

Exploring Self-perceived Development of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in a Blended Learning Environment

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Abstract This paper reports on the self-perceived notions of cultural intelligence (CQ) as expressed by groups of students enrolled in an intercultural learning course at a Japanese university. Utilizing a previously constructed instructional design framework ⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾, a blended-learning format that included experiential learning activities in a face-to-face setting was employed. Learner responses, expressed in terms of cultural competence indicators, such as knowledge, strategies, attitudes and self-perceived intercultural skills were recorded in a series of online feedback surveys. We present a selection of qualitative results to explore learner's notions of self-perceived skill development with regard to cultural intelligence (CQ). Developing a global mindset in higher education is discussed. **Keywords** blended learning; global mindset; cultural intelligence (CQ); instructional design; experiential learning

1. Introduction

Graduates today are expected to possess a range of personal skills that may go well beyond their academic qualifications. The recent idea of a *global mindset* has emerged as a term to describe what might be required from the modern global workforce. To meet these expectations, Japanese universities have been tasked by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) ⁽¹⁾ to increase efforts to internationalize higher education.

A *global mindset* can be cultivated through improving an individual's intercultural skills, or *cultural intelligence (CQ)* ⁽³⁾. CQ is a four-factor concept that describes a flexible personal capability that can be enhanced by multi-cultural experiences, travel, education, training and self-awareness programs. It is the capacity to function effectively across a variety of cultural contexts that includes ethnicities, generations and organizations. ⁽⁵⁾

A global mindset connects three overlapping areas: (1) mastery over technology, information systems and telecommunications; (2) an understanding of the socio-political factors of the different countries in which organizations operate; and (3) an appreciation of the role of culture and cross-cultural issues that impact decision-making. ⁽²⁾

Perhaps still due to historical isolation and linguistic barriers, intercultural learning at Japanese universities have yet to see the benefits of cosmopolitan campuses evident in many other countries. To investigate, and partially address this problem through technological means, we developed and implemented an undergraduate intercultural learning course, using a blended-learning format. Blended learning has become a popular form of instruction, as it has been shown to effectively combine the socialization opportunities of the classroom with online technologies. ⁽⁶⁾

2. The study

As part of a broader project concerned with developing CQ through applications of instructional design (ID) ⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾, this study reports on utilizing a blended learning format to support the development of CQ in a group of Japanese undergraduates. Learner response patterns, expressed in terms of cultural competence indicators, such as knowledge, strategies, attitudes and self-perceived intercultural skills were recorded through a series of online feedback surveys. We present a selection of qualitative results to explore learners' notions of self-perceived skill development with regard to cultural intelligence (CQ).

2.1 Methods and Procedures

The blended learning format was incorporated into a previously developed framework ⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾, which integrates three relevant fields: instructional design (ID), experiential learning and CQ theory. Drawing on the framework's embedded theories, we designed a 15-week course for a face-to-face (F2F) environment equipped with PC's and WiFi. The course included significant portions of synchronous and asynchronous activities.

The blended learning format thus incorporated three areas important to an ID application: (1) a focus on relevant learning content, (2) formative and summative assessment/evaluation and (3) the generation of data for research purposes. We focus here on the qualitative feedback gleaned from the 'free comment' sections of the formative assessments. We reasoned that this reflective type of feedback could be suggestive of changes in learners' notions of self-perceived intercultural skill development and thus also compatible with increases in CQ, possibly providing additional support for our broader project.

2.2 Results

For current purposes, we refer to the selection of *self-perceived intercultural skills* as indicated in light blue (Fig. 1.) Results of the qualitative analysis indicate a total of 33 instances (approximately 14% of the total 244 coded comments) from the four online reviews (N=30).

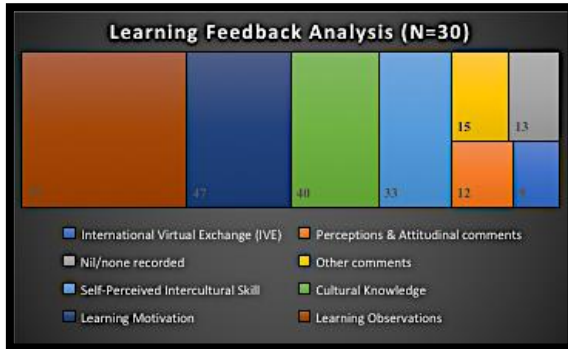


Figure 1. Learning Feedback Analysis

To allow for a closer look at the contents of this section of the feedback, we also performed a word frequency analysis (top 50 words), depicted in a word-cloud (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Learning Feedback Analysis: Word-cloud

A further analysis of the feedback comments that were coded as potential indicators of *self-perceived intercultural skill developments* was conducted, but for the sake of brevity we report only the main themes forthwith. Themes were categorized as standing in relation to: (1) personal values and beliefs; (2) cultural knowledge; (3) cross-cultural communication; (4) personal behavior (self and others); and (5) conflicts.

3. Findings

- (1) Feedback shows at least five clear emergent themes related to self-perceived intercultural skill developments. The identified themes stand in direct relation to the learning contents and further connects well with the four-factor model of the CQ concept.
- (2) In addition, these emergent themes overlap with and

supports recorded instances of cultural knowledge increases that could, in turn, be linked to CQ increases. These findings will need additional ratification but does indicate potential for further inquiry and comparison with other tools of measurement.

4. Conclusion

As part of a broader project to apply ID thinking to the development of CQ, this study reports the results of a blended learning course. Qualitative findings, as seen in learner-reports of their self-perceived intercultural skills, links well with, and provide support for our framework that hosts the CQ model. Given the theorized connection between CQ and the notion of a global mindset, the current model holds promise for further investigations in this area.

5. References

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