AOSIS

# Contextualisation within context: A pedagogical spectrum of six methodologies

CrossMark

**Author:**
Brian A. DeVries[1,2,3]

**Affiliations:**
[1]Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, United States of America

[2]Mukhanyo Theological College, KwaMhlanga, South Africa

[3]Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

**Corresponding author:**
Brian DeVries,
bdevries99@gmail.com

The field of contextualisation is broad, with a vast diversity of definitions, models and methodologies. There are now many useful models of contextualisation from which to choose. But clearly, there is no one-size-fits-all solution – the diverse collection of options are not equally valid or useful or effective in all ministry contexts. How should one choose the best method for his or her ministry and context? This article argued that the ministry 'context' – the area, actors and activity of ministry – is the key determining factor for choosing the most effective contextualisation method for each ministry situation. The various contextualisation models and methods are based on the ministry context for which they are designed, as the constraints of each specific ministry context significantly influence the ideal contextualisation methodology. This article considered six distinct ministry contexts, each of which requires a different contextualisation methodology.

**Contribution:** This article contributed to the discussion of contextualisation methodologies. While there are many settled theories and methods in this area, there remains considerable divergence and disagreement around various contextualisation concepts and practices. This article provides a useful pedagogical framework for organising the various methods in order to aid the academic discussion as well as the practical application of these methods.

**Keywords:** contextualisation; mission methodology; gospel and culture; intercultural theologies; hermeneutics; incarnation; translation; indigenisation; contextual theology; intercultural ministry.

## Introduction

Which method of contextualisation best aids the ministry situation in which you are serving? The field of contextualisation is broad, with a vast diversity of definitions, models and methodologies. Authors such as Schreiter (1985), Bevans (1992), Gilliland (2005:493–519) and Van Engen (2005a:183–202; 2005b:203–226) have proven this fact. Evangelicals have accepted the term *contextualisation* and have carefully refocused its meaning. Gilliland (2000:225–227), Conn (2000:481–482) and Terry (2000:483–485) provide a concise summary of this history.

There are now many useful models from which to choose. For example, in his definitive book, Scott Moreau (2012) surveys 249 evangelical models. He proposes a map for understanding and assessing diverse collection of contextualisation methodologies. This book is very helpful not only for its comprehensive scope, but especially for its academic reflection on the history of this field and various factors in the discussion.

Thus, a wide variety of contextualisation models are now available for gospel ministry. But clearly, there is no one-size-fits-all solution; the diverse collection of options are not equally valid or useful or even effective in all contexts. Many methods are specific to the context in which or for which they were developed. Furthermore, not all contextualisation methodologies are equally acceptable or faithful to Scripture and our gospel witness.

Additionally, there remain ongoing debates such as (1) the differing perspectives represented in the views of Charles Kraft and Paul Hiebert (Moreau 2012:77–98); (2) the extended discussion of 'how far is too far' in Muslim evangelism (Tennent 2007:193–218); and (3) the recent contributions of disputed contextual theologies, for example the divergent contributions surrounding missions and wealth (Wrogemann 2018:293–305). These debates demonstrate the need for more research and much more discernment in this important area.

The question in this article, however, is more practical: How does one choose the best method for a specific ministry situation? For those of us who teach, this question can be further focused:

How should we teach contextualisation in such a way that mission students and future ministry leaders will clearly understand its nuances and complexities, and so that they can accurately evaluate and utilise the best method in their ministry situation? We need a simple intuitive framework for teaching this complex subject.

I have had the privilege to teach contextualisation and intercultural ministry to diverse groups of students from many different countries. By experience, I have found that, without an intuitive framework, we often leave our students with a muddled understanding of the various contextualisation methods. The goal with this article is thus simply to present a teaching tool – a pedagogical spectrum of six methodologies – that my students have found helpful.

From a practical perspective, the ministry context and situation is a key determining factor in choosing the most effective contextualisation method for a specific occasion. The constraints of each specific ministry context will significantly influence the choice of methodology. Therefore, it is advantageous to organise the various contextualisation models and methods based on the ministry context within which they are used. I have identified six distinct intercultural ministry contexts, each of which requires a different contextualisation methodology.

Admittedly, this deductive approach has a practical orientation. I will not attempt to include representatives for all models, because other authors such as Moreau (2012) have already made thorough and definitive inductive studies in this field (cf. Cortez 2005a; 2005b; Hesselgrave & Rommen 1989). Instead, I simply present a functional framework – based on the contexts of ministry – for organising and assessing the vast array of contextualisation models and methods. This article builds on Moreau's study as well as the work of several other categorisations of contextualisation methodology (DeVries 2007:291–294).

