



Cultural Awareness

INEX MESSENGER

*Workshop is part of
"Make a difference" project
and created by
Mathilda v.d. Zwaag,
Long term- ESC Volunteer at
Inex Slovakia*



Introduction

As an ESC volunteer for Inex Slovakia, I had the great chance to create my own workshop about Cultural Awareness. I wanted for others to be aware of people's different cultural backgrounds and respect them through adapting to the situation.

Aim & Objectives

Aim :

To increase the awareness and acquire to the knowledge from the diversity of cultures in the world.

Objectives:

- Define and understand the concept of cultural intelligence.
- Participants will be able to look into perspective, identify where they are in the cultural intelligence.
- Participants will identify their own cultural norms & values.
- Participants will increase their common sense on different cultures, norms & values.
- To overcome at least one cultural barrier.
- Identify how generational, gender, and other group difference affect the workplace.



The set-up of the workshop

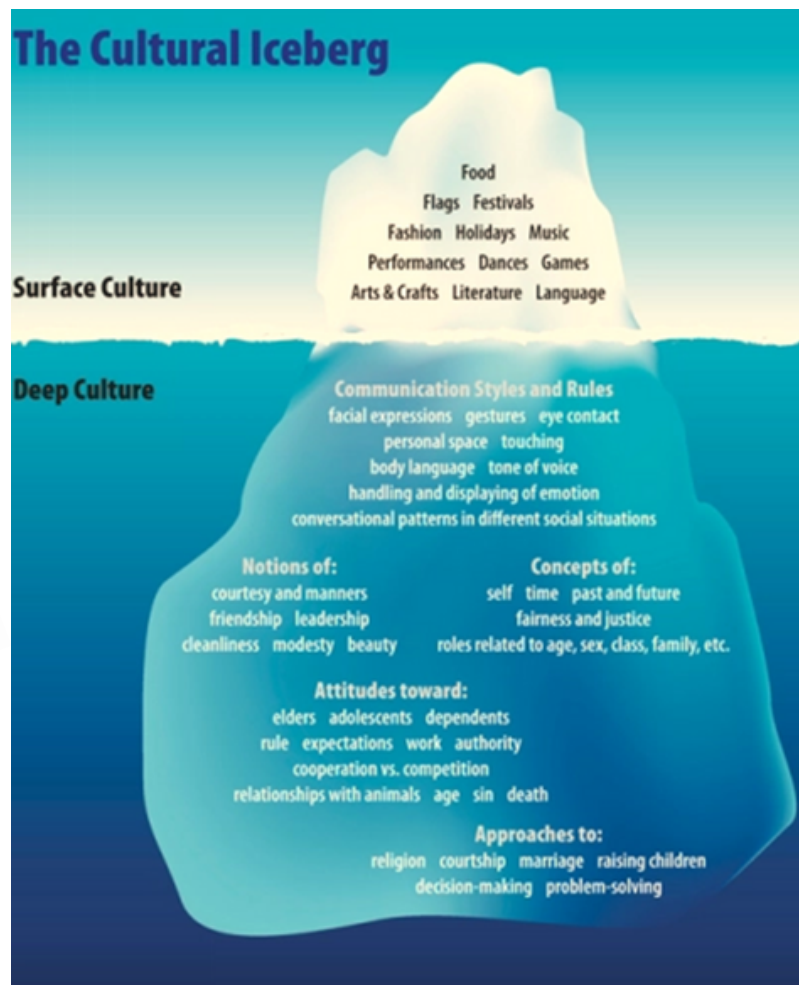
The workshop is based on two theories which are: Cultural Intelligence by David C. Thomas & Kerr Inkson and the Cultural Iceberg model created by Edward T. Hall's.

The cultural intelligence exists of three components which are:

1. **Knowledge** is important to understand the cross-cultural phenomena.
2. The **mindfulness** to observe and interpret particular situations.
3. The **skills** required to adapt behaviour to act appropriately and successfully in a range of situations.

First you have to have a better understanding and gain knowledge. Then, you can observe and interpret a cultural situation. Therefore, you have to have skills to adapt your behaviour in cultural circumstances.

The other theory which is the Cultural Iceberg model explains the two different layers of the iceberg. The first layer named the surface of the culture and it can be seen. For example, clothes, flags and languages. The surface culture layer is only 10% visible and the other layer is a hidden deep cultural layer which exist 90% of the total culture. The deep culture layer is built by aspects such as norms, values, and communication styles including rules. It is more difficult to decode the aspects of the deep cultural layer because they are concealed within a culture.



To kick the workshop of an icebreaker was used. The questions was asked, what kind of sound makes a dog? In almost every language/country a dog sounds differently.

For example, in the Netherlands it is blaf blaf and in Slovakia it hav hav. The idea for the participants it is to realise that something so small can be so different among people.

It was followed with an example of a cultural barrier. The example includes two people. One person from abroad who doesn't know anything about the culture and who is entering a local grocery store. The second person is a shop manager who has never left her country and they both act in the way how they would act in their own culture. The person entering the store, didn't look in the eyes or said hi to the shop manager. He was just staring at the ground when he was paying for his groceries.

