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TEACHING COMMUNICATION AND TEAM WORKING SKILLS AT INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES FOR FUTURE MANAGERS, LEADERS AND TEAM PLAYERS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

UNIVERSITY EVENTS BASED ON THE APPROACH GET_CONNECTED FOR THE SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS INTO THE UNIVERSITY CULTURE AND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL CORE COMPETENCIES FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE MANAGERS, LEADERS AND TEAM PLAYERS.

EXPERIENCES AT HTWG KONSTANZ 2022-2024

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Abstract. Foreign students are indispensable for internationalization and educational transfer, and not only at German universities. In view of cultural differences in learning culture and daily life, targeted measures are needed to integrate this group of full-time internationals and exchange students into the university culture. At the same time, we need to train intercultural core competencies among both international and national students to prepare them for their potential future jobs as managers, leaders and team players in business, politics and global institutions.

With the help of interactive courses, using the methodological approach get_connected, developed at the University of Applied Sciences Konstanz (HTWG Konstanz), and a design-based research approach, this process could be demonstrably shown and can be seen as an example for how to support integration and develop intercultural core competencies at universities in any country. This paper demonstrates the development of students' skills as future team players and managers in international contexts on the basis of our course offerings and workshops at the HTWG Konstanz from 2022-2024, taking into account the students' self-assessments of their own development processes.

Keywords: University education, emotional and intercultural competencies, future skills, approach get_connected.

1 STUDENT PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AS A MISSION OF UNIVERSITIES IN GERMANY AND TAIWAN

One of the many missions of universities in Germany is student personality development.

 "The competency-oriented design of study programs, courses and examinations is a central requirement of the European study reform and requires a change of perspective in teaching. Competence orientation is a key point in the state-wide structural guidelines of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and is taken into account in the German qualification framework for university degrees. A basic distinction can be made between 4 competency categories, with personal development being an essential one.

- The scientific qualification

- The ability to carry out a qualified professional activity

- The ability to engage in civil society and

- Personal development."[1i]

International cooperation (to solve, e.g., global problems) is another central task in German higher education policy.[2] The federal and state governments support German universities in initiating and conducting international research collaborations. Universities are particularly encouraged to participate in international calls for research funding, such as the 8th EU Research Framework Program (Horizon 2020). The aim here is to expand excellent research networks worldwide in order to take on and solve global challenges in scientific and social fields together.

Therefore, we can see, from a political perspective, that there is an openness in Germany towards developing new teaching concepts in higher education to prepare students to be future global problem solvers. The Bologna Process, an agreement between European countries to standardize their education systems, has been a major driver in this regard.[3] Universities are given responsibility for determining concrete ways to implement these missions.

Similarly, in Taiwan, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education explicitly emphasizes that academic subjects and the allocation of resources must be adapted to the needs of society in a contemporary manner in its mission statements. This means that:

(1) International competitiveness is seen as a central factor that places special demands on students. These students need a global perspective to meet the complex and changing needs of society and to be able to work for research institutes in different countries. That means they must have the ability to work in international settings to be considered attractive candidates in future job markets.

(2) (...) The curricula should be revised regularly to check whether the knowledge and skills acquired by students in individual courses are up to standard and meet the intended requirements for current tasks. This places special demands on the faculty and their teaching approach.

(3) Internationalization has become a criterion of high-quality universities with high quality teaching staff. International collaboration in higher education is highly valued.[4,5]

When comparing educational policy statements in Germany and in Taiwan, it becomes obvious that developing competencies needed to face the challenges brought about by internationalization is an important mission in both countries. Correspondingly, educators are expected to implement this mission.

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[i] Additional information are available at: https://www.hrk-nexus.de/themen/studienqualitaet/kompetenzorientierung

2 NECESSARY COMEPTENCIES IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL-IZATION

According to the general guidelines in Germany, it is up to the universities to decide which specific competences are important and should be included in their training programs. They especially need to take their students' future career prospects into account.

