

## **CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING OF PROSPECTIVE SPECIALISTS: APPROACHES AND METHODS**

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The accelerating pace of globalization has made cross-cultural competence an indispensable qualification for today's university graduates. For Belarus, which is bound to forge further links with the external world and maintain contacts with other countries this problem is of particular topical interest. The increase in the number of companies dealing on the international stage has brought about a dramatic change in educational goals and policies which is evinced in their inclination towards cross-cultural training. Academic background in specific courses is not usually sufficient enough to mix with other cultures, not to the extent that a specialist can fully understand the nature and concept of foreign business.

At the other end of the spectrum, how can a specialist evaluate the problems and peculiarities of his or her work without having been exposed to a different culture and draw the distinction between the alien and home-grown professional spheres. Cultural awareness appears to be instrumental not only in interaction with people from different cultural background but for gaining professional expertise as well. In this respect cross-cultural training has dual commitment: to equip graduates with ability to anticipate cross-cultural challenges in the international business world and get to the root of their own cultural identity in their professional sphere.

As far as means of cross-cultural training are concerned the basic approaches which are exercised within the framework of university education can be roughly categorized into two kinds: elaborating specific courses such as 'Cross-Cultural Communication' coupled with a related course 'International Relations' and the so-called interdisciplinary approach which implies studying cultural values and behavioral patterns in core subjects (sociology, culturology, etc.). One of them is foreign language. Linguists are unanimous that studying foreign language is inconceivable without examining its culture as language carries with it cultural coding. Therefore the role of learning foreign language is not to be underestimated.

There are various ways to introduce students to principles of intercultural communication and familiarizing them with methods and concepts of the target culture with regard to their profession:

Case studies which exemplify manifestations of cultural behavioral patterns

Overview of the major areas where cultures most often clash

Reading articles which can be summarized in the notion 'As others see us'

Group discussions of various stereotypes and their origin

Watching documentary films with a view to assess similarities and differences in cultures and develop strategies for dealing with cross-cultural issues

Self-assessment tests which make students aware of their own cultural moorings.

The integral part of cross-cultural training is investigation of pitfalls cross-cultural differences may present and examining the ways to bridge the gap between them. The chief cultural dimensions which can be effectively employed in analysis are as follows:

Emphasis on individualism or collectivism

Cultural assumptions about gender roles

Concept and management of time

Hot or cool expression of emotions

Deal-focused vs relationship focused interaction

Internal or external locus of control

Attitude towards authority (high-power or low-power distance)

Understanding cross-cultural differences of this kind isn't just a matter of idle curiosity. It can be applied to real situations of cross-cultural communication when it is necessary to adjust your interactive style to that of a stranger. Furthermore, cross-cultural analysis on the part of a student contributes to his or her values clarification as they unconsciously make a choice in favour of one or another cultural pattern delineated in the comparison.

Finally, discovering the ways to bridge the gap between two or more different cultures isn't enough for constructive relationships and joint-venture partnerships. To make a proficient cross-cultural communicator it is imperative not only to tailor your style to the needs of an interlocutor but to synthesise multiple insights from anthropology, psychology, linguistics, pedagogy and organized behavior alike. Culture consists of values, attitudes and behavior.

It stands to reason that the primary objective in teaching culture awareness is integration of human-oriented knowledge from different fields and a global mind-set able to mould collaboration to any environment and smooth the lines of communication between people of different cultural backgrounds and walks of life.

Summary. The article gives insight into the problem of cross-cultural training at university: its role in professional development of a specialist, its main methods and approaches and those aspects of culture analysis which are instrumental for joint-venture partnerships and ensure success in integration processes.