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**TITLE**

**COLOURFUL COLLABORATION**

Developing an intercultural training framework aiming  
to increase intercultural sensitivity for Towers Watson  
Reward, Talent and Communications employees

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# **COLOURFUL COLLABORATION**

Developing an intercultural training framework aiming  
to increase intercultural sensitivity for Towers Watson  
Reward, Talent and Communications employees

by

**Johanna Westhauser**

**August 2014**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the Degree of Master of Science in  
Intercultural Business Communication**

# Declaration

I declare that the work undertaken for this MSc Dissertation has been undertaken by myself and the final Dissertation produced by me. The work has not been submitted in part or in whole in regard to any other academic qualification.

**Title of Dissertation:**

**COLOURFUL COLLABORATION** – Developing an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity for Towers Watson Reward, Talent and Communications employees

Name (Print):           Johanna Westhauser

Signature:               \_\_\_\_\_

Date:                      18 August 2014

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## **List of Data Providers:**

- Towers Watson UK Ltd.

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## **Abstract**

An internationalised world requires employees to have intercultural skills to efficiently interact with colleagues and clients. Particularly in highly-diversified organisations like Towers Watson, a global management consultancy, employees would hugely benefit from intercultural training; however, the company currently does not offer it. Additionally, present intercultural research lacks applied culture-general training in the organisational context, and so the research set out to develop an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity for Towers Watson's Reward, Talent and Communication employees.

Primary data was gathered through interpretivist research using inductive and exploratory approaches combined with qualitative research methods in order to derive deeper meanings from this case study. Two semi-structured interviews and one employee focus group informed the research, and the data was analysed using open coding and qualitative content analysis. Relevant academic and practitioner literature from the fields of intercultural business communication, diversity management, and organisational management was synthesised to produce secondary data findings.

Combining the primary data findings with literature review results, an intercultural training framework was developed consisting of three parts and eleven stages. Although the research findings are specific to Towers Watson's context, the extracted themes overlapped with literature findings and can hence be generalised to a certain extent. The employed research approach was described in fine detail to ensure potential replication and application to other organisations. Future research foci are suggested as measuring employees' level of intercultural sensitivity and assessing the developed framework's effectiveness.

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## **Acknowledgements**

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I'm also very grateful to my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Mary Fischer, whose excellent comments and pointers helped me to focus more and dig deeper in my research. She challenged me every step of the way and provided the right level of guidance to complete this research. Thank you, Mary.

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I hope you enjoy reading this piece and welcome any feedback.

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# List of Abbreviations

This research uses key terms in abbreviated form, as set out below.

In alphabetical order:

<b>DMIS</b>	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity <i>(developed by M.J. Bennett, 1986)</i>
<b>GTM</b>	Global training manager
<b>IM</b>	Instant messenger (tool)
<b>L&amp;D lead</b>	Learning and development lead
<b>P1-6</b>	Participant 1-6 of employee focus group
<b>ROI</b>	Return on investment
<b>RTC</b>	Reward, Talent and Communications <i>(department at Towers Watson)</i>
<b>TW</b>	Towers Watson

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# **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

## **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter firstly provides the context of the research followed by two clear problem statements. From this, the purpose of the study is formulated and research questions derived, which are subsequently translated into research aim and objectives. An overview of the research process is given, followed by a short introduction to the researcher, and finally, the remainder of the dissertation is presented.

## **1.2 Background**

Globalisation and an internationalised society mean nowadays intercultural interactions are inevitable. Particularly in the workplace, employees are confronted with intercultural interactions every day, collaborating with multinational clients and/or different people from diverse backgrounds. Hence the ability to communicate interculturally and achieve a high level of intercultural sensitivity has become necessary and a sought-after skill by employers (Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992). For Towers Watson (TW), a highly-diversified global management consultancy and the author's work place, there is an even stronger need for employees to be interculturally sensitive: the consultant job in itself requires working with clients and colleagues across different industries, geographical regions, seniority levels, and social and academic backgrounds on a daily basis. Therefore, employees need to be sensitive to other cultures and collaborate efficiently across cultures to ensure high business performance.

Working across cultures or in intercultural teams can be challenging (Earley and Ang, 2003; Leung and Stephan, 1998; Molinsky, 2013). As intercultural sensitivity is a prerequisite to successfully interact across cultures (Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992), the need for employees' intercultural sensitivity is becoming more important (Bücker and Poutsma, 2010; Coffey *et al.*, 2013; Hammer *et al.*, 2003; Spitzberg, 2000). As suggested by Zhu (2004), organisations need to pay more attention to effective intercultural training, and Szkudlarek (2009) argues that skills associated with intercultural sensitivity are crucial nowadays and *should*

be taught. Hence employers should provide intercultural training to improve employees' intercultural sensitivity.

For employers, training concerns are often money and time expenses, which should, however, be considered an investment in human resources (Eichmann, 2009). As organisational training aims to develop employees' personal and organisational skills, knowledge and abilities (Yang *et al.*, 2009), it benefits companies in two ways: first, it improves organisational performance by increasing employees' skills and knowledge, and second, it supports employees' personal growth and development, which leads to increased employee satisfaction and ultimately higher employee retention (Vijayabanu and Amudha, 2012). Therefore, effective organisational training benefits companies' performance and provides return on investment.

### **1.3 Problem Statements**

Currently, TW does not offer any intercultural training; however, external drivers and the very nature of TW Reward, Talent and Communications (RTC) employees' job roles require employees to have excellent intercultural skills. That means there is a gap between identified employee needs and training offered by the company.

From an academic perspective, prevailing intercultural research is based on national or ethnic differences, particularly in the organisational context. Moreover, most intercultural training studies are conducted with students, and so there is a clear lack of applied business research focusing on (employee) culture-general training.

Hence this research formulated the following two problem statements:

- I. TW RTC employees would hugely benefit from intercultural training; however, the company currently does not offer it.**
- II. Intercultural research lacks applied culture-general training in the organisational context.**

## **1.4 Purpose of the Research**

This research will address the aforementioned problems by developing an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity for TW RTC employees. Supporting the idea of complex cultures, this research aims to advance the field of intercultural training research through forward-thinking findings.

### **The benefits of this research are three-fold:**

- 1) TW's RTC department will have an intercultural training framework available to use free of charge. If applied, improved intercultural skills of employees would also raise efficiency and hence increase business performance.
- 2) The field of intercultural training research will be enriched through an intercultural training framework model and a new research approach.
- 3) The researcher will benefit from an increased understanding of the field of intercultural training as well as TW's organisational context.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

To fulfil the purpose of this research, the following main research question needed to be answered:

### **What intercultural training framework can improve TW RTC employees' intercultural sensitivity?**

Four related sub-questions were raised to develop an intercultural training framework aiming to improve intercultural sensitivity:

- What is 'intercultural sensitivity' and how can it be improved?
- What is intercultural training and what components does it include?
- What are practical considerations of organisational training?
- How are intercultural training frameworks developed?

To make the developed framework context-specific and relevant to TW RTC employees, the following three sub-questions had to be answered:

- How is TW RTC internal training conducted?
- How do TW RTC employees' interact interculturally?
- What related challenges do they face and what benefits do they see?

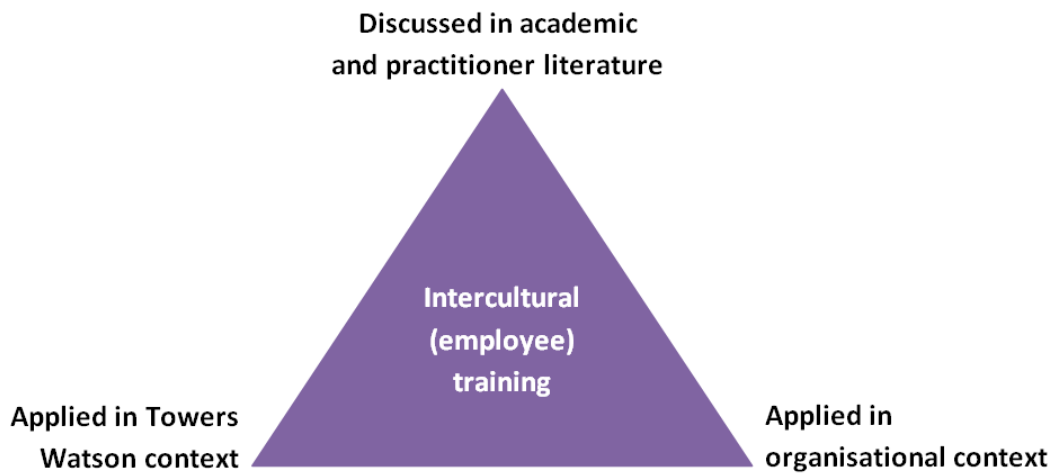
## 1.6 Research Aim and Objectives

Below, the research questions were translated into research aim, objectives and relevant source(s) (Figure 1.1).

Aim: To develop an intercultural training framework aiming to improve intercultural sensitivity for Towers Watson Reward, Talent and Communication employees.		
Theme	Objective	Source
Intercultural sensitivity	To define intercultural sensitivity and how it can be improved	Review of relevant academic and practitioner literature
Intercultural training	To define (organisational) intercultural training and its related components	Review of relevant academic and practitioner literature
Intercultural training	To produce an outline for an intercultural training framework	Review of relevant academic and practitioner literature
(intercultural) Employee training	To understand practical and organisational considerations of (intercultural) employee training	Semi-structured interviews
Towers Watson context	To explore how internal training is delivered in TW's RTC department	Semi-structured interview and employee focus group
Towers Watson context	To identify (examples of) intercultural interactions in TW's RTC department, including related challenges and benefits	Semi-structured interview and employee focus group

Figure 1.1: Overview of research aim, themes, objectives, and sources

The objectives helped to establish the academic and practitioner context of intercultural training and intercultural sensitivity, provide a balance of academic literature and TW-specific insights, and ultimately answer the posed research question. The triangulation of research themes is presented in Figure 1.2.



*Figure 1.2: Triangulation of research themes*

### **1.7 Overview of Research Approach**

Synthesising relevant academic and practitioner literature from the fields of intercultural business communication, diversity management, and organisational management helped answer some of the research questions; however, primary data was needed to reach the overall research objective as set out above. Primary data was collected from two semi-structured face-to-face interviews and one employee focus group. The interviews were held with one global training practitioner to establish organisational and practical considerations of (intercultural) employee training, while the second interview focused on TW's specific business context and internal training approaches. The employee focus group helped to explore employees' daily intercultural interactions and their respective challenges and benefits, ultimately making the final deliverable relevant to TW employees, and hence more effective and applicable.

Research participants were selected through purposeful sampling, ensuring a breadth of perspectives and participants' relevant expertise were extracted. Section 3.5 explains the sampling approach further. All primary data was analysed using content analysis and is described in more detail in section 3.6.

### **1.8 About the Researcher**

Under the notion of interpretivism, all research findings are to a certain extent construed by the researcher and hence subjective. Therefore, it is important to learn about the researcher before reading this dissertation.

The researcher has been working as a communications and change management consultant in TW's RTC department for three years, collaborating daily with many different people from diverse backgrounds. With a particular interest in intercultural communication and employee training, the researcher conducted this study with the aim to raise awareness of daily intercultural interactions in the workplace, and to ultimately improve collaboration among TW's RTC employees. As a TW employee, the researcher is prone to be less objective; however, for this particular research it is beneficial to understand the specific organisational context as it will help to apply theoretical findings and make them relevant to TW's business setting.

The author acknowledges that own cultural influences, stemming from Western nurture, philosophy and education, are likely to have affected viewpoints presented in this research. Moreover, own worldviews were likely to have influenced the chosen research methodology, research process, and data interpretation (*cf.* Bryman and Bell, 2011). To reduce risks for potential researcher bias, the researcher employed a high degree of self-awareness when obtaining and reporting the results, and involved reflexive self-critique to improve the validity of research findings (Fisher, 2010).

## **1.9 Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation is divided into 5 chapters: first, an overview of relevant literature is presented, followed by an in-depth explanation of the research approach. In Chapter 4 the research findings are analysed and discussed. Finally, a summary with recommendations concludes this document. Additional material is provided in the appendices starting from page xv.

## **1.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter firstly presented the background to this research, including drivers such as globalisation in the macro-environment and the need for intercultural collaboration in the micro-environment of TW. The research problems were defined as a lack of intercultural training at TW as well as a lack of applied culture-general training in the organisational context in intercultural research. To address these problems, the research set out to develop an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity for TW RTC employees. This research is unique and relevant, and will benefit TW'S RTC department, the field of intercultural training research, and the researcher. In addition to secondary data gathered through literature reviews, primary data was collected from two semi-structured face-to-face interviews and one employee focus group. Research participants were selected through purposeful sampling, and primary data was analysed using content analysis. The chapter ended with a brief introduction to the researcher, including acknowledgments of own cultural influences, worldviews, and involvement with the research company. Finally, the remaining structure of the dissertation was described.

## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

### 2.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, relevant academic and practitioner literature is reviewed to define key concepts and answer some of the research questions. Due to the complexity of the research, the literature review is subdivided, allowing for structured reading. For further reading, a bibliography was added.

### 2.2 Intercultural Research – an Introduction

The field of intercultural research is less than a century old (Stephan and Stephan, 2013), originating from an overlap of different academic fields, including foremost cross-cultural interactions, expatriate training, and communication. Further academic fields influencing intercultural research are psychology, international relations, and international business studies. Due to these diverse influences, intercultural research is still comparatively unexplored and lacks universally-accepted theory (Graf, 2003; Landis and Brislin, 1983). One key implication is the differing terminology used among researchers and their contradicting interpretations of key concepts depending on the adopted research angle (Chen and Starosta, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Tsai and Houghton, 2010; Wiseman, 2002). For example, the following terms are often interchangeably used to describe similar concepts:

- **cross-cultural competence** (Gertsen, 1990; Johnson *et al.*, 2006)
- **cultural intelligence** (Chen *et al.*, 2012; Earley and Peterson, 2004; Thomas, 2006)
- **intercultural communication competence** (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Gibson and Zhong, 2005; Kupka *et al.*, 2008)
- **Intercultural competence** (Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012; Graf, 2003; Kealey, 1989)
- **intercultural effectiveness** (Hammer *et al.*, 1978; Herfst *et al.*, 2008)
- **intercultural sensitivity** (Bennett, 1986; Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992; Chen and Starosta, 1997; Coffey *et al.*, 2003; Jain, 2013)
- **global mindset** (Rhinesmith, 1992)



The term 'intercultural' seeks rich understandings of interactions between individuals from multiple cultures (Gudykunst and Shapiro, 1996). According to Bennett (1986), 'intercultural' means recognising differences existing within a culture; for example, diverse academic backgrounds, genders, age groups, or social classes (Qayyum, 2012) and includes abilities to make sensible decisions on culture-related matters (Tsai and Houghton, 2010). This research understands 'intercultural' as 'across or between diverse cultures'.

### ***What is culture?***

Bennett (1986) refers to culture as an overarching idea that includes categories such as gender, physical ability, vocation, and more. Shaules (2007) describes culture as everyday behaviours and customs of people from different places, and Holliday (1999) adds cohesive thinking and emerging group behaviours. In the business context, organisational culture describes employees' shared symbols, rituals, and values (Schermerhorn, 1994). This research is based on the understanding that (organisational) culture encompasses a group's values, thought processes, and behaviours, and is dynamic, constantly changing, and often invisible.

“Our own culture is like water to a fish. It sustains us. We live and breathe through it.”

*Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, 1998, p.20*

### ***The small-culture approach***

As people can be unaware of how their own culture(s) influence(s) them, intercultural research has tried measuring culture to reach tangible findings and support intercultural understanding. Prevalent measurement methods are cultural dimensions that list countries and individuals on either side of spectrums such as collectivist or high power distance (*cf.* Hofstede's cultural dimensions, 1980). As most findings were applied to national groups, this type of cultural dimensions has been criticised as 'essentialist' because it assumes national culture to generate individuals' behaviours (Shaules, 2007).

Contrastingly, in recent years intercultural research has advanced with authors like Singer (1998) and Holliday (1999) building on the idea of culturally-complex individuals and diverse cultural identities, thereby dismissing the overarching

influence of nationality. Holliday (1999) developed a forward-thinking approach called ‘small cultures’: it describes the cohesive thinking and behaviour in social groups of any kind in contrast to large cultures that are predominantly defined by ethnicity or nationality. For example, employees working together and forming a group culture regardless of their ethnicity or nationality can be viewed as a small culture with their own habits, values, and behaviours. Whereas the large-culture approach is based on cultural determinism, the small-culture approach is based on cultural heterogeneity and complexity (Holliday, 1999).

Figure 2.1 compares both approaches.

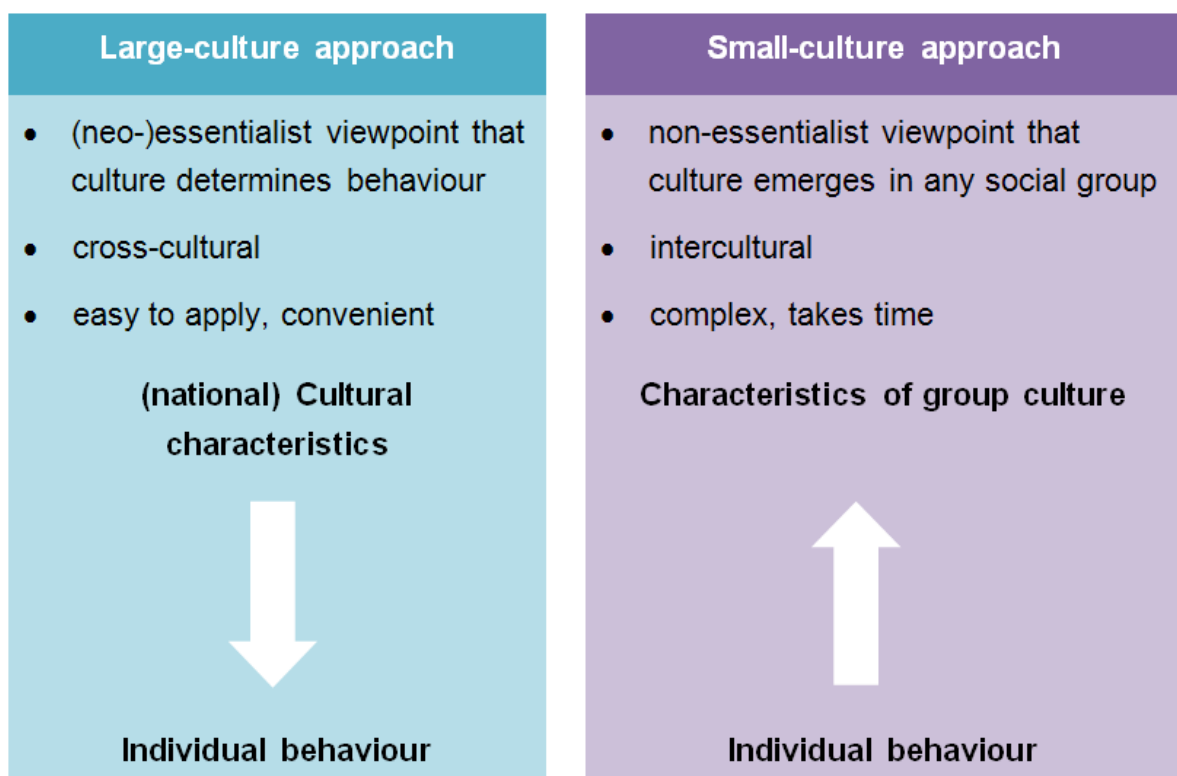


Figure 2.1: Overview of large- and small-culture approach; adapted from Zhou (2013)

Zhu (2004) criticises that prevalent training approaches apply cultural patterns, and hence large-culture approaches. Although the small-culture approach has emerged as a new way of thinking in the field of intercultural research, to date academic and practitioner research lacks applied intercultural training programmes using the small-culture approach. This research addressed this gap.

### 2.3 Intercultural Sensitivity

To successfully interact across cultures, intercultural sensitivity is vital (Abe and Wiseman, 1983; Chen and Starosta, 1996; Cui and Awa, 1992; Fritz *et. al.*, 2002; Martin, 1987). Below, Figure 2.2 summarises a few selected definitions of the term ‘intercultural sensitivity’.

Definition of the term ‘intercultural sensitivity’	Source
“Being sensitive towards cultural differences and willing to modify behaviour as a signal of respect for foreign cultures.”	Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992, p.416
“The recognition that cultures differ fundamentally from one another in the way they maintain patterns of differentiation, or worldviews, and as a person's capacity to differentiate phenomena in a variety of ways.”	Bennett, 1993, p.22
“Interculturally sensitive persons are able to reach the level of dual identity and enjoy cultural differences by gradually overcoming the problems of denying or concealing the existence of cultural differences and attempting to defend their own world views, and moving to develop empathic ability to accept and adapt cultural differences.”	Chen and Starosta, 2000, p.4
“Our ability to function effectively in an environment depends upon our skill in recognizing and responding appropriately to the values and expectations of those around us.”	Anderson <i>et al.</i> , 2005, p.47
“Intercultural sensitivity is a dynamic concept. It reveals that interculturally sensitive persons must have a desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures, and to produce a positive outcome from intercultural interactions.”	McMurray, 2007, p.6

Figure 2.2: Selected definitions of the term ‘intercultural sensitivity’

Synthesising the diverse definitions of ‘intercultural sensitivity’, three interrelated components appear: empathy (affective), acknowledgment and appreciation of cultural difference (cognitive), and behaviour adaption (behavioural). Empathy describes the ability to understand and share feelings of others; for example, an empathic person is more concerned for others' feelings, listens actively, and accurately observes the inner state of others (Bennett, 1986; Chen and Starosta, 1997). Chen and Starosta (2000) argue that “the more empathic one is, the more interculturally sensitive one will be” (p.112). Moreover, interculturally-sensitive individuals are better able to appreciate cultural

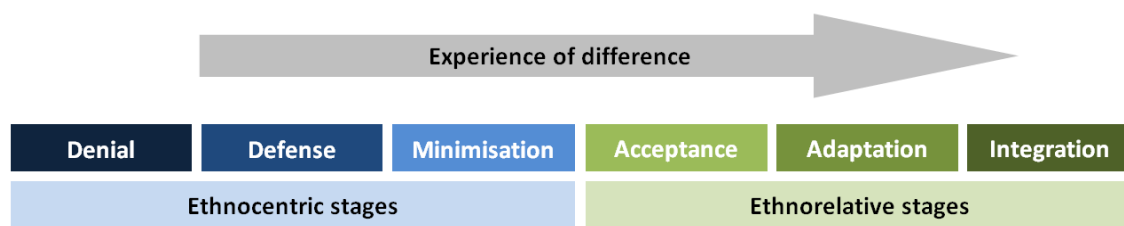
differences (Chen and Starosta, 1997; Fritz *et al.*, 2002; Hammer *et al.*, 2003). Bennett (2004) argues that “As categories for cultural difference become more complex and sophisticated, perception becomes more interculturally sensitive” (p.10). That is because by acknowledging that people are different, but equally embracing this difference, individuals accept alternative worldviews and viewpoints, thereby broadening their minds and appreciating others’ opinions. Finally, behaviour adaption describes the ability as well as willingness to modify own behaviours based on respect for other cultures (Bennett, 1986; Brücker and Poutsma, 2010; Greenholtz, 2000). For example, an interculturally-sensitive individual will behave in a certain way in situation A, but is able to adapt behaviours if required in situation B by recognising, understanding and adapting to varying cultural differences. Overall, intercultural sensitivity means individuals’ emotions are linked to conscious understanding, and ultimately lead to flexible behaviours in differing cultural contexts.

These three key components – empathy, acknowledgement and appreciation of cultural difference, and behaviour adaption – show that intercultural sensitivity encompasses the three dimensions of the ‘ABC’ of intercultural (communication) competence (*cf.* Chen and Starosta, 1996; Gudykunst *et al.*, 1977; Ting-Toomey, 1999). The affective dimension describes an individual’s feelings and emotions towards other cultures, which includes interest, attitudes, values, motivation, self-efficacy, and confidence (Yang *et al.*, 2009). The cognitive dimension is based on cultural knowledge and awareness, and any learning that the individual consciously places into the cultural context. The behavioural dimension describes an individual’s behaviours towards other cultures and is the highest stage of intercultural competence, requiring maturity to process diverse intercultural experiences (Paige *et al.*, 2003). It is commonly the most challenging dimension to appeal to because the individual’s affective and cognitive dimensions need to be addressed first before an individual can consciously adapt behaviours (*cf.* Edmonson, 1999).

### ***Increasing intercultural sensitivity***

To increase intercultural sensitivity individuals need to improve their ability to comprehend and experience cultural difference (Bennett, 1986). Nevertheless, Bellah *et al.* (1985) argue that seeking similarities like common goals will make the remaining differences appear less threatening. Still, being confronted with cultural differences fosters emotional reactions, which help employees realise their own self-contained worldview, and potentially appreciate alternatively-valid perspectives (Shaules, 2007). Therefore, experiencing cultural difference and dealing with it consciously is key to improving intercultural sensitivity.

Frequently-used measurement tools of intercultural sensitivity, such as Chen and Starosta's (2000) intercultural sensitivity scale, Bhawuk and Brislin's (1992) intercultural sensitivity inventory or Hammer and Bennett's (1998) intercultural development inventory (a short description of each instrument is given in Appendix 1) are self-completed assessment forms aiming to measure respondents' intercultural sensitivity at the time. Although their response-scale and test items vary, their approach to measuring intercultural sensitivity is similar, but only reflecting a snapshot in time. Since increasing intercultural sensitivity is a long-term process, these measurement instruments are restricted when looking at individuals' personal development. In academic literature, only one key model exists that describes individuals' long-term developmental process of intercultural sensitivity: Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Paige *et al.*, 2003). It focuses on individuals' underlying worldview (Bennett, 1986) and how individuals' respond to cultural difference (Paige *et al.*, 2003). The DMIS consists of six stages that individuals move through to become more interculturally sensitive (Paige *et al.*, 2003) (Figure 2.3).



