Exploratory research to analyze attitudes for training cross cultural competences using ICT tools.

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Abstract:

The present article content a literature review about the concept of cross-cultural competence, and shows the results of an exploratory study applied to a group of bachelor business students in a Peruvian university who participate in 2010 in two courses using Information Communication Technologies ICTs. The methodology used for the study consist in a survey applied to 39 students from different nationalities: Peruvians, French, Germans and from Colombia asking their attitude (level of agreement or disagreement) with cross-cultural issues, as well as the use of videoconference and chat. These ICT tools were used at class for the interaction with other international students located in universities in the USA, UK, Portugal, India, Brasil and Algeria).

Introduction:

The impact of globalization has created a need for international business graduates, and subsequently business students seeking the required attributes, as part of their educational training qualification (Towsend, 2007). According to Grahn and Swenson (2000) required attributes to lead new organizations evolved in the global economy implies a new style of management, certain

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awareness, understanding and skills that include cosmopolitanism, intercultural communication, cultural sensitivity, acculturation and effective intercultural performance. These concepts can be pointed as the acquisition of "cross-cultural competence" and this is perceived as crucial for organizational communications and team management, since every manager faces cross-cultural challenges within the workforce, and suppliers and most importantly with customers. In summary culture influences every aspect of organizational activity (Canen & Canen, 2004).

This phenomenon also has brought change into the curriculum of some schools and support what is known as "international education". "The concept of internationalization at the national/sector /institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education" Knight (2004).

The concept of international education is aiming at warranting better employability among graduates. While traditional international mobility has been considered as "the" way to train cultural competence, or as it is cited in Waxin and Panaccio (2005) the objective of cross-cultural training is to teach members of one culture to interact effectively with members of another culture, and to predispose them to a rapid adjustment to their new positions. Brislin (1979), a cross-cultural psychologist, identifies three methods of cross-cultural training: cognitive, affective and behavioral. The cognitive method corresponds to a diffusion of information, using conferences or non-participative sessions, on a foreign cultural environment. The affective method aims at provoking individual reactions so the subject can learn to deal with critical cultural incidents. The behavioral method aims at improving participant's capacity to adapt their communication style, and to establish positive relationships with members of another culture.

Cross Cultural Competence

Laugthon and Otewill (2000) made a study based on British undergraduate business education in the study are highlighted:

- Strategies for integrating cross cultural capability within the curriculum,
- What need to be done to prepare undergraduates for the international business world, and
- What can facilitate student's capability and effectiveness in a context of: International Operations and Cross - cultural environment

The authors states that a major challenge for educators in the business studies area is the development of an appropriate pedagogy to prepare the students for the dynamics of their future vocational world in which the demands of international business are likely to dominate their experience. Central to this notion of preparation for the world of international business is the facilitation of capability and effectiveness within the context of international operations and environment, and specially the ability to function in a cross-cultural or multicultural context.

Laughton and Ottewill (2000) draws on relevant academic literature to explore the nature of cross cultural capability, next chart shows an Identification of Cross Cultural Business skills (A) and International Management competence (B).

(A) Bigelow (1994)	(A) Lane and Distefano (1992)	Adler and Bartholomew (1992)	(B) Barham and Heimer(1995)	(B) Barham and Wills (1994)
Entry skills defined as those used to assess and comprehend a particular organisational context and develop effective working relationships, and to a lesser extent, personal characteristics. • Cultural and oganisational understanding • Adaptability	Identified a profile of executive global executives which included: An ability to: • Develop and use global business skills • Manage change and transition • Manage Cultural diversity • Design and function in flexible or-	Make a distinction between transnationally competent managers and traditional international managers, and under the heading of transnational skills they list: • Global perspective • Local responsiveness • Synergistic learning • Transition and	For them the underlying characteristics and associated skills are: • Championing international strategy • Operating as cross-border coach and • coordinator • Acting as intercultural mediator and change	This deep-rooted competence is composed by three interlinking parts: • Cognitive complexity, observed through cultural empathy, the power of active listening and a sense of humility. • Emotional energy, evidenced through emotional self-

• Establishing rela-tions • System and multi-ple perspective thinking • Attitudes /perceptions • Sensitivity • Language • Culturally influ-enced decision making • Diplomacy • Cross-cultural.	ganization struc-tures	adaptation • Cross- cultural interaction • Collaboration • Foreign experi-ence	agent • Managing personal effectiveness for international busi-ness	awareness, emo-tional resilience and risk accep-tance. • Psychological maturity, mani-fested through a curiosity to learn, an orientation to time and a sophis-ticated approach to personal morality

Training in Cross Cultural Capabilities and ICT tools

Groecsh and Doherty (2000) point that due to increased mobility in the global labor market and the internationalization of business; many organizations con-fronted with the challenge of managing an increasingly culturally diverse workforce, this means, managing human beings with different work values, atti-tudes, and behavior. It seems that the emergency of new Information Commu-nication Technologies (ICTs) could be an appropriate solution to provide equal opportunities "for rich or poor". Indeed restrictions still exists when thinking covering the entire population of students.

