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DEVELOPING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ADULT LEARNING IN THE ASEAN CONTEXT

Atanacio Panahon II

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Developing Cross-Cultural Competence in Adult Learning in The ASEAN Context

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Abstract

The rise of the borderless world and networked organizations, as well as the almost irreversible phenomenon of increased movement of workers, students, visitors, and retirees to overseas destinations, has made cross-cultural competence a compelling proposition.

A review of researches on cross-cultural competence points to a limited discussion on this topic in the context of adult and lifelong learning in the Asia and Pacific region. In the past 30 years, there has been a general push among higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe, North America, and some parts of Asia, especially among business schools, to structure teaching, research, and service activities to

international level. Toward this end, the capability of the faculty of HEIs in handling cultural diversity in the classroom is being addressed through formal training and faculty exchange. Admittedly, however, the issue of cross-cultural competence among teachers in adult education, particularly in the fields of continuing education and vocational training in Southeast Asia, remains a big challenge.

This paper clarifies the definition of cross-cultural competence in the context of adult learning and discusses the essential elements of cultural competence. The relationship of cross-cultural competence to the new construct called cultural intelligence, or CQ, is likewise discussed.

The paper also outlines the reasons that require teachers in adult education to be culturally competent themselves. One reason expounded in the paper is that teachers who are culturally savvy are more capable and effective in facilitating the learning process of adults to handle cultural conflicts. The importance of being culturally competent also highlights the role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in equipping would-be workers for overseas posting with the knowledge and skills to handle cross-cultural dynamics. In Southeast Asia, TVET is part of adult learning, and, in this regard, this paper suggests that the training component should include learning modules on tackling a multicultural environment.

Introduction

Cross-cultural competence has become a significant field of inquiry in recent years. It has evolved from the increasing relevance of social interaction, communication, and learning in a multicultural environment, stemming from the rapid pace of globalization and the onset of knowledge-driven economy. The significance of cross-cultural competence in fostering interpersonal relationships and interaction need to be analyzed and understood in order to enhance its efficacy and practical application. In particular, cross-cultural competence should be integrated into the structure and framework, as well as in the policies and programs, of adult education in the context of lifelong learning. Being cross-culturally competent has become more compelling for adult learners who seek higher level of competitiveness in overseas job markets, as they will inevitably be confronted by the profound influence of cultural diversity not only at the workplace but also in a wider community .

The challenge of cultural differences can be overcome by enabling people to assimilate cultural knowledge and skills through social interaction with people from diverse cultures and the provision of a structured learning process that enhances cultural competence.

Cross-cultural competence directly supports the goals of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to establish a caring and sharing society and to promote labor mobility in the region. The challenge of cultural differences can be overcome by enabling people to assimilate cultural knowledge and skills through social interaction with people from diverse cultures and the provision of a structured learning process that enhances cultural competence. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), a regional

agency tasked to make education accessible to all, professes respect for cultural diversity as one of its core values. Such posture can only be actualized if one displays a certain degree of cultural sensitiveness.

Educators, teachers, and trainers play an important role in promoting cross-cultural competence, making it an imperative for them to enhance their own competence in understanding and communicating the dynamic nature of cultural diversity. By being competent themselves would make them more effective in enabling adult learners to be better equipped in meeting the challenges of a multicultural environment. If the learning environment fails to give due recognition to the pervasive role of cultural diversity and the importance of cross-cultural competence, the quality and competitiveness of adult learners (workers) in the job markets will deteriorate. While migrant and overseas workers may have the technical competence to assume the job, a great number of them have limited or inchoate understanding of how to deal competently with the cultures of their host countries. As a result, some workers run afoul with the laws of their host countries, are unable to work well with their superiors or colleagues, or simply wallow in a prolonged culture shock.

Ignorance of the nuances of other cultures only accentuates bigotry and prejudice. However, it is recognized that intercultural dialogue and communication can only proceed and become constructive if participants were willing to learn from other cultures. At this time and age of highly globalized world, multiculturalism should be welcome in any open society. Learning to grapple with the conflicting forces that underpin a multicultural society, as highlighted by recent events in Europe, should be made an integral part of cultural training or learning process.

