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Using Native Advertising Approach for Knowledge Creation in Cross Cultural Studies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of a student-centric, output-oriented methodology based on the principles of connectivism for knowledge creation in cross-cultural studies. The task involved selection of native commercial advertisements in which students were expected to work in virtual teams and find cultural differences in their interpretation between the participants from three countries, **India, Austria and Russia**. Findings showed that the students acquired knowledge about the host countries' cultures in a unique way and distinguished between facts and fiction through interesting interactions with one another. Additionally, the exercise helped developing a global mind-set along with improving teamwork, time management, decision making, critical thinking and many other skills. The work recommends designing and developing such exercises for teaching effectiveness and knowledge creation in International Business which are more practical and applicable in the real life.

KEYWORDS

Global mind-set;
international business;
technology; connectivism;
collaboration; cross-culture;
student-centric

1. Introduction

In today's global economy, all executives are required to integrate and coordinate geographically dispersed operations and a culturally diverse workforce. They are expected to possess a global viewpoint consisting of a global mind-set reinforced by appropriate skills and knowledge. Management of any global company when it attempts to enter the foreign market expects the integration of local conditions into its global expansion strategy. They hire those who know how to adopt an international approach to solve issues and how business is conducted globally (Aggarwal 2016). This pattern obligated business schools to reflect changes in the educational environment. A serious need is felt by the faculty in international business to reflect on pedagogies, teaching styles, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes to construct innovative methods of managing and alleviating barriers to students' learning (Legisterb, Project-Based Learning in International Financial Management, 2018). They are determined to internationalize their learning environment by

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enhancing and encouraging international programs as a means to improve students' understanding of the world around them (Scott 2000). However, it is challenging to prepare students as job-ready experts in the field of international business.

For the present study, the research question was, would the innovative exercise used for teaching effectiveness in International Business (IB) which is more practical and applicable in the real life generates knowledge and help in developing a global mind-set and will it be appreciated more by the international business students over classroom teaching and rote learning? Findings showed that the students not only enhanced their competencies related to developing global mind-set but also acquired knowledge about the host countries' cultures in a unique way. They also appreciated the innovative pedagogy used over the conventional classroom teaching in International business. Additionally, the exercise helped developing global mind-set along with improving team work, time management, decision-making, critical thinking, and many other skills. The study establishes that multicultural team effectiveness and cross-cultural communication competence are directly related and are significant in managing and operating culturally diverse teams. Adding on the prior studies, it contributes in terms of pedagogy and provides evidences that designing and developing exercises which are practical and applicable in the real life do increase teaching effectiveness and knowledge creation in International Business domain.

The article is organized as follows: [Section 2](#) provides a literature review. [Section 3](#) highlights the methodology. [Section 4](#) presents the analysis of data. [Section 5](#) throws light on the major findings. [Section 6](#) includes a discussion. [Section 7](#) highlights the research limitations and suggests direction for future research.

2. Literature review

Business program graduates are expected to join working teams with the global mind-set and perform with cultural sensitivity in international and intercultural professional environments. They are expected to join corporate organizations with adequate skill sets to function competitively in the global market (Agarwal, 2011; Irving 2010; Ortiz 2004; Ramburuth, 2005). Having a global mind-set is a prerequisite for the managers who work with global teams and wish to compete successfully (Gupta 2002). Similarly, the global leaders are expected to possess cognitive capabilities to understand the changing global environment and make appropriate decisions to achieve goals for their own global organization. Thus, cultivating a global mind-set is a key attribute which business school's curriculum especially in teaching International Business all over the world is focusing upon. Before understanding global mind-set, let us explore what we mean by mind-set in

general. It is defined as a frame of mind that leads us to look at the world in certain way eventually shaping our behavior and decisions. There are two types of mind-sets: fixed mind-set where people accept certain ideas, norms, and values as the benchmark and do not want to make any additional adjustments and growth mind-set where people believe that the basic abilities can be cultivated through efforts and may change over time. Growth mind-set has to be open to receive new information and ideas without any preconceived notions of value or judgment allowing the person to look at things more objectively and change behaviors in response to changes in the environment without necessarily committing to existing conditions or accepted norms (Dweck 2007). Taking this further, a global mind-set is defined as an ability to think beyond local or cultural views and to embrace complexity for international effectiveness (Boyacigiller 2004). People with global mind-set are suggested to adopt one's behavior to that of the other culture by learning to understand the value system and communication behavior of the local people (Abugre 2016). They should know how to integrate local conditions into its global expansion strategy, develop critical thinking skills, and build strategic options for acquiring and developing a global mind-set to help formulate a sound global strategy. Kam C Chan found that a better learning outcome in global economic environment helps to achieve higher performance in functional business subjects later and suggested training in developing a global mind-set (Chan 2018). Ideally, the preparation should be such that students are able to apply the gained knowledge to the real-world practice (Wang 2018). These latest changing trends resulted in increasing the focus on the critical role of cross-cultural communication competence in managing diverse work group and multi-cultural team development. Though the concern is serious and apt, not many studies have been done to assess how a variety of assignments and activities in the classroom can support the development of the required global mind-set in teaching international business (Frank 2017; Kam and Chana, 2018a). Business schools all over the world are struggling to provide an international curriculum to their students with the broad understanding of social, economic, legal, political, and technological conditions (Ortiz 2004). Looking at the serious need for improving these skills, more studies on developing a global mind-set and cross-cultural communication competence for teaching effectiveness in International business are required and should be encouraged (Belkin 2017).

