

## Teaching Intercultural Communication- (Part 1) Aims and Outcomes

Over the past few decades, rapid globalization aided by multiple technological advancements, growing international trade and greater international political cooperation and integration has shrunk the world, bringing people around the globe closer together and creating the sense of the world as a 'global village'. This globalized world is characterized by a growing number of contacts between people across continents resulting in communication between people from linguistically, ethnically and culturally different backgrounds. An increasing number of culturally diverse workplaces and greater diversity in all areas of human interaction including but not limited to military cooperation, science, entertainment, tourism and education, has made the concept of 'intercultural competency' more relevant today, than ever. Whether communication takes place across countries or within the same multi-cultural environment, it is imperative to not only be aware of but also to improve our understanding of these cultural differences. Greater 'intercultural competence' makes for greater professionalism, cohesion and social integration.

Not only are workplaces becoming more diverse, but so are classrooms. They are now cultural mosaics, where each component retains its uniqueness while adding to the composition of the whole (Chisholm, M.I., 1994). This diversity brings with it alternative perspectives, new opinions and a greater understanding and appreciation of the world; however, due to its very nature, it also gives rise to a host of intercultural issues including classroom discrimination, minimized internal communication, misunderstandings and rigidity (Kane, A., 2013). As such, being 'inter-culturally competent' is now not only essential for students but also for teachers who teach multi-cultural classrooms.

(Chisholm, M.I., 1994) provided that "teaching effectively in culturally diverse classrooms means using culturally sensitive strategies and content to ensure equitable opportunities for academic success, personal development, and individual fulfillment for all students." In order for teachers to be effective with this classroom diversity, it is important for them to first recognize their own world-views and cultural competency (Bennet, M.J., 1993). Over the years, teacher-educators have used various techniques to facilitate a change in teachers' thinking, attitudes and behaviours towards cultural diversity, albeit with mixed results because they often focused more on content rather than the process of cross-cultural training (McAllister, G., Irvine, J.J., 2000). Owing to these gaps, it is essential to design and deliver effective cross-cultural training programs for teachers, thereby equipping them with the tools required to fully enhance all the benefits of a culturally diverse classroom. As such, this paper aims to state and describe the learning aims and outcomes of a 'half-day' intercultural training program for professors teaching culturally diverse undergraduate classrooms at international universities.

Before creating any intercultural training program, it is important however, to define the term 'intercultural competency'. Though there is no real consensus on the terminology around intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006), it can be agreed that intercultural competence demands for the ability of sensitive, reflective, and productive acting in situations of interaction with people from foreign cultures, regardless of location (Hatzer and Layes, 2003 quoted in Behrnd, V., Porzelt, S., 2012). Deardorff (2006) used the Delphi technique, to achieve consensus amongst the countless definitions and frameworks of intercultural competence, and derived a theoretical framework that focusses on the internal and external outcomes of intercultural competence based on the development of specific skills, attitudes, behaviours and knowledge, inherent to it. Owing to its clear and precise structure, and the belief that intercultural competence is an ongoing process whereby individuals need to be provided opportunities for self-reflection and self-assessment (Deardorff, 2009) the aims and outcomes of this training program shall be discussed in accordance with Deardorff's framework of intercultural competence. As illustrated by this framework, it is possible for an individual to possess the required attitudes while lacking the necessary knowledge and skills, thereby rendering them minimally effective and appropriate in their behavior and communication. Hence, adding said knowledge and skills, would add to an individual's flexibility, adaptability and empathy, making one more 'inter-culturally competent' (Deardorff, 2011). Assessing intercultural competence as a whole is a daunting task, and therefore it is crucial to prioritize specific aspects based on the overall mission and purpose of the program (Deardorff, 2009).

### **Learning Aims**

Successful interaction between the professors and the students is the main aim of the training program. Incompatibility of the curriculum and its delivery mechanisms with the students' cultural norms often results in mistrust, and breakdown of classroom communication. Thus, this program seeks to equip the teachers with the necessary attitudes, knowledges and skills required for effective, mutually beneficial classroom sessions.

The program aims to develop attitudes of discovery, respect, warmth, empathy and adaptability in the participants. It seeks to increase the emotional intelligence of the teachers, thus enabling them to more effectively cope with the psychological and emotional stress of dealing with the unfamiliar, while being able to modulate discourse styles and lecture patterns to cultural context.

It aims to provide them with a better knowledge of both verbal and non-verbal cues of communication and their subsequent cultural implications and a greater awareness of how culture underlies one's logic and thought systems.

The program also seeks to equip the participants with a broad body of skills, in order to facilitate the practical application of theoretical knowledge. It wishes to develop in the teachers, skills including but not restricted to the ability to evaluate and assess the differences in the students' learning needs, clarity of expression, observation and analysis and interpersonal skills.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this training program, the participants would be able to better apply their knowledge of cultural contexts to a practical setting.

#### **Internal Outcomes:**

As a result of the attitudes and skills developed as a result of the intercultural training, the participants will be equipped with:

- The ability to define their own understanding of multi-cultural education.
- The ability to introspect and self assess levels of 'intercultural competence', thereby continuing the process of intercultural competency beyond the training program.
- The ability to self reflect and understand personal feelings toward classroom diversity and subsequent expectations from students.
- A greater instance of confidence and reduced anxiety in cross-cultural encounters.

#### **External Outcomes:**

As a combined result of the developed attitudes and skills and subsequently derived internal outcomes, the participants will now be able to display the following:

- The ability to apply cross-cultural communication strategies to bypass incidents of cultural miscommunication and subsequent breakdown of classroom functions.
- The ability to apply the knowledge of culturally contextual verbal and non-verbal communication cues.
- The ability to identify cultural bias, cultural subtext, instances of omission and misrepresentation in teaching materials and subsequently adapt to, and redesign lecture plans to suit the needs of multi-cultural classrooms.

- The ability to present views and opinions explicitly and with greater clarity, keeping in mind the different learning needs of all students, as a result of linguistic and cultural differences.

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