

# The Cosmopolitan Educator

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## Adult Education Serving the Technology Transfer

- \*\* Adult Continuing Education provides most skills acquired after age 25 and all skills for two out of three jobs.
- \*\* By the year 2000, 75 per cent of all workers currently employed will need retraining.
- \*\* Continuing education technology has undergone significant changes in recent years and organisations are beginning to recognise the human resource as an asset to be developed, possibly the only one capable of providing desperately needed productive growth.
- \*\* More and more technological information, tied to community instead of individual goals, is being emphasised by educators today.
- \*\* New sources of continuing education, such as professional bodies and programmes provided by universities and polytechnics, have become frequently, and necessarily used.
- \*\* With NEED comes VALUE, and the adult educational function is showing benefits from its ability to demonstrate valuable results, to provide vital skills and to contribute to community goals.

In the sense that nations communities and 'have nots' need to absorb new technologies at a faster, or slower, rate, then they are also absorbing the new organisational cultures that these advances impose. The educational element of this cross cultural absorption is critical to successful implementation. And it is most often supplied by adult education agencies in each community. If, as Alvin Toffler in *The Third Wave* suggests, we are on the upward slope of the wave of a technological revolution, then adult education must be positioned in the forefront of developmental strategies of all progressive nations.

Additionally, educationalists present and future must be equipped with all of the sophistication in teaching, consulting and mentoring techniques which successful implantation of these technologies require.

To serve the technology transfer effectively, educationalists must become more cosmopolitan. The term "cosmopolitan" means "one who can function effectively anywhere in the world; a person who is comfortable both with him/her self and with differences in others in varying cultures and societies. Such flexibility is necessary to take on educational assignments with, for example, foreign manufacturers of high-tech systems where fulfilling the needs for transfer of technology may necessitate crossing a number of national/traditional boundaries.

Cosmopolitan teachers are not only professionally competent in the new discipline, they are also aware of both their own cultural conditioning and the uniqueness of the host culture in which they serve as educators.

Edward Hall states in *Beyond Culture* (1976) that the future lies in man's transcendence of the limits of individual culture. My own experiences in the Middle East show that successful transfer of technology through adult education is as much a matter of sensitivity to local culture as it is relevance of the technology itself. So educationists, 'cosmopolitan' or otherwise, need to increase their awareness of the subculture attendant to all or any technological advance.

## The Global Arena for Educationalists

**T**he teacher who functions 'globally' is in a unique position to exercise leadership as he/she supports transnational endeavours. Such an educator may be an expert engineer, agriculturalist, public health specialist or multinational consultant, but without intercultural skills his/her efforts will be undermined. A cosmopolitan educator can promote dialogue among people and their institutions, and even contribute to the reduction of cultural tensions - but only through insight and competence to foster cultural synergy. Dr. Gordon Lippitt observes in *Helping Across Cultures* (1978):

One of the most difficult things for an individual, a group, organisation, a profession or nation to accomplish is the act of helping another human system without creating hostility, suspicion or dependence. Results today, especially in education from one country to another, depend more upon people skills between the "helper" and the "helpee". Concepts and methods which are successful in one country can spell disaster in another. Cross cultural compatibility and skills can make the vital difference between effective educational performance and costly failures. Those engaged in international education today need to be multicultural, even more than they need to be multilingual.

The cosmopolitan educator must step into the private world or perceptual field of the student from one "technological country" to another to allow circular communication. Empathy is essential for all types of cross-cultural interactions.

Whatever technical base the international educator comes from, he/she should be aware that professional education and experience are culturally influenced. As a study of comparative management should convince multinational managers of the variety of cultural approaches to the process of management, so should those in architecture, engineering, agriculture and other specializations comprehend the impact of local culture on professional practice in these areas. MANAGING CULTURAL SYNERGY (1984) advocates that practitioners study the works of their colleagues in other countries and thus be better equipped to adapt more workable strategies and methods as they advise local consumers of new technologies.

Sometimes the result can be a synthesis; 'Theory 2' management for example, represents the combination of both Japanese and American management techniques to formulate a strategy that may be superior in certain settings to either Japanese or American management styles alone. The lesson for Maltese educators is to recognise the subtle differences which permit (or prohibit) the application of proven European strategies in a culture that is *not* fundamentally European.