If the learning environment fails to give due recognition to the pervasive role of cultural diversity and the importance of cross-cultural competence, the quality and competitiveness of adult learners (workers) in the job markets will deteriorate.

Learning in a Multicultural Environment

In the past 30 years, there has been a general shift among higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe and some parts of Asia, especially in business schools, to structure teaching, research, and service activities to international level (Stone, 2006; Beerkens & van der Wende, 2007). This trend has similarly led to parallel interests in fostering cross-cultural competence in a classroom setting. Admittedly, the integration of cultural diversity in classroom work, particularly in HEIs, has become necessary so that it does not hinder learning if it were left unmanaged (Sandberg & Vincze, 2008). On the other hand, it can serve as an enriching avenue for the acquisition of cultural knowledge and skills. Sandberg and Vincze further argue that diversity management through cross-cultural competence should result in higher learning efficiency and effectiveness, as shown in Figure 1.

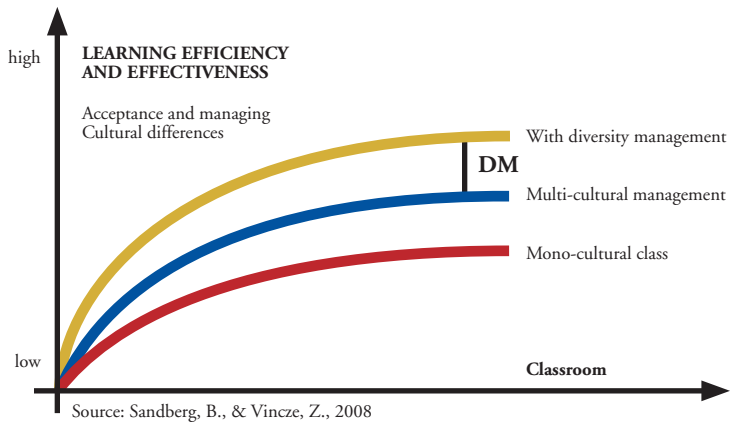


Figure 1. Diversity management increasing the level of learning in multicultural classrooms

A review of researches on cross-cultural competence points to a limited discussion on the topic in reference to adult and lifelong learning in Southeast Asia. The capability of HEI faculty in handling cultural diversity in the classroom and equipping students with the necessary skills for eventual greater competence in the job market is being addressed through formal training and internationalization program. Nonetheless, the issue of cross-cultural competence among teachers in adult and lifelong learning in Southeast Asia remains a big challenge for policy makers and other stakeholders in the field. Across the region, there is hardly a specific policy or program that directly supports the training of adult education teachers or is focused on developing the teacher's knowledge, awareness, and skills in cross-cultural dynamics. For example, a cursory look at the programs and course offerings of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the agency in the Philippines responsible for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), show that these do not incorporate studies on national cultures, intercultural management, or cross-cultural communication.

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Interestingly, the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults, an association of European academic researchers on adult education, has as this preamble: "the changes in the economic and political environment have made it obvious that it is impossible to study adult education without cross-cultural and comparative perspectives." This view also implies that multiculturalism should not be confined in the realm of research but should also prevail in the actual practice of adult learning and adult education provision.

This paper attempts to explore a framework and mechanism for effectively enhancing the cross-cultural competence of teachers, trainers, and other professional staff in adult and lifelong learning in the ASEAN region. Having the competence is envisioned to lead to a better turnout of adult learners who are more adept at meeting the demands of responsible citizenship and the requirements of the job markets in another country.

Factors Pushing Demand for Cross-Cultural Competence

The rise of the borderless world and networked organizations, coupled with an almost irreversible phenomenon of increased movement of workers, students, visitors, and retirees to overseas destinations, has made cross-cultural competence a compelling proposition.

