

A 21st Century Imperative: Integrating Intercultural Competence in Tuning

Darla K. Deardorff*

doi: 10.18543/tjhe-3(1)-2015pp137-147

Abstract: Given the increasing demand for interculturally competent graduates and employees, it is incumbent upon the Tuning community to incorporate intercultural competence into Tuning Frameworks. With the growing diversity in the world today, beyond national diversity, intercultural competence cuts across disciplines, subjects, and contexts. This essay highlights the first research-based definition and framework of intercultural competence which can be translated into any subject and context and makes the case for why intercultural competence must be embedded into Tuning Frameworks around the world.

Keywords: intercultural competence; global competence; workplace; Delphi; diversity.

The 21st century workplace is one filled with diversity — with workers of different ages, different religions, different genders, different cultures, with different beliefs, ways of thinking, abilities, ways of communicating, and so much more. Many jobs today, regardless of location, require working with other people who are quite different from each other. While technical knowledge and subject knowledge are certainly important for success, they are not enough. What else is needed to be successful in working with people across difference, regardless of the subject area? Employers increasingly indicate the importance of employees' intercultural skills and the ability to work successfully on diverse teams.¹ Intercultural competence (and a plethora of other terms, depending on the discipline and subject) becomes the

* Dr. Darla K. Deardorff (d.deardorff@duke.edu) is a research scholar at Duke University (USA). She is also executive director of the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA).

¹ Martin Tillman, "Employer Perspectives on International Education," in *The Sage Handbook of International Higher Education*, ed. by Darla K. Deardorff, Hans de Wit and John D. Heyl (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012); British Council, "Culture at Work: The Value of Intercultural Skills in the Workplace" (London: British Council, 2013).

way forward and it is crucial that the Tuning community intentionally include intercultural competence as a critical piece of what today's graduates need to know and be able to do, regardless of discipline. As the British Council report "Culture at Work" noted, "Communicating with customers, colleagues and partners across international borders is now an everyday occurrence for many workers around the world. Consequently, employers are under strong pressure to find employees who are not only technically proficient, but also culturally astute and able to thrive in a global work environment".²

Various disciplines and subjects are beginning to address the importance of intercultural competence through inclusion in accrediting standards. For example, in the United States, the following professional disciplines include intercultural, or global, competence in their accrediting standards: engineering, education, nursing, social work, medicine, and business to name a few. There are many examples of professionals working with those from different backgrounds. For instance, scientists regularly work with others from other cultures (examples include CERN, Square Kilometer Array (SKA), and European Synchrotron Radiation Facility). Within these varied and different contexts, it becomes crucial to consider what intercultural competences are needed to work successfully in teams, with clients, partners, co-workers and on projects.

Intercultural competence is increasingly gaining prominence in a variety of sectors around the world. Just as higher education is noting its importance,³ so are regional and world organizations such as the Council of Europe⁴ and the United Nations,⁵ as not only key to employability but also to democracy and a more peaceful world.

Given the increasing recognition of the importance of intercultural competence, the question becomes: When will the Tuning community integrate intercultural competence *intentionally* and *specifically* in existing frameworks? While some of the generic competences developed through the Tuning Project relate tangentially to intercultural competence (see Figure 1), Tuning does not overtly and intentionally address intercultural competence either in the generic or specific competences. Integration of intercultural competence may include adapting already noted competences (such as the

² British Council, "Culture at Work," 3.

³ Eva Egron-Polak and Ross Hudson, *Internationalization of Higher Education: Growing Expectations, Fundamental Values* (Paris: International Association of Universities, 2014).

⁴ Council of Europe, *Developing Intercultural Competence in Education* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2014).

⁵ UNESCO, *Intercultural Competences* (Paris: UNESCO, 2013).

ones in Figure 1) as well as including specific aspects of intercultural competence (see figure 2) contextualized to subject areas.

