

Dear SIETAR India members and supporters,

We truly hope you have stayed safe, well and connected. We, at SIETAR India, have reached out to diverse professionals in order to curate a small selection of articles which question existing paradigms and invite us to think about the way forward.

For this edition, from the world of academia, we have an article on intercultural theoretical paradigms from Dr. Soumia Bardhan, University of Colorado, Denver and a practitioner's perspective from Sunita Nichani and Véronique Nivet who are both passionate about giving engineering students a deep appreciation for human sciences.

From the corporate world, Zarine Stanford, who has had a long career as a Chief Marketing officer in the tech industry with large multinationals, shares an excerpt from the self-leadership book she is working on- #DareToGrow.

We are also delighted to include an article from Dr. Kumar Iyer, who is an advocate of sustainable business practices. Dr. Iyer is a graduate of IIT, Bombay with a Ph.d from the University of Utah.

Happy reading and do write to us your feedback or send in your contributions.

For the SIETAR India Board,
Sunita Nichani & Mala Malkani



OUR WEBINARS

UPCOMING



UNITY AND DIVERSITY - THE INDIAN KALEIDOSCOPE

Presenter: *Nirmala Menon*

Listed among the top 50 Diversity professionals in the Global Diversity List

Founder Interweave Consulting

Date: *25th August 2020*

Timings: *20:30 IST/17:00 CET/ 11:00EST*

Register:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/sietarindiawebinars

This webinar gives an overview of diversity and inclusion from an Indian context. The presenter will first trace the history and background of D&I in India. Followed by a discussion on modern India's current challenges, focusing on India Inc.

MAY WEBINAR STEP IN TO STEP UP

In this strange and difficult times, Sailaja Manacha, Author/Psychotherapist/Transformational Coach, provided great positivity, by way of a practical and interactive webinar, on changing our limiting narratives and stepping up. The webinar, which attracted over 40 participants, received great comments and feedback. Thank you Sailaja!

RESOURCES

Culture Buff Games is offering FREE INTERACTIVE GAMES for use in intercultural trainings. Learn and teach about American Values, British Values, Indian Values and Chinese Values in a fun & thoughtful way. Culture Buff Games is a learner driven, trainer facilitated, game-based learning tool.



Designed by interculturalists, the games teach country-specific cultural values via visual scenarios from contemporary culture and history of each country. The games emphasize problem solving and practical application of cultural knowledge.

Visit **www.culturebuffgames.com** to sign up for these free games.

Intercultural Communication and Postcolonialism

by Dr. Soumia Bardhan



THE NARRATIVE of intercultural communication as a discipline remains U.S.-centric. The history of its evolution in the U.S. continues to be definitive and we remain submerged in methodological nationalism, a decidedly U.S./Euro-centric approach to knowledge production. The critical paradigm, which addresses issues of macro contexts and questions the status quo, allows us to challenge and examine the intellectual and disciplinary history of intercultural communication. The anthropological precursors to intercultural communication as a field, have led to a set of assumptions many current researchers take for granted. In the current global context, it becomes important to question the appropriateness of these assumptions.

Critical intercultural communication “*resists and challenges normative assumptions about academic life that have a tendency to stifle curiosity, identity, creativity, and openness to and interests in difference*” (Ono, 2013, p.86). Nevertheless, the critical paradigm, too, has not sufficiently engaged with a postcolonial perspective that considers the entire planet to be historically interconnected and an uneven playing ground for (ntercultural and economic politics.

The postcolonial perspective investigates the cultural politics of the “international” in the articulation of racial and colonial regimes and subject positions. It “*primarily seeks to expose the Eurocentrism and imperialism of Western discourses*” (Shome, 1996, p. 41), and the effects of western modernity and colonialism in the world. It targets coloniality (continuation of colonial logics). What it adds to intercultural communication studies is that it insists on recognizing the connections between cultural power and larger geopolitical relations and international histories as they come to inform unequal power relations between different cultural groups and identities, and their practices and imaginations. This transnational stance allows recognition of the fact that however local and situated a cultural politics may be, it is always modulated by numerous connections and disconnections of the global.

The question that naturally arises, then, is: What does this mean for how we study and theorize cultural difference and communication in this postcolonial, neoliberal world of globalization? For the intercultural communication field, issues related to identity, production and maintenance of difference, and representation of self and cultural others (at macro, meso, and micro levels) become important topics. Voices from the global south need to be integrated into the conversation on critical intercultural communication and the U.S. grand narrative of the field has to open itself up to interruption and reconfiguration. Walter Mignolo, Molefi Asante (Afrocentricity), Yoshitaka Miike (Asiacentricity), Martin Loosemore, and Reza Pishghadam are few interdisciplinary scholars whose work exemplifies this reconfiguration.

References:

1. Ono, K. A. (2010). Reflections on “problematizing ‘nation’ in intercultural communication research.” *The Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication* (T. Nakayama & R. T. Halualani, Eds.). Wiley
2. Blackwell. Shome, R. (1996). Postcolonial interventions in the rhetorical canon: An “other” view. *Communication Theory*, 6(1), 40–59.

