

Cultural Intelligence for the Managers of Tomorrow: A Data-Based Analysis of the Antecedents and Training Needs of Today's Business School Students

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Abstract : The growing importance of cross- or intercultural competencies (used here interchangeably) for the business and management professionals is now a commonplace in both academic and professional literature. This reflects two parallel developments. On the one hand, it is a consequence of the increased attention paid to a whole range of 'soft skills', now seen as fundamental in both individuals' and corporate success. On the other hand, and more specifically, the increasing demand for intercultural competent professionals is a corollary of ongoing processes of globalization, which multiply and intensify encounters between individuals and companies from different cultural backgrounds. Business schools have, for some decades, responded to the needs of the job market and their own students by providing students with training in intercultural skills, as they are encouraged to do so by the major accreditation agencies on both sides of the Atlantic. Adapting Early and Ang's (2003) formulation of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), this paper aims to help fill the lagunae in the current literature on intercultural training in three main ways. First, it offers an in-depth analysis of the CQ of a little studied group: contemporary Millennial and 'Generation Z' Business School students. The level of analysis distinguishes between the four different dimensions of CQ, cognition, metacognition, motivation and behaviour, and thereby provides a detailed picture of the strengths and weaknesses in CQ of the group as a whole, as well as of different sub-groups and profiles of students. Secondly, by crossing these individual-level findings with respondents' socio-cultural and educational data, this paper also proposes and tests hypotheses regarding the relative impact and importance of four possible antecedents of intercultural skills identified in the literature: prior international experience; intercultural training, foreign language proficiency, and experience of cultural diversity in habitual country of residence. Third, we use this analysis to suggest data-based intercultural training priorities for today's management students. These conclusions are based on the statistical analysis of individual responses of some 300 Bachelor or Masters students in a major European Business School provided to two on-line surveys: Ang, Van Dyne, et al's (2007) standard 20-question self-reporting CQ Scale, and an original questionnaire designed by the authors to collate information on respondent's socio-demographic and educational profile relevant to our four hypotheses and explanatory variables. The data from both instruments was crossed in both descriptive statistical analysis and regression analysis. This research shows that there is no statistically significant and positive relationship between the four antecedents analyzed and overall CQ level. The exception in this respect is the statistically significant correlation between international experience, and the cognitive dimension of CQ. In contrast, the results show that the combination of international experience and foreign language skills acting together, does have a strong overall impact on CQ levels. These results suggest that selecting and/or training students with strong foreign language skills and providing them with international experience (through multinational programmes, academic exchanges or international internships) constitutes one effective way of training culturally intelligent managers of tomorrow.

Keywords : business school, cultural intelligence, millennial, training

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