Assessing intercultural skills

The importance of intercultural competence is increasingly recognized in both the academic and business worlds. Multinational corporations, in particular, understand that success in the global marketplace often depends on their employees’ ability to adapt to unfamiliar situations and “strange” attitudes.

Obviously, evaluating a person’s level of intercultural competence—or the mind-set most open to it—is extremely important. So it comes as no surprise that social researchers have been busy creating a variety of instruments to measure people’s sensitivity toward cultural differences and their ability to deal with them.

A cursory glance at Internet sources offers a prodigious number of methods (85 at last count) for measuring some aspect of cross-cultural adaptability. Approaches range from direct and indirect indicators to quantitative and qualitative analyses and include self-evaluation, peer evaluation and the traditional evaluation of participants by trainers. What all have in common, however, is the promotion of self-awareness and reflection on one’s intercultural evolution.

We have decided to examine three widely-known tools: the International Readiness Check, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and The International Profiler (TIP). All measure different facets and angles of a person’s openness and capacity to adapt to cultural otherness.

It’s a short and pragmatic introduction on how we trainers can create individual and group profiles, conduct needs analyses and, in fact, judge programs. With so many choices out there, it’s a good time for second looks.

We’re quickly approaching the end of 2009, n’est-ce pas? The SIETAR Europa Board wishes you all a merry holiday season and, as the Germans say, a “good slide into the New Year!”

Yours,
Patrick Schmidt
The Hungarian people are well known for their thirst for knowledge. More than a thousand years of contact with a dozen or more European and Asian races--including several centuries as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—has rewarded the Magyars with a true gift of curiosity and inherent openness toward foreigners. Ildikó Polyák is a perfect example.

She grew up in a family of lawyers but always knew her destiny lay elsewhere. At age 16, she was already fascinated by the relationship between Hungarians and people of other nationalities. Upon finishing her master’s degree in the early ’80s, she became an English professor at a college in Budapest.

In 1993, with the opening of Eastern Europe, Ildikó’s college received a British grant to help modernize its curriculum in partnership with the University of Hull. She was asked to teach intercultural communication, a subject she barely knew. With only four library books to work from, Ildikó launched a pilot program in 1994.

Shortly thereafter, she went to Holland for an intensive, week-long trainers’ course and found herself surrounded by people who were both interesting and...unusual. Then she attended her first SIETAR congress in Munich and met others who fit that description. She suddenly realized she was one of them!

Today, her intercultural communications courses are among the most popular at her college, often overbooked. Not only does she convey the subject with passion, she makes sure students apply what they learn through field projects in Budapest’s Jewish or Gypsy communities, among others. In fact, the city’s gay scene (including bars) was the object of a recent assignment that had the whole campus talking.

Ildikó has been a very active member of SIETAR Europa for nearly 10 years and was President in 2008. Modest and soft-spoken by nature, she can also make her points with laser-like precision when she’s in a fighting mood—a trait she probably inherited from her family’s law legacy.

From an interculturalist point of view, how would you describe the Hungarian people?

Hungarians love freedom and independence, we’re a proud people. However, if you look at our history, you’ll find we’ve been continually oppressed by Turks, Austrians or Russians. Consequently, we’ve developed an individualistic attitude...Not in the Hofstede sense, but in the sense of “I can’t trust anyone.”

We feel everybody wants to exploit us. We think, “I can trust only my family to help and protect me.” This also explains why families are so important in our culture.
Ildikó Polyák
A short portrait — continued

How has this individualistic attitude affected day-to-day life?
I think that, in the last 20 years, Hungarians in all walks of life have not been able to get their act together. If the government launches a new vision, our reaction is sceptical. "Why should I go along? My life’s okay and no one should be telling me what to do."

It’s a sort of anti-volunteerism as well as not taking the initiative, probably a reaction from the Communist period. And there’s an element of anti-social behavior in our character. If a Hungarian gets from Vienna to Budapest in less than two hours by driving 180 k, his friends will congratulate him.

