Preparing Students to Work in a Globalized Business Environment

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Abstract

As the world is becoming smaller and communication among people is getting easier, we all come in contact with people whose cultures and backgrounds are different from us. In order to live harmoniously and work effectively together, we need to improve our interpersonal skills and respect those who are different from us. This paper investigates how educators can prepare their students for a diverse workplace.

Key words: Globalization, Identity, Cultural Intelligence, Critical Thinking, Workplace

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how we can prepare our students better to work efficiently in new and diverse environments. According to a survey conducted in Japan in 2013, 25.9% of more than 1,100 Japanese companies polled said that they planned to hire foreign college graduates. That was 5% more than they had hired in 2012 (Nagata, 2013). From now on, Japanese employees will be working more and more with people whose identities, cultural backgrounds, and nationalities are different from theirs. In thinking about this situation, then, it is wise to keep in mind the following statement:

"We live in a dynamic, rapidly evolving era characterized by dynamic changes in technology, travel, economics and political institutions, immigration patterns, growing demographic diversity, and population density. These changes have created a world that requires regular interaction with people of different origins" (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, Roy, 2013). The key point to keep in mind here is "people of different origins" because, as Fred Jandt, Dean of Palm Desert Campus and Professor of Communication at California State University San Bernardino states, "Today more than 7 million people live on earth, and no two of them are alike. People can be small and large and in many colors. We wear different clothes and have different ideas of

beauty. Many of us believe in one God, others believe in many, and still others believe in none"
(Jandt, 2013).

Although it is a known fact that, due to rapid changes in many aspects of our lives, the world
has become a small village, it should be remembered that, not only do we come into contact with
people of different origins, "origin" does not solely mean people of different nationalities. "Origin"
can indicate not just the origin of two people of the same nationality, but also people from
different backgrounds with different origins and nationalities. *Identity* is what separates one
person from another and what constitutes a person's identity depends on many factors, which
will be discussed later.

Identity

Ting-Toomey describes identity as the "reflective self-conception or self-image that we each
derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process. Identity
basically refers to our reflective views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-image"
(Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity is who we are, and factors such as family, friends, education,
environment, etc. shape our personalities and characters. Therefore, our identity changes as we
come into contact with different people, join new groups, and move into new environments.
"Identity is dynamic and people usually have multiple identities. For example, when students
enter university, they assume the identity of a university student and leave behind that of a
high school student" (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, Roy, 2013). There is no doubt that two
individuals from the same city or region can find things in common, but it would be naïve to
assume that these similarities make them identical individuals. We often see even children from
the same family who have contrasting characters, so it should not surprise us to come into
contact with or work together with people whose views and opinions are different from ours, no
matter where they are from. Obviously, because of a shared past environment, some people will
find more things in common with those of the same nationality or region, but to work efficiently
with others regardless of their background, we ought to look for common ground between
ourselves and others and respect individual cultural and personal identity.

Cultural background and experiences are crucial factors in the formation of a person's
identity. For example, an employee from a team-oriented culture is expected to have high
commitment to a team identity across various situations. This team mentality will manifest
itself in the classroom, in the boardroom, and at home:

"A person's identity molecules are a collection of ideas and images concerning what you see, both the idea and typical state of things in the world. These identity molecules make up a filter through which our experiences and current situations are channeled. If you can understand a person's identity filters and what atoms make up their molecules, you can predict how he or she will interpret and react to various situations" (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, Roy, 2013).

People who have a tightly intertwined set of characteristics which make up their identity, to which they are strongly committed, may experience problems adjusting to new cultures or environments. Moreover, those who have not come into contact with individuals whose beliefs and backgrounds are different from theirs, and as a result lack flexibility, may find it difficult to work effectively in a new and diverse workplace. Sharing a common culture may facilitate things, but as we will see, sharing this culture with people of diverse origins and identities is more complex than many people usually assume.

Culture

We hear the word "culture" in many contexts, as it is one of the most commonly used words in society by mass media, academia, etc. However, some people may not be aware of certain elements that shape cultures, how cultures change, and what factors contribute to these changes. Jandt defines culture as "the totality of that group's thought, experiences, and patterns of behavior and its concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide our behavior and how those evolve with contact with other cultures (Jandt, 2013). Geert Hofstede, Professor Emeritus of Organizational Anthropology and International Management at Maastricht University in the Netherlands, classifies these elements of culture into four categories: symbols, rituals, values, and heroes. Symbols refer to verbal and nonverbal language. Rituals are the socially essential collective activities within a culture. Values are assumptions, which are sometimes not open for discussion within a culture about what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, normal or abnormal. Heroes are the real or imaginary people who serve as role models within a culture (Hofstede, 1991). Simply put, "culture" is how we connect with others, how we think, how we behave, how we view people, and how we see the world. Culture, just as with identity, is dynamic and is shaped by history, customs, education, religion, family, school, social groups, and many other elements. Culture is dynamic, changing through communication and exchanges with other

cultures. Jandt states that culture is communication and communication is culture (Jandt, 2013).

