study's participants as methods they used effectively as they trained additional pastors. More information about non-formal training options was covered in the findings in Chapter 4, but its increased usage warrants being mentioned again here. Likewise, in the current landscape of theological education, more technology has been used across the spectrum, from the use of Skype as Keith discussed in the blended teaching he did or as complicated as complete online theological programs that Scott and Paul offered. Despite the resistance among theological educators that Bogart (2017), Cloete (2015), and Etzel (2015) identified, there has indeed been a significant shift on the part of some educators in how they viewed integrating technology and theological training.

### **Fresh Thinking Was Required to Discover Solutions**

As I began this research, I was frustrated with the picture that was painted of the current landscape of theological education. Authors (Coleman, 2014; Higgs, 2015; Naidoo, 2012, 2013) described the dire situation that existed for pastoral training in developing nations. The preponderance of the literature focused primarily on what was not working and why it was not working. However, the participants in this study proved that it was indeed possible to provide pastoral training in developing nations, if educators were willing to be creative in their approach. I saw this across all of the continents and across the levels of training that the interviewees were engaged in. For example, Paul started an accredited fully online seminary in Latin America where it had never been done. The school trained hundreds of pastors in developing nations around the world, so more congregations have highly trained ministers. Brent realized that there was a need in Asia for pastors to be equipped to start churches in China. He developed a non-traditional school that trained Filipinos who started churches as part of their bi-vocational work

in China. Brandon realized that the majority of pastors in the rural areas of Ghana could not read and had no training. He developed a method that gave these pastors training in an audio format that allowed them to be equipped. These were just a few examples of how those who thought “outside the box” provided training for clergy who traditionally would have been excluded from accessing that education. This fresh thinking has begun to change the picture of theological education in developing nations, and the potential appears to be limitless for those who are willing to be innovators in developing methods that will work.

**Research Question 2: How is Technology Currently Being Utilized for Ministerial Preparation in Remote Locations?**

Throughout the process of interviewing the participants in the study, it became clear that there are a wide variety of technological tools being utilized in training clergy in developing nations. Yet, there were also wide differences between various countries on different continents as well as differences between organizations working in these areas, and those differences have impacted the ways in which the technology is utilized. Table 4 lists the study’s participants and the technological tools that they utilize as they train pastors in their primary areas.

Table 4

*Educational Technology Utilized by Participants*

Name	Area	Tools Used
Scott	Latin America	Online undergraduate and graduate courses
Stan	Latin America	Cell phones, phone and tablet apps, BibleBox, LightStream, computers, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth distribution, audiovisual presentations, video projectors
Paul	Latin America	Online graduate courses
Jeannette	Asia	Computers and video projectors, tablets, cellphones, video conferencing, cloud based content
Brent	Asia	Limited cellphone use
Keith	Asia	Computers and video projectors, tablets, cellphones, video conferencing
Ron	Europe	Computers and video projectors, tablets, cellphones, video conferencing, cloud based content, online courses at all levels, learning management systems
Brandon	Africa	Computers, cellphones, solar powered MP3 players, radio
Doug	Africa	Cellphones, limited computer and video projectors, radio
Gale	Africa	Cellphones, limited computer and video projectors, radio
Frank	Africa	Cellphones, tablets, limited computer and video projectors
Marlin	Africa	Computers and video projectors, tablets, cellphones, video conferencing, cloud based content, online courses at all levels, learning management systems
Stephen	Africa	Cellphones, tablets, computers, online courses, video conferencing, video projectors



## **Radio**

While providing pastoral training to rural students via the radio has been used in Western countries like the United States since the 1920s (Vincent, 2011), it appears to be a tool that has only recently begun to be used in some developing countries for training pastors. Christensen, Allen, and Tjasink (2016) described how one organization was utilizing radio programs in Eastern Africa to train farmers; however, none of the rest of the literature mentioned how this technology was being utilized in religious training settings. Therefore, this is one of the reasons that I have been interested in evaluating how pastoral training could be enhanced by methodologies practiced in other fields. Brandon's organization has combined both religious training and training in other fields with their radio stations. He stated:

...we started three radio stations which cover the majority of Ghana and parts of surrounding countries. We do a variety of Bible teaching, training, and Christian music on these stations. We also broadcast different programs to help rural communities with health and agricultural issues in order to help with community development as well as with theological education.

Part of the content that is broadcast on these stations has included training for pastors in rural areas of the countries. This training has been produced in six languages so that people can listen in at various times to hear the training in their primary language. Likewise, Doug and Gale's organization recently partnered with another mission agency in Swaziland to put their pastoral training on the radio. Doug explained:

We've got [our school's] teaching going out in Swaziland now. In Kwazulu Natal [part of South Africa], Paul is the missionary in charge of this. He's been targeting the local radio. He's trying to get it on the major Zulu speaking radio, which pretty much most of

the country is on. Because it's national radio stuff, it's not just local. We're using our teachers...and then they are teaching [our school's] lessons as part of this half hour radio program that's geared towards these [pastors we are training] as well as anybody else who's listening to the radio.

### **Computers and Video Projectors**

Some of the study's participants who have taught pastors in rural areas have utilized computers and projectors to display different content to varying degrees. In the Philippines, instructors from Keith's and Jeannette's seminaries often took a laptop and projector out to small churches in rural areas when they have provided Theological Education by Extension for pastors who come into the rural town from the remote areas where they were pastoring. Jeannette also stated that in some of the rural locations, "We can use PowerPoint or we can access the web or videos or special materials from the web right there in the classroom." This is consistent with what Balasubramanian, Thamizoli, Umar, and Kanwar (2010) identified about the ability that illiterate learners have to learn from various multimedia tools. While their research was agriculturally based, the rural pastors that Keith has been training have many similar characteristics with the farmers that Balasubramanian et al. were training.

However, Frank has not taken such equipment with him because most of the rural churches in Rwanda do not have electricity, so he utilized different teaching methods to work with their rural students. While a few of the Western instructors in Doug and Gale's organization utilize PowerPoint in their training, the majority did not due to the cost of purchasing the equipment.

## **Tablets**

With the introduction of tablets into educational settings, some of the participants have experimented with using them. As they have investigated the use of tablets in training pastors, different participants have tried different uses for the tablets in their settings. Frank stated:

I have been pushing for tablets.... You can keep using them. ...I'm thinking the tablet would allow us to do that [put the textbook content on the tablet] and add a whole bunch of things from the Internet that's free.

Since his students must be able to read and write, this tool would allow them to interact with more content than others in different contexts that are illiterate. Stephen has also encouraged seminaries across Africa to investigate ways that they could utilize Amazon Kindles to provide training resources to students in rural areas. He reported that there has been a move towards some seminaries working on ways to load content on more expensive tablets like Apple iPads that allowed students to watch video content and have expanded options for the kinds of training that they can access. For instance, pastoral students could download free videos from an organization like Third Millennium which would give them additional theological training in one of the majority languages of the world. So, while there may not be a lot of content in their tribal or regional language at this point, they could still increase their ability to learn via this particular technological tool.

## **Cellphones**

Bible colleges, seminaries, and various organizations have started to use cellphones in multiple ways to provide training for pastors. The participants in the study shared many different ways that range from incidental to very purposeful and from low involvement to higher involvement by those providing the training. This has greatly expanded since Shubert and

Shubert (2012) initially mentioned that a seminary in Kenya had started to experiment with using cellphones in pastoral training.

Doug and Gale discussed how over the past two to three years that they now have a number of students in their classes recording the training on their phones. In previous years, Doug stated that they would have to ask students in their classes for permission to photograph them. However, it has since become common for many students to record the classes on their phones without asking permission. Then, when they returned home, they shared the content with others who did not attend the class. While they have not done any work themselves to record and distribute the training, they have seen this grass roots approach expand the numbers of pastors who are receiving the training through a friend who shares the video from their phone. They have also experienced more of their pastoral leaders texting one another about lesson plans or sharing questions and resources from the trainings in which they are engaged.

Marlin, Stan, Stephen, and Brandon each talked about the ways that they have seen pastors use their phones for various recordings that are available to them. This included things like the audio Bible translations that Brandon's organization has done, or something more detailed like videos produced by Third Millennium that offered free biblical and theological training that rural pastors could download on their phones when they were in a larger city where they had good Wi-Fi connections. According to Stan, discussions about how they could get digital content into the hands of pastors in rural areas took place for years. Once smartphones became popular, they realized that they did not have to reinvent something, it now already existed and was easily accessible for people. He further explained that in research that his organization did across Latin America that most people:

...were not buying the phones for a phone or for cellphone coverage, their number one use was listening to music, watching videos, playing games, phone was fourth-- actually, and texting when they were in texting range, but phone and texting were fourth and fifth.

Stan also explained how they have seen that once audio and video content has been developed in minority languages:

and put into a menu, a touchscreen menu, that then people can listen to those teachings.

Since in oral culture, repetition is really the key, so if they can have it on their phone and listen to it over and over; it sticks better.

Patel and Patel (2013) reported that they had seen similar usage of smartphones used to train farmers in the most remote villages in India, and that in that training farmers in those minority languages were able to learn via the content on their phones. Gaikwad and Randhir (2016) also stated that the utilization of audio and video content on phones for illiterate farmers has allowed them to learn, as long as the information is made accessible to them.

Participants from every continent discussed how pastors in remote areas they serve have used apps as they have prepared for being pastors. Keith stated that many of his literate students have used a variety of Bible apps that have allowed them to read and study the Bible from their phones. They have utilized the information from the apps on their phones as they did research in their classes as well as for the sermons they wrote to preach in church.

Stephen, Paul, Marlin, Ron, and Frank each referenced a program that International Leadership University in Nairobi, Kenya had developed where they put seminary lectures and content on micro-SD cards that were then put into cellphones which allowed students to access all aspects of the special courses that were developed specifically to train pastors who were unable to come to the seminary. However, as of 2017, these courses were only available in either

French or English. Even so, the program has grown rapidly. They believe that this model, while very new was something that will continue to increase in popularity.

### **Portable Broadcast Tools**

Brandon and Stan were innovators who worked with different educational tools than would be recognized by most people. Brandon developed a special MP3 player that contained an audio Bible and between four and eight bachelor's level courses delivered in the first language spoken by a large percentage of pastors in rural Ghana. This MP3 player was developed to be solar powered so that it was not dependent on electricity to recharge it. The content was loaded onto the player by Brandon's team and there were buttons on the player that allowed the pastors to easily move between the uploaded content. Then, the pastors who participated in this training program received a call on their cellphone every ten days with questions that the pastors were able to answer by pushing various numbers on the phone keypad. This information was recorded through a special program at Brandon's headquarters which allowed them to know how pastors were progressing through the courses. This training concept was similar to those that others in the literature discussed as potential ways to train illiterate farmers in their first language (Balasubramanian et al., 2010; Patel et al., 2012 Gaikwad and Randhir, 2016) as well as the concerns that Morris (2017) raised about the importance of training pastors in their first language instead of putting all of the training into a major language of the country.

