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Culturally Relevant Management Education: Insights from Experience in Nunavut

The author's experience with a Nunavut business management education program illustrates how to develop culturally relevant organizational behavior curriculum. The process initially involved interviews with Inuit Elders about culturally appropriate responses to scenarios of cultural conflicts in the workplace identified by Inuit managers. The author then engaged in an experiential learning project working with an Aboriginal organization in southern Canada to develop a culturally appropriate organizational culture. The experience highlighted the importance of cross-cultural management educators recognizing diversity in another culture while actively demonstrating respect for and interest in the other culture's values and beliefs. The author recommends that in an increasingly globalized world, cross-cultural management educators undertake similar efforts to develop organizational behavior curriculum that reflects culturally diverse world views.

L'expérience que l'auteure a vécue dans le contexte d'un programme d'études en gestion des affaires au Nunavut est un exemple de la façon de développer un curriculum sur le comportement organisationnel qui est adapté à la réalité culturelle. L'étude a débuté par des entrevues auprès d'Aînés inuits. Les questions portaient sur des conflits culturels, tels qu'identifiés par des gérants inuits, et des façons de les affronter qui seraient appropriées à la culture inuite. Par la suite, l'auteure a participé à un projet d'apprentissage par l'expérience. Elle a travaillé avec un organisme autochtone dans le sud du Canada pour développer une culture organisationnelle nuancée culturellement. Cette expérience a mis au premier plan l'importance pour les enseignants en gestion transculturelle d'être sensibilisés aux disparités culturelles et de démontrer activement leur respect et leur intérêt pour les valeurs et les croyances de l'autre culture. L'auteure recommande qu'en cette ère de mondialisation, les enseignants en gestion transculturelle adoptent les mêmes démarches pour développer un curriculum sur le comportement organisationnel qui reflète la diversité culturelle des perspectives mondiales.

Introduction

With the globalization of education (Mason, 1998), Canadian universities are increasingly involved in the educational export business (Bloom et al., 1999). Faculty from across the country collaborate and compete to win lucrative Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) contracts to implement postsecondary education programs in countries as diverse as China, Egypt, and Guyana. The Canadian Bureau of International Education actively recruits Canadian educators for service abroad. Canadian universities offer on-line distance learning courses to students around the globe, many of them in emerging countries. Canadian postsecondary institutions hire specialists in recruiting international students willing to pay high fees for the privilege of receiving a North American education.

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International management education programs are particularly thriving (Jarvis, 2002), with online undergraduate and graduate certificates, diplomas, and degrees proliferating, Executive Master's of Business Administration (MBAs) being delivered internationally through on-site modular programs, and Canadian faculty being recruited to consult on the development of programs abroad. When the North American brand of management education is exported, however, the consuming students also receive an invisible package of cultural assumptions and values. Unless the faculty members of the exporting institutions adapt their curriculum in culturally appropriate ways, the outcome of international education efforts could be the creation of a homogenized world business culture based on the North American model. Discussions relating culture to the globalization of education, however, are rare and therefore much needed (Fay & Hill, 2003).

The potential effect of contemporary exportation of management education on diverse cultures has parallels in the assimilation experienced by Aboriginal people in Canada. While coordinating the Management Studies programs at Nunavut Arctic College (NAC), I became aware of the dangers of cultural exportation. My intensive involvement with Inuit students and colleagues deeply affected my thinking on culture in business management curricula. As Findlay (2000) has noted, non-Aboriginal academics working with Aboriginal students and colleagues receive the benefit of a profound education. Having been privileged to receive such an education, I offer the following personal narrative in the hope that it will stimulate a similar process in other educational professionals involved in cross-cultural management education, particularly in countries with indigenous populations. The article represents the learning process of a practitioner engaged in experiential learning seen in retrospect through a scholarly lens. As such it is presented as a "teaching story" (Morrow Rakhsha, & Castaneda, 2001) that may prove useful to other academics in similar cross-cultural education situations.

The Nunavut Context

Nunavut, the territory that came into political existence on April 1, 1999, comprises 2,000,000 sq. km. of Canada above the tree line, north and west of Hudson Bay. The population is approximately 29,000, of which about 85% are Inuit. The 26 Nunavut communities range in size from a population of 25 to almost 6,000 in Iqaluit, the capital. None of the communities has road access; all goods and people are transported by air or sealift (Government of Nunavut, 2004).

