Incarnating into Cross-Cultural Values: An Effective way to Deliver Experiences

Dr.S.V.Satyanarayana*
Dr.T.Krishna Kumar and Sreelakshmi Shanker***

Abstract

The present paper examines the cultural orientation of foreign students who secured admission in Osmania University (Andhra Pradesh, India) in terms of time orientation and event orientation, dichotomist and holistic thinking, crisis and non-crisis orientation, task and person orientation, status and achievement focus, and concealment of vulnerability and willingness to expose vulnerability. The study is based on a sample of 101 students. These orientations were between Africans and Asians. The study revealed that Africans are more crisis-oriented and dichotomistic in their thinking. Their orientation towards completing tasks and not wanting to expose their vulnerability is prominent. On the other hand, Asians have proven to be more event and person orientated, as also more holistic in their thinking. The discriminant analysis reveals that Asians, Africans and others are differentiate on one major cultural variables viz., Task orientation.

Introduction

Globalizations, International Business, Transnational Business are no longer taboos. Today, there is a level playing field where people are relishing the benefits of a flat world. Having realized the need of transnational business one cannot be ignorant of the prominence of multicultural value systems. The term "cross-cultural" emerged in the social sciences in the 1930s, largely as a result of the Cross-Cultural Survey undertaken by George Peter Murdock, a Yale anthropologist. Initially referring to comparative studies based on statistical compilations of cultural data, the term gradually acquired a secondary sense of cultural interactivity. The success of any business, their mergers and alliances depend on how well the organizations incarnate into other cultures. Incarnating into other cultures helps the organizations to have a right perception regarding the culture of their counterparts and helps them to deliver the services to the satisfaction of targeted customers. By the 1970s, the field of cross-cultural communication (also known as intercultural communication) developed as a prominent application of the cross-cultural paradigm, in response to the pressures of globalization which produced a demand for cross-cultural awareness training in various commercial sectors.

*Professor of Commerce, Osmania University, Hyderabad **Professor of Commerce, Osmania University, Hyderabad ***Junior Research Fellow, Department of Commerce, Osmania University, Hyderabad

India is recognized as the hub for global education. The quality of education, economic standard of living along with the fact that English is the generally accepted mode of teaching are attracting thousands of students from at least 100 countries. A large number of students come to India from countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Fiji, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Ghana, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Syria and even the US. (Nanda PK 2010). Unless the Indian Universities try to understand the cultural dimensions of the foreign students they cannot deliver good experiences effectively. The present paper seeks to understand the cultural orientations of the foreign students admitted into Osmania University, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Recent Studies

Kenneth L. Chau (1992) presents an instructional approach that helps students learn how to work with ethnic diversities in groups, and integrates cultural considerations into the essential content of group work syllabus. He has described pedagogical issues and classroom process, as well as the complex instructional roles and educational functions involved. He has highlighted the opportunities for creative linkage of core group work content to an ethno cultural perspective of group practice. This work has drawn implications for educational preparation for effective group work practice in multicultural environments. James A. Banks (1993) explains the perpetuated harmful misconceptions about theory and practice in multicultural education. He has highlighted that one misconception about multicultural education is that it is an entitlement program and curriculum movement for African Americans, Hispanics, the poor, women, and other victimized groups. Georges J. Casimir and Barbara Jones Morrison (1993) examines the importance of ethnic and cultural factors in mental health and mental illness, through consideration of race and culture in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, by examining patterns of service utilization by multicultural populations, and by advocating for policies which support multicultural initiatives in public mental health. A Taket and L .White (1994) presents two brief case studies from our work with multicultural groups, and explores some of the issues of OR practice in this context. The paper particularly focuses on issues to do with the process of OR, rather than on the detailed content of the case studies. In the discussion that follows, they examine one theme which they see as central to the

