

Study task 16

In the text below there are a number of examples of cautious language. Highlight as many as you can find. Which of the ways of expressing caution listed above are the most common?

How to learn

Cultural differences are an important factor when it comes to how and what managers should learn and from whom. Different cultural responses to management education are particularly revealing. For example, German and Swiss managers tend to favour structured learning situations with clear pedagogical objectives, detailed course outlines and schedules, and the 'right answer' or superior solution. This is very much in contrast with the view typically held by people in Anglo-Saxon cultures such as Britain and the USA. Most British participants in courses dislike a structure that is too rigid. They tend to prefer more open-ended learning situations with loose objectives and practical tasks. The suggestion that there could be only one correct answer is less acceptable to them.

The idea of working in groups may come more naturally to Asian managers than to the more individualistic Anglo-Saxons. On the other hand, Asian participants expect to have more difficulty having to 'sell' their ideas in a group, with the potential for open disagreement and conflict, and therefore possible loss of face. Nor do they quite see the point of learning from other students who are no more knowledgeable than themselves. Wisdom resides in the hierarchy.

Group discussions may seem perfectly natural to Americans, who have been encouraged as students to express their own ideas and opinions. British students too have been educated to challenge and debate the ideas put forth by each other, including the teacher. British culture values the ability to prove one's case, eloquently, even at the expense of others. Anglo-Saxon culture is more tolerant of confrontation and uncertainty, and is less concerned with status differences, either among participants or between themselves and the teacher. This can be quite a shock to students from Asia and many Central European countries, who are not used to either voicing their opinion in class, disagreeing with each other, or actively debating with the professor.

Training that makes extensive use of case studies, business games, and management exercises such as role-plays, favours learning by doing rather than learning by lecture and reading. It indicates a preference for experiential or active learning rather than cognitive or reflective learning. It also reflects an inductive rather than deductive approach; cases or exercises are used to arrive at general principles or theories (the Anglo-Saxon approach) rather than starting with a theory or framework.

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