

CULTURE INFLUENCES
ON
LEARNING AND THINKING

by

Asma Abdullah Phd

October 10, 2010

At Seri Pacific Hotel, KL

10 .45 - 12.00 am

Dr. Asma Abdullah: Consultant and Facilitator



Dr. Asma is a free lance consultant, trainer and facilitator on topics related to human resource development and the influence of cultural dimensions on management. She teaches on a parttime basis at the Graduate School of Management, Universiti Putra and Universiti Sains Malaysia on subjects related to Cross Cultural Organization Development and Change, International HRM, Organizational Behavior and Training and Development. She now works closely with both Malaysian and foreign managers to enable them to understand cross cultural and diversity issues when working in multicultural teams in the Asia-Pacific region

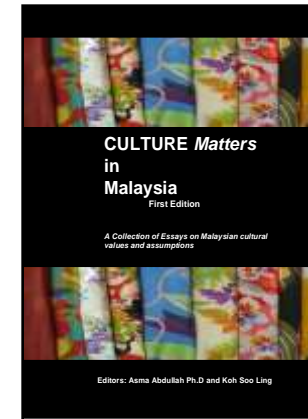
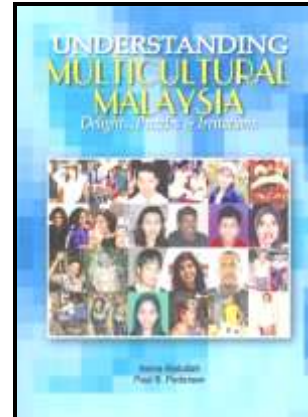
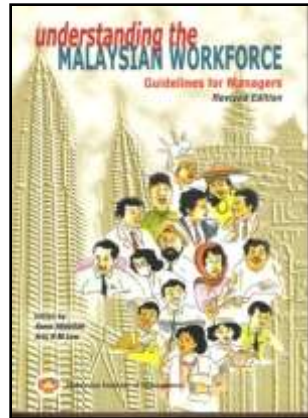
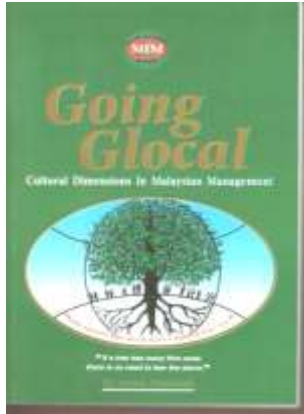
Asma graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Dip. Ed. (Monash University, Melbourne) Masters of Science in Education (University of So. California, Los Angeles), Master of Arts in Counseling (Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur) and Ph.D in Anthropology (Universiti Kebangsaan, Bangi).

Her work experience included 8 years of secondary school teaching and curriculum development in a semi-government organization. She joined Esso/ExxonMobil (1980-2003) and was a human resource development practitioner. She has written and published more than 40 articles on culture, women, training and development and authored 3 books *Understanding the Malaysian Workforce*, *Going Glocal* published by Malaysian Institute of Management and *Understanding Multicultural Malaysia* by Pearson-Prentice Hall.

She is also an Adjunct Professor at Universiti Utara Malaysia, a Panel Board Member, ASLI Center for Policy Studies, Kuala Lumpur and a Member, Industry Advisory Panel (IAP) for KANITA, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. She is also a founder member of the Facilitators Network Services in Malaysia.

In 1994, she received a Fulbright Scholarship to U S A and presented seminars and conducted research on culture and management. In 1997 -1999 she was appointed to the National Council for Women in Development (NA CIWID) and from 1997 – 2003 served on the Board of Malaysian American Cultural and Educational Exchange (MA CEE). In 1999, she co-wrote and co-directed two cross cultural plays - “Expat Comes to Town” and “The Expat Files” for Malaysian theatre.

