



The Limitations of Intercultural Training

Bettina Bohnert

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Scholarly Research Paper from the year 2003 in the subject Business economics - Personnel and Organisation, grade: 1,6 (A), University of Cooperative Education Mannheim (BWL/International Business Administration), 20 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Businesses in the 21st century are faced with many challenges. The most significant is the increasing globalization of economic transactions. Due to advances of information technology and traveling, as well as trade agreements, this process was promoted tremendously. The result is a very complex, worldwide business environment influenced by economic, legal, political, and cultural elements (Thomas 2002:4).

All business units are affected by globalization. Some examples are that the supply and demand sides enclose suppliers and customers originating from all parts of the globe, research and development departments have to reflect on international principles, and bookkeeping is forced to apply international accounting standards (Blom 2002:2). Consequently it is essential to be aware of the arising problems. Especially the cultural aspect has to be taken seriously as it affects all the other elements of one global world. Company employees have to deal with dissimilar behaviors resulting from a diverse programming of the mind of specific groups (Hofstede 1991) every day. Contact with cultural multiplicity does not imply traveling. Even "out-of-the-office" it is common to get in touch with partners belonging to another cultural group (Thomas 2002:3). Furthermore, the structure of the workforce in home countries nowadays consists of people belonging to different cultural backgrounds. Inter-cultural-contacts often lead to misunderstandings based on different values, attitudes and beliefs (Daniels 2001:46), which can even lead to business failure. Some differences that might cause misunderstandings are e.g. the way names are used and persons are addressed, variations in working, business and communication styles, and an unequal handing of criticism (Blom 2002:196).

To be successful in an international working surrounding cultural conflicts have to be avoided. To manage variety, new skills are required - the skill of intercultural competence. Although some business students already absolve intercultural training during their studies, the need for further education has risen in the last decades. Especially when regarding the share of the elderly workforce or those without a university degree who have never been educated in culture, but who have to manage the effects daily. Another indicator reflecting the need for an increase in intercultural training is an expatriate failure rate of 30 - 70% (Kühlmann 1995:10-19)...

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