**ASSESSMENT**

One part of this sabbatical project included a proposal to develop an assessment tool for students to measure their “global awareness” in a pre and post test format. I believed that if the students read a supplementary chapter to the Introduction to Psychology textbook and completed a few assignments on Cultural Psychology it would make a measurable difference in what they know and how they thought about people different from them. I learned through my research that this idea was rather naïve. There are measurement tools that purport to measure “global awareness” or “global competence” already on the educational market but none would be useful in such a format as voluntary-by-faculty “global assignments”. Before discussing a framework for assessing global competence or listing all the surveys and assessments that are available I will present an excerpt from an article by David Matsumoto, Professor of Psychology and Director of the Culture and Emotion Research Laboratory at San Francisco University. He is the author of over 250 works including original research articles, paper presentations, books, videos, and assessment instruments on this topic.

The following is quoted from the article (with permission):

Like many of my colleagues around the world, I teach classes in which I require my students to do lots of readings, research, write papers and perform on tests. Their performance serves as the basis for my evaluation, which I then use to give grades…..

When I speak to my colleagues about student learning, most believe that their students are learning something about the content that is taught in class and required on tests and papers. It seems that all of education can be summarized by what’s in a syllabus and the content of the tests we administer. And certainly there is some truth to this as they will surely remember something of all we require.

But when you speak to students you get a different picture. When I see my students a year or two after they have taken a class with me, I often ask them what they remember having learned in the class. More often than not students have forgotten all of the facts that I made them memorize for their tests. What they do remember often has nothing to do with the actual content of the course, but instead by the way I handled a difficult student or handled controversial material. It often varies, but it is often *not* related to the things I tested them on.

As I looked back and examined how we teach what we teach, I have come to the realization that no matter how important we teachers think something is to a student’s learning, the degree to which a student will make an effort to remember (not necessarily learn) something is more dependent on one all-important question rather than on any priority or values we instructors have about the material” “Will it be on the test?” And besides that, students are not interested in how much we teachers know; they just want to know that we are interested in them.

For these reasons, and through my reflection about education and my own life in the past few months, I have come to the following definition of education: *An education is what students remember after they have forgotten all the facts we made them memorize.* It is whatever they say they learned from you when you meet them a year, or two, or five after you taught them. And if we in the educational system think more broadly about what it is we are delivering, and if we define education as stated above, then to me the goal of education is *to help humans live uniquely as humans.* This then begs the questions of what is uniquely human and what differentiates us from non-human animals.

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Having a goal to help humans live as uniquely human means that we should help facilitate their learning of culture, morals and values. In the realm of culture and psychology, these can translate into the development of concepts such as ethno relativism and intercultural sensitivity. We can help people develop as voyagers of the world who welcome challenges and are constantly engaging with diversity and growing from it. This is contrasted with so many in our world today who spend so much time and effort vindicating their limited world views because they cannot deal with diversity and differences well or in a constructive manner. The newspapers and television news reports are replete with the consequences of such vindication.

Students all around the world today spend a major portion of their lives in an educational system. Those of us in the universities represent the last line in this collective effort in creating tomorrow’s citizens and societies.

How can we achieve these goals?

*Note: Dr Matsomoto developed the Intercultural Adaptation Potential Scale (ICAPS) he refers to in the following section.*

The development of the ICAPS *is* important to the field not only because it allows for the identification of the key psychological skills that are crucial to adjustment, but also because it provides researchers and educators with a useful tool with which to assess the efficacy of their training programs.

I have administered ICAPS a number of times in a simple pre-post design in order to examine the degree to which a variety of cross-cultural experiences actually improve students or trainees scores. Unfortunately, however, whenever I have administered ICAPS pre-post inn cross-cultural psychology courses taught by myself and others, I have found that scores do not improve. (Fortunately they don’t decrease either). This was shocking and disturbing to me, as it usually is to most cross-cultural psychologists to whom I report this data.

When I have administered ICAPS pre-post to intercultural training seminars that are designed to help people adjust to life in a different culture, however, upwards of 80% of the participants increase their scores. One of the biggest differences between traditional courses in which scores do not increase and training seminars in which we have documented increases in scores is that the former are generally didactic and one-way based mostly on lectures. The latter are experientially based with role-plays, simulations, and other such exercises built in as part of the training program.

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The data described here strongly suggest that we in the universities teaching classes the old fashioned way should reconsider what we are doing and reassess whether or not the format facilitates the types of psychological outcomes we want to occur in our students. The data I have obtained so far indicate they do not.

I have included herein a listing of many intercultural assessment tools that are presently available with the caveat of what is stated above. It appears that participants of training seminars are much more likely to profit in measurable ways compared to students who are exposed to a bit of intercultural words and assignments in traditional classes. This is not to say that the addition of this information is not worthwhile. Some students may profit a great deal and others a small amount from such exposure…it is just that, at this time, the likelihood of measuring a gain in cultural awareness from such efforts is not feasible.

Cross-cultural research itself will need to evolve in the future. Its continued contribution to psychology will be determined not only by our ability to be flexible enough to incorporate alternative teaching methods in order to achieve alternative educational goals, but also by our ability to incorporate alternative research methods in studying the interaction of culture and psychology. Much of cross-cultural research today is not about what people do as much as it is about people’s perceptions and attitudes about what they do and how they behave. ….

Everywhere we look people from different countries, backgrounds-cultures-are being thrust together like never before. Dealing with, managing, and taking advantage of this increased diversity remains one of our biggest challenges in the future. Psychology, informed by cross-cultural research, is uniquely positioned to create a better world by continuing its study of people of different cultures. Its improvements to knowledge of psychological processes, and in guiding future educational systems and processes so that people are better equipped with the psychological skills necessary to live within this increased diversity.