Although Inuit employment is increasing, most Inuit families live in public housing and rely on social assistance payments for income. This socioeconomic situation is the consequence of the Canadian government's intervention in the Arctic after World War II when the official policy was to settle the formerly nomadic Inuit into organized communities. Settlement in permanent communities disrupted traditional reliance on subsistence hunting and gathering, and the requirement for Inuit children to attend school interfered with generational patterns of cultural transmission. Rapid social, political, and economic change has taken its toll on the mental health of Inuit. Nunavut faces high rates of substance abuse, family violence, and suicide (Korhonen, 2002).

Regardless of the social problems, Inuit tradition is still strong in Nunavut. During 20 years of land claim negotiations (Purich, 1992), Inuit leaders ensured that measures were put in place to maintain their culture and their language. The 1993 Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA) specifically identified "cultural and social well-being of Inuit" as a primary objective (Indian & Northern Affairs, 1993, p. 1). Article 23 of the NLCA requires the Nunavut government, formed as a condition of the land claim settlement, to include "knowledge of Inuit cultures, society, and economy" (p. 193) and Inuktitut (language of the Inuit) fluency as recruitment criteria in hiring government employees. The Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC, 1995), charged with designing the structure of the new Nunavut government, recommended use of Inuktitut as a working language and the integration of Inuit traditional knowledge in government operations. At the same time, the NIC recognized that Inuit would also need Euro-Canadian management skills to operate in a complex, globalized environment. Settlement of NLCA would accelerate resource development in the Arctic, and Inuit had to be prepared to protect their land and their cultural heritage in the face of globalizing threats posed by the increasing presence of international mining corporations. Further, the NIC based the decentralized structure of the new government on the development of Internet accessibility in all Nunavut communities. Such accessibility has opened Nunavut to additional globalizing influences (Erikson, 2002).

Management Education in Nunavut

The management programs at Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) were charged with preparing Inuit for employment in the Designated Inuit Organizations (DIOs) created to manage land claim implementation and all levels of the Nunavut government: supervisory personnel and middle and senior managers. My own tenure (1997-2001) with NAC's Management Programs spanned the creation of Nunavut. Throughout this time I grappled with how we might provide contemporary management education in a way that reflects Inuit traditional knowledge and world view and how this would differ from a standard management curriculum. If the Inuit world view is significantly different, using southern Canadian curriculum materials and methods might produce Inuit managers whose understanding of best practices could be unsuitable for the Nunavut workplace. Models more appropriate to the cultural context might need to be found.

Inuit participants in *Sivuliuqtit*, a senior management development program at NAC, felt strongly that management education for Inuit must be different from mainstream business administration programs. They claimed that programs must be holistic, emphasizing body, mind, and spirit and must use a framework that places the Inuit world view on an equal footing with contemporary management theory (Pemik, 1999). Pauktuutit (1991), the Inuit Women's Association, also saw traditional Inuit values as differing significantly from those of other Canadians, especially in the ethic of noninterference and how it relates to issues of social control, authority, and leadership. Inuit concerns echoed those expressed by authors writing about conflicts between mainstream and Aboriginal values and behavior in other disciplines such as criminal justice (Ross, 1992) and counselling (Garrett, 1999).

The pre-Nunavut Management Studies program at NAC was implemented using business administration curricula from mainstream colleges and universities in southern Canada. During the mid-1990s such curricula gave the barest attention to questions of culture. Although diversity issues have been a concern in educational administration for decades (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997), such a sensibility has not deeply penetrated the world of mainstream business administration programs. For example, Canadian managers still need encouragement to reap potential economic benefits through increased hiring of minorities (Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005). In contemporary management education the world view and assumptions underlying the Euro-Canadian management model are generally not made explicit and certainly not challenged in any serious way.

In Nunavut our initial attempts to incorporate Inuit culture and traditions into management education focused on organizational behavior courses. These courses are about the social psychology of the workplace and address issues such as motivation, leadership, and decision-making, all of which are affected by the presence of cultural diversity (McShane, 1995). Human Resources Management, Principles of Management, and Management Communications are examples of such organizational behavior courses in NAC's management diploma program.