Stan has worked with two different tools. One called the Biblebox and one called LightStream. Both of these were portable systems that could be charged by solar power and taken anywhere. They both offered the ability to load a large amount of training materials such as videos, audio, and any media that could be saved in a digital format. Then, they were able to disseminate this information via a Wi-Fi or Bluetooth transmission to any phone, tablet, or laptop

that had wireless capabilities. Stan stated that these tools had been utilized effectively by several different organizations across the world that train pastors. While the BibleBox is relatively cheap to build, Stan explained that the LightStream is:

...a lot more expensive than building your own Bible Box, but what they've also got incorporated into it is the ability to plug in a MicroSD card and have it automatically load all the content that is on the LightStream onto that chip. It does one other thing too; MicroSD and it's a Bluetooth hotspot as well.

Stan also explained that this ability to take pastoral training content in a portable manner opened up the ability to take this information to the remotest villages that are only accessible by missionary airplanes or helicopters. After this information was loaded onto phones, that data could be passed along to people who were not present when the content was originally being shared. Ron's organization has been experimenting with similar technology in Moldova and Croatia to take their training to pastors in more restricted areas.

### **Video Conferencing**

Keith and Jeannette each discussed how they utilized a guest speaker or even an adjunct professor from a different part of the Philippines, Asia, or even the world as part of their Theological Education by Extension courses. Jeannette stated that they used, "...the professors from other countries, experts in certain fields and they do Skype sessions." Since these classes were generally held in slightly larger towns still in rural areas, they usually had Internet capabilities that allowed for video conferencing through a program like Skype or FaceTime. This allowed pastors, who came to a more traditional training session to have access to a broader pool of instructors than just the ones who could physically attend their classes in person. Christensen, et al. (2016) stated that they were able to see improvement in the training of farmers when the

farmers could interact with the farming experts and could get specific questions answered via text messages based on what they had heard on the radio. In a similar way, the video interaction between pastors and those participating via video conferencing assists the pastors in getting not only the training that they desired, but it also allows them to ask specific questions about the ministries they have been leading, which leads to deeper understanding and application of the content.

### **Cloud-based Content**

Ron has worked with various schools that put more of their training materials into a cloud based system so that they would be available for people wherever they live. He stated that by offering such content to pastors around the world, more of them could be trained as they were able to access the content whenever they were in an area that had a strong enough Internet signal to access the content. Their technical team carefully developed these materials with pastors in developing nations in mind. As part of their design, they made sure that the content was accessible by multiple computer and mobile devices so that the majority of people around the world could utilize the training materials. Marlin worked with Seminario Bíblico de Colombia Fundación Universitaria in Medellin, Colombia that developed a digital repository of books and other theological resources in Spanish that is freely available for pastors to utilize wherever they live around the world. The various resources can be viewed on the Internet and many can also be downloaded as PDFs or even multimedia presentations. Patel and Patel (2013) utilized cloud based resources to train farmers in India, and they determined that by having those resources available in such a way that the farmers could access them by phones or computers, that it would greatly expand the ability of those in rural areas to get the training that they need. Likewise, training materials that have been delivered via cloud based systems for medical training have



proven to help health care workers in rural areas (Albrechtsen et al., 2017; Liyanagunawardena & Williams, 2014)

### **Online Courses**

While there is limited Internet in some of the remotest locations in developing nations, there are remote places in rural Africa where pastors who have enough of an educational background can in fact take fully online programs from various places. Stephen and Frank discussed pastors that they know who have taken online classes and entire programs from universities in South Africa. In regards to students from outside of Costa Rica where the school is located, Paul stated, “We have students in about 24 countries maybe. That would include almost all of them in South America and Central America. It also includes Spain...Equatorial Guinea...[and] we've had students in New Zealand and other parts of the world.” Likewise, Scott’s school in Brazil had students from other countries in Latin America as well as in Africa, Europe, and Asia. While, the majority of their students lived in more populated areas, it was still possible for pastors in some regions to take the courses in remote areas. Rural areas in Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East seem to have better Internet access and there were seminaries in those areas that offered online pastoral courses to clergy in remote areas. Jeannette stated that many seminaries in China were utilizing online training for pastors across the country. Marlin discussed two such programs that were available in more restricted areas:

...Dallas Seminary for instance has a Chinese studies program that's being offered online. I mentioned to you the online programs that are being used in the Middle East because...traveling from one country to another or becoming a theological student in another Middle Eastern country is not possible, and so that opens up the online possibility. There's a new program by the way a new course called TEACH...Theological

Education for Arab Christians in Homes. It's a program that we were quite involved in helping to develop 32 online courses...and one of the reasons we helped to develop that was so that Arab believers who couldn't travel for residential programs, or perhaps even a satellite program, extension programs, would have a way to access theological education. This online TEACH program delivered the training via satellites in Arabic to the pastors. Ron also worked with a seminary in Bangalore, India that used online courses to train Bible college and seminary faculty and administrators in South East Asia, which also included those in rural areas.

### **Research Question 3: How Could Online Delivery Systems Help Meet the Needs of Training Clergy?**

The research from both the literature review and from the interviews with this study's participants clearly pointed out that there is a woeful shortage of trained clergy in evangelical Christian churches in developing nations (Naidoo, 2013, 2017; Nkonge, 2013; World Council of Churches, 2013). While much of the formal literature decried the inability for the current models to keep pace with training pastors to meet the needs of the rapidly growing church in developing nations, the members of this study argued for the need to investigate every opportunity possible to be able to train and equip more clergy around the world. This online training could look different in different parts of the world, in different population centers, under different governments, with different ecclesiological bodies and it could be delivered in varying formats based on the particular need for each setting. The participants identified how online learning has looked in both formal and informal settings, and how that training would be delivered to pastors in rural areas in countries where there have been restrictions on biblical training as well as in settings where students are free to study without concern for their safety. The importance of

investigating pastoral training delivered at different educational levels was identified by researchers in both Guatemala and Pakistan who realized that it was not possible to train everyone at the graduate or even undergraduate level (Carey, 2012; Winters & Jeynes, 2012; Tan, 2017). Table 5 gives a further explanation of typical degrees utilized in training pastors based on Western models that have been used around the world.

Table 5

*Traditional Options for Pastoral Training Programs Based on Western Models*

Pastoral Program	Average Credit Hrs.	Level	Focus	Goal
Informal certificate	Varies greatly	Illiterate to college	Generally a broad survey level	Usually lay or bi-vocational ministry
Formal certificate	15-30	Graduate or undergraduate	Can be broad overview or specific area	Usually lay or bi-vocational ministry
BA/BS	120	Undergraduate	Balance of Bible, theology, & practical. Often with a focus on a specialty	Prepares for seminary and/or entry level ministry
MDiv	90	Graduate	Balance of Bible, theology, & practical.	Foundation for ordination
ThM	120	Graduate	Balance of Bible, theology, & practical.	Foundation for ordination and academic career
MA	30-60	Graduate	Often focused on Bible, theology OR practical	May or may not lead to ordination
DMin	30-40	Doctoral	Practical ministry	Professional ministry enhancement
PhD or ThD	40-75	Doctoral	Research in Bible or theology	Academic career

## **Traditional Graduate Level Seminary Courses**

Paul's seminary in Latin America consistently trained pastors in about 25 countries around the world through their fully online graduate seminary program. While some of his students came from major metropolitan areas, many of them came from medium sized and small communities. Paul stated:

One of the reasons why we launched [our seminary] and this whole thing of distance learning and online education was because of the many leaders that just had no access. They were bi-vocational pastors. People that were very intelligent they had their own bachelor's and master's degrees. Some of whom are physicians, attorneys, architects, engineers. They were also planting [starting] a church or pastoring in a church.

Many of these students did not live near the capitals or major cities around Latin America. Likewise, Scott's program in Brazil has expanded to reach pastors around the world who want to take courses in Portuguese. They provided both online and blended courses as part of their options for students. Albrechtsen et al. (2017) and Liyanagunawardena and Williams (2014) explained how offering online courses to health care professionals in rural areas has been successful in allowing people who would normally struggle with access to advanced training to participate and increase their skills.

In parts of the world where there have been restrictions on training pastors due to limitations in place by various governments or leaders of other religious belief systems, online pastoral training has provided the opportunity to take the training securely to clergy in those countries. This has allowed them to study safely without the need to either leave the country or to risk gathering somewhere that might become dangerous for everyone involved. Ron's

organization has seen this work exceptionally well in many different locations in the developing world.

Scott, Paul, Ron, Stephen, and Marlin each discussed ways that training pastors online at the graduate level allowed pastors around the world to have solid training that has given them the opportunity to train other ministers around them in either formal or informal ways. Stephen explained that as one school in Kenya started a doctoral program:

The whole idea was; can we then train some Africans at a doctoral level within their context so that they can continue to serve in the context? The same idea is important in the context of the rural exodus to the city.

One of the perspectives raised by many of the participants was that by offering theological training at the master's or doctoral level, those from developing nations who wish to train pastors in a higher educational setting would be able to stay within their country and not go to the West.

Marlin explained it this way:

You know twenty years ago you could count the number of institutions that were offering doctoral level programs on one hand, and now there are well over two dozen of those programs. So students do not need to go to the West. There are opportunities in their own regions for the highest level of theological training and so that's what's happening is we're seeing an amazing growth of those programs especially at the doctoral level and fewer and fewer are coming to the West for that level of training.

In the long term, this will keep these pastor-educators from leaving and allows for a more robust pastoral training program in formal settings.

## **Certificate Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

As explained in Chapter 4, and listed in Table 5, in traditional Western theological education, a 90 credit hour Master of Divinity has been the most common degree that led to ordination within most evangelical Christian settings. However, as times changed, some denominations were willing to allow those with a formal certificate from a Bible college or seminary to move into the ordination track if they could demonstrate they had the knowledge and skills necessary to pastor. For instance, Paul's school recently started offering a graduate certificate because they had many students who already had earned a graduate degree in another field, and they did not want a complete degree in Bible or theology. However, since they had already been pastoring churches in a bi-vocational setting, the denominational leaders determined that while they did not need a complete graduate level theological degree, they needed to have some additional training to be effective pastors. By offering more options than just a "one size fits all", those who had already been educated in another field could obtain an appropriate amount of training for the pastoral role they had. In this particular certificate plan, students could choose five out of seven courses that addressed various aspects of the pastoral role they had. These courses could also be used as part of a degree program at a later date if so desired.

While Paul's school offered only one certificate option, Scott's school offered a variety of certificate programs, and this allowed them to meet a much wider variety of student needs. They developed some certificate programs that were standalone programs and others that could be utilized as part of a degree program. They offered certificate programs that addressed everything from the Bible to theology to practical ministry skills. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Jeannette's school in Hong Kong developed certificate programs that focused on specific

pastoral skills that lay pastors needed. While these certificate programs had only been offered in a traditional face-to-face method, there had been discussions about offering them online as well.

So, while the certificate might or might not lead to ordination within a particular group, this formal training was likely the only training that these pastors obtained. Furthermore, a certificate program was seen as more cost effective method to get critical training to pastors. By taking the equivalent of 15-20 credit hours instead of 90 hours, more pastors were able to afford this level of training. Paul also expressed how difficult it was for students to have the time to study:

Very few people other than church planters in the US would do what many of our students do, where they work Monday to Saturday because, in most countries, Saturday's a work day; we work until noon on Saturday if it's a 48-hour week. They work until noon Saturday then at nights, during the week, they are doing Bible studies, preparing for Sunday, and on Saturday night and Sunday mornings, they have ministry going on.