*Figure 2.3: The six stages of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, redrawn from Bennett (1986)*

It is designed along a continuum from ethnocentric to ethnorelative, so that ultimately individuals accept multiple perspectives or as Bennett (2004) explains it “one’s own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures” (p.68).

Bennett (1986) also provides training instructions per stage and details how the individual can progress to the next stage (Appendix 2).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) criticised that the DMIS model is too general and real-life progression through the six stages may not be as smooth and linear as the model suggests. However, Bennett (1986) acknowledged the fact that individuals can potentially reverse their own progress and regress into a previous stage. Therefore, ongoing support and training is vital to maintain achieved progress.

In addition to experiencing cultural difference, key factors for raising intercultural sensitivity are individual attitudes and personality, including tolerance for ambiguity, social initiative, flexibility, openness, and emotional stability (Brückner and Poutsma, 2010; Hall and Toll, 1999; Hess, 1997). Therefore, intercultural sensitivity is also based on individual character traits, and hence training efforts need to be directed at individuals’ attitudes and abilities.

## **2.4 Intercultural Training**

Intercultural training is a relatively new field of research having existed for only about 50 years (Paige, 2004). Over the last decade, interest in training intercultural skills has grown, arguably through external drivers like globalisation and multinational business environments. Academic literature on intercultural training focuses on three sub categories:

- **design** (Ryan, 2012; Stephan and Stephan, 2013; Thomas, 2009),
- **measurement** (Fischer, 2011; Graf, 2003; Hammer *et al.*, 2003) and
- **reviews** (Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012; Feng *et al.*, 2009; Zhu, 2004).

Intercultural training is essential for successful intercultural interactions (Earley, 1987; Forster, 2000; Yeaton and Hall, 2008) and can substantially help improve individuals' intercultural sensitivity (Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Kealey and Protheroe, 1996; Littrell *et al.*, 2006; Mendenhall and Stahl, 2000). According to Bennett (1986) intercultural training is more than only learning new skills but raising awareness and developing new attitudes.

Generally, intercultural training can be categorised into didactic or experimental, and culture-specific or culture-general (Gudykunst *et al.*, 1977). Graf and Mertesacker (2009) define an additional category called 'interventions' and relate it to the ABC dimensions (Figure 2.4). Research showed that at least one of the three ABC dimensions should be included in any training effort (Simpson, 1972; Mendenhall *et al.*, 2004; Ward *et al.*, 2001); however, it may be challenging to exclude the other two. For example, if a training programme focusing on the affective dimension includes any theory, this would arguably support the cognitive dimension and hence more than one dimension is appealed to. Ideally, a mix of all three dimensions is most efficient for intercultural training as it caters to a variety of participants' learning styles, and ensures all their senses are involved.

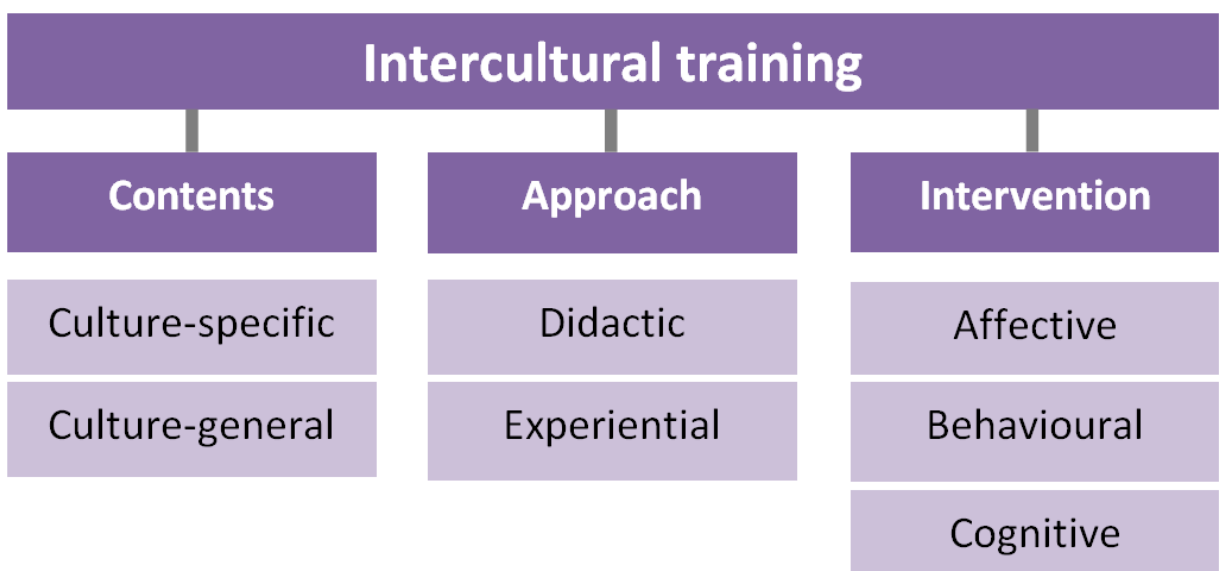


Figure 2.4: Graf and Mertesacker's (2009) typology of intercultural training (redrawn)

### ***Organisational considerations***

Particularly when it comes to soft-skills training like intercultural training, the issue of return-on-investment is raised because intercultural training efforts do not have tangible outputs (Qayyum, 2012). However, organisations benefit from employee training through improved business performance due to better-skilled staff and increased employee satisfaction resulting in higher employee retention (Vijayabanu and Amudha, 2012). Qayyum (2012) argues that the development and implementation of employees' cultural competencies is strongly influenced by management, and so the key to deliver positive intercultural training outcomes is management support.

There is of course the risk that employees do not bring apply learned skills and behaviours to the workplace (Schermerhorn, 1994), which Zhu (2004) defines as a gap between trainees' conscious and subconscious competence of trainees. To help employees apply their learned skills and behaviours in the workplace, training efforts need should develop their high-level competence by reconstructing their knowledge and relating it to their industry. Therefore, effective training programmes that ultimately deliver return on the company's investment need to be relevant and applicable to the employees' (and organisational) context.

### ***Developing intercultural training frameworks***

The first step of any training is developing a training framework (Rose, 2009). Often training is only thought of as the practical implementation of the training course itself; however, there are several stages before and after that are crucial for effective training efforts. For example, pre-training arrangements include training needs analysis, audience analysis, and selection of training methods and techniques (Vijayabanu and Amudha, 2012), and post-training elements include training evaluations, reviews, and training supporting staff like line managers co-teach the training going forward (Qayyum, 2012).

Developing intercultural training frameworks requires basic structures that can be tailored to specific training efforts. For instance, the ADDIE model is used by instructors and trainers as an overarching development process, including the



steps of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (Mayfield, 2011). From an educational perspective, Tyler (1949) defined four basic principles of curriculum and instruction, which include 1) defining objectives, 2) defining methods to achieve these objectives, 3) sequencing of methods, and 4) determining outcomes and effects. Clements and Jones (2008) created a circular model showing the developmental and reoccurring lifecycle of training frameworks including needs investigation, design, delivery, and evaluation. Rose (2009) developed a five-stage model including 1) delivery mode, 2) instructional style, 3) delivery style, 4) audience definitions, and 5) content structure. A concise framework for developing intercultural training was developed by Stephan and Stephan (2013) and is summarised in Figure 2.5.



*Figure 2.5: Stephan and Stephan's (2013) six-stage model of designing intercultural training (redrawn)*

### ***Training components***

All training frameworks are basic structures that need to be populated with specific training components, which are discussed below.

#### ***Needs analysis:***

Identifying training needs is the starting point of any training (Vijayabanu and Amudha, 2012) as it helps to ensure training is relevant and ultimately more efficient. Drivers for training efforts can be internal (organisational change) or external (changes in the market or feedback from customers), but depend on budget, (access to) target population, benchmarking, and organisational limitations (Clements and Jones, 2008). According to Fowler and Blohm (2004) the most significant influence on intercultural training is culture itself: for the trainee this is their own cultural influences, but within the business context it also includes the organisational culture and standards. Therefore, it is crucial to be aware of trainees' own cultures (Littrell and Salas, 2005; Schermerhorn, 1994; Stephan and Stephan, 2013), and so researching audiences' cultures has to be part of the needs analysis.

#### ***Trainee assessment:***

Pre-training assessments help understand the training audience, focus training content, and support training evaluation. Graf and Mertesacker (2009) found that the preferred instrument to assess training needs in business contexts is questionnaires because they are cost-efficient and easy to analyse. Other options include self-assessment instruments (Appendix 1): although they enhance candidates' acceptance of training interventions (Brown and Knight, 1999), there is a clear lack of reliable questionnaires assessing intercultural dimensions (Johnson *et al.*, 2006). As training needs differ per individual and over time, reoccurring analysis is essential to providing effective training.

#### ***Objectives:***

Ideally, training objectives should be connected to training needs that were uncovered in the needs-analysis stage. Setting training objectives is important because they: 1) provide clear direction for the training design, 2) help determine training content, 3) show organisational sponsors what budget is spent on, and 4) provide a route map throughout the training (Clements and Jones, 2008; Fowler and Blohm, 2004). To set objectives, Paige (1993)

suggests using the KSA model (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and selecting one element that is most crucial to the desired outcome, so to then focus on that dimension without ignoring the others. Examples of intercultural training objectives can be increased knowledge of a particular intercultural subject, being able to identify cultural bias, or adopting new perspectives. There can be a handful of objectives per training but they all need to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) and help achieve the previously identified training need.

### *Methodology:*

Training methodology (or 'approach') is often confused with training methods; however, intercultural training methodology includes a variety of methods, and methods are the process for achieving an objective (Fowler and Blohm, 2004). For example, Zhu (2004) argues for a synergistic approach that brings to light similarities and common grounds of participants because pattern-based approaches are task oriented and participants may find it challenging to apply their learned skill in their specific business context. Although problem-based approaches help to analyse contrasting cultural viewpoints (Qayyum, 2012), only evidence-based approaches showed long-lasting effects of trainees' improved behaviours (Stephan and Stephan, 2013). Schermerhorn (1994) suggests adopting a multisensory approach using more than one mode of learning for effective training, which helps appeal to different learning styles.

### *Design:*

Training design can be ready-made or tailor-made. Ready-made training programmes are usually less effective because they do not fit the organisational culture or the training objective(s) (Sue, 1991), and Hofstede (1991) criticises their cultural imperialism as "training packages have almost exclusively been developed in individualist countries, and they are based on cultural assumptions which may not hold in collectivist cultures" (p.66). Therefore, commercially-produced materials have to be adapted to meet the specific training needs, which is time-intensive (Fowler and Blohm, 2004). Tailor-made training was found to deliver better results (Earley and Peterson, 2004; Schermerhorn, 1994) and can considerably reduce time spent, costs, and personnel because of a pre-determined scope (Selmer, 2000). Before developing tailor-made

intercultural training, employees' intercultural skills profiles should be assessed (Graf, 2003; Littrell and Salas, 2005; Tarique and Caligirui, 2004), which reiterates the importance of the needs analysis.

#### ***Methods and techniques:***

Training methods should relate to the organisation's bottom line (Fowler and Blohm 2004) and consider desired outcomes, situational factors (time, location, budget, trainer skills), participants (need assessment, cultural norms, personal preferences), and learning styles (Yang *et al.*, 2009). As culture affects learning styles, effective training incorporates a blend of both didactic and experiential methods (Graf, 2003) and a mix of cognitive, affective, and behavioural learning activities (Paige, 1993). Therefore, varied training methods are needed to make contents relevant and appealing to all participants. Examples of methods that are most commonly used in intercultural training are lectures, presentations, culture assimilators and class discussions (Mendenhall *et al.*, 2004). However, the cultural context needs to be considered when choosing methods, as for example big group discussions only involve a few outspoken individuals. To deliver methods effectively, training techniques should be defined; for example, using triads when discussing a case study (Fowler and Blohm, 2004). It is important to incorporate both left and right brain training techniques (Schermerhorn, 1994) to stimulate all-round learning. To use participants' creative talents, more right-brain techniques should be applied, such as writing poems or drawing posters (Schermerhorn, 1994).