In the organizational behavior literature the term *organizational culture* refers to a system of shared meanings in a workplace that establish what can be said and done and what cannot be said or done (Robbins, Coulter, & Stuart-Kotze, 2000). Communication of such cultural norms is often tacit rather than explicit. That is, organizational culture is expressed as much in gestures and in silences as in words. It is transmitted through subtle exchanges such as the lift of an eyebrow that signal acceptance or rejection of behavior or ideas. The nonverbal component of the transmission of cultural norms is particularly significant in Nunavut organizations because the Inuit culture uses high-context communication. As a non-Inuk working to establish an Inuit-based management program, I needed to find out if it was possible to make shared meanings explicit in curriculum materials. Perhaps more important, I needed to know how to reflect them in the *lived curriculum* (Aoki, 1993).

Aoki (1993) distinguishes the lived curriculum from the planned curriculum. The planned curriculum is found in statements of objectives, recommended activities and resources, and directives on evaluation methods. The lived curriculum, in contrast, derives from the experience of students and instructors; it is the day-to-day enactment of valued behavior and expectations. In the context of a cross-cultural management education program, the instructors serve as important models, transmitting not just content information, but subtle messages about appropriate behavior and power relationships. Social learning is a critical element in developing sensitivity to culture, and model characteristics have well-documented effects (Harrison, 1992). Lack of culturally appropriate role models can be damaging for students, who need to be able to recognize their own faces reflected in the mirror that instructors represent (Battiste, 2000b). If the Management Studies program were to reflect Inuit culture, having only non-Inuit faculty might create an odd mirror indeed. As my job was to lead the creation of these culturally appropriate programs, I

struggled with the personal question of what role non-Inuit can have in transmitting a made-in-Nunavut management style and organizational culture.

Curriculum Development with Inuit Elders

NAC started development work on a culturally appropriate management program with a search for curriculum materials in 1997. For many years the territorial government had advocated culturally relevant education and the recruitment and training of Inuit teachers. In 1991 the policy document *Strength at Two Levels* (Government of the Northwest Territories) recommended the development of culturally appropriate life skills programs for Aboriginal students, but was mute on the topic of curriculum for postsecondary diploma programs. Much effort was focused on developing culturally appropriate K-12 curriculum for Inuit students. This material, however, was not appropriate for courses in the Management Studies diploma. For example, *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum From an Inuit Perspective* (Government of the Northwest Territories, 1996) contained one page on the question of leadership, which described in simple vocabulary how leaders were chosen in traditional hunting camps. Much more information than this was needed to construct curriculum at the postsecondary level.

Although anthropological research on traditional Inuit culture abounded, no scholarly literature existed at that time that articulated what Inuit traditional knowledge meant in the context of the organizational behavior of contemporary workplaces. Because a search of the management literature as of 1997 (including theses and dissertations) revealed no academic research on Inuit organizational behavior, I looked for organizational behavior research on other Canadian Aboriginal cultures. Although little information on Aboriginal organizational behavior had been published, preliminary research did show that Aboriginal organizations differed significantly from mainstream management (Chapman, McCaskill, & Newhouse, 1991, 1992). Chapman et al. (1992) identified several key differences between Aboriginal and mainstream organizations:

1. "Group orientation versus Individual orientation"; individuals put the organization's collective well-being ahead of their own achievement of career and/or monetary goals.
2. "Consensual decision-making versus Majority rule"; issues are discussed until all group members agree on an acceptable solution, rather than imposing a solution through a voting process.
3. "Group duties versus Specialized duties"; job roles are not rigidly defined; for example, a manager will answer the phone or empty the trash.
4. "Holistic employee development versus Organizational employee development"; the organization tries to support the employee's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development, not only the acquisition of job-related skills.
5. "Elder involvement versus Mandatory retirement"; rather than lose wisdom accumulated through years of experience, older people continue to be consulted about organizational issues. (p. 13)

Intrigued by these findings, I was curious about the Inuit experience of working in a Euro-Canadian colonial administration and how they would like

to see it change. In cooperation with Business Faculty from St. Mary's University, I initiated a curriculum development project to explore these questions (Wihak, Fletcher, Chamard, & Fitzgerald, 2001). First, we asked Inuit students in an Executive MBA program to generate examples of situations in which as civil servants they had felt conflict between the southern bureaucratic culture and their own culture. As can be seen from the listing in Table 1, Inuit experience cultural clash in a wide range of work situations. They experience distress when they are required to follow civil service protocols that are culturally inappropriate.