practice, namely working with 'difference'; present some guidelines that they have found useful in practice; and examine the question of the accessibility of community or to community groups. Dorothy Van Soest (1994) conducted an attempt to understand how students experienced the learning process and the outcomes of a new MSW course aimed at helping students develop knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity and societal oppression. He collected data from a total of 97 students through a content analysis of 30 student journals in Phase I, and a questionnaire completed by 67 students in Phase II of the study. The preliminary findings are placed in the context of relevant theoretical perspectives about the concept of moral exclusion and future knowledge development and research implications. Min-Sun Kim and William F. Sharkey (1995) aims to explain the cultural interaction patterns in multi-cultural organizational settings. Their work focuses on the dimensions of independent and interdependent construal of self, the individual-level equivalent of individualism and collectivism. They examine the relationship between one's orientation toward independent and interdependent self-construal and the perceived importance of three interactive constraints in "bind"; organizational communication situations. The results of their study indicated that self-construal is systematically related to one's perceptions of the importance of clarity, efforts to avoid hurting the other's feelings and avoidance of negative evaluation by the hearer. In addition, although a person's self-reported cultural identity was not associated with the importance ratings of clarity and the desire to avoid hurting the hearer's feelings, Asians were more concerned about not eliciting negative evaluations than the Euro-American participants. Jia Lin Xie and Gary John (2000) examined the interactive effects of group cohesiveness and absence culture salience on absence proposed by Johns and Nicholson (1982). It was hypothesized that group cohesiveness and absence culture salience would be negatively related to work-group absence. Emphasis was placed on the interactive effects of cohesiveness and cultural salience on work-group absence rate and employee self-reported absence. In addition, the potential mediating effect of group absence norms was explored. Survey responses were collected from 800 employees in a state-owned manufacturing enterprise in the People's Republic of China. Aggregate measures of salience and cohesiveness each had a negative relationship with work-group absenteeism. Consistent support for the interactive effects of cohesiveness and salience was provided by group, individual, and cross-level analyses. Group absence norms mediated the effects of cohesiveness, cultural

salience, and their interaction on self-reported absenteeism. Sue Ledwith and Diane Seymour (2001) draw on two studies of business and management undergraduate students at a new UK university. Each was in a different university school, using different research methods. Both came to similar conclusions; that strongly ethnocentric attitudes prevailed among home, UK students, systematically leading to feelings of exclusion and disadvantage among international students, whatever and wherever their origins. However, in terms of gaining understanding and skills in the field of multiculturalism, it was the international students who had the advantage. The implications for preparation of students for careers in the global economy are explored, and the positive results of some subsequent initiatives discussed. Pierre L. Van den Berghe (2003) explores both the conditions favoring multiculturalism and the problems it faces. The main obstacle was the model of the 'nation–state', which has been the basis of legitimacy in most liberal democracies since the French Revolution. Multiculturalism has existed in many non–democratic states (such as colonial and traditional empires) and in city–states. A distinction is made between minimal MD (the simple tolerance and legal protection of cultural diversity) and maximal MD (the celebration, encouragement and official support thereof). The article concludes that minimal MD is the more feasible of the two, and that political and social conditions for it are the most favorable in urban environments, especially in city–states. Alexei V. Matveev and Richard G. Milter, (2004) provides a working definition of high-performance multicultural teams and outlines the challenges multicultural teams face. These definitions along with extensive interview data and detailed self-reports of American and Russian managers working in multicultural teams emphasize the high importance of intercultural competence in improving the performance of these teams. This article also serves to highlight the characteristics of high-performance multicultural teams, the common challenges of multicultural teams, and the sources of these challenges. Alexei V. Matveev and Richard G. Milter (2004) employed the Cross Cultural Communication Competence Model to compare American and Russian managers working in multicultural teams. They collected data from 124 upper and middle managers in the United States and the Russian Federation by administering the cross cultural communication competence and the high-performance team questionnaires. Drawing from proven conceptual cultural orientations suggested by Hall, Hofstede, and Javidan and House, they examined how national culture affects team members' perceptions of cross cultural communication competence. The

