Developing Intercultural Competence and Communication: The Foundation for Successful Internationalisation

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Purpose The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the importance of internationalisation within a higher education context. It will provide the theory behind the connection between intercultural competence as well as a plethora of means as to how this should be achieved and implemented within the higher education sphere.

Study design/methodology/approach This chapter is descriptive in nature. It is a collection of literature with suggestions for the implementation of intercultural activities.

Findings The connection between intercultural competence and successful internationalisation is vital, and there are various ways that this can be achieved. The higher education institution must take a holistic approach to implementing various methodologies to foster it amongst their students and staff.

Originality/value This chapter will prove to be a crucial tool for stakeholders to use by offering workable suggestions and approaches to fostering intercultural competence within a higher education context.

Introduction

The importance of internationalisation within the higher education sector falls under the notion that both academic and professional requirements for graduates have come to increasingly reflect the demands of what is deemed to be an increasingly globalised society as well as the economy and labour market (Qiang, 2003). It therefore becomes imperative that higher education institutions provide adequate preparation for such educational shifts. It is important to note that such preparation is not limited to both academic and professional

knowledge with regards to internationalisation, but also the acquisition of multilingualism, and social and intercultural skills and attitudes (Qiang, 2003). Consequently, integrating intercultural communication and competence as a means of enabling the internationalisation of higher education is deemed to be essential in this regard. Therefore, the intent of the current chapter is to shed light onto the importance of internationalisation within a higher education context. It provides the theory behind the connection between intercultural competence as well as a plethora of means as to how this should be achieved and implemented within the higher education sphere.

What is Culture?

Culture is defined as the social system that comprises a definitive set of values, norms, and ways of behaving in a human society. When discussing the concept of culture, the definition is considered to be bilateral. Schein (1990) defines culture within a managerial context and describes it as 'how people feel about the organisation, the authority system, and the degree of employee involvement and commitment.' Moreover, he states that 'culture can be viewed as a widely held, shared set of values, beliefs, and ideas.' As a result, the concept of forming and developing cultural understanding is becoming paramount due to the increasing need to be able to interact with individuals from other countries and cultures (Lee, 2006).

What is Intercultural Competence?

The knowledge that cultures exist across a spectrum brings forth the question of how communication can be facilitated in order to manage the interactions between individuals who belong to different cultures. Intercultural awareness is considered to be the interaction between 'people of two different groups (ethnics, beliefs, etc.) or cultures' (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005), and according to Chen and Starosta (1998), 'intercultural competence is the only means whereby we can move beyond cultural differences in order to succeed in intercultural interactions.' Further analysis of the definition implies that intercultural communication effectively occurs at two levels. The first level is what is considered to be *interpersonal communication,* and the second level is considered to be *intergroup communication.* Interpersonal communication focuses on the identities of and relationships between interactants, while intergroup communication focuses on the identi-

ties of and relationships between the represented groups (Gudykunst, 2005). It is important that intercultural communication be understood at both levels. With regards to intercultural communication, the concept of competence refers to 'the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world' (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Therefore, the emphasis is on one's ability to effectively communicate with individuals who belong to different cultures. Moreover, both Spitzbern and Changon emphasised with regards to intercultural competence that cultural adjustment, assimilation, and adaptation can all be viewed from the lens of competence (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

What is Intercultural Communication?

With regards to intercultural communication, it is deemed to be the process of communication that takes place between people of different cultural backgrounds. This can also include those who are from different countries or even those who are from different subcultures within the same country (Shibata, 1998). Once we consider that both knowledge and communication are intrinsically linked, the relationship between the two suggests that the 'higher the level of knowledge, the greater the level of communication' and simultaneously, the 'greater the communication, the more knowledge increases.'

The level of knowledge involved permits a greater or lesser degree of interaction and, as a consequence, communication between the people who make up the different cultures. Knowledge and communication are two parameters that are intrinsically linked; the higher the level of knowledge, the greater the level of communication, but, from a different angle, the greater the communication, the more knowledge increases. In other words, communication allows us to decode many of the aspects that intervene in different civilizations. Cultural impact and, therefore, intercultural communication have been of interest in academic, political, institutional, and professional areas. For example, cultural assumptions have a great impact on commercial firms or organisations, and corporate or work culture has increasingly become the focus of research over the last two decades. Initially, practises was used to describe leadership practices, and later in the 1980s, management gurus defined culture in terms of symbols, slogans, heroes, rites, and rituals (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Strategic devel-

opment, productivity, and multiple skills and abilities at all levels depend not only on interpreting and understanding but also on 'practising' organisational culture. Nevertheless, although it has progressively become a common disciplinary framework, organisational culture is one of the numerous areas of knowledge which approaches aspects that intervene in culture but is not itself the essence of culture.