When Engineers Learn to Build Intercultural Bridges

by Sunita Nichani with inputs from Véronique Nivet

Pre- Corona: Come July, a group of around 20 French engineering students, aged 18-20 and from a prestigious French engineering college, opt each year to do a semester abroad in a partner engineering institution in Chennai.

The raison d'être of this exchange programme is the fact that engineers do not operate in isolation. They build solutions for and with society. This immersive international experience therefore affords them a lived experience of another culture so different from their own.

The 4 main vectors of this intercultural learning are homestays with host families, participation in outreach programs with NGOs, a short internship in an Indian company and an 18 hour intercultural awareness course that I have the honour of facilitating.

Divided into 9 two-hour sessions through a 5 month packed programme, I strive to ensure that these intercultural sessions open a safe space for reflection, where participants acquire tools to make sense of their perceptions, emotions and interactions with host families and India.

The initial sessions focus on goal setting, the intercultural approach, practical tips and a quick understanding of the cultural do's and don'ts to enable students to rapidly integrate. Having laid this foundation, we delve deeper into Indian cultural values. My favourite tools at this stage are structured conversation sheets so that the participants can have a rich and layered discussion on cultural values with their Indian friends and families.

Given the vibrancy of the Indian film industry, there is always a new Indian film that makes for rich learning while being entertained. Some of the films I have used are **Lunchbox, 2 States and English Vinglish**.

The last segment of this program is dedicated to acquiring frameworks such as cultural dimensions, which are not difficult to understand cognitively, but take on a whole new emotional charge when you are living with a host family with different notions of time and privacy.

Post Corona: This section has been fleshed out with inputs from Véronique Nivet, who is based in Toulouse and is in charge of the Indian programme.

How can we ensure this kind of rich intercultural experience for students with the pandemic foiling immersion programmes? While the classroom sessions can be delivered online, the more visceral and experiential aspects of cultural learning will need to be carefully designed.

One of our first ideas was to create a buddy system between French and Indian students. A curriculum that allows for the dyads to execute a technical project virtually, while continuing the discovery of each other's cultural and family contexts is an exciting possibility.

To develop empathy and understand the challenges of integration, an outreach programme with associations working with migrants can be hugely transformational for students. This is equally true for Indian students as the country saw migrant workers suffer enormously in the wake of the Corona induced lockdown.

Alumni from previous batches of the immersion programmes could be asked to share their experiences and even transfer some of their acquired skills. I have been amazed at the shows put up by the alumni where they have demonstrated Indian dances, recipes etc.

After all, to quote Marcel Proust, « *the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes* ».

Disruption & Innovation

by Zarine Stanford

Life is full of choices. A choice is an act to select one option while de-selecting others. Some choices are easy and some choices are hard. Some choices are planned and orderly while others are abrupt and unplanned. Sometimes, there is only one choice – the given. Regardless, they bring disruptions. They bring changes. They throw us off balance. However, if properly embraced and leveraged, these choices, disruptions, and changes give us dexterity, strength, innovation and growth. It all hinges on our perspectives and how we choose to act or react to them.

Some thirty years ago, I made a choice. I left my family and my home country of Hong Kong to move to the US in pursuit of higher education. Truth be told, it wasn't my first choice. I was forced to make the decision to leave Hong Kong as neither of the two universities accepted me. I wasn't one of the chosen ones.

Disruptions took multiple forms at that time. After a 16-hour trans-Pacific flight, I landed in San Francisco, a place I'd never been. Except for my cousins and uncle and aunt, I didn't know a soul. When I finally landed in Dallas, Texas, where my school was, I was in a land of total strangers, foreign language and culture, and unappetizing food.

Lesson #1 – Accept and move on. Six thousand miles away from home with little resource in my pocket, I had to make a go at it. Along the way, I did learn to be a decent cook of Chinese food as there wasn't any on campus! Prompted by a classmate, I went for a campus job interview two months before I graduated college. Shockingly, I was recruited and offered a permanent job as a writer!

Lesson #2 – When opportunity presents itself to you, seize it. “Mom, I would not be coming home for awhile.” Some of us thrive on changes and disruptions. Some of us run away from them. Imagine yourself as an old fashion analog scale with two swinging arms. To keep in balance, one has to put the same weight on both trays or move the lever. If you are kept in balance at all times, your arms will simply stay still, forever. If you give it a go at being off balance, you get to swing your arms and do what you are supposed to do, as a scale.

Lesson #3 – Try being off balance once in a while. It gives us dexterity, creativity, and fun. Back to the current time. COVID-19 has thrown us completely off balance. Never have we experienced the scale of disruptions as widespread as the pandemic, reaching out to all parts of the world. We have the choice to take a victim's attitude or the choice to make the most of it. Technology created the interconnected world we live in, helping spread knowledge and experience sharing. Those who will embrace disruptions – individuals, businesses, entities – are the ones who will rise above others. I will leave you with this simple equation.

