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ABSTRACT

A review of current research and research needs in cross-cultural training for business and a bibliography are presented. Future research should look at the world market that exists beyond traditional countries engaging in international trade. Business opportunities are available elsewhere, but American businessmen are ill-prepared to take advantage of those opportunities. Such research might focus on challenging hypotheses, finding new data sources, or taking an interdisciplinary view of aspects of international management. The methodology of research on business culture should be further developed. The bibliography contains citations of journal and periodical articles, book articles, and books on cross-cultural training for business culled from a database search by computer and library collections. (MSE)

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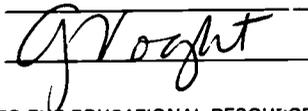
CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING FOR BUSINESS: CURRENT STATE OF THE ART AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Whenever a presenter indicates a willingness to describe the "state of the art", it sounds a bit presumptuous. While I do not pretend to know all, nor even to know every study which has been conducted in cross-cultural training, it is my hope that you may benefit from the studies I do know about, and from my observations. Because I bring a business perspective plus a communication perspective to this paper, it is also my hope that I will stimulate your thoughts and ideas in a new and fresh way. It is my assumption that most of the audience members have experience or at least interest in cross-cultural training. The most positive result of this presentation would be to arouse more questions and more discussion concerning the area.

This paper then, is composed of two parts: an explanation of current research and future needs, plus a bibliography with an explanation of how the sources were located.

The great English philosopher, Alfred Whitehead, stated that research expands knowledge, establishes orderly theory and principles, and is essential to effective education and teaching. Additionally, he adds, research spreads understanding and contributes wisdom (Dymsza, 9). Clearly the field of intercultural or cross-cultural communication is relevant in today's business world. One has only to pick up any newspaper or news magazine to read about the USA losing ground in the world marketplace, or about how we need to be competitive on a global basis, to be reminded that there is a great need for our expertise. In a March 3, 1986 article, Peters sums it up well,

The truth is, our previous successes abroad were won because there were no alternatives, not because we had honed our international management skills. Will a surcharge on Japanese goods overcome this barrier? No, only one thing will: Listening (59).

But, how can our businesswomen and men listen if they do not have the appropriate cultural training? They won't know how to listen, what to listen to, nor how to respond in order to elicit the desired response. But, this audience is not the one which needs to be convinced as to the importance of cultural training; the business community is.

Past cross-cultural research has come from a diverse number of fields, including: sociology, anthropology, foreign language and even business. Yes, business has long studied the multinational corporation (MNC) but mostly as a curiosity. Now nearly every business is becoming multinational and must be concerned with more than monetary exchange. Increasingly, the international division of businesses is disappearing; the entire



company is international. More managers, at more levels, must become "globally oriented" in order to compete in the world market.

With the demand for internationalization as strong as it seems, there should be unlimited funding from governments and from corporations. Yet we all know differently. Hopefully this will change as others realize that the world market is not limited to the USA, Japan and Germany. These countries command a great deal of attention and are more likely to attract funding and to have research about them published. However, we are ignoring many other countries, languages and cultures and it is about these countries that we can provide training.

The first recommendation then, for research, is to look beyond the traditional countries for a world market. Latin America, for example, is a wide open market, as yet unstudied and untapped. There is great potential for research and for business opportunities in Latin America. But today's American managers are ill-prepared to develop business in Latin America. While a lack of knowledge about Latin America is one aspect of cross-cultural research, it implies that perhaps as researchers we are unwilling to try new and different fields. A frequently levelled criticism of research areas is this lack of adventurous effort. The area of international business is no exception and clearly we need to investigate a number of different areas. Dymsha suggests a need for: Challenging hypotheses, new data sources, plus interdisciplinary conceptual and empirical research in many aspects of international management (10).

As American business slowly becomes globalized in thought and action they need us to help. They need to learn about cultures, and to learn how to apply this knowledge to business planning (long and short term), to decision making, and strategy implementation. In short, as cross-cultural trainers and educators we need to learn to speak "business" just as much as business people need to learn to speak the languages we teach and to function with and within other cultures. Certainly I do not suggest becoming an expert in accounting or management, but I do suggest that we should use some of our own training methods on ourselves and accept the "culture" of business, and business schools.

