From CQ to SYM-Q: How to Increase Intercultural Competence at Your Institution

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Abstract
Educational institutions often struggle with student persistence, with the hope that all who matriculate will persist to graduation. Persistence is made more complex for populations of international students by the incidence that they must also adjust to the new culture. Bowie State University in Maryland (BSU) has become a hub of international student enrollment, especially in its Master of Arts Degree Program in Human Resource Development (HRD). The program typically sees enrollments from the state of Maryland. In recent years, the program has enrolled a significant amount of students from several countries: the Caribbean Islands and countries from both hemispheres. After their exposure to the SYM-Q™ model (Ridley-Smith, 2016), the Bowie HRD faculty and Administrator posed these questions to themselves, "Are we meeting the needs of our diverse student body?" "How do those needs differ?" "What can we do differently to meet the needs represented by our diverse student body?"

Bowie State's Master of Arts Degree Program in Human Resource Development (HRD) is now participating in a mixed-methods pilot study that was designed by Constance Ridley-Smith, Ph.D. from research (Ridley-Smith, 2016) that was conducted under the auspices of CQ4Us (http://cq4us.org). To date, the participants have responded in predictable ways. Their responses indicate the following focus areas as being characteristic of their experience as international students in the BSU educational environment: language barriers, social isolation, differences in academic rigor and academic support, and difference in the level of proficiency in using technology that is required at BSU.

Keywords: Belongingness, Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence, Symbiotic Intelligence, Student Persistence, Intercultural Effectiveness, International Students, Inclusion, Social Isolation, Social Strain, Social Support, Academic Support, Academic Rigor, Academic Intelligence (IQ), Emotional Intelligence (EQ), Cultural Intelligence (CQ), and Symbiotic Intelligence (SYM-Q™).

To learn more about this topic, visit http://cq4us.org

email us at info@cq4us.org

Introduction

Educational institutions often struggle with student persistence, with the hope that all who begin matriculation will persist to graduation. Persistence is made more complex for populations of international students by the incidence that they must also adjust to a new culture. Bowie State University in Maryland (BSU) has become a hub of international student enrollment, especially in its Master of Arts Degree Program in Human Resource Development (HRD). In addition to the students from BSU's home state of Maryland, the Bowie State HRD program admits students from abroad. In recent years the department has seen a significant increase in the enrollment of international students from several countries in the Caribbean Islands and from both hemispheres. After having become familiar with the SYM-Q™ methodology (Ridley-Smith, 2016), the Bowie HRD faculty and Program Coordinator posed these relevant questions to themselves, "Are we meeting the needs of our diverse student body?" "How do those needs differ?" "What can we do differently to meet the inclusion of our diverse student body?"

Bowie State University is now conducting a pilot test of the SYM-Q ™ methodology (Ridley-Smith, 2016). They are using both quantitative (the SYM-Q™ Survey) and qualitative (a semi-structured interview protocol) methods. Twenty-four (24) participants have completed the quantitative survey. Their responses indicate the following focus areas as being characteristic of their experience as international students in the BSU educational environment: language barriers, social isolation, differences in academic rigor and academic support, and a difference in the level of proficiency required in the use of technology. The HRD faculty researcher will follow up by conducting interviews with selected participants who have completed the SYM-Q™ Survey. As valuable as the implementation of these data collection tools are the faculty's

opportunities for reflection and self-assessment. They now ponder what can be done to provide appropriate levels of social inclusion and academic support for their newcomer students. The SYM-Q™ model (shown below) and the survey questions, themselves, have been instructive about what a host culture can do to reduce social and academic strain that are often felt by newcomers, and to improve the likelihood that they persist to graduation.

Literature Review

During any new learning experience, the four intelligence abilities are displayed and honed. Whether one is seeking to acquire new academic subject matter (IQ), learning how to master interactions with others (EQ), navigating a new culture (CQ), or designing reciprocal interventions which promote inclusion and demonstrate successful interactions between persons of diverse cultures (SYM-Q™), these four abilities (Metacognition, Cognition, Motivation, and Behavior) are at work. These four abilities underpin all types of intelligence referenced in the literature and, thereby, form a unifying framework known as Intelligence Theory (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986). Intelligence Theory (MCG, COG, MOT, and BEH) provide the underpinning for understanding "intelligence."

Known collectively as Intelligence Theory, the four abilities (MCG, COG, MOT, and BEH) have been handed down from the architects of intelligence research and measurement, beginning with Thorndike (1920) who talked about social competence as a component of intelligence, Doll (1935) who discussed the importance of Social Intelligence, and Weschler (1943) who, when measuring intelligence, concluded that there were certain "non-intellective" factors to be considered. Gardner (1983) introduced the concept coined as Multiple Intelligences. Gardner hinted that there were "other intelligences, at first highlighting Interpersonal and

Intrapersonal Intelligences, and later identifying seven additional ones.

