

*Academy of Management Conference
Organization Consulting Division
Vienna, Austria
June 11-13, 2009*

*The Changing Paradigm of
Consulting: Adjusting to the Fast-Paced World*

**Title: Graduated Field Immersion—A Curricular Model for Consultants
On the Road to Become Global Citizens**

Category: Experience based research (with five years of trend data).

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**Graduated Field Immersion—
A Curricular Model for Consultants
On the Road to Become Global Citizens**

This paper describes a promising new field-tested teaching pedagogy aimed at developing cross-cultural competencies in consultants. It gives them both a skill set and a mindset for becoming “global citizens.” Called the *Graduated Field Immersion Model (GFIM)*, the method derives from the social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, and economics, and builds on the strengths of prior methods for teaching cross-cultural skills. Graduate level consultants move in and out of increasingly sophisticated and challenging field exercises in a host country. Competencies built in each assignment allow participants to extrapolate their experience from the current culture to different country-based and organization-based cultures. The learning activities culminate in an individualized framework of cultural entry for each participant that has wide transferability to other countries and organizations. Five years of consultant-participant evaluations support the efficacy of the model’s curricular approach as it is used at Pepperdine University’s George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management Executive Programs—Masters of Organization Development.

Introduction

The globalization of commerce has increased the number and complexity of transactions among markets and cultures that were once isolated from each other (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994; Francesco and Gold, 1997; Korten, 1996). Expanding markets require consultants capable of conducting global business. Organizational workers are increasingly required to develop new cross-cultural competencies to facilitate these transactions and to help organizations develop on a

global basis (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000; Tvorik, 1996; Qualman, 1995).

Increased interest in alliances, global network structures, and other transorganizational interventions, as well as growing workforce diversity, demand that managers and other workers become well versed and experienced in cross cultural competence. The premise of this paper is that successful consultants need to become global citizens, able to transverse among diverse organizations and countries with comfort and acumen.

Originally piloted in 1999, the curriculum presented here was tested and implemented in three different countries (Mexico, Canada and France) for several years. A faculty assessment and student feedback process were employed to refine and shape activities. Assignments and activities were designed and paced so they built a curriculum of increasingly sophisticated and challenging field exercises in the host country. Competencies built in each assignment allow participants to extrapolate their experience from the current culture to different country-based and organization-based cultures. The learning activities culminate in an individualized framework of cultural entry for each participant that has wide transferability to other countries and organizations.

THE GRADUATED FIELD IMMERSION MODEL

The graduated field immersion model (GFIM) describes an educational approach which is implemented over five-days of an intensive course that draws from these frameworks and theories. Anthropological concepts, such as participant-observer methods and definitions of culture, and economic concepts, such as industrial-organization models, are used to develop

cross-cultural skills and learn about a foreign¹ country's business environment. In preparation, participants come to the seminar workshop having completed a pre-work assignment.

The GFIM requires participants to conduct four increasingly complex activities to build cross-cultural skills and knowledge, and to develop the competencies needed to interact and conduct business in the global environment. With the exception of the final de-brief activity, *each event is conducted in the field among local nationals and businesses*. Participants complete assignments, with each one building on the learnings and competencies developed in the prior assignment.

Pre-Seminar Assignment

Prior to the seminar, participants read about social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and well-known cultural theory/frameworks such as Hofstede (1999), Hall (1977), and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998). Participants create an Individual Interpersonal Competence Profile. The profile describes the elements of human relations that the participants have determined are important to their business practices, including an assessment of their own interpersonal strengths and weaknesses. The profile is driven by data from self-awareness and feedback from others, and is triangulated with the addition of the characteristics for successful transpatriates as identified by Kelley and Meyers in their Cross Cultural Adaptability Index (CCAI, 1991).

¹ We use the term "foreign" to describe a cultural, economic, political, and organizational values and features set of any country that is different from the individual's own home country. No implications of better or worse, higher or lower status are intended.