- Ability to communicate in a second language
- Ability to show awareness of equal opportunities and gender issues
- Ability to search for, process and analyze information from a variety of sources
- Ability to work in a team
- Ability to work in an international context
- Interpersonal and interaction skills
- Ability to act with social responsibility and civic awareness
- Appreciation of and respect for diversity and multiculturalism
- Skills in the use of information and communications technologies
- Ability to adapt to and act in new situations
- Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries

Figure 1

Some generic Tuning competences related to intercultural competence

I. Existing Myths

An important task to be addressed before moving to a definition of intercultural competence is the debunking of certain myths which exist within academia about the concept. There are numerous myths around intercultural competence development including ones such as the following:

Myth #1: “International experience equates with intercultural competence.”

Myth #2: “Intercultural competence comes naturally and can’t be taught.”

Myth #3: “Intercultural competence is not that important in my discipline.”

Myth #4: “Fluently speaking another language means the person is interculturally competent.”

Myth #5: “Intercultural competence cannot be assessed.”

These are all myths that higher education institutions can and are addressing through the curriculum and beyond. For example, intercultural competence can indeed be addressed through the curriculum,⁶ and intercultural competence is assessable as in concrete learning outcomes,

⁶ Kate Berardo and Darla K. Deardorff, *Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2012); Betty Leask, *Internationalizing the Curriculum* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

using a multi-method, multi-perspective approach.⁷ Further, it is important to recognize that intercultural competence goes beyond language and beyond knowledge about other cultures — and to recognize that skills and attitudes are equally important to the development of intercultural competence. To that end, it is encouraging to note that numerous generic Tuning competences listed in Figure 1 do indeed address skills. The Tuning community needs to address these and other myths by intentionally incorporating intercultural competence and related aspects into its discourse and work.

II. Terminology

There are many terms used to describe this concept of intercultural competence: international competence, global citizenship, intercultural effectiveness, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural competence, and intercultural sensitivity to name just a few. Terms are specific to each discipline; for example, in the United States, engineering often uses “global competence” while the healthcare professions may use “cultural competence” (referring more to domestic diversity). Business may use a term such as “cultural intelligence” or “cross-cultural effectiveness” while in education, there are a wide variety of terms used including both “global competence” and “intercultural competence” as well as “global citizenship” and “global learning.” While there may not need to be consensus on terminology, it is important to recognize that there are indeed many different terms used for the same concept, and regardless the terminology, it is vital to understand how terms are defined, which frameworks are being used, and how these terms are translated into practice in the respective disciplines and subjects so that the academy moves beyond ambiguous, frequently used and lofty terms to substantive, meaningful practice. For the purposes of this paper, the term “intercultural competence” will be used given its prevalence in higher education⁸ as well as in numerous contexts around the world. Further,

⁷ Michael Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997); Doug Stuart, “Assessment Instruments for the Global Workforce,” in *Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence*, ed. by Michael A. Moodian (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008); Alvino Fantini, “Assessing Intercultural Competence: Issues and Tools,” in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. by Darla K. Deardorff (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009); Darla K. Deardorff, *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators: A Practical Approach* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2015).

⁸ Deardorff, *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators*.

intercultural competence (in contrast to cross-cultural competence, international competence, multicultural competence, etc.) implies *interaction* between those from different backgrounds, whether within a society or cross-border.

III. Research-based Definition of Intercultural Competence (ICC)

What is intercultural competence? There has been over fifty years of scholarly effort in defining this concept,⁹ primarily in the United States and in Europe. The first research-based definition of intercultural competence¹⁰ used a Delphi methodology, which is an iterative process with an identified group of experts, to develop a grounded-research framework that specified the agreed-upon essential elements of intercultural competence — categorized under knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as well as internal and external outcomes and highlighted here (see figure 2 for details):

Attitudes: Three key attitudes emerged as part of the consensus documented in the Deardorff study: respect, openness, and curiosity/discovery. Respect for others involves demonstrating that they are valued, including through showing interest in them and listening attentively to them. Respect is especially important to extend to those whose beliefs and values may differ from one's own. Openness and curiosity both imply a willingness to risk and to move beyond one's comfort zone. These three attitudes are foundational to the further development of the knowledge and skills needed for intercultural competence. One way to move individuals toward these requisite attitudes is by challenging their assumptions about their own views of the world and the ways in which they perceive others. This challenging of assumptions can be done through the curriculum, and especially through experiential learning opportunities in which learners engage actively with those in the local community.