For years, professors across the world have been using some of the popularly existing theories one of which is Hofstede's six dimensions of cross-cultural communication, but with the changing economic and social environment, these theories are becoming obsolete. Most of the proposed models are static and do not change over time. They give some basic knowledge to the people who do not have any understanding about the cultural differences but are not much of a use

to the contemporary international business executives (Klaes Eringa 2015). Few studies highlighted alternative pedagogical approaches such as collaborations and offered empirical evidences to validate the benefits of such exercises in the teaching of International business for developing a global mind-set. They proposed various innovative pedagogies/exercises which were closely related to several curriculum goals, including improvement of quantitative and critical thinking skills, and broadening the global mind-set of students (Chelminski 2017). In his study, Witte (2010) suggested three dimensions (i.e. knowledge, behavior, and critical analysis) of developing global mind-set; Wang (2018) suggested Classroom Response System (CRS); Raj Agarwal highlighted the global demographic imbalance in the age distribution of workers in the developed and developing country and predicted talent shortage in the next decade or so. He pointed out an increasing need for training to enhance cross-cultural abilities and felt that the training in cross-culture should be a good mix of theory and practice. Teaching in International business should reflect upon both long- and short-term perspectives. A good theoretical framework will help students build long-term perspective but short-term practical exercises will help students get a job and sustain in it (Agarwal, 2011). On the contrary to Agarwal, Le, Ling and Yau recommended short-term study tours and international internships for creating significant impact on students' global mind-set over other long-term co-curricular activities, which may cost more time and money (Quan Vu Le 2018). Chan in his study felt that students should go beyond merely acquiring global knowledge and develop a mind-set that is flexible enough to adapt to the dynamic global environment (Chan 2018). Seemantini in his study recommended online international management courses while Cheng and Wang suggested designing specific learning material for building a global mind-set in students (Seemantini 2018; Wang 2018). It was felt that the exercises should be such that students enjoy what they do and acquire analytical, problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making skills. For developing time and task management skills, Raj Agarwal recommended lots of non-classroom opportunities (Raj 1995).

Global mind-set is linked closely to decision-making in selecting choices and strategy formulation. Fung feels that while learning decisions-making skills, a person with a global mind-set should consider all viable factors and evaluate all trade-offs that may change over time. They need to understand that the environment is not static, and the decisions made at one point of time may not work at some other point of time (Chan 2018). His studies suggested several approaches such as speaker series, student-led conferences, and IB internships for improving global mind-set in International business teaching. He and his coauthors also suggested integrating different functional areas (finance, marketing, and logistics, among others) promoting a multi-disciplinary approach that enhances the application of the curriculum at business schools. This academic training would help students acquire these

intangible assets and develop strong analytical skills to tackle future problems (Fung 2012).

While working on developing a global mind-set in teaching international business, it is important to keep global trends in mind. The past three decades have seen the significant role of knowledge and technology in economic growth giving birth to knowledge-based economy (OECD, Cities and Regions in the New Learning Economy., 2001) which stands on three pillars; knowledge, skills, and innovation (Williams 2010). Keeping in mind that the higher education system of any country is directly linked with the economic drivers, the expectations from the institutions providing international business education increased and the need to internationalize teaching in international business was felt. Lots of research have been done in the knowledge management area especially on the transformation process from knowledge creation to knowledge sharing, those have proved to be important in the university context and are subjected to cultural differences (Tuğberk Kaya 2016). Hayek in his study highlighted how our mind generates knowledge (Hayek 1952) while Polanyi argued that our brain already knows more than what we can tell and termed it as Tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1966). The tacit knowledge involves time and space to develop bringing a new term “Ba” into existence which is defined as the medium of tacit knowledge transfer (Baqir 2004; Nonaka 2000). The concepts of tacit knowledge and “Ba” were subjected to multiple scientific discussions in the recent years, but Scheall finally concluded that “it is possible for an individual to possess an item of knowledge without explicitly knowing that they possess this knowledge, and, thus, without being able to state, perhaps even in the principle, how they came by this knowledge” (Scheall 2016). So, we conclude that knowledge is dynamic and it is constantly created in social interactions that happen amongst individuals and organizations (Cyert 1993) and with the advent and proliferation of information and communication technology (ICTs), its swelling presence in our day-to-day life and vanishing boundaries of settings where learning happens, there emerges a need to relook into the existing teaching and learning theories. While lecturing is still prevalent teaching style in many universities, the literature suggests that the organizations should develop new methods of deploying instruction (Gonzalez 2009) by keeping three main elements, those are the knowledge that the learner already holds (tacit), medium (Ba), technology.

With the increasing presence of technology in our day-to-day life, its role in teaching International business cannot be ignored. A considerable increase in students’ familiarity with social media and student research skills is also witnessed (Blaschke 2014). They are using more participatory and interactive technologies such as wikis, blogs, and YouTube over traditional content delivery tools (Buchanan Tom 2014). The three broad learning theories i.e., behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism are losing their significance if the technology

aspect is not imbibed with them (Perrin, Downes, Muirhead, & Perrin, January 2005). Even the learners' profile has changed; they are no more passive consumers of information. Rather, they participate in producing information. They feel that these sources are not only self-motivating but are also informal in nature and informal ways of learning are appreciated more by young learners (Philip Bell 2009; Krashen, June, 1976; Nada Dabbagh, 2011; Martin Ebner 2009). Hence, teachers, learners, managers, and policymakers all over the world are trying to integrate learning, both formal and informal with technology. In such circumstances, self-regulated learning (SRL) and personal learning environments (PLEs) can be the source to integrate formal and informal learning that can foster self-regulated learning in higher education contexts (Nada Dabbagh 2012). My study considered these factors while designing the exercise for teaching International business.

