

# INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES

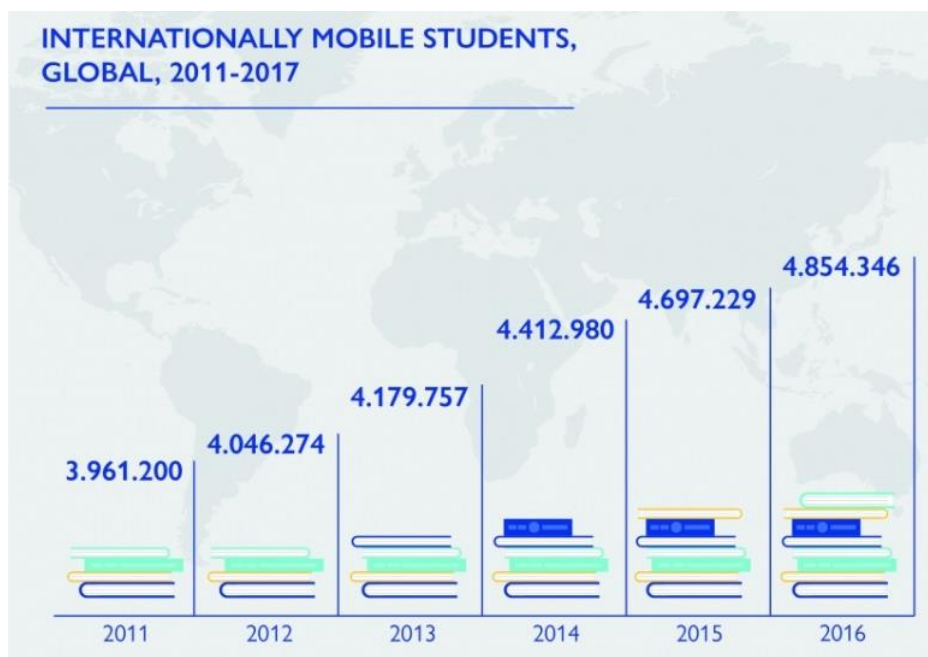
“*Man is by nature a social animal.*”

— Aristotle, Politics

Certain qualities are necessary for an individual to be a competent, enthusiastic and a social person as stated by Aristotle. Culture is dynamic in nature and demands an increased sense of credence. The difference in culture should be embraced with consensus and without fear. The individual should have an ability to accept the scenario in which he/she is in. *The ability to successfully make influential conversation with a person or people of other culture is called Intercultural Competency.*

<sup>[4]</sup>Judith Lambert (2012) writes on the need for change:

“The complex environmental, social and economic issues of the 21st century can no longer be resolved by repairing existing systems. There have been many inadequate responses to climate change, the obesity epidemic, toxic pollutants, shortage of fresh water and urban violence. [...] Collaboration alone cannot resolve these complex problems. In resolving society-wide issues, transformational change based on collective action has become not optional but a necessity, not a matter of avoiding but of celebrating change.”



The world has become a small place due to globalization. There are many people all over the world moving in to different cities, states or countries. People could be moving for a short time, longer duration or it could be a

permanent relocation. The reasons why people move into a different place for a relatively longer duration, is usually for educational or work purposes. So, it is necessary for one to know about the cultural differences between their place and the current place they are staying and should be readily accepting the differences. Studies say that the intercultural competencies are obtained usually when people study abroad.

There are many students that are moving abroad for the sake of studies. This means that their own culture and the country in which they intend to study is bound to have differences. The things in one's culture which is considered absurd or unlikely to be happening could be something very common in the other culture. This difference when understood while being at the university would help when the individual moves into a work culture. One would not face issues in adjusting at the work place if one starts to accept, learn and coexist with other culture people.

According to <sup>[2]</sup>, UNESCO's Aim of Intercultural Education

- 1) Understanding of different cultural groups
- 2) Respect for different cultural groups
- 3) Dialogue between different cultural groups

The reason why intercultural competency is demanded anywhere, be it a university or a work place is because:

- One should not go against the environment he/she or has moved in.
- One should know when social injustice is done to him/her to promote and protect human rights.
- One can evolve to living a better lifestyle by adapting to the new environment instead of changing it or revamping the present one.

The analysis in <sup>[3]</sup> speaks about intercultural competencies at the work place. Also, this analysis would help us realize the importance of intercultural competencies in the industry and would help us understand what kind of intercultural qualities an employer would be looking at, other than the technical skills.

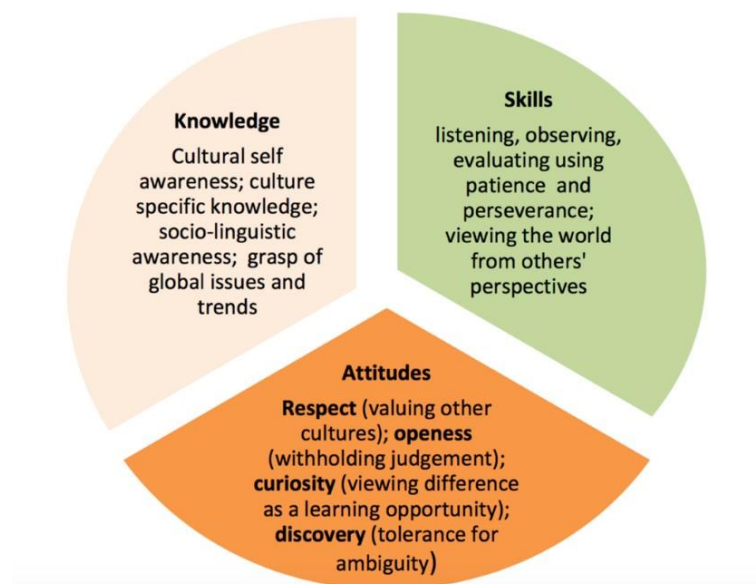
Every country, all over the world has rich culture. Every culture will have some knowledge in it that would help us lead a better life if learnt. So, a continuous learning of good out of one culture and unlearning of any attitude that is not good but has been practised already, will make world a better place to live to both the society as well as the individual.