So, there was a very real time pressure on these bi-vocational pastors, and if they were able to complete a certificate program, which gives them some training, they were better prepared than if they looked at the entire program and decided that they did not have time to do a master's level program, and thus did no additional training.

### **Certificate Programs Not at the Undergraduate or Graduate Level**

Researchers like Nkounge (2013) and Tan (2017) discussed options for non-formal pastoral certificate programs, and concluded that there was a large need to investigate the options that are available as well as investigating how these programs could be expanded to train more pastors across developing nations. Bock (2016) concurred with them, and was adamant that



since, "...it is less than 5% of pastors receive formal education" more non-formal methods must be implemented.

In his role as the director of accreditation for the agency that oversees all of the Evangelical theological schools on the African continent, Stephen had a vested interest in seeing traditional Bible colleges and seminaries thrive. However, he had also become more concerned about the need for these schools to broaden their perspectives and to see their role as extending beyond offering only formal theological education and to evaluate how they can serve the needs of the growing number of lay pastors and others in bi-vocational work who will never be able to attend a formal school for a wide variety of reasons. He was able to encourage several of these schools to develop online programs at the certificate level which provided basic theological education for people who lived outside of the major cities, so they were able to get some foundational levels of training. He believed that it will continue to require some creative thinking to get that training into formats that can easily be used on cellphones or tablets, but since large portions of Africans, even in the remotest villages, had Facebook accounts, there had to be ways to use online formats to provide training for these rural pastors.

Marlin explained how organizations like Third Millennium and Theological Education for Arab Christians at Home developed online theological content that they have delivered across the globe. The courses that they offered were designed with the input of various consultants, partner organizations and biblical, theological and pastoral leaders throughout developing nations in order to make sure that they provided a high level of training for pastors that was also relevant in those pastors' individual settings. Marlin stated that as of 2017, there were a few organizations who were granting a non-credit certificate for pastors who have completed particular educational sequences that these groups offer.

### **Research Question 3a: What are the Barriers and Benefits to Offering Online Training?**

There were a number of both barriers and benefits that were identified in the preceding pages of this study related to training pastors in developing nations in general. The participants also specified several barriers and benefits that had particularly impacted pastoral training in online formats.

#### **Barriers**

While the study's participants expressed a great desire to see more training offered through online modalities, they also raised a number of barriers that have impeded making online education an easy choice for pastors in developing nations to make.

**Lack of awareness.** When asked about barriers to incorporating the various kinds of online tools and apps that Stan has developed and enhanced for training pastors, he responded:

At this point, it's just the awareness that it even exists. Most of what I deal with-- whenever I go out and I'm meeting with minority people groups, most of them have no idea that these resources even exist. How to make people aware of the resources that exist? Everywhere I go, I always carry samples with me and say, "Did you know that this is available and this is available, this or this and this?" Usually, people are slack-jawed that, "Oh, we had no idea that these resources were available and that we could use them." That's the biggest hurdle, is finding the entry points to the distribution channels. Who are the key people in a language group, or in a geographical area, who are the gatekeepers of information that gets passed on to everybody? Honestly, that is the number one bottleneck. In Latin America, that happens by relationship.

This lack of awareness is further complicated by those in theological higher education who have a tendency, as Stephen and Brent identified, to be focused on the traditional way that education

has been done and not willing to investigate new options such as online education or options that could train lay ministers outside of the historical framework of the face-to-face training model.

Stephen explained his concern that the leadership in the traditional seminaries had not even been aware of the skills that students needed in order to be effective pastors. He stated:

Another set of issues that is affecting theological education actually, in Africa, is that it's so much in the box rather than outside the box. People come to the seminary to be trained. They're trained specifically and exclusively into theology. When they go into the community, they found that communities, where the churches are found, are dealing with issues of poverty, issues of HIV and Aids, issue of drug, issues of robbery, violence, rape, and many other issues.... You find that many students who graduate from seminary, they graduate, they know how to teach, they know how to preach, but they don't know how to become community developers to address and attend issues that are affecting the church.

Therefore, since the faculty and administrators in various schools were only able to “think inside the box” about issues as critical as what kind of ministry they were training pastors for, it made sense that they were also resistant to using online education because it was too far “outside of the box.” Stephen further explained the difficulties he saw with seminary leadership interacting with technology:

Many people find that difficult, challenging even, to answer their emails and do things like that. When you say if those seminaries can go into a distance education where the support is electronic, it becomes a little bit difficult. Train, first of all, the teaching staff to be able to do the same thing they are doing face-to-face, to do it online. It requires a different skill. It requires a different approach. There is a need of changing and culturing people and a constant program of--constant development, continue of development where

people are being encouraged to do this so that an old habit is replaced by a new habit. I think that's the challenge that is there.

This perspective was parallel to the thoughts of Bogart (2017) and Nichols (2015) who detailed the overall resistance that they found from faculty and administration in Bible schools and seminaries when the topic of offering online pastoral training was raised. They explained how this often times related to the belief among these academic leaders that true spiritual formation and preparation for clergy could only happen in a traditional face to face environment. If these leaders were not aware of the options and opportunities for utilizing online learning in ministerial preparation, or if they had categorically avoided the conversations about how online training could be beneficial to training students, they would not be able to share how the technological tools were beneficial to pastoral students.

**Internet reliability.** Another area that Frank, Stephen, Keith, and Jeannette raised was the lack of consistent and reliable Internet availability in more remote locations or within certain countries. This made studying online very difficult or impossible for those who were in some rural areas. As Frank noted, even in the capital of Rwanda, the electric grid was not consistent, so it could be difficult to be working on online courses when students did not know if the power and Internet would go off and whether it would be offline for an extended period of time. Keith explained the difficulties that he saw in some rural areas of the Philippines:

In some rural areas I think it's available like where I'm coming from my hometown it's available except that the internet connection is really really slow so that's a big problem there. With texting no problem at all but you know doing Skype like this is going to be terrible. So yeah there there's electricity and if you need to use a projector or laptop if you have a lecture somewhere there, it's doable. But when it comes to doing like this Skyping

or watching videos online that's going to be more challenging to do it in the rural area than here in Metro Cebu.

Miah, Hasan, and Gammack (2015) also raised concerns that while they were developing healthcare solutions for rural patients in Bangladesh that there were still areas where the Internet infrastructure was still a barrier to providing services. They recognized that, “Unreliable or lack of ICT [Information and Communications Technology] infrastructure will make the entire systems solution ineffective” (p. 320).

**Low technological skills.** Many people in developing nations have struggled with various aspects of using technology. Doug, Brandon, Gale, and Stephen each mentioned that pastors and leaders with whom they work have struggled to learn new technology. This was especially emphasized since the majority of them did not grow up with access to technology. Gale explained the struggles she saw as people in South Africa interacted with technology:

One of the difficulties in implementing something like this [online training] will be that, technology... is overwhelming. It's befuddling to sit in front of the computer.... You're dealing with connectivity, all kinds of issues that become really complicated on that side. It seems really simple here [in the United States]. In the simplicity of here, I think people pick it up like this, because of the efficiency of the systems, but there is not that efficiency over there and it becomes very confusing.

Stephen and Marlin also explained that very few students knew how to use computer technology. As a result, even tasks that some would find easy such as typing on a keyboard were difficult for pastors they knew. Miah et al. (2015) also identified this lack of understanding of and training in operating computer hardware and software as significant barriers to rural healthcare workers who needed to access online educational content.

**Programs only offered in majority languages.** Although large portions of the world speak the major languages of English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, and Arabic, it does not mean that these are primary languages for the majority of people groups, even those within countries that might have one of these as an official language. Gale, Stan, Frank, Keith, Brandon, and Doug each raised the issues of training pastors in the languages in which they normally speak and think. As he described the Bible colleges and seminaries in Ghana, Brandon stated:

...all of these programs are in English which is the second or third language for people in our country.... However, if we were able to offer training in more language groups, we would be able to train even more pastors.

When asked if English was the trade language in their part of South Africa, Doug replied affirmatively, but followed up with:

...but it's not the language that they would-- their heart language. We in our province speak Zulu and then each province would be different. That was one of the things that we've been told about our school, is that a lot of the Bible schools are the accredited Bible schools where they get a degree and that sort of thing, are in English... but you're missing the masses with people [when you only teach in English].

Marlin explained that currently, the majority of online courses designed to teach pastors have been offered in English, although there were programs that he and Jeannette identified that were being offered online in Mandarin, as well as Scott's Portuguese and Paul's Spanish programs. Carrey (2012), Curtis, 2016; Eguizabal (2013), and Morris (2017) each described the importance for organizations and schools to make sure that theological education was offered beyond just the majority languages of the colonial empires. They explained that those who spoke minority languages needed to have access to the training in their first languages. Morris (2017)

gave an example of a seminary in Colombia. Despite 83 distinct languages being spoken in the country, the seminary only offered its extension courses in Spanish. He further explained that the pastors, "...face significant language barriers when they return to their tribal context" (p. 144) because it was difficult for them to translate the theological concepts from Spanish back into their first language.

**Accreditation.** Both national governmental and global theological accreditation agencies have placed barriers in the way of online education for training pastors. For instance, even though Scott had served on the governmental accreditation agency, they continued to have struggles proving that their online education was of high quality. It was only in 2016 that the Brazilian government allowed theological schools to become fully accredited. However, Scott explained that with this accreditation came significant requirements such as, "in terms of hiring and forming the faculty, or a library, or facilities. Most of the seminaries that depend on the denominations, they don't invest too much on that." Since most of the Bible colleges and seminaries in Brazil had not been able to meet the accreditation standards, the options for attending accredited schools was limited. This was further complicated by the way that the government has defined which schools can teach courses in theology:

It means that if you're a denominational seminary and you're not accredited, you cannot say that you teach theology or you give a bachelor in theology; it's against the law. It's being really complicated now. If you say theology is the same thing as saying law or engineering or any other career, you say so.

However, with this new ruling, theological institutions who had hoped to gain approval to keep teaching theology to their pastoral students could no longer teach theology if they were not accredited, and since they did not meet the accreditation standards, they would not be able to

offer this critical component of pastoral training. This was further complicated because the major influence on the accreditation board was controlled by those in the traditional federal universities who depended on students in their residential programs, so they actively pushed back against online programs...even in theological programs that they did not offer.

In the Philippines, the accreditation standards limited how schools offer online or distance education. Keith explained:

When it comes to understanding education because we call it hybrid because the government with our accreditation we are not actually allowed to offer distance learning. Because you have to have a level 3 type of accreditation. I forgot the details about that, and we are not at that level. Big schools like the University of the Philippines they are in that category, but not us.

