



Training and assessment in intercultural competence: a critical review of contemporary practice in business education

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this review is to inform our teaching practice in the field of intercultural competence. We conducted a review of key sourcebooks, followed by a survey of business schools in our international partnership network. Here we present six case studies to illustrate contemporary practice in different countries. In the process we find that the acquisition of intercultural competence is best viewed as a process of intercultural learning from the perspective of both student and teacher. While the majority of our respondents offer training in intercultural competence to students, a minority provide this training to their staff.

We argue that as teachers we need to understand ourselves as intercultural learners in order to facilitate the intercultural learning of others. We also find that intercultural learning is best viewed as an experiential process, in which teachers play an important role of enabling students to conceptualise, reflect upon and articulate their experience. Finally, much of the literature and practice we uncovered is aimed at 'cross-cultural' learning when students go abroad, rather than 'intercultural' learning, which takes place in an international campus. There is a clearly a need for better conceptualisation of intercultural learning on campus, which differentiates the perspectives and needs of both overseas and domestic students.

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I INTRODUCTION

As teachers in an internationally diverse UK business school, we aim to enable our students to thrive in an intercultural environment. As with many institutions that have experienced rapid expansion of international student numbers and cultural diversity on campus, the promotion of intercultural competence is driven not only by the rhetoric of global citizenship and employability, but also by the very practical need to integrate students effectively in mixed-nationality learning and assessment groups. As teachers we want to know how best to provide guided interventions that enable our students to become competent and effective in their intercultural interactions, to integrate better in intercultural study groups, and to be generally positive about their intercultural experience.

For a number of years we have been offering workshops to students and staff in intercultural communications in order to facilitate the integration of an intercultural campus. However, this is on a limited scale and we have only recently started to incorporate this as an assessed activity in the curriculum. Although we have been using the term 'intercultural communications' in our teaching, it is apparent that 'intercultural competence' is the broader and more widespread term used to describe what we are aiming to achieve. We therefore set out to conduct this review of contemporary practice in training and assessment in intercultural competence, in order to identify principles and tools we could incorporate into our own teaching in the business and management field.

The aims of our review are:

1. To provide a broad and critical overview of the existing literature on intercultural or 'cross-cultural' training and assessment, in order to discover principles and practices relevant to students and teachers in an international university context;
2. To conduct a survey of our international partners and to identify case studies of international business schools that illustrate the diversity of training and assessment practices in intercultural learning;
3. To identify best practice to incorporate into our own teaching and make recommendations for future research and innovation.

In the first section of our report we present the findings of our literature review on training and assessment in intercultural competence. As the literature in this field is vast, we decided to focus our enquiry on key sourcebooks that have been written to aid teachers and trainers such as ourselves. While we have supplemented our review with important references from these sourcebooks, our reason for concentrating on textbooks rather than research literature is that we are looking for practical tools and instruments that can inform our own teaching, rather than new theories or research findings. We expect that readers of



this review may be in a similar position to ourselves, and therefore will find a review of such sourcebooks useful. The key sources we identified for this purpose are Byram (1997), Deardorff (2009a), Feng *et al.* (2009), Fowler and Mumford (1999a) and Landis *et al.* (2004). In the second section we draw upon the insights from our literature review to conduct a survey of contemporary practice in international business schools, followed by in-depth case studies with six of these schools. In the final section we present a synthesis of these findings in order to bring out the implications for our teaching.



2 A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT IN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

2.1 WHAT IS INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE?

The newcomer to the field is confronted with a dizzying array of different terms used to represent the concept of intercultural competence. While the terms ‘intercultural’, ‘cross-cultural’, ‘multicultural’ and ‘sociocultural’ are to some extent interchanged, ‘competence’ is a broader term used to incorporate many different facets – including flexibility, adaptability, intelligence, awareness, understanding – all relating to “the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognise as being different from our own” (Guilherme, 2000, p. 297). Further qualifying the term ‘effectively’, Guilherme *et al.* (2009, p. 193) explain that “interacting effectively across cultures means accomplishing a negotiation between people based on both culture-specific and culture-general features that is on the whole respectful and favourable to each”.

Many definitions stress that, while the recognition of cultural differences is a cognitive function, the ability to interact effectively across cultures is largely behavioural: “Intercultural competence in its various conceptions and models implies not just a commitment to knowledge and understanding for its own sake, but critically to forms of behaviour” (Fleming, 2009, p. 6). Similarly Hammer (2009, p. 213) defines an intercultural mindset as “the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt to behavioural context”. According to Van de Vijver and Leung (2009, p. 406) components of intercultural competence fall into four types: attitudes or orientations (e.g. towards other cultures); personality traits (e.g. cultural empathy and emotional intelligence); cognitive knowledge and skills (e.g. negotiation skills); and actual behaviour in intercultural encounters.

While there is reasonable consensus that intercultural competence consists of both cognitive and behavioural aspects, there is a multitude of different models to conceptualise its elements. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) suggest that models of intercultural competence fall into five types – compositional, co-orientational, developmental, adaptational and causal processes.

Compositional models specify different components of intercultural competence as a composite list of desirable attributes, knowledge and skills, much as Van de Vijver and Leung (2009) suggest in the example given above. Another example is Deardorff (2006) who views intercultural competence as a composition of attitudes (e.g. respect and openness to other cultures), knowledge (e.g. of different world views) and skills (e.g. listening and observational skills).



Co-orientational models focus on the attainment of shared understandings between interlocutors, where to 'co-orient' is defined as the ability to "adapt to one another's meanings and behaviours" (Spitzberg and Changnon, 2009, p. 20). For example, Byram (1997) defines the core dimensions of intercultural competence as attitudes, knowledge and skills, which he breaks down into five *savoirs*. The French word *savoir* in verb form translates as 'to know how to' and in noun form combines knowledge with ability, and can be expressed in English as 'know-how'. Byram's *savoirs* define, in intercultural contexts, 'having the know-how' to relativise the self and value the other; to know the self and the other; to interpret and understand; to act with critical cultural awareness and to discover and interact (1997, p. 34; pp. 88-89). He views intercultural competence as mediated by the linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence through which meanings and behaviours are negotiated, introducing the concept of the intercultural speaker as a "deliberate attempt to distance the notion of intercultural competence from the cultural competences of a native speaker" and as someone who acts as an intermediary to enable understanding between people across cultures (Byram, 2009, p. 326).

Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) critique compositional and co-orientational models as offering a limited explanation for how competence can be attained. Furthermore they argue that such models approach intercultural competence as an episodic snapshot, whereas developmental models recognise that the attainment of competence is a process that evolves over time. The most prominent of these is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993; Bennett and Bennett, 2004). Within this model, the development of intercultural competence is conceptualised as a set of clearly identifiable stages along a continuum – from 'denial' of the existence of cultural similarities and differences, through to 'adaptation', which is defined as cognitive frame shifting, cultural empathy, or behavioural code-shifting (Bennett and Bennett, 2004, p. 156). Spitzberg and Changnon argue that developmental models are distinct from adaptational models, which focus on the individual's ability to adapt to a host culture, where adaptability itself is taken to be evidence of cross-cultural competence (Kim, 2001).

Causal process models seek cause and effect relationships between different variables, and have an inbuilt capacity for empirical testing. Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence (2006), for example, identifies respect, openness and curiosity as attitudes likely to be conducive to the development of intercultural competence. Linking to self-awareness and cultural knowledge together with skills such as listening, observation, analysis and interpretation, these variables contribute to the promotion of empathy and adaptation, which in turn facilitates "appropriate and effective outcomes" (Spitzberg and Changnon, 2009, pp. 32-33).

Although this multiplicity of models helps to illustrate the complexity of the field, they are less helpful in enabling the user to understand which model is most appropriate in which context. Indeed Van de Vijver and Leung (2009, p. 405) claim that "we are now at the stage



where we are unable to decide which theories are well supported by empirical data, which frameworks should be modified, and which should be abandoned altogether”. A further limitation is that while these models say a lot about the nature of intercultural competence, they say very little about the process of acquiring intercultural competence. In the next section we consider how individuals can become interculturally competent, and what the role of education and training is in the process.

2.2 BECOMING INTERCULTURALLY COMPETENT: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A number of the sourcebooks we consulted view the acquisition of intercultural competence from the perspective of formal training and the role of the trainer (most notably Fowler and Mumford, 1999a; Landis *et al.*, 2004). Indeed our starting point as teachers is to understand what guided interventions can enable our students to become interculturally competent. However, it is important to view the acquisition of intercultural competence as a learner-centred process, which is the particular perspective taken by Byram (1997), Feng *et al.* (2009) and Kim (2001). Other writers view this as a process of ‘intercultural learning’ (e.g. Gourves-Hayward and Morace, 2010; Paige and Goode, 2009; Signorini *et al.*, 2009).

As with the wider literature on learning theory, the acquisition of intercultural competence arises from both didactic and experiential methods (Fowler and Blohm, 2004), although it is not always helpful to view these as separate activities – in reality these are often points on a continuum or cycle (Davidson-Lund, 2009). In the context of intercultural learning much of this is gained by experiencing intercultural interactions either at home or when travelling abroad. Indeed much of the literature on training is concerned with preparing individuals to cross into to a different culture, hence widespread use of the term ‘cross-cultural training’ (e.g. Bhawuk and Brislin, 2000; Black and Mendenhall, 1990).

In the context of higher education, an important way to experience intercultural learning is through opportunities for study abroad (Cushner and Karim, 2004; Vande Berg and Paige, 2009). However, Vande Berg (2007) argues that (in the US at least) many students are passive consumers of study abroad programmes, and that higher education institutions have a responsibility to intervene actively in enabling them to view this as an intercultural experience. At the very least this intervention should identify which learning goals an HEI wants its students to achieve, and that intervention should continue beyond the initial orientation briefings to enable students “to put traditional classroom practice into a broader intercultural context” (Vande Berg, 2007, p. 398). Indeed several commentators (Bennett, 1993; Vande Berg and Paige, 2009) insist that a form of training intervention is necessary in



order to develop intercultural competences, and that this cannot happen if students are simply left to their own devices.

It is also important to consider what we mean by 'training.' Fleming (2009) argues that education and training have traditionally been viewed as distinct concepts, whereas training is best viewed as a subset of the wider goals of education. Education is "a process of acquiring knowledge and understanding" while training is "a process of bringing someone to an agreed standard of proficiency by practice and instruction" (Fleming, 2009, p. 3). Training implies the pursuit of a specific goal or outcome, whereas education is conceived as broader and less utilitarian. Tomalin (2009) further distinguishes the roles of training and coaching, where "coaching is a longer term more adaptive and more personal process that has a deeper psychological impact on the coachee" (p. 117).

The key differentiating factor between education and training is that training is almost exclusively mediated by a teacher, whereas education in its broader sense can be both guided by a teacher and by oneself. Thus in their analysis of how study abroad programmes help to develop intercultural competence, Vande Berg and Paige (2009, p. 420) ask the question "how can individuals be taught, trained and/or mentored regarding the development of intercultural competence", or put another way, 'how can a teacher, trainer and/or mentor intervene to help develop the intercultural competence of their students?' It is this question we address in the next section of our review.

2.3 TRAINING METHODS

When selecting training methods it is of course necessary to have a learning outcome in mind, which should be mediated by the specific context within which intercultural learning takes place. Within the sourcebooks there are several lists and digests of training activities (e.g. Fowler and Mumford, 1999b; Fowler and Blohm, 2004; Pusch, 1999; Tomalin, 2009). These, however, tend to be general prescriptions that do little to guide the user in what methods are appropriate for what contexts. It is evident that there is no 'one size fits all' training approach. As Byram (1997, p. 4) points out "there can be no generalisable syllabus, neither linguistic nor cultural". Similarly Storti (2009, p. 272) points out "no two trainings are alike ... with a number of variables affecting the content, design and delivery".