In order to develop cultural awareness and become a good communicator, people need to be flexible and open-minded: "Our experience with and knowledge of other cultures are limited by how we like our culture and have bias towards other cultures" (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, Roy, 2013). Sometimes, this bias is not intentional, but is part of what Shaules (2015) calls "Deep Culture." Shaules describes Deep Culture as patterns of habits and meaning that are internalized in the unconscious mind, and that we rely on when we communicate and interact with others. He points out that we don't notice how much we rely on implicit cultural knowledge until it fails us in a foreign environment. As a result, if we are unaware of deep culture, we may overestimate the unifying force of globalization.

Therefore, in order to adjust to a new environment and cope with the challenges of working with others, especially when those who are from diverse backgrounds, it is essential that we keep an open mind: "Our experiences with and knowledge of other cultures are limited by how we like our culture and have bias towards other cultures." (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, Roy, 2013).

Gaston describes the process of gaining cultural awareness as having four stages. The first stage is recognition: the growing consciousness of our own cultural group. Stage two is acceptance/rejection, which Gaston defines as a reaction to cultural differences that is either positive or negative. The third stage is integration/ethnocentrism, which means to either begin to think bi-culturally or remain rigidly ethnocentric. The fourth and final stage is transcendence, when we are able to value and appreciate not only our own cultural roots, but value and appreciate other cultures as well (Gaston, 1994).

Showing interest in other cultures does not necessarily mean disliking or abandoning our own cultural identity. In fact, people who consider themselves world citizens have a good understanding of who they are and a clear knowledge of their own cultural identity. Nevertheless, for those who wish to work efficiently with others, regardless of their background, developing what we may call "cultural intelligence" is a must.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is a "person's ability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings. It captures a person's adjustment to new cultures" (Early, Ang, Tan, 2006). The shrinking world and diversified workplaces require individuals who have the ability to engage in

meaningful communication and mutually respectful interaction. People who have a few years working experience know that success at work necessitates having workers who are good communicators, understand others better, show sympathy, and look for ways to get the best out of any given situation. This applies not only to a multi-national workforce, but to any business situation with a sound management style. As mentioned earlier, cultural intelligence requires flexibility and experience in working with others whose views are different from ours. Successful people are those who can see the need for these things and wisely embrace this need. Although these days Japanese are exposed to more foreign tourists, and to some degree more foreign workers, their level of contact with such people may not be widespread or deep enough to foster a high degree of cultural intelligence.

Hanvey (1979) requires more than simple exposure: "It is not easy to attain cross-cultural understanding of the kind that puts you into the head of a person from an utterly different culture. Contact alone will not do it. Even sustained contact will not do it. There must be a readiness to respect and accept and a capacity to participate. The participation must be reinforced by rewards that matter to the participants. And the participation must be sustained over long periods of time."

Livermore (2015) states that research has shown that the four kinds of capability consistently found among culturally intelligent individuals are:

1. CQ Drive (Motivation): Having the interest, confidence, and drive to adapt cross-culturally.

2. CQ Knowledge (Cognition): The ability to understand intercultural norms and differences.

3. CQ Strategy (Metacognition): Being able to make sense of culturally diverse experiences and planning accordingly.

4. CQ Action (Behavioral): Being able to change verbal and nonverbal actions appropriately when interacting cross-culturally.

Words and phrases such as *motivation, having interest, planning*, etc. are mentioned above as capabilities found among culturally intelligent people, but they alone are not enough without the motivation and willingness to engage with others (Early, Ang, Tan, 2006). According to the authors mentioned above, cultural intelligence consists of three key parts: what you think and how you solve problems (cultural strategic thinking); whether or not you are energized and persistent in your actions (motivation); and whether you can act in certain ways (behavior). Cultural strategic thinking refers to the general thinking skills that you use to understand how and why people act as they do in a new culture. This understanding captures not just what people in another culture believe or value, but also perceives the procedures and routines that

people follow as they work or act (Early, Ang, Tan, 2006).