This is true not only in emerging countries but also in wealthier ones. Therefore we suggest to study in depth the impact of other sources that facilitate interac-tion between international students to train those very specifics skills. Many institutions all over the world are using ICTs for training their students but they all use different paradigm. The use of ICTs media for communicating bring extra challenges than "face to face" process of communication. The effect caused on these cultural virtual encounters on training cultural competences has not been reported yet.

Recently, Keris (2008) suggested a newly defined taxonomy of educational performance, which is composed of three performance domains: cognitive, affective and socio-cultural. Each domain has core competencies as indicators for assessing learners' educational performance. The cognitive performance domain, emphasized in traditional education, includes information managing ability (e.g. use of tools, use of resources), knowledge construction ability (e.g. information processing, reasoning skills), knowledge utilization ability (e.g. analytic skills, solution generation) and problem-solving ability. Self-identity, self-value, self-directedness and self-accountability are factors included in the affective performance domain. Finally, the socio-cultural performance domain includes the ability to establish social membership, Kang M. Heo. H. and Kim,M. (2011).

Bargiela-Chiappini, & Nickerson (2003) pointed out the concept of "business discourse". Internationalization should take the role of technology in intra- an inter-firm communication (e.g facsimile, electronic mail) and videoconference.
To this respect one of the first goals in higher education is training to develop intercultural communication as a foundation for the student's business dealings in the international market place. Students should be shown how cultural norms and values influence the attitudes and behavior of individual at work, and hence how the various functions need to be "managed" in different cultures. (Orpen, 2003).

In the search for teaching methodologies relevant to the development of cross cultural capabilities, much can be learnt from the training literature. Landis and Brisling (1983) identify a number of fundamental cross cultural training methodologies, viz information or fact oriented training , attribution training which focuses on explanation of behavior from the perspective of the native, cultural awareness training , cognitive behavior modification ; experiential learning and interaction training (Laugthon and Otewill 2000) .When communication and social interaction takes place it becomes critical to understand the role of categorization in social behavior (Stangor 2000).: "social categorization entails much more than the cognitive classification of events, objects or people. It is a process impregnated by values, culture, and social representations. The way an individual or a culture identifies similarities and differences between persons

and groups in their milieu is the foundation of every day intercourse is based. Social categorization composes the use of person prototypes, stereotyping, and the ideologizing of collective of actions" (p.)**.**

Stereotypes are example of social categorization, and can be primed rapidly. To that respect they play a role when dealing with different culture in a complex environment supported by ICTS.

Stereotypes are defined as an "oversimplified mental image of….some category of person, institution or event which is shared …by large number of people…Stereotypes are commonly, but not necessarily accompanied by prejudice…"(Stallybrass 1977)

From another perspective Ferdig, Coutts, Di Pietro, Lok and Davis (2007) explain that communication tools, video games, and social web sites have provided new and immediate ways to interact with those that do not necessarily share the same skin color, language, religion, government, culture, or shared values. However, simply having the connection to others does not ensure that users will instantly have or gain the multi- and intercultural skills necessary to understand or appreciate cultural diversity and complexity. The good news is that technologies, the same tools that provide the bridges and links between diverse groups, can also be used to successfully teach an appreciation and understanding of said diversity.

But we cannot isolate the role and the effect of national culture on internet use. Meanings, values, ideas and beliefs of a social group are articulated through various cultural artifacts, such as products, information and communication technologies (Hasan and Ditsa, 1999). According to Gong et al., (2007) studies have shown that different cultures react differently to new product and technological innovations.

According to Fujimoto 2007 value dissimilarity online is expected to produce negative effects such as negative affect (e.g. stress), negative attitudes (e.g. less trust), negative group dynamics (e.g. social integration) and negative work related behaviors (e.g. deviance from online communication). In particular, it is argued that differences in values elicited in the independent orientation of indi-

vidualists, and the interdependent orientation of collectivists, may act as a powerful deterrent to achieving positive outcomes.