**Have fun riding the
Change Curve.**

**Innovate.
No other species does
it better than
humans.**



**Changes = Disruptions
= Innovation = Growth
= Disruptions**

QBL and Intercultural Relations

by Dr. Kumar Iyer

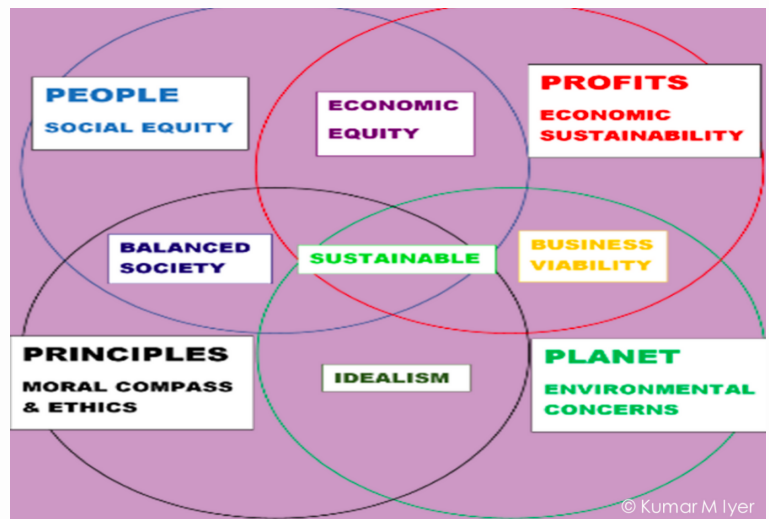
The Triple Bottom Line, is a framework that considers the three pillars of People, Profit and Planet as the building blocks of any sustainable ecosystem, organisations included. It was not only positioned as an audit tool but to ensure protection, conservation and compliance of environment and social goals as outlined by the U.N Sustainable Development Goals. However, the exacerbating global conditions all point to the fact that the TBL requires to be updated and innovated upon to ensure the prevention of further degradation of the Planet at the cost of Profits. Enter, The Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL). The concept of QBL has become more relevant today, especially, in a truly global setting, where intercultural beliefs and behaviour can be stumbling blocks for sustainable relationships. The Quadruple Bottom Line adds the factor of Principles, or the Fourth P, to the existing trilogy of Profits, People and Planet.

The elegance of the QBL, as a tool for intercultural integration, within and across organisations, manifests itself from the fact that while cultural differences express themselves through various behaviours and values, the higher principles are often transcendental.

Let us position the QBL as a basic ingredient of the intercultural transactional behaviour. The QBL ensures that a relationship built on mutual trust and respect, can topple the myriad barriers, when employees of varied cultures are expected to cooperate and coexist.

One instance, which, comes to mind concerns safety and working conditions across locations of a global organisation. With several hazardous operations and varying local laws, the operating conditions were unique to each location. This led to a highly skewed data regarding working conditions for the labour and employees for an organisation which prides itself on being a leader in its area of expertise.

The Operations Heads soon realised that there was no consistency in the data, as they were coming from different base lines. The management then decided to have a common minimum standard which would be applicable across the organisation in terms of processes, technologies and manpower training and qualification. With the support of the Group COO, a task force comprising of the various Operations Heads was constituted for this purpose.



A protocol was established based on the local laws, operating conditions and technological maturity, across each of the locations. Within the task force, each team member was assigned the responsibility of one aspect of the operations. However while developing this SOP, their mandate was to deliver a base metric which would be within the local laws of every region and also be adaptable across geographies, with minimum disruption to business.

These new standards which were developed over the course of a year ensured that there was a single metric for measuring performance and competencies across each of the locations of the organisation. All this, while ensuring that the safety and environmental standards were uniformly maintained across every location. The fact that the value of human life was measured the same, across geographies was a huge empowering realisation across the organisation. This unanimity of the value of human life, showcased that the Fourth P, Principles, must henceforth, play a critical role when striving for excellence across a multi-cultural organisation.

The QBL, as a paradigm, can be applied to every aspect of a multi-cultural society, individual and business. Corporations, not-for-profit organisations, CSR and governments, all social systems benefit by its metric-based evaluation of the four P's.

Clearly, QBL delivers sustainable growth while ensuring an extremely ethically purposeful business, safeguarding the organisation's longevity and durability against the formidable winds of change.



SOCIETY FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESEARCH

The Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research (SIETAR) - India is a non-profit association of educators, researchers and trainers from a wide range of practical and academic disciplines who share a common concern for intercultural relations. SIETAR-India provides an opportunity to learn from and share with colleagues in the intercultural arena and advance the body of knowledge and practice in the field.

Established in 1974, SIETAR has over 3500 members world-wide with affiliates in many countries. SIETAR holds Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) status with the United Nations and the Council of Europe. SIETAR - India is part of the global network of SIETAR organizations.

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