Every individual will have their own way of thinking and their own point of view. This means the solutions to complex situations could be obtained by intertwining of better ideas of multiple individual instead of a single way of solving a problem. There are various components that can help us in understanding and solving the problem. This demands the factors on which one should know what intercultural components can help them understand the problem one is facing.

According to the research paper [1], the Intercultural Knowledge and competence VALUE Rubric there are various components of intercultural competencies. Each of these components has been divided into their respective representing factors as per the above mentioned reference paper. There are three Intercultural competency representing factors:

1. Knowledge
2. Attitudes
3. Skills

**Constituent elements of intercultural competence**  
(Adapted from Deardorff, 2006)



## INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

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There are components which belong to Intercultural knowledge:

## 1. Cultural self-awareness



One should be wise enough to discriminate between what's good for humanity and what is not. They should be aware of their country first. This would usually help when some of the cultural entities remain almost nearly similar and this could be empathised easily. Also, only when one respects their own

culture can they respect the other culture as well. This could help in building mutual respect for the cultures. It is necessary that one must adapt to the new environment but it is equally necessary to not forget the good culture that they already were in, that promotes human values and provides moral support to the individual.

## 2. Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks

One has to never stop learning or observing once they are in a new environment. Different places would have different political, economic and social culture.

There are four dimensions of cultural worldviews:



### 1. Egalitarianism:

Inequality not being supported

2. **Communitarianism:** For a person to be able to interact with the society, the degree at which one should interact is expected to be high.

3. **Hierarchism:** A relative value or position assigned to an individual or an activity

according to the importance or levels of knowledge.

4. **Individualism:** A person should be given freedom to have some individual space when required.

One of the key qualities that helps keep on par with these different cases is by working through or talking through and out to different kinds of people in and around.

## INTERCULTURAL ATTITUDES

There are components which belong to Intercultural attitudes

## 5. Curiosity



There should be a desire to know new things and to know more as well. It is good to know in and out of a system. The more we learn the more we discover. Being curious about the activities going around is not at all a bad thing. One can go around and question people to know what they want. People do need to collaborate with each other in order to exchange thoughts and ideas. Unless this urge to know is there, one

cannot enjoy themselves in the new environment. Also, learning the local language might help to a great deal in having the knowledge of cultural overview. This can bring in confidence to an individual and can work with dynamically varying social confinements.

## 6. Openness



Being open begins with the interest in an activity or a technology or a personality. Once a person engages into being interested in something, the opportunities that arrive should be continuously grabbed. This can be achieved by talking, drawing or expressing it by any means of art as well. Once the opportunities are given to express thoughts or ideas, one must investigate if the successful execution of the same has occurred. This sequence of activities could be checked

continuously by noting the flaws and errors that have occurred, if there are any. This mind-set of an individual would help in building a rapport between himself and his/her environment very soon.

## INTERCULTURAL SKILLS

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There are components which belong to Intercultural skills

## 7. Empathy



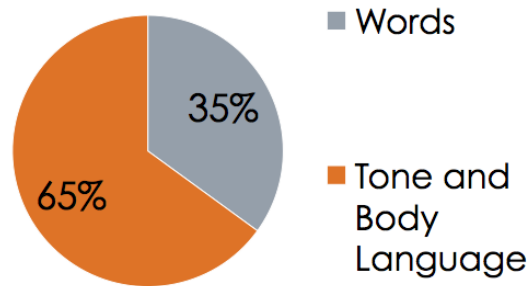
It is very much necessary for one to be empathetic in nature. One can identify the needs effectively if empathised with the colleague, customer or a friend. It also helps in enhancing the creativity of the other individual.

Sometimes, an emotional connection to a person will make you empathize with the situation and one could help as a friend. When one empathizes with a client, it becomes easier for negotiations.

It always makes the other individual safe when one empathizes.

## 8. Verbal and nonverbal communication

### Communication is...



There are written/sign language for verbal communication and Spoken language for non-verbal communication.

When the communication is non-verbal, people often understand what the other person means to say, by their body language. Clearly, the tone with which the thoughts or the ideas

are communicated is equally important. Having a good vocabulary is good but the thought should have been conveyed successfully. It often happens that one could be misunderstood due to the bad body language and the tone in which the words are used.

When a communication is purely verbal, one has to take care of order of information being provided. There should be a continuity of thought-flow in the other person's mind as well. This could be confirmed every now and then by asking for a feedback if understood or not.

Thus the information that one needs to provide should be considered delivered only after the concept is understood by the other.

## CONCLUSION

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Intercultural competency helps us to:

- respect the culture foreign to us.
- understand our own culture as well through the constant self-introspection and strengthen their roots of understanding
- evolve into living a better lifestyle by imbibing awareness in ourselves about the need for adapting to the new environment
- understand the global problems and help resolving them by collaborating with international interactions

## REFERENCES

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- [1] “*Facilitating Intercultural Development: Preparing Future Engineers for Multidisciplinary Teams and Multicultural Environments*” by Darshini N. Render, Horane A. Holgate and Charles A. Calahan, Purdue University West Lafayette, Indiana, United States,
- [2] <http://www.intercultproject.com/theoretical-framework>
- [3] “*The Culture at Work*” research analysis by the British Council
- [4] Lambert, 2012, Collective Learning for Transformational Change