## X1: Incarnational contextualisation (Figure 1)

The first context to consider (labelled as X1) is also first in the logical order of missional ministry: the embodiment of gospel witness in a missional context. This type of contextualisation is found in at least two significant cases: (1) the Word become flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14); and (2), as Christ was incarnated into the human context, so we who are called into cross-cultural ministry also seek – in a less radical and less amazing manner than our gracious Lord – to be incarnated into the sociocultural context of the group of people to whom we are sent. Like Christ (the Word), we (Sent Ones) leave our natural contexts (Sending Culture) and go into other contexts (Receiving Culture) to share the gospel. In intercultural ministry, we could call this *incarnational* contextualisation or cultural adaptation.

Some missiologists hesitate to use the term *incarnation* in relation to our contextual ministry, because the incarnation of

Christ was the unique event of the Son of God taking on flesh, which was and is radically different from a human missionary taking on a different culture. The Southgate Fellowship (2020:108–135) states, 'We deny that the *sui generis* incarnation of the eternal Son of God offers a proper analogy for construing contextualisation as "incarnational".' So perhaps *embodiment* would be a better term, but I feel the term *incarnation* can still be used for this type of contextual ministry (and this type alone), as we have been sent by Christ as his missionaries in the same way – at least to some degree and/or in some manner – as he himself was sent by the Father (Jn 20:21).

Let us analyse the underlying concepts of the *incarnational* mode of contextualisation: The agent of contextualisation is the missionary who is called to live cross-culturally in a context different from his or her own. The object to be contextualised is the person of the missionary – his or her lifestyle, language, thinking, and even values and emotions; in short, every aspect of the worldview must be contextualised at least in part. The stage for this activity of contextualisation is the sociocultural setting in which the missionary serves, especially the new audience for gospel witness. The flow of this contextualisation is linear and one-way; the missionary adapts the practice to the culture of the audience to be served.

A biblical example of X1 is explained with the Apostle Paul's familiar words: 'To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews'. The ultimate goal of X1 is to 'win' people for Christ from among all nations to be used by the Spirit to 'save some', and to participate with the nations in the blessings of the gospel (1 Cor 9:19–23). Missionary biographies covering the past two millennia are replete with excellent examples of how faithful men and women have followed Paul with X1 contextualisation in so far as he followed Christ. The literature gives us many faithful models for X1. Our struggle is usually not *how* to do it, but rather with our need for grace to be faithful as we do it. When teaching intercultural ministry, I have found it helpful under this heading to teach about matters such as adjusting to new cultures, dealing with culture shock, and gaining intercultural competence.
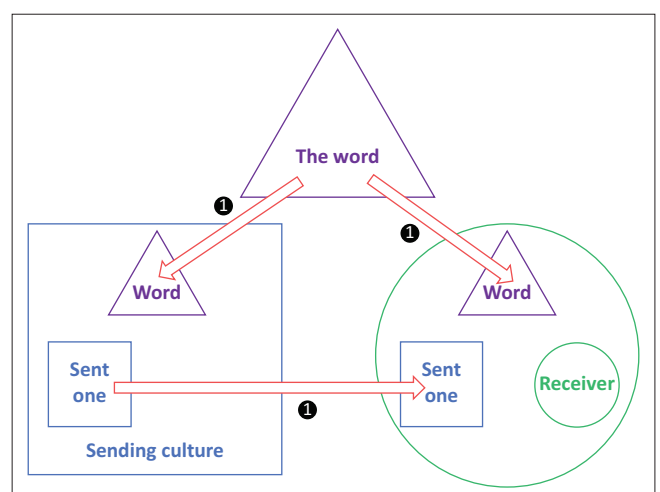


**FIGURE 1:** X1: Incarnational contextualisation.

# X2: Missional contextualisation (Figure 2)

For the missionary to be faithful when communicating the message of the gospel, a second mode of contextualisation must immediately follow the first. Thus, X1 is logically followed by *missional* contextualisation, which I have labelled X2. This mode of contextualisation takes place within a missional context, and it requires what has been called third horizon hermeneutics. Carson (1987) explains:

> The first horizon is that of the biblical documents or, as some would have it, of the first generation of Christian believers as that perspective is preserved in the New Testament. The second horizon is ours – i.e. that of established Christians who seek to understand the Scriptures. Contemporary discussion of mission, however, goes a step further and deals with the 'third horizon' – viz. the horizon of understanding of the group or people being evangelized. (pp. 213–257)

*Missional* contextualisation, X2, involves the communication of the gospel message (the Word) by the missionary (Sent One) to a person (Receiver) in the local sociocultural context (Receiving Culture). It describes the cross-cultural communication and translation of the gospel into a new sociocultural context.

The underlying concepts of X2 are well known: The agent of contextualisation is again the missionary who is ministering cross-culturally. The object to be contextualised is the message of the gospel. The stage for this activity is the sociocultural setting in which evangelism of non-Christians and discipleship of new Christians takes place. The flow of this contextualisation is also linear and one-way; the missionary speaks the eternal unchanging Word into a specific and changing local context (Conn 1984). In practice, however, this official one-way gospel proclamation is greatly aided by a dialogical two-way conversation between the Sent One and the Receiver (DeVries 2007:291–294).

