Chapter 42

Utilizing Learner Knowledge in Cross-Culture Management Education:
Beneath the Visible Teaching Pyramid

David Starr-Glass

Empire State College (SUNY), USA

ABSTRACT

In many business schools, the cross-culture management course has become a central response to the increasingly globalized and internationalized world in which graduates will work. The core content, pedagogic assumptions, and anticipated learner outcomes of this course have changed over the last two decades, moving from the passive transmission of national culture knowledge to more active and responsive knowledge-creation that might better serve students in approaching cross-culture management challenges. In restructuring his cross-culture management course, the present author reflected on these shifts and on the national culture richness of the envisaged students. This chapter explores ways of utilizing the informal cultural learning and tacit national culture knowledge of course participants to create a learning experience that might be more useful for students who will engage in the international organizational and corporate world of the twenty-first century.

INTRODUCTION

It is evident that globalization provokes different, contradictory, and polarizing reactions. For some, particularly in global and multinational corporations, it has been greeted with much enthusiasm. For others, especially in the older sectors of domestic manufacturing, it has been accepted with considerable reservation. In America, the UK, and a number of EU countries there has been significant populist sentiment against the increased migration and shifting national identity consequences of globalization. In the same countries, there has been growing political pressure to limit—if not to cease, or reverse—what are seen as the disruptive economic, trade, and societal outcomes of globalization. The campaign

rhetoric of the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the subsequent enactments of the new administration, the Brexit referendum in the UK, and the significant rise of populist and EU-skeptic political parties in France, Germany, Greece, and Holland are all cases in point. However, whatever the responses and whatever its future, the reality is that globalization has significantly and perhaps irreversibly impacted all market participants and economic players over the last twenty-five years.

Globalization is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, broadly defined as "the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, [and] ideas…across borders…[that] affects each country in a different way due to a nation's individual history, traditions, culture and priorities" (Knight & de Wit, 1997, p. 6). Globalization has undoubtedly resulted in the free flow of economic goods, services, and information even though that flow is often unidirectional and favors one country at the expense of others. In a more limited and problematic ways, globalization has also contributed to the flow of individuals. For many, globalization has challenged traditional sovereign borders and a personal sense of national identity in ways that are as unwelcome as they are disruptive. However, in the world of business, one of the main outcomes of globalization has been to produce a new polycentric world that requires an equally new awareness of economic power redistributions and the cultivation of deeper understandings of local difference in markets, consumers, and managerial approaches (Åkerman, 2015; Mittleman, 2013).

This new polycentric world has also had an impact on U.S. higher education. Knight (1999) suggests that "globalization can be thought of as the catalyst while internationalization is the response, albeit a response in a proactive way" (p. 14). As part of that proactive response, many business schools have devoted considerable effort and resources to the internationalization of their curricula. They have tried to ensure that their graduates are made aware of the newly globalized contexts they will encounter and possess the relevant competencies to interact with them. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business has called for authentic global academies and global business schools to produce "greater competence and confidence of graduates for doing business with global impact…more research insights into the global complexity of the managers, enterprises, and markets studied; and…ultimately better service of the global management profession" (AACSB, 2011, p. 7). Others have urged U.S. higher education to embrace a strategy of comprehensive internationalization and to adopt a "commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education…[as] an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility" (Hudzik, 2011, p. 10).

However, the infusion of international perspectives is often less than perfect and there has been considerable criticism about the extent to which many business schools realistically equip their students with the skills, competencies, and responsibilities required in the 21stcentury (Currie et al., 2106; Mingers, 2015; Murillo & Vallentin, 2016). In particular, criticism has been leveled at how these schools teach international business and how they prepare graduates to engage effectively in a globalized and culturally diverse world (Kedia & Englis, 2011; Jain, 2009).

In many business schools, the iconic sign of internationalization is the Cross-Culture Management (CCM) course. This learning experience acknowledges the implications, globalization, international perspectives, and the increased interaction between people from different nations. The CCM course recognizes the impact of national culture systems on organizational communication, the practice of management, and the mindset that global graduates need to acquire for success. Although formulated in different ways, the learning outcomes of the CCM learning experience generally seek to provide students with an awareness of national culture difference, a sensitivity to the impact of national culture

Related Content

Workforce Competencies and Career and Technical Education
Maria Martinez Witte, James E. Witteand Leane B. Skinner (2011). *Definitive Readings in the History, Philosophy, Theories and Practice of Career and Technical Education (pp. 103-121).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/workforce-competencies-career-technical-education/46701

Introducing Information Systems Students to Research with a Structured Group Project
Tanya McGill (2003). *Current Issues in IT Education (pp. 26-33).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/introducing-information-systems-students-research/7330

Framing Leadership Issues for System Developers
Gayla Jo Slausonand Chad Grabow (2003). *Current Issues in IT Education (pp. 125-132).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/framing-leadership-issues-system-developers/7337

Utopian B-School Classroom Where Expectation Meets Reality: An Admission Strategy for B-Schools
Sonali Lakhera (2021). *Research Anthology on Business and Technical Education in the Information Era (pp. 140-158).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/utopian-b-school-classroom-where-expectation-meets-reality/274360

Applied Training in Virtual Environments
Ken Hudson (2010). *Virtual Environments for Corporate Education: Employee Learning and Solutions (pp. 110-123).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/applied-training-virtual-environments/42233