It’s been said that Hungarians, comparatively speaking, are clever and inventive. Where does that come from?
There are two explanations. First, our language doesn’t belong to the Indo-European family, and it’s far more difficult to learn than, say, German or French. Because the grammar is so complicated, we’re programmed to learn difficult mental processes from a young age, which facilitates creative thought.

The other reason is that Hungary has been occupied by so many foreign armies that we needed to be clever to survive, for our culture to survive...

Recently, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia has been the object of racial tension. How do you see the problem?
In Eastern Europe we have a concept called "grivomania", derived from "grievance". It describes politics based on old injustices. A Slovak will say, "Ancestors of mine were killed by your soldiers in 1759!" The Hungarian will answer, "Members of my family were murdered by your people in 1848." It’s a never-ending story: "What came first, the chicken or the egg?"

Now I don’t want to say we’re innocent, no more than Romanians or Slovaks. But in times of economic crisis, politicians without scruples exploit old grievances. And the sad thing is, many people fall for it. They’re looking for scapegoats for their problems and are as easy to manipulate as children. I’m sorry to say it but I don’t think there will be a solution in my lifetime. But with economic improvement there will be fewer tensions.

How do you see the intercultural field developing in your country?
Well, in the ’90s and the early part of this century, multinational companies believed their trainers were preferable to local ones. Hungarians weren’t perceived as competent and British or American methods were thought to be the best.

In the last four or five years, however, there’s been a remarkable change. H.R. managers now recognize our local talent. Of course, they had a practical reason to begin to do so—expatriate trainers can be quite expensive!

Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt
The Intercultural Readiness Check

A Self-Assessment Tool

by Ursula Brinkmann and Oscar van Weerdenburg

When we started our activities as cross-cultural consultants some 15 years ago, we enjoyed working with models of culture in which countries are compared on different scales. However, groups differed in how they appreciated the country-specific data, i.e. how confident they felt about the challenge they were confronted with. We remember doing one workshop for a German company that had selected a number of people to go to Japan. Participants were resistant to the information about cultural differences between Germany and Japan: They simply did not feel ready to live in an environment so different from their own.

Taking stock, we analyzed how we could better support people in their international roles. Fundamentally, we wanted to develop the ability of individuals and groups to work across cultures. But to do so, we needed to assess those abilities first.

Hence, we developed the Intercultural Readiness Check. The IRC is a self-assessment tool that identifies four vital intercultural competences. Over the past nine years, the IRC has been filled in by more than 15,000 respondents from all over the world. We recently analyzed the IRC database and were able to distinguish subthemes, or facets, for each competence, which make it easier to identify specific strengths and pitfalls:

- **Intercultural Sensitivity**: How actively is a person interested in other people and their cultural backgrounds? This includes cultural awareness and attention to verbal and nonverbal signals.

- **Intercultural Communication**: How actively do people observe their communication style? This includes skills in monitoring how one communicates.

- **Building Commitment**: How actively does a person try to influence their social environment? Building commitment includes developing relationships and reconciling the needs of different stakeholders.

- **Openness to Uncertainty**: How easily do people accept the greater uncertainty of culturally diverse environments? This includes openness to unfamiliar settings and to cross cultural complexity.

Increasingly, organizations see intercultural competences as key indicators of leadership potential. The IRC helps individuals to capture their intercultural competences and to identify what they can contribute to their organization.

The IRC assists people in formulating a structured plan for development during an assignment abroad, and to identify the strengths they can rely on. It confirms existing...
The Intercultural Readiness Check - continued

skills, how to use these to set realistic learning goals, and helps respondents to determine how they can utilize their assignment as a chance to enhance their competences. With the IRC assessment, individuals can translate their sincere interest in other cultures into a specific plan for personal development.