The goal of X2 is to accurately communicate the gospel, within a different language and sociocultural context, in such a way that is understandable and without any unintended distractions or misapplications. Biblical examples of X2 (and its challenges) include the preaching of Paul at Lystra in Acts 14:6–18, communication that was at first misunderstood. Indeed, Paul's experience at Lystra highlights the importance in X2 of third horizon hermeneutics and faithful Bible translation. Evangelical literature abounds with faithful models for an insightful reflection on X2 (Hesselgrave 1991; Larkin 1988).

Many matters must be discussed (and debated) under this heading in evangelical missiology: culture and biblical hermeneutics, cross-cultural evangelism and discipleship, and Bible translation with the various underlying translation theories. It is crucial for our students to keep in mind the vital distinction between X1 and X2: in X1, the *person* of the missionary must be incarnated and adapted to fit into a new culture, while in X2, the *truth* of the Bible must be translated without change into a new language. In X1, we give up our rights – like Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 – in order to adapt to the people we want to serve; in X2, we carefully preserve and defend the unchanging truth of the message that we translate into the cultural setting of the people we are serving.

# X3: Ecclesial contextualisation (Figure 3)

When the Lord blesses cross-cultural missional ministry, a third mode or context of contextualisation will logically follow. New believers are gathered into local churches and
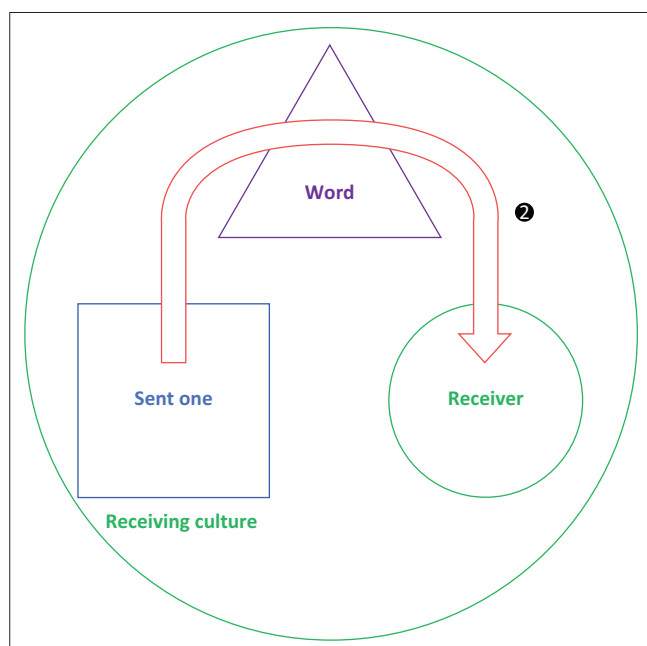

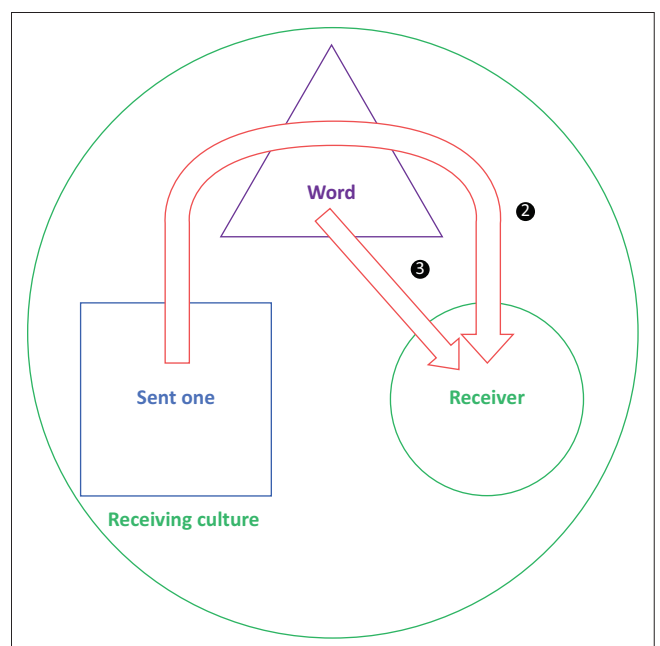
**FIGURE 2:** X2: Missional contextualisation.



**FIGURE 3:** X3: Ecclesial contextualisation.

faithfully discipled so that, by God's grace, a maturing church is established in a new sociocultural context. Evidence of the new church's spiritual maturity includes the practice of self-theologising, the confessing and teaching of biblical truth (Word) by indigenous people within the local church (Receiver) in the language and worldview of the local context (Receiving Culture). The maturing context requires a different method of contextualisation, which we can label X3. This contextualisation happens within the thinking and teaching of a local church – it is thus called *ecclesial* contextualisation, although perhaps the older term *indigenisation* is still better.