In the business communication literature, there has been a significant amount of interest in cross-cultural communication and high-low context cultures (Guffey, 2003; Locker and Kaczmarek, 2001; Mohan et al., 1996), which highlights the importance of the study of cultural perspectives toward online communication. Low context cultures tend to refer to individualist group members (Singelis and Brown, 1995), who value direct confrontation and clarity (Bove´e et al., 2003; Guffey, 2003; Locker and Kaczmarek, 2001; Mohan et al., 1996). Examples of low context cultures include German, and Scandinavian,NorthAmerican and English cultures (Bove´e et al., 2003; Hall, 1976). High context cultures tend to refer to collectivist group members (Singelis and Brown, 1995), who value indirectness, politeness, ambiguity and group membership (Bove´e et al., 2003; Guffey, 2003; Locker and Kaczmarek, 2001; Mohan et al., 1996). High context cultures include Eastern nationals, such as Japanese, Chinese,Arab, and Greek societies (Bove´e et al., 2003).

According to Fujimoto, within a global context, the most important dimension of cultural differences is the relative emphasis on individualism versus collectivism (Triandis, 1990). The concept of individualism and collectivism (I/C) was first discovered by Hofstede (1980). Hofstede defines culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (Hofstede, 2001). The collective programming of the mind refers to shared patterns of beliefs, values and ideas that shape human attitudes and behaviors (Bochner, 1994; Earley and Gibson, 1998; Marsella et al., 1985; Shweder and Bourne, 1982; Triandis, 1994). Specifically, Hofstede's I/C definition is about cognitive differences between nations, within which individuals, through socialization, develop a shared pattern of beliefs, values and ideas (Hofstede, 1994).

Individualism refers to societies in which an ''I'' consciousness is emphasized through independent values such as right above duties, primary concern for personal goals and immediate family (Hofstede, 2001). The independent values subsequently manifest loosely connected behavioral patterns between individu-

als and groups. Collectivism, on the other hand, refers to societies in which a ''WE'' consciousness is emphasized through interdependent values such as cohesive in-groups, mutual obligations and concern for one's groups with un-questioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2001).

Research Method

A survey was conducted in a Peruvian university (ESAN University*)   to a group of 39 students participants between august 2010 and December 2010 in one of two subjects using video conference and chat. The IT tools served to interact with students in universities located in USA and Portugal in course 1, and with students in universities located in, USA, UK Brasil, Algeria and India in course 2 .

In the survey participated 22 Peruvian students and a group of 17 foreign students, they were spending a semester abroad (foreign students where from France, Germany and Colombia partners universities), the age of the students were mainly between 19 and 21 years old, and 21 of them were women and 18 man.

The survey asked about their attitude to this   intercultural experience in class and with the use of these IT Tools, video conference and chat.

The survey asked if they agree or disagree with the following questions and they were asked to rate each item according to the scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

The questions:

1. Multicultural awareness training can help me work more effectively with a diverse population:

2. What we learn about the languages and cultures challenge our thinking and enrich our lives personally and professionally.

3. Exploring my own beliefs and cultural heritage allows me to recognize personal biases and balance perspectives in the work that I do.

*ESAN University is a private university located in Lima, Perú, founded in 1963 by Stanford University, offers graduate and undergraduate programs in the management field ,www.esan.edu.pe.

4. Understanding cultural differences helps me address conflicts arising from differences in values in a positive way.

5. Using videoconference to communicate and to share class with foreign students abroad makes me feel embarrassed or nervous as it is totally different of the traditional local face to face methodology.

6. Using CHAT or other as email to communicate and to work in assignments with foreign students abroad makes me feel uncomfortable and not useful.

7. I feel unpleasant to express my opinion in a group that disagree with my values, ideas, and religion

8. After the experience in this course I think I gain abilities to work with others and in teams

9. After the experience in this course I think my global perspective and interest in international issues has changed

10. I think the development of cross cultural capability is more effective through all of these teaching methods: multicultural group-work, role plays, and international work experience.