Stephen discussed the struggles that he had as the director of the African theological accreditation to encourage schools to rethink the options of accrediting online and other distance learning programs. It was very difficult to get some changes made to the accreditation standards that would allow for non-traditional models of education. He explained that many of the school leaders that he worked with were afraid of change, and they felt like they must be locked into the way they have done things for the past 100-200 years. Paul echoed the same concepts when he explained that their school had difficulties getting their fully online program accredited. As a result, they entered into a partnership that allowed their students to, "...get the degree through the South African Theological Seminary, but that degree is accredited throughout all of Europe and Africa and that's good in the States too." He also stated that even among the Christian accreditation agencies, there has still been a distrust of the online options. In fact, he stated that the accreditation process has been:



... incredibly difficult.... In fact, [one accreditation] organization...still has online education below the academy, and almost all of those schools are face to face. As far as I know, we're the only online university that works with them. I'm not aware of any others there. That's probably because we're probably one of the only online universities in the evangelical world. Most schools have online as part of the face to face program. We don't have a face to face program, it's only online.

Ron raised the issue of a school in Nigeria that wanted to offer an online curriculum for students around Africa, but they ran into difficulties making sure that their accreditation would be good in the different countries from which they hoped to attract students. This has additional complications because they wanted to offer their courses in French, Portuguese, and English, and that has required additional work to make sure that everything worked academically and culturally in each of the languages in different parts of the continent. Like Paul's school in Costa Rica, Ron stated that this seminary in Nigeria was also working through the South African Theological Seminary to provide accreditation for these programs.

**Security.** Marlin and Ron worked with schools in a number of areas of the world where there were security concerns that required extra work to make sure that the content that was being delivered to online students was kept safe, as well as the identities of and the content that students uploaded back to the online system. This required people with special computer skills who could provide information security for applications across the Internet, in the cloud, and through tools such as virtual private networks. Marlin explained:

You are aware probably that that in some areas due to security concerns, they... have to be careful of course they use VPNs [Virtual Private Networks] for security but sometimes the VPNs are shut down and so it's like a cat-and-mouse game to you know try to find an

open VPN....So for that reason because the security issues there are definitely limitations you know or always looking for a work around.

Ron further elaborated that specific questions have to be asked as these online training programs are established:

...there's more of a technology security set of questions that we have to address and how do we keep things secure? Do you need your own platform? What kinds of additional securities may you need if you were to have a learning management system? Are there other options in thinking through other technology options for delivery?

Security concerns, such as these, prevented Brent from engaging in online options for those he teaches, because the majority of his students went to China and others that he worked with pastor in the Middle East. He did not feel like he had enough skill to keep students safe in these environments.

**Costs.** Every participant addressed at least one of the issues of cost, sustainability, and the impact of Westerners reducing their investments in theological education in developing nations. However, there were some interesting thoughts regarding the specific cost of online education. Frank talked about struggles that people face with the Internet:

For instance, when they do the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] test for someone to qualify, it's not uncommon, you know, two hours into the test for all the electricity to go off and the Internet to quit and that the person that's trying to get it started up, it's just lost time. So those kind of things happen all the time and I'm always frustrated. You know, you never know what's going to work and when it's not gonna work and if you say I'm changing providers and then you stop and go, oh, they're all like

this. You know, that's a waste of time. And that's, we're in the best, we're in Kigali that has the best of everything in Rwanda.

So, the cost of frustration to do things on the Internet was a real issue. Frank also saw this with colleagues who were taking online courses from South Africa and the United States.

In Brazil, the accreditation association required that even online students come to the physical campus of the school they were attending at least once a year to take exams. This was very costly for Scott's students who lived outside of Brazil, and especially for those who lived in various countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Brandon explained how many of the Bible colleges and seminaries in West Africa were struggling to stay open due to the reduced funding from the West, and they did not have the ability to launch into new programs like online learning when they were holding so tightly to their traditional face-to-face programs. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Stephen described the high cost for schools to invest in computer equipment, software, and people to run the online programs from the African seminaries and to then be able to keep updating and upgrading hardware and software in order to stay current. He too explained that it was not easy for schools who were currently struggling with staying open to be able to think outside the box and be able to look into the future to utilize a different form of pastoral training that might help them out financially in the long run.

Brandon also expressed frustration that there were many pastors across Africa that needed training developed in their languages, because they were not able to study in other languages. For instance, there are over 60 languages spoken just in the country of Ghana. In order for Brandon and his organization to expand the training that they have started in one language, they had to wrestle with the various costs:

These devices are very expensive for pastors in rural areas, so we have to raise the money to pay for the translation work, the oversight of the training program, as well as for the MP3 devices. This means that we must come up with some kind of way to keep the program sustainable. While we have received a large amount of donations from the West to get this project started, we have to get to the point where we can fund it from within the country. Since it is nearly impossible for pastors in rural areas to afford going to the city to get formal training, we have to develop systems for this more cost effective manner to work in the rural areas.

With Western organizations reducing their financial investments in Africa, it has become more difficult for Brandon and others like him to be able to raise the funds to expand their training programs.

In regards to the infrastructure necessary to operate online programs, Ron stated that they, “have a common learning management system that we have been able to have someone design for us that allows the smaller schools to participate without having to pay for the entire system themselves.” Paul’s seminary belonged to a group of schools that also shared costs for the development and maintenance of their online learning management system. Ron and Marlin also discussed the high costs for small theological schools to run their own learning management systems and to be able to afford developing courses for the online learning environments. Paul also explained that several seminaries in Latin America, “are setting up partnerships with other schools to try to meet the need [to save money by working together].” This related to the fact that the other schools did not have the funding to develop their own courses and to offer them effectively to students who wanted to take an online course.

Of course, there is also the financial cost to students to take online courses. Brandon told about rural pastors with whom they are working. While they had cell phones, they were too old to work with the software that their new audio training program used, and it was a struggle for them to be able to afford a newer smartphone. That meant that it would be exceptionally hard for them to afford a computer and to pay tuition for an online program. Frank stated that the vast majority of the pastors they would love to train would never be able to attend their school because they were substance farmers who could not leave their farms. So, they would never be able to afford the tools or the tuition to be able to study online either. Similarly, Gale stated that the costs for unlimited data for cellphones was very prohibitive for the majority of their students in South Africa. Therefore, using cellular phones to take an online program would be prohibitive. While Paul had a number of students who were professionals in a different field such as law or medicine who also pastored a church and were thus able to afford their online programs, he still had a number of students each year who really struggled with being able to afford their programs. This was despite the fact that a fully accredited 46-hour online master's degree could be completed for only \$4,000 (US).

### **Benefits**

While there were indeed many barriers to offering online training for pastors in developing nations, this study's participants were also insistent that there were many benefits as well. In fact, while they fully acknowledged the barriers, they wanted to make sure to communicate that there was hope for the future with the utilization of online options for theological training.

**Does not require relocation of the pastor.** One of the largest benefits that the study's participants raised about the use of online education to train pastors in developing nations was

the fact that it allowed students to stay in their country and in most situations, to stay in the job or ministry in which they were currently working. Stephen discussed how historically, many Western missionaries wanted to bring pastors to the large cities where they could be totally transformed into an African who looked like and acted like a Westerner and who rejected the culture of his village. Then when they returned to their villages, they were expected to convert and reorient everyone in their community to look and act like the Western missionaries. This was not an effective method, because it prepared pastors for a reality that they could not create back in their villages. However, he also stated that he saw this trend start to change with training rural pastors in their communities because, “With the distance education today, and online education, or any other form through social media, or any form of education that can be invented or reinvented, it is possible to reach out to people, as many people as possible.” So, by being able to study in an online venue, pastors in smaller communities were able to stay and learn in their primary environment and adapt the lessons that they were learning online for their own situation instead of for a Western reality. Kaunda (2015) also expressed the need for Africans to move pastoral training away from Western schools and the Western faculty so that students would be able to study free from the colonial bias that had permeated much of the traditional theological training across Africa. By moving the education to online courses that were developed by and taught by Africans, those taking online classes in remote areas would be able to stay in their villages and not have to engage with the colonial vestiges of pastoral training in Africa.

Frank, Stephen, Stan, Ron, Gale, Brandon, Doug, and Marlin each shared stories of how key leaders from developing nations had worked hard so they could travel to the West to get an advanced degree, so they could pastor a larger church or could be better prepared to train more pastors as a professor at a Bible school or seminary. Sadly, they each discussed how the vast

majority of those who went to the West never returned. This echoes what others have stated in the literature (Beatty, 2014; Naidoo, 2017). Stan stated that if:

...somebody comes to the US, they get trained, they may go back to their country but they're not going to go back out to the bush because they've lived comfortably. It's really hard once you've lived that high, to go back and live that low.

Paul relayed how this looked when he was still teaching in a traditional Bible college:

Our last four years in Venezuela there were -- I can't remember if it was 10 or 12 Venezuelans that left Venezuela during that four-year period to study and get master's degrees in the States, and a few stayed on for their doctorates. Of those, only two returned, all the rest of them stayed to pastor churches or they got teaching positions at the seminaries where they studied, they did not return.

From an earlier study that I did, theological educators had stated that there was only about a 25% rate of pastors who returned to the country (Beatty, 2014). However, this study's participants claimed that the number was lower than that. Furthermore, not only did those who went to the West not return, but it was very rare for pastors who left their villages for pastoral training in a big city in their own country to ever return. Stephen explained it this way:

Someone who comes from a remote village in Africa comes to a major city in Africa feels, "I'm now an urban person, trained in the urban to serve in the urban. I'm changing the status of my life by living here. I cannot return back to the rural village." Same situation, someone comes from Africa, comes to the US. Around in the US and after living here for a while as a student, if he's not compelled by a certain agreement, the tendency was for that person to find a way of staying here. Either by giving reasons, I brought my children. They are now teenagers. They need to stay here. They are now

going to college. They're in high school. I came from a French speaking country. Here now, the education is in English. They will not fit back into the context. Many other reasons were given.

Therefore, there is a strong benefit for pastors to receive their training via online methods.

**Flexibility.** The ability for students to be able to choose from a variety of programs from a wide number of schools and from schools around the world allowed students to pick a program that worked best for them and provided the exact training pastors needed for their particular setting. Paul stated that he encountered more and more pastors in Latin America who were taking online programs. He stated:

There are more people that are operating online and I'm amazed at what I hear when I travel: such and such a person is doing an online course with such and such university in Spanish. It's not a master's but it's a bachelor's degree. A number of non-accredited institutions all over the place. They're just everywhere.... Ten years ago that just didn't exist. They existed but they weren't in Latin America, and now they are.

He explained, because they have so many options, they are bound to find one that works for them. One of Frank's Rwandan partners at the seminary was working on a master's degree from South Africa. It worked well for him, because he could do his classes around his work schedule, and whether the power was working or not.

Likewise offering online courses in different languages allowed students in one part of the world to study from another part. For instance, both Scott's Portuguese program and Paul's Spanish program originated from their campuses in Latin America, but they had students from countries in Europe and Africa where those languages were official languages, as well as



students in other parts of the world who preferred to study in Portuguese or Spanish without needing to leave Japan or New Zealand to travel back to Latin America to study.

