INTERCULTURAL TEAMS AND DEALING WITH ARGUMENTS

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Narrated case study can be accessed here.

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INTERCULTURAL TEAMS AND DEALING WITH ARGUMENTS – TEACHING GUIDE

1. Synopsis

Techno-com is an international-worldwide company with over 10,000 employees. The European headquarters are based in London, where David is a Managing Director for the UK base. He looks after the businesses in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. His responsibility is incredibly diverse as he has to deal with a global team in many countries worldwide.

Working with colleagues from different countries has been a learning experience for David. Also, he works with intercultural teams and resolves conflicts. Therefore, he must ensure that the organisations under his control are well-coordinated. Despite extensive training, David learned a lot from this experience. He is now considering how to put emotional stability and neuroticism into practice.

2. Teaching Strategy and Teaching Objectives

Teaching Objectives:

- Understand the meaning of '*emotional stability/ neuroticism*" and discuss its importance when working with people from other cultures.
- Understand the impact of "*emotional stability/ neuroticism"* on International Business when dealing with global teams.

3. Target Audience

- ✓ Undergraduate students in all business-related disciplines
- ✓ Postgraduate students in all business-related disciplines
- ✓ Employers

4. Questions for Case Analysis and Teaching

1) What are the conflicts that arise when working with the global team? What is the dilemma in this case?
2) What is the best way to cope with a team's disagreement, and what are the mechanisms you need?
3) What are the possible causes of conflict during a global team meeting?

4) How can David apply emotional stability into this situation?
5) What have you learned during the case? Where else can this be applied?

5. References and Recommended Reading

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INTERCULTURAL TEAMS AND DEALING WITH ARGUMENTS – TEACHING NOTES

1. Summary of case study

Techno-com is an international-worldwide company with over 10,000 employees. The European headquarters are based in London, where David is a Managing Director for the UK base. He looks after the businesses in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. His responsibility is incredibly diverse as he must deal with a global team in many countries worldwide. It has been a learning process for David as he has to work with colleagues from different countries. He also deals with intercultural teams and deals with arguments, so he must ensure that the organisations within his responsibility work well together. This experience gave David a lot of lessons to learn, although they have done lots of training. He is now thinking about how to apply *emotional stability/ neuroticism* to practice.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

The first step is to understand the meaning of 'emotional stability/neuroticism' and discuss its importance when working with people from other cultures. The theory slides on 'emotional stability/neuroticism' accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is to understand how 'emotional stability/neuroticism' can help in working with, or leading, global teams in international business settings. The third step is to reflect on this understanding to think of ways to demonstrate 'emotional stability' to the team in the next meeting.

3. Possible answers

Q1) What are the conflicts that arise when working with the global team? What is the dilemma in this case?

The challenges and conflicts of working in a global team for David are, firstly, physical challenges due to the different time zones within which work takes place. This sometimes makes working days longer for David and this causes him to become tired and frustrated. Other colleagues from the global team will share similar challenges in this respect. Secondly, given the different cultures of the team members, David is not always getting their names right in emails, and this is making team members upset. Thirdly, when David is leading global meetings, such as the ones with his Chinese and Italian colleagues, he is finding it hard to manage the different behaviours and emotions exhibited by the parties, including the different opinions raised. Fourthly, language can be a barrier in global teams as it can cause many misunderstandings during meetings, as in David's case.

Q2) What is the best way to cope with a team's disagreement, and what are the mechanisms you need?

First, multicultural teams have members with different attitudes and opinions, as well as approaches to disagreements. There are also different views towards authority and leadership, and this influences the dynamics of a meeting or of a potential disagreement. Further, there is a difference in terms of communication style (direct vs. indirect). For example, direct

communication in Western cultures can facilitate the resolution of disagreements, while in other cultures such direct communication could further fuel disagreements, or even potentially escalate them to a more serious conflict. In addition, in Western cultures, it is crucial to get information by asking direct questions and, therefore, direct communication is often preferred. On the contrary, in indirect cultures, inferring meaning in communication is preferred. Finally, people also have different perceptions/expectations of oneself and others depending on their cultural background, and this influences how they view their role within a team, as well as how they view their team members' role.

Q3) What are the possible causes of conflict during a global team meeting?

The main cause of conflict during a global team meeting is lack of understanding of other cultures. In David's case, he does not really understand why Chinese team members try to avoid conflict during their meetings, why they prefer to make collective decisions and why they tend to not share their opinion much. David is also not understanding why Chinese team members deal with conflict by 'saving face' and by implementing indirect rhetoric strategies, opposite to the Italian staff who seem to be more explosive and emotional during meetings. Instead of being frustrated over this, David should study the principles of the Chinese culture and think of ways to approach the Chinese colleagues, enable them to speak up during meetings and participate in decision-making. He should also study the principles of the Italian culture and think of ways to use to calm their interactions during meetings and act as a mediator between the parties.

Q4) How can David apply emotional stability into this situation?

David needs to realise the importance of emotional stability for social adjustment (ability to adapt to society). He needs to create and maintain positive emotions and effective social skills. These cannot be achieved without having knowledge of cultural differences. Emotional stability is a mediator between self-disclosure (passing information about yourself to someone else) and social adjustment.

Q5) What have you learned during the case? Where else can this be applied?

Cultural values and norms affecting human behaviour differ substantially between cultures. David needs to allow the multicultural team to get to know each other's cultures and what this means for their behaviour in a meeting context. Conflict can lead to positive outcomes if it is managed well, such as creating new ideas and forcing people to explore new approaches. It is also important to understand that cross-cultural conflict is exacerbated or perpetuated by cultural differences among the groups involved in the conflict. Emotional stability can help global teams overcome disagreements and conflict.