In our department at HTWG Konstanz, and especially in business and management study programs, we prepare students to take on leading positions in (international) teams. It is beyond question that, in addition to specialized knowledge, graduates need communicative and intercultural competencies. The well-known Globe Study[6], which is continuously being updated, provides information about the general requirements for managers, especially from an international perspective. And Fredrik Laloux, in his book Reinventing Organizations (2024), described the competencies necessary for successful international teamwork.[7] Both studies can serve as reference sources for selecting behavioral competencies to be included in our training programs, especially the practical classroom activities .

2.1   The definition of leadership in a global context

Given the diversity of leadership tasks as well as the multitude of related competencies and personality traits, it is not easy to select which competencies to train in class. Moreover, intercultural working contexts entail additional requirements. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight a few competencies here, as they are particularly suitable for describing universal human ethical qualities, which are important for personnel management in companies and organizations. They include: the ability to motivate, influence and enable another person to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the team, and the ability to build relationships with other people.[6]

When tackling the question of leadership and associated competencies in an intercultural context, it is important to approach the topic as objectively as possible, as the researcher's own cultural background unconsciously comes into play. Social psychology has proven to be a useful approach in this context with its view of leadership as a competence that is attributed to a person by others based on the quality of their relationship with them.[8]

2.2   "Irrational aspects of leadership": undefined aspects of successful emotion management

Since the 1990s, the focus of management research has shifted from traditional managerial tasks (namely planning, implementation and control) to the "irrational aspects" of leadership (related to emotional processes) and "transactional versus transformational leadership"[9,10]. These traditional tasks now make up less of a manager's 'normal' everyday work than they used to. These so called "irrational aspects" are especially relevant in a transformational leadership style, which tends to inspire employees to strive beyond required expectations voluntarily rather than relying on extrinsic motivational factors such as rewards and punishment in a transactional leadership style. The transformative leadership style is gaining popularity both in the East and the West. The concept of transformative leadership is now also referred to as the "New Leadership"[11], which stresses competencies on the personal level:

- Leadership refers to active leaders who are able to stimulate others personally and intellectually.

- The basic task of a leader is to make people become aware of what they feel, or make them aware of their true needs and to make them define their values in a meaningful way so that they feel motivated to seek out tasks which they feel are purposeful.

According to the Globe Project, which uses implicit leadership theory to examine the similarities and differences between effective leadership in different cultures (60 countries and 951 companies from three different industries),[6] the prototype of an excellent (international) leader can vary by culture and position. However, universal leadership attributes have been identified, and these represent the basic dimensions for characterizing successful leadership in the modern world. In this talk I would like to emphasize the leadership attributes that fall under the category of "irrational action competencies" in the broadest sense:

- Administrative skills (dynamic, effective, **decisive, economical),**

- **Problem solving skills** (informed, intelligent, **communicative**, **win-win-oriented),**

- **Motivating skills (**excellence-oriented, **encouraging),**

- **Team building skills (**dependable, **trustworthy, just).**[12]

The GLOBE study also reveals universal attributes that lead to leadership failure: dictatorial, egocentric, loner, non-explicit, non-cooperative, irritable, ruthless, and asocial.[6]

2.3 *Ethical leadership in international contexts*

Another term that often appears in business studies, and which entails (a major part of) the "irrational" leadership attributes, is "ethical leadership".[13] Researching and evaluating so-called ethical leadership has not been an easy task. It is especially difficult to define intercultural competencies in connection with international leadership in detail. In a nutshell, in a global leadership setting, the term intercultural competence encompasses the following three dimensions: perception management, relationship management and self-management.[14]

3 COURSES FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES AT UNIVERSITIES

3.1 Situation at the Konstanz University of Applied Sciences (HTWG Konstanz)

The HTWG Konstanz, as all other universities, has a mission statement and a corresponding code of conduct, which serve as a guideline for ethical and value-oriented behavior in the university setting. Moreover, our business study programs cover subjects such as compliance and governance, and in our degree programs that combine engineering with business studies, students have the possibility to choose elective courses on communication and intercultural communication as well. However, these courses are often taught by external lecturers "bought in" from the private continuing education sectors. Since these courses are usually not fully integrated into the curricula of the degree programs, the continuity, progression and evaluation of these courses are seldom guaranteed.

