Cross-Cultural Engagement Training for Faculty: A Model for Faculty Preparation

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The evolution of cross cultural learning: Three stories in a hundred years*

Three stories, the international education community’s “dominant narratives,” respond very differently to three questions about learning and teaching across cultural boundaries:

• What is “culture”?
• How do people learn in unfamiliar cultures?
• What role should educators play in order to support learning in unfamiliar cultures?

Story 1: Learning as Experience

• Culture is “out there” and imprints itself on us.

• Some cultures—”civilizations”—are superior to others

• Learners learn about unfamiliar cultures through traveling there and experiencing them

• Educators support learners by organizing trips to superior cultures, and prior to departure by teaching lists of do’s and don’t’s.

Story 1 is hierarchical: Students encounter sophisticated, “civilized” people & places

• With the Grand Tour—this story’s original signature program—learning occurs through exposure to the new & different in privileged places, and through modeling and imitation
With story 1, we learn to cross cultural boundaries through emulating “civilized” models

- To learn, we climb up. . .

- And if we slide down. . .

Story 2: Cultural relativism undermines the assumption of cultural hierarchy

Our common humanity binds us together, and no culture is superior to any other
Story 2: Students learn *interculturally* through “Immersion” in difference

- All cultures address the same human problems & challenges: concepts of justice, fairness; religious beliefs and the relationship to the supernatural; rites of passage, rituals, ceremonies; concepts and organization of time, etc.

- Learning occurs through *engagement* in the new and unfamiliar culture—and true engagement means *immersion* in the culture

- Educators often teach students about several sorts of cultural differences before departure, and through structuring the learning environment

Second Story: learning through “immersion” in difference

*Educators introduce, talk about cultural differences prior to immersing learners:*

- Non-verbal communication
- Communication styles
- Learning styles
- Cognitive styles
- Value contrasts
- Culture Shock
Second story: our community’s core immersion assumptions and practices

- Maximize duration of experience
- Enroll students in host institutions
- Improve second language proficiency
- Maximize contact with host nationals
- Carry out “experiential” activities: Internships, service learning, field work, etc.
- House students with host families or host students

Evidence supporting first and second stories

We frequently cite the student report: “Study abroad transformed me”
Evidence supporting first and second stories

Frequently cited as evidence: “More and more of our students are going abroad!”


A striking convergence of disciplinary evidence challenges stories 1 & 2: “Constructivism”

- The History of Science (Kuhn)
- Cultural Anthropology (Hall, La Brack)
- Experiential learning theory (Kolb, Osland)
- Developmental theory (Piaget, Perry, Belenky, Kegan, Baxter Magolda)
- Intercultural Communication (Hall, Barnlund, Bennett, Bennett, Hammer)
- Psychology (Piaget, Lewin, Kelly, Savicki)
- Linguistics (Sapir, Whorf, Deutscher)
- Cognitive Biology (Maturana, Varela)
- Neuroscience (Zull)
Story 3: Developing interculturally occurs through reflection, bridging differences—and facilitation of learning

- Culture consists of “the learned and shared values, beliefs and behaviors of a group of interacting people.”*

- Learning is a process where learners actively construct meaning, rather than passively acquiring it.

- Intercultural learning is experiential, developmental, holistic, intentional, and requires considerable practice.

- Educators intervene, throughout the learning process, to support learners’ constructing of meaning, rather than simply transferring meaning to learners.

- * J. Bennett, 2013

Story 3: Educators help learners develop four core intercultural competencies

- Help learners increase their cultural and personal self awareness through reflecting on their experiences;

- Help learners increase their awareness of others within their own cultural and personal contexts;

- Help them learn to manage emotions in the face of ambiguity, change, and challenging circumstances & people

- Help them learn to bridge cultural gaps—which means learning to shift frames and adapt behavior to other cultural contexts.
Assessing Student Intercultural Development: Comparative Program Data (IDI=90-point scale*)

**SA without facilitation at program site:**

- Georgetown U. Consortium Study (60 progs.)** +1.32

**SA with facilitation across program:**

- U of Pacific training program +17.46
- AUCP training program (Aix, Marseille) +13.00
- Bellarmine U./Willamette U. ICC course: +8.19
- CIEE training program (20 programs) +11.34

*Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI): [www.idiinventory.com](http://www.idiinventory.com); Hammer, M. (2012).*


Attending to our own intercultural learning and development: North American training venues

- Workshop on Intercultural Skills Enhancement Conference (WISE; Wake Forest U. annually organizes in February, in Winston-Salem, NC)
- Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (SIIC; annually in July in Portland, OR)
- Winter Institute for Intercultural Communication (WIIC; March 12-14, 2014 in Charlotte, NC)
- Queen University’s International Educators Training Program (IETP; June 8-13 in Kingston, ON)
- Intercultural Development Inventory Qualifying Seminars (IDI QS; various dates/locations, including Kingston & Baltimore)