Curriculum Approach using the Graduated Field Immersion Model

Four field activities conducted over five intensive days are provided to consultant students to develop global citizens skills:

- 1) Cultural Orientation
- 2) Hypothesis Testing
- 3) Economic Orientation
- 4) Cultural Entry Model

Table 1
Elements and Concepts in the Graduated Immersion Model

Activity	1. Cultural Orientation	2. Hypothesis Testing	3. Economic Orientation	4. Cultural Entry
Timing/ Duration	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3 and 4	Day 5
Overview	Small groups do fieldwork to identify and collect unfamiliar cultural attributes.	Small groups empirically test propositions about the host culture	Small groups do field research on local economy and management practices	Participants collaborate to develop processes and models of cultural entry
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop participant-observer skills • To learn about the concept of culture • To explore every day aspects of the host culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop research and diagnostic skills • To understand sociotype and stereotype concepts • To consider values, ethics, and personal choices when in a different culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To apply research skills to excise sociological & economic patterns • To heighten interaction with the host culture to develop confidence and resourcefulness in finding local resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To integrate learnings from prior experiences • To articulate one's personal assumptions and cultural filters • To develop a process for continually examining systems through multiple perspectives
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of propositions that show insights on a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied research methods & 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal presentations to local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized and practical frameworks to

	number of aspects of the new culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of artifacts that represent the culture • Self-assessment and team feedback of stretch goal achievement 	concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater personal comfort interacting within the host culture • Enhanced awareness of personal projections and defenses for increased autonomy 	national professionals/ executives regarding feasible host country business opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A personal view of group dynamics and behaviors that helped or hindered the team's performance 	smooth entry into various cultures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of the similarities and differences between country and organizational culture
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Cultural Orientation

The objectives of the first assignment are to develop anthropological skills of participant-observation (Spradley, 1997), explore everyday aspects of the host culture, and identify gaps between the pre-work assessment of strengths and weaknesses (developed in isolation of the culture) and the actual emotional experience of those skills in application. After the participants review their pre-workshop assessment papers and set individual stretch goals for the exercise, they are formed into small groups (the smaller the better after accounting for safety concerns). Trios and quartets work well. The first assignment asks the teams to spend the day collecting objects and experiencing the local culture. They are also given a restaurant name and address and asked to show up to the restaurant for dinner at a specified time with their collected artifacts for the retelling of their experiences. No maps or directions are supplied.

During the dinner, the experience is debriefed by asking the participants to present to the group the top three experiences and/or objects acquired. They are also asked to reflect on their skill set needs and to infer the meaning of the exchanges they had. That is, given the experience,

how accurate were their initial assessments of their strengths and weaknesses, and how should they be revised and clarified for the remainder of the workshop. In addition, they describe their assessments or propositions (hypotheses) about why local inhabitants acted the way they did.

Several concepts from the social and behavioral sciences inform the design of this activity. For example, one of anthropology's primary research methods is participant observation (Reference). In this method, researchers immerse themselves into the culture by becoming part of it. In *Street Corner Society* (1993), Whyte learned about the street gangs by taking an apartment and "hanging out" with the local boys and then keeping extensive observational notes about the interactions among the group members as well as their relationships with other groups. In the same way, the first field assignment asks participants to become part of the culture by doing normal, everyday activities. As they interact with the culture, they are encouraged to note difference in mannerisms, behaviors, exchanges, and so on. Another attribute of the assignment draws from humanistic psychology and becomes an important source of information (Rogers, 1961). Each participant is encouraged to be aware of their intra-psychic experience: to notice when they become frustrated, annoyed, happy, satisfied, when they talk louder or walk faster, and other behavioral or emotional clues that identify potential differences in cultural assumptions.

This initial activity eases participants into the new culture, helping them gain a foothold upon which to balance the succeeding fieldwork activities. It establishes the baseline for a pattern of increasingly complex and demanding activities that require participant confidence and resourcefulness.

Hypothesis Testing

The second assignment, conducted on the second day of the workshop, builds on the Cultural Orientation assignment. The objectives of the second session are to develop research, diagnostic, and intervention skills, understand the difference between a sociotype and a stereotype, and to challenge participants to consider the role of values and ethics in cross-cultural work.