A key dimension in many of the sources is the distinction between culture-general and culture-specific learning. Vande Berg and Paige (2009) describe 'culture-general' learning as abstracting culture specifics at a 'meta-level' so that learning can be translated and reconstructed in a different culture-specific context. The implications of the term 'intercultural' or 'culture-general' are wider than 'cross-cultural' or 'culture-specific', which implies crossing from one culture to another, for example, when an American expatriate



goes on an overseas posting to Japan. Nevertheless, the sourcebooks do not appear to distinguish training methods aimed at intercultural or culture-general learning, from training methods aimed at cross-cultural or culture-specific learning. Fowler and Blohm (2004, p. 40) propose a promising typology – suggesting that intercultural training methods can be divided into didactic culture-general, didactic culture-specific, experiential culture-general and experiential culture-specific – but they do not populate the framework with training methods. The only paper we could find that explicitly attempts to develop a contingency framework is Black and Mendenhall (1989). However, this has been developed for companies preparing their employees for an expatriate posting, where one of the key dimensions for consideration is job novelty. When suggesting ways in which the framework can be extended to other contexts, there is no mention of applying the tool to education.

As intercultural learning evidently mirrors the process of learning in its wider sense, several writers draw attention to the need to equip trainees with a theoretical understanding of culture (both general dimensions and dimensions specific to the cross-cultural experience) by which they become able to form an abstract conceptualisation of an intercultural experience. In the process of conceptualising this experience, self-reflection plays an important role. Tomalin (2009) divides training and coaching methods into experiential activities, comparative activities (enabling participants to compare their behaviour and preferences with others), and reflective activities. Jack (2009) proposes a ‘critically reflective approach’ in which students “begin to realise that both they and the world around them could be radically different” (p. 111). Byram (1997, p. 34) puts it yet more strongly, proposing that there can be a need for “a willingness to suspend belief in one’s own meanings and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging”.

This notion of ‘otherness’ is at the core of intercultural learning, and is mediated by one’s own cultural identity and the cultural identity of others. Whether we need culture-general or culture-specific learning will therefore depend on the nature of the interaction with others, and crucially where that interaction takes place (Yang *et al.*, 2009). As a general prescription Storti (2009) identifies four fundamentals of cross-cultural training: 1) defining culture; 2) identifying fundamental values and assumptions of the participant’s own culture; 3) identifying the fundamental values and assumptions of the target culture; and 4) identifying differences and strategies for dealing with difference. Like much of the literature, Storti’s approach contains an implicit assumption that training is intended to prepare individuals to cross from their own culture to a ‘target’ culture. As yet we have found no literature that explicitly conceptualises cross-cultural training from the perspective of individuals engaging in intercultural learning on their own turf. While the case study of teaching intercultural competence in a UK management department presented by Jack (2009) comes close, he does not distinguish between the intercultural experiences of home and overseas students.



2.4 METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS OF ASSESSMENT

Training and assessment should be mutually constituted. However, surprisingly little training literature considers how intercultural learning can be assessed. The few chapters in the sourcebooks on assessing intercultural competence tend to present lengthy lists of assessment tools, but inadequate conceptualisation of which tools are appropriate for which contexts (e.g. Fantini, 2009; Deardorff, 2009c; Paige, 2004). For example, Deardorff's list of ways to assess intercultural competence – in this order: case studies, interviews, mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, analysis of narrative diaries, self-report instruments, observation by others, judgement by self and others, developing specific indicators, triangulation – is a generic prescription for how to assess learning in its broadest sense and offers limited insight specific to the assessment of intercultural competence per se (Deardorff, 2009c, p. 478). Nevertheless there is a broad consensus that “critical thinking skills play a crucial role” (Deardorff, 2009c, p. 479). Byram (1997) is the only source we found that maps assessment methods against learning objectives, and where learning takes place through critical self-reflection; the most common recommendation is for portfolio learning by ‘self-monitoring learners’ (Byram, 1997; Lundgren, 2009).

It is evident that a thriving industry has grown up around the development of instruments for assessing intercultural competence, many of which appear to be targeted for commercial and business contexts. A few examples from an extensive list include: the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer *et al.*, 2003), based on the earlier Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity; the Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory, which measures conflict style in relation to levels of directness and emotion (Hammer, 2005); the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000), designed to measure relevant traits for people working in international and multicultural environments; the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory, a self-assessment tool that measures cultural intelligence and adaptability (Kelley and Meyers, 1999); and the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory, measuring cultural constructs and exploring cultural identity (Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992, 2000).

Lundgren (2009), however, questions whether the attainment of intercultural competence can be quantified. Similarly Byram (1997, p. 108) maintains that competences “require a shift of perspective, not a movement along a scale”, while Van de Vijver and Leung (2009, p. 413) claim that “most often the assessment instruments that are used in intercultural competence research are based on self-reports, which have well-documented limitations”. Trompenaars and Woolliams (2009) argue that there are many poorly constructed tools lacking in rigorous development and evaluation, and in some cases literally made up. Because each instrument defines its own measures, the attainment of these measures naturally provides the learning outcome of the training intervention. Therefore in a university



context, how can we determine if and how these are the most appropriate aims for our students?

Many of the training tools and instruments have been developed from an overwhelmingly western-centric and predominantly North American perspective, which raises questions about the relevance of these approaches to a student from a non-western cultural perspective (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2009). Is there, therefore, an issue of the intercultural adaptability of the very methods we use to assess intercultural competence?

Despite question marks over the veracity of such instruments, it is important to recognise that the use of assessment instruments is itself a form of guided intervention, which will inevitably invoke a reflexive response. For example, in many of the cases analysed by Vande Berg and Paige (2009), the Intercultural Development Inventory is the principle intervention by which students are able to contextualise their learning.

