

**The Influence of Intercultural Factors
in Corporate Education:
A Case Study from the Transport and
Logistics Industry**

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

As an adult education practitioner over the last twenty years the researcher has worked in different corporate sectors such as Energy, Finance and more recently Transport and Logistics, from which this study is taken. The context he has worked in has always been the training departments of these corporations at a National, Regional (Asia and Europe) and Global level.

The constant theme prevailing throughout these corporations is their approach to training, which is a *One Size Fits All* that is, the corporate message needs to remain the same across the globe. However, how the corporate message is transmitted can be approached differently to expedite meaning, improve comprehensive cognition and rapidly impact the bottom line through quicker skill and competency uptake. Another theme is the researcher's hunch that corporations can develop better practices by working with the cultural wisdom that exists with their multicultural workforce.

This research is a comparative study of corporate education across two cultures to identify intercultural factors that may enhance or hinder learning. It is hoped this study clarifies those concepts, assisting practitioners to develop more effective organisational development programmes for cross cultural learning situations whilst offering a template guide for practitioners to research and study their practice.

Drawing on Myles Horton (1991) ideas, a study was designed on a corporate global curriculum and how it was developed and used in a range of settings across Europe. Through Content Analysis of course materials, the study used data from a course module to perform a number of comprehensive reviews. Observations and interviews were performed using an Insider/Outsider approach with the facilitators. Mapping these responses provided data to revisit the Content Analysis stage to identify new codes, categories, relationships, networks and maps. These were checked with the same stakeholders to confirm accuracy of the findings which would be used to review the existing *One Size Fits All* approach and justify a move from dichotomous to dialectical practices in corporate education.

Overall this study suggests training can be enhanced by using learner identity, by blending cultures of the learner and the corporate and by creating an authentic Third Space, between the individual and corporation, where learning for all can be situated. This study also suggests detractors exist (such as unilateral approaches) which limit employee learning and corporate effectiveness. Finally, this study provides a first step on the path for practitioners to attempt (what has historically been the scholarly task of researching practice) praxis, as Freire (1968) sees it, to improve their practice and transform the wider field of practice.

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politics. Trevor D. for all the career talks. Neil W. who taught me all about managing a training team and to look beyond training and believe in myself as a manager. Then as a training manager I was taught more by great colleagues such as Ray J. (brilliant instructional designer), PVK & Sando (great communicators), Wayne H. (human side of training), Andy G. (how to manage upwards) and Gail B. (how to manage everything). Similarly I would like to thank UTS and also the Australian Government for providing me with the opportunity to apply for and study at the Professional Doctoral level at little personal financial cost. This is one of the marvels of the Australian education system of which I am forever grateful.

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GLOSSARY

The following glossary within this section aims to provide general basic definitions (from the researcher's perspective) of the terms used within the study. It is by no means comprehensive as it is only intended to provide an entry level definition. Further explanation of some terms is provided within the text.

Colonialism

This is the practice of one group overpowering another to exert their own influence, policies, traits and more thereby dominating and weakening the "victim". Within this study it sometimes (but not solely) refers to how corporate head offices dictate doctrine, policies and training for country branches to follow, with little to no consultation, discussion or input with country branches.

Content Analysis

A research approach focussed on the analysis of content to identify the intentions and communication tendencies of a programme. An example often used in this research is the course module being analysed as part of this study.

Corporation/Organisation

Within this study this is the business entity that runs functions covering transport and logistics as a means to make profit on a day to day and year to year basis. An example of this is ABC Pty Ltd. Within the corporation there are a number of hierarchical layers which exist and also roles which trainers operate within. These are also defined below.

Country Trainers

The trainers that provided training for their country employees at an operational level within an organisation were often called Country Trainers.

Culture

The characteristics of a particular group of people, nations, regions, as well as occupations, business firms and others which includes their religion, language, habits, beliefs, attitudes and many more related practices. Within this study it often

refers to the Spanish speaking and English speaking groups which are being studied, as well as the various occupational groups such as managers, executives, trainers, trainees and more. The term is also used in other similar contexts within the study as well.

Dialectical

The common practice of logical discussion and/or debate to investigate and determine reason. Within this study it is commonly referred to as the practice of open and transparent dialogue of more than one entity across a group to allow for greater input and ideas leading to improved outputs.

Domestic

This defines the market where goods and services operate at a country level. An example of this is when ABC Pty Ltd moves goods between Leuven and Gent (two local cities within Belgium).

Global Head Office

This is the central worldwide headquarters of the corporation where the CEO and Executive Board Members sit that control the overall corporation. An example of this is ABC Pty Ltd Global Office in London.

Global Head Office Training

The process in which the corporate head office training entity outsourced their requirements to external training companies who then ran the programmes to regional head office trainers.

Globalization

A worldwide move towards integration on economic, financial, trade, communication, health and more. Within this study the term has many meanings including the move to commonality and reduction in identity and culture.

Identity

The distinctive characteristics that belong to an individual or group that contributes towards their self definition. Within this study it is often in reference to the learner and their uniqueness and culture.

Insider/Outsider

A research approach focussed on the analysis of a given situation incorporating both an internal and external view. An example often used in this research is analysing how the course module being studied within this research is perceived by the facilitator and participant involved in the process of learning, but then also including an external observer's perspective of that process as well.

Intercultural

The process of mixing or exchanging cultural traits. Often within this study it refers to the way in which various cultures may blend and merge together within a learning setting.

International

This defines the market where goods and services operate at a global level. An example of this is ABC Pty Ltd moves goods between Leuven and London (one city in Belgium and the other in England).

Local

This is a local branch or facility level where the day to day functioning of the business is completed. An example is ABC Pty Ltd Leuven (a city in Belgium).

Local Country Trainers

The trainers that provided training for their country at a local operational branch or facility level within an organisation were usually called the Country Trainers. If however there was another level (which in some large countries did exist) then this is where this person fitted and they were called Local Country Trainers or Facilitators.

Mixed Method

The research technique of using more than one method or approach to investigate a research question. Within this study it often refers to the use of various research approaches such as Content Analysis, Observations and Interviews within an Insider/Outsider approach.

National

This is the central headquarters where the Management Team for that Country sits such as the example used here ABC Pty Ltd Belgium.

Regional Head Office

This is the central regional headquarters where the Executives and Senior Management Team covering and controlling a group of countries sit with examples such as Europe, Asia-Pacific, Americas and more within an example such as ABC Pty Ltd European Head Office.

Regional Trainer

The trainers that provided training for the operations function at this regional level within an organisation were often called Regional Trainers.

Third Space

An independent space where two or more entities come together to create a third new entity. An example often used in this study is where corporate culture and learner culture come together to form a new powerful third culture where learning takes place.

Unilateral

A single individual one sided view. Within this study it often refers to the single standard corporate approach taken by organisations to training, leading to the resulting *One Size Fits All* courses and programmes.