#### ***Delivery:***

There are three main ways of delivering training: face-to-face, through training materials, or online. Face-to-face training, usually instructor-led classroom training, supports participant interaction, allows for body language clues, and instructors tend to be more engaged when delivering training in person (Rose, 2009). However, its challenges are logistic arrangements, peer pressure, group think, as well as cultural interpersonal differences such as the concept of face (*cf.* Brown and Levinson, 1987) or fear of shame (Fowler and Blohm, 2004). Contrastingly, training materials can deliver content independent from an instructors or schedules and in trainees' own time. Nevertheless, training materials do not allow for participant interaction (Rose, 2009), and so learning

from others, group building, and debates are impossible, which are however key activities in intercultural training. Lastly, as technology has advanced, the demand for online training also increased: through video conferencing, internet platforms, or social networks, online training provides flexibility as participants can access content anytime from anywhere (Rose, 2009). Still, challenges for online training are compulsory computer access, participants' computer literacy, lack of physical interaction with others, and initial development costs of online training (Fowler and Blohm, 2004; Rose, 2009). Overall, Clements and Jones (2008) found that in the UK-context, survey respondents ranked 'instructor-led' training as most effective. Particularly for intercultural training, where key contents involves confrontation with difference, face-to-face interaction is more beneficial and hence classroom training should be adopted.

#### *Trainer:*

Whereas methods are neutral, the interpretation of content and delivery style are subjective to individual trainers (Fowler and Blohm, 2004), and so the trainer is key in any training. As trainers' credibility, expertise, and training style influence trainees' motivation and learning efficiency (Yang *et al.*, 2009), training effectiveness relies heavily on trainers' skills and abilities (Holladay, 2004; Schol *et al.*, 2005), which include being empathic, patient, clear, and enthusiastic (Fowler and Blohm, 2004).

#### *Timing:*

Graf (2003) argues that intercultural training should ideally include several sessions over several weeks, which allows participants to apply their learned knowledge and skills at work, and discuss experiences in training sessions. However, due to business needs and time/money expenses, demand for short-term training (half or one day) has increased (Caudron, 1991; Forsberg, 1993). In training sessions, a change in either pace of instruction, content, or body physiology of participants is needed every 20min to keep trainees focused and concentrated (Schermerhorn, 1994).

#### *Practical considerations:*

Training courses have shelf lives of maximum three years (Schermerhorn, 1994) and so they need to be regularly reviewed and updated, which requires ongoing investment but ensures training stays relevant. Especially training

material needs to be reviewed and scanned for cultural imperialism as ideally training material should come from a wide range of cultures. If training is communicated to employees in advance as recognition of their potential, they tend to be more accepting, motivated, and supportive (Fowler and Blohm, 2004). During the training, the venue and seating arrangements are important to stimulate comfortable learning climates (Schermerhorn, 1994), and regular breaks need to be provided (Clements and Jones, 2008). As training should inform not instruct, it is key to make learning fun and enjoyable through teamwork, and sharing jokes and personal stories (Schermerhorn, 1994). Finally, training tools (e.g. films, slides) and required equipment (e.g. slide projector) should be organised in advance.

### ***Evaluation:***

Training evaluation is crucial to gather feedback about performance and improve future training. Easterby-Smith (1994) defined the purposes of evaluations as proving (whether or not the training led to any change in knowledge/skills), improving (continual improvement process), learning (integral part of learning process), and controlling (to control training, e.g. costs). Kirkpatrick's (2006) generic training evaluation model covering the four levels of reactions, learning, behaviour, and results is helpful for basic training evaluation; however, particularly in the business context evaluation can help justify training expenses, and hence it is important to quantify training benefits in terms of cost (Clements and Jones, 2008). This is considered in Phillips' (1996) model of evaluation: 1) reaction and planned action, 2) learning, 3) job application, 4) business results, and 5) return on investment. Evaluating intercultural training is challenging because it involves measuring participants' attitude change. Fowler and Blohm (2004) argue that this can only be observed over time in behaviours, interpersonal relationships and approaches to issues. Nevertheless, Poon *et al.* (2000) defined three indicators to measure training effectiveness: participants' cross-cultural attitude, self-efficacy, and trainee reaction.

Included in the evaluation can be an assessment: either prior to training, after, or both, assessments can help establish participants' learning curves. Different assessment instruments are available to measure, identify, categorise, or

evaluate cultural characteristics of individuals, groups and organisations (Paige, 2004). The purpose for using such instruments needs to be specified in advance and all findings kept confidential, while considering costs, validity, reliability, and time-intensity (Paige, 2004).

Synthesising all training-related findings, a generic intercultural training framework was developed (Appendix 3).

## **2.5 Intercultural Sensitivity Training**

Qayyum (2012) defined the aim of training intercultural sensitivity as “to interact effectively with people from other cultures by understanding and acknowledging the other person's strengths and interests rather than their visible appearances and languages” (p.229). Intercultural sensitivity training has to touch participants' emotions and belief systems (Graf and Mertesacker, 2009) and should be culture-general (Triandis, 1994). As didactical training activities like lectures improve participants' knowledge but leave out emotional and behavioural dimensions, it is best to involve participants actively through experiential training covering all three ABC dimensions and experiencing different viewpoints (Graf, 2003). Based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, training should address four learning styles: concrete experience (group discussion, trigger films), reflective observation (journals, thought questions), abstract conceptualization (lectures, analogies), and active experimentation (simulations, demonstrations) (Bennett and Bennett, 2003). Each training component should involve all four stages, which is also known as ‘training around the wheel’ (Fowler and Blohm, 2004). Methods for training intercultural sensitivity include case studies, T-groups, role playing, critical incidents, and cultural orientation programmes (Chen, 1997). Brislin and Yoshida (1994) propose four components for training intercultural sensitivity:

- awareness of oneself and one's own cultural influences
- knowledge of other cultures
- recognition of emotional challenges involved, and
- basic skills that can be applied to most intercultural encounters.

If any of these components is missing, training will be less effective (McMurray, 2007). Although intercultural sensitivity should be trained gradually over a number of training sessions (Graf, 2003; Salyer, 1993), short-term experiential intercultural sensitivity training was found effective in increasing cultural awareness and changing attitudes (Hammer and Martin, 1992; Pruegger and Rogers, 1994). Therefore, intercultural sensitivity training can be successful in the short as well as long term.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter first discussed the difference in terminology in the field of intercultural research and explained the idea of culturally-complex individuals using Holliday's (1999) small-culture approach. Secondly, the three research questions 1) 'What are basic concepts of intercultural training', 2) 'What is 'intercultural sensitivity' and how can it be developed', and 3) 'How are training frameworks developed' were answered. Intercultural sensitivity was defined as individual abilities across three dimensions: acknowledging and appreciation of cultural difference (cognitive), empathy (affective) and behaviour adaption (behavioural). Training efforts to increase intercultural sensitivity should apply the DMIS model, helping individuals to appreciate cultural difference.

Intercultural training in organisations needs to consider the ROI for the business, internal/external drivers, and the organisational culture.

Frameworks for intercultural training should include needs analysis, objective setting, training design, relevant implementation, and evaluation and feedback.

To train intercultural sensitivity, experiential and culture-general training is needed, encompassing the four components of 1) awareness of oneself and one's own cultural influences, 2) knowledge of other cultures, 3) recognition of emotional challenges involved, and 4) basic skills that can be applied to most intercultural encounters.



## **Chapter 3 – Research Methods**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

The literature review answered some of the posed research questions; however, primary data research was needed to answer the remaining research questions:

- What are practical considerations of organisational training?
- How is TW RTC internal training conducted?
- How do TW RTC employees' interact interculturally?
- What related challenges do they face and what benefits do they see?

This chapter discusses the applied research to answer the above research questions. The following sections are structured according to Anderson's (2009) four-stage research model: research methodology, design, methods, and analysis. Additionally, a section on data collection and an overall research evaluation were incorporated.

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

Regarding ontology, the researcher's fundamental assumptions and underlying philosophical stance are based on constructionism and subjectivism (Bryman and Bell, 2011), which undoubtedly affected the research design. The researcher believes that meanings are socially constructed and constantly modified, so there is no objective perspective or definitive 'truth', but only individual interpretations and perceptions of research findings, coloured by our own cultural influences and beliefs (*cf.* Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the epistemology of this research was based on the stance of interpretivism.

As of the researcher's involvement with the research company, an element of subjectivity is inevitable and the interpretation of research findings was therefore context-sensitive. In line with the interpretivist approach, this allowed for greater insights and an in-depth focus on developing deeper understanding of the meanings behind the findings. An inductive approach was applied to

gather rich data by exploring respondents' opinions and experiences (Bryman and Bell, 2011). As an ideographic research study (*cf.* Burrell and Morgan, 1979), the smaller sample helped to gather relevant findings that were crucial for this particular research. The precise research design is described below.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research design followed an exploratory approach aiming to establish trends in the field of intercultural training and intercultural interactions at TW. This helped to build in-depth understanding of intercultural training and to define social phenomena at TW. With a strong research focus on TW's RTC department, the research was conducted as a case study, the most common approach in business and management research (Yin, 2009). This enabled the researcher to gain new insights into a business area previously inaccessible for research inquiry, and so new findings with practical application were generated that can be applied by TW going forward. By employing respondent validation and triangulation (*cf.* Bryman and Bell, 2011; Kanter, 1977), the research ensured data reliability and validity.

### **3.4 Research Methods**

Traditionally, case-study research is linked to qualitative techniques designed to generate 'rich' data (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). The primary data research involved two face-to-face interviews and one focus group. Combining these two methods ensured generating the relevant data to answer the posed research questions.

#### ***Pilot testing***

Before each interview and ahead of the focus group, questions were piloted to test their suitability, potential for topic changes, and if question types, flow of questions, and interview length were appropriate. This also helped identify questions that were misleading or confusing, as well as sensitive questions that could potentially make respondents feel uncomfortable. Overall, piloting the interviews and focus group helped the researcher to be better prepared and more attentive during the interviews/focus group.

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

The research used semi-structured face-to-face interviews to gather rich qualitative data. They helped to 1) derive deeper meanings and understandings of findings, 2) provide fuller contexts of the research topic, and 3) identify issues that had initially been overlooked (Leidner, 1993). The semi-structured interviews contained mostly open-ended questions aiming to get needed answers for the research, but equally provided flexibility to explore the topic further through free description of interviewees' experiences (Laforest, 2009). This helped reduce researcher bias as participants themselves chose what to talk about.

### ***Practitioner interview:***

To understand the context of organisational training and related constraints, a global training manager of a for-profit company was interviewed. It supported the identification of real-life challenges for organisational training, and provided practical considerations, supplementing the purely academic findings from the literature review.

### ***TW Learning & Development lead interview:***

TW RTC's learning and development lead was interviewed to understand the types of training conducted within the department, the organisational procedures that need to be considered, and the relevant stakeholders in the applied context.

### ***Employee focus group***

For the final deliverable of this research – an intercultural training framework – to be specific to TW RTC, a focus group with six employees was held. This helped to understand employees' daily intercultural interactions, intercultural challenges and benefits. As established in the literature review, effective training that develops employees' high-level competence needs to be relevant to their context. Hence this research included the employee focus group to understand employees' work context.

Figure 3.1 displays the research methods and their respective source and research objective.

Objective	Research method	Source
To define intercultural sensitivity and how it can be improved	Literature review	Authors of relevant academic and practitioner literature
To define (organisational) intercultural training and its related components	Literature review	Authors of relevant academic and practitioner literature
To produce an outline for an intercultural training framework	Literature review	Authors of relevant academic and practitioner literature
To understand practical and organisational considerations of (intercultural) employee training	Semi-structured interview	Global training manager
To explore how internal training is delivered in TW's RTC department	Semi-structured interview	TW RTC Learning and development lead
To identify (examples of) intercultural interactions in TW's RTC department, including related challenges and benefits	Focus group	TW RTC employees

Figure 3.1: Research objective with respective research method and source

### 3.5 Data Collection

Data was collected in May and June 2014 in Edinburgh and London, UK. Initially, 14 respondents were contacted to participate in the research, of which eight participants ultimately supported the research. The respondents were diverse regarding age, gender, experience, and job functions.

#### *Sampling*

Participants were chosen through purposeful sampling (*cf.* Bryman and Bell, 2011) which is a common technique in qualitative research (Berg *et al.*, 2001) and helps ensure breadth and multiple perspectives. The interviewees were selected because of their relevant experience and expertise in their respective field. The employee focus group participants were selected purposefully but not selectively: the researcher ensured diverse employees were participating, but not exactly who to avoid researcher bias. The employee focus group had diverse genders, roles, seniority levels, job functions, experience and length of

working in TW's RTC department, which helped to gain insights into the diverse intercultural interactions different TW employees perform every day.

Overall, the research sample included one experienced global employee training practitioner, one TW training lead, and six TW RTC employees of diverse roles and functions, resulting in a total of eight research participants.

### ***Suggestions to improve data collection in future***

To improve data collection in future, it would be useful to hold one or more additional interviews with the TW RTC head of office and potentially the TW global training manager. Additionally, having more senior representatives in the employee focus group (or alternatively a second focus group with only senior representatives) would help to improve understanding of management viewpoints of the topic.

