1. Introduction

Sustainable development requires a number of skills, some technical, some interpersonal and some managerial. One skill that cuts across all three of these categories is negotiations. At virtually every step in the development process separate groups and interests must be accommodated. From arranging assistance agreements between governments to persuading local groups to co-operate on specific projects, communication and negotiation are a key part of the development process. Governments, courts, businesses and labor unions, as well as individual decision makers, are all involved in these negotiations (Zartman, 1994). These issues, however, are becoming increasingly more complex and require different forms of support to help weigh decision objectives and alternatives and analyze different scenarios and offers. Teaching negotiation skills and integrating these with the ability to utilize them in the context of advanced negotiation support systems has become an important task in making development sustainable.

Policy makers and managers in developing countries face numerous challenges in such diverse fields as labor-management relations, international affairs, business partnerships, and environmental regulations. Governments, courts, businesses and labor unions, as well as individual actors are breaking new ground in decision making (Zartman, 1994). In most cases these decisions are made through negotiations, one of the most common processes for making decisions and resolving conflicts at all levels of society.

With the globalization of markets, the consequences of cross-cultural interactions have received considerable attention (Hofstede 1989; Adler 1993; Faure and Rubin
1993). Prompted by the growing economic and political roles of developing countries, studies have been undertaken contrasting developing and developed countries on the process, context and form of negotiations (Graham 1993; Druckman et al, 1976; Stone, 1989; Pechter, 1992). Cultural implications impact on attitudes towards contracts, value for formality, and status in human relations in both developing and developed countries (Swierczek, 1990).

Pechter (1992), having analyzed more than fifty real-life negotiations between Western and developing countries, concluded that the ethic of trust in most Asian countries is alloyed with an appreciation of shrewdness. While compromise is considered an appropriate outcome of negotiation in the Western world, it may often be considered an indicator of failure in Asian countries. Graham (1985, 1993), in his studies of negotiation styles in various countries, observed that the Japanese offered more extreme initial offers, used the word "no" less frequently, were silent longer and used aggressive tactics only in later stages of negotiation. Brazilians' negotiation behavior was characterized by more extreme first offers (even more extreme than those made by the Japanese), fewer promises and commitments, more commands, and longer interactions than exhibited by Americans in their negotiations.

These culturally-based differences in the understanding of the negotiation process have significant implications for designing training programs for negotiators. They also have to be considered in the design of software tools which seek to promote an accurate understanding of the valuation of decision alternatives, the assessment of concessions made by both sides, and the utility of a compromise in some situations. Without an understanding of the cultural framework which interfaces with the support system, decision and negotiation aids risk making the situation worse instead of helping the parties to a fair settlement.

The existing organizational and institutional structures in a developing country often do not provide adequate support for negotiation efforts. In a developing country, negotiators may not have a past bargaining relationship with their counterparts nor a history that establishes channels of communication. This may be one factor which emphasizes less structured settings for resolving disputes in industrializing societies (Ghauri 1988).

With increases in international trade and an accelerating shift of manufacturing from developed to developing countries, there is increased pressure on managers to engage in cross-cultural negotiations. This leads to growing interest in studying the way that culture affects negotiation theory and practice. Studies have revealed that most developing countries have few negotiators capable of translating their own and their organizations' principles and general goals into concrete bargaining proposals. They also lack systems for widespread and efficient training of decision makers (Stubbs, 1984; Schermerhorn et. al, 1985; Ghauri, 1988). To bargain effectively, one must not only have the ability to articulate interests and bargaining positions, but also the skill to communicate with one’s opponents and to interpret accurately their responses. This requires an appreciation of the opponents' mindset and understanding of how their actions and positions are situated in their own national and organizational cultures.

Since the ability to understand and effectively communicate with counterparts from different cultures is critical to international negotiations, its absence may be the