In this activity, participants develop a set of propositions about the host culture that are derived from readings, experiences from the prior day's activities, or cases. For example, Americans often hold the view that "the French are rude," or "Asians are industrious," propositions that can be empirically tested. Small groups are asked to pick one or more propositions and to develop a research plan to collect data in the field to support/refute the proposition's assertion. Clustered into new small groups, they are asked to return to the workshop and make afternoon presentations about the efficacy of the proposition and research design.

The second activity obviously brings research into a central place in the workshop. It is here that participants learn the skills they need to responsibly test their own assumptions and conclusions about a different culture. Questions of reliability and validity as well as the generalizability of the testing process are discussed. The group also assesses the caliber of the research methodology used and the conclusions drawn. Finally, there are rich opportunities to explore issues of values, ethics, interventions, personal choice and responsibility, as well as the nature of their risk-taking.

Economic Orientation

In the third assignment on Days 3 and 4, the participants are reformed into larger groups to conduct research on the host country's business practices, prevalent industries and economic climate. The objectives of the third assignment are to learn about the host country's business environment and its relationship to culture; extend basic research skills and leverage resourcefulness in a foreign environment; and develop confidence and interpersonal skills in finding local resources and talking to local nationals. The activity culminates in participant-driven recommendations regarding the feasibility of different business decisions.

Each group is assigned a particular subject to research and asked to develop recommendations for presentation to a panel of local national executives. For example, a group could be assigned to investigate the country's health care system and present the pros and cons of hiring local nationals or sending ex-patriots. Participants are given a clear set of criteria or standards against which the presentations will be judged.

Following a day and a half of research, presentations are made to a panel of host culture executives who can provide important insights and audit for participant misunderstandings. Their suggestions are identified and discussed during the presentation and debrief of the activity. In turn we have found our guest local national executives appreciate and benefit from the thinking and insights resultant of the student presentations.

Perhaps the most important concept explored and applied in this activity is economic and cultural. By exploring and researching a particular aspect of the host economy, the participants gain important insights into the economic structure of the country. In addition, the opportunity to explore relationships among organizations, economics, and culture is created. For example, in Mexico, the health care system clearly reflects the economic strata. There is a private health care

system for the wealthy, a social security system for the working class, and a subsidized system for the masses of unemployed. In China, the cultural importance of relationships is reflected in their insistence on a local joint venture partner. Different countries have chosen different economic models and those models often reflect the culture, thereby providing important clues to the student managers wanting to gain international experience.

The economic orientation activity also has important psychological applications. Participants often face important roadblocks in acquiring information about a particular aspect of the economy, and in many cases, the biggest roadblock is not the availability of information, organizations, or managers to talk to. The biggest roadblock is the individual's own sense of confidence (or lack of it). Modern managers and consultants as global workers need to be able to enter into many cultures, perform duties and tasks, and create relationships with local nationals whether they be customers, partners, or employees. One's resourcefulness is fully tested and evaluated. Success in the activity builds personal confidence in transversing countries.

Finally, this activity draws on important social psychological and sociological concepts, in particular group dynamics. The effectiveness of the team in gathering important data about some aspect of the economy is often a function of how well the group designs data collection activities, how well it assigns tasks to individuals, and how it chooses to meet its goals. As a result, the participants also get insights into the relationship between strategy and group dynamics.

Cultural Entry Model

The final activity, building a cultural entry model, is conducted on the fifth day and is intended to bring the experience together in an integrated fashion. The assignment is for

individuals and small groups to apply the individual and collective learnings over the past several days to describe the process one should use to successfully enter and understand the host country. The objectives of the exercise are to heighten self-awareness regarding interpersonal strengths and weaknesses as surfaced inside or outside the group; apply data gleaned from readings, papers, assignments, and from participant-observer roles; and create a framework to ease personal entry into a foreign culture as well as different organizations.

This activity is debriefed by identifying the common processes and concepts developed by the group. In addition, unique techniques are also identified and discussed. The efficacy and generalizability of these model elements to other cultures begins the process of seeing global competence as a life-long learning process. A number of subjects typically arise, including the fit between their own existing skill sets and the task requirements, areas for continued improvement and development, ethical and value implications of their behavior and business practices in cross-cultural situations, and observations on the way the groups function. Participants are encouraged to formalize their models, use them in future cross-cultural situations, and adapt them as part of an ongoing personal and professional development agenda.