## **3.6 Data Analysis**

### ***Transcribing***

All data was audio recorded and transcribed within four days following the interview/focus group. The transcription process included at least three redrafts of each transcript to ensure exact wording was used. Capturing the full complexity of the interviews/focus group was challenging, but re-listening to the audio files numerous times helped identify new phenomena (Bailey, 2008). The transcription was verbatim and although editing is recommended by some authors (*cf.* McIndoo, 2012) the researcher consciously chose not to edit any transcripts aiming to reduce researcher bias and subconscious interpretation. All transcripts were signed off by the relevant participants to validate participant agreement and content.

### ***Content analysis***

All data was analysed using content analysis, which is today's most commonly employed analytical instrument (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define content analysis as:

“a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”

(p.1278)

Qualitative content analysis, which is commonly used for interview transcripts (Mayring, 2000), supported the idea of rich-data gathering, and helped to focus on sense-making (Patton, 2002), thereby identifying key meanings, unique themes, and patterns. The process of data analysis was inductive, meaning codes and themes emerged directly from the raw data, which is beneficial when developing theory (Burnard *et al.*, 2008; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). Overall, qualitative content analysis produced descriptions from respondents' expressions that reflect their worldviews (Berg *et al.*, 2001), and helped to express their ideas (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990).

### ***Coding***

Open coding (*cf.* Burnard *et al.*, 2008) was applied using the coding software OpenCode 4.0, which helped to derive themes and sub themes from the data and create interrelated argument trees. Moreover, it allowed for memos to be recorded, enabling the researcher to gather thoughts and create links instantly between different codes or concepts. The created codes were predominantly 'in vivo codes' (*cf.* Glaser and Strauss, 1967), meaning respondents' actual wording was used as code instead of pre-constructed codes of the researcher. That way, coding stayed relevant to the message participants gave and reduced researcher bias.

In line with the inductive approach, open coding helped to discover emerging concepts from the data that later were grouped into categories and overarching themes (Khandkar, 2009; Seidel, 1998). To ensure consistency, the researcher

repeatedly compared codes (*cf.* Glaser and Strauss' constant comparative method, 1967) to avoid 'code confusion' (*cf.* Miles and Huberman, 1994; Schilling, 2006; Weber, 1990).

### **3.7 Research Evaluation**

To evaluate interpretive research work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the following four criteria:

- *Credibility*: established and maintained throughout this study through reliability and consistent handling of data, purposeful sampling, and expertise of researcher.
- *Transferability*: albeit small samples, the reliable rich-data research methods can easily be applied to similar research studies. The employed research process is described in detail to be replicated, although it would need to be tailor-made to specific contexts, as it is the case with any case study.
- *Dependability*: when compared to academic literature, the findings showed a strong overlap, and supported each other through triangulation.
- *Confirmability*: the inductive approach combined with open coding means themes emerged from the raw data and so were shaped by the respondents, not the researcher (Khandkar, 2009).

#### ***Limitations***

This research was limited by:

- *Time constraint*: the research had to be completed by 18 August 2014, which affected the choice of research methods and meant the final deliverable could not be applied and/or assessed.
- *Cross-sectional study*: taking a snapshot of TW employees' 'current' thoughts may mean they change over time. Due to time constraints a longitudinal study was not possible.
- *Participant bias*: the interviewees knew they were interviewed which may have affected their responses. Participant validation of all transcripts aimed to decrease this likelihood.

- *Researcher bias*: under the notion of interpretivism, the researcher will always have a certain level of researcher bias. Particularly, as the researcher knew most of the participants prior to the research, there was potential for researcher bias in question formulation, body language and tone of voice during the research. However, processes like critical self-reflexion and triangulation helped to minimise this.
- *Selection bias*: the participants who agreed to partake in the research could potentially be fundamentally different to those who chose not to participate. They may, therefore, not be representative of all TW RTC employees.

### ***Ethical considerations***

The key ethical considerations and their respective solution are listed below.

- *Confidentiality of respondents*: all respondents partook in the research confidentially and only the researcher holds their personal details. Actual data (i.e. the individual transcripts) were not shared directly with TW to ensure participants cannot be identified and will not feel organisational consequences as result of partaking in this research.
- *Data collection*: respondents were able to choose to participate in the research and received detailed description of the research beforehand (Appendix 4). All respondents signed a consent form (Appendix 5) and validated the relevant transcript. The interviews and focus group were held in secure environments, so data gathering occurred between the researcher and participants only, no other third party.
- *Data analysis*: at no point were respondents identifiable during data analysis. Researcher bias was minimised by employing triangulation, inductive approaches, and participant validation.
- *Data storage*: all data is stored on a secure drive in a locked drawer at the TW Edinburgh office, and will be deleted in late December 2014.

Finally, the researcher aimed to fulfil the criteria of successful interviewers, including among others skills being sensitive, open, remembering, but foremost interpreting without imposing meanings (Kvale, 1996).



### ***Research validity and reliability***

Overall, the applied qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, and so all interpretation represents the researcher's personal and theoretical understanding of the research topic. The careful data handling and structured research process applying widely-used qualitative research approaches ensured valid and reliable findings.

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter explained the applied research process to answer the remaining research questions that could not be answered through the literature review. An interpretivist approach was taken to understand TW RTC employees' intercultural interactions and practical considerations of employee training. Through two semi-structured face-to-face interviews and one employee focus group, rich data was gathered and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The research process was inductive to develop concepts emerging directly from the raw data. Evaluating the research process, limitations like cross-sectional study results as well as ethical considerations such as data privacy were considered, but the overall reliability and validity of the research confirmed.

## Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter analyses the data gathered through the research process as described in Chapter 3. Firstly, the main findings from primary research are discussed, followed by additional findings that emerged during the research process. The chapter ends on a brief summary of secondary findings, answering the outstanding research questions.

### 4.2 Main Findings

The main findings from primary data research are discussed below, alongside their respective research objective.

#### **To identify (examples of) intercultural interactions in TW’s RTC department, including related challenges and benefits**

The employee focus group helped identify the following key intercultural interactions, their challenges and benefits.

- ***Preference of intercultural interaction type is context-sensitive***

It emerged that employees work with a wide range of people, up to 25 different people every day from within and outside TW. Depending on job roles, two participants reported high numbers of face-to-face discussions with people, while the rest used predominantly email to communicate. Other types of interactions were phone calls, meetings, and instant messaging, but the group agreed that face-to-face interactions are most effective due to immediate response, verbal and body-language signs, and instant problem solving.

*P6: “It’s the follow up.”*

*P2: “You end up sending back and forth about eight emails when really if you just get up and go and talk to that person it’s resolved within 30 seconds.”*

However, further exploration actually showed that some participants changed their preference of communication tool depending on the situation. For instance, P2 reported that “*email is usually better*” in one example regarding record keeping, thereby conflicting its previous statement about preferring face-to-face contact with people. This shows that preference for communication tool and therefore interaction type are situation-dependent. Additionally, it emerged that participants use communication tools for different purposes; for example, some participants use the instant messenger (IM) tool mainly socially while others use it to chat with colleagues in different work locations. This demonstrates participants’ different expectations of what communication tools to use, when and how to use it, and hence represents a spectrum of diverse working styles.

Overall, the findings showed that participants seem to assign different functions and situations to communication tools and interaction types – but these differ per individual. Hence there is no one way of interacting with colleagues as expectations differ per individual and situation. This can be translated into participants equally expecting particular behaviours from colleagues depending on the situation; however, participants seemed relatively unaware that they had changed their expectations of others. Therefore, there is a clear need to raise (cultural) self-awareness and training should focus on improving participants’ intercultural sensitivity as it supports realisation of own expectations.

**Result:** The intercultural training framework should focus on raising cultural self-awareness to help employees better understand their own expectations of others’ behaviours.

- ***Unwritten rules in the workplace***

Many examples participants shared proved that there were unwritten rules in RTC, including expected behaviours and values. For example, P4 and P6 discussed how they both interpreted the same action (wearing headphones at work) completely differently, demonstrating opposing viewpoints and equally making assumptions that others behave similarly to themselves. Moreover, the fact that most participants agreed to use the IM tool not for long messages showed there are clearly rules in their minds; however, listening to the

participants complaining about situations where others did not follow these 'rules' shows that these are unwritten, not clear to all colleagues, and hence more or less subjective. When asked if there are unwritten rules at TW, all participants agreed, showing a certain level of awareness when confronted. Nevertheless, it is arguably only when being confronted that participants realised those sets of rules they have in their minds. Generally, these underlying levels of organisational culture are often invisible at the surface and hence difficult to understand for new entrants to this culture. For example, as a graduate joiner, P4 had to make own judgements about how to behave as there was no formal induction regarding behaviour in the workplace. Nevertheless, P6 argues that official training at the graduate intake week was unhelpful because it is patronising. Hence employees need an informal opportunity to learn about unwritten rules at TW and equally understand how these rules came to exist in the first place. As rules and behaviours are linked to our own as well as organisational values, it is vital to firstly understand individual principles and attitudes, and how these affect our behaviour and expectations of others.

**Result:** The framework should consider informal discussions with opportunities for trainees to understand their own and organisational values.

- ***Participants showed different levels of conscious behaviour change***

P2 reports an example where colleagues mistake P2's body language for being annoyed. This shows P2's awareness of how others may perceive own behaviours; however, the thought to change own behaviours (in this case the 'annoyed look' or 'sounding short') is not considered. The main reason for not considering changing own behaviours, according to P2, is routine:

P2: *"The longer you do something, the more 'set in your ways' you get. And I have to deal with a lot of those people but I'm the same. I do things how I've always done them x amount of years, and it's really hard to pull yourself out of that."*

Again, P2 shows awareness of her own behaviours but there is no sign of behaviour adaption or change – or willingness to do so.

Contrastingly, P3 describes its behaviour adaption in the workplace as:

P3: *“I definitely monitor–alter my interactions with people. [...] I speak with the designers in a different way [...] than I would if I was speaking to a senior consultant. [...] I definitely alter the way that I’m interacting with people based on who they are or what part of the business they are in or where they are in the hierarchy.”*

P3 identifies examples of its behaviour adaption as nuances in politeness or differences in language because *“different roles need to know different things”*, and so behaviour change is used to achieve results more efficiently. This is a clear example of conscious behaviour adaption to improve interaction outputs.

The group gave the impression that they felt they had to adapt their working style at times to cater to colleagues’ needs. P6 argues the main reason for that is *“an ease-of-life thing”*, particularly when more senior colleagues work differently than the participants. However, P6 further explains that:

P6: *“Yeah, I will almost try and adapt their style to eventually give myself the space to how I want to work. So I’m not ultimately going to completely change the way that I work. But I will perhaps cosmetically change the way I interact to make that happen.”*

This shows conscious awareness of differences in working styles, a strategy to achieve the desired outcome, but again lacks the motivation to change own behaviours. Interestingly, when asked if the participants thought their own working style is more efficient than others’, the majority actually disagreed, thereby showing a certain level of empathy for different working styles. Thus, if (some) participants are not ready to change or adapt their behaviours yet, but do show the awareness that other working styles may be more efficient, then training to help them achieve flexible behaviour adaption can positively affect performance. Overall, the different approaches of P2, P3 and P6 demonstrate different levels of awareness and readiness to change behaviours, which means the participants have different levels of intercultural sensitivity.

**Result:** The intercultural training framework should include pre-assessment of trainees' current level of intercultural sensitivity as it helps segmenting the training audience and defining relevant training approaches to increase intercultural sensitivity at different levels.

- ***Participants are often unaware of their manifested assumptions***

A big part of the discussion was around the use of TW's instant messenger (IM) tool and how colleagues used it. This focus alone showed participants were emotionally involved with the topic as it was brought up and discussed lengthily by them, not the researcher. Participants gave a range of examples where they felt colleagues used IM incorrectly, in their opinion. For example, P5 recounts an instance where a colleague requested a task and P5 defines it as "*That's an email. That's not an IM.*" but when probed for how people know when to send either, it became clear that the use of IM is built on expectations and assumptions as there is no formal training or induction. Another key comment from P5 was:

**I: *"Is the way you use IM the way you expect other people to use it?"***  
**P5: *"Yeah. And it's understanding I guess what's respectful in the workplace."***

P5's comment assumes all colleagues have the same idea of what is respectful behaviour. It neglects the idea of different thinking and values, and is therefore ethnorelative, assuming cultural homogeneity and that one's own belief is 'correct' while ignoring cultural difference. However, further in the conversation P5 admits to have never thought about these differences, clearly showing the ability to comprehend difference and accepting other viewpoints when confronted with them.

Another type of hidden meaning is presented by P2:

P2: *“If someone emailed me with something really urgent and it said ‘urgent’, I’m going to think it’s not so urgent that you’re only emailing me about it.”*

In this comment, it appears that the concept of ‘urgent’ and what actions and interactions are expected, seem very different among colleagues. In P2’s example, this even affects work outcomes and efficiency because an urgent task may not be completed immediately if another colleague does not consider it as a priority. Therefore, by interpreting interactions differently and not being aware of these hidden meanings, performance is negatively affected.