Therefore, I, personally, find these courses unsatisfactory in terms of their administrative status, content, and teaching formats. In addition, these courses do not provide a reliable assessment of personality development, especially in regard to emotional and intercultural behavioral competencies.

3.2 The limit of "understanding" via knowledge-based learning to increase intercultural competencies

I would like to share one situation from my professional career that made me think about my own course content and my way of teaching the subject of intercultural communication for students in business and management studies.

In one of my intercultural communication classes , students from different cultural backgrounds acquire knowledge about other cultural preferences in order to identify and analyze behavioral differences. And they are required to work closely together to solve a specific task. The aim of this group assignment is to immerse the students in real-life situations in which they experience intercultural differences first hand in order to train their intercultural skills. So, in principle, these students know about the challenges when working across cultures, and they understand that different working styles are sometimes attributed to the different cultural backgrounds. However, one student, who was obviously not happy with the way the others handled the task, wrote in his report, "Just because I 'understand' why someone behaves differently, I can't automatically stop getting angry about it!"

This comment showed me the limits of knowledge-based teaching and learning as well as the limits of experience-based learning without guidance by a lecturer. It also revealed how many emotional processes are involved in international teamwork. The student admitted that although he rationally "understood" the reason for his fellow students' "strange" behavior, this understanding had no direct effect on his emotional reaction. He continued to feel angry, which, of course, is a normal human reaction in overwhelming or frustrating situations. Even though one understands that they should feel and behave in a certain way, their rational understanding is often not sufficient for managing the emotions accordingly.

This incident opened my eyes and made me think about the importance of emotions and the role of an instructor's guidance in intercultural training. It became clear to me that to strengthen intercultural behavioral skills, we as lecturers need to accompany the students' *emotional* processes.

3.2.1 Escalation of the conflict without conscious processing of emotional reactions (negative spiral)

If the triggered anger is not addressed, it remains repressed as an unprocessed feeling. This will most likely lead to consequences such as: ending a collaboration, reinforcing (negative) stereotypes, and the ineffective training of constructive action competence, which could be transferred to comparable situations in international teams in the future.

Even worse, it could result in the breakdown of the personal relationship. If people are forced to work together without being able to release emotional distress, someone will always be blamed: "It's his/her fault that I'm annoyed. What an unpleasant feeling. Such a person is not important to me."

These feelings of frustration and dissociation might then create space for even more negative and judging thoughts like: "Even if we have to work together, you are not my desired teammate or a person I want to

have in my life...". These in turn could eventually lead to the loss of empathy or even formation of new stereotypes: "They really work differently, strange people, weird..."

3.3 Emotion management as part of the course content

It is obvious that our ability to deal with demanding feelings like anger, fear, and disappointment is a key to success in joint problem solving in (intercultural) teams. If we cannot deal with these emotions, they will hinder empathetic and constructive communication and reduce the chance of finding a joint solution.

This observation became an important motivation for me to change my course content: Students must learn to deal with their emotions, if they want to succeed in behaving in a certain way with the purpose of solving a problem for the benefit of all. They need to learn how to handle difficult emotions and how to achieve this even under pressure and in overwhelming situations. Therefore, in addition to the usual purely analytic thinking processes, I also cover psychological processes as part of the course content.

This raises the question of how, in the academic context of a university, the cultivation of emotional competencies can be supported, which can be seen as the foundation of intercultural behavioral competence.