2.5 INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE FROM THE TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Viewing intercultural competence as a learner-centred process is particularly important from our own perspective as teachers in the field. It is once we understand ourselves as intercultural learners that we are best able to facilitate the intercultural learning of others (Cushner and Mahon, 2009; Lundgren, 2009). Paige (1993, p. 194) refers to the importance of “the training of trainers”, which “requires learners to make a quantum leap from a basic understanding of intercultural experience and grasp of intercultural skills to a point where they can apply that foundation of knowledge and skills as intercultural educators”. Similarly Paige and Goode (2009) argue that international education professionals have an important mentoring role to play in enabling the intercultural development of their students, and set out to equip such professions with a set of useful resources from which to develop their understanding of intercultural competence and their role as mentors (pp. 343-346). As Paige and Goode (2009, p. 346) point out “international education professionals in the field are role models, intentionally or not, of intercultural competence for their students”. However, “the cultural mentoring role is not well understood, and intercultural learning and development are often left up to the students themselves” (Paige and Goode, 2009, p. 347). For example, in a study of study abroad faculty directors in the US, Goode (2008) found that the majority lacked formal preparation for their role, and that the preparation they did receive focused mainly on logistical issues, while lacking content necessary to facilitate the intercultural developments of students in their charge. Indeed few of the faculty directors saw this as their role. McAllister and Irvine (2000) argue that models that consider the process rather than the content of intercultural learning have more promise for teacher education. However, despite such exhortations, the intercultural training and assessment



literature overwhelmingly views intercultural competence from the perspective of the trainee, and there remains insufficient conceptualisation of intercultural learning on the part of the trainer.

2.6 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While we set out to identify training and assessment practices, we realise that guided intervention by teachers or trainers is only one way in which an individual becomes interculturally competent, and that our review needs to place training within a wider context of intercultural learning. In a higher education context, students can acquire intercultural experience by travelling abroad to study, or in the case of domestic students, by studying in an intercultural environment at home. However, there is a view that we cannot simply expect students to understand the significance of intercultural interactions or to acquire intercultural competence without the means to articulate their learning. Teachers can therefore play an important role in intervening to facilitate intercultural interaction, and to equip students with conceptual models and frameworks for reflective learning. However, at the same time the teachers themselves need to be equipped with the intercultural competence to facilitate the intercultural learning of their students. In the next stage of our review, we draw upon these core themes to examine the contemporary practice in intercultural training and assessment among business schools across the world.



3 SURVEY OF TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT IN INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

3.1 METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate intercultural competence training and assessment practices, we conducted a survey of business schools in our international partnerships network. We decided to take a two-part approach. First we sent out a questionnaire to all of our international partners in order to gain a broad overview of how they enable their students to develop intercultural, and whether they provide training in intercultural competence to students and staff. We used the questionnaire to identify whether the respondents would be willing to participate in in-depth telephone or Skype interviews. The questionnaire was sent out in November 2011 to 61 partners in 30 countries. Responses were received from 28 institutions. In the second phase we identified six partners, from a geographical spread of institutions, which we could include as in-depth case studies. The telephone/Skype interviews were conducted in January 2012. Six universities participated: one each in Hong Kong, Australia, the UK and Sweden, and two in the US.

For the questionnaire survey we decided to ask a minimal number of simple questions, which would not prove too difficult or time-consuming to complete. Our aim was not to be scientific, but to gain a broad overview illustrating the range of practices, and to identify potential case studies.

The questions were as follows:

1. Does your institution provide training in intercultural competence for students?
(please tick one)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

2. Does your institution provide training in intercultural competence for staff? (please tick one)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

3. What are the key ways in which you enable your students to develop intercultural?
(please tick as many as apply)
 - a. Study abroad
 - b. Intercultural communications module



- c. Mixed-nationality group work
 - d. Other (please specify)
4. Would you be happy for us to interview you to discuss your answers in more detail?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

We did not offer a definition for ‘intercultural competence’, first because of the difficulty of defining the term, and second as we felt that this would be a term our respondents – all working in international offices or in management positions relating to internationalisation – would understand. We also did not define ‘training’ as we did not anticipate any ambiguity over this term. The questionnaire did not ask about specific assessment instruments such as the Intercultural Development Inventory or the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Index, as we decided to investigate the use of such instruments in the case study phase. In question 3 we broadened the question out from training to elicit the variety of ways in which the schools more widely enable their students to develop intercultural.

3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

The majority of institutions responding to the survey (27 out of 28) provide intercultural training for students, whereas a minority of institutions (9 out of 28) provide intercultural training for staff. All nine of the institutions providing intercultural training to staff also provide intercultural training to students.

It is clear that there was considerable ambiguity over how some respondents interpreted the term ‘training’. At the outset we took ‘training’ to mean a teacher-guided intervention aimed at developing intercultural competence, and ‘study abroad’ to mean an experiential activity not falling under our interpretation of ‘teacher-guided intervention’. However, it became clear that respondents took ‘training’ as a generic term to encompass all aspects of educationally guided intervention, including study abroad. Although we can perhaps conclude that we should have defined ‘training’ more specifically, this nevertheless illustrates an interesting ambiguity over how our respondents understand the nature of training and its role in developing intercultural competence.

The results also show that the majority of respondents enable their students to develop intercultural through study abroad programmes (27 out of 28), and through mixed-nationality study groups on campus (24 out of 28). These figures reflect the internationalisation of the schools. The finding about study abroad is to be expected, as these are schools with which we have student exchange agreements. The finding about mixed-nationality work groups is to be expected as these schools all recruit overseas



students and have varying levels of intercultural diversity on campus. Just over half of the respondents (16 out of 28) indicate that they offer a module in intercultural communications to their students. Although we were expecting this response to be higher, the analysis of ‘other’ responses in the table below suggests that institutions do offer specific modules relating to intercultural competence, but that our category of ‘intercultural communications’ was too narrowly defined.