For trainers, the IRC allows us to assess the specific assets and pitfalls of groups, and tailor our interventions to the needs of the audience. We select content and exercises according to participants’ results on the IRC competences (e.g., intercultural sensitivity) and the more specific facets (e.g., cultural awareness), in order to focus on those areas that the group will most benefit from. Some groups are experienced in working across cultures, but have not identified sustainable solutions to cross-cultural issues that will carry them forward. Others find it difficult to communicate effectively across cultures, so we focus on their communication skills. The IRC results of one team we worked with indicated that members found it difficult to stay constructive during conflict, so we focused on helping them understand each others’ perspective and to relate to one another.

Our database by now allows for detailed industry comparisons. Organizations can assess how they are positioned within their industry with respect to intercultural competences, and work on specific skills for their success in international markets.

By now 150 intercultural professionals worldwide have become certified to use the IRC. We greatly appreciate being connected to them. We organize annual IRC Get Together events for all IRC Licensees, to encourage cooperation, exchange, and networking. We invite licensees to form groups to address different professional applications of the IRC, for example, on coaching, training, and diversity topics. It is fantastic to see so many colleagues coming back each year, and we enjoy these opportunities to meet and exchange experiences with them.

The IRC has changed the way we train. Our work has become more satisfying, we can work more in-depth with client companies, cooperate in new ways with colleagues, and connect cross-cultural consulting with intercultural research.

1) © 2001-2009 Intercultural Business Improvement Ltd.
2) We would like to thank Dr. Dianne van Hemert (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Koen Beirens (University of Gent), Dr. Frank Brück (University of Vienna), and Dr. Wouter Schoonman (Psy Tech industrial psychology) for their invaluable help with the research. Responsibility for any decisions concerning the use of the IRC remains solely with Intercultural Business Improvement.

Dr. Ursula Brinkmann and Oscar van Weerdenburg, authors of the article, are researchers and consultants, based in Holland. They can be reached at info@ibinet.nl or through their websites www.irc-center.com and www.ibinet.nl.
The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

An instrument to measure intercultural sensitivity
based on a theoretical model

by Grant Douglas

The Intercultural Development Inventory or IDI, developed by Milton Bennett and Mitchell Hammer, is an instrument which allows the measurement of intercultural sensitivity as it was first conceptualized in Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The IDI is an evaluation tool which is statistically valid and a reliable psychometric instrument. The IDI has been in use since 1998. It is a 50-item, theory-based instrument that can be taken either in paper and pencil form or online. The IDI is currently in twelve languages (Bahasa Indonesian, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Korean, French, Japanese, and Chinese). Translations from the English-language version were completed using rigorous “back translation” scientific protocols to insure both linguistic and conceptual equivalency. The instrument is easy to complete and generates an in-depth graphic profile of an individual’s or groups’ predominant level of intercultural competence.

The IDI is constantly being developed and is now in its 3rd version. The IDI version 3 was designed by Mitchell Hammer. This new version 3 is based on Hammer’s Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC), which is an advanced adaptation of Milton Bennett’s earlier Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). In order to use the IDI effectively and appropriately, individuals need to attend an intensive, three-day IDI Qualifying Seminar. Although the author is a qualified IDI administrator, he has not yet made the transition from version 2 to version 3, this article will thus be based on knowledge and experience gleaned from use of the version 2 instrument.

Both the IDI and the underlying Intercultural Development Continuum are culture-general in nature. They address cross-cultural difference independent of the type of difference. Cultural difference stemming from national, regional, societal, family, organization, and individual characteristics all come within the scope of the IDI. The IDI was designed and validated in a cross-cultural manner to ensure this culture-general validity. Research shows that developing one’s intercultural competence emphasizing one aspect of diversity and cultural difference (e.g. national origin) will carry over to one’s experience of all other types of diversity and cultural difference.

The IDI is unique in a number of ways. The instrument measures how people think and feel about, and so react to, cultural difference and diversity. It measures how people construe and organize events, guided and limited by their cultural patterns. This is what is known as a person’s orientation or “mindset” regarding cultural difference and diversity.