Teaching anger management as part of the emotional and intercultural behavioral competencies entails:

- Imparting knowledge about individual psychological and neurological processes to help students assess their collective patterns of behavior and better process anger, rage, and frustration;

- Introducing the impact of difficult emotions on teamwork and leadership and ways to deal with them;

- Coaching how to get in touch with one's own emotions and the emotions of others;

- Training constructive communicative skills.

3.3.1 Increasing empathy: a reachable goal for all students?

The innate human capacity for consensus is a proven fact, so that can be seen as a reachable goal. But of course, we can expect different degrees of readiness, and perhaps even ability, for empathy and emotion management among the students depending on personality, and factors like how they were raised, educational background, value system, etc.

Therefore, when designing ways and instruments to teach intercultural competence courses, we need to take the emotional and cultural intelligence of our students into consideration. We generally assume that students who were admitted to universities have a certain level of so-called intelligence quotient (IQ) and possess basic aptitudes for logical reasoning. But what about their emotional intelligence (EQ) and their intercultural intelligence? There continues to be much debate on whether our idea of IQ is still appropriate or whether it should be modified to include emotional intelligence as well, which is a key element of communicative competence and more specifically of ethics-based intercultural behavioral skills.[15]

Goleman defines emotional intelligence as a "meta-ability which determines how well we can use our other abilities, including pure intellect"[16, p.56]. In higher education, it means that students' level of emotional intelligence will strongly influence how well they perform academically and/or collaboratively in (intercultural) teamwork.[16, p.293]

Being able to handle difficult emotions, such as anger and fear, in a constructive manner is thus a central element of intercultural competence. Even though working with emotions is not a very visible (research) topic for teaching at universities (yet), it is undeniable how important and relevant it has become to stay psychological healthy and face issues successfully in our modern societies.

Making emotions a course subject is obviously new to many students and universities. However, the topic of emotions as an influential factor for productive learning has received increasing attention in recent years.[17] And the conventional one-sided view of intelligence as primarily cognitive abilities is increasingly being questioned or supplemented by emotional aspects.[16]

3.4 Personality development, cultural intelligence, and related behavioural skills

Cultural intelligence can be seen as an individual's ability to successfully deal with cultural situations that are unfamiliar to them. In this context, culture is understood in a broad sense: national, ethnic, and organizational, and intelligence is understood as a system that can be developed as part of personality development. Cultural intelligence is a complex faculty, and cannot be assumed to be automatically present just because

a person has lived abroad.[18] According to Livermore, there are four components of cultural intelligence (CQ): motivation, knowledge, strategy, and action.[19] Each of the four capabilities of cultural intelligence includes more specific capabilities (sub-dimensions), which can be measured and improved. The most important individual factors are:

- CQ Drive (Motivation): the interest, confidence, and drive to adapt cross-culturally;

- CQ Knowledge (Cognition): the understanding of cross-cultural norms and differences, knowledge input and analysis;

- CQ Strategy (Metacognition): the ability to plan one's actions on the basis of understanding, the ability to process experiences (emotionally) to select constructive and situationally appropriate behavior;

- CQ Action: the ability to adapt verbal and non-verbal actions (being aware of one's own needs) appropriately in intercultural interaction.

There has been an ongoing debate at universities about whether intercultural competence is an integral part of professional competence or just a desirable yet optional "soft skill" add-on. After all, universities already face sufficient challenges in terms of resources when teaching specialized academic and technical subjects with related analytical and professional skills.

Moreover, it is also often not clear to the students, what they are supposed to learn in such courses and to what extent this is related to their professional training. While I was thinking about how to answer the students, I came across the following quote from Antoine de Saint Exupéry: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."[20] What does longing refer to? Can that longing be awakened by providing the cognitive tools necessary to be confident, empathetic, and resilient? I think that, in terms of intercultural competence, the longing we strive for refers to the desire of people to create something together that is greater than themselves and the desire to act with passion and commitment for the good of all. This is precisely what is innate to us, but, as I stated at the beginning, is not experienced as a matter of course in everyday life. And this is also a core competency for successful teamwork.

