Seminar :   ***An Introductory Workshop to Intercultural Communication for Graduate Students: Developing Key Problem-solving and Leadership Skills for the International Workplace***

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The increasingly multicultural demographics in the academic and scientific workplace mean that students are faced with having to be more interculturally skilled and proactive when interacting in teams with other students, or with supervisors and professors, who can approach work and supervision in unexpectedly very different ways. Yet many students, and also supervisors, continue to overlook or under-estimate the immediate and often critical impact cultural issues have on how scientists communicate about science.

For example:

- How can a student's scientific competence be inaccurately assessed due to his/her culture-bound communication behaviour?

- What typical cultural behaviours in the scientific and academic environment is often mistakenly assumed to be a personality issue in discussion style, decision-making, task completion, question formulation, and teamwork?

- How do different cultural values create diametrically opposite approaches to problem-solving?

- How does culture shape different leadership and supervision style?

- How can *Sachlichkeit* (factualness), *Verbindlichkeit* (bindingness), *Direkheit* (directness) and *Durchsetzungsvermögen* (individual assertiveness) be a sign of competence and professionalism in one kind of culture, while in another kind it poses a tremendous risk that is to be avoided at all costs?

- If the factual "Red Thread" (Roter Faden) does not dictate academic discourse in many cultures, what does?

- If a professor or supervisor does not recognise culture-based problems in the institute, what can the doctoral student do to mediate, and how? Where are his/her limitations?

- What are the hidden conflicts in "international English", for example, when "German-English" dialogues with "English-English" and "Chinese English", even if everyone speaks "perfect" English?

- How can a student of science, foreign or local, learn intercultural communication skills in an analytically structured way to deal proactively with such a wide variety of cultures?

This popular 2-day practice- and applications-oriented workshop is designed to enable doctoral students to develop the key steps in accurately identifying cross-cultural issues, assessing the conflict interfaces that occur, and creating new culture-appropriate strategies for typical scenarios in cross-cultural academic interaction. It is open to and highly recommended for both German and international graduate students from all faculties and academic disciplines.

Drawing on authentic complex case studies and scenarios, the workshop approaches this "soft skill" in a highly structured and transparent manner, by combining and extending the descriptive value of conceptual models into step-by-step diagnostic tools by which to define culture-appropriate action in key work scenarios such as participating in project meetings and problem-solving, managing conflict, requesting information, providing critical feedback, dealing with cultural or bureaucratic hierarchies, optimising multicultural teamwork, and providing motivational leadership.

Seminar contents, Day 1
Start of morning session: 9:00 h

I. Salutations, aims and approach, review of agenda

II. Introducing the cultural "playing field"

- Warmer activity: Identifying typical problems in cross-cultural communication and key questions

Coffee break 10. 30 h – 10.45 h

- The basic communication Paradigms: A cultural values-based approach to identifying and assessing cross-cultural conflict (conceptual foundation)
- The "Cultural Onion": A model and tool for "mapping" cross-cultural conflict interfaces (structural tool)
- The 4-step Cultural Paradigm Shift Model (skills training transfer)
- Key example: Different cultural approaches to problem-solving
  - Conducting meetings: When is it not a forum for problem-solving?
  - Discussion style: Consequences of the "adversarial approach" to debate
  - Giving critical feedback: When can "constructive criticism" be destructive
  - How to facilitate information flow in hierarchical work structures

Lunch break 12.30 h – 13.30 h

III. Case Studies: Reassessing and "Mapping" Cross-Cultural Conflict Interfaces

- Case study 1: Conflicts in teamwork, leadership style

  - Different cultural expectations of leadership and supervision
  - Different cultural meanings of deadlines
  - How to deal with "rubber time"
  - Emailing: reading between the lines

Coffee break 15.45 h – 16.00 h

- Case study 2: From diagnosis to prognosis
  - Fact + Face Solutions: Creating corrective and prescriptive solutions
  - Group presentation and discussions

IV. Wrap-up and outlook
- The role of language: Using language to create "face"

17.30 h End of session

Seminar contents, Day 2
Start of morning session: 9:00 h

I. In plenary feedback round

- Warmer activity: The Key Learning Points of Day 1?
- Loose ends and applications

Coffee break 10.45 h – 11.00 h

II. "International English": the Hidden Conflicts in Cross-cultural Dialogue

- "High context" vs. "low context" communication styles
- Characteristics of low context "German-English"
- Giving and receiving instructions
- Saying "no" and interpreting "yes"
- Fixing and re-negotiating deadlines in "rubber time" cultures
- Activity: How to use language to create "face

Lunch Break 12.30 h – 13.30 h

III. "English-English": Its Potential as a Tool for Mediating Conflict
- Practice: Assessing and responding to tricky emails

Coffee break 15.30 h – 15.35 h

IV. Activity: Role-playing simulation for inter-group communication between mono-cultural teams

"The Trade Mission"
This is a simulation game that uses "synthetic cultures" as scripts for the role-player. The aim of this role-play is not to practise negotiation technique per se, but rather to examine the dynamics and conflicts that mimic those in real cross-cultural settings. The act of trying to play by different cultural rules enables the player to put himself into the proverbial "other shoe", and gain a sensitivity for the motivations and logic behind very different communication behaviour. Synthetic role-playing therefore is an effective analytical tool in facilitating the development of cross-cultural business communication skills. The concluding feedback and discussion session consolidates key concepts and learning points.

V. Wrap-up of the day

End of seminar 18.00 h

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