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IO4 Online Training Material

Module 1

Theoretical Background, Basic Principles and Concepts

Unit 3: Interculturalism

InterTrainE

Intercultural Training for Educators

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Introduction

Welcome to the third Unit of Module 1 of the InterTrainE course. Module 1 focuses on the Theoretical Background, Basic Principles and Concepts of Adult Education and Intercultural Education. Module 1 consists of 4 Units:

1. Basic principles of Adult Education and overview of Adult Learning theories
2. Critical Adult Education
- 3. Interculturalism**
4. Intercultural Education

This Unit, Unit 3 - Interculturalism, consists of the following sections:

Section 1: Introducing interculturalism

Section 2: Communicating across cultures

Section 3: Intercultural Conflict

Section 4: Intercultural Competence

Quiz

This unit corresponds to approximately **3 study hours**. Effort hours vary between learners, and therefore it may take you longer to complete this unit if you decide to explore all the recommended sources, or you may complete it in a shorter period of time if you have prior knowledge of some of the concepts and topics discussed.

- **Introducing interculturalism**

To understand interculturalism, we first need a good understanding of what culture actually is. Culture can be defined as a system of beliefs, customs, and behaviours shared by a social group. People make distinctions between different cultures based on different factors. It could be done by location (national, regional, etc.) but it does not have to be. For example; people might form distinctions between cultures based on class, gender, sexual orientation, race, occupation, wealth, etc. Cultural distinctions are regularly based on personal perceptions and interpretations of said social groups and might therefore be interpreted differently by others, in particular by those who recognise a culture as their own (insiders), and those who understand it as a different culture from their own (outsiders).

Different cultures can be, and usually are, present within a society. The number of cultures present within a societal group determines how we would refer to it:

In a **monocultural society** only one cultural expression is present, visible or permitted. Monoculturalism is the policy or process of supporting, advocating, or allowing the expression of the culture of a single social or ethnic group.

In a **multicultural society** several cultures are present. Multiculturalism is the presence of, or support for the presence of, several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society.

When two or more cultures within a society or societal group interact with each other, this is called interculturalism. Indeed, **interculturalism promotes dialogue and interaction between cultures instead of mere co-existence.**

Depending on how we understand culture, it can be argued that any society is multicultural and therefore intercultural interactions occur within it.

Read a short text on Interculturalism here:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110308003132/http://www.montrealgazette.com/life/Interculturalism+model+integration/4370196/story.html>

Melting pot v. Salad bowl

Countries such as the US, the UK and Australia have often been described as **'melting pots'** because of the fusion of different cultures that takes place in these countries and societies as a result of migration. In reality, however, the 'melting pot' model is outdated and actually refers to a monocultural society where all different cultures have to be amalgamated into the one, dominant culture, effectively losing their distinctive characteristics for the sake of homogeneity.



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Countries such as Canada are more often described as **'salad bowls'** or 'cultural mosaics', where cultures interact and mix with each other but do not merge into one, retaining their distinctive characteristics.



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Reflection

Is your country / hometown a monoculture or not? Does it resemble more a melting pot or a salad bowl? Think carefully about who/what makes it multicultural and how this affects the overall community.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the melting pot and salad bowl models?

- Communicating Across Cultures

Watch the short lecture on the InterTrainE Moodle on **Culture and Communication [19:00 minutes]** <https://youtu.be/IETczaFycOY>

The video covers the following topics:

- Culture and Communication
 - Defining Culture
 - Cultural norms and values
 - Key relationships: multicultural, intercultural, cross-cultural
 - Defining communication
- From the multicultural classroom to the intercultural classroom
 - Assimilation
 - Acculturation
 - Integration
- **The Arithmetic Exercise**

Click on the **The Arithmetic Exercise** on the InterTrainE Moodle and complete it.

Reflection

How did you find the **Arithmetic Exercise**? Did you complete it? Did you find it difficult? How quickly did you learn and adapt to the new rules? How did it make you feel?

Imagine what it is like for learners from other cultures or educational traditions to adapt to 'your' system.