Where responses were indicated within the ‘other’ category of question 3, we have synthesised these into the table below. Where evident we have tried to fit the responses into our predetermined categories of study abroad, mixed-nationality study groups, and intercultural communications modules. These three categories combine experiential learning with formal intervention from the institution. A fourth category of ‘experiential learning without teacher-guided intervention’ also emerged. Examination of the responses shows that in all cases where experiential learning without teacher-guided intervention was indicated, the institution also provides formal interventions for intercultural learning.

Table I: Questionnaire responses

Categories	Additional terms used by respondents
Study abroad	Study tours Cultural tours Cultural programme Pre-departure workshops to prepare students for study abroad
Mixed-nationality study groups (also aimed at integrating international students with home students)	Project work assignments in international groups Global experience programme International weeks International competitions Conferences Competitions for international students



Categories	Additional terms used by respondents
<p>Modules and courses incorporating intercultural competence</p>	<p>Classes on cultural intelligence</p> <p>Optional courses, e.g. ‘Doing Business In ...’</p> <p>Specific subjects on bridging cultures</p> <p>Language classes including cultural aspects</p> <p>Required attendance at cross-cultural activities</p>
<p>Experiential learning without teacher-guided intervention</p>	<p>Student engagement officers for social and academic integration</p> <p>Opportunities to mix with students from other countries as members of the same international cohort</p> <p>College events</p> <p>Internships</p> <p>Student organisations</p> <p>Buddy programmes</p>

Overall the findings demonstrate the difficulty of conducting a survey in this area, as respondents’ understanding of relevant concepts and terminology is variable. It is important to remember that the aim of the survey was to take a snapshot of contemporary practice, not to produce statistically reliable results. It also points to the importance of conducting case-study interviews where the understanding of terminology and the explanation of concepts can be explored in more depth.



3.3 CASE STUDY I: HONG KONG

In a cohort of 800 full-time undergraduate students, 12-15% are 'non-local', mostly from mainland China. 30% of postgraduate students are international. The Business School has the strategic goal to produce globally oriented graduates who are comfortable working with people from other cultures. There are two approaches to internationalisation of students – the study abroad programme and internationalisation on campus. Study abroad is the main way that students gain international experience. 50% of the undergraduate Business cohort go on exchange for one semester or a full year, and a further 150 follow a six-week summer study and work abroad programme.

The main emphasis of intercultural competence development is through experiential learning rather than academic study. All students joining study abroad programmes are offered pre-departure seminars, which mostly address practical and logistical matters. Intercultural awareness seminars are also provided. These were previously run by a consultant, but are now run in-house by an academic member of staff responsible for international affairs. The intercultural awareness seminar is a three-hour session using concrete examples and the personal experience of the teacher, rather than covering culture in an abstract and conceptual way. It is assumed that students will already have covered Hofstede's cultural dimensions in other modules. This training aims to "disabuse students of the belief that they know everything", to bring them out of their comfort zone, and to motivate them to make the most of their study abroad opportunity. Rather than teaching about characteristics of specific cultures, the goal is to prepare students to immerse themselves in their host countries, and to explore for themselves the potential opportunities for learning.

The University's central student services also run optional two-hour sessions oriented towards emotional resilience and adaptability, which have been designed around the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Index (CCAI). In the Business School, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) has now replaced the CCAI, and pre- and post-study abroad testing was introduced this year. The IDI is used not as a model, but as a benchmark to help students see how much they have to learn, and to give them the means to articulate what they have learned when they return. So far only one set of results from the pre-departure testing have been analysed, indicating that students are in an early stage of intercultural development, which is much to be expected.

Incoming students add to the cultural diversity of the student body on campus, and a number of measures are in place to encourage integration with local students. Because international students tend to gravitate towards each other, interventions have been introduced to encourage mixing. In the classroom lecturers try to combine nationalities in group work. In the residences, Chinese students and non-locals are allocated shared rooms.



Activities are organised for home and international students to socialise, as this does not occur spontaneously.

Two credit-bearing modules are offered by the management and language faculties, but uptake is limited with around 80 students participating in total. Around six courses are offered specifically to international students, e.g. 'Chinese Civilisation' and 'Mandarin for Non-Native Speakers'. No training in intercultural competence is currently offered to staff.

3.4 CASE STUDY 2: AUSTRALIA

The Business School has a student population of 6,500 undergraduate and 2,000 postgraduates. Overall, 25% of the student body is made up of international students, with a higher proportion in the postgraduate group. Intercultural training is not always labelled precisely with that term, but a wide range of activities are provided on campus to help students and staff to work and communicate effectively across cultures.

The Business School offers a credit-bearing module on bridging cultures, which aims to develop theoretical understanding of cultural differences, as well as practical skills for how to respond to culturally different situations. It is offered to outgoing exchange students, incoming international students, and to students with a general interest in intercultural communication. This is an optional module, with an intake of around 30 to 35 students. Although the take-up is not high, the continuation of the module is justified by its strategic importance.

Support for international students is provided at a number of different levels on campus. Orientation sessions introduce aspects of the Australian educational environment that may be new to them. For example, many Asian students are used to a predominantly exam-based system and have limited knowledge of what an essay is or how to write one. Sessions cover types of assessment, what is expected in the classroom, the concept of speaking up in class, etc. In addition a programme of 'just in time' seminars is designed to equip international students with skills when they are needed, for example a seminar on presentation skills is offered just before an assessed presentation is due. A two-way process is adopted, aiming both to integrate students into the learning environment, and proactively to shape the learning environment to accept them.