It is felt that a shift from teacher-centered- to student-centered-based instruction is critical to the business students' success (Wekesa 2016). Many studies indicate the value of virtual collaboration in teaching international business (IB). Their findings show that students enhance immensely in their capabilities of team coordination, conflict resolution, and cross-cultural communication competence (Bremner 2014; Economides 2008; Jolanta Aritz 2018; Schulman 2002). Researches are also done on various aspects of virtual collaboration in teaching international business. One such study assessed the role of language proficiency in multilingual virtual team and suggested that team members with lower language proficiency felt less included in synchronous and asynchronous collaboration (Fleischmann, Aritz, and Cardon 2019). The study recommended training in language for successful collaboration. Ramburuth and Welch in their study "Educating the global managers" provided useful insights on how to incorporate the element of cross-cultural competence in teaching international business (Ramburuth, Educating the global manager, 2005). Other than developing cognitive skills, their study suggested taking advantage of today's diversity of student population to develop global managers in an effective way (Ramburuth, Educating the global manager, 2005). Two Colombian universities facilitated real-time cross-cultural interaction in a collaborative international project as a part of the international business curriculum. The finding revealed that in spite of challenges associated with time differences, technology, and trust issues, majority of students perceived that the use of virtual teams as a teaching tool facilitates cultural understanding and IB-relevant learning (Alejandra and Gonzalez-Perez 2014). Jing Betty Feng of Farmingdale State College highlighted a four-stage reflective development model for use in the traditional classroom context to enhance intercultural competence for undergraduate students. The model provided a pedagogical approach for motivating students to engage in intercultural interactions for helping them learn to make sense of their environment, and for advancing their learning about intercultural interactions. Results reflected the successful testing of the model (Feng 2016).

Keeping the significance of virtual team collaboration and use of technology as a base, the present study explores the significance of a student centric, output-oriented methodology using the human process of justifying personal belief toward the truth in teaching International business (IB) for developing a global mind-set. A new teaching pedagogy was designed which was unique from the above-mentioned exercises. It involved technology and social media. The exercise was premeditated by the facilitators of three different institutions/universities and was conducted for three international business management classes in New Delhi, India, Graz, Austria, and Russia. The study aimed at a unique contribution in teaching international business and discussed how creating a personal learning environment with the help of technology can serve as a platform for integrating formal and informal learning. The exercise was output oriented which fostered self-regulated learning by the students. The learners compiled and shared the results of their learning achievements. They participated in collective knowledge generation and managed to generate their own meaning by identifying themes related to culture in selected native advertisement from the open sources and extracting gaps in the interpretations. The work aimed to contribute in two ways: first where the three broad learning theories i.e., behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism are losing their significance if not imbibed with technology, the study brings forth a methodology for teaching International business which creates Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) by integrating formal and informal learning that can foster self-regulated learning in higher education contexts (Nada Dabbagh 2012). And second, presupposing the importance of cross-cultural competence and multicultural team effectiveness as critical factors for working effectively in global teams, the work proposes a unique methodology by using the human process of justifying personal belief toward the truth for knowledge creation in cross-cultural studies and developing global mind-set.

3. Methodology & research design

The exercise was designed by keeping the theory of connectivism in mind. There are various reasons for referring this theory in the present study while designing the exercise for teaching International business. First, unlike past theories, connectivism is an idea that believes learning can happen outside of ourselves. The foundation of this theory is based on an understanding that any decision taken at one point of time may change due to rapidly altering foundations (Siemens, Jan 2005). Second, connectivism contributes to the development of new pedagogies where control is shifting from the teacher to learners (Kop 2008), reminiscent of the constructivist shift identified by networked learning recognized even by medical students (Bell, March 2011; Goodyear 2001; Goldie 2016). The popularity of this pedagogical method has

emerged in the form of massive open online courses (MOOCs) where educators either acted as a facilitator or were totally absent from the learning process (Downes, Learning networks and connective knowledge, 2006, October 16; Siemens, Learning and knowing in networks: Changing roles for educators and designers., 2008b). Three, George Siemens considered connectivism as a learning theory for the digital age, a successor to behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism (Siemens, Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age., 2004). It involves the flow of knowledge between humans and non-humans; a network comprising connections between entities which he termed as nodes (Siemens, Jan 2005). He felt that with the changing scenario, a classroom teaching and conservative one-way lecturing will make it difficult to match the changing trends. The connectivist principles highlighted by Siemens are well-aligned with and were found to be compatible with even Web 3.0 technologies (Foroughi 2015; Hussain 2013). It is found to be an amalgamation of connectivity, complexity, and self-organization.

Four, the theory of connectivism uses media as the most essential and powerful tool of learning. It does not restrict learning activities to the classrooms and encourages students to make effective use of technology rather than considering it as destructive and fosters lifelong learning in students (Archana 2018). Its approach is convenient as it allows learners to use resources that are open and freely available on the internet. These sources have creative common licenses which allow learners to use and share them legally. F. Bell in his article published in 2009 suggests steps to the educators who wish to use connectivism as a pedagogy. They are:

- (1) Follow the blogs of those who innovate with educational technologies.
- (2) Experiment (within your comfort zone) with web services and tools that might enrich teaching and learning in your practice.
- (3) Use, publish, and share resources through blogs, wikis, photo, and video-sharing sites.
- (4) Encourage students to use the web for scholarly resources – being critical and selective and attributing sources.
- (5) Assign student activities that enable effective use of media to report process and, where appropriate, outcomes.
- (6) Make explicit the concept of connectivism in student support activities so that they can exploit it in their own independent learning (Bell 2009).

Eight core principles given by Siemens were used to design the learning activity. These principles are:

3.1. Building exercise

For any effective pedagogical intervention, the task design is most significant. It should be grave enough to be handled by one person. This will promote brainstorming, role assigning, and managing conflicts (Bremner 2014). While keeping the theory of connectivism in consideration, the purpose was to design a task that included technology for developing global mind-set among students. To check whether the project design proposed was appropriate, four essential key inputs: task, group, tools, and context by Lowry, P.B.(Lowry 2004) were used.