Having identified a range of problematic situations, the next step was to create scenarios that depicted these as typical workplace interactions in Nunavut (Chamard, Fletcher, Wihak, & Fitzgerald, 1999). For example, the scenario below addresses concerns 3, 4, and 6 from the Table.

> Joan works at a computer for an Inuit organization. Since she has gotten an Internet hook-up, her working hours are taken up more and more with e-mails and web site reading. Some of these are directly related to her work; some are not. She also sends a lot of messages to the Nunavut Political Discussion Forum during work hours. These really don't have much to do with her job. Given that Nunavut is trying to develop the electronic information infrastructure, what should be done about Joan's actions?

We then used these scenarios to probe the problems and their solutions with respected Inuit Elders (Fletcher, Chamard, Fitzgerald, & Wihak, 2000). Our reasoning was that a workplace can be seen as a community, with both explicit and tacit rules. These rules govern how work will be divided and organized; how resources and benefits will be shared; how people will become members

Table 1
Inuit-Identified Situations of Cultural Conflict

1.	Social and geographical mobility of workers
2.	Performance evaluation (how to reward excellence in the workplace)
3.	Interface of public policy and private business
4.	Private time / company time (work vs. private time and place)
5.	Doing business with family and friends
6.	Personal use of company assets
7.	Dealing with personally disruptive individuals
8.	Substance abuse in the workplace
9.	Gender issues in the workplace (different expectations on/from men and women)
10.	Employment preferences (quotas, qualifications, credentials vs. competence)
11.	Interpersonal space (respect for self and others, who can be asked what and where, individual vs. group identity)
12.	Leadership qualities and how are they acquired?
13.	Union—management relations (how to negotiate without being adversarial, getting to win-win)
14.	Time management
15.	Oral vs. written, formal vs. informal process in workplace
16.	Orienting outsiders to the organization in Nunavut
17.	How to contribute without standing out, how to find out without asking
18.	Decision making/achieving consensus/communicating bad news

of the work community; what their responsibilities are as community members; when someone will be asked to leave the community; and how community members will treat each other in their day-to-day interactions. Such issues of social organization are similar to those that Inuit faced in their traditional precolonial communities. Therefore, we recognized that traditional social experience was where we needed to look to find Inuit models of workplace organization.

In Nunavut, contact with southerners and the move from the land to artificial settlements only became intense in the post-war period (Purich, 1992). Many living Elders were raised in traditional ways and hence hold the knowledge of how Inuit managed their own communities. We needed to ask them to apply their experience to contemporary workplace contexts.

The Elders' responses to the problem scenarios did reflect a different world view than that generally found in mainstream administration. For example, if we take the scenario of Joan and her Internet use, the territorial government Human Resource Manual would require the manager to initiate a process of progressive discipline, first meeting with Joan to review her job description and give her an oral warning about her Internet use. If Joan persisted in her unauthorized behavior, the supervisor would next give a written warning, then perhaps a day's suspension. If her behavior still did not change, this would ultimately lead to termination.

Such a formal approach reflects considerable concern with hierarchy, authority, and control, in sharp contrast to the advice given by Elder Aupilardjuk of Rankin Inlet.

> If we are managers in our work, we have to also be teachers and be at the same level as our employees. We have to help our workers and make sure they are doing a good job. My father was like that. He always made sure that his people were getting good assistance from him as a leader. He acted as if he was in the same level as everyone although he guided them to search for a stable foundation so that they will have a comfortable life. It was a very good way of being a leader and I have never observed confrontations or any types of rivalry between the people he led. If you do not treat your employees with respect there will be anger and discomfort in your workplace even if they will not confront you with their concerns.… if you want to be a good employer than you should not act as if you were in a higher position as your workers but always try and help them when they are in need.

This is not to say that Inuit culture would simply overlook the type of behavior that Joan was showing. Here is what the Elder Jerome Tattuinee had to say about the same situation.

