

COGNITIVE COMPONENTS IN FORMING CROSSCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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In the recent years there has become an increasing pressure for universities across the world to incorporate intercultural and international understanding and knowledge into the education of their students. International literacy and cross-cultural understanding have become critical to a country's cultural, technological, economic, and political health. It has become essential for universities to educate, or more importantly, "transform", to function effectively and comfortably in a world characterized by close, multi-faceted relationships and permeable borders. Students must possess a certain level of global competence to understand the world they live in and how they fit into this world.

Universities need to make sure that they are open and responsive to changes in the outside environment. Any university needs to be current with cultural changes, and willing to adapt to these changes. New distance learning technologies, such as interactive teleconferencing, enable students located thousands of miles apart to communicate and interact in a virtual classroom.

Cultural competence is becoming increasingly necessary for work, home, community social lives. It includes four cognitive components: (a) awareness, (b) attitude, (c) knowledge, and (d) skills.

Awareness is consciousness of one's personal reactions to people who are different.

The attitude component is added in order to emphasize the difference between training that increases awareness of cultural bias and beliefs in general and training that has participants carefully examine their own beliefs and values about cultural differences.

The knowledge component is an important part of cultural competence development.

The skills component focuses on practicing cultural competence to perfection. Communication is the fundamental tool by which people interact in organizations. This includes gestures and other non-verbal communication that tend to vary from culture to culture.

Notice that the set of four components of our cultural competence definition—awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills—represents the key features of each of the popular definitions. The utility of the definition goes beyond the simple integration of previous definitions, however. It is the diagnostic and intervention development benefits that make the approach most appealing.