

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

SLAWOMIR MAGALA. Cross-cultural Competence. Routledge, Oxon 2005. 244 pages.

Multicultural life has come to stay. We are not the very first people to face it – thanks for previous explorers and colonialists – but none of us can't get rid of it any more, as the globe has turned out to be so small. We often and unfortunately think, that it's enough if we are aware about some habits, expressions and stereotypes of people in another cultures, or even if we've the cultural intelligence which helps us cope with differences.

Slawomir Magala, sitting as a professor of Cross-Cultural Management at Erasmus University in Netherlands, however, claims that it is much more we need - and strongly needed in management, education, research and every day life in the current multicultural world.

We need cross-cultural competency, which is very collective ability, in order to understand the increasing complexity of the interconnected world, the social and socialization processes and changes going on in families, organizations, communities, media, nations.

The three major dimensions of cross-cultural competence are creativity, criticism and moral autonomy. They all enable us to bridge over differences and boost diversity, transparency and equality, as well as achieve the balance between fanatical dogmatism and cynical relativism. The competence is necessary, not only for developing cooperation but solving conflicts, too. Finally, to make the world better place to live.

Magala takes pretty critical approach to the concepts of both multiculturalism and intercultural communication, saying they depend on power: the ideological and political view and purposes. Multiculturalism has different values, perspective and dimension in the West than in for instance in Asian countries or among the majority than the minority in general. The self-reflection is crucial; individually, organizationally and in research.

Magala doesn't make it easy to but very challenging to see the multiculturalism with new eyes – and to work out what's this magic cross-cultural competence truly included. And it's still under construction...By reading – and understanding - Magala you can get inspired and be part of the progress.