3.2. Task

Based on the Siemen's principles, the implications were extracted to build an exercise that will incorporate eight principles highlighted on the left side of the Table 1. Developing a global mind-set and enhancing intercultural competencies among students were the central objectives of the exercise. Though Hofstede's model of cross-culture was discussed in the classroom, it was felt that the version is outdated and did not meet the present requirement. A need was felt to stay abreast of changing societies and cultures by evolving our methods of understanding them.

In response to this urge, persuasive digital technologies were used to enable intercultural communication competencies among students across three different courtiers in teams and helped them find ways to work harmoniously with the people having different cultural backgrounds. Such exercises allow students to shape their own learning experience (Arbesman 2012). The study analyzed how an exercise, which might only constitute one of many teaching methods in a course, could be set-up to generate a learning experience that might go a long way in the career path of the students.

3.3. Groups

This student-centric exercise was conducted for two intercultural management classes, one in India and another in Austria in 2016 and three intercultural management classes, Delhi-NCR in India & Graz, Austria, and Voronezh State University in Russia in the year 2017. In 2016, 60 students from India and 64 students from Austria participated in the project. There were total of 15 groups. In 2017, there were 28 students from Russia, 65 from Austria, and 62 from India. The group size was roughly 4. There were total of 7 groups from Russia, 16 from Austria, and 15 from India; thus a total of 34 groups involved in the study. The average age of participants ranged from 22 to 25 years. The interaction happened as follows:

Table 1. Connectivist principles and teaching implications.

Connectivist principle	Designing a learning model	Implementation of theory in the task design
One Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity that facilitates various connection points (nodes) for students. 	To form their opinions students researched from various sources. They connected with people who can provide their opinions and viewpoints. They learnt about how to verify their theories and how to ask the right questions.
Two Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom to accept more than one solution to a problem (providing nodes). 	The students connected nodes and applied existing theories on the real world situations. They learnt how these theories interact with reality and found serious gaps.
Three Learning may reside in non-human appliances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The exercise should use multiple source of information. 	Students used existing electronic sources such as blogs, articles, journals, or social media. There were unlimited amount of possible paths and no assigned best possible path.
Four Capacity to know is more critical than what is currently known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These information sources can be people, journals, books, articles, databases, social networks, etc. 	The students made their own choices about nearly every element of the learning process, including the selection of their main topic (by choosing the ad) and by designing the interaction (by asking concrete questions to their colleagues).
Five Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.		Based on the feedback, students identified gaps in the ideas they held and concepts they learnt from books from the existing reality.
Six Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The exercise should focus on output orientation and not just knowledge creation. 	They were allowed to connect on formal as well as informal platforms. This helped them to not only generate knowledge but also develop new relationships.
Seven Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic selected should be relevant to the present need. It should aim at developing competences that can be applied to problems. Focus should be on application of knowledge (output orientation as opposed to pure knowledge acquisition). 	Learning process was taken one step ahead. They were made to apply the gained knowledge in the real world to check its validity.

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued).

Connectivist principle	Designing a learning model	Implementation of theory in the task design
<p data-bbox="544 137 759 714">Eight Decision-making is in itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision.</p>	<p data-bbox="544 714 759 1197">Designing a learning model</p> <ul data-bbox="544 714 759 1197" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="544 714 759 869">• Exploring, understanding and decision-making by students themselves about their own learning pathways. <li data-bbox="544 869 759 1091">• Understanding that the knowledge gained is dynamic and can change due to changes in the information climate. <li data-bbox="544 1091 759 1197">• The teacher is taking the role of a moderator (student centered). 	<p data-bbox="544 1197 759 1742">Implementation of theory in the task design</p> <p data-bbox="544 1197 759 1742">They realized that any decision taken at one point of time may change due to rapidly altering foundations. This helped enhancing their critical thinking ability which is significant for developing global mind-set.</p>

Eight core principles given by Siemens (left column) were used to design the learning activity.

Table 2. Gaps identified.

Nodes and sample themes	Gaps identified	Themes identified
<p>1. Violence against Women (Dolce and Gabbana print ad^a)</p>	<p>Through the groups on both the sides reacted strongly, it was felt that the reactions from Indian students might not be that intense. This is because women in India are still vulnerable and can easily be overpowered. Changes are visible in the educated lots who are mainly residing in cities. In rural India it is still common. The sad part is the females aren't even aware that they are being exploited.</p>	<p>Attitude toward women in the society.</p>
<p>2. Animals & their religious association (Adidas Cow heart ad by Lukas Podolski^b)</p>	<p>Teams both the sides felt that there will be an obvious disapproval to the idea of holding a cow's heart in the hands of the football players to show the toil they put in winning the match but there was a gap identified in their reasons of disapproval. Austrian team felt that Indians would disapprove because of the religious sentiments associated with the animal "cow" as Indians treat cows like a mother. Indian students agreed to some extent but felt that the advertisement is offensive not just because of the religious sentiments alone but because it depicts cruelty toward animal in general and bloodshed. They also shared that young and educated generation have a different outlook toward this religious sentiments associated with cow in India from the group of fanatics.</p>	<p>(Religion and culture) Myths related to religious sentiments.</p>
<p>3. Views on smoking (Creative anti-smoking ad by Bored panda website^c)</p>	<p>Indian team felt that the ad investigated will give a very strong message on the smokers in Austria. Unlike their view, Austrian team felt it will be just another campaign against smoking. Based on the responses Indian learnt that most of the smokers in Austria are quite stubborn and they may take an offense by this ad. Almost 30% of the youth ranging from 12–18 years smoke regularly; it is just a casual thing, a part of their life style.</p>	<p>Perception about what is good and what is bad and who will decide.</p>
<p>4. Relationship with neighboring country & friendship (Google search reunion^d)</p>	<p>Teams on both the sides found the commercial beautiful and heart-warming. Both felt that they were able to connect with the commercial and found that it was really smart of Google to use this plot to promote their search engine. Indian team felt that Austrians might relate to the feeling of meeting a best friend after ages but will not understand the political, emotional and social significance of making the two friends one from Pakistan and other from India meet after partition. Unlike their view, Austrian team felt that with the similar historical background (partition), they can relate with the feeling.</p>	<p>Relations with neighboring countries and sentiments related with it.</p>

(Continued)



Table 2. (Continued).