The need for such competence has evolved into a significant issue because of the growing complexity of human development in the midst of social, political, and economic changes. In the ASEAN, a number of factors unique to the region provide the compelling reasons for integrating cross-cultural competence in course contents and in methodological approaches for adult and lifelong learning. The most significant of these factors are discussed below.

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Growing Emphasis on Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a process of school reform and is basic for all students. It involves changes in pedagogy, curriculum and instructional strategies, and learning institutions and systems. Since it uses critical pedagogy as an underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the bases for social change, multicultural education is by its very nature an exponent of social justice (Nieto, 1996). Since its rise during the US civil rights movement in the 1960s, its scope and nature have evolved to include fundamental structural reform of the learning and teaching process within the context of larger societal and global dimensions of power, privilege, and economics, and their intersections. What started as small curricular shifts and additions have become a framework for reexamining both schools and society from a progressive and transformative framework (Gorski, 1999). A country that subscribes to the principle of democracy, social justice, and progressive transformation of its society must therefore accept, if not embrace, multiculturalism. And that is also applicable to the entire ASEAN region.

Southeast Asia has slowly come to grips with the need to strengthen multicultural education in all levels of formal education. A recent research survey conducted among the ASEAN member states, except Myanmar, with 486 various education stakeholders as respondents, reveals that there is a need to introduce multiculturalism in education through teacher education programs. The survey further shows that teaching material development and student motivation techniques are considered

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the urgent contents for teacher training in multicultural education (Lee & Eom, 2007). Implied in this research is the compelling demand to have culturally competent educators, teachers, and trainers in the adult learning process.

Rise of Internationalization Program in Tertiary Education

International education has come about as a global phenomenon that is accentuated in the past 3 decades by the onset of globalization. In Southeast Asia, this phenomenon is manifested by the increasing number of partnerships between a local tertiary educational institution and a university from countries of the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). An example is the partnership between Cornell University and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Likewise, with greater flexibility in the choice of reputable schools, more Southeast Asian students complete their tertiary and graduate education abroad.

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It is expected that there would be spillover effects of multiculturalism on adult education as an increasing number of trainings and seminars, especially in the field of continuing education for professionals, will be conducted across borders, thereby allowing more intensive interaction between and among people of different cultural backgrounds.

Continuing Migration of Asians to Overseas Destinations

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) observes that the Asia-Pacific region continues to be the biggest source of migrants to OECD countries, estimated at 20 million for the period 1990–2010 (Kim, 2010). In some countries, like the Philippines, the exodus of workers to foreign job postings is encouraged with direct public sector involvement on prospecting and deployment. However, proper orientation of outbound workers on new environment and culture is hamstrung by the limited ability of trainers to impart appropriate cultural knowledge and skills that should necessarily equip the workers in dealing with their new workplace environment. Data from the Commission of Overseas Filipinos (CFO) indicate a burgeoning population of Filipinos abroad. As of December 2010, the number of Filipinos living abroad either on temporary or permanent basis reached a level of 9.5 million – and continues to increase at an average of 1,000 exiting migrant workers per day. Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines are the major sources of skilled workers operating the burgeoning industries of the Middle East. However, there have been many cases of work abandonment and premature return trips home reported. It is believed that one reason could be the improper or lack of orientation of the worker on the culture and language of their host country, and poor training on basic communication and negotiation skills in the style of the country.

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Influx of Businessmen, Tourists, and Retirees

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Southeast Asia, with its natural attraction as a destination for leisure or retirement, has witnessed a significant influx of visitors from the West. Likewise, the relative economic growth of the region has spawned increased trade and investments, which resulted in greater mobility of people into and within the region. While before foreigners were seen only in major cities of the region, the presence of people from various cultures has occurred in the entire breadth of almost every ASEAN member state. In a UNESCO report, the ASEAN region has almost doubled its population of foreign nationals from 3.1 million in 1990 to 5.6 million in 2005, which is undoubtedly the highest growth rate in the entire East Asian region (Kim, 2010). Needless to say, these developments are a boon to business in the ASEAN, particularly the hospitality industry.