In my experience, students have a strong willingness to work on their personal development. Receiving additional appreciation from the lecturer for their individual personality further helps to develop this working process into a self-directed and transparent one. The teaching methods must create an atmosphere of trust, in which the students can learn together without any fear of being personally devalued. In addition, the course aims must be made clear to the students, i.e., what kind of competencies they are going to work on and how they are defined. Lastly, the progress in competencies made throughout the course should be documented and used for evaluation.

3.5 Students as future international team players and leaders

This may come as a surprise to some, but anger management and emotion management in general are in fact skills that all people can learn. I first noticed how great the general willingness to experience this kind of emotional learning process is when I was teaching the military personnel at the Bundeswehr University Munich. The soldiers felt a great need to learn how to communicate constructively and control their emotions before they left for active deployment in the Iraq war.

Of course, when "personality development" is taught at universities, more detailed content must be planned according to the specific disciplines and the career goals of the students. The targeted competencies should always be clearly defined. And it is always a challenge to define sub-competencies for each target group, to develop instructional formats for teaching these sub-competencies and to develop evaluation tools for the teaching and learning effect.

I think the following competencies are indispensable for our students of business and management:

- Team working skills: the ability to act cooperatively, fairly, and empathetically;

- Language skills and communication skills;

- Value-based leadership skills

In order to development these competencies, trainings in anger management and intercultural conflict communication are of central importance.

4   THE TEACHING APPROACH *GET_CONNECTED* AT HTWG KONSTANZ

We developed the teaching approach *get_connected*[ii] at the HTWG Konstanz and have improved it over the past 14 years. It can be applied to different types of courses as the basis for promoting different kinds of behavioral competencies. Due to the impact of the pandemic 4 years ago, we were also forced to develop a digital teaching format for each offer which foster personal and intercultural development with computer-mediated pseudo face-to-face interactions. This online teaching format, additionally, offers unprecedented opportunities to connect students from different universities all around the globe in one classroom.

There is a short story behind the name *get_connected*: In 2018, we taught a course on intercultural communication at the Beijing Institute of Technology in China. We had a class of students from China, Germany and various other countries. We taught the course interactively, in which the students were asked to analyze their own "critical incidents" together. After the class, a student from Mauritius came to me and said: "Ms. Thelen, I would like to be part of your movement." Quite spontaneously I answered: "But you are, we are all part of this movement." What had happened? He had felt connected: connected to me, with the class content, to the other students, with life as it was happening at that moment. And so did I. If you do a search for the term "get connected" on the internet, countless pages will pop up that are related to telecommunication. I liked that, because telecommunication has provided incredible possibilities for us to connect with each other, and even more so today via the internet. But these new technical possibilities have not automatically improved our ability to feel *emotionally* connected. Our approach thus tries to help narrow or even close this gap.

4.1   *Get_connected as a didactical approach to building emotional connection with oneself and others*

Just like the underscore in the name, *get_connected* represents emotional connection obviously needed to close a gap. For that we need practical tools, methods, as well as conscious and individually verified strategies to work with our minds and especially with our emotions. And we need to take into account our psychological similarities and cultural differences. In *get_connected* courses, we guide each student to embark on their own personal journey in exploring feelings triggered by different kinds of situations and interactions.

As already mentioned, a transparent process is very important. We need to treat the students as conscious, self-determined human beings in a process of continuous personal development.[21] Our teaching methods are based on the "design-based-research" approach, in which students are considered not only learners, but also conscious researchers.[22] They receive stimuli from the courses for their individual development. In their respective learning processes, they are closely accompanied by the teachers. Regular evaluation of the learning process (via evaluation interviews, learning diaries and feedback rounds) is an important component, which allows for timely adjustment of the teaching design and continuous improvement of the courses.