Participant Evaluations over Five Years

In order to test the efficacy of the Graduated Field Immersion Model, five successive classes were asked to complete confidential surveys on-line over a five year period (2004-2008). Using a five point Likert scale, they were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with statements about the graduate level course entitled, “Organization Development Practitioner as

Global Citizen.” Mean responses in Table 2 are listed by year (and class name) for each statement and then averaged for each over the five year period.

Table 2 Participant Evaluations over Five Years for course
 “OD Practitioner as Global Citizen”

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	
Class Name & Size	Eta n=30	Theta n=31	Iota n=33	Kappa n=33	Lambda n=33	
In this course, the...						Combined Means
Objectives were clear	4.32	4.29	4.03	4.03	4.13	4.16
Content was important	4.63	4.61	4.24	4.18	4.34	4.4
Content was challenging	4.48	4.65	3.81	3.82	3.94	4.14
Session met expectations	4.32	4.74	4.26	3.94	4.16	4.28

N = 160 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agreed, 3 = neither agreed/nor disagreed, 2 = disagreed, or 1= strongly disagreed)

Responses for the statement, “Objectives of this course were clear,” received scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.32 with a combined mean of 4.16. With small range variation (of .29) this was an area that showed the most similar point of view held among respondents who agreed that the course objectives were clear.

When asked if the “content was important,” participants showed they agreed it was important with a combined mean response of 4.4. This was the highest of the scores, which

ranged from 4.18 to 4.63 (with a spread of .45). This strength underscores the relevance of the course in providing opportunities to develop global skills.

Participants agreed with the statement that the “content was challenging” with a combined mean of 4.14 and a range from 3.81 to 4.65. Firmly contained within the “agree” category, the combined mean indicates that participants found the match between educational requirements and their developmental needs to be a good fit. These class means however, represented the widest range of responses among the statements (.84), and indicated that some participants found the curriculum more challenging than others. This may be due to a number of factors. Firstly, participants represent a wide range of travel and work experience with other cultures. Some are well seasoned, while others have never held a passport until they were accepted into the MSOD program. Secondly, the nature of MSOD students, who tend to be counter-dependent and iconoclastic, is such that they have a high opinion of their abilities. This strong ego strength coupled with predictable defensive routines that safeguard the impression they wish to uphold as being capable, may create a cognitive dissonance that belies their ability to comfortably address areas of inadequacy, or in this case make it possible to confess that something was a challenge. Hence, they may tend to downplay the difficulty of the assignments and cross-cultural experience a sort of denial if you will. Faculty observations are that the assignments are challenging and stressful, and that none of the students execute them with comfort.

To the statement, “This course met my expectations,” class means indicated a range from 3.94 to 4.74, with a combined mean of 4.28. The combined mean fell well within the “agree” category showing that overall students found the curriculum fulfilled the merits and benefits that

the curriculum promised. The spread of scores were only slightly less broad than the previous one (.80), showing varied points of view were held among respondents. This range of responses is most likely due to the varied backgrounds and experience levels of the participants. The MSOD program is expensive and the students expect a lot of the faculty and curriculum. Depending on their socio-economic status, they also expect a lot of the hotel, the host city where the class is held, smooth logistics, good food, etc. As such it is difficult for an educational program to simultaneously provide superior education, keep costs down, and be all things to all people.

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, the data indicated that on average, the 160 consultant-participants found Pepperdine's graduate level consulting course entitled, "OD Practitioner as Global Citizen," to have clear course objectives, a curriculum that had important and challenging content, and that overall the course met their expectations. Viewed in total, there are two conclusions that can be drawn. The consultant participants found: 1) the course was efficacious in teaching global skills, and 2) there was value in the Graduated Field Immersion approach to teaching them to become global citizens—successfully inculcating the knowledge and skill necessary to become OD Practitioners able to transverse across country boundaries.

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