The message is thus clear: The challenges in increasing heterogeneous cultural mix need to be overcome through an effective mechanism designed to enhance cultural competence, which is dynamic in nature.

It is inconceivable that a reversal of this phenomenon will ever occur in the future. On the contrary, with the expected shift of economic balance of power moving slowly to this part of the world, more movement of people within and from outside the region is expected to come about.

Rise of Multicultural Social Units in Asia

Enterprises, religious institutions, and even family units have changed face in the last 30 years. Globalization has clearly shaped the denouement of this sociological shift. Years ago, it was quite inconceivable to see conservative Asian families having a “Caucasian face” as a member. To a certain degree, the last three decades have witnessed a marked cross-migration phenomenon, i.e., Europeans and North Americans building up their own residential communities in the so-called exotic places of the Far East, while Asians are seeking greener pastures in the Western world. The ease of travel and border control in and out of the region; the rise of the internet social network; and the changing values and perceptions on the East-Wide divide, coupled with growing acceptance of mixed marriages in the 21st century, all have conspired to make this phenomenon very visible. With ease of travel and the natural virtue of Asians to be hospitable, there is hardly any indication that a general backlash against foreigners living in our midst will ever happen.

Burgeoning Lead of the Services Sector

As economies in the ASEAN region continue to notch record growth, the contribution of the services sector to gross domestic product (GDP) has increased from 53% in 1990 to 58% in 2008 (Kim, 2010). This structural shift towards the services sector implies greater challenge on cross-cultural issues among workers. An economy that is agricultural have workers coming from the local area and their parochial concerns do not

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involve sophisticated social interaction. On the other hand, services-driven economies, such as in developed countries, operate on a higher level and more intensive aspect of people-to-people and face-to-face interaction.

Growing Influence of Institutional Network at Regional and International Levels

The development of institution-driven policy framework designed to generate strategic collaboration and complementation among countries in the region, particularly in the area of curriculum development, knowledge sharing, faculty/student exchange, and transfer credits, augurs well for an evolving ASEAN education system.

The development of institution-driven policy framework designed to generate strategic collaboration and complementation among countries in the region, particularly in the area of curriculum development, knowledge sharing, faculty/student exchange, and transfer credits, augurs well for an evolving ASEAN education system. It would be a system similar to what is now obtaining in Europe, e.g., the Bologna Accord, Erasmus Mundus, and Grundtvig. Another positive factor is the number of regional and international agencies that promote convergence of national educational systems, such as the ASEAN Secretariat, SEAMEO, the ASEAN University Network, Asia-Europe Meeting, and UNESCO.

These developments are realities that impinge upon the contextualized policy formulation and accordingly shape the trajectory of adult and lifelong learning system in the ASEAN region. To be precise, the emerging trends necessitate the introduction of cross-cultural competence as part of key competencies that are unique to the region's requirements.

A Need for Construct Clarity

Requisite to an effective formulation of a workable model for promoting cross-cultural competence in Southeast Asia is a clear understanding of the true meaning of the concept.

Current literature on cross-cultural competence abounds with a myriad of definitions and interpretations of its meaning. However, there is an apparent lack of consensus on what exactly constitutes cross-cultural competence (Johnson, 2006). A summary of studies on cross-cultural competence is shown in Table 1, which indicates this cacophony of conceptual approaches (Journal of International Business Studies, 2006). Johnson recognized Gertsen for being the first to coin the term *cross-cultural competence*, in 1990. It obviously is an etymological derivation from cultural competence, a term put forth by Cross et al. in their seminal work on competency in child care.

