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**Effective Intercultural Communication and Conflict Management
in German-Russian Cooperation.
Implications for Private and Public Enterprises in Russian Federation**

1. Intercultural Communication Management and Cultural Competence

Communication management in a multicultural environment has to focus on the issues of cultural sensitivity, the awareness of possible cultural differences as well as on the ability to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities emerging in new socio-cultural contexts. The challenge of the internalisation in Russian Federation — starting from growing individual cultural encounters — to private entrepreneurial initiatives abroad and strategic business networking — up to the image of effective public government — imply the necessity of successful and effective intercultural communication management.

The notion of intercultural communication management has been established as a subject of scientific research, defined as one of the managerial functions in globally operating organisations¹. There exists a relatively broad agreement that the inability of managers to adjust to the demands of the international business environment can be claimed to be the primary cause of international business failures².

Although recent survey evidence suggests that Russian firms tend to lag behind firms in advanced economies in terms of all main aspects of management quality³, no considerable effort has been made in the literature to analyse the effectiveness of intercultural communication management in Russian firms and its impact on management quality⁴. The overview of recent Russian scientific literature on intercultural communication has shown that little attention has been paid to the role of cultural competence in intercultural conflicts and to practical implications of cultural differences on effective cooperation and international business partnership⁵.

¹ *Schipanski A.* Kommunikationsmanagement in international tätigen Unternehmen., Integrierte Unternehmenskommunikation in international tätigen Unternehmen // Schriften zur Medienproduktion. 2012. P. 17–68.

² *Apud S., Lenartowicz T., Johnson J.P.* Intercultural competence: what do practitioners really know? Proceedings, Academy of International Business South-East Region Conference, Clearwater, 2003. URL: <http://www.aibse.org/proceeding.asp> (02.04.2013).

³ Diversifying Russia. Harnessing regional diversity. Special report. 13.12.12. URL: www.ebrd.com/pages/research/publications/special/diversifying-russia.shtml (01.04.2013).

⁴ *Matveev V.A.* The perception of intercultural communication competence by American and Russian managers with experience on multicultural teams. School of Interpersonal Communication. 2002.

⁵ *Садохин А.П.* Межкультурная коммуникация. М., 2012; *Червякова Л.Д., Сапожникова Е.Э.* Проблемы межкультурной коммуникации: культурная идентификация и конфликт культур в деловой дискурсивной практике. М., 2006; *Авсеевко Н.А.* Теория и практика межкультурной коммуникации. М., 2005; *Симонова Л.М., Стровский Л.Е.* Кросс-культурные взаимодействия в международном

In the context of these considerations I would set out to use a broad definition of cultural competence in order to develop a framework for intercultural communication management, which would encompass interventions to eliminating cultural misunderstandings and conflicts in private and public enterprises. The goal is to demonstrate some interventions which would address sociocultural barriers to effective communication in German-Russian cooperation within a framework that can be applied to the prevention and elimination of intercultural conflicts.

In order to find answers to my questions I will conduct a literature review of relevant academic and government publications, focusing the definition of cultural competence and the classification of cultural barriers to effective intercultural management. In the absence of strong quantitative data, I would reinforce my findings by means of an expert interview, which is becoming increasingly accepted as a scientific tool in management research⁶.

Successful and efficient cultural encounters both on the individual and institutional levels depend considerably on the cultural competence of the individuals involved. Continuous development of cultural competence should therefore be viewed as an integral part of intercultural communication management in organisations⁷.

It is widely accepted that cultural competence is a crucial factor in explaining effective performance in international business and political settings⁸. It is closely linked to successful cross-cultural adjustment, task effectiveness during overseas assignments and healthy interpersonal relationships with culturally different individuals⁹. It has also been argued that promoting and supporting cultural competence in a public organisation can contribute to the relevancy, adequacy and appropriateness of services and programmes¹⁰.

Cultural competence is defined as the ability of individuals to function effectively in another culture; it is a “set of cultural behaviours and attitudes integrated into the practical methods of a system, agency, or its professionals that enables them to work effectively in

предпринимательстве. М., 2003.