### "Cosmopolitan" Education and the Technology Transfer

**T**he cultural factor in international education takes on an added meaning in relation to the technology transfer. If an educator possesses intercultural wisdom, he/she will be more likely to use only appropriate technology in development. Such a teacher will not promote a technology that is too sophisticated for absorption into the local economy and/or/beyond the ability of indigenous learners.

The establishment of high technology firms in Third World countries points to another reality. Global teachers can do a disservice to students in less economically developed nations when they bring in obsolete concepts, methods, and technology. The industrial work culture is dying, and bureaucratic organisational models are disappearing. Why impose these methods on the

Third World Nations when it may be possible to skip the industrial stage of human development and move right into the new information society and technological era? Unless the cosmopolitan educator is futuristic and professionally alert, he or she may transfer irrelevant concepts and processes to the disservice of the community.

### Culture as the Key to Community Understanding

**E**very macroculture (country) is made up of numerous microcultures (regions, class systems, income groups, etc.) Teaching students from diverse minority or ethnic backgrounds can be improved with highly developed cross-cultural skills. The "cosmopolitan" educator has many opportunities to learn these skills overseas and then apply them to classes at home.

But a teacher, even when trained in cross-cultural education, must prepare for the unexpected within the domestic scene. Rejection of new technology, through fear of redundancy, "newness", or technical inadequacy, can result in most peculiar reactions by groups of his/her own countrymen. It is well for educators to remember that even the medium of communicating change requires much training before they can overcome studied resistance to technology.

Cultural awareness provides understanding to teachers and trainers who wish to get a better fix on what is happening in a group, an institution, a company or a government agency. Here the term "culture" is used in the broadest sense as the unique working lifestyle of a group of people; the coping strategies and the skills already developed and adapted for particular purposes. "Culture" represents a body of communicable knowledge and learned behaviour that humans acquire and pass on for survival and success within an environment. A group's culture makes it unique and gives it a sense of identity. It is manifested in the group's artifacts, the objects made by the group, as well as in its social institutions or organisations. A people's culture is seen in their customs and traditions, their knowledge and morals, their laws and regulations. In fact it is exemplified in their whole special way of life, their language and communications systems, their values and goals, their ideas and attitudes.

In the technology transfer change makers are trying to superimpose on these norms of behaviour and should therefore pay attention to established norms as a start-point for introducing concepts and technologies which may in the slightest way affect these norms.

## Understanding "Global" Organisations

In Figure 1 Hay Associates use Human Resources Management Actions as a means of expressing different technological change behaviour requirements under three differing cultures. Comparison shows just how sensitive to these differences a change maker (or educator) must be.

In describing the technology transfer as it relates to *management* education I have identified the three major categories of organisational culture as defined by Hay Associates:

**The Bureaucratic Culture** - typical of protectionist and developing countries, most frequently found in organisations operating within protected and stable markets. Characterised by impersonal style, absolute reliance on standards, norms and rigid procedures. Best supported by pyramidal and centralised hierarchy with little internal competition and many organisational "types".

**The Technical Culture** - typical of communities with a tradition of technical expertise, often found in well established and traditional industries. Characterised by paternalistic style, technical knowhow, and a highly functionalised organisation with fierce interdepartmental competition. Recognition and ultimate power at the top goes to the technician.

**The Managerial Culture** - typical of trading countries which were open early to free competition and enterprise, encountered in organisations operating in highly competitive, innovative industries. Characterised by professional managerial style which is performance-oriented and supported by flexible and adaptive organisation.

Culture is the medium by which a community expresses itself to its members as well as to the outside world. Organisational culture is a human creation, subject to change and modification, and it touches upon every aspect of organisational life - from group structure to organisational climate. The cosmopolitan educator may find the following general classifications helpful as a mechanism for thinking about either national or organisational cultures.

**1. Organisational rationale and identity** - what is the organisation's sense of self and space? What is the philosophy that makes this entity distinctive? What are the beliefs and attitudes prevalent in this human system? What are the organisation's boundaries which denote its "territory" or which set it apart from others in related fields?

**2. Organisational purposes and standards** - what is the organisation's perception of its goals, missions or general objectives for its *raison d'être*? What are its values and norms? What is important to the organisation is translated into standards of performance or rules and regulations in codes of practice.

**3. Organisational look and style** - what is the system's *ambiance* (i.e. mood, character, quality, tone and atmosphere)? This cultural dimension gets translated for practical purposes into organisational attitudes towards such matters as appearance, dress or time consciousness. How does the organisation project itself to its members and to outsiders? What is the organisational and leadership style which captures its spirit and becomes manifested in policies and procedures?