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Table 1. Definitions of Cross-Cultural Competence

Field	Authors	Concept	Definition	Content
International Business	Black and Mendenhall (1990)	Effective cross-cultural interactions	Cross-cultural skills development, adjustment, and performance	3-way taxonomy of skills development: self, relational, perceptual
	Gertsen (1990)	Cross-cultural competence	The ability to function effectively in another culture	An effective dimension (personality traits and attitudes), a cognitive dimension (how individuals acquire and categorize cultural knowledge), and a communicative, behavioral dimension
	Adler and Bartholomew (1992)	Global' or 'transnational' competence	Specific knowledge, skills, and abilities	
	Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999)	Cross-cultural competency	Knowledge, skills, abilities, and 'other' attributes	Categorizes competencies as stable or dynamic
	Hofstede (2001)	Intercultural communication competence	None	Awareness, knowledge, skills, and personality
Workplace diversity	Cross et al. (1989)	Cultural competence	'...a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations'	Personal attributes, knowledge, and skills
Intercultural communications	Collier (1989), Imahori and Lanigan (1989), Kealey (1989), Wiseman et al. (1989), Redmond and Buni (1993), Miller (1994), Lustig and Koester (1999)	Intercultural communications competence	To be appropriate and effective in the communication process that takes place between individuals from different national cultures	
Psychology	LaFromboise et al. (1993)	Cultural competence	None	Personality, knowledge, ability, skills, behaviors

Source: Journal of International Business Studies, 2006

In academic discourse and research, cross-cultural competencies are applied interchangeably with intercultural competence, and, in some instances, even with the basic construct of cultural competence.

Cultural competence is viewed as the original term, referring to the ability to understand and handle cultural diversity existing in a local environment, e.g., schools, hospitals, workplace, or communities, where the presence of ethnic minorities is the main issue under consideration. Research in the past, particularly in the US, would expound on cultural competence of nurses, counselors, and teachers interacting with patients or students belonging to the minority class, e.g., African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific islanders, or American Indians.

The use of the term, intercultural competence, gained prominence as a result of increasing inquiry on issues related to similarities and differences in attitudes and behaviors of people from different (national) cultures. In recent years, however, the shift to the Gertsen-coined terminology, cross-cultural competence, has gained greater acceptance in academia and business. It is worth noting though that it is more difficult to find the equivalent term of cross-cultural in other languages, unlike intercultural which can easily be translated as *intercultural* in Spanish, *interkulturell* in German, *interculturale* in Italian, and *intercultural* in French.

In his review of existing definitions, Johnson concluded that, for business application, Gertsen offers the most appropriate and relevant, yet simple definition: the ability to function

Johnson concluded that, for business application, Gertsen offers the most appropriate and relevant, yet simple definition: the ability to function effectively in another culture.

effectively in another culture. Gertsen presents cross-cultural competence as constituting three dimensions:

- an affective dimension (personality traits and attitudes);
- a cognitive dimension (how individuals acquire and categorize cultural knowledge); and
- a behavioral dimension (how a person communicates or relates himself in a multicultural environment).

...business practices and business schools have made a clear choice of using cross-cultural competence in confronting issues related to the ability of managers and employees to deal with cultural diversity in international business.

It appears that, since the term was coined two decades ago, business practices and business schools have made a clear choice of using cross-cultural competence in confronting issues related to the ability of managers and employees to deal with cultural diversity in international business. In recent years, the use of the term, cultural intelligence (CQ), has gained prominence in the business sector. This has largely stemmed from the empirical research of David Thomas and Kerr Inkson presented in their book, *Cultural Intelligence: Living and Working Globally*, which defines CQ as being skilled and flexible in understanding a culture, learning more about it from ongoing interaction, and gradually building cross-cultural skills and a repertoire of behaviors so that one can be effective in any intercultural situation (Thomas & Inkson, 2009). The three elements of knowledge, skills, and cultural mindfulness constitute CQ. Since Gertsen's dimensions of cross-cultural competence closely approximate the elements of CQ by Thomas and Inkson, the terminologies can be used interchangeably. Mindfulness might be too limiting a concept, but it, in fact, leads to an appropriate behavioral response in a given cultural situation.

Understandably, cross-cultural competence in adult and lifelong learning is deemed to assume a context different from that of business. For one, the set of actors, priority considerations, and the social setting are different, even if it may be argued that the broad notion of adult education in developing countries, such as TVET, out-of-school youth training, and continuing education, is essentially a function of business or an employment-related issue.