Knowledge: Intercultural scholars in this study concurred on the following broad categories of knowledge: cultural self-awareness (meaning the ways in which one's culture has influenced one's identity and worldview), culture-specific knowledge, deep cultural knowledge (including understanding other worldviews), and sociolinguistic awareness. It is

⁹ Brian Spitzberg and Gabrielle Changnon, "Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence," in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. by Darla K. Deardorff (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

¹⁰ Darla K. Deardorff, "The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10, no. 3 (2006): 241-66.

important to note that for purposes of this discussion, “culture” is defined as values, beliefs, and norms held by a group of people, which shapes how individuals communicate and behave, that is, how they interact with others. Culture does not necessarily mean only those from different national or ethnic backgrounds, but also those from other diverse groups (religious, socio-economic, gender, sexual orientation, regional) within a particular society. The one element agreed upon by all the intercultural scholars in the study was the importance of understanding the world from others’ perspectives. This last piece has significant implications for higher education: How do different subjects and disciplines incorporate others’ perspectives and intercultural experiences into their curriculum and programmes?

Skills: The skills documented in this study as part of the consensus understanding of intercultural competence address the *processing* of knowledge: observing, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating. This concurs with an observation by the former president of Harvard University regarding the importance of “thinking interculturally”.¹¹ Given these skills, critical self-reflection is essential to the development and assessment of intercultural competence.

Internal Outcomes: These attitudes, knowledge, and skills ideally lead to internal outcomes that consist of flexibility, adaptability, an ethno-relative perspective, and empathy, with the latter emerging as a key research area of intercultural competence. These are outcomes that occur within the individual as a result of the acquired attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for intercultural competence. If these internal outcomes are achieved, individuals are able to see from others’ perspectives and to respond according to the way in which the other person desires to be treated. Individuals may reach this outcome to varying degrees of success based on the amount of intercultural knowledge and skills acquired.

External Outcomes: The summation of the attitudes, knowledge, and skills, as well as the internal outcomes, are demonstrated through the visible behavior and communication of the individual in an intercultural situation. How effective and appropriate is the individual involving engaging with diverse others in intercultural interactions? This, then, becomes the agreed upon definition of intercultural scholars, that intercultural competence is the *effective* and *appropriate* behavior and communication in intercultural situations, with *effectiveness* being determined by the individual and the *appropriateness* being determined by the other person(s) in the interaction. Effectiveness (the degree to which one achieves one’s goals) is only half the intercultural equation with

¹¹ Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

appropriateness being the other half. It is important to understand that this definition is predicated on particular requisite elements of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as agreed upon by experts in this study as outlined here.