Nodes and sample themes	Gaps identified	Themes identified
5. Views on marriage (Platinum day of love ad ⁶)	<p>Since there is a lot of cultural difference with regard to marriages, Indian team thought that Austrian team will not understand the concept of falling in love after marriage. This was found to be true. Austrian team found it very strange. They did not relate with the emotions. They stereotyped arranged marriage in India and also found it unusual to fall in love after marriage.</p>	Marriage
6. Proximity and eve teasing (Incredible India: Indian Tourism ⁷)	<p>The commercial depicted eve teasing with foreign tourists. In India, such incidents generally go unnoticed unless the situation escalates too high. People do not hesitate to break the private space and push themselves upon others. It is normal among common crowd especially with tourists. But Austrians in general consider it rude to disturb strangers on the streets. They value private space and do not appreciate intervention. Indian students learnt that there are laws for not only the eve teasers but also for the people who do not offer help to the victim.</p>	Attitude toward visitors from other countries.
7. Masculinity and Gender Discrimination in household (Ariel- Share the load ⁸)	<p>Indian students felt that Austrians will find it abnormal that almost all household works are done by females at home. This is because they felt that in western countries, gender discrimination does not exist when it comes to division of labor in a household. But they learnt that the traditional Indian families and the conservative Austrian families think on similar lines. However, in India, even in urban families, the majority of the work is done by women and not shared equally by the menfolk.</p>	Division of labor and gender discrimination
8. Concept of Beauty (Olay – Flawless is overrated ⁹)	<p>In India, beauty is judged by the physical appearance and size zero body figure. Indian students thought that Austrian's being an advanced country with modern thinking might judge the beauty through various other parameters. It was found that like Indians, in Austria also beauty is judged majorly by physical appearance. Like India, even Austria is in a gradual change mode with respect to standards of beauty.</p>	Definition of physical beauty.
9. Patriarchal Society (Nyi soch/New thinking ¹)	<p>Indian students perceived that Austrians will not understand the concept of displaying a mother's name on the T-shirt for the simple reason that they do not have a Patriarchal society. Yes, they were right but in the process of getting their opinion on this theme they explored that though there was no such discrimination exist in Austria, the issue with women empowerment is mainly discussed in connection to the salary.</p>	Patriarchy and changing norms

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Nodes and sample themes	Gaps identified	Themes identified
<p>10. Understanding the significance of sibling bonding through Indian Festival (Amazon – Raksha Bandhan ad)</p>	<p>Indian students were sure that the Austrians will not understand the emotional aspect between siblings shown in the ad as they do not celebrate any such day. Yes, they did not understand it for the same reason but after trying to explore the concept of Rakshabandhan they felt that the concept of sibling bonding is very beautiful.</p>	<p>Sibling bonding</p>
<p>11. Interpretation of the popular word “Juggad” (Sulekha ad)^k</p>	<p>In India word “Juggad” is commonly used for people who manage to do things with the limited resources around them. There is a negative connotation implied with this word as we perceive that the solution provided is temporary. Though the word “Juggad” was understood correctly, the meaning perceived by Austrians carried more positive connotative meaning. According to them, “Juggad” means “the act through which somebody fixes problems very creatively and with less money and resources.” In India, normally parents and grandparents live with their children throughout their lives but students felt this might come as an unusual thought for Russians. Unlike what Indian thought, living together as an extended family is so common in Russia that it can be called a tradition. It’s been always a norm for grandparents, their children and grandchildren to live together as a family in one house. Just as in India, this trend has seen some changes lately. Nowadays, more and more young Russian couples strive to get their own housing whereas the families regularly reunite during a weekend family dinner.</p>	<p>Terminologies and their interpretations Family values</p>
<p>12. Concept of Joint and nuclear family “Raymond – the complete man”^l</p>	<p>–</p>	<p>Family values</p>
<p>13. Sharing the workload (Ariel – Share the load^m)</p>	<p>The same ad showing all the household works are done by females at home did not surprise Russian students. They shared that Russian women became more feminine and men turned more masculine following the fall down of the communistic state. It became the norm for a man to view himself as the family provider and the woman to strive to be the housekeeper.</p>	<p>Household chores and gender disparity</p>

^a https://www.google.co.in/search?q=dolce+and+gabbana+ad+overpowering+womens&rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN751IN751&source=Inms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwik7OLtwaXXAhWEnZQKHfyDC2AQ_AUICigB&biw=1135&bih=457&dpf=1.13#imgdii=oWvdFaRmpIF-SM:&imgcr=m21Un1QPzhz8dWMI

^b https://www.google.co.in/search?hl=1C1CHBD_enIN751IN751&biw=1135&bih=457&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=Sgl-Wa2f8a40ATPsZugCg&q=football+player+holding+a+cow%27s+heart&oq=football+player+holding+a+cow%27s+heart&gs_l=psy-ab.3...7657429913.0.430811.78.46.0.0.0.765.8029.2-21j3j1j1.27.0...0...1.164.psy-ab.53.16.4696...0j0167k1.0.60tzCN_cmWY#imgcr=W99ID4kazxZ50M