Game: Barnga

A useful simulation game that you can play in the classroom is Barnga. Barnga is a simulation game on cultural clashes, developed by Sivasailam Thiagarajan & Raja Thiagarajan. Click on the link below for information on the game, its learning outcomes, required resources and how to play it.

<http://intercultural-learning.eu/Portfolio-Item/barnga/>

Watch this short video on **Hand gestures from around the world**, by Mairead Finlay [02:13 minutes]: <https://termcoord.eu/2018/10/video-fix-intercultural-hand-gestures/>

Watch the short lecture on the InterTrainE Moodle on **Communicating Across Cultures**. [19:04 minutes] <https://youtu.be/VyLUZZzg7-A>

The video covers the following topics:

- Intersubjectivity and shared meaning
- Contexts and Contextualisation
- Visual communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Politeness
- Turn-taking

Read this short blog post on **Understanding** by Katerina Strani
<http://lifeinlincs.org/?p=934>

Think... How do the people in the images below express their identity, beliefs or culture? What do you think they communicate? What do you understand ? What do you not?



Different perceptions of time can cause intercultural encounters which can quickly cause frustration with those involved. When teaching a multicultural group of learners, be aware that time could be perceived differently amongst the students. Punctuality and the importance of punctuality could be understood in very different ways, resulting in students coming and going at different times. Learners might also have different schedules than what you are used to, for example to make time for prayers.

Of course, different perceptions of time are not the only factor which can lead to intercultural encounters in the educational environment. Different student-teacher relationships, appropriate clothing, the interrupting of class and many more could all lead to potentially frustrating encounters. A strong intercultural competency will support the educator in dealing with these situations, and they might provide interesting opportunities for learning.

Watch the short lecture on the InterTrainE Moodle on **Intercultural Perspectives of Work, Leisure and Time**: <https://youtu.be/FxxgUtR5mgs> [04:34 minutes]

Read the text: **The Papalagi and time**

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/f4u9q25zi4pwcwy/5.1.5%20Papalagi%20and%20time.docx?dl=0>

Who are the Papalagi?
What are your reactions to the text?

- Intercultural Conflict

Before discussing Intercultural Conflict, we should mention **individualist v. collectivist cultures**. This refers broadly to the degree that individual or collective interests prevail in a particular group. Ferraro and Briody (2017, p.32)) explain the distinction between individualism and collectivism in the following table:

<i>Individual-oriented cultures</i>	<i>Collective-oriented cultures</i>
Individuals are major units of social perception	Groups are major units of social perception
Explain others' behavior by personal traits	Explain others' behavior by group norms
Success attributed to own ability	Success attributed to help from group
Self-defined as individual entity	Self-defined in terms of group
Know more about self than others	Know more about others than self
Achievement for one's own sake	Achievement for benefit of group
Personal goals over group goals	In-group goal over personal goals
Value self-assuredness	Value modesty
Value autonomy and independence	Value interdependence
Fear dependence on others	Fear ostracism
Casual connections to many groups	Strong connections to a few groups
Few obligations to others	Many obligations to others
Confrontation is acceptable	Harmony is expected
Task completion is important	Relationships are important

Source: Ferraro, Gary P., and Elizabeth K. Briody. (2017). The Cultural Dimension of Global Business, Taylor and Francis, p. 32.

Watch the short lecture on the InterTrainE Moodle on **Intercultural Conflict**: <https://youtu.be/xJQWfJtiEUw> [07:43 minutes]

In addition to the above, the video covers the following topics:

- **Hammer's Intercultural Style Model**
- The concept of 'face'

What is your conflict style?
How important is 'saving face' to you?

- Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence can be understood as the ability by which people navigate multicultural environments and understand intercultural interactions. In short, someone who is interculturally competent should have...:

- ...appreciation of diversity and multi-culturality
- ...the ability to work in an international context; and
- ...an understanding of cultures and customs of other countries

Next, we turn to the one of the most popular models of the phenomenon – the *Bennett Scale*, developed by Milton Bennett. His framework describes different ways in which people interpret and interact with cultural differences. Bennett assumes that as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex, that person's competence in intercultural interactions increases. The framework consists out of six stages which present an increasing intercultural competency. The first three stages are **ethnocentric**, meaning that one's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way. The final three stages are **ethno-relative**, meaning that one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures (Gifford *et al.*, 2008).