I asked the participants what they think of the situation. The participants would say the behaviour of the buyer of groceries is rude and not respectful towards the shop manager. If we would give the shop manager more information about the guy entering the store, like in his culture it is normal that higher authority figures has to invite you to interact meaning they have to start the conversation.

However, due to a lack of knowledge, observation and skills the shop manager and the buyer didn't come to a common respect. Through using the cultural intelligence theory the cultural barrier was explained.

Then, we defined the word culture through the platform jamboard or by using sticky notes. The participants had to write down what they associate with the word culture. For example, music, life style and religion. This way it creates a diverse set of perspectives. This activity was carried out to gain a better understanding and knowledge of culture.

Following it up with an cultural iceberg model activity. The sticky notes on which were written the words associated with culture were defined into the two layers of the iceberg. This, in order to see which aspects are hidden and which are seen within culture.

The theoretical part was closed with the culture definition of Geert Hofstede "Culture consists of shared mental programs that condition individuals' responses to their environment".

The last part of the workshop was closed with a cultural intelligence test so that the participants can know how cultural intelligent they are and what they can improve on. The test was credited by Harvard Business School Publishing which I adapted to the version suited to the workshop.



Adaptive version of the cultural intelligence test

Diagnosing your Intercultural Intelligence

These statements reflect different facets of cultural intelligence. It is most useful to think about your three scores in comparison to one another. You rate the extent which you agree with each statement, using the scale:

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3, neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

After filling in the scores for each component add up your scores.

Knowledge

- ___ Before I interact with people from a new culture, I ask myself what I hope to achieve.
- ___ If I encounter something unexpected while working/being in a new culture, I use this experience to figure out new ways to approach other cultures in the future.
- ___ I plan how I'm going to relate to people from a different culture before I meet them.
- ___ When I come into a new cultural situation, I can immediately sense whether something is going well or something is wrong.
- ___ **Total**

Mindfulness

- ___ It is easy for me to change my body language (for example, eye contact or posture) to suit people from a different culture.
- ___ I can change my expression when a cultural happening requires it.
- ___ I adjust/change my speech style (for example, accent or tone) to suit people from a different culture.
- ___ I easily change the way I act when a cross-cultural happening seems to require it.
- ___ **Total**

Skills

- ___ I have confidence that I can deal well with people from a different culture.
- ___ I am certain that I can befriend people whose cultural backgrounds are different.
- ___ I can adapt to the lifestyle of a different culture with relative ease.
- ___ I am confident that I can deal with a cultural situation that's unfamiliar.
- ___ **Total**

Total of all the three components= ___



According to the the total score of points you can have a beginner, intermediate or expert level on cultural intelligence. But what does it mean?

If you have a beginner's level. You are on your way to reach top and just need a little more time to understand and be aware of cultural interaction. A great way to start is with reading about different cultures and observe how people interact. Try to look it from a different perspective and be open for the unknown.

As an intermediate, you are doing a great job! You can still improve on some aspects to become even better at it. You can do this through reading or practicing cultural conversations or activities.

Having a score of an expert, you are aware of cultural intelligence and keep doing the things related to cultural intelligence. Also, there is always new things to learn to improve yourself to be even more open minded and put the learned knowledge into practice.



Results of the test

0-20 points = Beginner
21-40 points = Intermediate
41-60 points = Expert

Places of carrying out the workshop

The workshop was held on- and offline. The first trial of the workshop was done virtually with the office staff (5 people) and they gave their feedback. The feedback that was given was more technical changes rather than content. It was followed up with a virtual leadership training where I received feedback from the participants and a leader. Their feedback was to give more examples instead of using just one cultural barrier example.

Then the workshop was given offline during the Obisovce camp which was held outside on the grass field. The flipchart was used during the workshop instead of the jamboard to create interaction. The tests were printed out for the participants to fill them in.

The last workshop was during the virtual camp: Comic strips and movie analyses. It was good to have different nationalities to create a more diverse set of perspectives and interaction. In total four participants contributed to the workshop and shared their opinions.

The cons and pros of the workshop

Several cons during the workshop were that it was not consistent in the way how the workshop was executed. Every workshop had its own flow of presenting due to off- and online workshops it has to change a bit. And after every workshop, I would change it a little bit or adapt to the audience during the workshop. This could be seen as an improvement to be more consistent in order to better compare the results of the workshops.

However, everybody was actively participating and involved during the workshop.

I had the feeling the participants increased their knowledge on cultural aspects and in particular about cultural intelligence. Together we analysed an example of a cultural barrier and therefore I can confirm that they know how to overcome their own cultural barriers. Using the cultural intelligence test they defined where they are in the cultural intelligence. With the knowledge received the participants would be able to identify their own cultural norms & values and be aware of differences among people. Happily, most objectives have been achieved which results in a successful outcome including my own personal growth. I gained more confidence in developing workshops as well in presenting.