The IDI can be used for a wide variety of purposes. These include, individual assessment in coaching and/or counseling
The IDI - continued

situations, group analysis in teambuilding, organization-wide needs assessment for training design, programme evaluation to assess the effectiveness of various interventions and academic research.

Lille Catholic University has been using the IDI for a number of years. One school in Lille, which has been a pioneer in the use of the IDI, is ESTICE. Elena Choquet, the pedagogical director and a member of SIETAR-France, explains:

“The Estice, an Institute of International Business within Lille Catholic University, has been using the IDI for the past 5 years with a threefold purpose. Firstly, all the students have to go on 3-4 international internships during their 5 years of study. They also have a total of 72 hours of Intercultural Communication training. The first year students take the test after the first 4 hours of class, enabling the professor to assess where each student is in terms of their intercultural sensitivity. This allows the professor, as far as possible, to tailor the course to provide the most appropriate training.”

In the final year, when the student takes the test again, the two sets of results can be compared, offering a unique and objective insight into the efficiency and value of the combined approach to acquiring intercultural competency through academic training and practical international experience. Finally, these results are shared and debriefed with each individual student before they leave the university in order to assist them in assessing their skills and identifying obstacles which may still be in place.

While this does not pretend to be a rigorous scientific approach, the IDI does nonetheless give empirical evidence to assist in elaborating curriculum changes or increasing accompaniment for certain students approaching an international internship.”

The IDI is also used at Lille Catholic University on personal development courses for faculty and administrative staff and to help incoming international students put in place personal development action plans to speed up their integration into their educational institution and their new country.

On a personal note, I have been using the IDI quite intensively this year with students and staff and have been very impressed with its results. On one of the international master’s on which I teach; we have decided to implement a pre and post test which will allow us to better adapt the intercultural component of the course and also know more exactly the profile of the graduates we are putting out on the job market.

More information about the IDI at: www.idiinventory.com

Grant Douglas is the General Secretary of SIETAR France and in charge of the development of Intercultural Communication at ICL-Clarife, the language and intercultural centre of Lille Catholic University. He can be contacted at grant.douglas@icl-lille.fr
The International Profiler (TIP)

As explained by WorldWork Ltd.

What is it?
*The International Profiler* is a questionnaire and feedback process that has been developed to help managers and professionals reflect on where their skills are (and where they may be lacking skills) in working internationally. It also helps raise awareness of potential areas in which they may require future development, and suggest actions they can take to fill the gaps.

How does it work?
The questionnaire consists of 80 questions and is based on:

- 10 competencies
- 22 associated skills, attitudes and areas of knowledge that define the special capabilities required to transfer leadership, managerial and professional skills to an international context. The competencies have been derived from research in the multi-cultural field and the practical experience of people working in international roles.

*The International Profiler* is a psychometric questionnaire that provides individuals with structured feedback in terms of the energy, emphasis and attention they typically bring to each of the competency sets. Worldwide Ltd. also created a licensing process to train consultants and in-company HR professionals to use these tools and provide structured feedback on a one-to-one basis, in groups or over the telephone.

The Profiler feedback provides:

- Awareness of potential gaps in a person’s international competence
- Linkage to individual roles, required working style and appropriate attitudes and approaches
- The rationale for development and initial action steps for meeting development needs

All the individual needs to do to initiate this process is to fill in the International Profiler questionnaire that takes about 20-45 minutes. The questionnaire can be completed and scored on the web or in hard copy version.

Who is the International Profiler for?
*The International Profiler* is aimed at individuals who need to build adaptive skills for working in a multi-national environment. They may wish to review their present international experience and extend the skills they bring to the task. They may have a present or imminent need to transfer their technical and managerial skills more extensively into the international arena.
Typical candidates include:

- Managers leading, or participating in, international teams
- Specialists sitting on international committees
- Managers operating in multi-cultural workplaces
- Managers and professionals dealing with the consequences of cross-border mergers/acquisitions
- Professionals with international business careers
- International project managers
- Managers integrating operations across national boundaries
- Key support staff co-ordinating and communicating across cultures

What are the benefits for the individual manager?