confirmed hypothesized relationship and salient effects of national culture on cross cultural communication competence led to theoretical and practical implications for multicultural organizational settings. S.Krishna, Sundeep Sahav and Geoff Walsham (2004) explored research-derived best practices for effective management of global software teams. Sherwood G. Lingenfeleter and Marvin K.Mayers presented An Inca national Model in their work on Ministering Cross-Culturally. They have examined cultures in terms of time orientation and event orientation, dichotomistic thinking and holistic thinking, crisis orientation and non-crisis orientation, task orientation and person orientation, status focus and achievement focus, and concealment of vulnerability and willingness to expose vulnerability. William Ming Liu (2005) outlines a rationale for the inclusion of men and masculinity by drawing parallels with Whiteness and privilege as integral aspects of multicultural competency. Additionally, by including the study of men and masculinity into multicultural competency, issues such as heterosexism, patriarchy, homophobia, and sexism that are aspects of dominant masculinity can be addressed. Simultaneously, training clinicians to work with men may mean more effective and improved services than currently available. Fanny Waldman (2007) reviews the literature on court-ordered and multicultural counseling, highlighting central elements of both. It then suggests guidelines that blend these elements. The author illustrates how using these guidelines can enable therapists to engage these clients in the therapeutic process and focus on culture as the context for change. Yaghoob Foroutan (2008) examines the employment and occupational status of South Asian female migrants in Australia, mostly Indian and Sri Lankan. He highlights their work differentials with both native-born and other female migrants in this multicultural context and confirms that they are a highly selected population who potentially bring considerable economic benefits to the receiving society. The observation that South Asian female migrants in Australia are able to contribute significant human capital in the form of language and education skills, but do so to some extent on their own terms, suggests that more careful attention needs to be paid to selecting migrants from South Asia and facilitating their entry into the labor market. Thus the studies have focused on cross culture, pedagogical issues, dimensions and gender issues. Most of the studies are from outside India. Therefore, the present study is based on Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and MarvinK. Mayers model and examines cross cultural dimensions of international students.

Objective of the Study

The present paper examines the cultural orientation among different nationalities. The cultural orientations are examined in terms of Time Orientation, Event Orientation, Dichotomist Thinking , Holistic thinking , Crisis Orientation, Non-crisis orientation , Task Orientation , Person Orientation , Status focus, Achievement focus, Concealment of vulnerability, Willingness to expose vulnerability.

Methodology

The present study is an empirical one. It is based on primary data collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is the adapted version of Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K.Mayers. It has two parts. The first part has 48 items which cover Time Orientation, Event Orientation, Dichotomist Thinking, Holistic thinking, Crisis Orientation, Non-crisis orientation, Task Orientation, Person Orientation, Status focus, Achievement focus, Concealment of vulnerability, Willingness to expose vulnerability. The second part seeks the respondents' profile. The questionnaire was administered among 101 foreign students who secured admission into Osmania University Hyderabad. The responses were analyzed based on percentage and ANOVA was applied in order to test the Hypothesis. Discriminant analysis has been applied to differentiate the variables that distinguish Asians, Africans and other groups. Various Dimensions of Cultural Aspects are presented in the table 1.

Table 1 : Cultural Dimensions and their Conceptualization

S.No.	Cultural Dimension	Conceptualization
1	**Time Orientation**	People with time orientation have lot of concern for punctuality, amount of time expended, careful allocation of time, goal directed, tightly scheduled and lot of emphasis on dates and history.
2	**Event Orientation**	Event Orientated people have a lot of concern for details of the event regardless of time. Exhaustive consideration of a problem until resolved. They stress on completing the event as a reward in itself and emphasize is on present experiences rather than the past or future.
3	**Dichotomistic Thinking**	People with dichotomistic thinking have judgment as right or wrong and uniformly apply it to situations. They organize information and experiences systematically, sort out the details