⁶ *Gummesson E.* Qualitative Methods in Management Research. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA, 2000.

⁷ *Bolten J.* Interkulturelles Coaching, Mediation, Training und Consulting als Aufgaben des Personalmanagements internationaler Unternehmen // Strategisches Personalmanagement in globalen Unternehmen / Clermont A. et al. (Eds.). Vahlen, München. 2001. P. 909–926.

⁸ *Miller E.K.* Diversity and Its Management: Training Management for Cultural Competence Within the Organization // Management Quarterly. 1994. No 35 (2). P. 17–24; *Lustig M.W., Koester J.* Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communications Across Cultures. New York, 1999.

⁹ *Bhawuk D.P.S., Brislin R.* The Measurement of Intercultural Sensitivity Using the Concepts of Individualism and Collectivism // International Journal of Intercultural Relations. 1992. No 16. P. 413–436.

¹⁰ *Geron S. M.* Cultural Competency: How Is It Measured? Does It Make a Difference? // Generations. 2002. No 26. P. 39–45.

cross-cultural situations”¹¹. There is a considerable overlap in the literature between the notions of cultural competence and cultural intelligence¹², both concepts reflecting the dynamic processes of adaptation to new cultural contexts and focusing on three dimensions: cognitive, motivational and behavioural. According to these dimension a culturally competent/intelligent individual is supposed to a) be able to use metacognitive strategies to overcome new social contexts, b) have the motivational impetus to seek new information outside his or her realms of knowledge and experience, c) be able to engage in adaptive behaviours and to keep perseverance in the face of obstacles and setbacks.

With regard to these dimensions recent research suggests that intercultural competence is essential for one’s deep insight into the causes and prevention strategies of intercultural conflicts¹³.

2. Intercultural conflict management in German-Russian cooperation

Conflicts are defined as “*a form of intense interpersonal and /or intrapersonal dissonance (tension or antagonism) between two or more interdependent parties based on incompatible goals, needs, desires, values, beliefs, and /or attitudes. (...) Intercultural misunderstandings and potential conflict arise when two individuals, coming from two distinctive cultures, have two different ways of expressing and interpreting the same symbolic action*”¹⁴.

A modern approach towards management in business settings views dealing with intercultural conflicts as a challenging task; managed effectively an intercultural conflict may contribute to positive outcomes, improved relationships within multicultural teams, to better understanding of the needs and expectations of the involved parties, to more effective task accomplishments and to more creative problem solving and innovation¹⁵.

The analysis of cultural conflicts in German-Russian cooperation involves the examination of sociocultural barriers to effective communication. Three major levels of sociocultural barriers can be identified where intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts may evolve: organisational, cultural and individual. While these are not perfectly distinct categories, and there may be some overlap between them, they help to build a framework on which to

¹¹ Cross T., Bazron B., Dennis K., Isaacs M. Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care. Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center. Vol. I. Washington DC., 1989.

¹² Earley P.C., Ang S. Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures. Stanford, 2003.

¹³ Mattl C. Interkulturelle interpersonale Konflikte? Ansatzpunkte zum Verständnis von Konfliktenstehung und Konfliktverhalten im interkulturellen Kontext. Frankfurt am Main, London, 2006.

¹⁴ Ting-Toomey S. Towards a Theory of Conflict and Culture // Communication, Culture and Organizational processes / Gudykunst W.B., Stewart L., Ting-Toomey S. (Eds.). Beverly Hills, CA, 1985. P. 72.

¹⁵ Ting-Toomey S. Managing Intercultural Conflicts Effectively // Samovar L., Porter R. Intercultural communication. 7th Edition. Belmont, CA, 1994.

understand the complex and important issue of cultural competence in intercultural cooperation.

When analysing the emergence of the barriers to intercultural communication, two major perspectives need to be considered: the surface level of organisational barriers and the deep level of cultural and individual barriers.

Organisational Barriers

From the organisational standpoint, one factor that impinges on both the effectiveness and stability of German-Russian cooperation is the extent to which the human resource managers and/or project managers realise the impact of cultural differences on communication processes.

