



# QUIC

## **Making the Difference:**

**Integrating sociocultural competence and other research into international student orientation and support programs**

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## **Making the Difference: Integrating sociocultural competence and other research into international student orientation and support programs**

Have you ever wondered where all of the wonderful research on international education and international students by Masters and PhD students and their professors and mentors ends up? Significant work has been done over the years on cultural transition, international student adaptation and cultural competencies. Has the work of these folks ever made a difference to our professional work and experience?

I am sure that we have all had the privilege of hearing key leaders in the field of international education at a conference or have read the works of the “big names” in intercultural communication who have helped to establish the field as we know it. Have we taken this research and changed the way we do things? How do we integrate this work into practice? As a practitioner when I design my programs and activities, I must confess I very often reach back into the “tried and true” practices of the past and have used the work of early interculturalists and international educators to get my message across. The “U” and “W” curves, the iceberg model, Bafa Bafa and Barnga, and the DIE exercise grace my cultural presentations like elderly relations at a community dance. I suppose that this provokes an additional question - When we do employ theory and research in our practice, do we know who carried out the research, when, and from what context it emerged?

With these questions in mind, I have directed my recent reading and discussion with professional colleagues to the end of discovering their answers.

This paper will deal mainly with the question regarding our application of research in our programs; however, before I outline my findings in that area, I am wondering about the extent of our collective knowledge of our own intercultural training history. For this portion of this paper, I owe much to the work of Peggy Pusch in her chapter “Intercultural Training in Historical Perspective” in *The Handbook of Intercultural Training*.

Below are three tables that have variables that must be arranged in correct relation to one another: one, a number of organizations and dates; two, a number of authors, items and dates; and three, a number of instruments, authors and dates. Try your hand at re-arranging the items, authors and dates so that they correspond accurately with the organization name, author or instrument listed in the first column. The answers are in Appendix 1.

**Table 1: International Organizations and their Founding Dates (Undesignated)**

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Date Founded</b>
4-H Exchange	1917	
AFS	1931	
Canadian Friends Service Committee	1947	
CBIE	1947	
CIDA	1948	
CIDA Briefing Centre	1948	
CIEE	1957	
Coady Institute	1959	
CUSO	1960	
East West Centre	1961	
IDRC	1961	
IETP	1964	
IIE	1965	
Intercultural Press	1966	
Norman Paterson School of International Affairs	1968	
NAFSA	1969	
Peace Corps	1970	
Portland Institute	1974	
SIETAR	1977	
SIT	1977	
WUSC	2003	

**Table 2: Key Figures in the field of International Education (Undesignated)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Authored Items</b>	<b>Author's Item</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Date</b>
Allison Lanier	<i>Coming of Age in Samoa</i>		1915	
Bronislaw Malinowski	<i>Culture's Consequences</i>		1928	
Dan Kealey	<i>Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition</i>		1946	
Edward Hall			1959	
Geert Hofstede	<i>Living in the USA</i>		1973	
John Berry	<i>Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person</i>		1979	
Josef Mestenhauser			2000	
Margret Meade	<i>Survival Kit for Overseas Living</i>		2001	
Robert Kolhs	<i>The Silent Language</i>		2001	
Ruth Benedict	<i>The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture</i>		2006	
	<i>The Trobriand Islands</i>			
	<i>Thinking not as Usual: Adding the intercultural perspective.</i>			

**Table 3: Instruments Used in Intercultural Training**

Instrument	Authors	Author	Dates	Date
“U” Curve	Bennett		1951	
“W” Curve	Bennett		1954	
Bafa Bafa	Dubois		1955	
Barnga	Gullahorn (2)		1963	
Cold Water	Hall		1970	
Culture Shock	Hammer et al.		1973	
D.I.E.	Kolb		1974	
DMIS	Lysgaard		1976	
ExcelL	Mak et al.		1981	
Iceberg model	Ogami		1986	
IDI	Shirts		1987	
Learning Styles Inventory	Thiagi		1994	
Re-entry	Westwood		2000	
World Within Reach	WSAnet		2003	

**How well do we integrate current research into practice?**

I visited international educators at a number of Canadian post-secondary institutions during a trip in 2009 to discuss if they are aware of recent research and writing in the field of the international education, and if so how they put it into practice.

