

WHITE PAPER LITERATURE REVIEW (WP2)

Experiences and lessons learned

Introduction

This white paper describes the experience of the project partners while carrying out Work Package 2 of the Erasmus+ CAPIRE project. It will explain what steps we took and why we chose that path. We will particularly zoom in on the obstacles and setbacks we encountered during the work and how we solved them. This white paper aims to help others learn from our problems and mistakes so that they can prevent or solve them more easily.

The name of the tool

In our application, we called the tool a 'Culture Sensitiser'. This name was used by a number of scholars at the end of the 20th century, probably because they wanted to avoid the original name: Culture Assimilator. We agreed that the original name was not ideal, since assimilation is a sensitive subject in immigration discussions. Moreover, the tool does not intend for users to assimilate into a foreign culture, but to understand it better. When we started the project, after a short discussion, we chose to call the tool a 'Culture Simulator'. Like the 'flight simulator', it trains users by bringing them into near-life situations where they have to deal with cultural differences. Another advantage is that this name stays close to the original name.

The search

The literature search for a training tool is different from that for an organisational theory or management phenomenon. In many handbooks and papers on intercultural training, it is mentioned alongside other methods. Thus, we ended up with a far too high number of references. Adding more criteria helped reduce it, but still, the number was high.

Conference paper

We decided to submit the Literature Review as a paper for the EURAM conference in Bath in 2024. Consequently, we received two written reviews and verbal feedback during the presentation session. One reviewer suggested we drop the aim of a Systematic (exhaustive) Review and focus on the lower number of papers that dealt more extensively with the tool.

Finally, we chose a mixed approach. We collected in an appendix table all papers that evaluated the tool (rather than just mentioning it) and could show that, to this day, it has the lively interest of scholars and trainers. In addition, from the literature, we derived a corpus of all culture simulators (examples) that we were able to retrieve. This showed how the tool has developed

since the 1960s. Most were made in the U.S. From the 1990s onwards, German scholar Alexander Thomas improved the tool and produced more than 30 of them for Germans who want to do business abroad. But the improved version of Thomas was never adopted outside Germany.

From the many examples and the suggestions in papers, we were able to establish a kind of model for the ideal Culture Simulator. The paper is now ready for submittal to a journal.

Learnings

All in all, the work was successfully finalised. We hope our model will set the standard for future Culture Simulators. Since the tool is for free and available in 6 languages, there are no (language) barriers to using and following it.