



**NAVIGATING A MULTICULTURAL WORLD: EQUIPPING TEENAGERS  
WITH INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this fast-changing society, young individuals are urged to be strong in intercultural relationships to survive and develop. This article explores how to train youngsters to be equipped with cultural understanding, respect other nations, and communicate through diverse cultural backgrounds is important. By offering several strategies to raise cultural awareness, this paper concludes the necessity of intercultural competencies in teenagers' lives in an increasingly multicultural global community.

**KEY WORDS**

Intercultural competencies, cultural awareness, navigate, intercultural communication, global community, teenagers, diverse community.

**Introduction**

Intercultural communication is a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups, or how culture affects communication. It describes the wide range of communication processes and problems that naturally appear within an organization or social context made up of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. In this sense, it seeks to understand how people from different countries and cultures act, communicate, and perceive the world around them. (Lauring, 2011). According to Deardoff 'There is not an agreed upon terminology about intercultural competence'. Thus, we believe that intercultural competence develops human well-being, widens their horizon and increases cultural awareness. Through this, nations can share respect, and empathy towards each other in this whole world. Intercultural competence is part of a family of concepts including global competence, graduate attributes, employability skills, global citizenship, education for sustainable development and global employability. (Leung, K., Ang, S. and Tan, M.L., 2014). Given the need to educate students about the interconnected and diverse world, educators must highlight intercultural competence in the curriculum of higher education (Deardorff, 2011). Global education, multicultural education, and intercultural education all address the development of intercultural competence, which enables an individual to interact and communicate appropriately in an alien culture.

In today's globalized world, teenagers need to develop effective intercultural communication skills to navigate and thrive in diverse environments. By understanding and respecting different cultural norms, customs, and traditions, teenagers can build strong relationships and communicate effectively

with people from all walks of life. It is crucial to equip our young generation with the tools and knowledge to embrace diversity and foster positive intercultural interactions. (Wereszczyńska, 2018) In the modern interconnected world, adolescents must acquire proficient intercultural communication abilities to successfully adapt and excel in varied settings. Knowing culture well and understanding cultural diversity helps young individuals to thrive in this society gain an opportunity in their studies and be successful in their future careers. They can communicate easily with individuals in the target society and live in harmony. Through comprehension and reverence of diverse cultural standards, practices, and customs, adolescents can establish robust connections and communicate proficiently with individuals from various backgrounds. It is essential to provide our youth with the resources and understanding to accept diversity and promote constructive cross-cultural exchanges.

Consequently, learning how to interpret and participate in this interconnected world is a basic necessity and responsibility of twenty-first-century global citizenship. Being aware of our beliefs, behaviours, and communicative practices – the way they shape our thinking and interactions – can facilitate more effective encounters with members of other cultural groups. (Abrams, 2020). True competence in intercultural communication requires individuals to have active knowledge of both their culture and the target language culture. Furthermore, developing cultural competence also involves activating higher-order critical thinking skills to understand the effects of culture on individuals and promote self-awareness. In other words, true competence in intercultural communication requires that an individual have active knowledge of both his/her own culture as well as that of the target language culture (Taylor, 2023).

It is true that to understand another culture means individuals must respect their own culture and know it in the best way. It happens when the young generation learns other rituals by comparing them to their native cultures. Having access to technology, today's youngsters are successful in this concern. They can learn about other cultures by just clicking the link or watching media resources. They can simply implement their knowledge to understand other cultures when they acquire other languages well enough. To have background knowledge in cultural understanding about their own culture is the most important factor to learn other nations' culture. Intercultural competence can be increased with additional points of frequency of interaction with people of diverse backgrounds.

## **Literature Review**

To understand the importance of equipping teenagers with intercultural communication skills, it is essential to review the existing literature on this topic. Research by Gudykunst and Kim suggests that the ability to communicate effectively across cultures is becoming increasingly important in our rapidly globalizing world. Furthermore, studies by Matsumoto and Hwang emphasize the need for individuals to develop intercultural competence to navigate diverse cultural environments.

Fantini (2009) argued that a review of the assessment tools of intercultural competence reveals the dilemma. Some instruments address lingual aspects, but some address cultural customs. Other instruments focus on international rather than intercultural and therefore exclude diversity within a nation. However, others are simply unclear and their intent is uncertain. One construct, cultural intelligence (CQ), appears to address intercultural competence directly.