I made reference to significant research that had been conducted in the fields of acculturation, cultural transition, intercultural communication, and sociocultural

competency training, to see if they recognized any of the researchers. Overall, it appears that very little of that research has been applied in practice.

Whether it is:

- Hofstede's work on cultural dimensions that "gives us insights into other cultures so that we can be more effective when interacting with people in other countries"<sup>1</sup>;
- or Bennett's research on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) which "explains how people or groups tend to think and feel about cultural difference"<sup>2</sup>;
- or Hammer's and Bennett's Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) that helps people, teams, and entire organizations become more effective communicating and working with, leading, and understanding the needs of people from different cultural backgrounds"<sup>3</sup>;
- or Westwood, Ishikawa, Barker and Mak's work in training for sociocultural competencies through the ExceLL program which is "designed to help international students adjust to a new culture and to fully participate in life at school or on the university campus"<sup>4</sup>

– few practitioners have utilized this research in their orientation programs and/or workshops.

### **Why are we not applying the research?**

My conversations with various international education practitioners revealed that most were not able to apply research because they:

- did not have time for research or program design
- did not have resources
- did not have experience in how to do it

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/> May 5, 2009

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.mdbgroupinc.com/dmis\\_background.htm/](http://www.mdbgroupinc.com/dmis_background.htm/) May 5, 2009

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.mdbgroupinc.com/idi\\_applications.htm/](http://www.mdbgroupinc.com/idi_applications.htm/) May 5, 2009

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr/training/excell.aspx/> May 5, 2009

- did not have the knowledge
- were not hired to design new programs
- were not aware of the material
- were already overworked with their existing programs.

In addition, the feedback was clear – the research that we do apply was largely developed in the post-war era up until about 1980. With this in mind, I feel that one of the purposes of this paper should be to highlight a few of the researchers who have been adding to the knowledge and practice in our field. This selection of individuals and groups will be totally subjective on my part and will omit some notables who will be glaring by their absence. Having said that, it is simply my purpose to open up our consciousness about the field of international and intercultural education and stimulate a collective investigation into the next steps forward.

### **What have researchers been doing that may be of interest to international educators?**

In this section I will give a brief outline of a few authors' work largely excerpted from internet sources. My selection of these particular authors is based more on my experience with their work than on any comprehensive review of the literature. In most cases, I use the words of the researcher to describe the potential benefits and applications of their work.

#### **John W. Berry – “Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures”**

In the field of cultural research perhaps John Berry of Queen's University is best known for his work on “acculturation”. ‘*Acculturation*’ refers to “culture change resulting from contact between cultures.”<sup>5</sup> Acculturation has emerged as one of the most prominent topics in the area of cross-cultural psychology.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.oregonstate.edu/instruct/anth370/gloss.html/](http://www.oregonstate.edu/instruct/anth370/gloss.html/) May 5, 2009



## **Thomas Vulpe, Daniel Kealey, David Protheroe and Doug MacDonald: Intercultural Competency Training**

Competency training is well known to many professions. However, in the field of international education it has only been applied in the past ten years. The work of Dan Kealey and his colleagues at the Centre for Intercultural Learning has helped to move competency training beyond research to practice in the field of international education. Their publication *A Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person* (Vulpe et al. 2004) sets the stage for organizations and institutions to utilize a competency based approach to hiring and training suitable candidates for working in the international arena.

What is a culturally effective person? By our definition, it is someone who is able to “live contentedly and work successfully in another culture.” This profile will outline the broad competencies – the skills, knowledge and attitudes – and the more specific behavioural traits possessed by an interculturally effective person (IEP).