		and have a clear picture.
4	**Holistic Thinking**	People with holistic thinking judge people after taking into considerations all the circumstances. Information and experiences are seemingly disorganized; details stand as independent points complete in themselves.
5	**Crisis Orientation**	Crisis Oriented people anticipate crisis, emphasize planning, seek quick resolution to avoid ambiguity, seek expert advice and repeatedly follow a single authoritative, preplanned procedure.
6.	**Non-Crisis Orientation**	People under this category tend to downplay possibility of crisis, focus on actual experience, avoid taking action, delay decision, seek ad hoc solution and distrusts expert advice.
7	**Task Orientation**	People with task orientation tend on focus on tasks and principles, find satisfaction in the achievement of goals, and sometime accept loneliness and social deprivation for the sake of personal achievements.
8	**Person Orientation**	Person Oriented people focus on persons, relationships, derive satisfaction in interaction, seek friends who are group orientated and sacrifice personal achievements for group interaction.
9	**Status Orientation**	Personal identity is determined based on formal credentials of birth and rank, attention is focused on those with high social status in spite of personal failures, and people associate only with their social equals.
10	**Achievement Oriented**	These people base personal identity on their achievements. They tend to be self-critical and make sacrifices in order to accomplish ever greater deeds. People associate with those of equal accomplishments regardless of background.
11	**Concealment of Vulnerability**	People with this orientation tend to protect their self-image, emphasize on the quality of performance, reluctant to enter into unknown areas, refuse to entertain alternative views or accept criticism, deny culpability and withdraw from activities in order to hide weakness and shortcomings.
12	**Willingness to Expose Vulnerability**	They emphasizes on completion of event, willing to push beyond one's limits, ready admission of culpability, weakness and shortcoming. Further, they are open to alternative views and criticism. They will be willing to talk freely about personal life.

Profile of the respondents

The profile of the respondents is presented in order to convey that the opinions reflect their background .The profile of the respondents consists of both the genders. Ninety per cent are males and ten percent are females. Age wise it is observed that the lowest age is 20 years and the highest is 42 years, and the mean age is(with a mean of 26.31 and modal age is 24 years) with a standard deviation of 4.46 years. Religion-wise classification has shown that 87 per cent belong to Islam, followed by Christianity (8.9 per cent), and Hindus (1 per cent). 3 per cent stated that they have no religion.

Nationality of the respondents has shown that 31.7 per cent are from Iraq, 25 per cent from Afghanistan, 16 per cent from Kenya and 9.9 per cent from Iran. The remaining respondents are from Chad, China, Eritrea, Fiji, Indonesia, Namibia, Somalia, Soria, Syrian, Tajikistan, Tanzania and Yemeni. These nationalities are grouped into Asians (75.2 percent), Africans (20.8 per cent) and others (4 percent).

Results and Discussion

To examine whether any significant differences exist on the twelve cultural dimensions on Africans, Asians and Others, the data was subjected to One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the results thus obtained are displayed in table 1.

Table-1: Results of One-Way ANOVA examining the significant differences in the cross cultural values among Africans Asians and others

S. No.	Cultural Orientations	Africans		Asians		Others		F	Sig
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Time Orientation	3.9714	0.61412	3.6342	0.67361	3.4	0.36515	2.608	.079
2	Event Orientation	3.4381	0.72834	3.5079	0.76276	3.5	0.38297	.072	.931
3	Dichotomist Thinking	3.3429	0.6038	3.3211	0.9421	3.1	0.87178	.131	.877
4	Holistic Thinking	3.1429	0.46105	3.3684	0.51542	3.15	0.91469	1.740	.181
5	**Crisis Orientation**	3.619	0.79222	3.1158	0.68606	3.4	0.76594	**4.232**[*]	**.017**
6	Non-Crisis Orientation	3.219	0.65698	3.2158	0.43176	3.15	0.52599	.036	.965
7	**Task Orientation**	3.7429	0.72427	3.0526	0.66483	3.65	0.7188	**9.335**[**]	**.000**
8	Person Orientation	3.419	0.66001	3.2737	0.5183	3.5	0.66332	.801	.452
9	Status Orientation	3.000	0.70993	3.1605	0.85916	3.05	0.34157	.332	.718
10	Achievement Orientation	3.5238	0.64335	3.5526	0.52344	3.55	0.9434	.021	.979
11	Concealment of Vulnerability	2.6095	0.65567	2.8816	0.57705	2.65	0.3	1.929	.151
12	Willingness to Expose Vulnerability	3.3238	0.69993	3.4263	0.50527	3.65	0.37859	.676	.511

*P<0.05; **P<0.01

It can be observed from the above table that only two dimensions of cultural orientations namely crisis orientation (P<0.05) and Task Orientation (P<0.01) differed significantly among the Africans, Asians and Others.