Albrechtsen et al. (2017) provided online training for healthcare workers in both developed and developing nations. They discovered that over half of the nearly 30,000 people who completed the course were from developing nations. Because they were able to access an online training on prevention of and treatment for diabetes, they were able to participate from their location. The flexibility of being able to study at their convenience in their own location in the world allowed them to learn how to improve their healthcare skills. In fact, they determined, "...the health care professionals from developing regions reported that the course had impact on their clinical practice... [at a significantly higher rate] compared to health care professionals from developed regions" (p. 4). This demonstrates that by offering options for individuals in developing nations who had limited options for training, that offering online options ultimately increases the ability for students to improve their knowledge and their ability to do their jobs. Similarly, Naidoo (2017) described how the availability of flexible online options for pastoral training has begun to be embraced by pastors across Africa. With a variety of courses available from different nations and theological perspectives, and with different choices for the level of instruction, pastors have more options than ever before to obtain their education.

**Sharing of resources.** Paul, Marlin, and Ron each identified that it was difficult for individual schools to provide all of the resources necessary for offering online classes. But each of them explained how sharing resources such as learning management systems or courses had built better partnerships and allowed more pastors to get training. Likewise, Paul described some of the ways his school had shared with other seminaries in Latin America:

For example, we have a partnership with SETECA [Seminario Teológico Centroamericano in Guatemala City, Guatemala] where we have a document that describes sharing courses.... They have two of our courses that we gave them. Medellín [Seminario Bíblico de Colombia Fundación Universitaria in Medellín, Colombia] has a couple courses that we gave them and they're using them. It's not happening a lot but it is happening. I think just out of necessity, it's got to happen. The school ESEPA [Seminario Escuela de Estudios Pastorales in San José], in Costa Rica actually requires their master students to take two of our courses.

As Paul's school allowed pastors from other seminaries and from other countries to take online classes, more pastors were trained. Furthermore, this exposure to others gave students the opportunity for expanded and strengthened understanding of pastoral ministry outside of just their own setting.

**Pastors can be trained in areas where it is not safe to have a school.** Ron and Marlin discussed the benefit for pastors who took online courses in areas where there was concern for their safety. Because the school came to them, they were able to study to become a better pastor with much more security than if they attempted to develop a traditional Bible school or seminary. Online learning allowed organizations to be dispersed within a region and kept everybody safe instead of having a targeted area where people were put at risk. Ron has assisted a seminary in Ukraine as it transitioned from its former traditional face-to-face format to a wholly online format. He explained that the seminary:

...was overrun by the Russian separatists, and they lost everything. They lost one of the best libraries in that part of the world. Records, dormitories, a beautiful campus, it's gone. It's not built. How can we create something that if we have to move, if we have to find

different locales, it will still be available? They're looking at the Moodle [an online Learning Management System] space as a way to archive and create artifacts of learning that they can do mobily [*sic*].

In a similar method, several schools in various parts of Africa have been destroyed due to civil wars. Ron also worked to develop ways to continue to train pastors with online options with a few schools in Liberia which had to close due to civil war there.

**Cost benefits.** While the costs were listed above as a barrier, there was also a sense among the study's participants that there were significant cost benefits when pastors were able to stay in their location and take online classes. One of these benefits was that pastors could serve their congregation(s) instead of leaving their community and moving to the capital, another country in their continent, or even to the West. This allowed the local ministry to continue growing strong as well as it gave the pastor a place to implement what he was studying in his online program. Furthermore, this format has allowed pastors to stay with their families. I have also taught students from Asia and Africa who left their homes to attend seminary in Europe and did not see their family for three years, several of whom left five to ten churches behind that they were pastoring. This a high cost can be significantly reduced by online learning options. Stephen was forced at least three times to leave his wife and children in one country as he fled for his life to another country, for a period of several years each time. In fact, he was currently living in the United States as a United Nations' refugee while his family remained in South Africa due to threats against his life. If he had been able to complete his PhD online along the way, they would have been able to stay together in a safe country and not had the high costs associated with the physical distance between them.

Keith had a student who lived nearly 24 hours from the seminary by car and ferry. In order to help this student complete his degree, Keith came up with a creative model to finish the student's coursework:

So, what we're doing is calling it a hybrid right now and so there are, we have allowed some students to do independent studies. So we have one that is in Manila. It's very hard for him to commute every week to the school so what I did since he is graduating and he only needs to take a few more subjects and so we started this last semester. For example, in my world missions class, I created an independent study culture (we call it a culture) and everything is there, stays there, the requirements and the papers to write. I also required that we need to Skype so that I have a regular interaction with him.

This hybrid model saved the student incredible time and money and allowed him to complete his pastoral training in an innovative way that might provide an example for other students.

Stephen also addressed the issue that as funding from the West continued to be reduced, it became harder and harder for the traditional residential schools to operate well. He believed that by offering more online options, it would be more cost effective than continuing to maintain the number of physical campuses that were currently struggling. Brandon went so far as to say that using various methods of online courses and educational technology, "...is the only way to be able to train the pastors in rural areas, and it's the only sustainable model that we have."

Scott discussed the economic advantages for their seminary to be able to offer fully online courses. Since they did not have a residential campus, they did not have full-time professors. so they only operated a small office complex and did not have major expenses related to maintaining a campus. They were able to teach their courses via adjuncts, which allowed them to keep the prices low for their students.

**More pastors get trained.** As Naidoo (2013, 2017) and Beaty (2014) stated, there have been limited options for pastors who want to gain training, and Naidoo further explained that the Church has grown faster than the seminaries could train people. Yet, there have not been positive options suggested as alternatives to train enough pastors for the needs of the Church. When asked if the current model that Jeannette used in Hong Kong was working well, she laughed. “Well, not enough. There’s never enough leaders in the churches....” So, despite working in theological education for over 30 years in Asia, she too vouched that the current models were not meeting the needs. Likewise, Stan stated that the number of students the Bible colleges and seminaries in Latin America were training was, “...completely inadequate for the real need. And the Church continues to grow. There’s new churches being planted [started] all the time.” In Africa, Brandon stated, “...there are not enough people attending seminary to keep up with the growth of the Church.” Ultimately, by offering online options, more pastors can get trained and become part of the response to the growth of the Christian Church in developing nations. Marlin also explained that it was impossible to train enough pastors in the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe where students were not allowed to attend a physical campus in their country or leave to go to a country where they could attend Bible school or seminary, so, offering online pastoral training was the only way to provide the needed training. Therefore, one of the most important benefits to offering online theological education was that it opened up opportunities for more pastors to get trained in more countries than the current theological institutions have been capable of training.

Cartwright (2014) and Etzel (2015) both argued that the utilization of online methods to train pastors provided the opportunity for pastors who were not able for one reason or another to attend a residential seminary to receive training that would help them as they served their

congregations. Their perspectives on the benefits of training more pastors were indeed reflected by the participants in this current study.

### **Research Question 3b: What Cultural Components Need to be Considered in Offering Online Education?**

#### **Acknowledge the History of Theological Education**

Naidoo (2013) and Nkonge (2013) discussed the need for any theological education to start with the concept that educators need to look at pastoral training from a postcolonial viewpoint before they discuss ways to train pastors today. Kaunda (2015) took this a step further and argued that prior to any theological training being developed, educators must back up and look at the needs from a decolonized perspective of how training needs to look before the Western missionaries came and established Christianity with a skewed Western perspective. These concerns seemed to be vocalized primarily in the African context and were not raised by participants outside of Africa in this current study. Obviously, they do not reflect the viewpoints of all Africans who are involved in pastoral training. Marlin stated that throughout his 27 years of teaching pastors in Nigeria, he always felt welcomed and felt like the Africans he served with appreciated the fact that he was there helping prepare pastors for the Nigerian churches.

However, the concept of being careful to evaluate the history of theological education is still very important to think through when deciding how to set up online education. For instance, in what ways could pastoral training be delivered so that it does not carry the baggage of being just a repackaged attempt to teach pastors in developing nations that true Christianity looks like churches in Europe or North America? Stephen expressed that the original missionaries brought a, "...Western program, Western professors. Everything was Western." When there have already

been situations that demonstrated that past experiences have caused current struggles, it was critical to make sure there were not additional injuries added to what has already been identified.

From his interactions across the African continent, Stephen had extensive experience listening to other Africans and synthesizing the feelings of Africans, in regard to the history of the Western missionaries. He stated:

...there is also a problem of the content itself which I mentioned about, the Western model or curriculum that was received. I'm not trying to be very critical to that. I'm grateful for a lot that we received. We are what we are today in Africa because of what missionaries have done. That one I'm very grateful. I would like to underline that. At the same time, that doesn't stop us from being able to reflect further and to be creative and to improve on what we've been given.

### **Develop the Curriculum for the Culture of the Pastors**

Closely related to being aware of the historical issues is being careful to start developing the pastoral curriculum based on the needs of the pastors and the communities in which they serve. While Ron and Marlin acknowledged that some schools started using online theological courses that were developed by others in their consortiums of seminaries or by schools in the West, there was still a need to improve those courses for the particular students their seminary is reaching. Marlin stated:

...schools are pretty sophisticated. I mean they know that if they're get something off the shelf, that sort of one-size-fits-all, yes what they're getting and there may be some advantages for using that for a time. There may be ways to contextualize it, modify it, add, subtract, substitute, but all of them recognized that that in the end that's not ideal and that the more effective theological education is going to be more fit for the context and so

a lot of them then would start with a more kind of off the shelf kind of things and then as soon as they're able to begin to develop materials for themselves, that's what they do as you know for all their resources

Ron also encouraged schools to back up and ask simple, but yet profound questions like, "What do they think the Bible says pastors need to know and be able to do to be effective?" And, "What are the cultural dimensions for what that particular program outcome needs to know and be able to do?" Once these key questions were answered, seminaries have developed an effective curriculum that was culturally relevant.

As Brandon and his team looked at the curriculum that a school in the West was willing to share with them, they took the content, translated the words and then contextualized that content to make sure that it really applied to their particular culture. They also used staff from the rural areas to make sure that the content was culturally relevant and applicable to the rural pastors that it was being designed for. Morris (2017) echoed the importance of making sure that all areas of pastoral training are contextualized in such a way that the "rural indigenous student" (p. 6) setting is not forgotten by those who may desire to only address the issues of pastors in the urban areas. He argued that the needs and the context of the rural pastors is significantly different than the training that is most often offered in seminaries across Latin America. Brandon realized that for this content to provide effective pastoral training that people from the villages had to be involved in the development of the training and it was not enough for other Ghanaians in the capital to make assumptions about what would or would not work for the rural pastors.

The work that Brent and Jeannette did in training pastors to do bi-vocational work as domestic helpers and English instructors were adjusted so that both the content and the ways the trainings were set up met the cultural needs of both the current students as well as preparing



them to train others in culturally relevant ways in other countries. Ferguson (2016) also expressed the benefits for seminaries to offer this kind of variety of online theological education to different groups of pastors who lived in different ministry contexts around the world. Cartwright (2014) and Etzel (2015) each addressed the needs for a student's cultural setting to heavily influence the type of program that pastors enrolled in and that the content of those programs effectively prepared them for ministry in the setting in which they were found.