In *ecclesial* contextualisation, X3, the agents who engage in contextualisation are indigenous Christians from the local culture, ideally guided by the spiritual leaders of the local church. More than a century ago, Dutch theologian, Bavinck (1894), argued for X3:

> Calvinism wishes no cessation of progress and promotes multiformity. It feels the impulse to penetrate ever more deeply into the mysteries of salvation and in feeling this honours every gift and different calling of the Churches. It does not demand for itself the same development in America and England [*and Africa and Asia*] which it has found in Holland. This only must be insisted upon, that in each country and in every Reformed Church it should develop itself in accordance with its own nature, and should not permit itself to be supplanted by foreign ideas. (p. 23)

The object to be contextualised is still the message of the gospel, motivated by a sincere desire to improve the local teaching and confession. The stage for this activity is within the church and often sustained by second or third generation believers. The flow of this contextualisation is cyclical as a hermeneutical spiral. In this way, the indigenous church refines its collective Bible knowledge and confession of the gospel.

The goal of X3 is to improve the accuracy of the local understanding and application of biblical truth (theology) in order to answer to local questions that challenge biblical thinking (apologetics) and to confront the sin of local traditions (prophetic preaching). The church in Berea, after being planted by the Apostle Paul, is a biblical example of the beginnings of X3 (Ac 17:10–12). Evangelical literature also abounds with models of X3. Much has been written about the so-called fourth self: self-theologising. Some of these models prove to be more faithful to Scripture and orthodox practice than others as has shown by recent missiological debate about 'How far is too far' with planting churches within non-Christian communities (Tennent 2007:193–218).

There are many matters for intercultural ministry that belong under X3: Niebuhr's 'Christ and Culture' paradigm and the ongoing discussions of how to be a church in the world but not of the world (Keller 2012:89–134); Hiebert's critical contextualisation (1994:75–92) with discussions of various contextualised ministry methods; and the whole area of biblical worship principles and contextualised worship practice. It is also important to teach the vital distinction between X2 and X3: While X2 logically precedes in ministry progression, X3 is an indication of a more mature ministry environment (DeVries 2016:8–10). Thus, the process no longer involves third horizon hermeneutics, and the cross-cultural missionary is no longer directly involved in X3. I have found that teaching contextualisation in this way usually creates a wonderful space in the classroom for extended discussions about making relevant local biblical application and avoiding pervasive syncretisms (both of the local cultural and of the missionary's culture).

# X4: Reformational contextualisation (Figure 4)

The fourth context of contextualisation involves the outward-facing ministry of a local church. When a church is faithful, its members will engage in gospel witness – both by words and deeds – within their own community and public space. This missionary activity of the local church in its own particular sociocultural context is different from X2 – the cross-cultural gospel ministry of a missionary. It requires thus a different method of contextualisation, which can be called *reformational* contextualisation. The term *reformational* is used, as the result of this activity is the social and spiritual reformation of the local community. It could also be called *transformational* contextualisation, but the words *transform* and *transformation* are often used more broadly and could confuse the precise focus of X4.

In *reformational* contextualisation, X4, the agents are faithful members of the local church who are guided – again, ideally – by their spiritual leaders. The object to be contextualised is the public witness of the church in the world, which is tailored to the specific needs and issues within its particular sociocultural context. The stage for this activity is the public
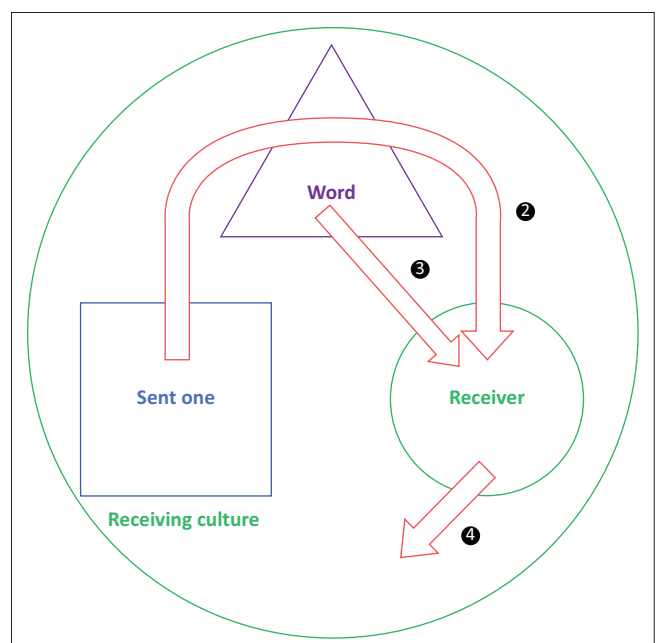


**FIGURE 4:** X4: Reformational contextualisation.

space and community surrounding the church. The flow of this contextualisation is both linear and dialogical: It is dialogical as a prophetic conversation between the indigenous believers and the local culture; it is also linear as a prophetic proclamation of the gospel's truth claims to local unbelievers and their unbiblical cultural practices.