The International Profiler is not a prescriptive tool, nor is it culture-specific. It observes skills that are necessary in order to operate successfully in an unfamiliar culture, independent of individual cultural constraints. It is the basis for a structured exploration of an individual's competency requirements, and thus is developmental. It helps managers to understand the extra and enhanced qualities they require for personal success at an international level. It can be used to identify and address the particular development needs they require to:

1. Take on a specific new international role
2. Build an international career
3. Work more effectively with colleagues in an international team
4. Build productive relationships with new partners in unfamiliar cultural contexts

What are the benefits at an organisational level?

For the organisation the Profiler can:

1. Reduce the personal and organisational trauma of inappropriate appointments.
2. Avoid miscommunication and mistrust in critical business relationships.
3. Audit experience and capabilities for working across cultures.
4. Provide individual development plans and group training solutions that are specifically adapted to the demands of a multi-national business environment.
The Unbearable Lightness of Being Intercultural

A short essay on slipping in and out of cultures

by Patrick Schmidt

Globalization is rapidly breaking down our vision of a world with well-defined national, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Cheap computers and internet service, and innovations like Google, YouTube and Wikipedia are enabling a constant flow of knowledge and ideas across borders. This, along with the emergence of faster and cheaper transportation, has meant even the most remote parts of the planet are brought into instantaneous contact with one another.

Marshall McLuhan’s “global village” has, in this sense, become reality.

Not surprisingly, intercultural competence has taken on an importance that no one could have imagined even 20 years ago. We’ve shifted into a new mode of living where transnational contact is almost a daily occurrence. Our lives are enriched but are also far more complex.

The very nature of cross-cultural communication — different languages, behavior patterns and values — makes it imperative to avoid assumptions of similarity and to stimulate appreciation of intrinsic differences. Thus, intercultural skill (the ability to understand the values and beliefs behind behavior and reconcile them with your own) are basic, necessary tools in today’s world.

It’s not something that happens overnight! Usually it means living in another country/culture/language for several years and, even then, one has to be both observant and open-minded. But globalization has no time for that...

Whether it’s the economy, the ecology, or just plain international politics, the world can’t seem to wait. Administrators and salesmen, diplomats and artists and aid-workers race around the globe like the human ants in a Jacques Tati film.

Our job, as intercultural trainers, is to telescope the process, to explain the fundamentals of social communication while relating the “charming idiosyncrasies” of a specific society. But how do we know we’re getting through? How do we recognize the beginnings of intercultural competence in our students?

A good place to start is complex allegiance, where a person’s identity becomes less fixed. Thoughts and emotions are less a product of previous beliefs than an on-going process of understanding. Sense of self moves in and out of different world-views; one no longer thinks in ethnocentric terms but according to ambiguous conditions, a natural juggling of value-systems.

Arnold Schwarzenegger is an excellent example of what I call “bicultural belonging”. When visiting die Heimat, he’s as Austrian as it gets. But when he returns to California, he’s home...

A truly intercultural person speaks more than one language and knows that language is far more than a means of communication—not so much a system of vocabulary, grammar and syntax as a shared perception of the world. Experience and meaning are connected via a shared framework and each
The Unbearable Lightness of Being Intercultural — continued

new linguistic reality teaches you more about yourself.

The intercultural person is able to see and feel the relativity of beliefs, of decisions: an “absolute standard of rightness” no longer exists. Instead the process is dynamic, a continuing awareness of your own cultural boundaries. Which, in turn, allows you to expand your own parameters and wander into another person’s mind.

Take the well-adjusted American manager of a U.S.-German pharmaceutical company outside of Frankfurt. He wants to develop a new marketing campaign on a trial-and-error basis but knows his team will feel insecure about it. Understanding that the German need to plan things out is real, not frivolous, he comes up with a reassuring analogy.

“It’s not a hit-or-miss operation, quite the contrary. What we’re doing is running a loop in a flow-chart on daily sales and will adapt the campaign accordingly.”