Books by Asma Abdullah



1. **Going Glocal, Published by Malaysian Institute of Management, 1996**
2. **Understanding the Malaysian workforce, Published by MIM, 2000**
3. **Understanding Multicultural Malaysia, Published by Pearson, 2003**
4. **Culture matters in Malaysia, 2009**
5. **Insights into Malaysian Culture, 2009**

Masitah Babjan : Consultant and Facilitator



MASITAH has served more than 15 years in corporate organisations and enthusiastically supports organizations and professionals committed to harnessing their potential intelligence and inner wisdom to make more meaningful contributions to their personal, business and community success.

She graduated from University of Manchester, Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), United Kingdom in Electrical Engineering. Although trained in a technical discipline, her extensive exposure also include areas in human resources management, facilitation, training and consulting gained after her corporate experience in Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), and ExxonMobil, a multinational oil and gas corporation.

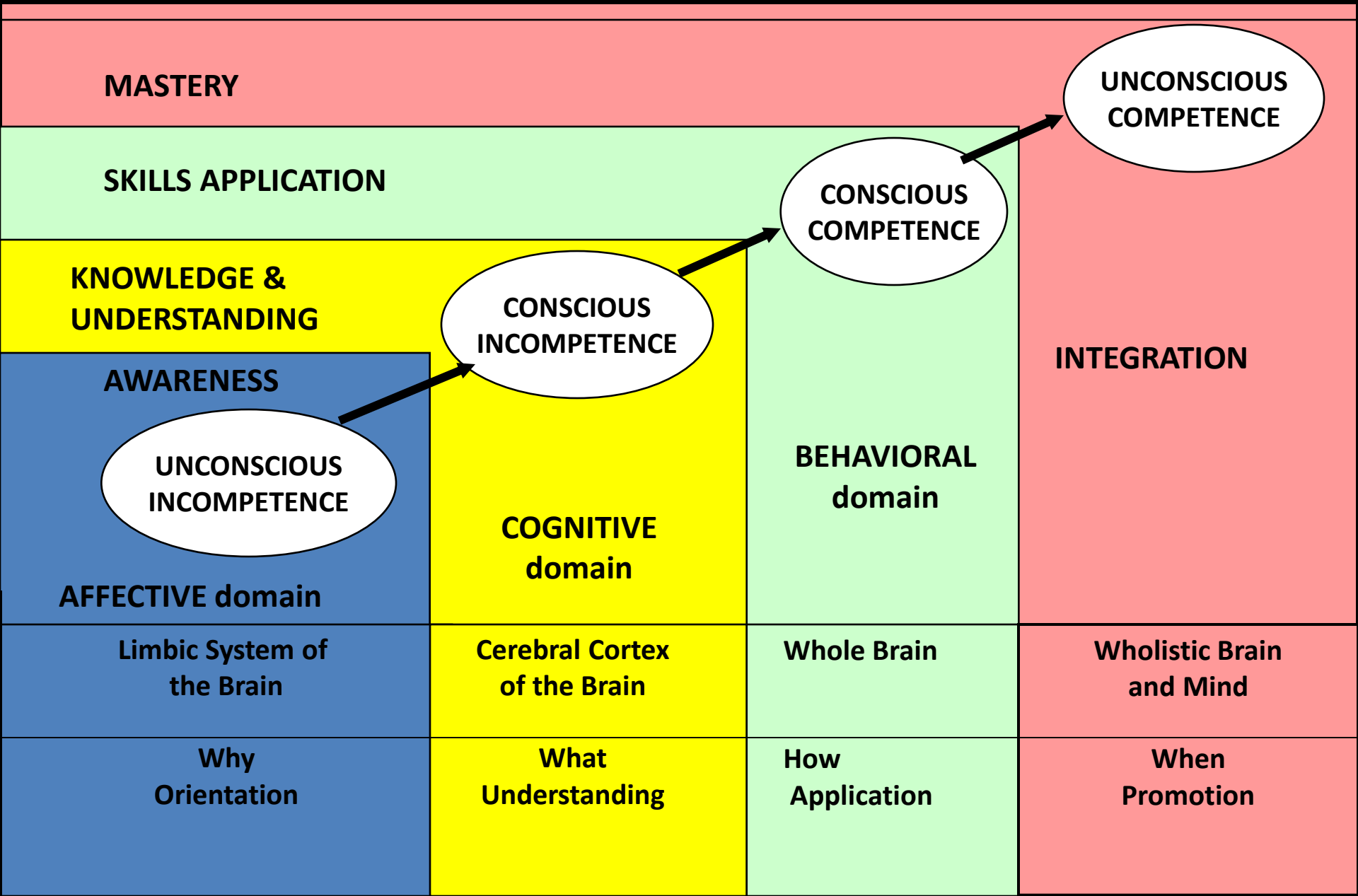
Masitah currently focuses on corporate training and facilitation in the areas of leadership and management development as well as personal effectiveness. Her special interest lies in the areas of creative thinking, intercultural management and work-lifestyle balance for management executives and business leaders.