The goal of X4 is to speak against sin in the culture and social structures of the local community, to answer contemporary challenges to the claims of the gospel, to preach the gospel in the language of contemporary culture in order to address the needs (both felt and spiritual) of people in that context, and to be used by God to reform local society and rebuild it on a gospel foundation with a Christian worldview. The church in Rome was at one time a biblical example of X4. The Apostle Paul thanks the Lord that their 'faith is proclaimed in all the world:' (Rm 1:8; cf. 1 Th 1:6–10).

In the classroom, we can explain X4 by discussing the faithfulness to Scripture of newer contextual theologies, the importance of contextual ethics, and the need for faithful prophetic witness of the local church in society. There are many excellent examples of X4 in church history, including many Protestant churches during the European Reformation of the 16th century, and the revivals in England and America during the Great Awakenings, which eventually led to an end of the Atlantic slave trade and the great century of Protestant missionary expansion. Newbegin (1989) motivates prophetic witness within a Western society with the gospel and, likewise, many other faithful non-Western Christians should seek to speak the gospel prophetically in their own sociocultural contexts. Other historical examples include revivals in Korea (Blair 1977) and Madagascar (Smith 1987).

## X5: Reflectional contextualisation (Figure 5)

A fifth mode of contextualisation is often the by-product of faithful X1 and X2 that is motivated by X3: It describes the changes that take place in the missionary's own worldview and theological practice. The worldview differences in cross-cultural ministry, which may initially cause culture shock and other reactions, should lead to careful and humble reflection by the missionary (Sent One) about his or her own worldview (Sending Culture), the sociocultural context in which he or she is ministering (Receiving Culture), and new insights gained in the process from God's Word. This contemplation is a feedback mechanism, usually resulting in some changes within the missionary himself, which can be called *reflectional* contextualisation.

The underlying concepts of X5 are different from the modes of contextualisation already considered. The agent in X5 is again the cross-cultural missionary him- or herself. The object to be contextualised, as in X1, is the person of the missionary. But unlike X1, this reflection and the resulting modifications are often much deeper within the missionary's worldview due to a more mature understanding of both his or her
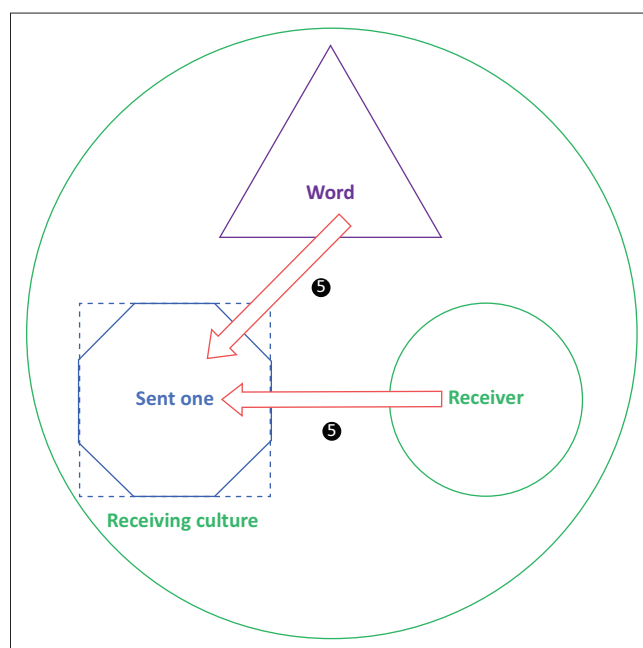


**FIGURE 5:** X5: Reflectional contextualisation.

sending culture as well as the receiving culture. Becoming a bi-cultural person is usually a long process. The stage for X5 is usually very personal – within the missionary's life and perhaps his or her family – and it often causes tensions such as reverse culture shock. The flow of this contextualisation is again linear as the missionary adjusts his or her worldview and becomes multicultural.

The goal of X5 is to grow in our understanding and application of biblical truth and to mature in multicultural ministry. The Book of Acts gives much attention to X5: A relatively large number of verses are devoted to explaining how the Apostle Peter, together with the whole New Testament church, learned that the gospel was for both Jews and non-Jews (Ac 11:18; cf. Gl 2:11–14). A classic example in evangelical literature that flows from X5 is Hiebert's 'Flaw of the Excluded Middle' (1994:189–201). In the classroom, we can further teach X5 by dealing with a number of related missiological subjects: tensions in the process of becoming bi-cultural, the dynamics of forming cross-cultural relationships, and the important practice of cross-cultural conflict resolution. There is a growing collection of good literature in this category (Elmer 1994; Lingenfelter 1996), but much more is needed.