The University is also running a three-year trial project focused on supporting international student learning. The project employs four staff as language and learning advisers, each allocated to one of the four schools. Activities cover both remedial and proactive work, such as seminars on preparation for assessment. Students can access language and learning advice; for example, support is given for essay writing – not for content, but for aspects



such as format, how to make a coherent argument, and effective presentation style. A student-to-student support service runs alongside those provided by staff, with student learning advisers based at a central student enquiry point. For example, if a student is struggling with Accountancy, they can get immediate help from a student adviser specialising in that area. Advanced-level international students participate in the scheme so that international students can speak to someone who has been through similar experiences. Indeed the majority of enquiries at the desk are from international students raising issues that they would otherwise hesitate to raise with staff.

Support to staff is provided through a Teaching and Learning team within the Business School, which focuses on learning styles and curriculum design. The team is headed by an Associate Professor in Education, who leads four professional and administrative staff. Training is provided to academic staff to support them in working with the multiplicity of cultures in their classroom, to have an understanding of different cultural learning styles, and to develop a range of appropriate teaching and assessment methods. Support is provided both one-to-one and to groups of academic staff on culture-specific issues such as how do Chinese students or those from verbal cultures such as Saudi Arabia tend to learn, and on general issues such as dealing with mixed cultural groups. The aim is to develop understanding of why these different approaches and expectations occur, and to take a proactive approach in order to prevent such problems arising, rather than helping students once the problems have already occurred. Where students are required to work in international teams, the Teaching and Learning team provides guidance to the lecturers to ensure that they are able to give the student teams appropriate support.

3.5 CASE STUDY 3: USA (I)

In a cohort of 2,800 undergraduate students, between 25-30% participate in study abroad programmes, either by spending a semester/ full academic year at a partner institution, or by joining one of the Business School's sponsored programmes. The sponsored programmes are where students travel in groups of 10-30, accompanied by a tutor, to one of several European capitals to pursue business and culture studies. For many students this is their first overseas experience, therefore the large group size provides a level of comfort and helps to mitigate some of the culture shock that may face students travelling alone.

Students joining these study abroad programmes are required to attend two sessions that address pre-departure planning and study abroad survival. These sessions cover practical information about the destination city such as packing, travel, arrival and safety. Although not labelled as intercultural awareness, some information is also given about behavioural aspects such as norms for service levels and how these might vary from what US nationals are accustomed to. The aim is to help students manage their expectations and as such can



be seen as an aspect of intercultural competence. The University is also planning some online provision as part of the pre-departure preparations for students, and again the focus is expected to be more related to practical travel matters than cultural relations.

When students return from study abroad, there are two initiatives that help them to reflect upon the experience. The first is a two-hour welcome back session in which students discuss what was good and bad, and issues like reverse culture shock. The second is a set of two one- to two-hour workshops linking their international experience with their career planning – one session is on the resumé and one on the interview. These optional sessions were trialled in 2010-11 with about 25 students taking each session, mostly from the cohort of study abroad ambassadors. In addition to the more informal evaluation undertaken by the College of Business, the University conducts a formal evaluation of the student experience, which has recently started to ask questions about how happy students are with the international component of their studies. The College of Business plans to compare the data from students who have not experienced study abroad with the data from the students who have, in order to assess the impact of the study abroad programme.

For intercultural experience on campus, all students can take language courses, participate in international student groups, attend international-based Business courses, teach English and/or participate in international-focused seminars.

The College of Business receives approximately 80 students per year from partner institutions. At the University level, there are relatively few activities directed towards the intercultural integration of the student body. The College of Business has led the way in this regard by: providing College-level support and orientation to incoming international students; holding a bi-annual Global Gathering event to increase engagement and integration of international students in the student body; creating a study abroad office of three advisers (this is the only college in the University that has done so); offering visits to clubs, student organisations, and classes to talk about importance of international competence; creating an International Business Society, where groups of students talk about international issues in business; and creating International Programs Student Ambassadors – a group of students that talk about importance of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is a pillar of the College of Business's mission, and the current priority is more focused on getting US students out of the US, than integrating them with international students more effectively.

Within the curriculum a taught module on Intercultural Communication is provided at the University level, and is available to College of Business students as an option. Mixed international group work is built into the curriculum, and provides a practical method of bringing international and home students together.

For administrative staff involved with the study abroad programme, training in intercultural competence is mainly through attending external workshops and conferences. For faculty



the University organises tours to locations outside the US to raise awareness of internationalisation. Within the College of Business external faculty engaged in research with international partners are invited as speakers to raise awareness and encourage development of these activities. At the University level an international task force involves the Deans as a 'think tank' to explore the expression of internationalisation for students and staff.

The College of Business is interested in how students' intercultural learning can be measured. Specific instruments are viewed with some caution because of the challenge of getting people across disciplines to agree on a common measure, and the uncertainty of whether the instruments are actually measuring what they need.

3.6 CASE STUDY 4: USA (2)

Please note that the interviewees for this case study represent the University not the Business School specifically. The case study is therefore of internationalisation across the University as a whole.

International students from 54 countries make up 14% of the undergraduate population across the University. Between 200-250 students complete a period of study abroad each year, and 60-100 undertake an international work placement or internship (known locally as 'co-op abroad'). Opportunities for study abroad range from one week to a full academic year, and the majority of students go out for one term or a semester, i.e. between 11 and 15 weeks. The majority of students who participate in the study abroad programme are from the domestic group. The students undertaking co-op abroad tend to be international students returning to their home country.

There is little formal training in intercultural competence provided to students, other than the online course discussed below. The main emphasis is on experiential learning through study abroad. Students are expected to use their study abroad experiences to develop their own intercultural competence by exploring and discovering aspects of the host culture and by reflecting on what they have learned through the process. Pre-departure orientations are held for outgoing students, with re-entry conferences on their return.