This profile can be used as a guide for designing pre-departure training programs, for improving selection procedures for international personnel, and for evaluating their performance on assignment. It can also be used for composing job descriptions, in project planning, and as a self-development guide.<sup>8</sup>

This research was foundational in the work that Myles and Corrie carried out in identifying the competencies that underlie the work of international education professionals in *Training for International Educations in Canada: A Competency-Based Approach*.

## **Josef Mestenhauser: Adding the Intercultural Perspective to Thinking**

The work of Josef Mestenhauser at the University of Minnesota has assisted international educators to move beyond the paradigm of seeing intercultural competence as a “fix the problem” approach. His work addresses such topics as leadership in higher education, internationalizing the campus, and the process of becoming interculturally competent.

Mestenhauser’s work in the essay “*Thinking not as usual: adding the intercultural perspective*” (Yershova. DeJaeghere, Mestenhauser. 2000) is particularly thought-provoking.

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<sup>8</sup> Vulpe et al. 2001 p. 5.

The purpose of this article is to fill the gap between the emphasis in higher education on subject matter content and the acquisition of intellectual competencies.... The authors selected three such competencies for review and examination: intercultural competence; critical thinking; and comparative thinking.... Their analysis indicates that teaching of intercultural competence continues to be dominated by the "fix the problem" paradigm, which considers cultural differences an obstacle to be over-come. They applaud the emerging emphasis on the developmental approach to intercultural competence. Critical thinking, the second skill discussed, is the best known and is the one most commonly referred to in the literature as a universal skill. The authors dispute its universality by calling attention to specific areas of critical thinking that are influenced by culture, and by suggesting ways of expanding the concept to be more relevant to intercultural interactions. Comparative thinking, the third intellectual skill, seems to be the most neglected and yet is the most pervasively used, being practiced every time individuals explain themselves to other.<sup>9</sup>

They suggest that their research can help instructors to infuse the intercultural perspective into the curriculum and to help students view the course through a different lens or multiple lenses.

### **Mitchell Hammer and Milton Bennett - The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)**

Mitchell Hammer and Milton Bennett developed an assessment tool "as an empirical measurement of intercultural sensitivity as conceptualized by Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)." <sup>10</sup>

The DMIS has been used extensively in intercultural education and training since 1986 as a framework for explaining the reactions of people to cultural difference. The DMIS identifies a set of cognitive structures (or "worldviews") that act as orientations to cultural difference which move along a developmental scale from stages of ethnocentrism through stages of ethnorelativism. The IDI is a valid, reliable tool to measure an individual's (or group's) fundamental worldview orientation to cultural difference according to the DMIS stages.

#### **What is the IDI?**

- A theory-based (not opinion-based) inventory which meets standard scientific criteria for a valid and reliable psychometric instrument.
- A 50 item questionnaire available in 12 languages.
- The IDI is currently being used by over 1,200 Qualified Administrators in over 25 countries.

#### **Why use the IDI?**

- To assess cross-cultural competencies for teams or individuals working in cross-cultural situations.
- To understand and identify developmental stages of clients or partners.
- To encourage reflection and strategizing for multicultural teams.
- To determine areas that facilitate, or limit, cross-cultural competence for teams or individuals.
- To increase self-awareness of intercultural competencies and encourage further development.

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<sup>9</sup> Yerabova et al. 2001 p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.truworld.ca/internationalization/internal/IDI.html>

- To establish a language and conceptual framework for discussing intercultural interactions.