> Perhaps we are too soft on our employees today. In the years 1930s to the 40s … our grandfathers would make sure that we did not play with our food. Even if we played with a small piece of food, they would scold us and tell us that food is not a toy and to play with toys instead. It was intimidating and scary when we got scolded and there was no place to go and tell on them. Maybe today we are too brave and do not feel anything even when we are being disciplined. Or is it better now that we are able to do what we please and not afraid like we used to be? And perhaps it is better to work in freedom. It is also good to work feeling relaxed and safe. Perhaps we are all to learn or be taught to be good supervisors in order to give advice to our employees and make our

> work run smoothly. But if we were to get carried away and start running our employees around, that would not be so good … There are always things to be done and therefore we should think ahead and plan a good working condition and explain carefully, not in a intimidating way.

These two excerpts illustrate how the Elders approach modern workplace dilemmas and how relevant their traditional experience could be in contemporary Inuit organizations. Although their management approach is quite different from the bureaucratic methods in a typical government human resource manual, they do bear a striking similarity to humanistic *Theory Y* management theory (McGregor, 1960). For example, a survey of best practices to support workplace well-being (Clutterbuck, Wihak, & Quarttone, 1988) found some leading-edge Canadian organizations whose management philosophy would be in accord with that of the Inuit elders. So are the sentiments expressed by respected management experts such as Covey (1989, 1992), who recommends, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" or Marcic (1997) who sees love and wisdom as the foundation of good management. For example, this passage from Marcic's (2002) Web page sounds remarkably like the Inuit Elders.

> Treat individuals as children and they will behave like children, passive and whining. Don't trust them and be critical and you will create untrustworthy and cynical employees. Control them too much and be negative about their plans and you have helped develop listless and risk-averse workers.

This harmony between the Inuit Elders' approach to management and that of some contemporary non-Inuit writers gave me some confidence that we could create written curriculum for organizational behavior courses that was in accord with Inuit traditional knowledge. In addition to our Elder interviews, we could incorporate written material that the Nunavut government began to issue concerning Inuit traditional knowledge (Arnakak, 2002). We could supplement the Nunavut materials by selecting resources from non-Inuit culture that reflected values and human-relations approaches similar to those expressed in Inuit culture. Nevertheless, the question of whether such a program could effectively be taught by non-Inuit instructors remained to be answered. Because this question concerned the lived curriculum, it did not seem to be one that I could answer by reading, but only by experience.

Learning From Other Aboriginal Organizations

How was I to acquire experiential learning about how traditional Aboriginal values are expressed in a work environment? In the early days of Nunavut the Euro-Canadian colonial bureaucracy was still intact. I felt I needed to be immersed in an Aboriginal organizational culture. I thought that Aboriginal cultural patterns would be evident in that context, and that as a minority I would have the opportunity to absorb these patterns and reflect on cultural conflicts that I experienced. To that end, I designed an action learning project (Mumford, 1985) that involved working on organizational and management development issues with a southern Canadian Aboriginal organization while reporting on my ongoing learning to my NAC colleagues.

In retrospect, my assumptions that I would find an Aboriginal organizational culture in a southern Canadian Aboriginal organization and that what I

learned could subsequently be applied to Inuit organizations in Nunavut were startlingly naïve. However, I lacked training in anthropology and Native studies, as do many management educators, and hence had little understanding of how Aboriginal cultures differ from each other. My graduate training in organizational psychology had given me no foundation in cross-cultural issues and certainly no introduction to the neocolonialism characteristic of much research in cultural psychology (Duran & Duran, 2000). Although I was increasingly aware of my own colonizing role as a college instructor in Nunavut, I was ignorant in 1999 of the growing literature about the colonization of the mind that has been imposed on Aboriginal people in southern Canada (Battiste, 2000a) and how this might affect the extent to which a given Aboriginal individual or organization embodies traditional culture and values.

Nevertheless, my rationale for seeking an immersion experience with an Aboriginal organization seemed reasonable at the time, given what I was learning through my involvement with the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO). CANDO's Standing Committee on Education (SEC) consisted of representatives from Canadian postsecondary institutions involved with Aboriginal management education; many of the members were reputable scholars (Wuttanee, 1995) from Native Studies departments of Canadian Universities. The SEC was focusing on accrediting existing university and college programs to deliver a curriculum in Aboriginal Community Economic Development. In consultation with practicing Aboriginal economic development officers, the SEC had developed this curriculum to reflect both traditional Aboriginal culture and socioeconomic issues in contemporary Aboriginal communities. The fact that I was approached to contribute the Nunavut perspective to the SEC suggests that these scholars thought that Inuit and First Nations people shared common concerns with regard to management education. Moreover, the educational issues discussed at SEC meetings were exactly the issues I was grappling with in regard to developing management education in Nunavut.

