

Exercise 1

Mapping the Multicultural Classroom into Learning Teams[©]

Time allotted: 50-65 minutes

Objectives:

- Demonstrate how students and instructors are socialized to behave differently.
- Identify cultural expectations and values in the classroom.
- Compare and contrast cultural similarities and differences.
- Recognize one's own assumptions and expectations.
- Clarify the instructor's role.
- Create an effective multicultural learning community that is sensitive to diversity.

Materials and Space Requirements:

- The ideal space is a large empty area to form the world map. However, instructors can also use a regular classroom and have students ignore obstacles like desks and chairs.
- A whiteboard and markers are needed to create the table of cultural expectations in the classroom. Flip chart pages and markers are another alternative.
- Handouts: none

Exercise:

STEP 1: Visual representation of cultural influences (5 minutes)

Instructor: “Visualize the classroom as the world, with the North Pole at the front of the room, the South Pole at the opposite end, with Africa and Europe along the wall to your far left and Latin America and North America along the wall to your far right. The Middle East, Asia, and Australia are toward the middle of the room. Go stand in the spot where you were raised. If you were educated in different countries, stand in the one that represents your primary cultural identification. You will have to check with other students to make sure your position is correct relative to theirs.”

Once students are in position: “Let's see what nationalities are represented. Where are you located?” The instructor asks each part of the room where they are standing to get an overview of the international/regional composition.

STEP 2: Country/Regional group formation and discussion of classroom norms (10-15 minutes)

“Form homogenous country or regional groups (of no more than 6-8) with the students standing closest to you.” If there are many people representing one country, break them into smaller regional groups. If there is only one person representing a country, he or she should join the closest group or other singles. “Introduce yourselves and then answer questions a. and b. below. I will call upon someone in

your group to report your consolidated answers to the entire class, so everyone should be prepared to briefly summarize your discussion.”

- a. How were students expected to behave in the classroom where you were raised?
- b. How were teachers expected to behave in the classroom where you were raised?

STEP 3: Group reports to the plenary (15 minutes)

The instructor asks a spokesperson from each group to briefly relay their answers, which the instructor (or a student volunteer) writes on the board.

STEP 4: Plenary debriefing (20-30 minutes). (If forming learning teams directly after this session, have the plenary discussion while students are still in their homogenous, regional small groups).

1. Do you see any differences in norms or values that could affect our learning community?
2. Did anything surprise you as you listened to other groups report out? What does this tell you about your own assumptions?
3. If there are different expectations about participation in the room, how can we ensure everyone is heard?
4. Have you ever studied in another country?
 - a. What was the most significant cultural difference you observed in the classroom when you studied abroad?
 - b. What did you learn about your own culture as a result of your study abroad experience?
5. What norms should we set to create a (multicultural) learning community where students are comfortable, can talk openly about cultural differences, and maximize the opportunity to learn from people of different backgrounds and experiences?
6. The Instructor can show a slide with the Norms for the Multicultural Classroom found at the end of this IM chapter.
7. What are the key take-aways from this exercise?

STEP 5: Learning team formation (15 minutes). (This can be done directly after the exercise, or if time is limited, have students reform in homogenous groups at the start of the next class session and then perform this step).

Student-selected team formation. “Our goal is to form learning teams of 5-7 people that are as diverse as possible. In addition to cultural and ethnic diversity, what other types of diversity are present in this class (age, race, gender, majors, etc.)? (Write their answers on the board.) We know how to work and get along with people just like us: our goal in this course is to learn to do the same with people who are as different as possible from us. Please do not join a group with your friends or people you have worked with in the past – you will not learn as much as you can from the course and will miss an important career building opportunity. Get up and walk around to form your groups and let me know when everyone is satisfied. Then we’ll see if I am also

satisfied with the diversity you have created.” Once the teams are created: “Look around the room – are we as diverse as possible? If not, let’s make some trades.”

ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN LEADING THIS EXERCISE

- A. If there is no cultural or ethnic diversity in your classroom, consider using the Diversity Icebreaker (see Instructor’s Manual below) to identify other types of diversity.
- B. If this is your first-class meeting, you may wish to write these items on the board:
 - 1. An agenda with time periods
 - 2. Confucius’ quotation (“I read and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand.”) to accentuate the importance of experiential learning in your course.
 - 3. The two questions for the exercise:
 - a. How were students expected to behave in the classroom where you were raised?
 - b. How were teachers expected to behave in the classroom where you were raised?
- C. A key reason for using this exercise is building an understanding and tolerance of the diverse ways students have been taught to behave in the classroom. Always explain the purpose of the simulation.
- D. If teaching graduate students who have all worked in other countries, you could use this variation. Change your prompt question to “How are managers expected to behave in the country where you were raised?” After forming country/regional groups in Step 2, and introducing themselves, have them discuss and report out on that question. Then ask them to move to another country on the world map where they have the most work experience and form another country/regional group with those closest to them. After introducing themselves, students answer and report out on this question: “What is the single-most important fact we should understand about the management style in this country?”
- E. If you only have one representative from some countries, and they have no other nearby country to join, you can group them together and make sure they have a bit more time to report out. (Step 1)
 The goal is to have each country included in a table on the board (or on flip charts). Make a note of the different countries when you ask students where they are standing on the map, and then write those countries in cells across the top row while they are discussing in Step 2. If there were only 4 countries in the room, your table could look like the sample below. As students report out in Step 3, you fill in the blanks for Student and Teacher Behavior. A variation would be to have each student group fill in this information for their country.

Countries				
Student Behavior				
Teacher Behavior				

- F. You can ask for volunteers to report on the group discussions in Step 2, or you can set a norm of cold-calling upon random students to instill the idea that everyone has to be ready to participate and therefore must pay attention.

- G. Differences between public and private school, country regions, changing educational norms over time within a country, etc. often emerge in student reports. It's important to point out these nuances to underscore this important lesson: *Cultures are not monolithic and our goal in the course is not to stereotype cultures but to understand their complexity.*
- H. If your classroom contains some of the differences listed below in the textbox, Examples of Cultural Difference in Education, you can share these differences with the class and take this opportunity to help students be more understanding. A video, A Different Place: The Intercultural Classroom shows what can go wrong in a US classroom filled with international students with different classroom norms, communication styles, and language ability. See <https://www.worldcat.org/title/intercultural-classroom-a-different-place/oclc/170966121>. This somewhat dated film is still an excellent example of various intercultural communication styles (direct versus indirect; circular versus linear; intellectual confrontation versus relationship confrontation, emotionally restrained versus emotionally expressive).
- I. If your class is very large, an alternative method of forming learning teams would be for the instructor to collect diversity-related information from students and randomly group them into regionally diversified teams.
- J. After you have created learning teams, you can request students to create a list of team members and their contact information for your records.

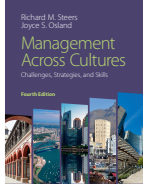
EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATION

- National education systems vary widely in terms of what they emphasize (academic achievement, extracurricular activities, etc.).
- Students are socialized to be assertive or non-assertive with teachers and school administrators or to question and participate rather than listen and take notes in class.
- In many parts of the world, teachers are authority figures to be respected and feared. Student questions might be discouraged and perceived as challenging authority.
- Students from authoritarian educational systems may be less accustomed and comfortable expressing their own ideas and considering personal experience as valid support for their assertions.
- In other countries, the teacher-student relationship is informal. Professors may encourage college students to address them by their first name and behave in a friendly manner.
- "Cheating" sometimes occurs because students feel obligated to help one another.

NORMS FOR THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

- Mutual respect
- Ethnocentric attitudes and behaviors are discouraged
- Safe, nonjudgmental environment
- Differences are openly discussed in a spirit of joint inquiry and learning
- Students contribute cultural explanations or examples but are not put on the spot without their permission to explain their culture

- One cultural group does not dominate the discussion
- Space is made for everyone to participate, with special consideration for students who are not native speakers
- Differences in communication style are understood



Case 1

Developing Global Managers at Google and IBM®

Key concepts: global management skills, in-house vs. field training programs, management development, multicultural competence

Companies committed to expanding their global reach—or just defending themselves from global competitors—face a common problem: How to train their employees to be better global managers. Historically, this was often accomplished through the extensive use of expatriates. However, this is often a high-cost, time-consuming option that does not always lead to success. Global firms often seek alternative strategies. This case presents two very different strategies. The first was developed by Google in its early years when the company needed a global reach but also faced an uncertain future. The second was developed by established electronics giant IBM to create its own cadre of global managers through in-house training.