What is the Internationalisation of Higher Education?

The concept of internationalisation is highly multifaceted and covers a plethora of dimensions at different levels of higher education (Yang, 2002, p. 72). There is not a single unified definition that would ultimately cover the interests of the stakeholders; however, a commonly accepted definition with regards to higher education has been put forth by Trilokekar, who stated that 'internationalisation of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service elements of an institution' (Knight, 2006). This definition is considered to be the one that is most closely aligned with the three important functional dimensions of the tertiary sector, such as universities. These include teaching, research, and service. The concept of internationalisation must be considered as something that is 'dynamic' rather than a set of isolated activities. The key element to consider is intercultural dimensions within this definition in order to emphasise the fact that internationalisation is not limited to one specific country or nation-state but rather is a concoction of different cultures and ethnic groups within various countries.

The Importance and Necessity of Internationalisation of Higher Education

It is without a doubt that education has become more international. No longer is the education system or curriculum limited within geographic borders. Although institutions and universities develop their own strategies to internationalise their research and teaching agendas, the government also plays a fundamental role in shedding light on the importance of internationalising higher education through international cooperation and exchange programmes. The importance of internationalisation comes about as an effective way to improve and maintain a competitive advantage economically. The socio-cultural reason for the internationalisation of higher education is directly linked to the potential impact of globalisation. This is particularly important

when we consider that higher education itself has been considered to be part of 'cultural agreements and exchanges.' Today's globalised economy, information, and communication systems suggest another aspect of the social-cultural reason (Knight, 1999, pp. 201–238). In addition to this, according to Knight (1999), with regards to higher education, an individual, institution, or country's motivation regarding internationalisation is one that is deemed 'complex and multi-levelled' and works to respond to the evolving nature of the importance of higher education. Moreover, according to Hayhoe (1989), 'international cooperative agreements, academic mobility, international scholarships, technical and economic development, international curriculum studies, cultural values, and historical and political context are the most important reasons for the internationalisation of higher education' (Hayhoe, 1989).

There are various reasons for the internationalisation of higher education. These include:

1. Mobility and exchanges for students and teachers;
2. Teaching and research collaboration;
3. Academic standards and quality;
4. Research projects;
5. Cooperation and development assistance;
6. International and intercultural understanding.

Intercultural Competence and Communication in Higher Education

One of the leading researchers on the theory of intercultural competence is Byram (1997), who defines IC as the ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness, and their skills in interpreting, relating, and discovering, i.e., overcoming cultural difference and enjoying intercultural contact. This definition was expanded upon when Chen and Starosta both considered that intercultural competence refers to those who are competent enough to interact in a way that is deemed 'effective and appropriate' with people of different cultures (Chen & Starosta, 1996).

In addition to this, the concept of intercultural competence is di-

vided into various fragments. Both Chen and Starosta consider that it is divided into:

1. Affective perspectives (attitude);
2. Cognitive perspective (knowledge);
3. Behaviour perspective (skills).

It should be noted that having knowledge of one's own culture does not constitute intercultural awareness. Therefore, it is the consideration of both the 'psychological and attitudinal aspects' of the individual themselves, with consideration of their own culture as well as those that they do not belong to. Deardorff (2006) noted that with regards to the general definitions of the IC, essentially the primary focus is on 'individual's skills and attitudes in successfully interacting with persons of diverse backgrounds.' On the other hand, Dervin and Gross (2016) state that 'an approach to intercultural competence that fails to point coherently, cohesively, and consistently to the complexity of self and the other fails to accomplish what it should do: Helping people to see beyond appearances and simplifying discourses-and thus lead to "realistic" encounters.' Therefore, it becomes clear that the concept of intercultural competence revolves around the knowledge acquired through direct, authentic communication and encounters with those who belong to different cultures.

Being knowledgeable of one's own society and cultural conventions is therefore considered to be the starting point for developing any degree of intercultural competence. However, the cognitive dimension includes the 'complex understanding of cultural differences.' The intrapersonal dimension can be defined as the 'capacity to accept and not feel threatened by cultural differences,' and, finally, the interpersonal dimension refers to the individual's 'capacity to function interdependently with diverse others.'