Overall, these examples show the hidden meanings and assumptions participants hold by assuming cultural similarity and projecting their own values and expectations onto colleagues.

**Result:** Reflection on own behaviours and being confronted with difference, for example different assumptions and hidden meanings in the workplace, need to be included in the framework.

- ***Effective interactions support business efficiency***

P2 gives an example of how collaboration affects beneficial work outcomes:

P2: *“You just got this massive spectrum of how different people work. [...] it impacts on a business level because if I am doing a job and say it takes me two hours, it might take me half an hour to sort it out for one person; it might take me six hours to sort it out for another person because they approach the same thing in such a different way. So that will affect how much I charge.”*

This demonstrates the importance of efficient interaction among colleagues as it benefits TW’s business efficiency and hence (financial) performance.

**Result:** Part of the training content needs to focus on interacting with diverse colleagues to make work processes more efficient, and training evaluation should include measuring progress.

- ***Different perspectives bring fresh ideas***

P1 notes that new joiners with an outsider perspective often question certain tasks/work behaviours, which repeatedly helped improve work routines and common practice.

P1: *“A new fresh set of eyes coming in from a different company, they question more, and make things for the better most of the time.”*

However, P1’s comment only focuses on new joiners, but in-house expertise of existing colleagues is dismissed: by looking at issues from different perspectives, fresh ideas and viewpoints can be borne even from within TW. Accepting and appreciating different perspectives is a key element of intercultural sensitivity, and can therefore be improved through intercultural training.

**Result:** The framework should include opportunities for discussing different viewpoints, and how to use these to improve (business) performance.

- ***Personal relationships with colleagues improve working relationships***

P1 gives an example of how being on the same wavelength with colleagues affects the nature of their working relationships. This demonstrates how matching personalities can translate into positive working relationships. However, it dismisses the fact that opposing personalities and working styles can complement each other and are said to be more efficient in team constellations, if they are well managed. It shows a strong focus on the personal side when working together, and hereby networking and collaborating during training, getting to know people outside of the daily routine and forging new relationships can be very beneficial.



**Result:** The intercultural sensitivity framework should include sufficient opportunity for trainees to interact with each other and build relationships outside of the daily work routine.

Summarising the findings from the employee focus group, it can be extracted that participants showed varying levels of intercultural sensitivity. Some of them showed the ability to adapt behaviours (behavioural), which is the most difficult step, while others showed merely awareness (cognitive) and/or empathy (affective) for cultural difference in the workplace. This proves a clear need for intercultural sensitivity training as participants could improve their abilities by much. As established in the literature review, intercultural sensitivity encompasses all three dimensions of the intercultural competence ABC, and hence participants can still improve their intercultural sensitivity across all three dimensions. These different levels of intercultural sensitivity within the audience may make it more challenging to develop encompassing training that caters to all trainees' needs; but equally it supports team learning – trainees learning from each other – and stimulates diverse viewpoints. This, in combination with an informal approach, can produce a 'different-to-traditional' training helping trainees to come to terms with their own cultural identity, which should be considered within the training framework. More explicit implications for the intercultural training framework as gathered from the focus group are that it should focus on raising cultural self-awareness, interacting with diverse colleagues, being confronted with difference, help identifying own cultural values, and support reflection on own behaviours. The framework should also include sufficient opportunity for relationship building, for discussing different viewpoints, and pre-assessment of trainees' current level of intercultural sensitivity.

## To understand practical and organisational considerations of (intercultural) employee training

Findings extracted from the two semi-structured interviews are discussed below.

- **Needs analysis is crucial**

According to the global training manager (GTM), identifying employees' training needs is the vital first step in any training development. As the findings of the needs analysis helps make training more relevant to companies' business context, it ultimately makes training efforts more (monetarily) efficient. The GTM also points out the risk of thinking training is needed, when the needs analysis may establish the contrary.

GTM: *"I think the best thing to do is, you've got to speak to people in your company, you've got to listen to their needs. [...] There's nothing worse than going off and developing training and it is what you think they need."*

Therefore, the initial investment in needs analyses can actually benefit companies in the long term if it is found that training actually may not satisfy the identified need. Interestingly, the interview with the TW learning & development lead (L&D lead) exposed that currently there is no formal training needs analysis held at TW RTC. So although needs analyses are crucial, TW currently does not have any such measurements in place. This shows a clear gap between what is common practice and TW practice. Potentially, this means TW training may not address employees' actual needs, and hence training efforts may be inefficient, particularly cost-wise.

**Result:** When developing the intercultural training framework, the need analysis should be the crucial first step that identifies whether or not to pursue training development.

- ***Make theory applicable to trainees' business context***

Both interviewees agreed that for organisational training it is vital to demonstrate how taught theory applies to work contexts as employees want to practice real-life scenarios. Certainly, technical training requires more theory than soft-skill training as it aims to help employees

L&D lead: *“What I think is really important is turning or translating what the theory teaches you into practical applications.”*

do particular tasks. However, the GTM argues that soft skills cannot be separated from technical skills training and ideally both should be combined for a well-rounded training approach. Overall, both interviewees stressed the importance of focusing on real-life application of learnings as ultimately only this will improve business performance.

**Result:** The intercultural training framework needs to consider real-life applications to TW RTC employees' work context.

- ***Time is the most critical resource for training***

TW's business is based on consultants charging their time spent to clients' project, which means any time spent on internal training is regarded as human resource investment. According to the L&D lead, at busy times consultants need to prioritise client work over personal development, resulting in training cancellation. This challenge of time has led to so-called 'lunch and learns' at TW – where knowledge is shared over one hour at lunch – so that consultants learn in their regular 'off time' and not miss client work. Although this seems a sensible solution to manage the time concern, the GTM reminds that shorter training actually is more complex to develop as it requires a clear focus on salient points. That means although there may be demand for short-timed training, developing this is more complex and hence time consuming for the training developer. According to the GTM, it is essential to focus on training outcomes as this ensures training content helps achieve the set objectives. Overall, the interviewees confirmed that timing and training duration are important.

**Result:** Short and timely intercultural training is needed, which can be achieved through clear objective setting and focus on training outcomes.

- ***Budget is limited, which calls for internal trainers***

Besides TW's already existing online training catalogue, there is not much budget available to purchase additional training. As external training is generally expensive, budget constraints often mean that ideally internal trainers should be sought, who can be of any level or background, according to the

GTM: “[...] ideally you'd find trainers within the company as much as possible.”

L&D lead. Simultaneously, this provides development opportunities for employees presenting training sessions, which both interviewees stressed is important. Nevertheless, the L&D lead noted that affordable options with external trainers can be considered, because the head of RTC is “*very supportive*” of employee training and development. The GTM notes that external trainers may not understand the exact organisational context but offer outsider perspectives and market insights. According to the L&D lead, TW's has long-standing relationships with certain external trainers and the “*outside trainers know us so well, they present as if they are one of the team*”, which means they understand TW's organisational culture and needs. Generally, if additional training budget is required, the needs analysis showing clear employees' need for such training may help convince management to support the training effort and allocate resources towards it, which reiterates the importance of the needs analysis.

**Result:** For an intercultural sensitivity training, internal trainers delivering the training with minimal resources would be ideal; otherwise clear needs for external training must be presented to management.

- ***Communicating the benefits of (intercultural) training is important***

Both interviewees stressed the importance of clearly communicating the benefits of (intercultural) training to all stakeholders, including management and employees. The GTM argued that employees need to understand *why* they participate in training, so communicating training objectives in advance gives employees an idea of what to expect, and generally makes them more open to training interventions and to actively participate.

Although intercultural sensitivity training has no tangible outputs, both interviewees strongly argued that it is crucial for organisational performance: it improves teambuilding, strengthens group culture, and supports more efficient collaboration.

GTM: *“How people do their jobs is as important as what they need to do.”*

From an employee retention point of view, training can help keep employees motivated: the L&D lead noted that *“career development and progression are key drivers for our people”*, which training can enormously support. Contrastingly, the L&D lead mentioned that not many colleagues sign up for the TW-provided training, and hence lose out on what TW offers its employees. Therefore, by communicating training better and stressing the opportunities TW provides to employees, it would potentially support employee satisfaction, TW’s employee value proposition, and ultimately employee retention.

L&D lead: *“[Training] Increases people’s morale, creates a sense of community, a sense of belonging to the firm, their identity as*

**Result:** The intercultural training framework needs to include the step of communicating training aims and benefits to achieve buy-in from all stakeholders.

Summarising the above findings, the intercultural sensitivity framework should include the steps of needs analysis to determine whether training development is necessary, and communicating training aims and benefits to stakeholders. The framework should also consider real-life application to TW RTC employees' work context, training timing and short duration, and ideally be delivered by internal trainers if no additional budget is available.

Comparing these findings to conclusions drawn in the literature review, a clear overlap between theory and applied practice is noted. Nevertheless, the two practitioners mentioned the key step of communicating training to all stakeholders, which is often neglected in academic literature. Whereas training literature focuses on idealistic training approaches, the two practitioners provided insights that communicating to achieve management and employee buy-in is vital to training success. Another difference to literature findings is the strong focus on resources, primarily monetarily and time-wise. As it was found that training can often be pushed aside for more urgent priorities, training clearly is not an organisational priority and hence budget may not be allocated easily to these types of interventions. However, with a strong needs analysis and clear communication of specific training outcomes, management is more likely to approve training. Therefore, communication and budget are crucial organisational considerations for employee training.

#### **To explore how internal training is delivered in TW's RTC department**

Findings from the semi-structured interview with the L&D lead regarding TW's RTC internal training are discussed below.

- ***TW offers diverse training programmes but focuses on on-the-job learning***

The L&D lead explained the diverse training programmes TW currently offers, including a UK-firm-wide graduate programme, a specific RTC graduate programme, a TW online training catalogue for basic technical skills, day-long external class-room training for soft-skills, and short, monthly in-house 'lunch and learns' sessions that are 'different' to standard trainings and involve diverse training approaches. However, the L&D lead stressed the importance of

learning on the job, which is key at TW. This relates to the idea that training needs to be relevant and involve direct job application for employees' day-to-day work. Overall, it shows TW has a wide range of training programmes already in place, and due to its focus on on-the-job learning there may be only little room for an additional training programme.

**Result:** The intercultural training framework should be integrated into existing training programmes and reinforce application to on-the-job learning.

- ***TW RTC employees want a balance of interactive sessions as well as traditional case studies***

According to the L&D lead, a recent online poll across RTC showed that employees *“liked the interactive, different kinds of sessions better”*. Nevertheless, many respondents favoured the traditional client case-study format which the L&D lead had not expected. This shows that TW RTC employees have diverse preferences of training types, and means training programmes should ideally include a range of interactive and traditional sessions.

L&D lead: *“What was interesting is a lot of people said “where have the case studies have gone?” which was something we have consciously moved away from doing.”*

**Result:** The intercultural training framework should comprise diverse training types to cater to differing preferences of employees.

- ***Feedback is not managed within RTC***

The L&D lead explained that all training courses include trainee feedback forms which are not tailored and centrally managed. Surprisingly, the L&D lead did not know what happens with the feedback, which shows a lack of awareness and equally how TW is missing out on using feedback specific to RTC to tailor and advance training going forward.

Moreover, an underlying finding was extracted from the L&D lead's comment shown on the right: as the L&D team was surprised by the fact that employees wanted more traditional training types, it shows the team assumed they

understood employees' needs but were actually wrong. This demonstrates the importance of regular feedback to uncover actual employee needs and wants.

**Result:** A feedback stage reporting regular results directly to the RTC team is required within the framework.

Summarising, TW RTC-specific implications for the final intercultural training framework are the overall integration into existing training programmes, inclusion of diverse training types, and regular feedback results reported directly to the RTC team. Although these findings are context specific to TW RTC and hence unique, they do enrich existing training literature by providing insights into organisational training requirements that were not available before.

### **4.3 Additional Findings**

The below additional findings support general organisational management literature but were listed as they affect the final deliverable to some extent.

- ***Leadership has a huge impact on work behaviours***

The participants mentioned numerous examples where they changed their working behaviours to accommodate more senior colleagues. P5 questioned whether those seniors are actually aware of this behaviour change, demonstrating a lack of feedback between levels. Moreover, P6 mentioned that leadership hugely impacts workplace behaviour; for example, how (in)formal to behave and dress. Therefore, management sets the cultural scene that colleagues copy, but for this to be efficient implies management awareness and ideally balance of work behaviours within the management team. This confirms findings from the literature review that management support for training is vital, but it further stresses the importance of post-training management involvement to ensure employees apply their learnings by having cultural role models in the workplace.



- ***Training should be different from traditional approaches***

The L&D lead recounts an impressive example of a training session that was untraditional but very successful. Hence the L&D lead argues to have as much variety in training approaches as possible to stimulate employees' creativity. Similar to findings from the literature review, creative training approaches seem the most efficient way of getting employees' attention and revive the daily work routine.

