

I. Key words

Cross-Cultural Training; Intercultural Awareness; Experiential Learning, Managementtraining, Cross-Cultural Psychology.

II. Managerial Background

How important are cultural differences to organisational effectiveness? Globalisation is powerful enough to let organisations become increasingly multicultural. In addition to an acceleration of cross-cultural trade beginning in the 20th century and continuing into the 21st century, a profound shift in consciousness occurred because globalisation more immediately affected the daily lives of people around the world in diverse ways. Multinational companies develop global strategies to expand into new markets, reduce their dependence on expensive labour and restructure into network or virtual organisations. Expectations are for the globalisation of commerce to accelerate during decades to come. At the same time, the rapid growth of the Internet significantly facilitates cross-cultural communication, and accentuates the awareness and interdependence of countries.

Today, increasing numbers of companies transcend geographic, economic, political and cultural boundaries, e. g. by sending expatriates into the field. Many companies still conduct the worldwide management of people as if neither the external economic nor the internal structure of the firm had changed. The costs of cross-cultural failure, for individuals and their companies, are enormous: personal and family costs; financial, professional and emotional costs; costs to one's career prospects, to one's self-esteem, to one's marriage and family. This scenario describes sufficiently the reason for learning "the art of crossing cultures" (Craig Storti).

To this end, this cross-cultural training has been designed to:

- Provide input into managers cross-cultural development needs

- Examine the implications of alternative approaches to managing people from around the world
- Promote participants' ability to continue to learn, grow and change into the future.

The material presented is premised on the findings of extensive research both in theory and best practices in the fields of behavioural sciences, psychology, philosophy and management.

The focus on cross-cultural training is designed to address cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes. One purpose of this training is to offer a large number of cross-cultural training methods, ranging from lectures to simulations and from emotional experiences to web-based training on intercultural studies. Culture-general training that helps adjustment to any other culture is supplemented with culture-specific training to facilitate adjustment to a target culture.

III. Summary

The underlying philosophy of this cross-cultural training is that "serious cultural conflicts arise not from major, obvious differences, but from unrecognized, minor ones". This training develops an understanding of the behavioural management practices required to successfully conduct business in other countries. It develops an appreciation of the distinctive features of selected countries, and their particular management practices, and explores the ways in which management theories and behaviours may be adapted to suit their application in an international setting. It aims to enhance the behavioural skills of managers operating internationally through the development of a more integrated view of international business and related behavioural management practices. It explores behavioural skill learning in order to establish a platform for continued cross-cultural development on the part of the participants.

IV. Content of the cross-cultural training

Topics covered include the nature of human behaviour; cross-cultural psychology: perception, assessment, learning, personality, communication, team working, conflict negotiation, leadership; international organisational and international management behaviour; cross-cultural theories and approaches; intercultural research results, theoretical underpinnings of behavioural skill learning; cross-cultural training requirements; skill development plans; cross-cultural training concepts and designs.

V. Learning targets and training outcomes

On successful completion of this training the participants are able to:

1. Demonstrate a detailed knowledge and explain the influence of the cross-cultural issues affecting managerial and employee behaviour within particular countries
2. Review the recent social, philosophical, religious, political and economic history of a number of countries and modify the application of management theories and practices to accommodate the unique cultural environments of those countries
3. Analyse the application of appropriate cross-cultural behaviour to different cultural contexts and cross-cultural situations in business and management situations.
4. Understand and appreciate the role of self-reflection in effective cross-cultural behaviour development
5. Reflect their own cultural background in terms of thinking, feeling, assessing and behaviour, and evaluate their current level of cross-cultural competence, as well as to be largely aware of their cross-cultural preconceptions and stereotypical clichés.

VI. Key points of this training from a learning perspective

- An extended range of cross-cultural repertoires is more helpful to a managers ability to relate effectively to managers of other cultures, work with productive purpose and enjoy an enriched quality of life, than a limited range of behaviours.
- With the current pace of proceeding globalisation in the business environment, an ability to continually grow and change both in our cultural belief systems and our behavioural repertoires is essential to our on-going development.
- Non-judgemental cultural awareness and the acceptance of cultural diversity are fundamental for a sound development of cross-cultural competence.
- Experiential Learning is the most fundamentally effective tool in behavioural skills training and personality development coaching.
- Human behaviour is subject to personally directed change. People can take charge of their own personal development.
- We are responsible for the outcomes in our life. Most fundamentally, how one chooses to act, is determined by himself and everybody is the ultimate judge of the value of the outcomes of one's actions. Our learning is in our own hands.

To this end this training incorporates many opportunities for active participation, personal reflection, individual experimentation and behavioural practice. Theoretical input alone has never been enough to create the necessary leverage for personal change.

The trainer will predominantly take over the facilitative role of a coach to encourage a climate for experimentation, practice and learning to emerge.

VII. Learning in this subject

A little thought leads to the conclusion that a subject such as this cannot be taught exclusively in a theoretical mode. Although the participants have to learn theoretical frameworks and research results about cross-cultural psychology, they also have to acquire behavioural skills in them.

Therefore theoretical input will come from lectures, discussions, case studies. Experiential input will come from a variety of cross-cultural training methods guided by the trainer.

Adapting Kolb & Fry's Experiential Learning Model (1975: concrete experience – reflective observation – abstract conceptualisation – active experimentation), the training will always embrace these five elements of skill learning:

1. **Skill Assessment:** Self-tests to evaluate the current level of cross-cultural awareness and behaviour
2. **Skill Learning:** Cross-Cultural Behavioural Guidelines derived from established theory and research findings
3. **Skill Analysis:** Applying the Cross-Cultural Guidelines by analysing specific case studies
4. **Skill Practice:** Practicing cross-cultural behaviour in specific role plays and simulations to apply the behavioural guidelines in practice
5. **Skill Application:** Applying practical experiences and personal insights to one's own individual development plan and to one's own set of future cross-cultural behaviour in business practice.

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III. Author

Dr. Matthias Wessling is since 1994 Professor of Management Training at the FH Aachen - University of Applied Science, Germany, Faculty of Business. As Head of the Teaching and Research Department "Managementtraining" he is teaching and researching in English, Portuguese and German. In lecturing he is primarily involved in Management Training, Cross-Cultural Psychology, Leadership & Personality and Business Start-Up. In Behavioural Trainings for General Management Skills, Cross-Cultural Behaviour and Applied Leadership he focuses upon the method of Experiential Learning (Kolb & Fry) , mostly practised in block teachings of several days duration. He has published on various subjects such as Corporate Ethics and Corporate Culture, Management Coaching and Teambuilding, Social Competence and Business Start-Ups.

Complementarily to the University, he is a self-employed Managementtrainer and Business Coach for Teambuilding, Cross-Cultural Leadership and Personality Development. Working for both nationally and internationally acting companies, he has wide practical experience in Coaching, Teambuilding and Management Training. Furthermore he has extensive commercial experience: before he took the professorship he founded and managed some small and medium sized companies. Initiated by this, he takes much interest in the process of founding and running new firms. In 2002/2003, he researched and lectured for 9 months in Portuguese as Visiting Professor for Managementtraining in Postgraduate Programs of the UEL – Londrina State University (Paraná-Brazil). In 2007, he researched and lectured for 7 months in English as Visiting Professor for Cross-Cultural Training in Postgraduate Programs of the Sydney University of Technology UTS (Australia).