According to Liu et al. (2011), in order to overcome the barriers of differences within cultures, it is important to build 'mutual differences with the other interactant.' She suggests that the best way to do this is to focus on the similarities as opposed to the differences. This is important because, according to Liu, the more knowledge we gain about people from different cultures, despite the visible differences such as the way we look or other physical traits, the more similarities and points of mutuality we share with each other. Moreover, the roles that both emo-
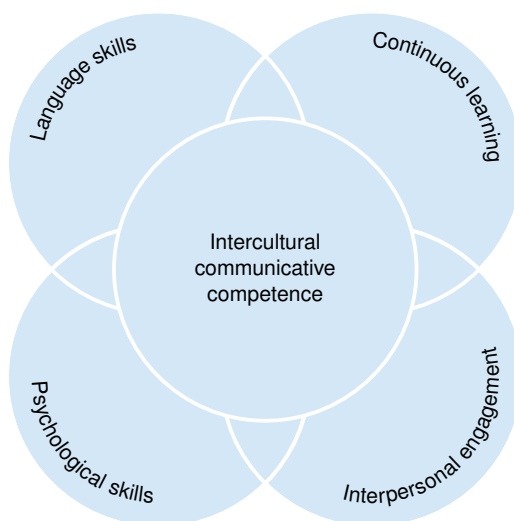
FIGURE 7.1

The Four Dimensions
of Intercultural
Communicative
Competence

tional and psychological factors play are also fundamental. The reason for this is that these factors are potent enough to interfere with our interaction in two primary ways:

1. The approach we have with the interlocutor;
2. The motivation we have to engage in the communicative.

The terms intercultural competence and intercultural communication are often used interchangeably. However, there is once again a central difference with regards to both terms. According to Guilherme, the main difference with regards to intercultural competence is that it involves 'the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognise as being different from our own.' Moreover, Wilkinson suggested that intercultural competence is referred to as the 'fundamental role of language difference and therefore the need for linguistic as well as cultural competence' (Wilkinson, 2020). Therefore, with regards to the difference between intercultural competence and communication, the central focus is on language. The lingua Franca is the key element in this case.

With regards to higher education and the cultivation of both intercultural competence and communication within this context, it is deemed necessary to take into consideration the four microdimensions of IC and ICC:

- interpersonal engagement,
- psychological attitudes,
- language skills,
- verbal and nonverbal.

All these micro dimensions' work in an overlapped manner with regards to both IC and ICC.

Actions to Promote Intercultural Competence in Higher Education

As noted by Bok (2009), Intercultural competence is a lifelong process; there is no pinnacle at which someone becomes 'interculturally competent.' Therefore, becoming interculturally competent is considered a lifelong endeavour that is tied to lifelong learning. With this knowledge, it becomes important that learners continuously engage in activities that reinforce both IC and ICC.

Encouraging Intercultural Friendships

A plethora of research has been conducted with regards to the means by which students in higher education. Encouraging students to form intercultural friendships is one way to reduce the in-culture prejudice that would naturally arise. This conclusion was reaped from various studies (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), which have suggested that what is referred to as intergroup contact is necessary in order to form what is deemed to be a successful intercultural relationship. The contact hypothesis suggests that there are four contact conditions that need to be met in order to ensure this effect:

1. Contact and communication should be made between two individuals or two groups who deem themselves to be of equal status within the contact situation.
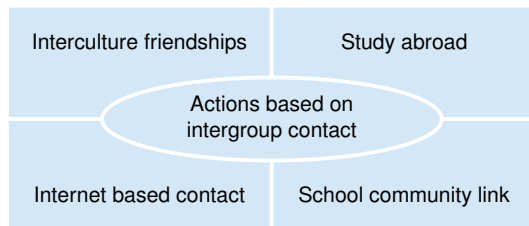
FIGURE 7.2

Actions Based on Intergroup Contact

2. The contact that these two individuals have should be what is referred to as 'sufficiently prolonged' in order to be able to allow for relationships and friendships that carry with them a level of depth and meaning.

3. Joint activities. Both parties or groups should take part in or be involved in activities that have a common goal. This is important because it will eliminate the possibility of competition between the two groups.