Stan addressed this issue of knowing the cultural needs of the pastors when he explained that in many rural locations in Latin America, there was an immediate need for very practical training for pastors instead of a primary focus on the theoretical underpinnings of theology. For instance, he explained that many pastors in rural areas displayed tendencies towards verbal and physical abuse in their relationships. In order for a pastor to lead his congregation well, it would be critical for them to be trained in how to treat others as one of the first steps instead of their training focused on a deeply theological concept such as the Trinity. As he interacted with pastors around the continent, he discovered many of them have a very limited understanding of basic Biblical concepts and practices. He argued that the training for these pastors should start with basic applications from the Scriptures and eventually work toward discussing the philosophical aspects of theology. In contrast, many seminaries in the urban areas began with a theoretical foundation to their pastoral training, and have moved to the practical application of that towards the end of the educational program. He stated that this is a difficult shift for people from the cities or formal educational institutions to understand. A similar illustration from healthcare would be that an ambulance crew which was dispatched to assist an overweight heart attack victim, would not put the victim on a diet to control their weight as their first concern; rather, the crew would take care of the immediacy of the heart attack and then address the

contributing factors to that at a later time after the patient had recovered from the heart attack. Eventually, the philosophical and medical issues that led to the heart attack could be discussed. However, in much of the seminary training in Latin America, the focus was on the big picture items instead of taking care of the immediate and practical issues that the rural pastors needed addressed. It was not that the theoretical is less important than the practical, it was that the practical was much more urgent.

Ron echoed this concept in relation to developing curriculum in much of Africa. He stated:

What the Africans want to do is start with the issues, start with the practical problem and through a biblical theological approach, work backwards into, "Okay, how does the Bible address this problem?" So we start with the application and we move into the theory from the application. If you look at their curriculum like leadership in places of conflict, or HIV, administering the HIV/AIDS with a discipleship model or something. The titles [of seminary courses] are all very different than a traditional seminary curriculum model. It's been very instructive to us to see how kind of the African mindset or world view might shape even the way we do theological education. Coming at it from a totally different vantage point, but in the end, covering both facets of the process that we would say are important as well.

This has been one of the issues that much of African theological training has wrestled with since the two approaches were so different. It would take work for organizations to write curriculum from an African perspective. Stephen's comments on the struggles with seminaries in the West trying to just send their online training to Africa was enlightening as he stated this about the curriculum:

It has to be contextual. It has to be relevant. We need to listen to the community. We need to respond to the need of the community. At the same time, our theology has to take on that kind of dimension too. Is it responding to the need, the actual need, of the community today?

His response as an African demonstrated the importance of pastoral training addressing the specific needs of the churches pastors were called to serve. However, in many Western seminaries, the concern would be more focused on whether the training was theologically correct and whether students were being prepared for future academic success more than a focus that prepared pastors to meet specific needs in their communities. This was exactly the cultural concern that Ron raised above. Morris (2017) contended, it was critical that all theological education must start with the way that pastors in a particular area thought and understood their worldview prior to building the curriculum that trained them to serve in their particular context.

Paul raised some additional issues surrounding the needs for careful attention to be paid to the cultural dynamics in online education. The differences could be somewhat subtle like Latin Americans who placed a high value on being relational, so online courses would need to be designed in such a way that there were opportunities for students to interact with other students and the professors. Likewise, there were even differences between how different cultures across Latin America view things, so it was important for those who were designing and teaching online courses to be aware of the cultural differences, even if it was easy to think of all Spanish speakers as being the same. Paul explained the differences could also be larger, especially if a school believed they could just market their pastoral training from the United States to students in Latin America:

Professors need to understand that Latin America is not Kansas. That the issues that are faced by the farmers in Kansas are not the issues that Diego faces in Bogotá or even in Puebla, or the borders like Ciudad Juárez in Mexico. How does your course on counseling, translate to a pastor in Mexico City who is facing gang wars in a church full of single moms?

### **Allow Students from Different Locations to Enhance the Learning Process**

Stan raised concerns that often organizations in the West thought that they had developed some kind of pastoral training that will work for everyone within the country, or even within all of Latin America. However, many times, that training was developed specifically with students from the large cities as the focus and content that was included in the courses was not culturally relevant to those who lived outside of the major metropolitan areas. His challenge was that those who developed online training must have a deep understanding of and have invested careful thought into how the training was put together. In the process of developing courses that worked for pastors from a variety of locations, everyone would be able to learn better and would be able to help one another learn more about how pastoral training could be applied in different settings. Morris (2017) also believed that pastors from the rural areas needed to be invited to speak into the course design process so that it would meet the needs of minority people groups, and not just the needs of those in the majority culture. He argued that when students from rural areas attended seminary or when course content was developed to be delivered in a majority language that:

Due to the absence of contextualization (nothing beyond translation), the students will have difficulty seeing the importance of the professor's lectures for their setting. The issues raised in the lectures and the questions asked will only occasionally intersect with the issues and questions important to the students. Thus, the students will not perceive the

relevance, and the training will not achieve its potential impact upon the students and their ministry contexts. (pp. 107-108)

Morris also explained that that even if the ministerial training was developed in a majority language within the country that the pastor was serving in that the training must be contextualized for the rural students and not just translated into their minority language because the needs of people in the remote communities required a different kind of pastoral ministry than that of residents of large urban centers.

Scott and Paul also discussed how their students were enriched through classroom discussions when they had students from different countries around Latin America and around the world in their classes. By engaging in discussions in their classes from different cultural viewpoints, their pastors were better trained.

### **Offer Courses in More Languages**

Another cultural concern that several of the participants raised was the issue of options for different languages being utilized in training pastors. As has been mentioned previously in this chapter and as a barrier in Chapter 4, participants have acknowledged that historically, the majority of theological education had been offered exclusively in a major world language such as English, French, or Spanish. In order to address this concern, several of this study's participants provided their non-formal pastoral training in one or more minority languages in their region. As schools and organizations develop more online educational programs, it will be important to consider multiple language options in order to train more pastors.

There are large groups of people who speak minority languages and these groups should be large enough to provide a market for training pastors. For instance, while Brandon's organization had developed audio translations for over 300 languages in West Africa, they chose

one particular language to do the pastoral training for rural Ghanaian pastors because it was spoken and understood by over 75% of the population as well as people in some surrounding countries. Likewise, Doug acknowledged that the majority of formal pastoral training in South Africa was done in English, but the vast majority of pastors in his area preferred to study in the Zulu language. In fact, Gale stated that only about 5% of their pastoral students chose handouts in English. Even students who completed formal university training in English generally preferred the Zulu handouts.

Throughout Latin America, very little education was done in the minority languages. Stan believed that if more training was done online via various apps, that it would make training pastors much easier. There would be a higher interest in studying, because it was so rare to have written or oral content in a language other than the primary official language of the country. Keith reported a similar scenario in the Philippines where the majority of the training was in English. He was not aware of any Bible schools or seminaries that taught pastors formally in another one of the many Filipino languages. However, his school translated their Theological Education by Extension courses into other languages when they went out into the rural areas.

The importance of moving beyond the use of majority languages for training pastors was encouraged by others who addressed the way that pastoral education has been done for well over a century. Researchers such as Carey (2012), Lonchar (2009), and Morris (2017) pointed out that if the Church truly desired to see pastors trained for all churches that the training would need to be provided in as many different languages as possible.

### **Recognize That Culture is Changing and is Not Static**

Another cultural element that was raised was the fact that culture is changing. Participants addressed this concern in regards to concerns in Africa that Westerners brought their

particular version of Christianity to the continent. Then, that version became the way that things had always been done without the ability to change things as the culture in Africa changed throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and even into the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. The Western missionaries were adamant that the only way to do theological education was the way that it had been done in the West. They used their power to ensure that methods of training pastors did not change. They maintained their control through the threat of removing funding or by reminding the nationals that the professors from the West really understood theological training better than the Africans ever could. These methods of hegemonic leadership prevented change from happening throughout the decades that Western organizations controlled theological education in developing nations (Byaruhanga, 2013, Higgs, 2015; Mugambi, 2013; Morris, 2017). As a result, many generations of national leadership had been conditioned to believe that the way the Westerners had done things was unchangeable. Due to the belief that the Western way was the one and only way for theological education, national leaders were reluctant to make any changes. While the participants stated that some change has happened, it has been very difficult to overcome the historical way things were done.

Stephen explained that it was difficult to help professors and administrators in many seminaries to think about offering courses online. The response he got was often related to, “We’ve never done it that way before.” Likewise, Keith had difficulty motivating the faculty in his seminary to discuss teaching hybrid courses and independent study courses based on an online framework. Due to the fact that much of the structure of their seminary was originally established by missionaries, they felt like they had to keep doing things the same way. He used terms like, “the faculty were not open for that” in regard to a potential change about offering weekend classes and “our faculty are not happy about that” to describe a change that he made to

offer some options for students to audit courses. Ron also had a story of working with a group of Filipino schools where the younger leadership was encouraging change for the health of the schools and to better train pastors, but the older leadership was resistant to doing things differently.

Sometimes outside forces have made cultural changes something that happens whether people were ready for it or not. Ron explained how over the past decade theological education has changed in Ukraine. Under Soviet control, the way pastors were trained was based on Russian thought patterns and strong Russian influence. However, today, Ukrainians are wrestling with what a culturally relevant and practical pastoral training program should look like in the independent nation. This has caused them to reflect on what pastors need to know and be able to do to serve their churches in a free nation unlike in previous generations when the concern was more focused on their role within the larger Soviet Union

Stan was a little blunter in his assessment of the tendency for those responsible for theological training to be behind the times and to be late adopters. As he engaged pastors and others involved in developing online and app-based training, he encountered those who were looking for better training options. He clearly stated, “I think if you can encourage people to develop relevant training for pastoral ministry, it’s not just a felt need, it’s a screaming felt need!”

### **Summary**

The respondents in this study verified what others such as the World Council of Churches (2013) and Naidoo (2017) have reported; there is a major shortage of trained pastors for Christian churches in developing nations. Each participant, across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America discussed the needs that they see in their particular Bible college, seminary, or



organization as they work to train more pastors. They also explained that there is a need to change the former paradigms that focused primarily on traditional, face-to-face residential schools in the capitals and largest cities of countries. One of the major ways that they envisioned training more people to minister is to utilize more educational technology such as online learning platforms, along with new ways to integrate cellular phones and other emerging platforms to be able to take training to the remotest parts of the globe.

In order for this transformation to take place, it will also require those who desire to train clergy to identify ways to develop sustainable models that are no longer reliant on funding and personnel from the West but are supported by churches, denominations, and organizations within the developing world. It will also be critical for those engaged in this training to identify and develop specific culturally relevant training that will meet the needs of those who speak languages other than English, French, Spanish, Arabic, or Mandarin. There are many pastors around the world who speak a tribal language and struggle speaking one of these languages, let alone studying biblical, theological, and practical ministry training in one of them. Closely related to this is the need to be creative with methods to train clergy from cultures that are largely oral in their culture and those that are marginally or totally illiterate so they too can be equipped to serve the people within their communities.

### **Limitations**

This study was conducted with 13 individuals engaged in pastoral training around the world. Most of these individuals only interacted with me during one interview session and then through emails exchanged to follow up on questions from the interviews. Due to this small sample size, it is impossible to guarantee that every opinion or viewpoint about pastoral training in developing nations was covered. Yet, every participant has experience with theological

education in more than one country, and many have that experience from more than one continent, so their breadth and depth of experience gives credibility to the information that they provided in this study.