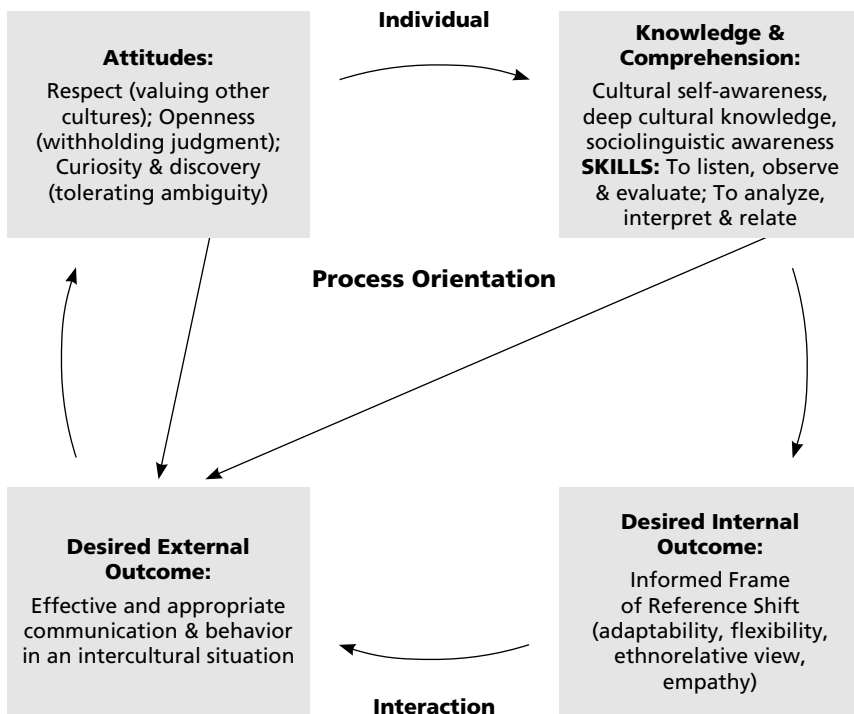


Figure 2

Process Model of Intercultural Competence.¹²

IV. Discussion of ICC Framework

Given that the items within each of these dimensions are still broad, each aspect can be developed into more specific measurable outcomes and

¹² Deardorff, "The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10, no. 3 (2006): 241-66; Deardorff, *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009).

corresponding indicators depending on the subject and context. Note that the overall external outcome of intercultural competence is defined as the *effective* and *appropriate* behavior and communication in intercultural situations, which again can be further detailed in terms of indicators of appropriate behavior (as viewed by the other) in specific contexts, from engineering to health care.

There are several key points to consider in this grounded-theory based model that have implications for the Tuning community. First, intercultural competence development is an ongoing process and thus it becomes important for individuals to be provided with opportunities to reflect upon and assess the development of their own intercultural competence over time. In addition, this suggests assessment should be integrated throughout targeted interventions.

Second, critical thinking skills play a crucial role (see the Skills module in Figure 1) in an individual's ability to acquire and evaluate knowledge. This means that critical thinking assessment could also be an appropriate part of intercultural competence assessment.

Third, attitudes—particularly respect (which is manifested differently in cultures), openness, and curiosity—serve as the basis of this model and impact all other aspects of intercultural competence. Addressing attitudinal assessment, then, becomes an important consideration.

Fourth, knowledge alone is not sufficient for intercultural competence development and as Bok (2006) indicated, developing skills for thinking interculturally becomes more important than actual knowledge acquired. How will subjects go beyond knowledge in developing interculturally competent skills?

Fifth, there was only one aspect agreed upon by all the intercultural experts in this study and that was the ability to see from others' perspectives. As a result, addressing intercultural perspectives (of even how a subject is taught in different ways around the world, such as mathematics) within the subject area and the ability to understand other worldviews becomes an important consideration. Further, it becomes important to consider other cultural perspectives and definitions for intercultural competence. For example, from a South African perspective, the concept of *Ubuntu* (African humanism) emerges as a key element of intercultural competence. Other cultures also may focus more on relationships,¹³ than on the individual. What

¹³ Guo-ming Chen and Ran An, "A Chinese Model of Intercultural Leadership Competence," in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. by Darla K. Deardorff (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009); Ranjini Manian and Shobha Naidu, "India: A Cross-Cultural Overview of Intercultural Competence," in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. by Darla K. Deardorff (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009); Peter Nwosu,

definition(s) of intercultural competence will be used in each subject area and region around the world? Upon what will this definition be based?

V. Translating Intercultural Competence into Different Subjects

There is much work to be done on intercultural competence — in taking a general framework, such as the one discussed in this paper, and translating the elements into the subjects and disciplinary contexts. Despite the common basis of intercultural competence elements, an interculturally competent engineer will look different than an interculturally competent health care professional, for example. Here are some questions for the Tuning community and researchers to explore further by discipline and subject, based on the intercultural competence framework discussed in this paper:

1. How does respect, open-mindedness (including non-judgmentalness) and curiosity translate concretely into the discipline?
2. Where is cultural self-awareness addressed in the discipline?
3. Do students recognize the ways in which they view the world, issues, and solutions as culturally bound and can students clearly articulate the multiple ways in which others view these same issues?
4. How does knowledge of different populations (age, gender, culture, religion, indigenous beliefs, etc) in the disciplinary context get taught and from whose perspective?
5. Are the historical/social/economic/political/religious contexts of different populations included in the curriculum when appropriate?
6. Do the disciplinary materials reflect different perspectives?
7. How are communication styles being addressed in the disciplinary context?
8. Are students able to reflect regularly and intentionally on the process of developing their intercultural competence and do they recognize the lifelong nature of developing such competence?
9. Are students able to display empathy and humility in approaching others?