Google's field training program

Structured in-house global training programs can be time-consuming and expensive, especially when a company is in its early stages of development. As a result, many of today's companies opt for relatively inexpensive, short-term—and yet still very effective—"study abroad" program for their workforce. Four to six-week overseas assignments seem to be the most successful, so long as the experience includes pre-departure training, a high degree of personal challenge, strong immersion experiences with local cultures, coaching and reflection. As noted in the text, cross-cultural experiences have to be high challenge and high contact to trigger personal transformation for the program to be successful.

So, what does such a program look like? Consider Google and its parent company Alphabet, one of the world's most successful entrepreneurial ventures on record. From its inception, Google needed both seamless access to global markets and people capable of managing these markets. Today, Google has sufficient resources to develop any type of training program it wants, but in the beginning when resources were tight the company needed a relatively inexpensive global learning program for its new young employees that could be done not just effectively but also efficiently. It chose a simple strategy that met both criteria and proved to be a blueprint for later start-ups.

The example of Google's traveling managers illustrates how this company, and many others, search to find unique ways to educate their managers about both the global challenges facing them and the strategies that can help them succeed. To train a new generation of managers, in 2006 Google began sending its young "brainiacs" on a worldwide mission. One recent group of trainees began their journey in a small village outside Bangalore. There were no computers in the tiny village, only unpaved roads surrounded by open fields in which elephants roamed and trampled local crops at will. The visit was aimed at educating Google associate product managers about the humble, unwired ways of life experienced by billions of people around the world. Discussions with local villages began awkwardly, as the managers discover that the villagers had never heard of the company. As one young manager noted, the experience brought "a whole new

meaning to what's on the back of [my] shirt," referring to a T-shirt with the company logo in front and, on the back, the now classic phrase from the company's home page: "I'm feeling lucky."

On their first day in Bangalore the visitors went to the Commercial Street shopping district for a bartering competition. Each Google manager was given 500 rupees (about \$13) to spend on "items that don't suck," with a prize given to the one who attained the highest discount on the purchase. For most, it was the first time they had to bargain with street vendors. "I usually shop at Neiman Marcus," observed one manager, after she bargained the price of a necklace down from 375 rupees to 250. It was one of her colleagues who won the competition, however, by purchasing a deep burgundy *sherwani* – a traditional Indian outfit – for one-third of the original asking price.



From India, the group traveled to Japan, to visit the company's Shibuya headquarters and network with fellow employees, learn about regional markets, and study the local culture. The visitors shared the product "road map" for the next year with their Japanese colleagues, answered questions, and then heard what the engineers and managers in each location were focusing on. They also got a sense of the local marketplace by talking to local Googlers, customers, and partners. In Tokyo, they learned that Yahoo! Japan was clobbering the competition – it's like

Google and AOL and eBay rolled into one – but that Google had captured the imagination of the Japanese people. It was the no. 2 brand in the country, behind Toyota.

Tokyo’s legendary electronics district, Akihabara, was chosen for another group competition, ostensibly to sharpen the product knowledge, business skills, and street smarts of the global travelers. They were divided into small teams and given \$100 to buy the strangest gadgets they could find. Diving into stalls full of electronic gizmos, they found items such as a USB-powered smoke-removing ashtray and a stubby wand that, when waved back and forth, spells out words in LED lights.

Finally, the group traveled to China and came face to face with the realities of doing business there. They immediately recognized the conflict of balancing the company’s freewheeling management style with China’s rigid government rules – and censorship. At Google headquarters in Beijing, the visiting managers interviewed local English-speaking consumers. Here they learned the stark realities of how effective the Chinese government can be at tilting the playing field to benefit the home team, Baidu.com, by occasionally blocking access to Google’s site and by insinuating a nationalistic element into the choice. The lesson was clear to the visiting managers: Baidu knows more about China than Google. The journey continued, as did the learning

IBM’s in-house training program

IBM is a long-established company that is widely recognized throughout the world for its state-of-the-art computers and supporting technologies. The company currently has a formidable global presence, spanning nine time zones in more than 170 countries and employing 412,000 employees worldwide. It is highly ranked in both the Fortune’s Global 500 and the World’s Most Admired Companies, and is one of the ten best managed companies in the world according to *The Wall Street Journal*. The company specializes in technology and innovation, inventing and providing software and hardware, engaging in business consulting and the provision of technology services that enable people and organizations to solve complex problems. It is perhaps best-known today for Watson, a question-answering AI computing system that IBM built to apply advanced natural language processing, information retrieval, knowledge representation, automated reasoning, and machine learning technologies to the field of open domain question answering.