In 1985, Sternberg discussed practical intelligence. In 1986, Sternberg & Detterman introduced the concept that there were four constructs which undergirded all intelligence. Theirs was a signal work and has become the basis of modern intelligence theory. It is upon Sternberg & Detterman's unifying framework (MCG, COG, MOT, and BEH) that all types of intelligence are understood, organized, measured, and discussed.

Several twenty-first century theorists have made significant contributions utilizing Sternberg & Detterman's unifying framework: Salovey & Meyer (1990) first used the term, Emotional Intelligence. Goleman followed in 1995 with the title book, *Emotional Intelligence.* Carolyn Saarni (1999) discussed the concept of emotional competence and Bar-on (2006) described social and emotional intelligences, concluding that intelligence was the ability to act purposefully. Bar-on's contribution has its greatest significance in affirming the identification of other intelligences, human adaptability and responsiveness to new states of being and/or conditions that are presented by the evolving, ever-changing environment in which we live.

Such evolving changes have stemmed from a meteoric rise in internet use, rapid globalization, and the increase in international trade that ushered in the 21st century. To help international workers to navigate these new spaces, Earley, Ang, & Tan (2006), Bucher (2008), and Livermore (2011)   have provided a template for purposeful actions known as Cultural Intelligence (CQ). CQ Theory is based on the improving the interactions between newcomers and members of a host culture in the global workplace.

Research Goals

It is hopeful that this research will enable Bowie's HRD faculty and program coordinator

to probe ways to address the matriculation challenges that are experienced by the international students described earlier. In CQ methodology, they are considered to be "newcomers". The research will be equally useful in helping to address the challenges of local students who have entered Bowie State University's Graduate Department of HRD after having attended another U.S. educational institution. Typically, these students are African- American and Hispanic- American. In this regard they, also, are viewed as "newcomers" to the institution, but not to the U.S./Maryland culture. In relationship with their international student colleagues, however, these students *dually* can be regarded as members of the host culture. In all cases, the Bowie State University administration and faculty are regarded as "members of the host culture" or "the host culture." The research will identify ways to enrich the educational environment in the Bowie State University Master of Arts Degree program in Human Resource Development and to apply the SYM-Q™ model to address student challenges.

Literature Gap Addressed

SYM-Q™ addresses what was perceived by the theorist to be a gap in the literature. The work of the CQ theorists mentioned above are useful in navigating the global workplace. However, neither of the recognized CQ Theorists focused solely upon the application of cultural intelligence models in educational institutions, nor did they fully articulate the importance of reciprocal responsibility for successful outcomes between newcomers and members of the host culture.

Common Themes Recognized

 In her doctoral research of newcomer experiences in educational institutions during the desegregation of public schools in the USA , Ridley-Smith (2015) uncovered several themes that were common to student newcomers who pioneered desegregation in the southern state of

Tennessee (USA). Themes that were shared by the former students who were pioneers of the desegregation experience included loss of academic support, change in academic rigor, and social isolation. Ridley-Smith notes that these themes also are consistent with the experience of international workers, international students, and her own ethnographic experience that has been gained while studying, living, and working in diverse settings throughout her career. In a third instance, the same themes are emerging in the Bowie State University research.

Strength of the SYM-Q™ Model

 As a result, Ridley-Smith (2016) purports a methodology known as (SYM-Q™), or Symbiotic Intelligence. Like other intelligences, SYM-Q™ is ordered upon and is measured by the Sternberg & Detterman (1986) intelligence framework. SYM-Q™ differs from CQ in that it articulates a framework for *reciprocal* interactions, that when followed, yields higher CQ functioning, which is the acme of SYM-Q™. In Cultural Intelligence (CQ) the onus for assimilation usually rests upon the newcomer. In SYM-Q™ the responsibility is squarely, equally, and reciprocally placed upon both the newcomer and the members of the host culture. SYM-Q™ empowers the members of the host culture to assess their readiness to receive international students and workers. It invites the host culture to meet the newcomer halfway through actions such as (but not limited to) including, welcoming, supporting, affirming, and mentoring the newcomer. (See Diagram below. Newcomer actions are in the blue arrow. Host Culture Actions are in the outside circle. Both sets of actions culminate with "being", the state of SYM-Q™ effectiveness).