**4. Organisational process and activities** - what does the organisation DO, and how does it go about this? Whether an organisation produces goods or provides services, it can be analysed relative to reasoning and human relations, information and marketing, manufacturing and technology. Such personnel and managerial activities continuously undergo change in response to external forces or internal adaptations of people and behaviour.

**5. Organisational communication and information** - what are the organisational communication systems, both formal and informal, as well as external and internal? More specifically, how does the managerial information system work and what does it encompass? Are personal communications open, circular and authentic? What languages, signals and special vocabularies are used?

**6. Organisational human resources and relationships** - how does the organisation (community) view its people and decide their roles and interrelationships? What does it do to enforce or re-enforce the expectations of its members? How does it attempt to recognise, motivate and reward its people with compensation and benefit plans, educational opportunities, and learning processes?

How does it prepare personnel for the impact of the technological revolution and contribute to community retraining projects? What type of man-machine relations exist? What is the focus and quality of relationships externally with community institutions and internally between and among its groups? In all what is the quality of life that this endeavour engenders for its various human constituents? How wise is the use of power within this human energy-exchange system?

FIGURE ONE

MANAGING TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

	BUREAUCRATIC CULTURE	TECHNICAL CULTURE	MANAGERIAL CULTURE
* Structuring the Organisation	* Establish rational & detailed organisation chart & communicate throughout the organisation	* Develop, organise & obtain consensus or interrelationships among functions	* Keep organisation minimal & adaptive to change
* Designing Jobs	* Formalise & standardise Job Descriptions * Put emphasis on tasks to be performed	* Formalise relationships as accountabilities will be most often shared	* Be flexible & formalise accountabilities to be accomplished
* Delegation Decision marketing authority	* Extremely limited delegation & freedom required	* Decision making must be controlled	* High degree of delegation and freedom is supported
* Controlling & Assessing Performance	* Need for heavy system of administrative checks & balances to measure how tasks are performed * Emphasis is on compliance with standards & norms	* Effective cost accounting system is required to measure efficiency * Emphasis is no qualitative criteria	* Sophisticated control system is required to measure end results * Emphasis on quantitative criteria
Designing Compensation Plans			
* External Competitivity	* Usually minimal	* Median	* High
* Internal Equity	* Must be absolute & normatic * Must integrate seniority	* Limited * Must reflect balance of power among functions	* Fair * Must reflect job value & performance
* Incentive Components	* None	* Limited	* High
* Benefits	* Highly formalised & common throughout the organisation	* Formalised & Personalised	* Informal & Personalised
* Providing Job Security	* Must be absolute	* Fair	* Minimal
* Career Development	* Strict & objective rules & procedures must be established for promotions & career progression	* Develop bridges between functions to improve organisational integration	* Reward high performers through rapid promotions

From Human Resource Management Actions for Three Cultures - Hay Associates - 1979.

Conclusions

The educational systems and processes espoused in a community are conditioned by the national culture in which it is situated, and in which the community's members were raised and educated. The cosmopolitan educator should be open to learning more about the culture of counterpart cultures from whence technology is being absorbed.

Within every organisation agency or technical association there is a unique institutional culture. The more the educator understands this cultural environment the more effective he/she will be, not only in functioning within it but also in changing this culture as technological needs dictate:

Many management techniques are developed to deal with complex technologies, or the volume of data to be recorded and analysed at a particular time. Such techniques concern primarily the technological, economic and financial side of organisations, and should thus fit different cultures. But the use of a technique, no matter how neutral, creates a work situation that may conflict with personal circumstances, values and beliefs already held (John Harper - Strategies for International Management Development - 1985).

Both the individual and the institution are products of human culture at a particular place and point in time. In advanced economic societies, the

individual has been conditioned by the industrial stage of development. Pre-industrial or less developed countries may operate mainly as agricultural cultures. Yet the entire planet is rapidly moving towards a post-industrial society and human beings will soon be challenged to create cultural adaptations suitable even for life and work in outer space. Therefore both educational culture and human systems are in the midst of profound transition. Many of today's people in new technology firms are contributing towards what will become tomorrow's meta-industrial organisational cultures. The cosmopolitan educator's responsibilities should involve creative experimentation with the new work habits, customs, traditions, beliefs and practices that will formulate tomorrow's culture patterns. In the world of the technology transfer, traffic on the cultural bridge is heavy. Success or failure of the transfer is in the hands of the educator to use effectively in the community's best interests.

References

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