Intercultural communication skills are included in a small selection of modules provided by the Business and Anthropology faculties, although not necessarily labelled as such. An online course has been developed in the Language faculty, which aims specifically to address the sense of 'otherness' that can be a challenging factor of living, studying and working in a culturally diverse environment. Initially piloted with a group of language students going to Taiwan, the module has now been offered to Business students, with around 30 students



taking the module. The core modes of learning are reading about culture, plus critical self-reflection on intercultural experiences. Some tasks are undertaken in conversation with others, but the main emphasis is on individual self-assessment. The role of the tutor is not to give the students answers, but to suggest readings, raise questions and lead students through the thought process.

Tools and instruments for measuring intercultural competence are currently not used at the University, although there is interest in exploring this for the future. There is some concern about how to ensure that any instrument used would facilitate appropriate intercultural learning, and that what is tested actually benefits the students.

In relation to integrating international students, the University organises events for international, exchange and domestic students to meet and participate together, such as welcome dinners for incoming exchange students, or cross-cultural debates involving student panellists. A student-to-student buddy system operates for non-academic issues and an element of 'default' mixing arises from international and domestic students living together in residence halls. During their studies most students work in groups some of the time, which can be both pre-assigned or self-selected. Some students may actively choose to work in mixed international groups, but no requirement to do so is imposed.

At present no formalised training in intercultural competence is in place for teaching staff, although this issue has been raised with the President at the University level to be considered as a development for the future. Administrative staff dealing with international students can access workshops through their professional organisations, for example the Professional Advising Organisation, and once a year a workshop is provided by the University for advisers who deal with exchange students.

3.7 CASE STUDY 5: SWEDEN

International students at the Business school make up 60-70% of the postgraduate cohort with 30% at undergraduate level. Home students from second generation immigrant backgrounds also contribute to the cultural diversity of the student community. 10% of the 2,500 student body go out to partner institutions each year as part of the study abroad programme. A similar number are received as incoming exchange students.

Pre-departure training is provided for outgoing study abroad students by the administrative staff in the Office for International Affairs. The session is two hours long, of which the first hour is focused on intercultural training. Students are introduced to the concept of culture, and are encouraged to reflect on their own backgrounds and culture, with questions such as who am I, where do I come from, and what is the origin of my name? The aim is to raise



awareness that living abroad is very different from travelling abroad. The second hour focuses on practical and logistical issues.

During their study abroad period, students are required to complete a reflective journal of their experiences and self-development. If students agree, these are posted on the website as a resource for other students to use.

International students are coupled with a buddy before they arrive on campus, when they participate in orientation sessions at both the university and departmental levels. A buddy programme runs during the first six weeks of the first semester, and includes sightseeing trips and a cultural introduction to the local area. On-going social and cultural events are run throughout the semester.

At present no formal training in intercultural competence is in place for staff or students, nor are there specific credit-bearing modules related to intercultural communications. There are future plans to introduce a credit-bearing reflective module for students returning from study abroad which links in with their career planning, and to introduce intercultural communications training for administrative staff who work with international students.

3.8 CASE STUDY 6: UK

In a cohort of 700 undergraduate Business students, around 45% are from outside the UK. In the postgraduate cohort of 800 students, around 90% are from outside the UK. Therefore a large proportion of students are already gaining international experience by coming to the UK to study, and the experience of an intercultural campus is a key principle underpinning the Business School's internationalisation strategy. All international students participate in an international welcome week and course-specific orientation sessions.

At the undergraduate level, students are given the option to participate in study abroad or an international work placement during the third year of a four-year degree programme. For students on International Business and Language programmes, it is compulsory to spend the placement year either studying or working abroad. Each year approximately 100-120 students gain overseas work placements, and 30-40 participate in study abroad at a partner institution.

Although exchange opportunities exist at the postgraduate level, few students participate in the study abroad programme for two main reasons. First the majority are already studying outside their home country, and second the one-year intensive curriculum does not easily facilitate a term spent on study exchange. As a result the MBA and International Business students are given the opportunity to participate in a short study tour hosted by an international partner institution, usually in Europe.



Students across all programmes work extensively in pre-assigned, mixed-nationality syndicate groups. The groups are constituted from the beginning of the course, before students have got to know each other, and they are expected to perform from the outset. Although the experience on the whole is positive, every year a number of students experience difficulties in working and communicating with each other, and ad hoc tutorial support is needed to help students cope with the challenges of intercultural group work.

In 2008 a more proactive approach was trialled at the postgraduate level, through the introduction of a voluntary, non-credit-bearing module on intercultural communication run throughout the main teaching period from October to April. The aim was to provide students with a theoretical framework for analysing and reflecting on their intercultural interactions and self-development, and to encourage on-going reflection rather than the 'one-off' training previously provided during the welcome week. During class discussions, students draw upon their personal experiences to develop their understanding of cultural variation in social and professional contexts. Since 2010, this model has been developed to incorporate intercultural competence training as a credit-bearing component of new postgraduate curricula, in modules such as Learning, Skills and Career Development and Career and Project Skills. Teaching methods include class participation, individual and group presentations and reflective learning, and assessment is by a personal development portfolio.

Over the last decade staff training in intercultural communication has been available on an ad hoc, voluntary basis, both within the Business School and at the University level. In 2010 the University introduced a linked programme of staff sessions, to raise awareness of cultural variation, and to give staff the opportunity for discussion of practical issues that arise in daily contacts with the diverse student body on campus. These are available to both administrative and academic staff, although to date the uptake has been greater among support services.



4 KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is clear that for the majority of our respondents, the overwhelming focus of their effort is on the intercultural development of their students, whereas very little training in intercultural competence is provided for academic and administrative staff. Only a third of survey respondents offer their staff training in intercultural competence, and only one of the case studies provides structured training and support, albeit voluntary, for academic staff dealing with international student groups.

Much of the emphasis on intercultural learning is experiential, and the predominant focus for achieving intercultural experience is through study abroad. The examples of specific training cited by our respondents are mainly to prepare students for their study abroad experience. Some of this training is culture-specific and tailored to students' destination countries and cultures, while other provision is more culture-general, aiming to raise students' awareness and encourage self-reflection.