^c https://www.boredpanda.com/creative-anti-smoking-ads/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

^d <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHGDN9-ofJE>

^e https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07Rz_zYJZ_E

^f https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ee5Bq_eB1YM

^g <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJukf4ifuks>

^h <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1whG-9BjsQ&t=5s>

ⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxE3o8crEes>

^j <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhhEMpgDUGQ>

^k https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loumMCO_eLE

^l <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bizWotrxdjY&feature=youtu.be>

^m <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJukf4ifuks>

2016

Austria<->India: 15 groups

2017

Austria <-> Russia: 4 groups

Austria <-> India: 12 groups

India <-> Russia: 3 groups

3.4. Tools

Associative Group analysis framework (an inferential approach to analyze people's mental representations) was adopted but not used as a survey instrument. AGA is an inferential approach through which one can analyze people's mental representations. The process focuses on subjective meanings and images to assess similarities and differences across cultures and belief systems. It is based on the assumption that there is a close relationship between people's subjective understandings and their behavior. The verbal associations are determined largely through the decoding of the meaning by reading reaction. The disposition of associations then guides the overt reaction.¹ Unlike AGA that uses language specifically "words" to understand differences in psychological meaning across cultures, the present study used full commercials/advertisements as units of analysis. The commercials selected were native and had some cultural theme.

3.5. Context

3.5.1. First step

Thirty-four groups comprising 4–5 students each were made to collaborate and work on an assignment/task in the year 2016 and 2017. One coordinator from each side for each group was nominated and e-mail IDs were shared. Students in the team selected an advertisement (preferably national ones) of their own choice, in which they were expected to find cultural differences in the interpretation between India-Russia and India-Austria. Selected advertisements were easily found on YouTube and can be used as a teaching & learning material. They had the task to discuss presented ads and to find gaps in perception. The students used diverse channels (e.g. different social media, wiki, blogs, etc.), which were suggested or chosen by the participants themselves. The resulting media galleria and connected discussion topics included, in total, more than 600 ads, leading to a broad learning experience. No single facilitator can come up with such a broad information base and it can be safely assumed that no student used all of these available resources, instead of selecting the learning path most suitable to him or her. Following questions were used for analysis:

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Associative_group_analysis

- (a) How does your group understand the advertisement and how does it work for you?
- (b) How do you think will the other side understand the same advertisements, will there be any difference to your own understanding?

3.5.2. Second step

The students had to analyze these advertisements according to their cultural standards. To verify their analysis, they contacted students from the partner institute and asked them for their understanding of these advertisements by posing concrete questions. The students were instructed to ask for short feedback (only a few questions, which could be answered by both the teams within the given time). In turn, they were expected to answer the questions from the students on the other side. Deadlines were set by the instructors to inculcate time management skills in the participants.

The resulting reflection was recorded in writing. In a second step, the students were asked to send the ads and a number of self-developed questions to their colleagues in counterparts. These questions had the aim to learn about the reactions and interpretations of the other side. The resulting answers were compared with the own predictions and discussed in a short paper.

During the process, students explored whether there were “gaps” between students’ perceptions of cultural understanding and the reality which they in fact received in the post observation. Qualitative approach and content analysis were adopted to analyze data.

4. Data analysis

Looking at the objective of the study, I used mixed methodology procedure. The analysis was done using both qualitative and quantitative data applying convergent parallel design in which both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and analyzed independently and then amalgamated at the end for the interpretation. Qualitative data analysis was done to generate meaningful summaries out of the raw data submitted in the form of short write-ups by the groups. Total of 34 write-ups were analyzed. The analysis was done in 6 phases of categorizing and assigning codes to the data. At first, the write-ups were read and re-read to understand and get a good sense out of the raw data. 1725 distinctive phrases were extracted that appeared to be expressing discrete thoughts related to cultural observations. Initial categorization was done using the open code. For example, “One most important thing that we realized was that the Indian culture is extremely diverse, deep, vibrant, alive and full of traditions, rituals background stories and historical underpinnings whose time scale is on a cosmic level.” Bottom-up process was used to code the data in the first stage. Themes such as marriage, relationships, sibling bonding, attitude

toward females, joint families, nuclear families, Gods, faith, believes, sexuality, division of labor, status, decision-making, tourism, food, professional and personal hierarchy, etc. emerged. Codes and sub-codes were generated. The codebook was revised and re-revised several times by comparing the initial codes, relating them with the sub-codes and evaluating whether the extracted data is making sense related to the theme of the study i.e. whether it is reflecting the practical aspects of cross-cultural understanding or not.

The data was analyzed using the qualitative data analysis software programmer QSR NVivo Pro (Qualitative Solutions and Research Software: Version 2). Full transcripts from the write-ups submitted by students were entered onto Rich Text Format (RTF) files and loaded to NVivo (Gibbs 2002). Sections of data that referred to cultural themes and which reflected the general questions raised were brought together using NVivo's coding facility. Following steps were taken to organize the data so that it could be more manageably retrieved, sorted, and grouped:

- (1) Based on research questions, all the relevant sections of a text were marked and assembled in Nodes.
- (2) Content categorization: The sub text was read as openly as possible. Keeping the purpose in mind, subtext categories were sorted, and themes were generated.
- (3) Sorting the material into the categories. At this stage, separate sentences or utterances are assigned to relevant categories. Pattern recognition and fair representation methodology were adopted to further categorize the extracted data.