The surface level of organisational barriers involves apparent and superficial factors that can be — recognised early enough — more or less promptly changed. Examples of barriers that strongly influence communication processes may include poor design of organisational environment, which fails to meet the needs of the employees for clear communication. The lack of highly qualified interpreter services and/or culturally/linguistically appropriate translation of working materials for example can result in mutual misunderstandings, poor comprehension and be associated with the lack of skill, incompetence and eventually with the lack of appreciation and trust. Communication in Russian-German projects in English language may also appear to be misleading and insufficient if even a minimal language barrier can be recognised.

Organisational barriers may also involve the lack of background knowledge concerning obvious limitations to effective communication — varying from the information about actual working hours in private enterprises (starting from 7:30–8 a.m. in Germany and not until 9–10 a.m. in Russian Federation) — to the information about actual periods of public holidays. For example the periods of time from the 21st of December to the 3rd of January in Germany and from the 25th of December to the 15th of January in Russian Federation are often reserved for private holidays (though the official holidays are indeed shorter), so that official appointments and meetings as well as project deadlines are not likely to be accepted.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers in business environment arise on a deeper level when individuals are faced with the challenges of interacting in a new cultural system and/or are being requested to comply with different, but not clearly formulated and not clearly understood, cultural standards, value systems, routines and practices. On this deeper level the cultural barriers are determined by social, political, environmental, historical and other different implicit factors, which are not easy to convey and to change.

It has been found out that rising difficulties facing business processes in a foreign culture are associated with the increasing cultural distance, perceived as an overall difference not only in cultural values but also in economic, political and legal environments¹⁶.

The investigation of the causes of conflicts in Russian-German cooperation can be based on the analysis of main contrasting cultural values along with the comparative analysis of different cultural standards and dimensions. Just a few factors can be taken into account in order not to exceed the scope of this paper.

The best way to understand cultural background of conflicts is to analyse cultural values within the framework of established intercultural paradigms. Hofstede explains cultural differences through certain dimensions, such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity¹⁷. Of these, I shall turn in this paper to individualism vs. collectivism dimension, which seems to influence communication patterns in a most explicit way. This dimension is defined by Hofstede as “the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side, we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose... On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families...”¹⁸

While representatives of the collectivist cultures (to which Russian Federation is usually attributed to) tend to be more concerned with the maintaining of the group harmony and with the saving the other persons’ “face”, dignity, the representatives of the individualistic societies tend to be more direct but emotionally restrained. It was found out that the individualists would adopt an explicit confrontational discussion style of conflict resolution whereas the collectivists would rather prefer an accommodating or engaging style¹⁹. In case of the engagement style of conflict a verbally direct approach along with an intensive verbal and non-verbal expression and emotional involvement would be chosen in order to demonstrate sincerity and willingness to engage to resolve the conflict. Adopting and

¹⁶ *Rosenzweig P.M., Nohria N.* Influences on Human Resource Management Practices in Multinational Corporations // *Journal of International Business Studies*. 1994. No 25 (2). P. 229–251; *Thomas A.S., Mueller S.L.* A Case for Comparative Entrepreneurship: Assessing the Relevance of Culture // *Journal of International Business Studies*. 2000. No 31 (2). P. 287–301.

¹⁷ *Hofstede G.* Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA, 2001. P. 428; *Bhawuk D.P.S., Brislin R.* The Measurement of Intercultural Sensitivity Using the Concepts of Individualism and Collectivism // *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 1992. No 16. P. 413–436.

¹⁸ *Hofstede G.* A Summary of My Ideas About National Culture. URL: <http://feweb.uvt.nl/center/hofstede/page3.htm> (20.2.2013).

¹⁹ *Ting-Toomey S., Gao G., Trubisky P., Yang Z., Kim H.S., Lin S L., et al.* Culture, Face, Maintenance and Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflicts: A Study in Five Cultures // *International Journal of conflict management*. 1991. No 2. P. 275–296.

accommodating style of conflict resolution means choosing an indirect and implicit way of silence, avoidance and ambiguity²⁰.