The focus of intercultural training on campus is largely aimed at integrating overseas students with local students, through orientation programmes, buddy programmes and the like. Most of the case studies recognise that they have thought little about providing specific support for students to work together effectively in an intercultural campus. There is little evidence of mechanisms to help local students understand and integrate with their international peers. This is surprising given that the majority indicated the use of mixed-nationality study groups as a way in which they enable their students to develop interculturally.

Although training and assessment are two sides of the same coin, we gained little additional insight from our case studies about how the development of intercultural competence can be assessed. Indeed the majority of training activities identified in this study are non-assessed, non-credit bearing and mostly voluntary. Our findings must be qualified by acknowledging that some of our interviewees were in administrative rather than academic roles, and it was therefore not possible to investigate comprehensively how taught modules that incorporate intercultural competence are assessed. Awareness of learning culture and curriculum design for international students is highly developed in one school, but barely on the radar elsewhere. As for supporting the intercultural development of students while on study abroad, only one school provided an online module, which is assessed through critical reflection.

Instruments for assessing intercultural competence are not routinely used. In one of the case studies the IDI is used primarily as an intervention rather than as a means of assessing intercultural learning. In this case the IDI is used as a pre-departure tool to raise awareness and get students thinking about intercultural competence. Furthermore its use when the students return is primarily as a means to assess the effectiveness of the study abroad



programme. Barriers to more widespread use of intercultural assessment tools include cost and resource implications, and the difficulty of agreeing on an effective measure.

It is clear that context is a critical factor in designing interventions to enhance intercultural competence, and this point is often made in the literature. However, the findings of this study suggest that the variation in context for different constituencies on campus are not always clearly identified, nor is provision tailored accordingly. For example, study abroad requires students to have a differently oriented body of knowledge and set of skills from those required to engage effectively in an international campus. Study abroad calls on specific cross-cultural skills and, ideally, in depth knowledge and understanding of the communicative patterns and norms in the host culture. However, students studying at an international business school, and often living in residences with others from different countries, are exposed to the 'melting pot' of the international campus. These students face a multi-layered challenge, because they need to be able to interact effectively with the international student community, with the rules, regulations and personnel of a new educational framework, and with the local community off campus. The extent to which incoming international students are prepared for life on our campuses is likely to vary, and depends on factors such as their previous personal experience and education. Our own experience of teaching intercultural communication modules has shown that engaging with the different communication and work styles of their fellow international students, and self-reflection about their own, often throws up a lot of questions about the host culture.

One limitation of the literature is that while many commentators claim that context is important, the term 'training' is generalised in a way which strips it away from the context in which it is delivered. Byram's (1997) principles of defining culture, uncovering and explaining the underlying values of the home and target cultures, do not appear to apply where an international campus is the 'target'. In this scenario students are exposed not only to many cultures, but also to flexible expressions of those cultures. For example, a Chinese student interacting with a group of other Chinese students on an international campus is likely to communicate differently from the way the same student will communicate in a mixed international group. The requirement to juggle inter- and cross-cultural skills, and to identify which is which, can be daunting for students who are in the host country for the first time.

As for domestic students, our responses suggest that they do not receive the same level of cultural training as non-domestic students, but they are nevertheless expected to integrate with the overall community and in many cases this will be their first experience of working across cultures. At our University the domestic student group constitutes a rich cultural mix of their own, with a high proportion from second- and third-generation Asian families. This can have great advantages, as these students have often grown up with one foot in each culture, and so already understand that cultural differences exist, and have the means to appreciate and articulate them. Our experience suggests that these students are often less



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daunted by intercultural encounters than those domestic students for whom cultural difference is a very new experience and concept.



5 CONCLUSION

We set out to conduct a review of training and assessment in intercultural competence with the rather straightforward purpose of identifying key practices and principles we can incorporate into our own teaching. In the process we uncovered conceptions of training that are both narrow and specific, and broad and complex. It is by embracing the breadth and complexity that our study has opened up implications wider than its original aim. In particular we have found that the acquisition of intercultural competence is better conceptualised as a process of intercultural learning, and that intercultural learning is a continuing journey for us all.

In relation to the specific application of intercultural competence training and how it can be assessed within our own context, we uncovered many examples of good practice to inform our teaching. In particular we found that intercultural learning is best viewed as a constantly reflective cycle in which teachers play the important role of enabling students to conceptualise and articulate their experience. In this sense we have concluded that the most promising method of assessment is by critical reflection. While we set out hoping to identify an instrument we could readily use as an assessment tool, we realise that the use of such tools is not a means of assessing student learning, but as a form of intervention that can assist in the process of reflection. However, as there are so many tools available, all with a different conception of intercultural competence, it is very difficult to identify which tool is most appropriate for which context. Nevertheless, if we view intercultural learning as a developmental process, there is one clear tool – the Intercultural Development Inventory – that is most helpful in enabling intercultural learners to contextualise their experience.

In relation to understanding the complexity of intercultural learning, we found that the literature offers limited conceptualisation of the different contexts in which intercultural learning takes place. In theory the nature of the training intervention should differ according to whether students are approaching intercultural learning on their own turf or crossing to a different culture, and whether their interactions are within a ‘target’ culture or within an infinitely variable intercultural mix. Much of the literature and practice we uncovered is aimed at ‘cross-cultural’ learning when students go abroad, rather than ‘intercultural’ learning that takes place in an international campus. There is a clearly a need for better conceptualisation of intercultural learning on campus, which differentiates the perspectives and needs of both overseas and domestic students.

Finally we return to our own perspective, as both teachers and students on an intercultural journey. While we set out to inform the training we give our students, we found that little consideration is given to the training we need as teachers. Our own intercultural competence is surely a prerequisite for designing effective training that develops the intercultural competence of others. There is clearly a need for institutions to equip all staff –



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and particularly staff teaching in an intercultural environment – with the means to develop
interculturally themselves.



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