Findings

From the aggregated sample:

1. 57.89% of the surveyed strongly agree and 39.47% agrees with the states that multicultural awareness training can help them work more effectively with a diverse population.
2. 69.23% of the surveyed strongly agree and 28.21% agrees about the issue of learning languages and about cultures challenge the way of thinking and enrich lives personally and professionally.
3. 66.67% of the surveyed agrees and 20.51% strongly agrees with the state that exploring their own beliefs and cultural heritage allows them to recognize personal biases and balance perspectives in the work they do.
4. 51.28% of the surveyed agrees and 35.90% strongly agrees with the state that understanding cultural differences helps them to address conflicts arising from differences in values in a positive way.
5. 28.21% of the surveyed strongly disagrees and another 28.21% disagrees with the state that using videoconference to communicate and to share class with foreign students abroad makes them feel embarrassed or nervous as it is totally different of the traditional local face to face methodology, but a 23.08% of the surveyed agrees.
6. 41.03% of the surveyed disagrees and another 28.21% strongly disagrees with the states that using chat or other as email to communicate and to work in assignments with foreign students abroad makes them feel uncomfortable and not useful.
7. 50.0% of the surveyed disagrees and another 28.95% strongly disagrees with the state of feel unpleasant to express their opinion in a group that disagree with their values, ideas, and religion.
8. 66.67% of the surveyed agrees and another 20.51% strongly agrees with the state that after the experience in this course they think they've gained abilities to work with others and in teams.

9. 48.72% of the surveyed agrees and other 20.51% strongly agrees with the state that after the experience in this course they think their global perspective and interest in international issues has changed.

10. 55.26% of the surveyed agrees and another 4.21% strongly agrees with the state "I think the development of cross cultural capability is more effective through all of these teaching methods: multicultural group-work, role plays, international work experience".

Information about the courses

In the course 1 were 28 class sessions for each class, and 15 of those were joint classes with the other universities. On Monday, the U.S. and European schools linked together, on Wednesday, the European and South American schools linked together, and on Friday, the U.S. and South American schools linked together. The professors identified the following topics to be used in the joint sessions: culture and stereotypes, corporate social responsibility, leadership across cultures, organizational culture, international marketing, global entry strategies, and regional integration. In additional to the joint sessions, professors held local sessions to help prepare students for the joint sessions and to discuss other topics. For the joint sessions, the professors assigned the same material for students to read from a textbook and from readings placed on reserve.(Radebaugh et al 2010)

The course 2 corresponds to the Global Understanding course, that was designed by East Carolina University in the USA to provide experiences which would prepare students from all cultures, both developed and developing, to be global citizens. After many lively discussions, designers agreed on a simple threefold definition of global competence, and the goal for the course was to provide experiences for all three aspects of global competence. The three aspects are: *cognitively* acquire basic knowledge about other cultures; *affectively* become more open-minded towards other cultures; *behaviorally* acquire real time interactive and collaborative experiences with students from other cultures. Chia, R., Poe, E., Yang. B. (2011).

The format of each session was to split each class in half and have one half engage in a face-to-face teleconference while the other half was communicating with their counterparts using a form of chat through computers. Half way through the class period, the two groups switched places to each student had the opportunity to communicate through videoconferencing and through a form of chat. Students prepared for the class sessions by identifying a series of questions they wanted to ask their counterparts at the other universities.

In regards to the methodology at the Global Understanding course as Nazarenko, Sizykh & G. Fandei,(2011) pointed, students of different cultural backgrounds come to "meet" their counterparts from various regions of the world, having no special socio-cultural or cross-cultural knowledge of their partners' society. They usually have only general ideas about the "other" cultures, based on information obtained by them from various sources and these ideas could vary very widely. Due to direct communication with their partners in the project they extend and correct their perception of their counterparts' countries and cultures and acquire special socio-cultural and cross-cultural knowledge. They use their partner-students as a learning resource.

Throughout the GU courses, different topics are discussed like college life, family, traditions, meaning of life, stereotypes and prejudices. At the end, the students are required to submit a cross-cultural report about what they learned from the different countries they 'met' through the videoconference links.

Meziane, M , Kara Terki (2011)

Conclusion

New generation of students are used and feel comfortable with the use of technology in their daily lives as well with the process of communication that it implies, nowadays ICT's offers to higher education many possibilities for adapting it to the curricula and for learning purposes. The benefits of this technology for education are not just limited to teach a specific content in a subject, but for so-

cial interaction as a direct and experiential activity with no limitations of physical presence.

In conclusion we will consider information technology as a value added in management education, and we focus specifically in the use of this tools, as to understand how a virtual environment serves to recreate the real world for training in "cross-cultural" between students in two transcontinental countries.

The study of virtual collaboration   among cultures will benefit the productivity in international labor environments and cross-cultural distributed teams, as it is pointed from their research by Rutkowski et.al. (2002) their findings bode well for the extended use of such teams in business and government settings.

The limitation of this study is the short number of the sample, no consideration of a statistical analysis but intend to serve as a reflection to researches
to go further in the understanding of the process of communication and the use of technology in an specific goal that is cross-cultural training where the interaction is critical.

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