Masitah engages participative learning approaches, creative expression and graphic facilitation techniques in her workshops. A firm believer in striving for excellence and life-long learning, she aims to help others achieve their desired work-life goals by sharing her knowledge, enthusiasm and passion and inspiring them to greater heights.

10 KEY LEARNINGS

1. Share observations on how people learn and think across cultures
2. Learn the common basic assumptions related to learning
3. Understand the 16 Cultural Dimensions
4. Identify the key values of culture
5. Recognise the influence of culture on facilitating learning and thinking
6. Compare cross cultural perspectives on excellence in education
7. Examine the difference between pedagogical and androgogical learning
8. List key learning behaviours
9. Identify some challenges in learning and thinking across cultures
10. Identify strategies to facilitate learning across cultures

THE LEARNING COMPETENCY MODEL



Acquiring

LEARNING

The cognitive process of acquiring knowledge, skill, understanding, values, and wisdom.

www.clomedia.com/content/anmviewer.asp
www.acypher.com/wwid/BackMatter/Glossary.html
www.rotc.monroe.army.mil/helpdesk/definitions-1/terms.htm

Making sense of

THINKING

- A purposeful exploration of our experience maps *R.J.Steinberg*
- An operational skill, where intelligence acts upon experience —*H.Gardner*

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

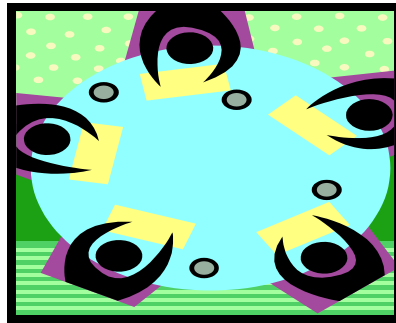
Sharing

Common Basic Assumptions and Key Learning Behaviours

Understanding Culture and Assumptions/Dimensions

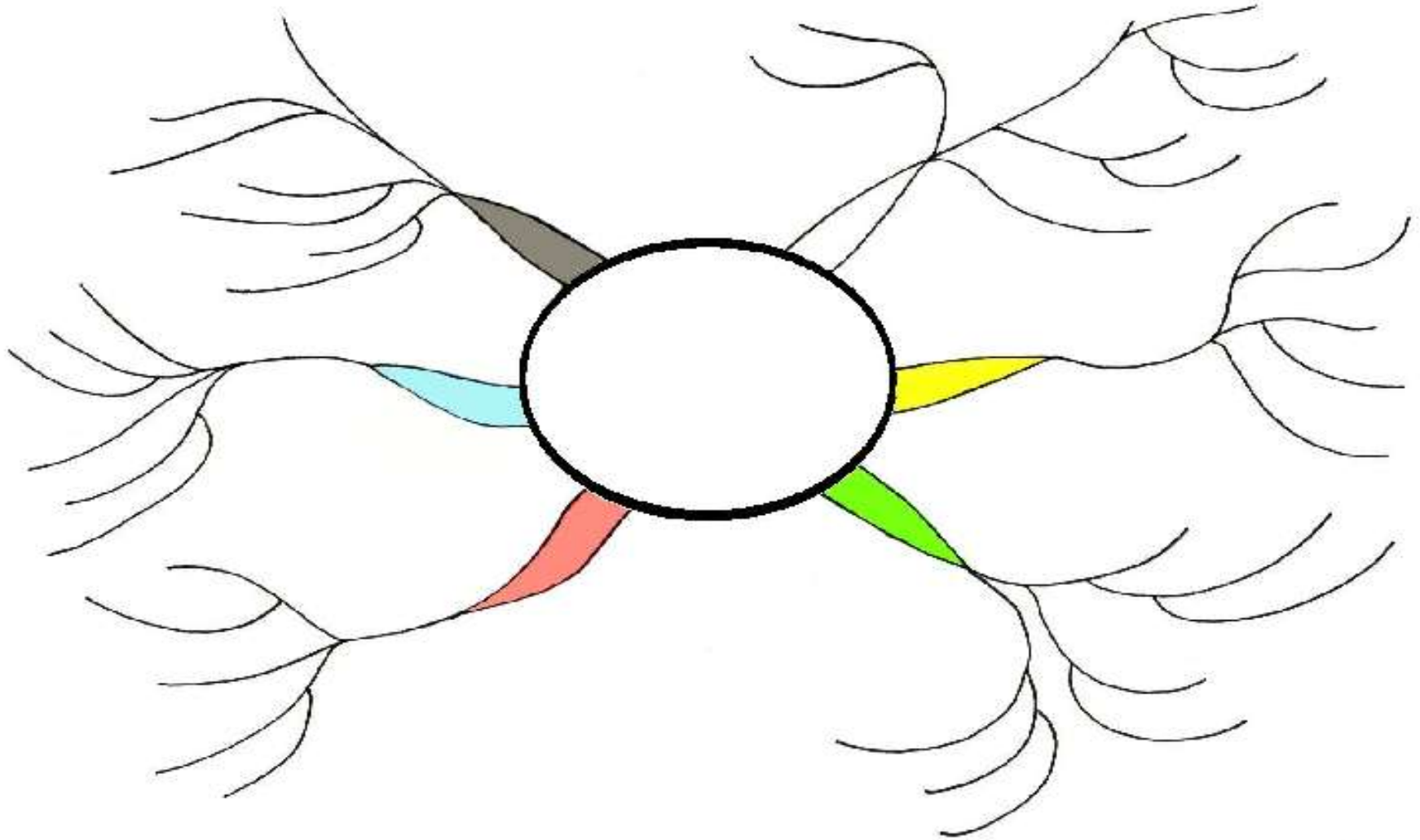
Implications of assumptions on learning and teaching

Sharing session



**How do people
learn and think
In your culture**

MY OWN LEARNING MAP : SESSION TWO



ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT LEARNING



Importance of active verbal participation and involvement

Deductive, linear, questioning and use of abstract thought

Sequential argument and challenging posture

Independence and autonomy of learners

Having a point of view on issues and events

Overview

There are some hidden aspects of one's culture which can either foster or hinder the ability of learners to

think critically,

participate actively in open discussions, and demonstrate a

questioning and **challenging** posture.

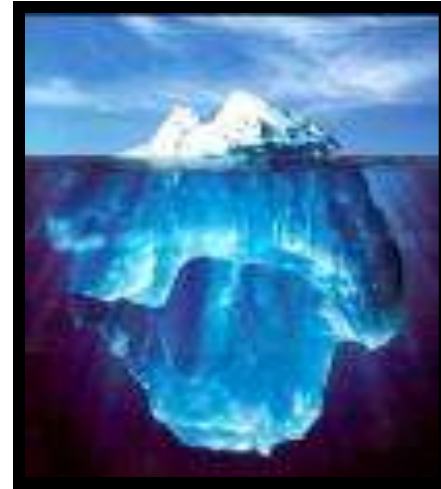
An understanding of one's values and underlying cultural assumptions is important to help in the design of contextually appropriate learning strategies.

