

Contextualising approaches to cross-cultural competence education

A case study from Japan

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Overview

Social, political and economic contexts in approaches to education and training for cross-cultural competence

- How can examination of these contexts help us avoid culturalist attributions?
- How can we address them in the planning and implementation of CCC education?

Case study: cross-cultural competence education and training in Japan

- A burgeoning field, especially in-house training in major firms and curricular programs at university level
 - Apparently simplistic, ethnocentric ('us' vs. 'them') model of cross-cultural competence
- How to explain this model?
 - A product of 'Japanese culture'?
 - Other explanations?

'Global Human Capital (GHC) Development' in Japanese firms

	Selective	Across-the-board
Training	Selected employees engaged in structured GHC study separate from regular work and training programs	Training in GHC-related skills conducted alongside other standard training programs for all employees/recruits
Experience	Employees selected for overseas postings / work assignments requiring international skills	International exposure for all employees through overseas postings / internationalisation of domestic workplaces

	Intentional/planned	Unintentional/unplanned
Learning that which is already known to others	(1) Planned learning of that which others know	(2) Socialisation into an existing community of practice
Development of existing capability	(4) Planned/intended learning to refine existing capability	(3) Unplanned improvement of ongoing practice
Learning that which is new in the workplace (or treated as such)	(5) Planned/intended learning to do that which has not been done before	(6) Unplanned learning of something not previously done

(Colley, Hodkinson & Malcolm, 2002)

Examples: Selective training

On-site

Design and management of selective, formal on-job cross-cultural business training initiatives. Training may be delivered either through internal HR departments or by instructors engaged from outside the organisation.

Examples include:

- **Bridgestone Corporation** – ‘Global Development Class’
- **Kyowa Hakko Kirin** – ‘Global Executive Program’

Off-site

Training conducted on an intensive, off-job basis outside Japan through partnerships with either Japanese or non-Japanese education and training providers. Examples include:

- **Daiwa Securities Capital Markets** – sponsored MBA study overseas
- **Kaneka Corporation** – 2-5 month homestay and language training programs in China and the U.S.
- **IHI Corporation** – Two-month English language training program in India for candidates for executive positions

Examples: Selective experience

Direct exposure to non-Japanese workplaces and cultural settings: ongoing, intensive and individual

Fostering qualities and personal outlooks demanded of GHC

Cost-effective (compared to across-the-board experience); requires distinction between GHC and non-GHC workforce

- **Asahi Breweries** – Global Challengers Program: One year working in overseas office (preceded by language study if necessary)
- **Sompo Japan Insurance** – Targets high-achieving employees for postings to offices in overseas network. Local knowledge and expertise seen as essential for management of future international expansion
- **Honda** – Postings OS and to internationally-oriented domestic workplaces for employees demonstrating particular aptitude and/or motivation

Examples: Across-the-board training

GHC training is conducted alongside or integrated with other standard training programs.

Particularly common at graduate entry stage: basis for further skills development into the future – whether company-organised or self-motivated – and as a means of highlighting to new recruits the importance of international expansion to the company's long-term success.

- **Hitachi Information Systems:** All new employees undertake three weeks' training outside Japan. Currently implemented in association with tertiary education providers in Vietnam and the Philippines
- **Kubota Corporation:** All new career-track employees are sent to the United States for one month of English language instruction and home-stay experience
- **Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance:** International skills training program for junior employees. Areas covered include business customs in different countries and techniques for managing international business operations and workplace

Examples: Across-the-board experience

Often seen as the most radical approach.

Expose all workers to international business situations: normalise international skills and outlooks as part of the regular set of employee competencies

Individual worker compelled to develop a subjective conception of the required competencies, and to directly assess own performance against both employer expectations and other workers.

Motivation for further self-directed learning.

- **Taisei Corporation** – Sends all new employees to overseas branches for OJT immediately after induction
- **Hitachi** – Promotion and career progression tied to foreign language proficiency (esp. English language test scores)
- **Rakuten, Fast Retailing (Uniqlo)** – English adopted as the official workplace language; pro-active recruitment of non-Japanese staff

Common features

- Structure: Human resource management process focus (recruitment, induction, training, promotion)
 - Overtly orchestrated rather than embedded in mainstream training structures
 - Focused on individual rather than organisational learning: self-directed (and often self-funded)
- Content: ‘Us’ learning about ‘them’
 - Exposure to other cultures
 - Either directly or through ‘imported diversity’
 - Ethnocentric starting point
 - No curricular formulation: exposure assumed to lead to competence
 - English language for business
 - Conflation of linguistic divide (Japanese-English) and cultural difference (Japan-Other)
 - Measurement through testing
 - High stakes for employees: impact on career progression

National Policies on GHC Development (2011-)