Rathje (2007) discussed the current debate on intercultural competence in terms of goal, scope, application, and foundation. There are two viewpoints toward the goal of intercultural competence:

the efficiency model focuses on productivity and sees intercultural competence as “an instrument and a means to success” (Rathje, 2007, p. 256) in an intercultural environment; the human development viewpoint “emphasizes the importance of effective human interaction in the expectation that successful intercultural competence will manifest itself in the participants as a kind of palpable personal development” (Rathje, 2007, p. 257). The scope of intercultural competence includes culture-specific competence which discusses intercultural competence rooted in one or more specific foreign cultures; generalized intercultural competence discusses intercultural competence as a means of human development among people with different cultures; general social competence gathers separate intercultural competencies as a whole and regards it as a form of social competence; transfer of generalized action competence places intercultural competence in the framework of action competence, which is necessary for a successful communication. The application of intercultural competence falls into two categories either inter-national or inter-collective. Intercultural competence with international interpretation describes the interaction between individuals from different national cultures. Intercultural competence with inter-collective interpretation describes the interaction between individuals of specific collectives with distinct cultures. The cultural foundation uses the scenario of intercultural competence to address the term culture. The coherence-oriented approach is a traditional understanding of culture, which describes culture as “something unifying which produces common characteristics shared by a significant number of the members of that culture” (Rathje, 2007, p. 260)

According to Dearnorff (2011), the increase of intercultural competence is a continuing process. It involves the progress of critical thinking skills, the development of a global perspective, and other worldviews. Additionally, it hinges upon the progress of attitudes including respect, openness, and curiosity

Additionally, the work of Bennett assures the importance of intercultural communication in promoting understanding, respect, and harmony among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It is essential to know the cultural understanding and existing literature on intercultural communication skills will provide valuable insights into the significance of equipping teenagers with these essential abilities for their personal and professional development.

There are multiple approaches to help the younger generation integrate into the global community and provide them with the chance to feel happier and more knowledgeable in this interconnected world, such as promoting cultural awareness and understanding, educating teenagers about different cultures, traditions, and perspectives to foster empathy, respect, and inclusivity. Then encouraging meaningful interactions and collaborations among teenagers from diverse backgrounds to promote cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. (Wu, 2020)

Additionally, integrating technology and digital literacy into education can be a great asset to connecting teenagers with global communities and resources. Nowadays, young individuals are in search of virtual companions to acquire linguistic knowledge, gain awareness of diverse cultures, and engage in idea exchange. The advancement of technology plays a pivotal role in facilitating these endeavours.

Cultivating critical thinking and media literacy skills to navigate and evaluate information from diverse sources in a globalized world aids learners in understanding different cultures. Subsequently, promoting involvement in international endeavours and social movements, like environmental

sustainability or humanitarian work, fosters a sense of global accountability and involvement, which is also conducive to enhancing cultural awareness.(Fuad et al., 2022)

Furthermore, offering opportunities for adolescents to partake in immersive cultural engagements, such as exchange programs or studying abroad, serves to broaden their horizons and deepen their appreciation of diverse cultures.

Lastly, providing teenagers with intercultural competencies and skills through experiential learning methods, such as simulations, role-playing, and cultural immersion programs, emerges as a crucial approach to heighten cultural sensitivity. Through the implementation of these techniques, we can enable the forthcoming generation to embrace diversity, nurture global comprehension, and establish a more inclusive and cohesive global community.

In conclusion, to raise cultural awareness in the young generation, it is imperative to provide adolescents with intercultural communication abilities to effectively prepare them for success in a diverse global environment. By cultivating an appreciation for various viewpoints, fostering empathy, and instructing efficient communication techniques, we can enable adolescents to adeptly navigate and make positive contributions to a globalized society. Stakeholders such as educators, caregivers, and community figures need to prioritize the cultivation of these proficiencies in teenagers, considering their pivotal role as the forthcoming leaders and influencers who will shape our interconnected world. Through deliberate educational initiatives and backing, we can establish a more all-encompassing and cohesive global society where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds can cooperate and flourish.

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