This may help promote critical thinking among students

KEY LEARNING BEHAVIOURS

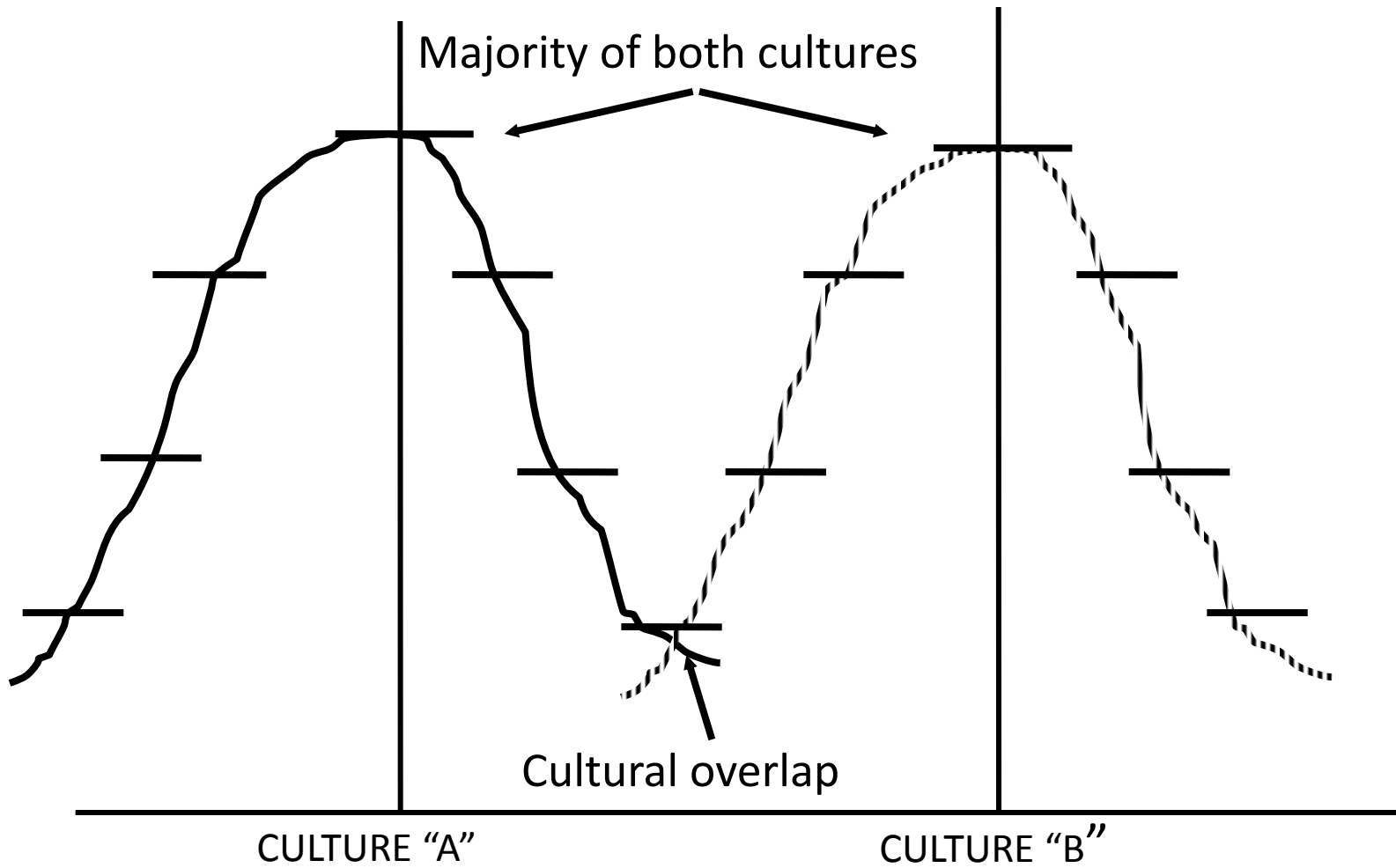
- Asking questions
- Suggesting ideas
- Exploring options
- Taking risks/experimenting
- Being open about the way it is
- Admitting mistakes and inadequacies
- Converting mistakes into learnings
- Reflecting and reviewing
- Talking about learning
- Taking responsibility for own learning & development