5. Findings

5.1. *Qualitative data analysis*

The resulting content was large and diverse. Through the answers from students of different cultures and fields of study, many differences in perceptions of these ads became obvious. Themes were extracted and gaps were identified between perception and reality. Valuable insights came up from all three cultures' mind-sets regarding the context being investigated. Each identified gap left students with extra knowledge and information about each other's culture (Table 2). Findings from some samples are elaborated below:

While exploring the Indian culture through the lens of native ads, students realize that in many cases there was a mismatch in what they perceived with what the fact was. Students from other countries learnt that though things are changing in India, sharing the work load in office and at home, concept of beauty, and patriarchal attitude still exist. The generic theme related with

religion also emerged as religion and culture are inseparable in many ways. For thousands of years, various societies have had some form of religion at the center of their cultural beliefs and practices. The finding reflected a gap in what people in Austria perceive about religious sentiments related to the cow in India with the fact. Similarly, Indian participants felt that joint family culture where even grand parents live with their grand-children will be something that Russian participants may not understand but to their surprise it was not so. While reading the views of Austrian participants related to smoking, Indian participants realized that they did not appreciate the ad which is indirectly indicating them to “not to smoke.” They believe in self-creation and experimentation as opposed to tradition or popular mass opinions and behaviors.

5.2. Participants' opinions on using connectivist environment for developing global mind-set in teaching international business (IB)

Group was independent to choose a medium, aggregate, create, relate, and share the information outside the classroom. They were responsible to set learning goals, manage time, identify resources, try out new media tools, and make them work. Though majority of participants had good things to narrate, there were few who shared mixed reactions. One participant commented, “This was my first activity where I participated in an autonomous learning exercise. Earlier it used to be in a formal classroom and the instructor was equally responsible for the successful completion of the learning activity. Initially, my group found it problematic. But slowly the things became interesting.”

Another group commented, “Despite being highly socially sensitive, open to collaborating, share views, our group on the other side was not responding. We felt that collaborative and autonomous learning may not necessarily results in knowledge creation.” Many groups shared positive feed backs. One group felt “It was a thought provoking project for us. Learning about Austrian culture was made so interesting. We discovered many eye opening facts that we might remember throughout our lives.”

“Through this productive interaction with our Austrian counterparts, we as a group discovered a whole new angle to the cross-cultural exercise. We acquired knowledge and distinguished between facts and fiction through interesting interactions with one another, rather than from a teacher.”

“We learnt so many things about the culture in Russia. I do not think a mere reading of cultural theories would have helped us better.”

The mixed reactions were obvious when you initiate any new thing. On the one hand, some groups found the exercise to be highly productive while directing their own learning, on the other hand some groups preferred more support and coordination from the instructor that can give their learning a direction.

5.3. Quantitative data analysis

At the end of the project, students were asked to reflect on the 9 specific skills which the project aimed for developing a global mind-set in International business teaching. Those skills were research abilities, verbal and written communication skills, problem-solving abilities, time management skills, teamwork, creative thinking, IT skills, cross-cultural communication competence, and ability to use web resources appropriately. The chart given below (Figure 1) reflects the same:

The activity was designed to develop cultural competence in teaching international business to the business management class and the score on this parameter was highly satisfactory. The skills related to organizing and managing learning to use web resource and technology-enabled instruction came out to be between good to very good. Students scored average on the critical thinking, and research abilities. Critical thinking tends to build a rational, open-minded process that depends on enough information and empirical evidences. Time plays important role in it. It was felt that for developing these abilities the duration of the project was too short. It was interesting to see that the scores were very good on teamwork, time management, and problem solving. The abilities in verbal and written communication also scored between averaged to good.

A paired-samples t-test was also conducted to compare the responses of participants who felt that they enhanced the 9 specific skills with the ones who felt that they did not or maybe they are not sure.

The test showed that there was a significant difference in the scores of the respondents who said yes ($M = 66$, $SD = 18.98$) to the ones who said no/maybe ($M = 33.88$, $SD = 18.98$) conditions; $t(4) = 2.4$, $p = .034$. These results suggest that the huge number of participants felt that the exercise helped them immensely in enhancing the skills required to develop a global mind-set.

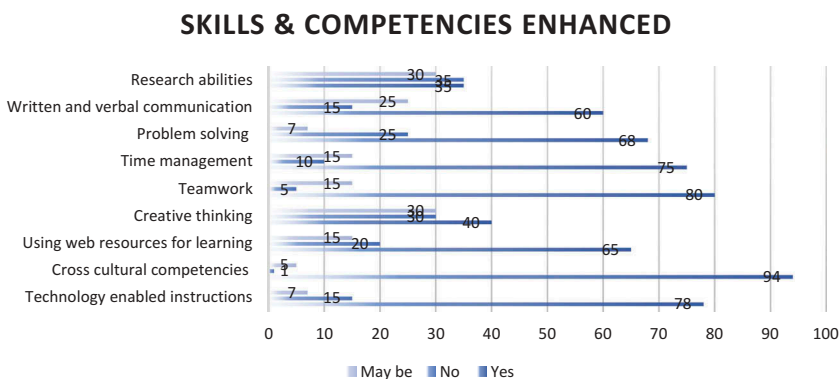


Figure 1. Enhanced Skills and competencies

6. Discussion

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of a student-centric, output-oriented methodology based on the principles of connectivism for developing a global mind-set in teaching International business and knowledge creation in cross-cultural studies. It was found that the methodology was successful in making students understand the dynamics of cross-cultural communication and its significance in future career. The literature suggested innovation in pedagogies using appropriate curriculum design and trainings for developing global mind-set in international business (IB) and the findings established that by using simple methods like this one, it is possible to develop a global mind-set without completely overthrowing the existing learning paradigm.

The assignment was successful in not only creating the conditions of the emergence of knowledge, but also accumulating and transferring it thus supporting the fact pointed out by Kaya and Erkut, B that “the subjectivity of knowledge is indeed not a philosophical metaphor, but rather the result of the interaction processes in the cortex of the human mind” (Kaya 2018).