The Bennett Scale

1	Denial	Does not recognise cultural differences For example: <i>My culture is the only culture.</i>	Ethnocentric
2	Defence	Recognises some differences but sees them as negative For example: <i>There are other cultures, but mine is superior.</i>	
3	Minimisation	Unaware of projection of own cultural values; sees own values as superior For example: <i>Everyone is equal, elements of my culture are universal.</i>	
4	Acceptance	Shifts perspectives to understand that the same “ordinary” behaviour can have different meanings in different cultures For example: <i>Differences between cultures are not a problem, they are of interest to me.</i>	Ethno-relative
5	Adaptation	Can evaluate other’s behaviour from their frame of reference and can adapt behaviour to fit the norms of a different culture For example: <i>When interacting with different cultures I am aware of different rules, standards and interpretations.</i>	
6	Integration	Can shift frame of reference and also deal with resulting identity issues For example: <i>When interacting with different cultures I am open to them challenging my previously held perceptions and beliefs.</i>	

Source: (Gifford et al., 2008)

In other words, having intercultural competence does not only mean being aware of different cultures, but also having an awareness of our own culture and the **biases** and **prejudices** which we might have. It also requires an open-mindedness to the different norms and ideas of different cultures and a willingness to let our own notions of normality be challenged.

According to Bennett (2009), cultural theorists agree that **cultural knowledge alone does not lead to intercultural competence**. Cultural contact, Bennett argues, does not necessarily lead to competence and cultural contact does not always lead to significant reduction of stereotypes. For this reason, Bennett advises students **to critically**

examine culture, not just accumulate facts and knowledge about a culture, to develop intercultural competence.

Watch the short lecture on the InterTrainE Moodle on **Intercultural Competence**
https://youtu.be/h_3VdV9qdgw [06:29]

Marsella (2005) summarises **Culture and the Construction of reality**, which also relates to ethnocentrism, in the following extract:

“Our views of reality are culturally constructed (Marsella, 1999)! Our world views—our cultural templates for negotiating reality—emerge from our in-born human effort after meaning, an effort that reflexively provokes us to describe, understand, predict, and control the world about us through the ordering of stimuli into complex belief and meaning systems that can guide behavior. Our brain not only responds to stimuli, it organizes, connects, and symbolizes them, and in this process, it generates patterns of explicit and implicit meanings and purposes that promote survival, growth, and development. This process occurs through socialization and often leads us to accept the idea that our constructed realities are in fact realities. The “relativity” of the process and product is ignored in favor of the “certainty” provided by the assumption that our way of life is correct, righteous, and indisputable (e.g., ethnocentricity). In brief, as we come to culturally construct our realities, we become grounded and inflexible and certain in our assumptions and behaviors. We become both the beneficiaries and the victims of our cultural constructions. We come to act as if our constructions are real, accurate, and not to be questioned. This sense of ethnocentricity often combines with nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and a cultural ethos leading to conflict and violence because of the perception that they are “right” and deserving of defense in the face of threats to their veracity and existence. It is here, in the name of patriotism, national defense, religious and moral ascendancy, and even financial profit, that we often rise to conflict, violence, and war” (Marsella, 2005, pp. 658-659).

Activity: World map <http://intercultural-learning.eu/Portfolio-Item/the-map-is-not-the-territory/> (if there is time; adapt to suit adults; you may only need to show the different versions of the map and not do the entire activity)

- ▶ Think of the norms and values in your own culture. What are these norms and values and how important are they to you?
- ▶ Think of Hammer's intercultural conflict style model. Is your conflict style closer to a direct or an indirect one? What would happen if you argued with someone with a different conflict style?
- ▶ Look at Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Which stage would you position yourself and why? Has your position changed over time?
- ▶ Do you agree with the definition of Intercultural Competence? What is Intercultural Competence for you?

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