In studying Culture, we can use the analogies of the tree and iceberg



At the conscious level, we see the symbols, rituals and role models while at the unconscious level we focus on values and underlying assumptions

Cultural Norm Distribution BETWEEN TWO CULTURES





DEFINING CULTURE

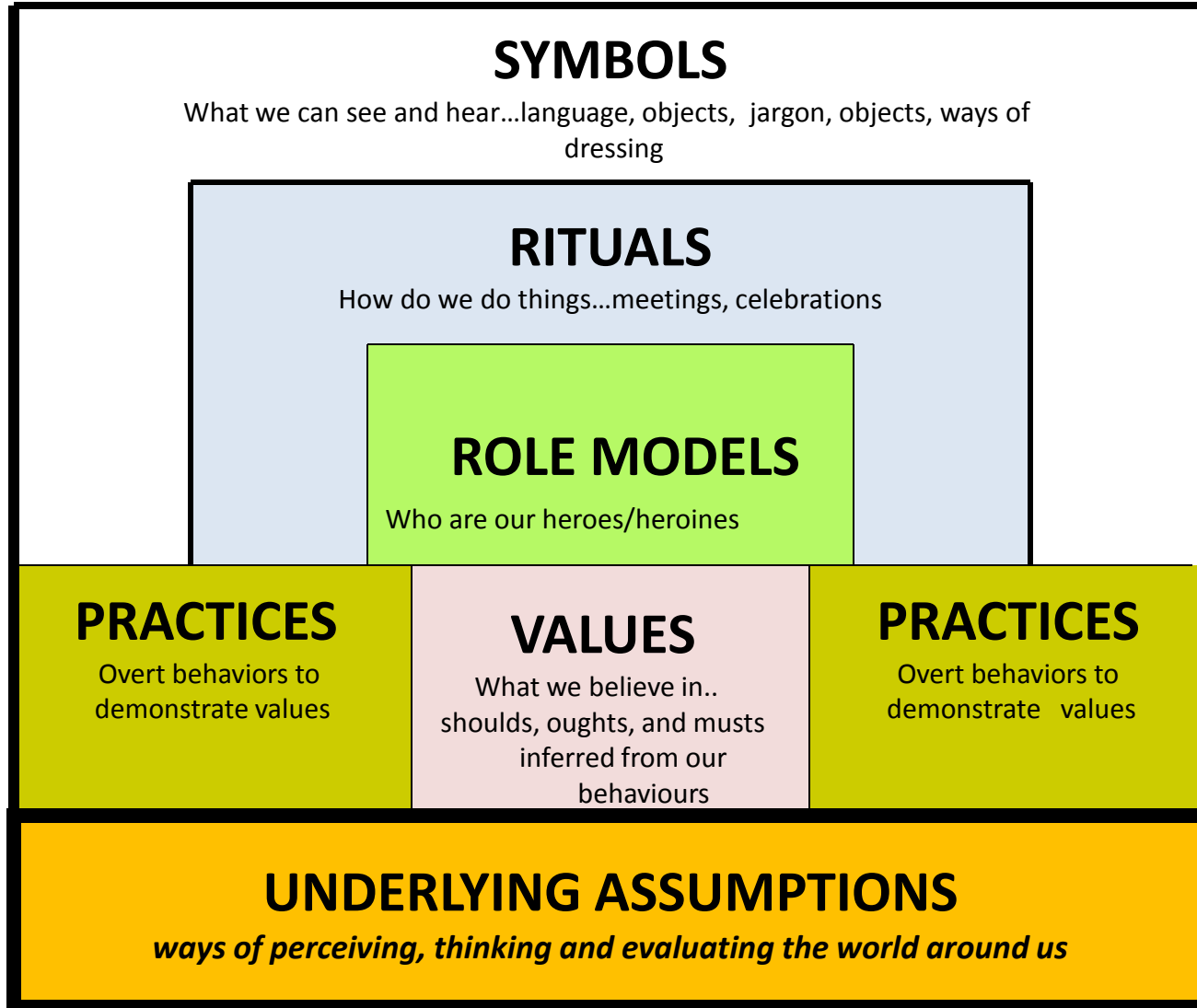
...the collective programming of the body, mind and spirit which distinguishes members of one group (nation, ethnic group, company or category) of people from another.