This “other” perspective builds on empathy and permits events to be reconstructed as alternative cultural experiences. However, the ability to see oneself according to dual frames of reference — a sort of “dynamic in-between-ness” — can cause some to lose their primary cultural identity and create what might be described as internal culture shock.

The breakdown of identity leads to cultural marginality, an existence on the periphery of two (or more) cultures. Milan Kundera’s “unbearable lightness of being” takes on real meaning here. If each life is ultimately insignificant, the decisions you make, whether based on your own culture or an adopted one, don’t matter: they have no weight, they don’t tie you down.

But insignificance is unbearable. When our decisions lose their importance, our lives are set adrift. We no longer exist as clearly-defined individuals. It’s a common condition among long-term expatriates and “global nomads.” Conflicting identities often lead them to seek out other cultural marginals rather than people belonging to a specific group.

Despite periodic identity-confusion and the “unbearable lightness” of an uprooted life, such people may find roles as global mediators. The attempt to understand and reconcile cultural differences in both perception and expression is a worthy personal goal as well as a viable career opportunity.

In any case, one’s true values are never at risk — a degree of ethnocentrism remains in fundamental habits of mind which co-exist with “other-culture awareness.” Every person needs a healthy identity-based ego and tested approaches to life.

We are, however, being forced to move from a “nationalistic worldview” to the universal recognition that each culture is unique and must be accepted for what it is before any real communication is possible.

This article is adapted from the author’s book “In Search of Intercultural Understanding”, published by Meridian World Press.
Book Review

Verstehen sich Deutsche und Amerikaner?

Von den kommunikativen Hürden im transatlantischen Business

by John Otto Magee

Euro 14.95, 180 pages

Written in the thriller genre, this compact book zeroes in on the different types of behavior that make for major clashes when a German multinational takes over an American competitor. What emerges is a surprisingly tense roller-coaster ride: a real page-turner!

Two CEOs—one from Philadelphia, the other from Düsseldorf—secretly meet in New York to decide the fate of a merger that went bad from the start. Might it not be easier for all concerned to simply walk away?

Their own discussions, however, lead them to see that the cultural factor was almost completely overlooked. What seem to be unsolvable problems of substance may only be roadblocks national cultural approaches. They still have a chance at making things work...and being proved right after all.

They bring in a hired gun, a German intercultural expert living in Philadelphia, who puts together a three-day workshop at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. The two CEOs as well as the respective German and American heads of each of the key ten disciplines (product development, manufacturing, service, supply, marketing, finance, etc.) come together to address their divergent approaches.

Each subject kicks off with a logical, albeit leading, question and a case study. Participants are asked to react—viscerally. After which they’re given access to what their cross-cultural counterparts said and are then supplied with a white paper deconstructing the cultural differences.

The ensuing discussion, guided by a man who understands the way both sides see and think and feel, is proof of the solution itself: only when each group understands the motivations and fundamental approaches of the other can progress be made.

Although not available in English, the book is a must for all German-American intercultural trainers. It distills, in detective-story detail, how a post-merger workshop should be run and it’s an entertaining read whether you’re in the biz or not.

John Magee was educated at the Jesuit University, Georgetown and combines rigorous thinking and persistent inquiry to throw equal light on opposite players in what can only be called a “potentially unified divide”. He does so by making readers feel as well as think.

Then again, not only has Magee lived in Germany for 20 years, his choice to write in German is unique in itself. Kafka may have done so but few Americans ever would. Small wonder that his protagonist makes sure the workshop participants get it and get it right.