- ***The focus group supported self-reflection and raised cultural awareness***

All participants agreed that the discussion as part of the focus group helped them become aware of others' behaviours and interpretations. P3 called it even "a revelation" and P6 noted that it is not something colleagues usually have time to think about. P6 further suggests that discussions with colleagues such as the focus group are much more helpful to share different perspectives than official training teaching employees how to behave in the workplace. This means giving employees room for self-reflection and discussion can help broaden their minds and raise awareness. In academic literature, this need for self reflection was not as prominent; however, these findings suggest self-reflection has a larger impact than previously considered.

#### **4.4 Findings from Literature Review – a Summary**

Below is a reminder of the findings from the literature review that answered some of the posed research questions.

##### **To define intercultural sensitivity and how it can be improved**

Intercultural sensitivity is vital to successful interactions across cultures. It involves the interrelated components of acknowledgment and appreciation of (cultural) differences, empathy, and behaviour adaption, spanning the affective, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions of the 'ABC' of intercultural (communication) competence.

To improve intercultural sensitivity, individuals need to experience and appreciate difference. A useful instrument to support this is Bennett's (1986)

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), which focuses on individuals' long-term developmental process, and provides training instructions per stage of the DMIS as well as details on how individuals can progress to the next stage. In addition to experiencing cultural difference, individual attitudes and personality are also important factors to increase intercultural sensitivity. Personality traits that support individuals' ability to adapt include, among others, tolerance for ambiguity, social initiative, flexibility, openness, and emotional stability. Therefore, intercultural sensitivity is based on experiencing and appreciating cultural difference as well as individual character traits.

### **To define (organisational) intercultural training and its related components**

Generally, intercultural training can be categorised into didactic or experimental, culture-specific or culture-general, and appealing to the affective, cognitive, or behavioural dimension of trainees. Ideally, a mix of all three dimensions is most efficient for intercultural training as it caters to a variety of participants' learning styles, and ensures all their senses are involved. In the business context, organisational training aims to develop employees' personal and organisational skills, knowledge and abilities and benefits the company through increased performance and employee retention. Main considerations when it comes to training are money and time expenses, but to deliver return-on-investment management support of intercultural training is needed. To close the gap between employees' conscious and subconscious competence, effective training needs to be relevant and applicable to employees' organisational context.

Components of intercultural training include needs analysis, assessments, objective setting, methodology, design, delivery, methods and techniques, trainer, timing, and practical considerations.

### **To produce an outline for an intercultural training framework**

An intercultural training framework should involve the six stages of needs analysis, objective setting, training design, relevant implementation, evaluation, and feedback.

#### **4.5 Evaluation of Findings**

Generally, the rich data produced a spectrum of findings of which the key ones were presented in this document. Although some of the findings seem common sense, it is helpful having research to backup made assumptions, and provide guidelines for improving current training approaches for TW RTC employees. Therefore, the findings were helpful to develop the final deliverable and gave the researcher a thorough understanding of TW's training context and employee needs.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

Firstly, the main findings were analysed and discussed, followed by additional findings from the data and a recap of the literature review findings. Lastly, the findings were evaluated as helpful to generate the final deliverable as well as benefitting the researcher through deeper understanding of TW's training context.

## **Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter concludes the dissertation, starting by restating the research aim and objectives. Subsequently, the research findings are summarised and their key implications for the final deliverable – an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity – are noted. The final framework is then presented, followed by a brief list of research implications and future research foci.

### **5.2 Research Aim and Objectives – a Reminder**

The research set out to develop an intercultural training framework aiming to improve intercultural sensitivity for TW RTC employees. This was to be achieved by:

- defining intercultural sensitivity and how it can be improved
- defining (organisational) intercultural training and its related components
- producing an outline for an intercultural training framework
- understanding practical and organisational considerations of (intercultural) employee training
- exploring how internal training is delivered in TW's RTC department and organisational considerations
- identifying (examples of) intercultural interactions in TW's RTC department, including related challenges and benefits.

### **5.3 Applied Research Approach**

To answer some of the research questions, relevant academic and practitioner literature from the fields of intercultural business communication, diversity management, and organisational management was synthesised. In addition, primary data was collected to answer the remaining research questions, and helped to gain insights into the practical side of (intercultural) organisational training as well as TW-context specific considerations. As it was important to gather rich data in order to derive deeper meanings, interpretivism informed this research's methodology, and so an inductive and exploratory approach was

applied. Therefore, qualitative research methods were employed to gather primary data from two semi-structured face-to-face interviews and one employee focus group. The interviews were held with one global training practitioner to establish organisational and practical considerations of (intercultural) employee training, while the second interview focused on TW's specific business context and internal training approaches. The employee focus group helped to explore employees' daily intercultural interactions and their respective challenges and benefits, ultimately making the final deliverable relevant to TW employees, and hence more effective and applicable.

Using qualitative content analysis helped derive deeper meanings from the data that otherwise may have been overlooked. Moreover, triangulation across three research areas (TW employees' context, TW training context, and organisational training context) helped to establish overarching themes, which subsequently could be compared to and complemented the findings from the literature review.

Overall, the applied research approach went smoothly and according to plan. Findings from the data were numerous and could be extended if it were not for the dissertation's word limit. General research limitations are discussed in section 5.7.

#### **5.4 Summary of Findings**

The literature review found that intercultural sensitivity involves the three components of acknowledgment and appreciation of (cultural) differences (cognitive), empathy (affective), and behaviour adaption (behavioural). To improve intercultural sensitivity, individuals need to experience and appreciate difference, for which Bennett's (1986) DMIS is beneficial. For training purposes this means experiential and culture-general training is needed, encompassing the four components of 1) awareness of oneself and one's own cultural influences, 2) knowledge of other cultures, 3) recognition of emotional challenges involved, and 4) basic skills that can be applied to most intercultural encounters. Generally, intercultural training should appeal to the affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimension of trainees; however, money and time

expenses as well as return-on-investment are main organisational considerations. Intercultural training frameworks involve the six stages of needs analysis, objective setting, training design, relevant implementation, evaluation, and feedback.

TW RTC-specific implications for the final intercultural training framework are overall integration into existing training programmes, inclusion of diverse training types, and regular feedback results reported directly to the RTC team. It was also found that the intercultural sensitivity framework should include the steps of needs analysis to determine whether training development is necessary, and communicating training aims and benefits to stakeholders. The framework should also consider real-life application to TW RTC employees' work context, training timing and short duration, and ideally be delivered by internal trainers. Findings from the employee focus group showed the intercultural training framework should focus on raising cultural self-awareness, interacting with diverse colleagues, support reflection on own behaviours, identifying own cultural values, and being confronted with difference. Moreover, it should include sufficient opportunity for relationship building, for discussing different viewpoints, and pre-assessment of trainees' current level of intercultural sensitivity.

Additional findings were that management are cultural role models setting workplace values, variety in training approaches is needed to stimulate employees' creativity, and employees need room for self-reflection and discussion to help broaden their minds.

### **5.5 Intercultural Training Framework – a Model**

In this section, a model for an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity for TW RTC employees is presented. It was developed by using the generic intercultural training framework produced through the literature review (Appendix 3), and populating it with TW RTC specifics as generated from the primary data research.

## ***Part I – Pre-training***

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### **1. Needs analysis**

- Expected outcomes:
  - Define a current issue/what could be improved
    - Consider general team collaboration, working across different lines of business or office locations
  - State expected solution(s) of the training
    - Specify to what extent/stages the training should ideally increase trainees' intercultural sensitivity, merely parts of it, a specific dimension or overall
  
- Drivers for training:
  - Review the internal TW RTC context
    - Consider TW RTC organisational changes, such as change in business strategy or HR development
    - Employee feedback
  - Define relevant changes in macro environment
    - Client feedback
    - TW-wide changes
  
- Benchmark TW RTC:
  - Establish current skill level of employees
    - Consider previous training – what other soft-skill training have employees potentially attended?
    - Keep results to supports quality assurance and evaluation
  
- Training audience:
  - Define the training audience by considering:
    - Access to target audience/availability
    - Diversities within the group
    - Segmentation of trainees by role, seniority etc.
  
- Conclude findings:
  - Evaluate if the need can be satisfied through training
  - If no need was established, training may not be necessary

**→ Only continue if a need for intercultural training aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity was discovered**

## 2. Resources

- Budget:
  - What budget is needed?
  - What budget is available
  - What time investment is expected?
    - Trainees
    - Internal training developer (*if applicable*)
    - Internal instructor (*if applicable*)
  - Clearly define the ROI for TW RTC
  
- Internal or external trainers:
  - Search for internal trainers with required expertise and skills
    - Check their availability
    - Consider their personal development
  - Is additional budget available to purchase external training?
  
- Contact person:
  - Who is the training sponsor?
    - Management buy-in is required
  - Who manages the training development process?

→ Get management approval **before** proceeding

## 3. Objective setting

- SMART training objective(s):
  - Derived from training needs established through needs analysis
  - Should be based around:
    - Helping trainees to acknowledge and appreciate cultural differences
    - Improving trainees' empathy
    - Supporting trainees' behaviour adaption
    - Raising trainees' cultural self-awareness
    - Supporting relationship building
  
- Multisensory methodology to achieve objective(s):
  - Combine several approaches, including:
    - Synergistic (defining similarities – common goals within TW RTC)
    - Pattern-based (workplace-task oriented – communicating with clients)
    - Problem-based (focusing on contrasting viewpoints – analysing different interpretations of the same action)
    - Evidence-based (using case studies – working with real-life work examples)



#### 4. Audience definition

- Training access:
  - o Open to all employees (if budget permits)
    - This allows for diverse audience
- Training eligibility:
  - o As part of existing training programme, are there any access restrictions (i.e. seniority levels or job roles)?
    - Anticipate feelings of excluded employees and communicate accordingly  
(if applicable)
- Audience segmentation:
  - o Ensure diverse trainees participate (gender, age, seniority levels, backgrounds, experience, interests)
  - o Pre-assess trainees' current level of intercultural sensitivity using the DMIS in combination with a test instrument
    - Can be applied as online questionnaire prior to training

#### 5. Design

- Timing:
  - o One training session
    - Further sessions are possible if established training need requires this and more budget is available
    - Booked into trainees' and instructor's diaries in advance, so they can manage their time and clients' expectations
  - o Integrated into existing training programme
    - Consider training outside busy client periods and events
  - o Maximum duration of half a day
- Instructional style and delivery mode:
  - o Instructor-led classroom training
    - Supported by training material trainees can take away
  - o Experiential and culture-general training
    - Giving trainees the opportunity to actively experience difference and learn how to deal with numerous intercultural situations
- Methods:
  - o Diverse mix of methods across trainees' affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimension, including:
    - Interactive group work
    - Individual work
    - Discussions
    - Case studies

- Techniques:
  - Employ diverse mix of techniques, including
    - Group discussions
    - Triads
    - Self-reflection
  - Use right-brain techniques to stimulate trainees' creativity
    - Writing poems/raps
    - Graffiti walls
    - drawing posters
  
- Content structure:
  - Define module themes that are relevant to employees' work context, including:
    - Interacting and collaborating with diverse colleagues
    - Unwritten rules at TW RTC
    - Understanding different viewpoints within TW RTC
    - Jargon and language use within TW RTC
    - Defining individual and organisational cultural values
    - Exploring trainees' cultural identities
  - Sequence content by building a content outline
    - Always begin with the training brief (define ground rules and outline)
    - Provide brief theoretical background
    - Test knowledge of other cultures
    - Focus on trainees' self-awareness and their own cultural influences
    - Discuss emotional challenges involved
    - Identify basic skills that can be applied to most intercultural encounters
    - Always end with the training de-brief (discuss learning outcomes)
  
- Trainee assessment:
  - Ideally before and after training to measure trainees' learning curve
    - Supports the evaluation of training effectiveness
  - Consider pre-assessing trainees' intercultural sensitivity using the DMIS
  - Use self-reflection assessment following the training
    - Helps trainees' to apply learnings in their daily work routine

## 6. Communication

- Communicating training aims and benefits:
  - Involve diverse stakeholders, including:
    - Trainees – what to expect, what to prepare, why to attend
    - Instructors (*if different from training developer*) – what is the overall aim
    - Management – training outcomes, trainee feedback, evaluation results

## ***Part II – Training implementation***

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### **1. Trainees' needs**

- Timings:
  - Have regular breaks
    - Give trainees the chance to move around
    - Ask trainees if additional breaks are needed
  - Change methods and pace of training regularly
    - Trainees can only concentrate for up to 20min at a time
  
- Physical environment:
  - Ensure room set up is informal and comfortable
    - Do all trainees have access to the room?
    - Can trainees see/hear well from all spaces in the room?
    - Do trainees have special requirements (hearing or seeing aids etc)?
  - Provide refreshments
    - Consider dietary requirements (may be culturally influenced)
  - Trainer should have same dress code as trainees
    - Consider cultural needs of trainees'

### **2. Resources**

- Training equipment:
  - Arrange for computer, slide projectors, and internet access
  
- Trainer(s):
  - Check in with trainer(s) to ensure they are on time and in the right place to deliver training
  
- Backup plan:
  - Have a 'Plan B' ready for lack of resources/technical issues on the day

## ***Part III – Post-training***

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### **1. Trainee assessment**

- Self-reflection activity:
  - Trainees should complete a self-reflection exercise to stimulate reflection and raising cultural self-awareness
    - This is an individual exercise and will not be shared with anyone
    - Consider having an incentive or control mechanism to ensure trainees complete the activity

### **2. Feedback**

- Tools:
  - Questionnaire
    - Use standardised online questionnaire
  - De-brief
    - Use results gathered during the de-brief
    - Remember to have notes taken
    - Note that these may be influenced by group think and peer pressure
  - Trainees' self-reflection exercise
    - Do not use the exercise in itself but consider additional feedback from trainees
- Feedback providers:
  - Ensure to include a wide range of feedback providers, including:
    - Trainees
    - Instructor(s)
    - Management – Have they noticed changed in trainees' behaviours/skills?
- Receiving/sharing feedback:
  - Ensure all feedback is directly reported to the relevant colleagues in the TW RTC team
    - Consider where to store feedback
    - Who should receive the feedback?