While attempts were made in the process of selecting participants to get individuals from branches of Christianity such as Catholic and Eastern Orthodox, each of the study's participants identified as an Evangelical Christian. This was also a limitation in that the perspectives expressed focus on a smaller subset of Christianity and might not be a representation of all training for clergy in developing nations. Even though the participants all fit into this general theological persuasion, they represented twelve different denominations or church groups. This difference suggests that the viewpoints expressed represented a broad spectrum of theological perspectives.

A third limitation is that I did not go to the locations where these participants are involved in training clergy. Due to them being spread across the globe, it was not financially feasible to go and interview them in the developing nations where they are at. In order to address this limitation, I used the Internet to fact check the various schools, organizations, and individuals represented to verify that what was said in the interview process agreed with what was publicly available about each situation.

## **Conclusions**

### **There is a Great Need for Training Pastors**

Throughout this study, the concerns raised in the literature review were affirmed and were made even clearer by the stories the participants shared. The concept that there are very few Bible colleges across much of the developing world is one concern, but to then comprehend the

limited number of graduate seminaries that are located in these regions of the world explains the urgency of establishing more paths to training pastors.

As Paul explained, his school is one of the largest seminaries in Latin America, but it only had about 50 students enrolled and they were from about 25 countries, the reality of the need for more training options became much clearer. This meant that on the average, his seminary was only preparing two students every two to three years for each country. That was not enough to meet the needs of the current churches, let alone new ones. Keith was in a similar situation where his seminary was the only accredited one in his region of the Philippines. They too were not graduating enough students to meet the current needs of the Filipino Church. Likewise, as of 2017, Frank's school was the only accredited Bible college in Rwanda, and while they have grown, it had not been fast enough to meet the current needs for pastors in the country.

As Brandon, Frank, Doug, Stan, and Gale shared about the eagerness of pastors who wanted to learn about how to lead their churches better, it became obvious that the lack of trained pastors was not due to a lack of interest on the parts of pastors in rural areas, but rather a lack of opportunity for these pastors to get trained. Many of them had not been academically prepared to attend a formal college or graduate school, but they were willing and able to learn via other creative methods how to better serve their congregations. These participants in this study have demonstrated that there is a hunger for training, especially if it can be delivered in language that is the student's primary one instead of a national language in which they are not comfortable studying.

### **Technology is Available to Help Train Pastors**

Part of the impetus behind this study was to evaluate if there were ways that technology could be effectively utilized to train pastors in developing nations. As I discussed the focus of the

study with peers, friends, and others located in the West, the majority of people expressed shock because they assumed that there was no way that technology could be used in developing nations. The assumption was that people in “those nations” could not possibly have access to technology, and especially not those who lived in more remote areas.

However, the participants in this study gave clear examples of the wide variety of technology that was currently available and that was being used to train pastors. The access to some kinds of technology such as high speed Internet were limited in the most rural areas of developing nations in Africa and Latin America, but they were in fact available in most remote areas of Europe and Asia. For much of the developing world, technology such as cellular phones, tablets, and computers were available, and pastors could have access to them. There might be some concerns about the purchase price of the phone or Internet service required to use these tools, as well as the available Internet bandwidth and the technological skills of pastors, but these options were available. These tools would allow rural pastors in large portions of developing nations to have the ability to take online courses offered by schools in their country, continent, or even from another part of the world.

In addition to the more standard forms of technology that were known and used in the West, there were new technological tools that were being developed and utilized specifically to train pastors in the remote parts of developing nations. These new tools took currently available tools and combined them with other tools that then extended the ability to train pastors in areas that had not previously had access to some forms of pastoral training. Brandon’s specially designed MP3 player that held biblical, theological, and practical pastoral training as well as a version of the Bible partnered with a cell phone and software that collected data from answers entered on the phone, allowed pastors in Ghana to become trained. Stan’s work with Biblebox

and LightStream provided pastoral training in a small mobile package that could then send that content to a pastor's phone or load the materials on a memory device that could be put into a phone or computer.

### **More Partnerships Need to be Developed**

Participants in the study highlighted the advantages of partnerships that they have seen. This included partnerships between denominations that traditionally would not work together but for the sake of training pastors in Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa, and beyond, they were willing to come together for both non-formal and formal training. Paul mentioned how his school partnered with other traditional seminaries across Latin America to share online classes to reach more pastors. The organizations that Ron and Marlin were part of existed almost in their entirety to develop partnerships between seminaries in developing nations. Jeannette's school established partnerships with schools in other countries so that Filipinos could be trained by Filipinos. There were also partnerships such as the accreditation organization that Stephen directed across Africa or the group of theological schools in the Philippines who worked together on various projects. Many of this study's participants stated that there is a need to do more partnering due to reduced resources from the West, reduced numbers of formal students, and the increased costs of providing training for clergy. While the participants of this study were engaged in the above partnerships, the connections seemed to focus more on the formal undergraduate and graduate level of pastoral training and not on the informal training side.

Through this study, it appears that there would be value to develop partnerships that allow the kind of sharing of resources and knowledge and best practices among those who are providing non-formal training for pastors in developing nations. For instance, if there were a way for someone like Stan to share what he has learned about designing effective apps for training

pastors in minority language groups in Latin America, Gale, Doug, and Frank could perhaps use those same app tools to provide training in Kinyarwanda, Zulu, or some other language. It would also be beneficial for Brent to be able to share how his training methods for those going to pastor in China could be utilized for others who are pastoring in countries in the Middle East where there are Filipinos working in similar settings. In order to effectively provide more and better training for pastors around the world, it appears that working together instead of continuing to function in silos will be an important component of achieving success.

### **Pastoral Training Must Be Culturally Sensitive and Relevant**

The literature is clear (Higgs, 2015; Naidoo, 2013; Gathogo, 2012; Hedges, 2008; Kaunda, 2015), especially in Africa, and the study participants confirmed that one of the major errors of theological education over the past 200 years was the assumption that the Western view of Christianity was the only one. The missionaries' insistence to train pastors to lead churches in the same way that churches were led in the West without any acknowledgement of the cultures of those in the developing nations has led to the development of unsustainable models, as well as caused extreme friction between those in some nations today and those from the West. The cultural insensitivity prepared many pastors for a world that did not exist, whether in their own villages or even in the urban cities of their countries. While much has been learned about how to address these cultural issues, changes to theological training have been slow to adapt to address how pastors are trained in their context instead of assuming that the curriculum from a Western seminary could be implemented without any adaptations to the needs of those in developing nations. Thankfully, the participants shared several examples of how issues like sustainability or the training of leaders within developing nations has opened the door to discuss ways to continue to improve theological education in developing nations from a national perspective instead of an

unquestioning following of how things have always been. Yet, it continued to be difficult for pastors from developing nations who traveled to the West for advanced theological training. For those who returned to their country, many were unable to relate to those they were called to serve because of the cultural differences between the training they received in the West and the realities of their home.

With the knowledge that there have been major errors in how culture has been addressed in the past (Higgs, 2015; Morris, 2017; Tan, 2017), it is critical for schools and organizations who are currently developing pastoral training to take into account the different cultural realities that are present in the lives of the pastors they are preparing for ministry. While it might be impossible to cover all of the areas where culture influences pastoral training, there are several large elements that must be addressed. One of those is to make sure that curriculum designed for pastors in a particular area is designed to meet the needs of the local pastors. Stephen, Ron, and Stan expressed the importance of building the curriculum from the local needs instead of starting with a Western model and forcing it into another culture. Stephen explained that for much of African culture, people want to start from a specific problem and move into how the Bible addresses that particular issue instead of starting from the theoretical view and moving to application as is popular in Western education. Stan raised the issue that in Latin America, rural pastors need to start with basic information instead of diving into deep theoretical perspectives. However, Western models of pastoral training often work on the philosophical foundations long before introducing students to how to use the knowledge in their daily lives.

Another cultural area that was raised was the need to offer the pastoral training in the primary language of the pastors as much as possible. While it might be cheaper to provide training in one of the larger global languages due to the economy of scale, if the pastors are

unable to fully understand and synthesize the content that they are studying in a second language, the training will not be as effective as if it were in their heart language. While this is especially true for training rural pastors, it is also important for formal schools to investigate whether they can offer their programs in a language spoken by a large number of their students.

Finally, it is important to address the issues of the changing nature of culture. Perhaps one of the downfalls of the Western missionaries who established Bible colleges and seminaries in developing nations over the past two centuries was that they seemed to become embedded into the culture of the pastoral training process; the way programs were established in the early 1800s was the way it would continue to be done forever. As a result, according to Ron and Marlin, it has only been within the past decade that many theological schools have started rethinking how to reorganize their schools to meet the changing needs of people in their countries. Stephen, Stan, Paul, and Keith also each told a story of their interactions with leadership in formal schools who are very resistant to changing to the present philosophy of how education needs to be done. For pastoral training to be effective, it must address the needs of the culture pastors are serving today, not the culture of their grandparents or great grandparents 100 years ago.



## CHAPTER VI: THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE

### **Implications**

This study contributed to the body of knowledge that looks at the training of pastors in developing nations via a variety of technological methods. It is the first study available that specifically evaluated ways to train pastors in rural areas in developing nations around the world and thus provides a solid foundation for further research moving forward. It discovered barriers and benefits to training pastors in these areas, as well as specific ideas related to the use of online education in these areas. Although many answers have been discovered through this study, it has also raised many additional questions that merit further study.

As I have reflected on several of the gaps in the literature and on what has been written about the practice of training pastors in remote areas, it has been depressing at times to see the great needs and the constant reminders that the process is not working as it should. The facts are clear, the Church is growing, and there are not enough trained pastors to shepherd the congregations. However, at the same time the intense needs have been an unrelenting motivator for me to continue researching ways that could possibly help train more clergy around the world. This study provided me, and the greater community of theological education with some examples of models that are in fact working in developing nations. Finding these positive examples has fueled my passion to keep looking for additional working models and to keep writing and to encourage others to write about models that they are using which will help train more pastors in developing nations. While the current status sounds quite bleak, the participants in this study have given me great hope that it is possible to make a difference in training pastors. I am excited to see what additional research will discover in the future as people work to prepare more ministers for the Church.

## **Sustainability**

With the reduction of revenue and professors from the West due to changes in governmental regulations like Frank has experienced in Rwanda or due to changing priorities of the Church in the West as Jeannette and Stephen identified, schools and organizations need to reevaluate how they plan to sustain the training of pastors in their areas. While people like Brandon expressed concern about the large reduction in money coming from the West, he did not have solutions in mind other than the need to raise more money inside Ghana and to continue to cut costs in other places. Historically, the Church in Ghana has relied on funding from the West and they have not developed a habit of supporting ministry within their own country, so Brandon believes it will be difficult to raise as much money from inside the country as they have been accustomed to coming from outside. So, new models of sustainability need to be identified and studied in order to make sure that the schools can continue to operate.