Focusing on adult education in developing countries, teachers and trainers have to grapple with cultural issues with or without them being aware of their palpable presence. Such culture-related challenges may be seen in the training itself where participants come from different regional or cultural backgrounds and, when not properly managed, can actually negate efforts at enhancing the learning process of adult learners. Moreover, when teachers and trainers are not equipped in handling the multicultural education process and have limited cross-cultural competence, there is obviously a restricted opportunity to introduce the adult learners in the nuances of cultural diversity and in understanding other cultures.

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Unfortunately, a review of existing literature indicates that there seems to be no authoritative definition of cross-cultural competence which may be considered uniquely applicable or tailor-fit to teachers and trainers in adult education. This suggests that the level of research and academic inquiry on the relevance and effectiveness of cross-cultural competence in adult education is at a nascent stage. In Europe, an adult education program that has quite remarkably incorporated cross-cultural competence in the training of teachers and

trainers is the Grundtvig Multilateral Project, known as Feel Like Migrant (FLAM). The FLAM project aims to develop and implement a multicultural teaching approach by training teachers, trainers, and staff to make them more competent in handling migrant adult learners, thereby accelerating the learner's integration process in the host countries (EACEA, 2008). This objective is highly relevant to a region like the European Union, which is experiencing an unprecedented influx of migrant workers from developing and underdeveloped economies. For Southeast Asia, an approach totally different from the European version may have to be formulated, as the pervasive character of adult education program in the region is shaped more by economic or employment considerations for adult learners.

Paraphrasing the Gertsen notion of cultural competence and that of Cross et al., the following definition of cross-cultural competence for teachers and trainers in adult education is adopted:

the ability of adult teachers and trainers to respond effectively in a multicultural environment and infuse among adult learners the necessary skills to think, act, and behave in such an environment

In the midst of internationalization and globalization, teachers and trainers are expected to gear themselves toward enabling adult learners to function effectively in a culture other than their own.

In the midst of internationalization and globalization, teachers and trainers are expected to gear themselves toward enabling adult learners to function effectively in a culture other than their own. This implies the development of the learner's ability to interact adequately in a multicultural environment.

Toward the Development of a Cross-Cultural Competence Framework for Southeast Asian Adult Educators

Considering that cross-cultural competence as an applied construct is location specific, any universal model needs to reflect the unique local requirements and conditions, making its applicability on a regional, national, or local basis more authentic and highly relevant to stakeholders. The goal is to put in place adult educators and trainers who are adept at handling cultural diversity and capable in transferring knowledge and skills to learners who will then gain cross-cultural competence in the process.

A review of existing models on cross-cultural or intercultural competence depicts a common pattern, i.e., the models show the different phases in the adaptation process to a different culture. They likewise show an interface between the so-called declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. The former refers to a cultural fact (e.g., Filipinos speak Tagalog) while the latter talks about attitudes and behaviors (e.g., one's attitude on the manner Filipinos speak Tagalog).

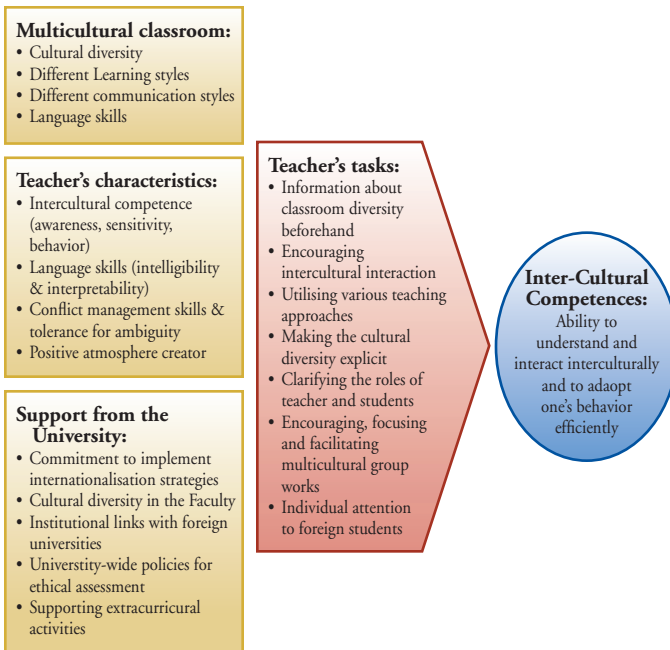
While a number of models focus on personality and attitude, one particular framework addresses the behavioral aspect, which deals on the gap between what individuals know to be interculturally competent and what they actually do in multicultural situations (Ruben