“Understanding Africans’ conceptualizations of Intercultural Competence,” in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. by Darla K. Deardorff (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009); UNESCO, *Intercultural Competences* (Paris: UNESCO, 2013).

10. Can students communicate and behave both appropriately and effectively with those from different backgrounds? When working in groups and teams?

These are just a few of the many questions that can be generated from the intercultural competence framework discussed in this paper. Addressing intercultural competence in intentional ways in the Tuning community is the next step in ensuring that graduates are ready for the diverse world of the 21st century.

Bibliography

- Berardo, Kate, and Darla K. Deardorff. *Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2012.
- Bok, Derek. *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- British Council. "Culture at Work: The Value of Intercultural Skills in the Workplace." London: British Council, 2013.
- Byram, Michael. *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997.
- Chen, Guo-ming, and Ran An. "A Chinese Model of Intercultural Leadership Competence." In *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, edited by Darla K. Deardorff, 196-208. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.
- Council of Europe. *Developing Intercultural Competence in Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2014.
- Deardorff, Darla K. *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators: A Practical Approach*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2015.
- . "The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10, no. 3 (2006): 241-66.
- . *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009.
- Egron-Polak, Eva, and Ross Hudson. *Internationalization of Higher Education: Growing Expectations, Fundamental Values*. Paris: International Association of Universities, 2014.
- Fantini, Alvino. "Assessing Intercultural Competence: Issues and Tools." In *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, edited by Darla K. Deardorff, 456-76. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.
- Leask, Betty. *Internationalizing the Curriculum*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Manian, Ranjini, and Shobha Naidu. "India: A Cross-Cultural Overview of Intercultural Competence." In *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, edited by Darla K. Deardorff, 233-48. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.

- Nwosu, Peter. "Understanding Africans' conceptualizations of Intercultural Competence." In *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, edited by Darla K. Deardorff, 158-78. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.
- Pottinger, Paul. *Competence Assessment: Comments on Current Practices. Defining and Measuring Competence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979.
- Spitzberg, Brian, and Gabrielle Changnon. "Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence." In *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, edited by Darla K. Deardorff, 1-52. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.
- Stuart, Doug. "Assessment Instruments for the Global Workforce." In *Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence*, edited by Michael A. Moodian, 175-89. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008.
- Tillman, Martin. "Employer Perspectives on International Education." In *The Sage Handbook of International Higher Education*, edited by Darla K. Deardorff, Hans de Wit and John D. Heyl, 191-206. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012.
- UNESCO. *Intercultural Competences*. Paris: UNESCO, 2013.

About the Author

DARLA K. DEARDORFF (d.deardorff@duke.edu), PhD, is a research scholar at Duke University (U.S.A). She is also executive director of the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) and holds faculty posts at other institutions including Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (S. Africa), Meiji University (Japan), and Shanghai International Studies University (China). She received her doctorate from North Carolina State University and her principle fields of research include intercultural competence development and assessment, internationalization, teacher education, and global leadership. She serves as a consultant and advisor on these topics to numerous organizations and universities around the world and is regularly invited to speak on related topics. She is author/editor of numerous publications including five books, some of which are *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Sage, 2009), *Building Cultural Competence* (Stylus, 2012), and *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators* (Stylus, 2015).

Copyright

Copyright for this article is retained by the Publisher. It is an Open Access material that is free for download, distribution, and or reuse in any medium only for non-commercial purposes; provided any applicable legislation is respected, the original work is properly cited, and any changes to the original are clearly indicated.