4.1.1   *Examples of the get_connected approach:*

The *get_connected* teaching concept and some preliminary evaluation results from a get_connected course, taught in the summer term 2021, were published in a handbook on how to increase China competence at German universities.[23] So far we use three basic concepts that we adapt to the different target groups. Every format can be taken as a single offer, however we see deeper understanding and different results in dealing with (intercultural) issues in students who take part in all classes. (Further research is still needed in order to be able to confirm the results in greater detail).

Course 1: Intercultural Project Work

Target group:

-        New students at the university

-        Students from all departments

-        Exchange students from international partner universities

Objectives:

[ii] Additional information are available at: https://www.htwg-konstanz.de/hochschule/einrichtungen/china-kompetenzzentrum-bodensee/get-connected

- Raise students' awareness of emotional processes in new and challenging contact situations
- Strengthen students' understanding of the potential of difficult emotions for personal growth
- Prepare students to work in teams and to solve tasks collaboratively
- Integrate students from different cultural backgrounds

Especially for new students at the university, freshmen and international exchange students, it can be difficult to feel connected. In our experience, the process of "emotionally" arriving at the university is not easy. Although the level of difficulty varies among students, depending on their prior experiences and personalities, people, in general, tend to stay in familiar groups in order to avoid feelings of fear and insecurity that can arise when they leave their comfort zones. The adjustment can be even more difficult, if they come from foreign cultural contexts and do not speak the new language very well.

Simply offering encounter opportunities to help establish connections among intercultural groups, is often not enough. The process of encounter needs to be guided professionally so that the students can learn to recognize and understand their emotional reactions. Moreover, such guidance can also help to avoid the danger of unresolved emotions, which can make further contact more difficult / impossible or lead to reinforcement of false stereotypes about each other.

Methods and Evaluation and Evidence of Increase of Competencies: Less theoretical, more experience-based learning in group work

The *get_connected* courses are deliberately made less intellectually demanding, and instead emotionally motivating. The students are allowed to work with self-selected topics. Especially in the first format, motivation and "fun" provide room to reflect on emotional processes involved in the intercultural teamwork. If the given tasks are very demanding intellectually, the students' focus would be fixated on completing the tasks, while the team process as well as the emotional reactions would receive little attention. What we aim for is exactly the opposite: We want the students to understand that their emotional processes are a major learning objective.

We have been experimenting with these course formats for 14 years now. During this time, it has become clear that only doing the projects is not sufficient for the students to learn what is involved in successful teamwork in the long term. They might get the impression that their success or failure is solely dependent on whether they work in a team with people they like or don't like. Therefore, we have chosen to engage the students in a different way:

Students as explorers and researchers

Students act as conscious explorers and researchers: they reflect on their team dynamics and especially on the feelings triggered during the working process.

- At the very beginning of the team process, students complete a self-assessment and agree on the definition of the competencies important to them.
- Before and after each team meeting, students record their emotions in their "learning diaries". They then receive feedback from the lecturers regarding these feelings. Emotion management thus becomes a self-responsible conscious process.
- At the end of the course, students evaluate themselves, which helps to assess the individual growth in competencies as well as the team process.

Course 2: Communication Psychology

Target group:

Students from all departments and cultural backgrounds at any stage of their studies

Objectives:

- Raise students' awareness of their psychological processes in communication
- Cultivate skills of communicating with oneself (self-awareness and self-care)
- Cultivate skills of communicating with others (addressing conflicts constructively)

Methods:

- Teaching psychological and neurological principles;

- Introducing individual assessment of anger management skills;

- Experimental, experience-based learning in teams

Final exam:

- Group presentation of a case study analysis using the "tools" learned in class;

- Role play: act out the case study solution

This format teaches the basics of communication and action psychology in an interactive manner. Students learn to assess individual feelings and actions from a psychological point of view as generally human behavior. As a result, they become more aware of their individual processing processes. They also become aware of the personal responsibility they can take for their own behavior and the need for communicating with themselves in the sense of self-care and remembrance. It becomes clear that successful communication with the self is the basis for constructive communication processes with others. This seminar is therefore a basic seminar that lays the foundation for the development of intercultural competences.