One of the criticisms which appears repeatedly, is that a questionable methodology (the questionnaire) was used for much of business research in the international area. As a method the questionnaire is certainly efficient and economical. However the researcher may or may not have control upon the actual distribution, the completeness of answers, the conditions around the answers, and the questionnaire itself may very well have not only standard kinds of biases built in but also cultural factors. There is definitely a need for in-person interviews of key executives. In order to do this, we must learn to function within the culture of business.

The USA is becoming more service and information processing centered as opposed to being based upon manufacturing as in the past. Because service and even information processing are more behavioral, our services as "interpreters" of new and unfamiliar

cultures will be increasingly needed. Service and information processing rely heavily on human input. As a society we cannot rely upon what we have had to offer since World War II. We must join the modern world and have a realistic view of the capabilities of the US business community as it interacts with the world.

As researchers we can contribute towards some of the future needs such as the ways in which MNC's interrelate (production, marketing, finance, human resources, and so on). Additionally we not only can, but must help American businesses to understand strategies which work and those which do not work concerning the risks of: politics, operational planning, actual operation, evaluation systems, contingency planning, and response to crisis.

Training of employees who are in contact with other nationals and of employees who are assigned overseas is an area in which some progress has been made. However we need to develop frameworks for these people so they can respond appropriately. They need to know much more than how and when to say please and thank you. It is a start learn a language, for it is impossible to separate language and culture. But theory is needed so a manager can be equipped to make the appropriate decision based upon a deep understanding rather than memorization of etiquette. There are many gaps in understanding other cultures. Not knowing about these other cultures creates havoc for American business people; it is a havoc we as cross cultural educators and trainers could and should minimize.

In the second portion of this paper, I will explain how the larger bibliography was found. The previously mentioned havoc of American business people must be minimized by the cross-cultural educators like ourselves. While no sources should be ignored, I have presented those I have found to be most helpful. The obvious starting place is the card catalogue of the library plus the various indexes. The index of special help for this project was the Business Periodicals Index. Some of the more commonly used headings proved useless. The following did provide helpful sources:

1. culture
2. leadership
3. cross-cultural studies
4. intercultural
5. business-international aspects
6. international management
7. sociolinguistics

Enough description was provided in the index so one could judge if it would serve a specific purpose.

When I chose a particular aspect of Latin American culture I wished to investigate and thoroughly exhausted the above index and card catalogue, the next step was to contact the business librarian for a computer search. It pays (literally) to study ahead of time, as some computer accessed networks offer a discount after 6 p.m. Additionally it pays to study the headings provided by the computer network and with the help of the librarian, plan the strategy. The first heading we used was

Mexico or Hispanic or Latin or Central or South America. 2,348 documents were found. We narrowed the category as we went along, specifying information desired by the use of the headings provided until we arrived at 20 or so and then asked for a print-out. It was provided immediately and I paid for approximately six minutes of "on-line" time. It was certainly worth the minimal fee.

Finally, I would urge the researcher to investigate doctoral dissertations, governmental and private documents and even to browse through certain journals. Journals of special interest to the cross-cultural researcher include:

1. Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology
2. Management International Review
3. International Studies of Management and Organization
(translation-articles by non-US authors)
4. Journal of International Business Studies
5. European Journal of Social Psychology
6. International Journal of Intercultural Relations
7. International and Intercultural Communication Annual

These seven journals have provided especially helpful insight into intercultural issues and business issues. They have clearly illustrated the commonality of these two areas.

Hopefully this two-part paper has stimulated thought, perhaps inspired further investigation into the myriad of areas which are so important to American and worldwide business success. In it I have attempted to explain how strongly we need further research and in which areas it is most needed. Secondly I have presented briefly how I went about accumulating the

bibliography which follows. And finally I repeat the words of Alfred Whitehead, as a call to you to: pursue research which will expand knowledge, establish orderly theory and principles, spread understanding and contribute to wisdom in order to improve the human condition (Dymsza, 9).

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