Another important point to keep in mind is that "High CQ people seek both positive and negative information about themselves-they do not selectively sample, interpret, and remember just the positive events. It also means a person is energetic and willing to persevere in the face of difficulty and possible failure. That's why motivation matters." (Early, Ang, Tan, 2006).

In order to develop cultural intelligence among Japanese university students, teachers' lessons and related activities require extensive planning in order for teachers to give learners opportunities to interact, negotiate, and exchange opinions with those whose views are different. The crucial thing is for students to be taught how to express their opinions clearly, present clear and unbiased facts to support their opinions, and listen to others through being open-minded, curious, respectful, and willing to show flexibility.

Application of Cultural Awareness in the Workplace

Hofstede (1991) states that the acquisition of intercultural communication abilities passes through three phases: awareness, knowledge, and skills. According to Hofstede,

> Awareness is the recognition that we carry a particular mental software because of the way we are brought up, and that others who are brought up in a different environment carry a different mental software for equally good reasons. Knowledge means when we interact with particular other cultures, we have to learn about their symbols, their heroes, and their rituals. And skills are based on awareness and knowledge, plus practice. We have to recognize and apply symbols of the other culture, recognize their heroes, practice their rituals, and experience the satisfaction of getting along in the new environment.
>
> Hofstede also says that; when working in a multi-cultural environment, many factors influence a person's personality and response to different situations. Obviously, we ought to be careful not to generalize or stereotype, but certain qualities apply to different nationalities. For example, when it comes to feminine and masculine societies, in feminine societies managers use intuition and strive for consensus while in masculine societies, managers are expected to be decisive and assertive. In terms of uncertainty avoidance, Japan ranks 6 among 50 countries and 3 regions surveyed, while Canada and the U.S. stood in 42 and 43 place respectively.

By looking at the charts below, developed by Livermore (2015), we can see where certain regions and nationalities stand culturally, so to speak.

As can be seen from the charts below, there are clear differences in how certain nationalities think, behave, analyze situations, communicate, etc. with others. The charts may reveal more about homogeneous societies like Japan and Korea than societies such as the United States, Canada, or Australia. It is getting more difficult to describe a "typical" American or Canadian due to the existence of people from a multiple of races, religions, and backgrounds. On the other

Table 1. Uncertainty Avoidance

Low Uncertainty Avoidance		High Uncertainty Avoidance	
Emphasis on flexibility and adaptability		Emphasis on planning and predictability	
Low	Moderate		High
Anglo Eastern Europe Nordic Europe	Arab Confucian Asia* Germanic Europe Southern Asia* Sub-Saharan Africa		Latin America Latin Europe
*Indicates signify variation within cluster			
Leading Low Uncertainty Avoidance Individuals ● Avoid dogmatic statements. ● Invite them to explore the unknown. ● Let them act and keep you informed.		**Leading High Uncertainty Avoidance Individuals** ● Give explicit instructions. ● Rely on formalized procedures and policies. ● Ask them to recommend action; then offer feedback and support.	

Table 2. Neutral vs. Affective

Neutral		Affective	
Emphasis on non-emotional communication; hiding feelings		Emphasis on expressive communication; sharing feelings openly	
Neutral	Moderate		Affective
Confucian Asia Eastern Europe Germanic Europe Nordic Europe	Anglo* Southern Asia		Arab Latin America Latin Europe Sub-Saharan Africa
*Indicates signify variation within cluster			
Leading Neutral Individuals ● Manage your emotions and regulate your body language. ● Stick to the points in meetings and interactions.		**Leading Affective Individuals** ● Open up to people to demonstrate warmth and trust. ● Work on being more expressive than you might typically prefer.	

Table 3.　Power Distance

Lower Power Distance		Higher Power Distance	
Emphasis on equality; shared decision making		Emphasis on differences in status; Decisions made by superiors	
Low	Moderate		High
Anglo Germanic Europe Nordic Europe	Confucian Asia Eastern Europe* Latin Europe Sub-Sahara Africa		Arab Latin America Southern Asia*
* Indicates signify variation within cluster			
Leading Low Power-Distance Individuals ● Forgo formalities. ● Create ways to question or challenge authority.		**Leading High Power-Distance Individuals** ● Follow chain of command carefully. ● Do not question or challenge authority.	

hand, it is equally wrong to stereotype Japanese or Koreans. We should not compare individuals; rather, we should compare cultural tendencies.