As Africans are more crisis orientated, it may be due to the reason that the inhabitatns of this region are accustomed to the vagaries of weather in continent barring exceptions in some parts. As a crisis is an unexpected event or series of events that spiral out of control, disrupts normal operations and causes intense and unwanted public scrutiny that harms or threatens to harm the very existence of people and organizations, these people have developed higher levels of adoptability to such climates of intense variations. Partly the unstable political infrastructure in the contient, the military coups and the predominant wildlife attacks that have taken huge toil on the people could be the reasons for such crisis orientation. On the contrary, Asians are very passive and comfortable in their cultures which are oriental and perpetual in nature for longer centuries. Besides, Asians are more family oriented and clan-oriented in their nature. Whenever, there is a crisis, the members of the clan and the elders of the families come to the rescue of the other members under distress. Besides, the children in Asian continent are socialized and taught to be more relationship-oriented and protectionist oriented (in the sense communities or elder protect the younger ones). As a result they are less crisis oriented.)

As regards tasks-orientation, Africans are known to be more task oriented along with other Europeans and Arabs because they are high-contact cultures (Barnlund, 1975). Whereas, east Asian countries like china, Japanese, Koreans are members of low-contact cultures (Hall, 1976). On the contrary, Anderson (1997)argued that cultures in warmer climates tend to be more socio-emotional than task oriented. Whereas, in colloer climates, the trend is reversed. One explanation could be that in warmer climates, people develop a sense of urgency and focused lives in their workplaces since the increase in temperatures reduces their productivity. Whereas in cooler climates, people tend to develop more close ties and work slowly till the time to leave the work premises.

Thus from the results of One-Way ANOVA, is understood that Africans, Asians and Others, differed significantly on two cultural variables only . To further examine the effectiveness of cultural dimensions in significantly discriminating between the members of three groups of countries, the data was subjected to Stepwise Multiple Discriminant Analysis. The results thus obtained are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4

Table-2: Stepwise Discriminant Analysis of Cultural Dimensions across three nationals

Steps of DA	Variables Entered	Wilk's Lambda	Sig.
Step One	Task Orientation	0.840	0.00

Table 3: Summary of Results for Stepwise Multiple Discriminant Function Analysis

Variables entered in the Analysis	Test of Equality of Group Means F value	Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients
Task Orientation	9.335^{**}	1.00

**P<0.01

Table 4: Canonical Correlation, Group Centroids and its Test of Significance

Group	N	Group Centroid	Wilks Lambda	Chi-Square	Canonical Correlation
Africans	**21**	**0.770**			
Asians	**76**	**-0.246**	**0.840**	$\mathbf{17.090^{**}}$	**0.4**
Others	**04**	**0.634**			

**P<0.01

Stepwise multiple discriminant analysis was performed (Table 2) among the three groups of nationals utilizing the scores from all the cultural dimensions as the discriminating variables. The discriminant analysis produced one significant axes. Surprisingly, out of 12 dimensions, only one "Task Orientation" was found to be significant by which the three national groups assigned different weights. The Wilks lambda (positive weight) for Task Orientation was found to be 0.840, indicating strongly and positively significant one (P< 0.01). This indicates that Task orientation all alone is sufficient to discriminate well between the three groups and the model of the discriminant function analysis is appropriate for the data. Thus using stepwise method of discriminant analysis 64.47 percent of the Asians, 57.14 percent of the Africans and 0.0 percent of the students from other countries have been correctly classified. On the whole 60.04 percent of the total group has been correctly classified.