With regard to the collectivism-vs.-individualism paradigm, the concept of high and low context cultures of Hall can also be operationalised in order to demonstrate an overview of cultural barriers to effective communication and cooperation in Russian-German teams (displayed in the table below)²¹.

According to the simplifying conceptualization of Hall, which nevertheless proved useful and valid for intercultural research, much of the information in high-context cultures is contained in the context of the communication, so that subtle contextual clues and conventions — such as non-verbal and paralinguistic behavior — can influence how the message is interpreted. In low-context cultures the meaning is explicitly stated through language, the message is primarily in the words and is not supposed to be interpreted further.

**Figure 1: Barriers to effective intercultural communication
in German-Russian cooperation²²**

	German project team members	Russian project team members
Values and Expectations	Democracy, Self-determinism, Equality for Women, Human rights, Ecology.	Trust, loyalty, Hierarchy, Fatalism, Males dominate, Exploit environment.
Working style	Task-oriented, Highly organized and prefer doing one thing at a time, Stick to facts and figures obtained from reliable sources, Calm, factual and decisive planning, Activities are well-grounded, the reasons and backgrounds pointed up, The strained connection between the ideal (nice to have) and real limitations (have to) should be clearly estimated.	Person-oriented, Multitasking, non-linear perception of time, Not constant level of performance – varying from high to low, Group responsibility, Operational readiness, Impulsive, Unpredictable.

²⁰ Hammer R. The Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory: Individual Profile and interpretive Guide. N. Potomac, MD. Hammer Consulting Group. LLC, 2003.

²¹ Hall E.T. Beyond Culture. New York, 1976.

²² Source: own illustration, modified from Moosmüller 1997, Hall 1976, Hofstede 2008.

Communi- cation style	Low-context, Direct, Explicit, Emotionally restrained, Controlled, Truth before diplomacy, Prefer straightforward, direct discussion.	High-context, Indirect, Impulsiv, Reluctant to compromise, Non-confrontational, Diplomacy before truth, Little body language.
Attitude towards a person causing problems	Strong expectation to solve the problem autonomously, Confrontational style of conflict resolution.	The superior is assumed as an “accomplice” and is expected to solve the problem. Accommodating or engaging style of conflict resolution.

Figure 1 summarizes some crucial barriers which may provoke misunderstandings and conflicts and cause German-Russian cooperation to be unsuccessful. These barriers can be grouped into four: different values and expectations, (resulting in) different working and communications styles, and different conflict management styles, formulated as an attitude towards a person causing problems.

Individual Barriers

The way individual barriers affect communication in intercultural projects depends on individual cultural backgrounds of the participants, their experience in intercultural communication, their motivation to reflect and analyse contradictory information and their readiness to adapt oneself to cultural differences, or — in other words — on their cultural competence.

As a rule, German managers who begin work in Russia can be claimed to be more competent on an intercultural level for they can quickly adapt to new cultures and have a high level of ambiguity tolerance. It is the lack of basic knowledge about Russia and stereotype-free understanding of Russian cultural values that can still influence German-Russian cooperation in a negative way. On the other hand Russian managers tend to be somehow “encyclopaedically” prepared for intercultural encounters. Possessing a large scope of information about German history, geography and traditions, they may not have a chance to develop intercultural competence which results in their ethnocentric understanding of new cultures²³.

Ethnocentric perspective is considered to be one of the most important individual barriers to effective intercultural communication. It means that the individuals tend to see the norms, values and role definitions of their cultural in-group as “natural”, “correct” and

²³ Interview with Prof. Dr. Alexander Krylov, Director of West-Ost-Institut Berlin on the 12th of June 2013.

therefore universally valid, whilst rejecting out-groups²⁴. The ethnocentric perspective may impinge on mutual understanding as long as sociocultural differences between the parties are not (fully) accepted, appreciated, explored, or understood²⁵.