My experience with the SEC encouraged me to think that working with a southern Canadian Aboriginal organization could teach me valuable lessons applicable in Nunavut. Further, the site of my action learning project was a Calgary-based organization, Ghost River Rediscovery, whose youth leadership development model both draws on Indigenous traditions and seeks to bridge the world between cultures (Henley, 1996). Ghost River Rediscovery employs both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff intent on creating an organizational culture that reflects Aboriginal values and practices while making use of contemporary management tools.

When I arrived at Ghost River Rediscovery, it became apparent that merging Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian approaches into one organizational culture was just as much a dilemma for this organization as it was for the Management Studies programs in Nunavut. We therefore decided to consult with several other educational organizations for Aboriginal youth whose mandates also involved bridging cultures. We were able to obtain valuable advice on how to develop an Aboriginally based organizational culture through informal interviews with representatives of the Saskatchewan Federated Indian College in Regina (now First Nations University of Canada), the Centre for Indigenous

Environmental Resources in Winnipeg, and Blue Quills College in St. Paul, Alberta.

The most important lesson Ghost River learned from the experience of these other organizations was that bringing Aboriginal culture into a new context is a lengthy, ongoing process. A work of conscious cultural creativity, it is a venture into unknown territory. To clarify other important learnings from these organizations, we used a framework adapted from Weir (2000) to identify key elements that Ghost River needed to focus on changing:

- Ensuring that organizational leadership and control (board and management) is predominantly Aboriginal;
- Having a majority of Aboriginal staff in the organization;
- Involving Elders in organizational decision-making and inviting them to be resource people in the administration office as well as in the youth programs;
- Placing more emphasis on consensual decision-making;
- Offering all staff the opportunity to participate in Aboriginal spiritual teachings and ceremonies as an integral part of their employment (the form of spirituality varied from organization to organization, but frequently included workplace smudging ceremonies and using Medicine Wheel teachings to analyze work-related issues).

Ghost River Rediscovery used these findings to begin a shift in organizational practices intended to strengthen the Aboriginal nature of the organizational culture. Specific measures that were taken included a series of staff workshops to explore traditional Aboriginal values with Elders, office staff participation in sweatlodge ceremonies, the introduction of talking circles at staff meetings, and an increase in Aboriginal staff and board representation.

Raising the question of culture formally also had an influence on individual staff members at Ghost River Rediscovery. The Executive Director, a Mohawk, decided to take additional formal training in both Aboriginal spiritual teachings and contemporary management practices. The Director of the Indigenous-Indigenous youth leadership exchange program undertook a research project on Aboriginal leadership in cooperation with an Aboriginal colleague from Calgary. From such responses I learned how important it is to initiate this kind of cross-cultural dialogue.

An important lesson I learned concerned the dilemma faced by cross-cultural educators in essentializing members of another culture by excessive focus on categorization of cultural difference (Gosine, 2002; Nozaki, 2000). Through my Ghost River Rediscovery experience I became much more aware of differences among Aboriginal cultures and of the differences among individuals with an Aboriginal heritage, particularly with regard to level of assimilation to Euro-Canadian culture. I was alerted to the dangers of fixing cultural identity too categorically and ignoring individual agency in the creation and expression of identity.