- GHC established as key paradigm in education and employment
- An amalgam of:
 - Communicative competence (esp. foreign language proficiency)
 - Global business literacy
 - Generic employability skills / character traits
 - Japan-focused identity
- Emphasis on development of individual capabilities
 - Model of skills enhancement rather than institutional change (changing the person, not the system)

“Factor I: Linguistic and communicative proficiency;
Factor II: Self-direction and a positive attitude, an enterprising spirit, cooperativeness and flexibility, and a sense of responsibility and mission;
Factor III: An appreciation of other cultures and a sense of Japanese identity.”
(Cabinet Council on Promotion of GHC Development 2011)



Add just a little bit extra!
Transform yourself into
Global Human Capital



Minimum proficiency for non-native speakers!
Energy-efficient approach to learning
Business English / Globish and Chinese

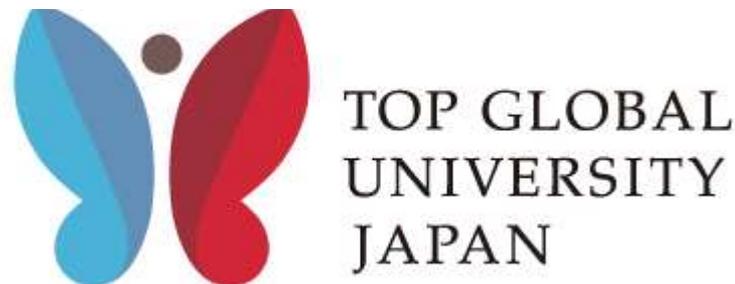
Don't embarrass yourself in front of foreigners!
New ways to cultivate knowledge of
Japanese culture

Grab every chance to improve
yourself, no matter how difficult

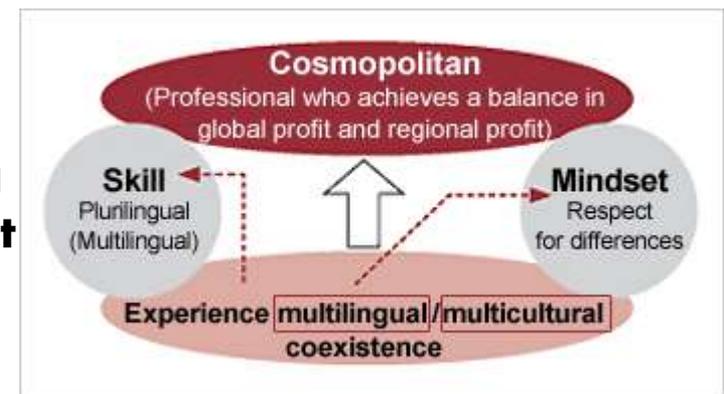
Achievable self-improvement

- **Skills:** communication, negotiation, management, leadership
- **Qualities:** Initiative, creativity, confidence, tolerance
- Language as core component
 - Pragmatic approach
- Japanese identity emphasised

Internationalisation of university campuses and curricula



Re-inventing Japan Project



Common cultural explanations

- Japanese culture: Us and Them mindset
 - Historical isolation
 - Contemporary ethnocentrism
- Corporate culture: Long-term employment
 - Training incremental, organisationally embedded
 - Low emphasis on portable skills
- Educational culture: Credentialism
 - Competitive exam-based system to university entrance level; university education a 'hiatus'
 - Disconnection of formal education and OJT
 - Preference for rote learning, formal testing, quantification

Other factors

- Rapid onset of globalisation
 - Shift from manufacturing to services
 - Shrinking domestic market (demographic change), growing international opportunity
 - Regional economic and political developments
 - = acute awareness of 'Japan' in the world
- Business climate
 - Challenges to competitiveness = competition-based response required
 - Efficiency demands = onus of human resource development shifted to individuals and education sector
- Job market
 - Increasingly unstable and short term = self-improvement is crucial

Other factors

- Higher education reform
 - Over-supply = differentiation crucial
 - Internationalisation as value-adding (attracting applicants and selective government funding)
 - Sensitivity to employer demands
- Private education and training sector
 - Foreign language, study abroad, learning aids and publications
 - Individual clientele and direct partnerships with companies
 - Intense competition (and major market growth) in language testing and foreign language tuition for corporate clients

In summary . . .

- ‘Global Human Capital’ is a point of alignment in a variety of key social agendas
 - National economy
 - Demography
 - Business environment
 - Job market
 - Education system reform
 - Educational services market
- Not (only) a cultural artefact

Implications and considerations for CCC education planning

- Interaction of formal and non-formal educational spaces and stakeholders
- Contextualisation of learning experience
 - Learners as candidates
 - Learners as consumers
 - Learners as discursive actors
- Integration of multiple learning sites
 - At school
 - At work
 - After work / in home
 - Away from work