　　The main point here is that it is vital, when working with people of different nationalities, to keep their cultural backgrounds in mind in order to work and communicate with them more effectively. This applies equally to two people of the same nationality who have different backgrounds. As has been stated above, family, education, environment, friends, group affiliations, etc. influence cultural identity. The more differences there are between people with different cultural backgrounds, the greater the possibility there is for differences in cultural perceptions as well. Therefore, it is important to help students become critical thinkers and to enable them develop their ability to analyze various situations objectively. The essential thing is to be able to see things from another person's point of view. This ability cannot be achieved easily and requires constant exposure to and practice in dealing with new/different situations.

Critical Thinking

　　Ken Kay, CEO of Edleader21 (P21), says that:

　　"Today's students need critical thinking and problem solving skills not just to solve the problems of their current jobs, but to meet the challenges of adapting to our constantly changing workforce." For university graduates to compete in this ever-changing environment, they need to be critical thinkers, good communicators, and individuals who

are flexible enough to adjust to new people and environment with ease.

Critical thinking and problem-solving can be defined and explained in many ways, but P21 explains what critical thinking entails as follows:

Reason Effectively

● Use various types of reasoning (inductive, deductive, etc.) as appropriate to the situation.

Use Systems Thinking

● Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems.

Make Judgments and Decisions

● Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs.

● Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view.

● Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments.

● Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis.

● Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes.

Solve Problems

● Solve different kinds of unfamiliar problems in both conventional and innovative ways.

● Identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions."

If students want to compete in this global society, they must be able to be proficient communicators, creators, critical thinkers, and collaborators. Today's job market requires competencies such as critical thinking and the ability to interact with people from many linguistic and cultural backgrounds (cultural competency) (nea.org).

According to Paul and Elder, habitual utilization of intellectual traits produces a well-cultivated critical thinker who is able to:

  ▪ Raise vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely.

  ▪ Gather and assess relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively.

  ▪ Come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards.

  ▪ Think open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, assumptions, implications, and practical consequences.

  ▪ Communicate effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

Paul and Elder also say that critical thinking entails having the capacity to evaluate skillfully and fairly the quality of evidence and detect error, hypocrisy, manipulation, dissembling, and bias."

In his article "The State of Critical Thinking Today", Paul (2004) says that "students need to think clearly, accurately, precisely, relevantly, and logically. They should also be able to clarify questions, gather relevant data, reason to logical or valid conclusions, identify key assumptions, trace significant implications, or enter without distortion into alternative points of view. They should have intellectual traits of mind such as intellectual humility, intellectual perseverance, and intellectual responsibility."

However, in the same article, Paul depicts a disturbing image of the present situation of higher education in the States, a situation which is true of many universities in Japan as well. Paul maintains that, in the United States,

▪ Most college faculty at all levels lack a substantive concept of critical thinking.

▪ Most college faculty don't realize that they lack understanding of this substantive concept of critical thinking, but believe that they sufficiently understand it, and assume they are teaching their students correctly.

▪ Lecture, rote memorization, and (largely ineffective) short-term study habits are still the norm in college instruction and learning today.

Rote memorization still plays a prominent role in the Japanese educational system, at least until students graduate from high school and pass university entrance exams. Although Conley (nd) in "Toward a More Comprehensive Conception of College Readiness" says that "habits of mind such as analysis, interpretation, precision and accuracy, problem solving, and reasoning can be as or more important than content knowledge in determining success in college courses," the improvement of teaching styles, learning habits, and cognitive learning in Japan faces formidable obstacles. Teachers often, consciously or unconsciously, employ teaching approaches and styles the same or similar to what they were taught when they themselves were students. Therefore, it is safe to assume that, both in the U.S. and Japanese universities, the skillful teaching of critical thinking, objective analysis, accurate data gathering, logical reasoning, and tasks that challenge students' assumptions is not what it should be.

Globalized Markets

Although the subsequent topics cannot to be discussed at length in this paper, they are mentioned because they are also of great importance: changes in domestic markets in Japan; the need to hire more non-Japanese workers; and expansion of Japanese overseas markets.