Principles for Reflecting Culture in Instructional Approaches

The experience with Ghost River did provide me with the answer to my question about what role a non-Inuk could play in the creation of organizational behavior courses that would reflect Inuit traditional knowledge in a management education program. First, I recognized that whenever possible these

courses should be developed and instructed by Inuit. However, if Inuit instructors are not available, non-Inuit instructors must operate from two primary principles: *nonessentialism* and *cultural reciprocity.*

Nonessentialism

When working cross-culturally, non-Inuit instructors must first be committed to what Nozaki (2000) calls a nonessentialist multicultural model. With this approach, instructors must acknowledge that any given culture is heterogeneous and avoid superficial categorization of individual members of a culture. Culturally diverse individuals vary widely in their values, beliefs, and behavior. In the case of the Inuit, groups traditionally living in varying regions of Nunavut had different customs and practices. In Nunavut today, varying communities have widely differing histories in terms of their contact with southern Canadian cultures. Further, individuals in these communities have differing personal histories of acculturation to both Inuit and southern Canadian culture, as well as differing individual histories with regard to familial, economic, and social factors operating in their lives. Thus rather than holding "Inuit traditional knowledge" to be a monolithic corpus of information and practices shared by all Inuit, non-Inuit instructors must continually keep in mind the multiplex and evolving nature of this knowledge.

Cultural Reciprocity

While maintaining a nonessentialist stance, the non-Inuit instructor must nevertheless model a high level of *cultural reciprocity* (Harry, Rueda, & Kalyanpur, 1999). Cultural reciprocity involves demonstrating an interest in and respect for cultural diversity, being highly sensitive to students' expressions of friction about valued beliefs and behavior, articulating his or her own experience of cultural conflicts, and examining the roots of such conflict in underlying differences in world view. With this approach, organizational behavior courses can be taught as experiments in cultural creativity. Rather than relying on written curriculum materials reflecting only Euro-Canadian culture, an oral curriculum for Nunavut could be developed by inviting respected Elders, senior Inuit public servants, and Inuit business people to participate in the program as co-instructors or guest speakers. The lived curriculum could thus actively support the creation of new developments in Inuit culture appropriate to the contemporary workplace. Indeed, the dialogue generated between Inuit and non-Inuit might actually accelerate a development process as the friction resulting from cultural differences creates opportunities to make Inuit cultural values and beliefs explicit in a new context.

Cultural reciprocity is a great advance over a lived curriculum that ignores or demeans Inuit culture. Nevertheless, as long as the educational leadership and the management faculty are dominated by non-Inuit, the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993) may subtly continue to reflect the world view of the colonizing culture and colonial power relationships (Battiste, 2000b). Unspoken messages could counteract efforts toward cultural reciprocity modeled by individual non-Inuit instructors. Non-Inuit instructors must, therefore, actively support their own eventual replacement by Inuit, even if this means relinquishing their own privileged positions (Wihak, 2004).

Conclusion

My experience with management education programs in Nunavut was concerned with integrating culture-specific knowledge into a curriculum. Lessons learned about nonessentialism and cultural reciprocity, however, have to be taken to heart in other cross-cultural management education programs. In such programs, efforts need to go far beyond the superficial accommodations for minorities espoused in recent Canadian management education materials (Baklid et al., 2005). Rather than assuming a stance of Euro-Canadian cultural superiority and/or universality, respect for culturally diverse and distinct world views needs to be demonstrated in both the planned and lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993).

Specifically, management educators working cross-culturally need to develop and demonstrate a deep appreciation and respect for the collective wisdom of the other culture with regard to the organization of work and human relations in the workplace. They need to support the development of culturally appropriate methods and materials for teaching organizational behavior courses. One possible approach is to carry out a curriculum development exercise similar to the one that NAC and St. Mary's University undertook with Inuit Elders (Chamard et al., 1999; Fletcher et al., 2000). Another approach is to seek work in the other culture's organizations and experience work-related cultural conflicts directly before taking on a teaching role. Ideally, such explorations would be conducted as ethnographic or auto-ethnographic case studies or narrative inquiries, using appropriate scholarly research methods. In addition, cross-cultural management educators need to seek input whenever possible from practicing managers in the host culture through inviting their participation as co-instructors or guest lecturers in organizational behavior courses. Consultation with scholars with greater knowledge of cultural diversity such as anthropologists and educational administration specialists would also be highly beneficial. From all these approaches the cross-cultural management educator can continually deepen his or her insight into the heterogeneity of the host culture, thus protecting against essentializing errors (Nozaki, 2000).

Although ensuring nonessentialism and cultural reciprocity requires more effort than delivering one-size-fits-all education, the benefits are potentially enormous. The specter of a world with the homogeneous world view of North American business culture is a desolate one. Instead, our globalized world could be made much richer by management educators' ensuring that cultural diversity is respected, appreciated, and encouraged.

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