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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

COGNITIVE STYLES OF AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS
AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THOSE
STYLES FOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

by

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COGNITIVE STYLES OF AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS
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A descriptive study of the cognitive styles of African theological students was conducted in order to propose the most appropriate strategies for bibliographic instruction in African theological colleges.

The following research questions were asked:

1. What are the learning styles of African theological students in Kenya and Nigeria?
2. Do students in the two countries differ in their learning styles? If so, how?
3. What teaching strategies do theological students in Kenya and Nigeria prefer?
4. What teaching strategies can be recommended as those likely to be most effective for bibliographic instruction in theological schools in Africa?

The Cognitive Style Inventory for African Students and the Group Embedded Figures Test were administered to 118 theological students in two theological colleges in Nigeria and in two

theological colleges in Kenya. In order to determine whether African theological students share a unique learning style, the same instruments were also administered to 87 students studying in form V in Kenyan and Nigerian government schools.

Findings

Ninety-one percent of all the students were field-dependent, and 9% were field-independent. All students (100%) in the West African schools were field-dependent, and 84% of the Kenyan students were field-dependent.

The theological students tended to be more field-dependent than the government school students. Ninety-seven percent of the theological students were field-dependent, and 83% of the government school students were field-dependent.

The results of the Cognitive Style Inventory for African Students showed the preferences of African theological students to be very similar to those of African government school students. A majority of the subjects had a visual orientation rather than an auditory one. They showed the ability to perceive meaning through touch and through sight. Depending upon the situation, the African theological students look to family, associates or themselves when making decisions. Both inductive and deductive reasoning are employed.

The data were used to propose teaching strategies for bibliographic instruction. The strategies were reviewed and approved by a panel of experts in cognitive style mapping.