Note that X5 could be grouped as a subset of X6 – global contextualisation, the final context of contextualisation to be considered next. However, I decided to keep it separate and place it first for several reasons: (1) it is vitally important in our missional practice – also as an antidote to ethnocentrism in practice; (2) it logically precedes global contextualisation and is often the precursor to effective X6; (3) it is a linear flow as a feedback mechanism rather than being a dialogical or organic process of contextualisation; and (4) it changes the missionary (Sent One) and not necessarily the missionary's culture (Sending Culture) as in X6. It is thus better to keep X5 distinct and consider it first.

## X6: Global contextualisation (Figure 6)

The humble conversation among many mature churches from various cultures results in *global* contextualisation, labelled X6, the final context for us to consider in our functional framework. This conversation takes place in at least three ways:

- when sending churches humbly listen to receiving churches to learn from them about how to be more faithful and effective in gospel ministry (similar to X5, but on a broader scale);
- when all churches wisely reflect on church history, carefully learning from the experiences of those gone before, humbly correcting previous mistakes and weaknesses, and thus standing on the shoulders of others as they continue to serve Christ in their generation; and
- when networks of churches from various sociocultural contexts engage each other in order to further refine the collective understanding and confession of the gospel.

In global contextualisation, the agents are believers within the international church community. The objects to be contextualised are the aspects from each of our own sending cultures and the gospel message understood and confessed within it. The stage for X6 is global, ideally the whole body of Christ everywhere in every local church. The flow of this contextualisation is cyclical and organic, and the conversation among Christians within all cultural contexts. Hiebert (1994) explains:

> Just as believers in a local church must test their interpretations of Scriptures with their community of believers, so churches in different cultural and historical contexts must test their theologies with the international community of churches and the church down through the ages. (p. 103; see also Hiebert 2006:288–308)

The goal of X6 is maturity and unity in the worship and witness of each local church. We desire that all churches 'attain to the unity of the faith' and knowledge of Christ (Eph 4:13, cf. 1–16). This process of X6 will guard the church –
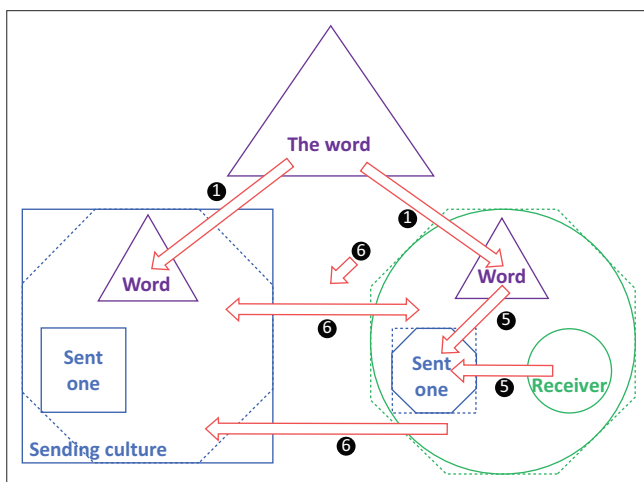


**FIGURE 6:** X6: Global contextualisation.

both locally and globally – as it continues to think God's thoughts after him and to practise his deeds more faithfully. The classic biblical example of X6 is the gospel defence by the young multi-ethnic Antioch church at the Jerusalem Council (Ac 15:1–31). Delegates from this church argued against those who insisted that non-Jewish believers must keep Jewish traditions; the Antioch delegates argued that justification was by faith alone (cf. the message of the Book of Galatians). Note the presence in Acts 15 of all three elements of X6: ecumenical discussion, historical consideration, and ecclesial reflection guided by Christ's Word and Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit used Antioch's gospel defence to refine the theology and confession of the whole church.

Missiological study in this area is crucial to prepare students for intercultural ministry. I have found it very fruitful under X6 to discuss, for example, the principles and challenges of multicultural team leadership which are urgently needed within global ministries. I have also reviewed the history of church-mission organisational structures, and discussed contemporary challenges for missional structures today within very complex global networks and multicultural relationships. It is also valuable to discuss the radical difference between divergent contextual theologies (cf. Wrogemann 2016) in contrast to biblical confessions of further-reformed global theology. The faithful X6 does not lead to further fragmentation, but rather a 'unity of the faith' and maturity in Christ (Eph 4:13). Carson (1996) explains:

> Instead of appealing to the principles of contextualisation to justify the assumption that every interpretation is as good as every other interpretation, we will recognize that not all of God's truth is vouchsafed to one particular interpretive community – and the result will be that we will be eager to learn from one another, to correct and to be corrected by one another, provided only that there is a principled submission to God's gracious self-disclosure in Christ and in the Scriptures. (pp. 10–11)

## Contextualisation within context (Figure 7)

The pedagogical spectrum of six methodologies as explained in this article is a helpful way, in my experience, to classify and to teach about the various methodologies available for intercultural ministry today. This spectrum is valuable for several practical reasons.