The ethnocentric heritage of the “uniting” homogeneous culture of the Soviet Union has resulted in the common attitude that diversity issues do not seem to be crucial either in the private sector or in public policy. This perspective seems to be officially accepted as far as the minor cultures of the former Soviet republics are concerned, but is misleading and counterproductive regarding the cultural encounters with representatives of European cultures. Ethnocentric view of cooperation on the Russian part may result in non-constructive persistence in own viewpoint and difficulties in finding a compromise.

Moreover, when the involved parties fail to take social and cultural factors into account, they may resort to stereotyping, which also affects their behaviour and decision-making in a negative manner. A stereotypical view tends to dominate the perception and interpretation of a new situation²⁶. In the worst cases, this may lead to biased or discriminatory treatment of a team member based on his race/ethnicity, culture, language proficiency, or social status.

3. Interventions on the Organisational and Individual Levels for Effective Intercultural Communication Management

Given the evidence of sociocultural barriers of effective (German-Russian) intercultural cooperation and partnership, the development of effective strategies of intercultural communication management both in private and public enterprises would include interventions on the organisational and individual levels.

Organisational Level

Effective intercultural knowledge management within organisations implies an evolving process of collecting, integrating and transforming knowledge about different cultures into specific practices, standards and policies²⁷. Geron claims, that one of the most challenging aspects of promoting cultural competence on the organisational level is actually formulating a set of viable guidelines or approaches that will improve one’s ability to adapt to

²⁴ Triandis H.C. Culture and Conflict // Samovar L.A., Porter R.E., McDaniel E.R. Intercultural Communication. A reader. Twelfth Edition. Boston, 2006. P. 18–28.

²⁵ Wiseman R.L., Hammer M.R., Nishida H. Predictors of Intercultural Competence // International Journal of Intercultural Relations. 1989. No 13(3). P. 349–370.

²⁶ Weiß A. Macht und Differenz. Ein erweitertes Modell der Konfliktpotentiale in interkulturellen Auseinandersetzungen. Berlin, 2001.

²⁷ Nonaka I., Takeuchi H. Die Organisation des Wissens: wie japanische Unternehmen eine brachliegende Ressource nutzbar machen. Frankfurt am Main et al., 1997.

the challenge of different cultural settings²⁸. These approaches may encompass an organisational self-assessment involving leadership, corporate culture and organisational mission statements in terms of cultural openness; continuing staff training in cultural competence, conflict management and appropriate languages; development of policy and procedural manuals that support cultural competence as well as the development of performance measures such as knowledge transfer and accumulation of collective experience of conflict resolution.

According to the idea of a continuously evolving process of introducing cultural competence into an organisation²⁹, an emphasis can also be placed on the recruitment practices, focusing on the hiring of the employees or public servants who have already effectively operated in at least one different cultural context. Given their social and cultural understanding of the processes and business practices both in Russian Federation and abroad, young professionals are likely to organise project management, to adapt physical environment, materials and resources to meet the needs both of the Russian and foreign colleagues/clients/partners.

Following this logic some German companies have turned to the practice of recruiting ethnical Germans, who migrated from the countries of the former Soviet Union (especially from Kazakhstan). Providing a superficially perfect match this recruitment strategy has not always proved to be successful, concealing a certain conflict potential due to the fact that these employees were not socialised in Russia, do not therefore have a realistic idea of contemporary business practices in Russian Federation and could face even more serious intercultural problems rooted in their ambiguous status.

It should be pointed out that culturally competent experts are usually employed by globally operating international companies, which have successfully set organisational development of cultural competence as a strategic goal of communication management and are therefore investing in on-going development of human resources in terms of educational programmes, seminars and trainings with intercultural focus³⁰. This general observation may be one of the reasons why, particularly, large international companies such as Hochtief Russia³¹, Knaf AG, Volkswagen AG, Siemens AG — just to name a few — have established successful

²⁸ *Geron S.M.* Op. cit.

²⁹ *Bolten J.* Op. cit. P. 909–926.

³⁰ Interview with Prof. Dr. Alexander Krylov, Director of West-Ost-Institut Berlin on the 12th of June 2013.