(born into, assimilation, acculturation, immersion)

...webs of meaning that man himself has spun...deep seated, resistant to change, and yet ultimately subject to modification by new experiences

-Clifford Geertz on culture

KEY ELEMENTS OF CULTURE



A SURVEY ON VALUES

1. Achievement
2. Accommodating
3. Apologetic
4. Autonomy
5. Brotherhood
6. Caring
7. Champion of causes
8. Competition
9. Compliant
10. Cooperation
11. Courtesy
12. Diligence
13. Directness
14. Discipline
15. Education
16. Entrepreneurship
17. Equality
18. Face
19. Fairness
20. Faith in God
21. Family orientation
22. Fear of God
23. Filial piety
24. Frankness
25. Freedom

26. Food
27. Friendliness
28. Frugality
29. Generosity
30. Hard work
31. Harmony
32. Health
33. Honesty
34. Humility
35. Independence
36. Indirectness
37. Individualism
38. Informality
39. Integrity
40. Karma
41. Loyalty
42. Materialism
43. Modesty
44. Non-confrontational
45. Patience
46. Perseverance
47. Pragmatism/practical
48. Politeness
49. Prosperity

50. Rationalism
51. Reciprocal Obligations
52. Relationships
53. Respect for elders
54. Risk taking
55. Security
56. Self respect
57. Self sufficiency
58. Sense of belonging
59. Sincerity
60. Spirituality
61. Status
62. Straightforwardness
63. Success
64. Tact
65. Thrift
66. Trustworthiness
67. Wealth
68. Others
69. _____

5 Top Most valued values:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

16 CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Harmony	Gauges the individual's relationship with Nature	Control
Relationship	Measures the importance placed on relationships with others versus task Accomplishments	Task
Hierarchy	Gauges the emphasis placed on rank, status and other ascribed attributes over equality issues	Equality
Shame (outer driven)	Verifies if shame (outer driven) or guilt (inner driven) is the principle that guides behaviour	Guilt
High Context communication	Measures the extent to which cultures depend on the external environment, situation, nonverbal signs to communicate	Context
Polychronic	Verifies if the principle that guides behaviour is circular or sequential	Chronic
Collectivism	Measures the preference for interdependence with other people	Individualism
Religious	Verifies the degree in which religiosity, as opposed to secularity, is considered in work related issues	Secular

Top 5 values

June 26, 2007

Bruneians Faith in God Loyalty Politeness Brother hood Cooperation	Cambodia Loyalty Respect for elders Relationships	Laos Health Equality Education Politeness Harmony	Myanmar Honesty Loyalty Sincerity Politeness Wealth
Japan Achievement Entrepreneurship Honesty Politeness Harmony	Nepal Family orientation Faith in God Courtesy Trustworthiness Entrepreneurship	China Achievement Equality Freedom Hardwork Wealth	
Philippines Faith in God Family orientation Reciprocal Obligations Politeness Apologetic	Thailand Brotherhood Politeness Frankness Friendliness Hard work	Vietnamese Achievement Respect for elders Prosperity Hard work Harmony	

Top 5 CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Malaysian
1	Religious	Relationships	Religious	Relationships
2	Relationships	Task	Relationships	Harmony
3	Harmony	Hierarchy	Hierarchy	Religious
4	Hierarchy	Harmony	Shame	Hierarchy
5	Group	Individualism	Harmony	Polychronic

AMERICAN	BRITISH	AUSTRALIAN
Task Individualism Control Equality Monochronic	Equality Task Religious Harmony Group Orientation	Equality Individualism Secular Group Orientation Relationships

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON EDUCATION

Cultures which are more group/collectivistic in orientation regard education as a nationalistic endeavour. The objective of education is to develop **one's character in order to be perfect members of a society**. Having an academic qualification is one way to achieve upward mobility and earn a "ticket to ride" into the world of work. There are social expectations that have to be met with **extrinsic rewards** to be achieved.