First, this simple X1 to X6 presentation aids us in teaching about complex areas of intercultural ministry. In the past many of us have struggled to teach about contextualisation, especially as there are many conflicting definitions, used within differing ministry contexts, promoted by the strong opinions of experienced leaders who have been used by God for faithful ministry. Therefore, in the classroom we start by defining the term, giving a short history of the practice, perhaps using some proof texts to strength our lecture, and then we present a number of contextualisation examples for discussion. Or others may advocate for one model (like 'incarnational contextualisation' or 'critical contextualisation') over another, especially based
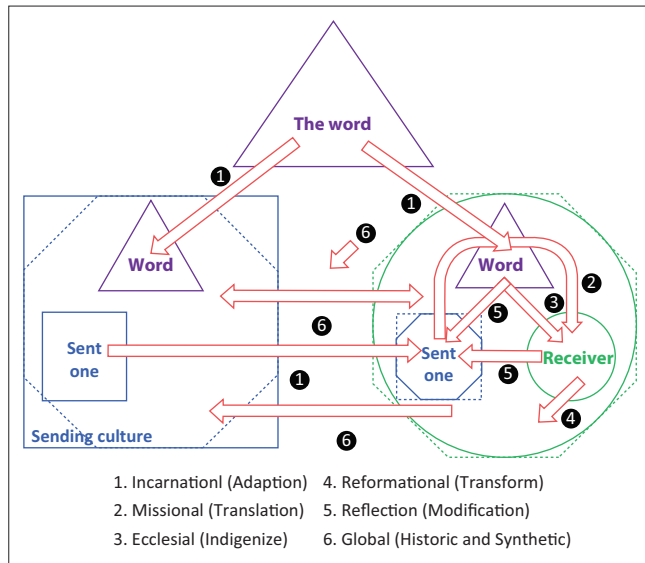
**FIGURE 7:** Contextualisation within context.

1. Incarnationl (Adaption)
2. Missional (Translation)
3. Ecclesial (Indigenize)
4. Reformational (Transform)
5. Reflection (Modification)
6. Global (Historic and Synthetic)

on their own ministry experience. However, our incomplete classroom presentations give us the feeling that we have not fully grasped the subject, and our students struggle with the same ambiguity, uncertainty, lack of big-picture clarity and questions such as 'how far is too far' remain classroom debates that tend to end with everyone defending his or her own perspective based on their own experience.

Therefore, we need to find a better way – a comprehensive 'big-picture' explanation of contextualisation (if only for pedagogical purposes) that will help our future students (and our own intercultural ministries). Many of my students from many different background, have found this X1 to X6 spectrum to be valuable.

Second, this macro perspective of contextualisation helps us classify various models and methods, and it helps us evaluate their underlying methodologies. Our choice of methodology must seek faithfulness and functionality for the specific context in our specific ministry. The choice of methodology for a specific context depends on many factors. There are essential criteria: (1) Is it biblical – is it faithful to God's Word and biblical hermeneutics?; (2) Is it ethical – does it promote Christian witness and Christian values?; (3) and Is it missional – does it support the cause of my specific calling within God's mission? There are also functional criteria, both conceptually for personal understanding and teaching others, and practically for ministry practice and guiding local Christians. Seeing the 'big picture' can put such things in perspective.

Third, this pedagogical spectrum provides a framework for further missiological discussion. The concept of contextualisation has become nebulous and imprecise – even within evangelical missiology – as it is used by different people with very different (even conflicting) meanings. There is no 'one size fits all' solution (hence, the six different types), and perhaps we can at least find a better conceptual framework within which to discuss and better define related aspects. This spectrum, I hope, is a step forward in the ongoing debates about underlying assumptions and personal perspectives in this area of missiology.

Missiology does not need another new method for contextualisation – another golden key to unlock an envisioned door that seemingly hinders the rapid progress or massive success of our gospel ministries. The challenge in our ministry practice is usually more practical: the need to choose the best method for my unique ministry situation. We can feel overwhelmed by the available options, and our students may leave with a muddled understanding of the whole. While certainly more work must be done to refine some of the existing contextualisation methods, there are already enough good options available to us. Furthermore, this refining work (by research, in practice, and with spiritual discernment) will be greatly aided if the present methods can be better tailored to suit the particular context of ministry in which they are employed.