The Symbiotic Intelligence Model (Sym-Q™)
Constance Ridley-Smith, Ph.D.
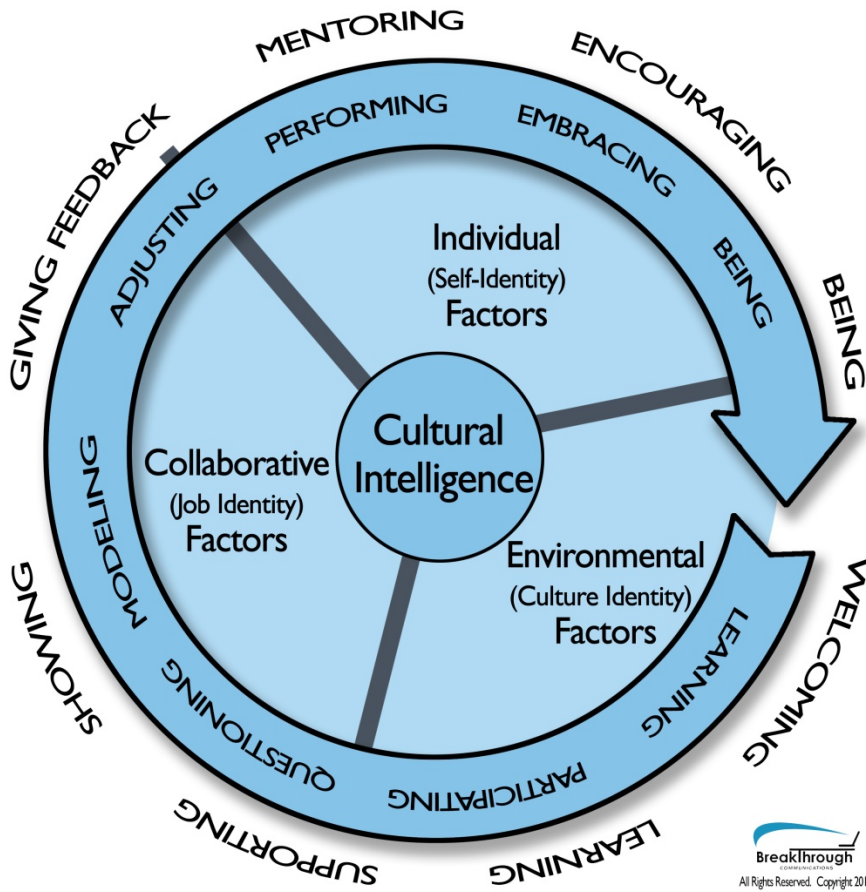
In addition to measuring the four intelligence abilities, the SYM-Q™ also seeks answers about what members of the host culture can do to moderate the effects of phenomena like social isolation and loss of academic support. To do so, it measures the newcomer's perception of how his or her *self-identity factors* (personal characteristics, proficiency with technology, generational identity, and attitudes toward the new culture) contribute to a sense of "fit" with the new culture; *culture identity factors* which assess whether there is a match between one's own values, beliefs, and norms and those of the new environment; *and job identity factors* which are based on how novel or how different is the newcomer's current educational experience from the previous institutional experience. *Job identity factors* also draw comparative information about how much discretion is available to the newcomer; how clear is the guidance provided, whether there is a conflict inherent in the role, and the overall quality of the role. (See Diagram, Center Circle). Using the model in tandem with the SYM-Q™ Survey results, members of the host culture can pinpoint the types of interventions that are likely to produce the desired results.

Relevance to Education

It is known that all students who matriculate do not persist to graduation (Ridley-Smith et.al, 2016). It is also known that students who are involved in campus activities are more likely to experience "belongingness" to the institution. (Ridley-Smith, 2014). Motivation to persist or engage in a new culture appears to is highest among newcomers who receive clarity about their roles (Van Dyne, 2008, extrapolated in this case to apply to degree requirements), rate highly the quality of educational experience they are receiving, and experience structure and organization that is similar to their expectation (low role conflict and role novelty) (Van Dyne, 2008).

This ongoing research examines the usefulness of SYM-Q™ (Symbiotic Intelligence) in meeting the matriculation challenges of Bowie State's international students who are newcomers to the geographic location of Maryland, the university, and the department.

Try out a simplified version of the SYM-Q™

Our SYM-Q™ research has become the basis for a 33-question student survey that will help you to pinpoint the areas that your students find most challenging in your own institution. Glean data that can help you to make the right interventions. Your students will be more likely to persist and enjoy their college experience.

The survey can be found at the following link.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FOSFA16

Or, take the full SYM-Q™ survey to find out more about your own experience as a newcomer. Request survey by email at info@cq4us.org.

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