4. Framework. Having contact supported by an explicit framework is of utmost importance.

Taking into consideration such conditions ultimately means that simply bringing students together is not enough to reduce possible prejudice or feelings of discrimination. Instead, the nature of the activities they are conducting and the way they are cooperating with each other in the classroom are fundamental. Ideally, the nature of the activities should be one that facilitates cooperation. Higher education institutions can promote them through policy implementation and various extracurricular activities.

There have been studies conducted that suggest that contact in its many forms (direct and indirect) has the potential to significantly reduce prejudice. According to Dovidio et al. (2011), there are three forms of indirect contact that can reduce prejudice:

1. *Extended contact:* when an in-group member is friendly with an outgroup member;

2. *Vicarious contact:* when an in-group member interacts with an outgroup member;

3. *Imagined contact:* imagining oneself interacting with an outgroup member.

Taking these three types of interactions into consideration will ultimately allow teachers and instructors to potentially develop classroom interventions based on these forms of direct and indirect contact (Turner & Cameron, 2016).

An example of a possible intervention could involve reading a series of texts of stories one a week over a 6-week period. These stories, in themselves, will promote intercultural understanding. A study that was conducted by Cameron et al. (2006) revolved around reading a group

of stories over a 6-week period to children between the ages of 5 and 11. The stories primarily revolved around the students who belonged to the 'ingroup' having harmonious relationships with refugee children. According to this story, such intercultural intervention actually led to positive attitudes towards refugee children and, in turn, improved the intercultural competence displayed by the kids. Another instance within this story revolved around students creating or conjuring up stories in which they would describe instances in which they would picture themselves reacting positively to peers of the same age who belonged to different cultural groups. Such an instance was also very instrumental in making the students feel that they were willing to have more contact with outgroup members. As an extension to these different types of contact, 'imagined' contact has also been effective for students who are enrolled in tertiary education, such as universities (Turner, West, & Christie, 2013).

Study Abroad

Implementing study abroad programmes as an alternative to intercultural contact within the classroom is incredibly effective. This is particularly important when we consider that certain schools are incredibly homogenous by nature. Many studies have been conducted that suggest that studying abroad is effective with regards to developing intercultural competence (Anquetil, 2006). Such a conclusion comes about as a result of a series of significant studies that focus on the impact of study abroad programmes. It is important to note that when students are given sufficient support and preparation, the degree to which their intercultural competence improves is significant.

The different preparation activities could possibly include:

- Pre-departure orientations;
- Students conduct research into the host country;
- Possible language learning;
- Advice on forming friendships in the host country.

Arranging for Students to Have Internet-Based Intercultural Contact

Due to the financial nature of the study abroad schemes, they are not necessarily accessible to all school students. The cost of student mobility can be the main issue. However, even if the school is particularly

homogenous and, let's hypothetically say, the higher education institution does not have the budget to send their students abroad, there are other strategies and approaches to ensure that students have a suitable intercultural experience. One way of achieving that would be through the creative use of the internet. This suggestion is, in fact, supported by various theorists (Huber & Reynolds, 2013; Fisher et al., 2004).

Why the internet is a particularly useful tool is that it gives students who are part of a higher education institution the unlimited opportunity to access information about other cultures, possibly develop rapport, and exchange views and perspectives with people of different cultures and backgrounds. This is important because the internet provides a gateway to this, where perhaps they would not have the opportunity to do so otherwise. An example of this would be online video conferencing, etc. This would essentially be a collaborative project between students in different countries. If communication were to be considered challenging in this context, then this would be deemed an opportunity for the teacher to discuss what caused this possible miscommunication and the different ways that this can be overcome in a more culturally sensitive manner. In this regard, online activities using the internet would enable students to develop the following traits:

1. Inter alia;
2. Openness;
3. Listening skills;
4. Communication skills;
5. Cooperation skills;
6. Critical understanding of culture and cultures.

Although research regarding the degree to which intergroup contact is optimal through the internet is lacking, various studies have suggested that it is possible. A study by Byram et al. (2016) that connected a number of studies involving higher education students and took into account the results that would occur if students of various cultures communicated with one another is an illustration of this. This study took into consideration the different facets previously discussed. In order to develop the various facets of intercultural competence, language teachers proposed collaborative projects that required students from various countries to collaborate and communicate closely with one another. The projects themselves addressed a range of different

topics; however, the central underlying theme was primarily civic or political in nature. The topics included recycling, graffiti, and climate change.