Course 3: Conflict management in international teams

Target group:

Students from upper semesters from all departments and all partner universities, the more diverse the better

Objective:

Preparation for Conflict Resolution in International Teams

Content and methods:

Mixing knowledge and experience by having both theoretical input and experience-based learning in intercultural teams

The third course format combines the essential course elements from courses 1 and 2 described above.

Due to the pandemic, we have modified the formats so that we can also teach them online (since summer term 2021). It turned out that, even using a digital format, it is possible for students to establish personal connections among each other as well as to us lecturers. Digitalization also made it possible to offer this course to students at STUST, who were enrolled in our double-degree master's program International Management Asia-Europe, before they came to study with us in person. This class is now part of the double-degree program.

In the *get_connected* courses, one of our essential goals is to foster students' ability to work constructively with foreign fellow students - in fact students who might represent not only a different culture, but also a challenging or even problematic one in public perception. It is exactly for these situations that students need specific skills to find common solutions beyond personal inclinations that usually arise when they are under pressure. This ability will be crucial in their future professional lives.

Knowledge transfer and experience-based learning

The content and the methods of the *get_connected* courses are knowledge–based and experience-based at the same time. Some examples of the theoretical input are as follows:

- Constructivism

- Basics of communicative psychology

- Basics of cultural dimensions

- Tools for anger management / dealing with difficult feelings

The "emotional" input, i.e., assignments for weekly meetings in student teams made up of 4-6 fixed participants, represents a special challenge for us teachers, because we need learning materials/assignments

that evoke different emotions. Only in this way can the students experience the difficult feelings that are aroused by working on the assignments in the teams and learn how to deal with them.

Moreover, the lecturer's special responsibility also lies in their close supervision of the teamwork and in their selection and adaptation of the class content in relation to the learning process in the teams. Weekly classroom sessions for theoretical input has proven useful for the students to master the team assignments both cognitively and emotionally. The lecturer also needs the ability to possibly accompany students going through intense emotional experiences.

In the fixed student teams, the students have weekly meetings, in which they experience team processes and learn how to deal with emotionally difficult issues constructively. In the beginning, it is important to make sure that the teams have established positive rapport, before they are asked to deal with (emotionally) difficult topics.

Example of the progression of some course components:

-   Knowledge input in the classroom session

First, the lecturer introduces the concept of constructivism. It is made clear that we tend to perceive others through the "glasses" of our own perspective. Therefore, irritation and conflicts may arise.

-   Team meeting in fixed small groups

One task for the student teams is to watch national news from their home country on a same day. In the team meeting after that, the students exchange information about the content, the focus, and the way the national news is presented. A quote from a student shows the learning effect: "I realized that we can't understand each other because we have very different truths!"

With this task we try to push the students to consciously see the limits of their own psychological reality and how their unconscious bias imprints their individual perception of the outside world. This helps to make them more sensitive, self-aware and self-responsible when dealing with potential difficulties that arise during team work. They now have access to an explanation for their difficult feelings, and as a next step they can learn how to deal with them.

Another assignment for the team meeting is to recommend each other a movie that represents a particular (emotional) insight into their own culture. All team members then watch the movies and discuss them in their next team meeting.

The aim of this task is, while unveiling new cultural aspects, to encourage students to discuss their feelings (excitement, confusion, etc.) triggered by the movies and their rationale for choosing the particular movies. This is not an easy task. For example, one student found a film brutal and repulsive but did not know how to address these feelings in the team discussion. It helped to ask the lecturer how to do this and to clarify the emotions before talking to the student who recommended the movie.

