

Chapter 4

Intercultural Teaching Competence in the Disciplines: Teaching Strategies for Intercultural Learning

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ABSTRACT

As universities continue to internationalize their curricula and recruit a growing number of international students, instructors facilitate learning in increasingly diverse classrooms. This chapter explores the application of Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC) by faculty members across the disciplines at a large Canadian research university. Based on focus group interviews with instructors in eighteen disciplines, it provides varied and concrete examples of how instructors mobilize intercultural teaching competence to navigate diverse classrooms, promote perspective-taking and global learning goals among students, practice culturally relevant teaching, and validate different ways of knowing and communicating among students through assessment practices. Placing disciplines at the centre of the discussion in this way elucidates the extent to which ITC may be adapted to fit the contours of the academic field and allows readers to explore best practices for facilitating the development of intercultural competence among students in their disciplines. Finally, the implications of disciplinary differences in ITC are discussed for faculty development and curriculum support.

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INTRODUCTION

Faculty members at Canadian, US, and European universities facilitate learning in diverse classrooms and prepare students to participate meaningfully and responsibly in a global society after graduation (Leask & Bridge, 2013). Many of these universities identify global engagement, intercultural fluency, or knowledge of international perspectives as intended outcomes of undergraduate education and encourage instructors in all disciplines, from civil engineering through biochemistry to international relations, to contribute towards the achievement of global learning outcomes (Kahn & Agnew, 2015).

Very few faculty members have had any formal preparation for facilitating intercultural learning or dialogue across cultures, even if they are involved in international education or study abroad initiatives (Paige & Goode, 2009). The few exceptions to this are instructors who teach in disciplines that explore race, diversity, intersectionality, cultural difference, power, or privilege as a focus of their research in fields such as sociology, social work, postcolonial literature, women's studies, anthropology, or international education, to name a few. Faculty in these fields already have discipline-specific theoretical frameworks and strategies at their fingertips for facilitating dialogue about identity involving issues such as social justice, whiteness, or value differences across cultures (Fong, 2009). Instructors in other disciplines, however, typically discover effective ways of supporting diverse learners as part of a student-centered approach to teaching or while working to increase student engagement in their classes (Hermida, 2010).

Developing teaching tools for faculty working in diverse academic settings has been an important driving force behind the development of the Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC) model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). This chapter represents a critical next step in the evolution of this model which identifies the key skills that faculty need in order to facilitate learning across cultures in a variety of disciplines. Discovering how teaching strategies for intercultural learning differ across the disciplines and mapping what approaches may align best with the needs of students in science, engineering, or arts and humanities will better enable faculty members to reflect on their practice and expand their repertoire of facilitation techniques and further enable faculty developers to create programs and resources that match the needs of students and faculty in these disciplinary groups.

Previous literature on the skills of interculturally competent faculty focuses primarily on: the needs of instructors in social science classrooms (Deardorff, 2009) and social justice courses (Bell & Griffin, 2007), explores the preparation of future elementary and secondary teachers (Coole, Dunn & Kirova, 2005; Cushner & Mahon, 2009), or identifies basic concepts and theories of intercultural learn-

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