### **What is the purpose of the IDI?**

The IDI can help respondents to:

- Understand the developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity through which people move towards greater intercultural effectiveness.
- Increase self-awareness for each individual respondent and identify issues that may be impeding development.
- Increase organization-level understanding of intercultural issues.
- Determine training and educational needs.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of training, counselling and education endeavours.
- Improve the intercultural skills of respondents.
- Prepare to enter a new culture, such as a multinational environment, a new country, or a domestic situation with cultural diversity.
- Identify training and education needs of client populations

### **How does it work?**

- Participants complete a confidential (password accessed) online inventory.
- A Qualified IDI Administrator creates a graphic profile (for a group or individuals).
- IDI Administrator explains stages of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) which is the theoretical base of the instrument.
- IDI Administrator provides graphic profile and interpretation.
- Teams or individuals reflect on results of inventory, strategize for further development and achieve greater understanding of reactions to cultural difference.<sup>11</sup>

The IDI can be used in working with many of the groups of staff, students and faculty who are involved in the international education and internationalization activities. Participants completing the IDI have the opportunity to see themselves in a different light than they may have experienced in the past. Participants may deepen their understanding of their intercultural skills and knowledge. They gain a snap shot of where they fit on the intercultural communication continuum. They also have a benchmark for reviewing their intercultural development at some time in the future.

## **Westwood, Mak, Barker, Ishiyama - Excellence in Experiential Learning and Leadership (ExceLL) Intercultural Skills Program**

The initial period of six months in a host culture is critical for the successful adjustment of a newcomer. Many of us are using traditional orientation programs and workshops to get the message across about the services and resources available to students to assist them during their adjustment process. The Excellence in Experiential Learning and Leadership (ExceLL) Intercultural Skills Program or as its Canadian creators call it Sociocultural Competency Training (SCT) was created in 1999 as a tool to assist newcomers in developing sociocultural communication skills. Since its development by

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.truworld.ca/internationalization/internal/IDI.html>

a team of Canadian and Australian researchers, the ExceLL program has gained significant attention especially in Australia and New Zealand. Although the program is referred to as SCT by Westwood and Ishiyama, since I will be referring to publications detailing the program as it is used in Australia and New Zealand. I will continue to call it ExceLL in this article.

The EXCELL Intercultural Skills Programme is a practical programme designed to help international students adjust to a new culture and to fully participate in life at school or on the university campus.

**The EXCELL programme will teach international students:**

**What** to do in certain educational, social and work settings in order to communicate effectively

**How** to apply this knowledge for best results

**Why** these behaviours are appropriate in the new culture

Participants in EXCELL will learn the skills to

1. Seek help or information
2. Make social contact and social conversation
3. Participate in a group or team setting
4. Refuse a request
5. Give feedback
6. Express disagreement

International students who complete EXCELL report a marked increase in self-confidence and happiness resulting in local friendships and academic success. EXCELL promotes intercultural understanding amongst local students thus maximising the benefits of cultural diversity in the classroom.<sup>12</sup>

The ExceLL program is especially useful in offering newcomers – both immigrants and international students – the opportunity to identify the context within which they must communicate in order to have a successful transition to their new host culture, and to practice skills that enable them to communicate in academic and social situations. This is a welcome addition to the orientation activities that we have traditionally offered to new students and staff.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr/training/excell.aspx>

## **Who is applying the research?**

This section will be a short list of institutions and individuals that have taken steps to build current research into their international education programs and activities. These are only a few of the ingenious practitioners that are working industriously across Canada to change the way we do our work. The fact that we do not have a comprehensive inventory of the work in progress betrays a serious shortcoming in our profession that needs attention.

## **Extending our Understanding of the Cultural Adjustment Process**

At the CBIE annual conference in 2004, Lorna Unger of Carleton University presented a workshop on pre-departure preparation. In her comments on “culture shock” she examined another way of envisaging this experience. She illustrated the process through what might be called “the stress and coping lens” or in a similar light to the experiencing of other stressful periods in our lives, and proposed commonly used stress management techniques to address the negative responses that her students might experience in the transition.

These insights employed by Lorna have their roots in psychological counseling and it is exactly this type of application that broadens our base of knowledge and its application in the field. The book, *The psychology of culture shock* by Colleen A. Ward, Stephen Bochner, Adrian Furnham, examines ‘culture shock’ - which is one of the most commonly used concept in our cross-cultural work – from a psychological perspective. Usually we map this concept on another generally accepted concept - the “U” or “W” curve - which as we have seen above was coined in the 1950s and 60s. It lays out various ways regarding how we understand the intercultural transition process and how we can assist those experiencing its impacts. Among others, the works of John W. Berry are examined.