### **3. Evaluation**

- Effectiveness:
  - Were the training objectives reached?
- Methodology
  - Were the applied methods relevant?
  - Was training delivered effectively?
- Contents:
  - Was the sequencing of content effective?
  - Was the contents relevant to TW RTC employees?

- Evaluator:
  - Who is involved in the evaluation process?
    - Ensure true evaluation results by having an objective person joining the evaluation process
  
- Final outcomes:
  - Communicate training outcomes to management
  - Use feedback to update training
    - If it was a one-off training, consider feedback for future training development
  - Define action steps to keep momentum
    - How do the outcomes affect TW RTC?
    - What was learned from the outcomes?
    - How can these learnings be re-applied to TW RTC?

## **5.6 Research Implications**

This research played an important part in TW RTC's internal training context as it provides the department with an intercultural training framework available to use free of charge. If applied, improved intercultural skills of employees would also raise efficiency and hence increase business performance.

Moreover, the developed framework and applied research approach enriched the field of intercultural training research due to its novice stance on applying the small-culture approach, and lastly, the researcher gained thorough understanding of intercultural training and TW RTC'S organisational context and employee needs.

The findings helped to develop a strong and relevant intercultural training framework work for TW; and hence the research aim and related objectives were reached.

## 5.7 Research Limitations

The research went according to plan and so the main limitations as mentioned in section 3.7 continue to apply. As the generated findings are specific to TW's business context, it is unlikely that the exact findings apply to other organisations; however, the research findings provide a range of themes that are likely to be present in similar organisations. Moreover, as the findings overlapped with some of the results from the literature review, a certain extent of generalisability is implied. Nevertheless, this research set out to be a case study and is hence context specific.

To ensure application for future research, the research approach was described in detail, so that similar research can be applied to other specific (business) contexts. As TW was selected as case study due to its clear analogy of Holliday's (1999) small-culture approach, the applied research approach may only be applicable to similarly highly-diversified organisations. However, under the notion of the culturally-complex individual, the small-culture approach (if applied) is actually relevant to any organisation, and therefore, the general themes that were extracted may apply to other organisations as well.

## 5.8 Future Research Foci

Future research topics could be:

A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to assess the effectiveness of the proposed intercultural training framework within TW RTC</li></ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to explore if employees' intercultural sensitivity increases over the long-term when confronted with intercultural differences</li></ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to measure if behaviours change in intercultural interactions from employees that have and have not attended intercultural training</li></ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to compare management viewpoints to employees' in order to identify if behaviour change is level dependent</li></ul>

## **5.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter firstly restated the research aim as to develop an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity for TW RTC employees. Subsequently, a summary of the applied interpretivist research approach is given, including the inductive and exploratory approaches using qualitative research methods. In section 5.4, the key findings were summarised, including that the final training framework should focus on raising cultural self-awareness, being confronted with difference, relationship building, and support reflection on own behaviours and cultural values. These findings were then applied to the final deliverable, an intercultural training framework aiming to increase intercultural sensitivity for TW RTC employees consisting of three main parts and eleven stages, which was presented in section 5.5. Lastly, implications of the research, such as a free-of-charge training framework for TW, and limitations like a case-study research approach applicable to a variety of organisations, were listed. The chapter ends on a selection of future research foci including a longitudinal study to measure if employees' intercultural sensitivity increases when confronted with intercultural difference.

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## **Appendix 1 – Intercultural Sensitivity Measurement Instruments**

### **Intercultural sensitivity scale (ISS)**

Chen and Starosta's (2000) intercultural sensitivity scale consists of 24 items using a five-point Likert-type response scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). It measures the five components of engagement in intercultural interactions, respect for cultural differences, self-confidence in intercultural interactions, enjoyment of intercultural interactions, and attentiveness in intercultural interactions (Graf, 2003). It was based on their previous model of intercultural communication competence from 1996, which included the three conceptual dimensions of intercultural awareness, sensitivity and adroitness. They later adapted it to purely measure intercultural sensitivity (Fritz *et al.*, 2002) but it again shows the lack of clarity and diverging terminology. The model is widely used but has been criticised for its unsatisfactory psychometric properties (Graf and Mertesacker, 2009).

### **Intercultural sensitivity inventory (ISI)**

Bhawuk and Brislin's (1992) intercultural sensitivity inventory consists of 46 items on a seven-point Likert-type response scale ranging from very strongly agree to very strongly disagree. It aims to test respondents' traits such as empathy, respect, interest in local culture, flexibility, tolerance, and technical skill (Kapoor *et al.*, 1996). Although the instrument tests respondents predominantly on their individualist-collectivist orientations (Kapoor *et al.*, 2000), Graf's (2003) results when applying and testing the instrument were excellent. Nevertheless, Kapoor *et al.* (2000) criticised the validity of results due to the instrument's ambiguity in the tone and direction of the items used, and concluded the measure was unreliable.

### **Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)**

The Intercultural Development Inventory consists of 50 items on a five-point response scale sensitivity based on Bennett's Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (discussed below). The IDI is said to be widely used in educational and corporate training programmes but is equally built for evaluation and research (McMurray, 2007). However, Paige *et al.* (2003) criticise that to use the IDI trainers need a three-day qualifying seminar and Graf and Mertsacker (2009) point out that it is related to cost. It is therefore an additional time and money investment for organisations to consider.

All three instruments require respondents to self-complete a form about how they *think* they feel/ behave, which is open to criticisms such as peer pressure, the need to select an answer that is socially accepted, and that desirable answers may already be implied within the statement. The same criticisms apply to further existing instruments used to measure traits associated with intercultural sensitivity, such as openness, cultural knowledge and flexibility. These are for example the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (Kelley and

Meyers, 1992), the Culture Shock Inventory (Reddin, 1994), the Intercultural Anxiety Scale (Stephan and Stephan, 1985), the Organisational Culture Inventory (Cooke and Lafferty, 1983), and the Worldmindedness Scale (Sampson and Smith, 1957). Overall, although the response-scale and test items vary across these instruments, the approach to measuring intercultural sensitivity is similar. However, measurement instruments are restricted when looking at individuals' personal development to improve intercultural sensitivity.

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## **Appendix 2 – Bennett’s (1986) DMIS Model Training Tips**

An overview of Bennett’s (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and how to train each stage is given below.

### **Denial:**

- No actual training needed
- Examples are: hold 'Mexican nights' to create more differentiation of general categories for cultural difference
- Unaffiliated contact tends to be more entertaining than developmental

### **Defense:**

- Focus on positives of all cultures
- Don't talk down own culture as pride will turn into hostility towards other cultures
- Increase cultural self-esteem

### **Minimisation:**

- Discuss and evaluate differences
- Use simulations, reports of personal experience and illustrations of substantial cultural differences in the interpretation of behaviour or use representatives of other cultures

### **Acceptance:**

- Discussion of values
- Stress recognition and non-evaluative respect for variation in verbal behaviour and communication style

### **Adaptation:**

- Interaction is vital
- Focus on the ability to intentionally shift frame of reference, to empathise
- Let participants apply knowledge in face-to-face communication. e.g. dyads with other-culture partners, facilitated multicultural group discussion or outside assignments
- Use real-life communication situations

### **Integration:**

- Focus on personal ethics
- Help construct an ethical system that will guide their choices and actions

### **References:**

Bennett, M.J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 10(2), pp.176-196.



**The details of the training framework have been removed.  
If you'd like to learn more about the developed framework, please contact me.**

### Appendix 3 – Generic Intercultural Training Framework

As a result of the literature review, the researcher developed the below generic intercultural training framework. This was used as a base for the final deliverable of this document.

Stage	Activities	Components	Considerations
[Redacted]			
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]			





## Appendix 4 – Research Information Sheet

This document provides details about the research, its researcher (“I”) and the rights of the research participant (“you”). Please read the following pages thoroughly and sign the consent form on page 3 if you agree to participate in the research.

**If you have any questions that have not been answered in this document, or you require any changes, please contact the researcher before signing the document.**

### 1. Research information

Research Information Sheet	
<b>Project title:</b>	“Developing an intercultural training framework for an organisation”
<b>Purpose of research:</b>	<p>To explore intercultural (employee) training including:</p> <p><i>[note: adapted for training practitioner:]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the basics of need assessment, design, and evaluation</li> <li>• how it can help improve participants’ intercultural sensitivity</li> <li>• common intercultural interactions in the workplace</li> </ul> <p><i>[note: adapted for Towers Watson’s Learning and Development Lead:]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how employee training is planned, held and evaluated at TW RTC?</li> <li>• what are considerations and limitations to employee training?</li> <li>• what are benefits of employee training?</li> </ul> <p><i>[note: adapted for employee focus group:]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how do you interact with different people in your day-to-day job?</li> <li>• what are the benefits/challenges of working with different people?</li> <li>• what did you (dis)like about employee training you have attended as part of your role at TW?</li> </ul>
<b>Research procedures:</b>	<p>For you, the participant, the research will occur in three key stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The preparation:</b> This includes reading this document and asking any questions you may have to ensure you fully understand what you are participating in. You will need to agree and sign the consent form to partake in this research project for your own and my benefit.</li> <li>2. <b>The interview:</b> I intent to hold a semi-structured interview with you in a location and at a time convenient for you. This interview will be mainly about your experience with the research topic and will be audio recorded.</li> <li>3. <b>The transcription:</b> A transcribed copy of the interview will be shared with you for ‘sign off’. That way I hope to accommodate any changes in wording you may require after having read the interview content. <i>Please note that major changes to content at transcript stage will severely impact the research process, so please ensure you are aware of what you (don’t) want to talk about during the interview.</i></li> </ol> <p>The final thesis will be shared with you on request.</p> <p><i>[note: for the employee focus group, the term ‘interview’ was replaced with ‘focus group’]</i></p>

<b>Statement of confidentiality:</b>	I, the researcher, confirm that I will treat your data (including your personal details and gathered interview results) highly confidential and they will not be shared with anyone else apart from yourself. The interview recording and transcript will be securely stored on a password-protected drive that only I have access to. All data will be destroyed at the end of December 2014 unless you request otherwise. If choice of words, ways of narrating, or storylines could identify you, I will discuss this with you first and ask for approval to continue the research.

2. Details of the researcher

I am currently a Master's student in 'Intercultural Business Communication' at Edinburgh Napier University. This research project is part of my Master's dissertation. Please feel free to contact me anytime using the details below.

**Name:** Johanna Westhauser

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Mobile:** [REDACTED]

3. Rights of the research participant

- You participate in this research project voluntarily without any coercion.
- You are given the opportunity to review the interview transcript for accuracy.
- This is an independent academic study not intending to affect your professional life.
- You have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. If possible, please inform me in advance and provide me with a reason for your withdrawal.

## Appendix 5 – Research Consent Form

Edinburgh Napier University requires that all persons who participate in research studies give their written consent to do so. Please read the following and sign it if you agree with what it says.

1. I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project on the topic of intercultural employee training to be conducted by Johanna Westhauser, who is a postgraduate student at Edinburgh Napier University.
2. The broad goal of this research study is to explore how intercultural employee trainings are designed and delivered, which should take no longer than three months to complete.
3. I have been told that my responses will be anonymised. My name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in any report subsequently produced by the researcher.
4. I also understand that if at any time during the interview I feel unable or unwilling to continue, I am free to leave. That is, my participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw from it without negative consequences. However, after data has been anonymised or after publication of results it will not be possible for my data to be removed as it would be untraceable at this point.
5. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
6. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the interview and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I have read and understand the above and consent to participate in this study. My signature is not a waiver of any legal rights. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to keep a copy of the informed consent form for my records.

---

Participant's Signature

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Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the respondent has consented to participate. Furthermore, I will retain one copy of the informed consent form for my records.

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Researcher's Signature

---

Date

**Appendices 6-8 have been removed due to data use confidentiality.**