When I was younger and helping at home, my father taught me the value of using the right tool for each specific job. The right tool is helpful, not only because it often makes the job easier, but also because it usually produces a better result. With this analogy in mind, the available collection of contextualisation models and methods can be seen as a toolbox of instruments that all should serve to assist us in gospel ministry. However, the various contexts and situations each call for a specific tool, a specific methodology. Thus, it is wise to carefully identify the right tool for the specific task at hand.

Which method of contextualisation is best for the ministry work you are doing? Or to repeat our initial question: Which method of contextualisation best aids the ministry situation in which you are serving? We do not need another new method for contextualisation. Rather, we just need to reorganise the toolbox, hopefully in a more helpful way, so that we – with our students – can more carefully choose the best tool in order to be more effective in our ministry work.

# Acknowledgements

## Competing interests

## Author's contributions

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

## Funding information

## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

# References

Bavinck, H., 1894, 'The future of Calvinism', *Presbyterian & Reformed Review* 5(1), 23.

Bevans, S.B., 1992, *Models of contextual theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.

Blair, W., 1977, *The Korean Pentecost and the sufferings which followed*, Banner of Truth, Carlisle, PA.

Carson, D.A., 1987, 'Church and mission: Reflections on contextualization and the third horizon', in D.A. Carson (ed.), *The church in the Bible and the world*, pp. 213–257, Paternoster Press, Exeter.

Carson, D.A., 1996, *The gagging of God: Christianity confronts pluralism*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

Conn, H.M., 1984, *Eternal Word and changing worlds: Theology, anthropology, and mission in trialogue*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

Conn, H.M., 2000, 'Indigenization', in A.S. Moreau (ed.), *Evangelical dictionary of world mission*, pp. 481–482, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

Cortez, M., 2005a, 'Context and concept: Contextual theology and the nature of theological discourse', *Westminster Theological Journal* 67(1), 85–102.

Cortez, M., 2005b, 'Creation and context: A theological framework for contextual theology', *Westminster Theological Journal* 67(2), 347–362.

DeVries, B.A., 2007, *Witnessing with the Holy Spirit: Pneumatology and missiology in evangelistic theory*, Southern Seminary, Louisville, KY.

DeVries, B.A., 2016, 'Towards a global theology: Theological method and contextualisation', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37(1), a1536. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v37i1.1536

Elmer, D., 1994, *Cross-cultural conflict: Building relationships for effective ministry*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.

Gilliland, D.S., 2000, 'Contextualization', in A.S. Moreau (ed.), *Evangelical dictionary of world mission*, pp. 225–227, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

Gilliland, D.S., 2005, 'The incarnation matrix for appropriate theologies', in C. Kraft (ed.), *Appropriate Christianity*, pp. 493–519, William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA.

Hesselgrave, D.J., 1991, *Communicating Christ cross-culturally*, 2nd edn., Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

Hesselgrave, D.J. & Rommen, E., 1989, *Contextualization: Meanings, methods, and models*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI.

Hiebert, P.G., 1994, *Anthropological reflections on missiological issues*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Hiebert, P.G., 2006, 'The missionary as mediator of global theology', in C. Ott & H.A. Netland (eds.), *Globalizing theology: Belief and practice in an era of world Christianity*, pp. 288–308, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Keller, T.J., 2012, *Center church: Doing balanced, gospel-centered ministry in your city*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

Larkin, W., 1988, *Culture and biblical hermeneutics: Interpreting and applying the authoritative word in a relativistic age*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Lingenfelter, S.G., 1996, *Agents of transformation: A guide for effective cross-cultural ministry*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Moreau, A.S., 2012, *Contextualization in world missions: Mapping and assessing evangelical models*, Kregel Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Newbegin, L., 1989, *The Gospel in a pluralist society*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

Schreiter, R.J., 1985, *Constructing local theologies*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.

Smith, F.G., 1987, *Triumph in death: Story of the Malagasy martyrs*, Evangelical Press, Darlington.

Tennent, T.C., 2007, *Theology in the context of world Christianity: How the global church is influencing the way we think about and discuss theology*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

Terry, J.M., 2000, 'Indigenous churches', in A.S. Moreau (ed.), *Evangelical dictionary of world mission*, pp. 483–485, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

The Southgate Fellowship, 2020, 'Affirmations and denials concerning world mission', *Themelios* 45(1), 108–135.

Van Engen, C., 2005a, 'Five perspectives of contextually appropriate missional theology', in C. Kraft (ed.), *Appropriate Christianity*, pp. 183–202, William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA.

Van Engen, C., 2005b, 'Towards a contextually appropriate methodology in mission theology', in C. Kraft (ed.), *Appropriate Christianity*, pp. 203–226, William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA.

Wrogemann, H., 2016, *Intercultural hermeneutics*, vol. 1, transl. K.E. Bohmer, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.

Wrogemann, H., 2018, *Theologies of mission*, vol. 2, transl. K.E. Bohmer, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.