

# Global Mind Monitor — determining intercultural competencies of Stenden Hotel Management School students: setting the research agenda

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**ABSTRACT:** Ongoing Internationalization of Higher Hotel Management Education encourages professional universities to monitor and assess intercultural competence development of students. Moreover, strategic ambitions aimed at educating alumni capable of 'global thinking' and 'hostmanship' inevitably connect intercultural competence with hostmanship, a currently marginally explored academic concept. Hence, Stenden Hotel Management School needs to address both the measurement and assessment of intercultural competence development as well as the conceptualization of 'hostmanship'. This article discusses the need to set the research agenda for determining intercultural competence development within the context of educating globally oriented, hospitable hosts.

**KEYWORDS:** intercultural competence development, assessment of intercultural competence development, hostmanship

## Introduction: strategic ambitions

In its first strategic institutional plan, NHL Stenden expressed its "focus...on internationalisation" (NHL Stenden, 2019, p. 17) for which this "young" university of applied sciences (UAS) "offer[s] an international and intercultural context" (NHL Stenden, 2019, p. 18) — even for students who choose not to study abroad. It is assumed that by virtue of this all-embracing environment, students will be enabled "to become world citizens that contribute to the development of the regions in which they are living" (NHL Stenden, 2019, p. 19).

Similarly, Stenden Hotel Management School (Stenden HMS), one of the most diverse schools of NHL Stenden, claims to develop alumni who are competent at "global thinking" and "hostmanship" (Stenden HMS, 2019). The bachelor's degree is offered at three of the four international campuses of NHL Stenden, and students can follow part of the major degree at one of these sites, or minors as part of a Grand Tour®.

## Intentional intercultural learning

Assertions like these demonstrate the ambitions of a global- and future-oriented educational institution. Ambitions can be strong drivers of innovation and strategic direction and we should all welcome these ambitions, which all require intercultural competence (ICC), something Stenden HMS has been teaching for some two decades. However, the aspirations also partly seem to rely on the implicit assumption that the mere presence of culturally different "others" will somehow lead to the development of intercultural competence, a view that is refuted in recent research (Leask & Carroll, 2011; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012; Leask, 2014; 2015; Gregersen-Hermans, 2015;

Keizer-Remmers, 2017). Instead, these and other researchers (Deardorff, 2015; de Wit, Hunter, & Coelen, 2015; Rönström, 2016) stress the importance of intentional learning and curriculum design, a focus on the process, and ongoing assessment of the impact *and* the outcomes of international education. Moreover, Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017, p. 294) strongly emphasise the "intentionality" (of educators, learners and institutions), as "intercultural competence does not just happen".

## Assessing intercultural competence development

Hence, the question arises: how can we as educators (or policy makers) *know* when a student makes progress in the development of intercultural competence? How can students know? This question addresses the assessment of intercultural competence (ICC). Assessment of ICC is a challenging subject which is a hot topic in the field — unfortunately, the scope of this contribution does not allow a full discussion of recent developments in this field. Nonetheless, we agree with Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017, p. 127; emphasis in original), who propose "a change of mindset in thinking about *assessment of learning* to *assessment for learning*". As educators and researchers, we need to focus on the process of assessment rather than the result of it and encourage students to express not only what they have learned, but also to articulate why this learning is important for their development (ibid.). This calls for "guided critical reflection" (ibid., p. 296). However, from our experience at Stenden HMS, students cannot always express their intercultural competence development eloquently — or sometimes clearly overestimate their intercultural abilities. Moreover, neither they nor Stenden HMS currently have clear evidence of ICC.

## Evidencing intercultural competence development: Global Mind Monitor

Stenden HMS recognised the importance of evidencing intercultural competence development when it acquired CeQult certification as a distinctive feature of internationalisation for the bachelor's degree in 2015. Hence, it was only logical that Stenden HMS was one of the early adopters of the Global Mind Monitor (GMM), "a measuring instrument that gives students the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and helps lecturers to carry out an evaluation interview with the student on the basis of concrete parameters" (Zuyd Research, 2017, p. 1). GMM was developed by Zuyd University of Applied Sciences in Maastricht. Stenden HMS and some other Dutch hotel schools (like Saxion and The Hague) have a good collegial and collaborative relationship with Zuyd UAS, centred around GMM. The GMM focuses on the qualities deemed crucial for the development of global and intercultural competence: "Openness (cultural empathy, open-mindedness), Adaptability (flexibility, emotional stability), Social initiative, Cultural knowledge/meta knowledge, Intercultural behaviour, and Cultural motivation" (Zuyd Research, 2017, p. 2). These qualities are also important for the development of "responsible global citizens", "global thinking", and "hostmanship" — the capacities aspired to of Stenden HMS students as mentioned earlier. What GMM measures overlaps considerably with a concept called "cultural intelligence" (Earley & Ang, 2003; Thomas, 2006; Van Dyne, Ang, & Livermore, 2010) which includes elements like knowledge, skills (behaviour), metacognition, motivation, and mindfulness — and these are also components (to some extent, and with different names sometimes) of "global thinking" and "hostmanship". However, better conceptualisation of the concepts being pursued is crucial — especially if one wants to make claims about the development of students in these areas as they become "game changers" (Stenden HMS, 2019). Evidencing this development is equally crucial.

### Global Mind Monitor: research opportunities

Stenden HMS started to monitor all Leeuwarden-based students since 2017 via the GMM. This allows not only for the reflection and coaching options which have been mentioned earlier, but also provides an excellent opportunity for longitudinal research. It is now time to harvest the fruits of what we planted two years ago. We have access to all Stenden-related data collected via GMM. We will do so in collaboration with Hogeschool Zuyd and the other hotel schools, but also independently. Recently, during a GMM research day at Hogeschool Zuyd, some ideas were already framed by participants. Stenden HMS can and will embark on viable and innovative studies with research partners, but can also use its own data to investigate (for example) the relationship between cultural distance and the development of cultural competencies, the impact of a Grand Tour experience on the GMM scores, the effect of previous international experiences, or the number of languages a student speaks. We could relate DBE (design-based education, the newly developed didactical philosophy at NHL Stenden) to ICC development, or investigate the differences between gender and age groups, or incoming streams (like work and study, associate degree (Ad) or MHS<sup>1</sup> intake) — there is a plethora of research opportunities at Stenden HMS, but also with academic partners and the international

campuses. Moreover, the focus of our future studies could be on staff as well as on students' ICC development — provided that educational staff (like career development coaches or placement coaches who monitor and discuss their students' development from several perspectives) also complete the GMM on a regular (annual) basis.

Not only could we do quantitative research and look at percentages and numbers yielded from GMM (the What) — we should also set up qualitative studies to look for the reasons behind the quantitative findings (the Why and the How). It will be interesting to engage in storytelling, critical incident techniques, appreciative enquiry, qualitative interviewing, participant observation or visual methods (e.g. photographs) to look beyond the numbers and facts. Moreover, a qualitative paradigm will allow researchers to critically approach the self-scored data and invite students to share examples, real-life experiences, stories and personal biographies.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches offer good opportunities for students (bachelor's and master's) to participate in research and to co-create knowledge. It is time to take GMM at Stenden HMS to the next level and take full advantage of this practical tool to not only enhance the quality of intentional learning towards the articulated ambitions of global-thinking world citizens, but also to inspire new research in the field of Intercultural and global competence development which can contribute to true hospitality: "the art of making people feel welcome" (Gunnarsson, Blohm, & Wegweiser, 2008, p. 3).

### Note

1. MHS – Middelbare Hotelschool, vocational hotel education (European Qualification Framework level 4)

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