A third type of assignment for the team meeting is to solve a "critical incident" with the communication tools introduced in class. The team reports and learning diaries are then reviewed by the lecturer in order to know whether the critical incident has been solved or whether the lecturer needs to offer support to individual students in the role as "coach".

4.2   Evaluation 2022 – 24 (summary) course format 3 "conflict management in international teams : based on learning diaries, interviews before and after the course, final presentations and role plays.

In the end, I would like to share with you some results from the students' evaluations of this specific course format between 2022- 2024, which shows what they experienced as a learning effect.

Shared achievements desired by the participants in the courses (their personal goals)

-        Improve foreign language skills
-        Clear communication (and knowledge about different cultural understandings of "clear communication")
-        Patience
-        Overcome own shyness

- Expand knowledge about other cultures

- Expand knowledge about different communication styles and how to use them

- Knowledge about the forms of communication appropriate for hierarchically structured contexts

- Emotional readiness to handle different communication styles

- Develop interest and openness towards people from other cultural backgrounds

Selection of comments from students 2022-2024 / post-course responses: quotes

- "To be able to put yourself in the shoes of others", be aware of differences, think about how your message may be received

- New ways of dealing with conflicts

- Be aware of high and low context communication. Be aware of the four sides model [Schulz von Thun] and especially of the model of "I- and you-statements"

- Being mindful. I understand better why people act in a certain way - and how to deal with it

- Dealing with unexpected situation, such as losing important point of view during a discussion and having to work with what we have

- Accept and analyze the conflict, separate the person from the problem and try to express my feelings

- Speak out my point of view and listen to others

- Just be active and put myself in other people's shoes!

- First, communicate calmly is the most important thing. Other than that, listen actively, review options, and finally try to end the conflict with a win-win solution

- Pay more attention to listening.

- To understand the differences between different cultures, such as high context and low context, direct and indirect communication

- Try to communicate in a way that others could feel that you really want to help and try to understand other's feelings and the way they think differently from me.

- Dare to ask for help from the team members, they always explained to me and told me how to do.

By providing students with knowledge from the fields of psychology and neuroscience on the one hand, and working with them with concrete communication tools of intercultural communication and communication psychology on the other, we fulfil our classic role as university lecturers. At the same time, we "coach" them individually, when they exhibit emotional difficulties in dealing with their team members during group assignments.

Throughout the semester, the course content and teaching focus is constantly updated according to the students' needs (as reflected in the learning diary entries). Only in this way can we live up to our claim of responding to individual needs and accompanying (individual) competence development.

5   UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE

As university lecturers, it is our responsibility to prepare the students for the future, one that is beneficial for all. And therefore, we need to contribute to the discussion about what students need to learn. "Future skills" should not only imply dealing with technical issues. To me, it is of central importance, both on a local and global level, to support the students' personal development in competencies of constructive communication and behavior by training them to deal with emotions consciously.

As Albert Einstein said: "All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed to ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of a mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom."[24] Of course, it is clear that the teaching of intercultural competences is diffi-

cult to evaluate and that these competences, even once acquired, are not set, but that they have to be constantly refreshed and enhanced again during the lifelong process of learning. But this is equally true for many competencies, such as foreign language skills, social skills, etc.

This makes it all the more important to send a signal in the university context that intercultural and emotional skills are important in the modern world, and that training these skills is also a qualification goal in the university context. In this way, they will gain more importance, and the importance of personal development in the university context will become more significant and can be further developed in concepts and teaching formats and also conveyed in a contemporary way.

These competencies are indispensable for solving global problems, and we at international universities have the global responsibility to make these competencies tangible, communicable and assessable. There is an ongoing discussion about "future skills" that are connected with our discussion and are part of our goal of facing upcoming challenges. As Ehlers wrote, "Future skills are competencies that allow individuals to solve complex problems characterized by a high degree of emergence in a self-organized way and enable them to act (successfully). They are based on cognitive, motivational, volitional, and social resources, are value-based, and can be acquired in a learning process"[25, p.53].

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