One of the reasons why it is especially important for international educators to portray the adjustment process in a variety of ways is, while most international educators generally accept and often refer to such concepts as ‘culture shock’ and the ‘U and W curves’, these concepts are themselves in doubt according to many researchers.<sup>13</sup> *The psychology of culture shock* lists three reasons that the ‘U’ curve remains popular even though there is evidence to indicate that it is largely unsubstantiated:

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<sup>13</sup> *Is it Time to Retire the U- and W-Curves of Adjustment?* [www.pacific.edu/SIS/docs/FINAL-Forum-Presentation.ppt](http://www.pacific.edu/SIS/docs/FINAL-Forum-Presentation.ppt).

- it is intuitively appealing;
- while there is much evidence to dispute the validity of the U-curve proposition, there is some that supports it;
- and, finally there is no credible successor to explain sojourner adjustment over time. The authors do note that the stress and coping approach shows promise but requires more longitudinal study.<sup>14</sup>

### **Applying what we know of Intercultural competencies**

In addition to the ExceLL program, other institutions are making efforts to offer programs that increase student competencies in the area of communication skills and to assist their students in making a healthy and successful adjustment to the Canadian and local cultures. The Langara PLUS program and the UBC Jump Start program are two programs that illustrate different approaches to integrating sociocultural competency training into the initial stage of international student adjustment to their new host culture. Other institutions are also implementing similar programs.

The Langara PLUS Program features four categories of activity including: study skills workshops, social events, recreational activities, and lifestyle workshops to achieve this end.<sup>15</sup>

The UBC Jump Start Program provides new international students with an intensive two-week academic preparation for university life that offers a combination of lectures, classes, workshops, residence living, and social and cultural activities led by our outstanding faculty, staff, and student leaders.<sup>16</sup>

### **Applying the theory of Internationalization to practice**

Almost all institutions in the country have some form of mission statement involving a goal for internationalizing the campus. Whether it is the work of Jane Knight (internationalization policy and practice), Josef Mestenhauser (international education leadership, thinking differently about intercultural communication) or Bengt Nilsson (internationalization at home- IaH) the concepts and statements are widely used. But how are they put into practice? Betty Leask, a researcher from Australia specializing in

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<sup>14</sup> Ward, Boschner, Furnham, 2001. P. 82-83

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.langara.bc.ca/international-education/langara-plus.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.students.ubc.ca/newtoubc/orientations.cfm?page=jumpstart&view=schedule>

internationalizing the curriculum, noted in her article “Competing rationales for and discourses of internationalisation: Implications for academic staff development“ that what is evident in our discourse, is not always evidenced in our practice.<sup>17</sup>

Possibly the best example of an institution that has acted in a comprehensive and determined fashion to internationalize their institution, is Thompson Rivers University (TRU). Policy, curriculum and programs all bear evidence of putting theory from the field – Mestenhauser and Bennett – into practice. The training programs for their faculty and staff members orient them to the intercultural and international environment that the strategic goals seek to promote. Credit courses on “Performing to Academic Standards” and “Intercultural Learning Perspectives” aim to support the student in addressing differences in educational and cultural perspectives and building competencies that will enable communication skills for participating successfully inside and outside the classroom.<sup>18</sup>

At Queen’s University International Centre (QUIC) we have applied research from both areas of internationalization at home (IaH) and international competency training. Recently Andrew Crosby, our 2008-09 international education intern, published a paper entitled “Linking the Intercultural and Anti-Racism Components in Internationalization at Home: The English Language Support Program at the Queen's University International Centre, Canada “ that looked at the field of IaH and reviewed the QUIC English Language Support (ELS) Program as an application of that theory. In addition Andy noted that there is an absence of research and programs in the IaH field that are directed to anti-racist education. His contention is that when internationalization at home programs are implemented in our local learning communities then there is an increased opportunity that cultural difference can lead to conflict, especially racism. If that is the case then we should be implementing anti-racist training programs to enable international educators to work successfully to broaden engagement between people who are racialized and local communities.