The 'F' value (test of equality of group means) in table 3 represents a one-way ANOVA individually computed and the value is observed to be significant (p<0.01), indicating that the variable that has entered in the analysis discriminate well between

the three groups even at the individual level. From this table it can be observed that the standardised canonical discriminant function coefficient value is found to be one. This value is in the standard form and has a relatively high magnitude of size one, large values of standardised discriminant function coefficient indicated the higher the variable contributes towards discrimination. As only one variable has entered in the step wise discriminant function analysis, not much interpretation can be done from this value.

Group centroids are used to interpret discriminant function results from a global or overall perspective. As the present study uses thee group discriminant analysis, there are three centroids, one for each group. The centroids indicate the most typical location of an individual from a particular group, and a comparison of the group centroids show how far apart the groups are along the dimensions being tested. Table 4 reveals that the group centroid for Africans is 0.770 and for Asians is -0.246, while for students from other countries it is found to 0.634. This indicates that as the Africans and the others have highest positive means scores, on task orientation, both of them are far away from the Asians on that particular cultural dimension.

These values are reported in the form of z scores. To test how well separated are the centroids of the groups, Wilks Lambda is used. Wilks Lambda also called the 'U' statistic is used for testing the equality of group centroids. It is a multivariate analysis of variance test statistic that varies between 0 and 1. Small values indicate that the group centroids differ. Wilks Lambda is the proportion of the total variance in the discriminant scores not explained by differences among the groups. To test the significance of lambda, it is transformed to a variable with an approximate chi-square distribution. From table 4 it can be observed that chi-square is 17.090 which is significant (p<0.01), indicating highly significant differences between the group centroids. Thus students from the Africa, Asia and other group of countries are well separated from each other in terms of the cultural value of task orientation

The last column in table 4 gives the canonical correlation for the step wise multiple discriminant function analysis. The canonical correlation measures the association between the discriminant scores and the groups. One interprets this correlation by squaring it, i.e. $(0.4)^2 = 0.1600$, indicating that 16.00 percent of the variance in the

dependent variable (Africans, Asians and students from other countries) can be accounted by the single variable (Task orientation) which entered into the discriminant analysis.

Thus task orientation is the only one variable which discriminates between the three groups and the remaining cultural value variables remain insignificant and do not help in discriminating between the three groups.

The Africans are on the rise in this decade after two decades of deprivation and starvation due to the vagaries of weather and political insurgency, economic instability and poverty. Having leant the lessons from such oppression form the political infrastructure, economic infrastructure and the social structure, the people of Africa have been on the positive outlook for peace and progress in the region. On the contrary, there is complacency among the Asians since the Asia has been developing and the rates of poverty have been dropping ever since the Asian Drama (Myrdal, 1968) which inquired into the Poverty of Nations.

Implications of the Study

The conclusions drawn have a few implications. While serving or teaching Africans one has to keep in mind time, their dichotomist thinking, Crisis Orientation, their orientation towards completing task and their orientation of exposing their vulnerability to a limited extent. Likewise, Asians have to be treated differently based on their cultural background. While dealing with foreign students, sometimes, certain issues may arise which may be too delicate to expose and discuss. They have to be considered in a holistic perspective, without exposing their weak points. This creates trust and confidence in their teachers, which is the basic building block of teaching. If teachers and facilitators take these points into cognizance, they will be able to deliver satisfaction effectively.

Conclusion

The study examined the cultural orientations of Africans, Asians and Others in terms of Time Orientation, Event Orientation, Dichotomist Thinking, Holistic thinking,

Crisis Orientation, Non-crisis orientation, Task Orientation, Person Orientation, Status focus, Achievement focus, Concealment of vulnerability and Willingness to expose vulnerability have been varied. However, on "time orientation" and "task orientation" Africans are better than Asians.

The discriminant analysis reveals that out of 12 dimensions, only on one cultural variables the national groups differentiated significantly viz., Task Orientation. Further the mean scores across the three national groups reveal that Africans and the others had stronger positive means scores than the Asians who had negative mean score, indicating that the Africans and the others are more far apart from the Asians on task orientation. This further indicates that the Africans are on the rise since the last two decades of insurgency, the climate changes, the grappling with the traditions, political instability, and the deprivation.

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