Reviewed by Patrick Schmidt

Contents

Editorial 1
Idikó Polyák 2-3
Short portrait
The International Readiness Check 4-5
Intercultural Development 6-7
Inventory (IDI)
The International Profiler 8-9
(TIP)
The Unbearable 10-11
Lightness of Being Intercultural
Book reviews 12-13
Events, workshops, congresses 14-16

SIETAR Europa
637 bd de la Tavernière
Residence l’Argentière - Bât E
06210 Mandelieu la Napoule FRANCE
Tel.: +33 4 92 19 04 90
Fax: +44 870 121 7440
office@sietar-europa.org
www.sietar-europa.org
Book Review

Beyond Hofstede

Culture Frameworks for Global Marketing and Management

by Cheryl Nakata

U.S. $100, 304 pages

As Aristotle to scholastic philosophy, so Hofstede to intercultural studies. The question is, of course, “Where would we be without him and how far can we go with him?” Beyond Hofstede is a highly academic treatment of the question from the perspective of marketing and management studies, but not without interest for those who both teach and do consulting and training in intercultural matters.

Since the inception of Geert Hofstede’s seminal research and, despite its ongoing replication and development, some core concerns have arisen that impel us to both examine the extent of its validity as well as to take into account new societal developments. These factors demand that we enlarge the scope of intercultural inquiry and its applications. Since Hofstede’s original inquiries and the development of its exploratory framework, internationalization and globalization have spread exponentially. Moreover, culture and cultures have become increasingly complex due to mobility and exchange. Certainly it has become clear that broad, brush definitions of cultures as national and ethnic are at best starting points for viewing the diversity that flourishes within these entities and, in fact, this approach may incline its users to overlook this diversity all to easily. Today’s researcher must ask: what are the units of cultural attribution and, how much granularity can be allowed before the boundaries of meaningful cognition are reached? Quite a few of the essays in this book struggle with this dilemma in the background.

In Chapter 11, for example, Liu and Dale examine the use of mental models in the study of culture with a focus on how the dynamics of mental models are shared and converge between individuals. If “mental models” sounds a bit clinical and abstract, we need to remember that humans invest them with feeling and significance and they often take on the clothing of story and metaphor. Establishing and relating these mental models is another way of looking at the tasks of intercultural communication, negotiation, advertising, etc.

Another way to examine the effects of culture in our lives is to research the circumstances under which culture “kicks in” in a big way to affect our perceptions, judgments, motivations and decision making. Significant work has been done here, but it is a moving target which demands ongoing attention to the dynamics and circumstances under which people make decisions. There is certainly a difference in how people make decisions if under stress and want or if they are operating out of an environment of abundance.

Readers should be prepared for quite a few highly technical discussions that require a mastery of statistical and other research technologies. However, it is a provocative resource for suggesting research directions that are more flexible, more interdisciplinary and more creative as we acknowledge the contributions of Hofstede as well as reframe cultural exploration.

Reviewed by George Simmons

Contents

Editorial 1

Idikó Polyák 2-3

Short portrait

The International Readiness Check 4-5

Intercultural Development 6-7

Inventory (IDI)

The International Profiler 8-9

(TIP)

The Unbearable Lightness of Being Intercultural 10-11

Book reviews 12-13

Events, workshops, congresses 14-16

SIETAR Europa

637 bd de la Tavernière

Residence l’Argentière - Bât E

06210 Mandelieu la Napoule  FRANCE

Tel.: +33 4 92 19 04 90

Fax: +34 870 121 7440

office@sietar-europa.org

www.sietar-europa.org
On Being an Interculturalist

Our contribution to a better world

Join our congress and take part in interactive workshops, panel discussions and presentations from the broad field of intercultural research, education and training.

Our main congress themes are:
- new concepts, tools and approaches in intercultural research and practice.
- do we practice what we preach?
- enriching breadths with depth – on profound transformation in intercultural training and research.
- certification process for intercultural trainers.

Pre-Congress Day Programmes on 3rd Dec from 9:00-18:00
- Games and Simulations as Intercultural Educational, Training and Coaching Tools by George Simons and Marta Nowicka in English and Polish
- Interactive training strategies – the Germans. Do you want to know how the Germans tick? Let’s play and find out! by Sabine Wagner in English
- Research Workshop by Betina Szkudlarek in English
- O Porozumieniu bez Przemocy w szkoleniach międzykulturowych by Agnieszka Pietlicka in Polish

Register at http://sietar-polska.pl/english/registration-form

The congress languages will be English and Polish. More information about the Congress on www.sietar.pl. If you have any questions, please write to: congress@intercultural-link.com

Wroclaw is the main city in south-western Poland, well known for its mixed European heritage.
Resource Diversity?