It is important to note that the studies that were conducted were qualitative in nature and included relatively small samples. Despite this, the results suggested that there was a significant improvement in terms of intercultural competence. These included:

1. Developed common international identifications;
2. Gained new intercultural and international understandings;
3. Acquired skills of criticality and developed their intercultural competence;
4. They learned how to apply their intercultural competence through action in their own communities.

In terms of the degree to which the internet is deemed an effective outlet for developing relationships, a study conducted by McKenna et al. (2008) involved two schools. One included schoolchildren living in what was considered a multicultural city in England, and the other in a rural area in England that was monocultural. As a result of this study, they found that children were able to form solid relationships, communicate well with each other, and were willing to learn about each other's cultural worlds.
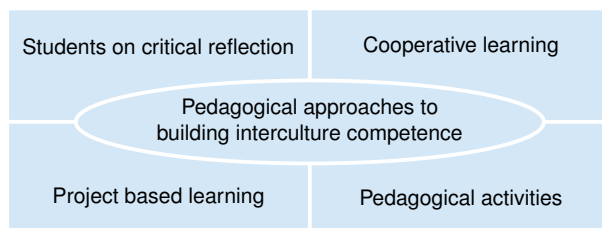
Pedagogical Approaches to Building Intercultural Competence

Supporting Students' Critical Reflection on Their Intercultural Experiences and on Their Own Cultural Affiliations

With the knowledge that intercultural contact is likely to reduce an array of discriminatory acts such as prejudice, increase the degree to which students have tolerance for each other, and ultimately boost intercultural competence, This is guaranteed if the four intercultural contact conditions are met. With regards to the effectiveness of intercultural competencies, they are more likely to be fostered if students are encouraged or required to reflect critically on their intercultural encounters (Alred et al. 2003; Byram et al., 2016).

Developing intercultural competence is not only limited to exploring the cultures of other students within higher education; it is also important that students discover and explore their own cultural backgrounds

FIGURE 7.3

Pedagogical
Approaches
to Building
Intercultural
Competence

Students on critical reflection	Cooperative learning
Pedagogical approaches to building interculture competence	
Project based learning	Pedagogical activities

and identities. Through exploration of their own background, it will ultimately provide them with the gateway to delve into the cultures of other students. Therefore, two additional strategies that could possibly be used in order to build the students intercultural competence could potentially involve delving deeper into their own cultural identities (Schwarzenthal et al., 2017)

Cooperative Learning

The approach of cooperative learning has also been found to be an effective way to boost intercultural competence. With regards to cooperative learning, it isn't limited to students working together in groups in an informal, unstructured manner. In fact, what is required of the students is that they work together on tasks that foster cooperative traits.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), activities that foster cooperative features generally consist of the following:

- *Positive Interdependence:* It is important that students feel that they are linked with group members in a positive, harmonious way.
- *Individual Accountability:* The performance of each student needs to be regularly assessed. This can be done in a formative way.
- *Promotive Interaction:* Students need to be able to interact and communicate with each other in a way that promotes goal achievement.
- *Social Skills:* Students should be exposed to and taught the most fundamental social skills with regards to building high-quality cooperation. These could include the following: decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills.
- *Group Processing:* There must be some kind of group reflection in order to monitor the working relationships between all group members.

If the cooperative learning that is implemented abides by these principles, then ultimately the degree to which intercultural competence is built will also increase. The outcomes are likely to be the following (Johnson, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1999):

- Boosting number of intercultural friendships;
- Students acceptance of cultural differences;
- Appreciation of diversity.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning has also been proven to be effective in fostering intercultural competence among students (Cook & Weaving, 2013). Project-based learning involves partaking in activities that revolve around 'real-world situations.' The activities should ultimately be based on activities that students find meaningful and interesting and that they can engage with. The nature of the projects does not have to be a fixed length; they can either be short in length or long in length.

The nature of the projects is that they must encourage students to problem-solve, investigate, and exercise their decision-making skills. Although these can potentially be done independently, it is encouraged that project-based learning be conducted in groups. Regardless of whether the students are working alone or in groups, it is important that self-reflection and self-evaluation be done during the course of the project.

Although limited research has been conducted with regards to students within higher education, there has been research conducted with regards to students who are considered to be at both primary and secondary levels. These studies have proven that project-based learning has been very effective in fostering skills such as listening, perspective-taking, and respect for others (Bell, 2010).