In view of IBM’s global reach and diverse workforce that speaks more than 70 languages, cross-cultural training has become an important issue. IBM takes diversity issues seriously, as evidenced by its organizational policies that date to the company’s founding. Today, its diversity programs have grown into one of the world’s largest—and most successful. One of these programs in support of its global commitment is “Shades of Blue.” (The “blue” comes from IBM’s unique blue color used on its logo. The company



also sponsors a global internship program called “Extreme Blue.”) The Shades of Blue program represents a professional development initiative aimed at managers who undertake business operations across national borders or who are in charge of multicultural teams. Ted Chiles, Vice President of Workforce Diversity at IBM, states that important issues of cultural awareness and

acceptance, multilingualism, and ethnic minority groups comprise key elements in the company's Global Workforce Diversity Challenge.

The Shades program was designed to allow managers to develop critical competencies that enable them to better engage in business across cultures. Specifically, it was designed and implemented with reference to a number of *key goals*:

- Broaden the definition of diversity and create a framework of global diversity that captures the myriad of ways in which people differ.
- Build an organizational culture that encourages this broadened definition of global diversity.
- Incorporate diversity and its management into organizational management and leadership procedures.
- Deal with the manifold ways that these differences can be observed.
- Understand that many of these differences take place below the surface, deeply rooted in each individual and involving behaviors, cognitions, and emotions.
- Arm managers with the required *multicultural competence* and *global management skills* needed for dealing with and managing these observed and subtle differences in employees.
- Discern local values, issues, and perceptions within a broader context.
- Develop skills relating to leadership that promote effective strategies for handling global diversity within the organization.

These key components, in turn, address the global nature of IBM's workforce and allow the company to develop and instill crucial global management skills in its employees. The program uses five *learning strategies* to develop multicultural competence, including: 1) open attitudes; 2) self-awareness; 3) other-awareness; 4) cultural knowledge; and 5) general cross culture understanding. The program is delivered on-line initially, followed by a two-day face-to-face workshop that makes use of group discussions, presentations, videos, and role-playing to increase understanding and skills-building.

As a result of these activities, IBM discovered greater employee awareness of cultural biases, different culture-based communication styles, strategies for working across cultures, and skills necessary to handle problems relating to team decision-making, feedback, and conflict resolution.

People involved in the Shades program say it has been successful for several reasons. To begin with, the program has strong support from top management. It is coordinated and run by a highly experienced multicultural team of cross-cultural specialists. It is centered around a realistic learning model to guide its activities and evaluations. And it creates a stimulating learning environment and encourages unprejudiced dialogue among participants. Moreover, the program ties cross-cultural learning to IBM's core business strategies to ensure that participants see the connection between their learning and the pursuit of corporate objectives. Finally, the program creates feedback loops that support continued learning and facilitate the development of teams and the organization.

IBM is a global company with a global workforce that aims for further excellence through continuous product and service innovations and market expansions. The multicultural nature of its workforce—and its ability to build successful teams within this workforce—represents a strategic competency in its on-going success. Through these endeavors, the company has not only gained a competitive advantage in operating in culturally divergent contexts, but has also created inclusive organizational and managerial environments that provide benefits well beyond management training.

Case questions:

1. Does architecture reflect workplace cultures? Specifically, what might the two building photographs suggest about the workplace cultures at Google and IBM? Can you identify other buildings that reflect or exemplify corporate cultures?
2. Would you expect both companies to recruit similar employees? Might their approaches to training be different? Why or why not?
3. What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of each of these two training approaches (field training vs. in-house training) to global management development? Explain.
4. How does each of these programs relate to the three-stage learning model discussed in chapter 1?
5. How does each of these programs help develop multicultural competence?
6. In which program do you believe you would learn more to become a successful global manager? Why? In which program would you prefer to participate? Why?
7. What can smaller companies do to create similar programs within their more limited budgets?
8. In the spirit of continuous improvement, what suggestions can you offer to make each of these two programs more effective.
9. If there is one core lesson from this case that applies to developing global managers, what would it be?