In the area of international education competency training, QUIC has researched and designed programs specifically for international educators and for staff from across the Queen’s campus. Both the International Educators Training Program (IETP)<sup>19</sup> and the

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<sup>17</sup> Leask, 2005. [http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/pdf/refereed/paper\\_424.pdf](http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/pdf/refereed/paper_424.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.truworld.ca/internationalization.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://quic.queensu.ca/training/ietphome.asp>

Certificate in International Perspectives for Queen's staff<sup>20</sup> have been impacted by research in the areas of competency training (Vulpy et al, 2000) and intercultural competencies (Hammer and Bennett, 2001). In order to determine the competencies that underlay the skills and knowledge that international education professions need to learn in order to perform their responsibilities successfully, QUIC generated a working paper entitled *Training for International Educators in Canada: A Competency-Based Approach* (Myles and Corrie, 2008). From that background research the IETP courses were specifically designed to build competencies into the training for international education professionals.

### **Thoughts about some ways forward**

If I were to suggest to you that we should be using typewriters and slide rulers as a basis for our engineering programs in our institutions, you would consider me slightly daft, if you considered my proposal at all. Is this not the case with our recent application of new research on international education? Are we not, for the most part, still using the instruments and research that were generated for international education and cross cultural training up to the 1980s? Needless to say, we must move forward.

Given the realities of our work and the reasons stated for not employing recent research into our practice, this may not be as simple as we would like. However, here are a few suggestions for moving us forward.

First, why not include sessions on applied research in future conferences and encourage sessions that either outline recent international and intercultural research, or present how research has been applied in our programs and services? Once the sessions have been delivered, they could be added to a database that was available to the professionals in the field.

Second, we could track the Masters and PhD research that is being carried out by the international education community in Canada and add the various projects and thesis abstracts to a database. If a more direct intervention were desired, a list of topics in the fields of intercultural communication and international education could be generated to inspire professionals carrying out advanced studies to address in their research some of the needs identified by their colleagues.

Finally, we could encourage practitioners in the field to document the changes that they make to existing programs and the implementation of new programs that apply some of

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.hr.queensu.ca/workandcareer/cw-trainwork.php?certid=8>

the research that is being generated by their professional colleagues or by the academic community specializing in international and intercultural education.

### A final word

With these suggestions and insights in mind, I hope that international educators will become more aware of and involved in attempting to put recent research into practice. With each step forward we will begin to see new approaches emerge for our programs and services focusing on international students and students preparing for a sojourn abroad, especially in the area of social and cultural adjustment to a new host culture. Any success that we experience utilizing new research may mean a more successful transition for students who are in the midst of the acculturation process. This in itself is a goal worth achieving.

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[http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/pdf/refereed/paper\\_424.pdf](http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/pdf/refereed/paper_424.pdf)
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## Appendix 1

**Table 1: International Organizations and their Founding Dates (Sorted)**

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Canadian Friends Service Committee	1931
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CIEE	1947
Coady Institute	1959
CUSO	1961
East West Centre	1960
IDRC	1970
IETP	2003
IIE	1917
Intercultural Press	1977
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"W" Curve	Gullahorn (2)	1963
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Barnga	Thiagi	1981
Cold Water	Ogami	1987
Culture Shock	Dubois (IIE)	1951
D.I.E.	Bennett	1973
DMIS	Bennett	1986
ExceLL	Mak et al.	2000
Iceberg model	Hall (Weaver)	1954
IDI	Hammer et al.	2003
Learning Styles Inventory	Kolb	1976
Re-entry	Westwood	1970
World Within Reach	WSAnet	1994