There is no question that Japan is facing a shrinking domestic market due to its declining birthrate. The increase in the aging population has greatly affected trends in consumer marketing. Moreover, the number of non-Japanese consumers in Japan has increased markedly in the past few years due to the influx of mainly Chinese and other Asian visitors. Even businesses that appeal mainly to Japanese customers, such as department stores like Isetan and Mitsukoshi, must adapt their business practices to appeal to non-Japanese customers. In the past two years, according to Hiroshi Onishi, the president of Mitsukoshi (*Financial Times*, 2016), the proportion of Chinese among shoppers at Mitsukoshi's Ginza branch has risen from low single-digits to 25 percent. Mitsukoshi has changed the layout of the store and retrained staff. Not to understand its overseas customers' needs "would be disrespectful to them", says Ohnishi, who has been increasing the number of Chinese-speaking employees and specially training in-store sales people in the cosmetics section. Hiroshi Mikitani, the founder of the e-commerce giant Rakuten, states in the same newspaper article cited above that, due to the shrinking of domestic markets, growth for Japan can only lie beyond its national borders. Success in overseas endeavors will occur only if Japanese workers are able to understand non-Japanese customers. Mikitani stresses that globalization is, for Japan, a must, not a choice. Therefore, understanding the needs, tastes, and trends among non-Japanese consumers will continue to be a part of business strategies adopted by Japanese corporations.

Another area where Japanese companies need to improve is in the amount of their share of foreign markets. Japan's share of global trade dropped to 4 percent in 2012 from 8 percent in 1990. The country's share of direct investment in foreign countries also dropped to 4 percent in 2012 from 9 percent in 1990. According to Waldenberger (2014), this is puzzling, as Japan has great technological advantages. For example, Japan applied for the most global patents in 2011, filing 32 percent, followed by 29 percent for the U.S. and 11 percent for Germany:

Japan's biggest companies have been losing relative market share over the past ten years: their proportion of the Fortune Global 500's total revenues decreased to 13 percent, from 35

percent, between 1995 and 2009. One of Japan's longtime strengths is electronics, for example, but its share of the world's export value of electronic goods has fallen from 30 percent in 1990 to less than 15 percent today, according to the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry. Many Japanese companies have no alternative to globalization if they hope to continue growing (McKinsey & Company, 2011).

The problem surely stems at least partly from an educational system that is still too insular to create the wave of aggressive, ambitious internationalists it profoundly needs (*The Japan Times*, 2014). Unless Japan makes changes in its educational system by, for example, ceasing to compel students to concentrate on rote memorization and outmoded testing methods, it may be difficult for educators to foster learners who engage in active learning through conducting research and participating in discussions and debates based on factual data. In doing so, learners become critical thinkers and able to draw correct conclusions that take diverse points of view into consideration.

According to Waldenberger (2014), "Japan has a lot of potential but is not making good use of it to achieve globalization." The real obstacle is what he calls the 'inner' labor market, or Japan Inc.'s way of hiring, training and promoting employees. In an inner labor market, career paths to top management are based on lifetime employment. In other words, employee promotions are seniority based. Waldenberger goes on to say that this "inner" labor market relies heavily on Japanese managers and provides few opportunities for foreign talent with a career path to top positions. Therefore, with this shortage of local labor market and shrinking young population, it would seem to make perfect sense to employ more qualified foreign labor and give this labor force opportunities to both advance their various careers and participate in key decision-making strategies.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, more Japanese businesses are hiring foreign university graduates or Japanese students with overseas experience. Companies such as Uniqlo are holding meetings in English. This seems to be the right direction to go, but the progress is slow. Transforming the present business mind-set and employing strategies that take into account both Japanese and non-Japanese consumers and employees, are what will undoubtedly serve the future of Japan the best.

Conclusion

Globalization of markets is forcing Japan to rethink its marketing strategies and management styles. Immediately after World War II, Japan succeeded economically by adopting and adapting the technological knowhow of advanced countries. For decades, Japan's economy was the second largest in the world. But times have changed and things are moving more quickly. Japan needs to regain its share of the market by competing with the emerging and established economies of other nations. To achieve this, Japanese companies and their management must rely on employees who are visionary, flexible, and who embrace diversity. Japanese businesses must also hire more non-Japanese and learn how to think in "unfamiliar" ways. Not only this, but Japanese universities must teach students how to be good communicators, critical thinkers, people who can work with both Japanese and non-Japanese, and people who are able to express their opinions, knowing that their opinions are valued.

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グローバル化したビジネス環境で働くための学生の心構え

サベット・メヘラン

抄　録

世界が小さくなるにつれ，人と人とのコミュニケーションが容易になり，文化や背景が異なる人々と接するようになる。調和を図り，一緒に効果的に働くためには，対人関係のスキルを向上させ，私たちとは異なる人たちを尊重する必要がある。この論文は，教育者が学生を多様な職場にどのように備えさせるかを研究した。