³¹ Hochtief Russia picks its employees from a network of highly qualified “expats”, who have suitable experience in Russia. (According to the interview with Mario Spengler, Senior Project Manager at Hochtief Russia in 100 Fragen und Antworten zum Russlandgeschäft, deutsch-russische Auslandshandelskammer 2012, P. 21).

business relations in Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States³².

The shortage of qualified experts who would foster progress and innovation in Russia has always been highlighted as one of the most important barriers to successful business in Russia: *“There are many things that are failing, among others modern engines. But fatal is the lack of modern know-how and up-to-date vocational education and training, both on the university level and the level of secondary vocational education. Even if you have modern equipment in your firm, you will hardly find the staff, which would be able to handle it properly.”*

The companies mentioned above have found a solution to this problem — having organised effective systems of (dual) vocational education and training (VET) in Russian Federation, enabling their employees to qualify at international quality standards. Among the goals of these programmes are not only promotion of the comparable standards, recognition of professional qualification in Germany and Russia and support of the access of German products to Russian market, but also the idea of contribution to sustainable youth employment and continuous economic growth thanks to global labour market mobility³³.

However close investigation of both private and governmental initiatives on the development of dual vocational education and training has shown that the development of cultural competence seems to be underestimated. Neither the existing programmes mentioned above, the planned initiatives on cooperation of VET — institutes, nor the initiatives of improving the structures of social guidance for trainee exchange in Germany seem to pay any serious attention to the possible risks of failure grounded in poor intercultural preparation³⁴.

This seems to also be the case as far as federal programmes for management development (presidential programmes)³⁵ and the programmes for German-Russian lawyer further education are concerned³⁶: neither of the programmes have incorporated any concepts of intercultural preparation.

The focus on cultural competence in public enterprises is likely to evolve even more slowly than in profit-driven private businesses, due to the substantially different style of

³² Volkswagen AG: www.firo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Romanenko.pdf; Knauf AG: www.firo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bykov.pdf; Siemens AG: www.firo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Kolesnikov.pdf (15.06.2013).

³³ International Bureau of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. URL: www.firo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Barske.pdf (15.06.2013).

³⁴ Федеральный институт развития образования (Federal Institute of the Educational Development). URL: www.firo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Esenina.pdf (16.06.2013).

³⁵ Interview with Anastasija Pavlova (Federal Resource Center on the Organization of Management Development (www.pprog.ru/) on the 3rd of June 2013.

³⁶ Институт государства и права Российской академии наук (The Institute of State and Law (ISL) of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). URL: www.igpran.ru (16.06.2013).

management, which is distinguished by the centralization of decision making, lack of authority delegation, profit-sharing, financial motivation, subjective personnel management and choice, etc.³⁷ The concept of intercultural communication management on this level has to be therefore officially grounded, well-promoted, clearly accepted and understood to be framed as a relevant political initiative.

Developing cultural competence is an ongoing process that requires strong institutional support³⁸. The absence of that support within a firm or a public authority due to institutional ethnocentrism can impinge on the ability to work and interact effectively with other national groups and impede the development of intercultural cooperation.

Promotion of mutual understanding of cultural biases and positive and negative stereotypes is an important step in helping Russian private and public enterprises create an environment that is conducive to the exercise of appropriate intercultural expertise in German-Russian cooperation. It is important to mention in this context, that German mass media often tend to form an one-sided pessimistic picture of political, economic and cultural life in Russian Federation. There is no use searching for the reason of this tendency in hostile intentions, but rather in the way of perception, which has been established within the framework of cultural socialization³⁹. Instead of complaining about this, it is useful to concentrate on the optimisation of intercultural communication as a dominant strategy of communication management, trying to help to understand the country and its people. Significant importance in terms of communication management should be attached to the examination and instrumentation of the stereotypes about Russia. Positive stereotypes such as creativity, flexibility, spontaneity, openness to innovations, cheerfulness, hospitality, soulfulness, passion, etc. should be intensified within the framework of various informational campaigns in order to form a positive public image. The same effort as to public relations strategies should be given to diminish negative stereotypes about Russian people such as laziness⁴⁰, poor self-organisation, alcoholism, untrustworthiness, brutality, etc.⁴¹ Especially television, as the most powerful medium of influence, can be used as the channel to effectively appeal both to the logic and emotions and contribute to the construction and

³⁷ *Mordasova T., Mineva O., Romanova A.* The Influence of Intercultural Communication on Management: Regional Aspect // *Journal of Intercultural Management*. 2009. Vol. 1. No 2. P. 83–89.