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& Kealey, 1979). Earlier, Ruben (1976) identified seven components of cross-cultural competence, namely, the

- ability to express respect and positive regard for other individuals;
- ability to respond to others in a descriptive, nonevaluative, and nonjudgmental way;
- ability to recognize and acknowledge that people explain the world around them in different ways with differing views of what is “right” and “true;”
- ability to put oneself in another’s shoes;
- ability to be flexible and to function in initiating and harmonizing roles, which are, respectively, defined as requesting information and clarification and evaluating ideas for problem solving and regulating the group status quo through mediation;
- ability to take turns in discussion and initiate and terminate interaction based on a reasonably accurate assessment of the needs and desires of others; and
- ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort.

Elements from the early works of Ruben (and later, with Kealey) can be found in some models dealing in cross-cultural competence. Sandberg and Vincze (2008) attempt to portray the dynamics of cultural diversity in a classroom, as shown in Figure 2.



Source: Sandberg, B., & Vincze, Z., 2008

Figure 2. Model of classroom-based intercultural competence

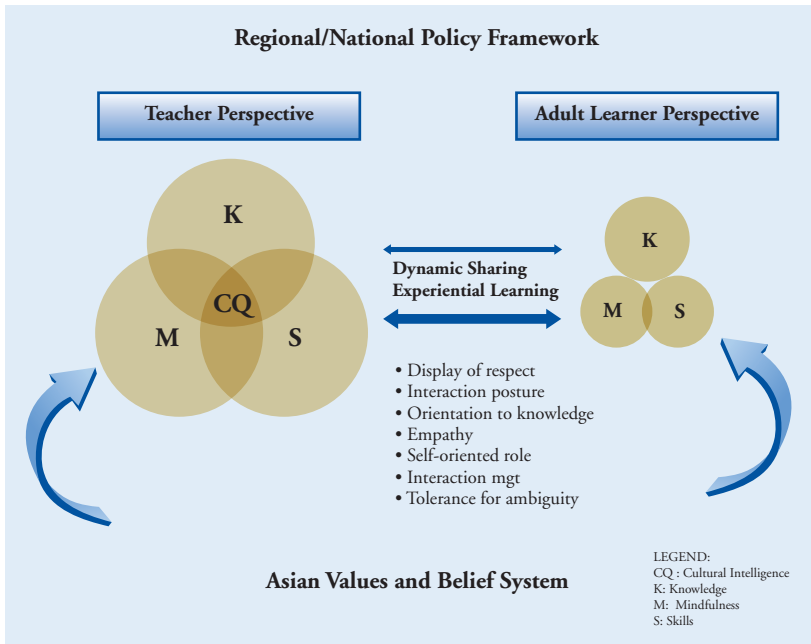
Sandberg and Vincze argue that, for a multicultural classroom to yield culturally-competent students, it is essential that the teachers have cross-cultural competence in the first place, as well as language and conflict management skills. In order to achieve maximum efficacy in terms of methodology, Sandberg and Vincze propose that teachers should be familiar with didactic and experiential learning approaches. On the other hand, the students should be encouraged to join intercultural discussion groups. In any case, the progress of the students in achieving cross-cultural competence should be monitored and measured with metric systems tailor-fit to the requirements and objectives of the school.