Pedagogical Activities that Foster Intercultural Competence

There are also different types of pedagogical activities that can be employed in order to foster the intercultural competence of students. An example of these activities includes:

1. *Role-play activities.* Such activities would help students explore what those who are discriminated against may feel. This would

promote the understanding that even though there may be physical differences between each other, everyone is ultimately deserving of dignity and respect.

2. *Analysing different films and texts.* This can be an interesting activity for students. They will be required to analyse characters in order to build greater knowledge and understanding of people who come from different backgrounds.

3. *Ethnographic tasks.* Such tasks would involve the students participating in various observations and then reporting back to the classroom. Here, the instructor or professor would encourage the students to analyse their observations. The process will encourage the students to think critically about different situations within the ethnographic context. This activity could possibly involve interviewing different people in order to foster their tolerance and ambiguity, as well as their respect for different people.

4. *Actions based on school institutional policies* play a significant role in promoting cultural inclusivity in higher education. The policies should reflect a commitment to promoting diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of the institution's operations. This includes the curriculum, teaching methods, admission processes, faculty recruitment, and student support services.

One effective way of promoting cultural inclusivity in higher education is through the use of a culturally inclusive curriculum. This approach involves integrating diverse cultural perspectives into the course content, materials, and assessments. This helps to broaden students' perspectives and understanding of different cultures and helps them develop the skills necessary to work in a globalised world.

Another effective approach is adopting a whole-school approach to valuing diversity in schools. This approach involves creating a culture of inclusivity throughout the institution rather than only in specific programmes or departments. This involves promoting diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of the institution's operations, including policies, procedures, leadership, and communication.

To implement a whole-school approach, institutions should create a diversity and inclusion committee that includes representatives from different cultural backgrounds, and ensure that they have a voice in decision-making processes. This committee should also develop and implement training programmes for staff and faculty to help them un-
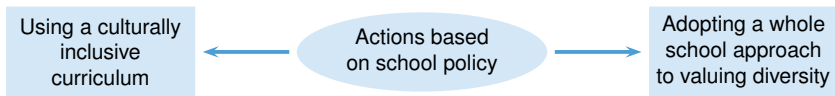
FIGURE 7.4   Actions Based on School Policy

derstand the importance of diversity and inclusivity in higher educa-
tion.

Culturally Inclusive Curriculum

The curriculum is an important tool that aids in promoting intercul-
tural competence. The importance of integrating intercultural compe-
tence into the curriculum would therefore treat diversity as a resource
for learning. The ways in which this could potentially be integrated into
the curriculum would be the following:

- Curricula which includes appreciation for history;
- Include a focus on minority groups.

Research has shown that when schools and higher education insti-
tutions implement a culturally inclusive curriculum, they play a funda-
mental role in reducing the students' cultural prejudices as well as their
respect for minority groups within the community. In turn, racism and
discrimination are more likely to be reduced (Cammarota, 2007).

A Whole School Approach to Valuing Diversity

A whole-school approach would involve not only focusing on the cur-
riculum but rather holistically embracing all elements of the higher ed-
ucation institution. This would therefore include learning, general gov-
ernance, policy, and codes of conduct. The university would also focus
on means by which they could improve both student-student relation-
ships as well as staff-student relationships, as well as how they have
links to the wider community. The community could then ultimately
work with the school towards embracing diversity. This could possibly
be in the form of the following (Billot et al., 2007):

- Culturally inclusive curriculum;
- Holding inclusive celebrations of the different religions;
- Embracing different religious traditions;
- Making sure to always include and respect minorities by employ-
  ing them and placing them at the forefront of the institution.

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that both intercultural competence and awareness are fundamental aspects of successful internationalisation in higher education. This chapter has presented the different means by which an institution could possibly put in place actions and activities that would be deemed important in cultivating intercultural competence amongst students.

However, it is important to note that teachers and instructors need to ultimately consider their roles as agents of change and that they are the fundamental facilitators of the intercultural competence of their students. Ultimately, the instructors need to be ready for this in order to make sure that the activities are implemented in the most effective way possible. Training pre-service and in-service teachers could ultimately accomplish this. The reason why this particular training would be deemed particularly important is because it is necessary to develop the instructor's own level of intercultural competence beforehand. This is vital because it would mean that instructors need to be knowledgeable about how to deliver suitable educational experiences to the students.

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