*Worlds in change: Understand, maintain and create diversity*

The next SIETAR-Forum 2010 will take place from 25th – 27th February 2010 in Bonn. After its big success with the Forum 2008, SIETAR-Germany invites up to 300 interculturalists including representatives from science, economy, politics and society for this exciting event.

Delegates will get new approaches and findings about diversity values, which are divided into three different core topics:

- leading diversity
- learning from other worlds
- diversity values – Germany the developing country?

The aim of the forum is to contribute to higher recognition and increased use of diversity values in the society, economy and social sector in Germany.

One of the novelties of this Forum is an extraordinary selection process of the workshops, named “Call for people”. An online-platform gives delegates the opportunity to propose and assess topics for a maximum of twelve workshops in advance. In this way it will not be the organisers, but the delegates themselves, who get the chance to determine their own workshops for the Forum.

Registrations for this conference are possible from now on. People who register by the 15th of December 2009 will receive an early bird discount. All information around the Forum can be seen on: www.SIETAR-Forum.de. The conference language will be German.

Bonn is a lovely small city, an ideal spot for meeting others at conferences and congresses.
Events, workshops, congresses

Wroclaw, Poland
December 3-5, 2009
SIETAR Polska Congress
Theme is “On being an Interculturalist -- our contribution to the world”. Some topics: interculturalism as a profession, intercultural competence, do we practice what we preach?, new concepts, tools and approaches in intercultural research and practice. The conference languages will be English and Polish.
http://www.sietar.pl

Bonn, Germany
February 25-27, 2010
SIETAR Forum 2010
Ressource Vielfalt? Welten im Umbruch: Viefalt verstehen - erhalten - gestalten SIETAR-Deutschland is again organizing a forum that will emulate its highly acclaimed forum from 2008. Key aspects will be: Leading Diversity - Learning from other Worlds - Diversity Values: Germany the developing Country?. A community rating will allow everybody to contribute to the forum subjects in advance. The conference language will be German.
http://www.sietar-forum.de/

France
October 27-29, 2010
30th Anniversary of SIETAR France
To celebrate its 30th anniversary, SIETAR-France is planning a congress in conjunction with SIETAR-Europa. Themes will be human rights and diversity. Languages will be French and English. More information about the congress will soon be available on the SIETAR-France website. www.sietar-france.org/sietar/

Direct Member Election Results from November 18, 2009
For the term 2009-2011, Mirka Lachka and Perihan Ügeöz were voted in as Direct Member representatives on the SE Board and Ildikó Polyák was elected as the Substitute. Approximately 60% of eligible voters cast a vote. That’s a high percentage for “Direct Member” elections. All candidates are therefore to be congratulated for their ability to get members to the polls, and their appeal in drawing votes. For more information, visit: http://www.sietar-europa.org/elections09/2009candidates.html

Survey on virtual technology among SIETAR members
This survey aims to assess which technological tools you are using in your professional and personal lives and what differences may exist in terms of age, gender, nationality, current country of residence and profession. This study is a follow-up study to one conducted in 2006.

The results of these studies are important in:
1) improving your ability as an independent consultant to compete with your larger competitors.
2) demonstrating the importance virtual tools are playing in the delivery of training and consulting services.

The survey requires about 15-20 minutes to complete
Link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qRckP2ed6_2bkJOg2d_2fbKG7A_3d_3d

This survey is being undertaken by Peter W Hayward, founder of EHI Consulting in consultation with Dr. George Simons of Diversophy, com and Dr. Jolanda Tromp, Consultant Intercultural Global Teamwork, both coauthors of the new Cultural Detective: Global Teamwork.”