³⁸ *Cross T., Bazron B., Dennis K., Isaacs M.* Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care / Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center. Vol. I. Washington DC., 1989.

³⁹ Interview with Prof. Dr. Alexander Krylov, Director of West-Ost-Institut Berlin on the 12th of June 2013.

⁴⁰ *Мединский В.П.* О русском воровстве, душе и долготерпении. (Мифы о России). М., 2013.

⁴¹ Results of brainstorming in group work in my practice as intercultural trainer. URL: <http://blogscoped.com/prejudice/> (25.06.13).

deconstruction of political myths about Russia⁴².

It would therefore make sense to introduce the idea of intercultural seminars and trainings for foreign journalists working in Russia, to present and explain the Russian way of thinking, way of life and Russian humor. Another idea might be to think about the initiation of own educational programmes in Europe⁴³.

The development of cultural competence in a multicultural environment in Russian Federation implies enhancing cultural sensitivity and forming a positive attitude towards cultural diversity, supporting new interest towards national origins and reviving ethnical self-awareness⁴⁴, which cannot tolerate the ethnocentric idea of superior (European and American) and inferior (former Soviet republics) cultures.

It should be mentioned in this context, that the promotion of the idea of tolerance as an integral part of intercultural competence in Russian society and the utilisation of this idea in terms of communication management may appear to be a challenging task; there is a point in the extant Russian literature that at the present moment there is no agreement about the notion of tolerance in Russian society. Mchedlova suggests that the consolidation of the political culture in Russian Federation in the early 90-es on the basis of adopted American and European concepts have a direct bearing on the vague definition of the notion of tolerance in scientific literature and in common minds⁴⁵. She quotes different ways to understand the notion of tolerance — ranging from the view that tolerance in its broad definition is equal to the notion of indifference, undifferentiated acceptance of the Evil, destructive pacifism and common negligence — up to the idea, that tolerance is “not an obvious value, but is always demanding an argumentative basis”⁴⁶.

Considering this background, the practical implication for human resource and communication managers would advise setting up a binding definition of “tolerance” and “intercultural competence” and communicate it within the organisation to prevent confusion. This strategy can also be used with regard to the notions of cross-cultural, intercultural and intracultural communication, which also seem to be ambiguous in Russian scientific literature⁴⁷.

⁴² Володенков С. В. Современная политическая коммуникация как инструмент манипулирования общественным сознанием // Вестник московского университета. 2012. № 5. С. 97.

⁴³ Interview with Prof. Dr. Alexander Krylov, Director of West-Ost-Institut Berlin on the 12th of June 2013.

⁴⁴ Mordasova T., Mineva O., Romanova A. Op. cit. P. 83–89.

⁴⁵ Mchedlova M.M. Tolerance As a Political Strategy of Managing Cultural Diversity // Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. 2012. № 2. P. 72.

⁴⁶ Ibid. P. 72.

⁴⁷ Interview with Prof. Dr. Alexander Krylov, Director of West-Ost-Institut Berlin on the 12th of June 2013.

Individual Level

On the individual level the promotion of intercultural competence for effective communication management may take place either within the framework of university studies or/and as on-the-job within organisations.

In Germany there exists a broad range of varying effective academic programmes, preparing students for cooperation in Russian Federation, such as at the University of Bremen, the University of Jena and multiple universities in Berlin. Additionally, more German universities offer lectures on intercultural communication. It has to be taken into consideration, that to meet the needs of business students the German curriculum tends to favour a limited, descriptive perspective of the issues of intercultural communication. At the same time the curriculum of the students of culture and sociology tends to involve more analysis, ignoring the economical realms and lacking the practical approach⁴⁸.