Proposed Model of Cross-Cultural Competence for Adult Education in Southeast Asia

Adult education program in Southeast Asia has to provide an environment where both teachers and learners achieve an increasing level of competence in handling cultural diversity. Even if the national aims and objectives of the ASEAN member states with respect to adult education program differ from one another, it cannot be denied that the effects of globalization and internationalization permeating the shores of the region call for a more deliberate approach to incorporating strategies for installing cross-cultural competence in the different types of adult education, such as continuing education, TVET, workplace learning, grassroots training, and adult literacy programs.

Adult education program in Southeast Asia has to provide an environment where both teachers and learners achieve an increasing level of competence in handling cultural diversity.

This paper proposes a model of cross-cultural competence in adult education that is contextualized to Southeast Asian setting, as presented in Figure 3.



Source: The Author, 2012

Figure 3. Proposed model of cross-cultural competence for adult education contextualized to Southeast Asian setting

The proposed model assumes that adult learners have their own limited level of understanding of cultural diversity, and lack the ability to respond to a given cultural situation. Hence, it can be noted that there is a clear absence of an overlapping portion of the three circles, denoted in the model as CQ. The overlapping part of mindfulness (M) and skills (S) circles for adult learners implies that an adult learner may have natural skills and sensitivity that can generate a behavior appropriate in a given cultural situation, even as the learner does not have an a priori knowledge about the subject culture.

Teachers and trainers should have the necessary cross-cultural competence in terms of knowledge (K), M, and S, which include the seven components of behavior formulated by Ruben, as the minimum requirements.

Teacher's knowledge of culture should be shared with the learners interactively through lecture, storytelling, and case studies with particular emphasis on experiential learning process. Experiential learning pertains the process of acquiring "knowledge, skills, and/or abilities attained through observation, simulation, and/or participation that provides depth and meaning to learning by engaging the mind and/or body through activity, reflection, and application." (Craig 1997)

As referenced by Zhao and Parks (1995) in their study, **Self-assessment of communication behavior: an experiential learning exercise for intercultural business success**, the Kolb model of experiential learning process may be considered appropriate in enhancing communication in diverse cultures. Similarly, the said model may be used to introduce cross-cultural competence among adult learners. No doubt, an adult learner going through four phases, which include concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, becomes more engaged in the learning process. Zhao and Parks explain these stages as follows: The learner begins with a concrete experience of a particular cultural diversity issue, followed by reflective observation by rethinking what has occurred. The learner then undergoes abstract conceptualization, where a small group discussion is conducted with a debriefing by a

...an adult learner going through four phases, which include concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, becomes more engaged in the learning process.

facilitator to help conceptualize what has been experienced. With the development of some abstract concepts about their experience, the learner will be able to consider alternative behaviors and test them in a new experience (Zhao & Parks, 1995).

The introduction of cross-cultural competence in adult education in Southeast Asia should take into consideration the unique value and belief system of the peoples in the region. For one, the self-effacing and non-assertive nature of some people in the region may have to be incorporated in the design of the learning program or learning modules to draw positive elements from this orientation. The type of participants and learning situation should likewise be factored in. For example, a TVET program can embed elements of cross-cultural competence in the teaching of a technical subject, by bringing the discussion on such subject in the context of a culturally diverse environment, e.g., Filipino welders working on a Danish ship in a Middle East country.

The thrust of adult education in a given country should proceed from the stated aims and objectives of the national education system. In the Philippines, for example, most programs classified as adult education in the TVET category largely cater to prospective workers intending to be deployed abroad. Obviously, the nature of training the learners in the field of cultural diversity will have something to do with the nuances of practices and human interaction in the target host countries.

The introduction of cross-cultural competence in adult education in Southeast Asia should take into consideration the unique value and belief system of the peoples in the region.

In the long run and given a measurable monitoring of performance, the relatively small circles of K, M, and S elements (Figure 3) for adult learners should be broadened to allow a healthy overlap, to give rise to the CQ element. Once a certain level of CQ is reached, this serves as a springboard for the learner to face the challenges of cultural diversity in the community, at the workplace, or even at home; and makes the learner a person of cross-cultural competence.

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