The results justified that “for organizations focusing on the generation of knowledge, it is certain that the process of generating and organizing knowledge cannot occur in a top-down, centrally planned way but has to be bottom-up (Erkut 2016b) and based on the individuals that constitute the organization.” The method used in the study was unique from the existing methods of conventional teaching. Through the bottom-up process, students analyzed different levels of perception involved and learnt that an answer to a specific question might match the expectations at one point of time and for a specific group of people but it can be different in a different time zone and with different people. By applying four simple principles, (1) providing nodes, (2) building connections, (3) output orientation, and (4) student centered learning through PEL and self-regulated learning paradigm students who aspire to be global managers developed an open mind-set to consider the unique situations that cause problems and explore appropriate solutions. The students designed their activities consulting their group members. This enabled self-learning atmosphere. They learnt to identify the similarities and differences between their understanding and expectations with that of the reaction of the group on the other side at personal level thus enhancing their own critical thinking abilities. As highlighted in the review of the literature, critical thinking ability is an important component in developing a global mind-set, hence the unique approach proves successful in adding value into training and development of students’ global mind-set.

The students reached these defined learning outcomes through different routes, both formal and informal and have, in the process probably learned very different things, many of which are not obvious to the teacher. It was felt by the instructors that the present set of students, being digital natives and

most of the time (if not always) being connected to their digital community excelled in using open learning sources for their own learning success and were quick to enlarge their own networks.

Students felt that they spent less time gathering and integrating knowledge and more time on higher-level thinking – gathering information from human and non-human sources, synthesizing information, constructing new knowledge, and applying what they learnt (Ohler 2008). They learnt to acquire knowledge and distinguish between facts and fiction through interactions with one another, rather than from a teacher (Bell, March 2011).

The study offered new insights in teaching International business (IB) through a method that can incorporate the multiple skills and competencies integrating both long- and short-term perspectives as stated in the literature review (Agarwal, 2011) . Through this assignment, students were exposed to various components of a global mind-set, including cognitive complexity, critical thinking, collaborative skills, and cosmopolitanism (Abugre 2016; Aggarwal 2016; Quan Vu Le 2018).

The assessment of such exercises can only be done by assessing the quality of the produced output (e.g. the quality of the short papers produced in the above course), not by checking rote learning. In this student-based activity, students designed most of their own learning experience which enabled them to perceive the similarities and differences between their views, their expectations and the reaction of the other side on a very personal level. They shared:

“The project was thought provoking. We learnt many things about Austrian culture which would not have been possible by just going through the established cultural theories.”

“It was an interesting project. We acquired knowledge and distinguished between facts and fiction through interesting interactions with one another, rather than from a teacher. The learning was so practical in nature that it will last forever.”

They learnt as stated by Stephen Covey, “we see the world, not as it is, but as we are or, as we are conditioned to see it.” Hence the methodology proved to be not only output oriented but also a good source of knowledge creation. The demonstrated principles are not restricted to “soft” topics and can be used to generate knowledge in a variety of fields. The same principles have been successfully used to generate knowledge in the medicine and statistics fields.

To sum up following are the critical insights derived from this study:

First, my study provides evidence that designing and developing exercise which are practical and applicable in the real life does increase teaching effectiveness and knowledge creation in International Business domain. Second, my study provides an interesting awareness and knowledge of social and cultural background as skills necessary for effective team tasks in international business operations. Hence, this study adds on prior studies and explores a unique contribution in terms of pedagogy for building competencies in cross-cultural communication. Third, the study establishes that multicultural team

effectiveness and cross-cultural communication competence are directly related and are significant in managing and operating culturally diverse teams.

7. Research limitations and future research

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. There is a high possibility that the responses from the teams have been overstated. There is a high chance of getting a different reaction to the same advertisement if shared with a different team. My study emphasized accessing external knowledge through various sources; however, absorptive capacity is decisive as to what extent the knowledge will be absorbed by each participant. The study involved only three countries, it will be beneficial to carry out this research in other countries and cultures to enrich the data. Culture is a vast term; 4 weeks project was a short duration to understand cultures in general. For better results, universities can extend the duration to at least 2–3 months. The study claims knowledge creation but the fact that it takes place at the abstract level of the mind it is difficult to measure the extent of knowledge created.

To improve the learning outcomes, the researchers can extend the current study by including various other features in the task design. In future, the exercise can be done via collaborative platforms such as SLACK where team members can engage in rapport and trust building activities. They can exchange short video clips and personal profiles describing themselves, their hometowns, universities, and favorite activities. In the beginning, students can do an initial ZOOM meeting, to discuss the assignment, roles and tasks, etc. They can set timelines and benchmarks. Instead of any ad from the open source, a facilitator can ask the team members of each country to select two ads from the specific industry which reflect their culture. This will make the task/research more specific. Resulting interpretations, misunderstandings, and false perceptions can be discussed in a teleconference involving individual or all team members. Cultural values and lifestyles can be discussed in detail. Team members can be made to visit each other's home country and meet them face to face. They can compare their perceptions with actual experience and further cultivate their intercultural understanding thus developing a global mind-set. Future pedagogical research should also focus on designing specific learning material that can target specific learning goals. In the end, I would like to reinforce that educators will still have an important role to play in designing, monitoring and evaluating the exercise which is more practical and applicable in the real life. Albeit the above-mentioned limitations, the study makes a strong contribution to the field of teaching International business (IB) and knowledge creation in the intercultural and cross-cultural studies. It contributes to the international business literature by suggesting mixed methodology and innovative teaching pedagogy for developing a global mind-set and cross-cultural communication competence.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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