The academic programmes with similar focus are almost unknown in Russian Federation due to the fact, that both business circles and society do not realise the practical necessity of cross-cultural management. The abolition of any serious effort to introduce programmes on the enhancing of intercultural competence in academic curriculum can be explained by the fact that the idea of globalisation — despite intense international (trade) relations — has not yet reached the individual consciousness. The existing academic programmes introducing the basics of intercultural communication in Russian universities seem to concentrate on the study of national characteristic features rather than to develop an overall systematic approach, which would enable the students to adapt to and work effectively in any culture⁴⁹.

There is relatively broad agreement in scientific literature, that intercultural training can be considered to be one of the most powerful and effective tools to promote cultural competence on the individual level⁵⁰. Hofstede suggests that (inter) cultural competence can be successfully taught and learned and introduces a process of intercultural communication competence that involves awareness, knowledge, and skills⁵¹. An effective intercultural training is designed to enhance individual knowledge of the socio-cultural background of partners/clients/colleagues and to equip him or her with the tools and skills to overcome the barriers to effective communication, and to manage intercultural conflicts in order to cooperate effectively. Recent research insists that comprehensive intercultural training

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Садохин А.П. Межкультурная коммуникация. М., 2012; Bolten J. Op. cit. P. 909–926; Miller E.K. Op. cit. P. 17–24.

⁵¹ Hofstede G. Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations. P. 428.

programmes should focus much more on the development of a broader set of knowledge, skills and abilities that will enhance cultural competence rather than on the imparting of factual and conceptual knowledge⁵². It has been claimed that interactive methods of effective intercultural training (simulations, multicultural group-work, etc.) should contribute to intercultural organisational learning and knowledge exchange⁵³.

There is a scope for greater experimentation with the professional management training programmes adjusted to individual needs. There is a relatively broad agreement that the training of (inter)cultural competence should encompass the knowledge and the skills dimensions. The former implies cultural literacy, focusing on the acquisition of culture-general and culture-specific knowledge, awareness of cultural differences and rules of interaction: “cultural knowledge is an important determinant of one’s ability to minimize misunderstandings with someone from another culture. Cultural knowledge has a positive effect on other [cross-cultural competence] attributes and maximizes intercultural competency”⁵⁴. The latter dimension includes abilities to adapt to the behavioural norms of a specific cultural environment, effective stress-management, or conflict resolution.

4. Some Concluding Observations and Recommendations

In this paper I examined some barriers to effective intercultural communications in Russian-German cooperation on the individual and organisations levels, which should be addressed within the framework of effective intercultural communication management.

There are a number of options available with a view to improving the quality of intercultural communication management in private Russian companies and public authorities.

First, promoting and incorporating the issue of cultural competence into the academic programmes of the institutions of higher education, especially for the study of business, communication and public administration, should be recognised as an ongoing effort, that requires recognition and support within the framework of governmental initiatives.

Second, intercultural on-the-job trainings need to be more widely provided for management specialists and public sector officials. Indeed, a common characteristic of successful global companies is a strong sustained investment in human capital⁵⁵. Particularly regular training programmes enhancing cultural competence and facilitating conflict management skills seem to be essential for successful and effective long-term intercultural cooperation.

⁵² *Садохин А.П.* Межкультурная коммуникация. М., 2012.

⁵³ *Moosmüller A.* Kommunikationsprobleme in amerikanisch-japanisch-deutschen Teams: Kulturelle Synergie durch interkulturelles Training? // *Zeitschrift für Personalforschung*. 1997. No 11/3. P. 282–297.

⁵⁴ *Wiseman R.L., Hammer M.R., Nishida H.* Predictors of Intercultural Competence // *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 1989. No 13(3). P. 349–370.

⁵⁵ *Rosenzweig P.M., Nohria N.* Influences on Human Resource Management Practices in Multinational Corporations // *Journal of International Business Studies*. 1994. No 25 (2). P. 229–251.

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