I believe that this is an area where communication needs to happen between various schools perhaps within a given geographic area or even between groups that have developed partnerships in other areas such as shared accreditation agencies. Ideas that have worked well to improve sustainability for one school or in one area could be shared so that other schools and areas can benefit from the knowledge at peer schools. Stan mentioned that there is a lack of understanding about the options that are available in global theological education. However, I did not hear Frank, Scott, or Paul mention that they had discussed options for improved sustainability with others, even though they mentioned that this was a real issue for their particular schools. Given the concerns that were raised by this study's participants and others like Naidoo (2017) about sustainability, it is time to stop focusing just on what is not working

and to start working on effective solutions which will allow theological education to continue to thrive for generations to come...even if it must look different to be sustainable.

## **Technology**

The participants identified both positives and negatives of using cellular phones in the process of training pastors. Therefore, it would be good to specifically study how phones are being used, gather information about the best practices, and then start developing a plan on models that will work in various developing nations. Although several participants knew about the work that the International Leadership University in Kenya is doing with cellphones, none of the participants talked about utilizing that format in their own setting. This raises the question of how models that are working to train pastors through one seminary or organization could be transferred to other seminaries. If the concept is working well for those in Kenya, could that same process be replicated by a seminary in another part of Africa or even in South America? In addition to the use of phones, a few participants mentioned using tablets. I did not find any research that addressed the usage of tablets for training pastors or for training people in other fields in developing nations. Given the concerns that some participants had about the screen size of phones for studying, more research should be done to evaluate how tablets could be integrated into ministerial training. For instance, would the cheaper Amazon Kindles make a difference for providing theological libraries for pastors as Frank hypothesized? Would it make sense to spend more money on more expensive Android or Apple tablets that would allow pastors to download video content from an organization like Third Millennium so that they could learn via audio video methods? Would it ever make sense to have tablets that utilize cellular technology so that pastoral students in remote areas could more easily access content on the Internet in areas where the cellular signal is stronger than an Internet connection?

In addition, other technology like the Biblebox and LightStream that Stan discussed and the MP3 player loaded with pastoral training materials that Brandon is using, as well as new technology should be studied to determine its effectiveness and ability to be used in multiple languages and multiple locations around the world. These tools seem to be known by a few people, but further research into their uses could be beneficial as pastoral educators from around the world determine how to best implement these tools in their settings. Furthermore, this could be an area where those who have skills in designing technology could work together with those who have content that they want to use in pastoral training to keep innovating more effective methods to take the training to pastors. As was discussed previously by Stephen and Stan, often times, those in theological education have been resistant to technological advances. Perhaps the time has come for innovative theologians to work with those in technology fields to develop models that work instead of waiting for the theological academy to change their minds about training pastors via technology. If they do provide models that are able to equip more pastors, this will be a successful part of closing the gap between the growing Church and the lack of pastoral leadership in it.

### **Meeting the Needs of Oral Learning, Illiterate and Marginally Literate Pastors**

One of the needs that was clearly exposed from this study was the need to train pastors in rural areas of developing nations who cannot meet the requirements to study at a formal educational institution. Whether they come from a primarily oral culture where there is not a history of written literacy or whether they had limited educational opportunities due to a lack of accessibility or war, pastors in these regions need training in a format that works for them. Gale, Brandon, Frank, Doug, and Stan have models that are working for them, but there is little research available that addresses the various models that they are using for this population

around the world. The training of pastors who are illiterate was only briefly mentioned in the literature by Morris (2017), but the participants in this study have raised the issue that there are many pastors in this category that the current methods of training will never reach. Therefore, more study needs to be done to identify the overarching needs of this population and to develop models such as those the participants in this study have developed, and to then evaluate their effectiveness in training these pastors who have been largely ignored over the years.

This is an area where I also think that more partnerships need to be developed. While some in positions of national or global leadership like Stephen have encouraged formal, accredited Bible colleges and seminaries to seriously investigate doing more informal training of pastors, the models of Theological Education by Extension that Keith and Jeannette have used in their schools continue to be expensive for the schools to sustain. Therefore, there needs to be more research on how formal schools can engage the informal learners in order to train pastors who will probably never attend their formal programs for one reason or another in a cost-effective manner. This will require a major paradigm shift for schools who depend on support from tuition paying students to support the school to be innovative and to invest in training those who may not be able to afford even a limited expense for pastoral training.

The majority of the schools that Ron and Marlin work with are accredited and have a natural network developed. However, the non-formal programs that Frank, Brandon, Brent, Doug, and Gale are working with do not have such a network. Rather, each group is running their own program and is largely disengaged from other organizations that are also training pastors. It seems that a network needs to be developed that will connect those who are providing pastoral training in non-formal ways so that successful models could be shared, current models could be improved, and future models could be brainstormed. One of the difficulties with this

concept is that there is not a current format to begin connecting those who are involved in this kind of pastoral training. It would likely be a difficult process to develop the infrastructure that would allow for this kind of network to be built, but the long-term dividends would be transformational around the world. Connected to this idea is also the need for those who are currently engaged in models that are training the illiterate and oral-learning pastors to write more about what is working and what is not working so that there can be an increasing body of literature that is available for others to review as they seek to train pastors in their areas.

Perhaps, it is this area that has surfaced from this study which holds the most potential to drastically improve the numbers of trained pastors in developing nations. The contrast between those working in formal seminaries like Paul who are concerned about the low enrollments and those working in non-formal settings like Frank, Gale, and Doug who have more ministerial students than they can train is stark. If a goal of the global Church is to train more pastors in developing nations (World Council of Churches, 2013), it seems like there are many who are waiting for the right training taught at the right educational level at the right price, and the non-formal venue would be a great place to start training more pastors.

### **Final Thoughts**

The realization that the vast majority of pastors around the world have no training on how to be a pastor is a sobering thought. It is hard to conceive of any other profession where those involved have not been trained prior to carrying out the responsibilities of their work. While the majority of the literature written about the lack of trained clergy spends its time decrying the decline of available options, I hope that this study provides some hope that there are options available for training pastors around the world. The training may or may not look like traditional Western theological training, and that is OK. No, that is excellent! It is obvious that many of the

models that were imported from the West to other countries have not proven to be sustainable models that were adequate to meet the needs of the people they originally desired to prepare for ministry.

Since the literature also expressed frustration that there has been little research done in the field of online theological training and for training of pastors in developing nations, it has been exciting to be able to help provide more research in these fields. My prayer is that this study helps light a spark that will be part of the solution of training additional pastors around the world instead of one that joins the chorus that only laments the problems without offering hope for a different future.

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## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date:

Dear Fellow Trainer of Ministers,

I am a doctoral student in the Teaching and Learning program at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, USA. I am conducting a research study under the direction of Dr. Rena Shifflet as part of my dissertation work. I am examining the educational options that are currently available for preparing people to become ministers. The specific questions of interest are: 1. In what ways are electronic devices being utilized for ministerial preparation in developing nations? 2. How can the training of ministers in developing nations be impacted by integrating more educational technology in distance education? And the sub questions include: a. What are the barriers and the benefits to using electronic devices in training? b. What cultural components need to be considered in offering distance education via these tools?

Participation is voluntary and participants may drop out of the study at any time without any penalty to them. The study will involve participants interacting in an one-on-one interview in English with the co-principal investigator that will last approximately thirty (30) minutes. During the interview, participants will be asked questions about their experience with ministerial preparation and the perceptions of how well people in their region are being prepared as well as potential ways to train more pastors. All interviews will be audio and video recorded with the consent of the participant. Participants will have the right to choose to skip any of the questions and the information provided will be kept strictly confidential. Due to the global nature of this research, the interviews will most likely take place using a video interface via a tool like Skype or Google Hangouts. Should an interview take place in a face-to-face setting, it will take place at a location of the participant's choosing such as their office, home, or a mutually agreed upon neutral site.

The results from the study will be presented as an aggregate in a doctoral dissertation. Pseudonyms will be used in the presentation of the results in place of participant names. This will ensure confidentiality of the participant information. The findings from this study will help evaluate the current status of ministerial preparation in developing nations as well as provide insights into the potential of utilizing online training as method for preparing more people to become pastors.

If you would like to be part of this research study, please send me an email at A\*\*\*\*\*@ilstu.edu with a time that you can meet for an interview.

Thank you very much for your time and interest in this study.

Sincerely,

Andrew Beaty

309-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*

A\*\*\*\*\*@ilstu.edu

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Skype or Google Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Availability \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Interviewee,

I am a doctoral student in the Teaching and Learning program at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, USA. I am conducting a research study under the direction of Dr. Rena Shifflet as part of my dissertation work. I am examining the formal educational options that are currently available for preparing people to become ministers. The specific questions of interest are: 1. In what ways are electronic devices being utilized for ministerial preparation in developing nations? 2. How can the training of ministers in developing nations be impacted by integrating more educational technology in distance education? And the sub questions include: a. What are the barriers and the benefits to using electronic devices in training? b. What cultural components need to be considered in offering distance education via these tools?

The study involves a thirty (30) minute one-on-one interview in English with me, the co-principal investigator. This interview will likely take place via a video conference call utilizing a tool like Skype or Google Hangouts. The interview will be audio and video recorded with your permission. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your experience with ministerial preparation and the perceptions of how well people in your region are being prepared as well as potential ways to provide additional education for new pastors. Please be aware that participation in this study is voluntary and that you may drop out of the study at any time without any penalty. In addition, you have the right to skip over any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Confidentiality will be preserved at all times during the collection and storage of data in order to protect your privacy.

The interview will be transcribed and the data collected will be stored in a password protected file that will only be accessible to the co-principal investigator. The results from the study will be presented as an aggregate in the dissertation in such a way that information may not be traced to any one participant. Also, pseudonyms will be used in the presentation of the results in place of participant names. This will ensure confidentiality of the participant information.

While there may be no specific or personal benefits to you, the findings of the study may be used to help increase the quantity and quality of ministerial preparation throughout developing countries. Educational institutions, denominations, and mission agencies will find

this information beneficial as they evaluate additional methods of preparing pastors around the world.

Thank you for being willing to participate in this research study. Before conducting the interview, you will be asked to sign this letter of consent, acknowledging that you have been given permission for your responses to be recorded and used in this study.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please email me at a\*\*\*\*\*@ilstu.edu or contact my research advisor Dr. Rena Shifflet at r\*\*\*\*\*@ilstu.edu.

Again, thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study.

Sincerely,

Andrew Beaty

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you may contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Office at Illinois State University at [rec@ilstu.edu](mailto:rec@ilstu.edu) or call (309) 438-2529.



## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions for educators:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. How long have you been involved in theological education?
3. In what teaching formats have you been involved with in preparing people to become pastors/ministers?
4. How do people in urban areas of your country typically obtain training to become ministers?
5. How do people in rural areas of your country typically obtain training to become ministers?
6. How are electronic devices like smart phones, online courses, radio broadcasts, or other technological tools being used to train ministers in your area?
7. How often do you teach with educational technology such as these tools?
8. In what ways could using more educational technology improve the training of ministers in your area?
9. What are your thoughts on the use of distance education techniques and tools in the delivery of theological training in your area?
10. Do you see a need for more theological distance education options in your area? If so, why?
11. How might theological distance education options enhance training in your area? What challenges might be associated with this type of training?
12. What barriers might exist in your country if electronic devices were incorporated into ministerial training?
13. How can those who prepare ministers through distance education make sure it is relevant to the culture and context in which it is offered?