Cultures which are more individualistic tend to look at education as a right of the individual to develop to his fullest - based on his innate creativity and ability. The focus is on more on the **acquisition of knowledge and skills** and the achievement of economic worth, self-respect, sense of achievement and subject mastery. They are driven by **intrinsic needs** based on their own self motivation to succeed and excel.

IMPACT OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF COLLECTIVISM ON LEARNING

- Critical evaluation is not likely to be heard
- People tend to be relatively passive and shy to ask questions or make the first move
- The self is more related than separated - emotional interdependence instead of being a separated one – autonomous, independent and self directed
- It is important to have a support system

IMPACT OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF HIERARCHY ON LEARNING

- There is a dependency relationship between learner and teacher. It has to be nurtured and strengthened
- The young do not challenge authority and will accept what they hear from elders
- They view teacher as guru - source of wisdom and fountain of knowledge
- Questions are seen as intrusive

IMPACT OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF HIGH CONTEXT ON LEARNING

- Learners will not confront or upset others
- Because of politeness, they allow someone else to take the lead
- The local polite system allows people to be more general and analog
- There is a tendency to refrain from critiquing another person
- As it can be difficult to separate the person's actions from his/her Personality
- Triangular use of feedback
- There is low verbal participation and longer time to be familiar
- The Medium is the message. The unspoken word may be just as important.
- Avoid unsuitable topics
- Learners can be seen to be passive

Active verbal participation and involvement

Deductive, linear questioning and use of abstract thought

Sequential argument challenging posture

Independence and autonomy of learners

Self directed

Specific two way feedback

Key Behaviors

Now Consider (across cultures)

Conveys views to others in a direct and open way to arrive at a mutually acceptable result.	Shares own thoughts and views in an effort to arrive at a mutually acceptable result
Seeks feedback from others about own performance.	Listens to others' views about areas of performance improvement and takes action accordingly.
Builds a climate of trust by being continually open and honest about own feelings.	Shares thoughts, feelings and rationale so that others understand personal positions.
Proactively takes the lead and identifies solutions to problems.	Looks to find better ways of doing things
Takes decisive action to overcome current issues, problems, obstacles and barriers to success.	Formulates clear decision criteria and initiates action within a reasonable timeframe.
Enthuses, motivates and generates commitment from others through style of communication.	Communicates in a clear, concise and understandable way, while relating to the needs and interests of others.

STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE LEARNING

Harmony Relationships Shame High Context Group Hierarchy Polychronic Religious

Create learning activities which are sensitive to the values, assumptions and sensitivities of the learners

Provide opportunities for learners to build relationships prior to doing team projects

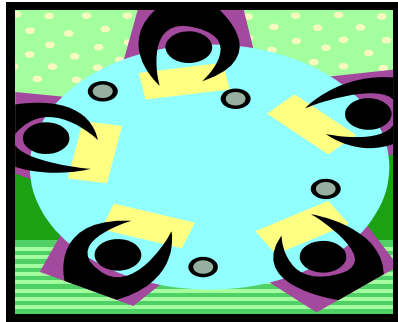
Encourage team presentations on what they have learned together.

Develop confidence in learners to participate and challenge existing boundaries in in small teams

Promote learning by using a multi sensory approach where students have fun in doing things competitively on a team basis

Encourage learners to be brave to have a point of view

Sharing session



Now that you have an understanding of
the influence of culture on **LEARNING**
and THINKING
what do you plan to do differently?

CONCLUSION

The objective of understanding cultural dimensions is to enable trainers and facilitators to promote a learning environment that is congruent with the values of their learners across cultures

These dimensions are the underlying assumptions operating at the *unconscious* level that members take for granted.

It is only by knowing these *unconscious assumptions* that trainers and facilitators can be accurate in assessing people's behavior and develop appropriate strategies to maximize learning.

Terima Kasih

Xie Xie

Nandree

Shukriya

Thank You

Danke Shon

