

How are intercultural competences developed and cooperation among colleges in a multicultural team.

Summary

The module consists of two sections, “How are intercultural competences developed?” and “Cooperation among college in a multicultural team”

First section of this module examines why it is important to have intercultural competences, a definition of what is meant by the term intercultural competences and what cultural vision this module is written from. There will be an explanation of the descriptive and the complex concept of culture. This module will also discuss how to work on developing intercultural competences and what it requires. The theorists point out that communication, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudices, discrimination and racism and cultural identity must be considered in order to develop competences. At the end of the first section there will be a few tips for professional carers meeting with persons from other ethnic backgrounds with dementia. The second section is occupied with the challenge multicultural teams face – and the benefits. The challenges concerns communication, power and hierarchy, understandings of professional etiquette and how emotions effect the team. The benefits of working in a multicultural team for the person with another ethnic background with dementia, for the organization and for the employer is reviewed.

Why are intercultural competences important?



In a globalized world, it is necessary to be able to interact with each other in a good and respectful way. In the AMiDE context, we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. Not many citizens from other ethnic backgrounds and with a dementia diagnosis are taking up space in home care or in nursing homes. Many people came to Europe from the 1950s to the 1980s to work. They are now reaching an age where the risk of developing dementia is higher. Some ethnic groups appear to have a higher risk of getting diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease than the background population. This in turn increases the risk of dementia. It is still not known how many people from ethnic groups have dementia. However, numbers are clearly increasing and are relatively high in some communities. Studies have shown that people with dementia and their relatives from ethnic groups do not make use of the different care

services provided by daycare centers, home care and nursing homes to the same degree as the background

population. If you try to provide a good service to citizens from different ethnic backgrounds who are people with dementia, you may face various challenges such as:

- Where to find the people with dementia and the caregivers who need help
- How one understands the needs and desires of people in the light of different values and traditions
- How to establish a trusting relationship
- How to tackle racism and discrimination (especially in health care)
- How to deliver person-centered care
- How to deal with the barriers associated with language and education
- How to adapt care to religious beliefs and traditions

There is no easy answer to these questions because each situation is different and involves different people at different times.

The users of services will change in the future, as there will be more citizens from a different ethnic background and more women from different ethnic backgrounds entering the labor market. This means that they cannot also look after their elderly parents at home. In Denmark, there is currently the highest number of citizens from other ethnic backgrounds in work, compared to previous years. ("Mandag Morgen", August 31, 2020). Many citizens from different ethnic backgrounds are employed in the care professions in the project countries. This provides several different relationships where ethnicity matters:

1. A citizen with an ethnic background and a helper with the country's background
2. A citizen with the country's background and a helper with a different ethnic background
3. A citizen with an ethnic background and a helper from a different ethnic background who must provide assistance on the basis of the country's legislation

It is a great challenge to work and cooperate in a multi-ethnic society, especially if you are uneducated or have a short education. It is, for example, an advantage to be able to understand a citizen's values well, and in certain situations, you must be able to accept professionally that some clients perceive you with a different authority than you do. These competences do not develop on their own. It requires education, training and management focus. The most difficult challenge to overcome is that we believe that we are competent but act on the understanding that: the citizens of Iraq want it a certain way and forget that each citizen is never a representative of a country's culture or religion, but only represents their own values. He/she can never become a cultural representative. This project will contribute to staying at the forefront of the challenge of when ethnic minorities get dementia, enter care homes and need care according to their own values.

The definition of "Intercultural competences"



We are mainly basing the term on the work of the Danish researcher Iben Jensen. She is a master of cultural sociology, has a PhD and is a professor at the Department of Learning and Philosophy at Aalborg University. She has written several books and scientific articles and has dealt with intercultural competences for over 20 years. Iben Jensen defines intercultural competences as:

Intercultural competences are if you can reflect on yourself and your actions and those of others and if you can act with understanding and respect for both similarities and differences.

This definition requires further description. It has been developed based on "the complex concept of culture" which has been developed as a critique of the descriptive concept of culture. However, the concept of culture is such an ambiguous concept that you must clarify what cultural understanding you are working with. Simplified, there are two main notions of the concept of culture, the descriptive concept of culture and the complex concept of culture.

In the descriptive concept of culture, you understand culture as something the individual is carrying. Culture is the ideas, values, norms and rules that a person adopts from the previous generation and which you try to bring to the next generation. In practice, the descriptive concept of culture means seeing culture as defined entities that follow the nation's borders. For example, that there is a fixed German, Kenyan, Guatemalan or Danish culture. It is expected that everyone in a national culture share the same values, rules and norms. You can identify features of Greenlanders for example, – these may arise from stereotypes. It is believed that culture is changing very slowly. Finally, culture is used as an explanation for why people act the way they do.

The complex concept of culture has developed over the last 20 years, where globalization, among other things, has made it clear that national cultures cannot be understood as isolated. German culture is not a unique size. It is now clearer than ever that there are many similarities in lifestyles across all cultures. Many people like to listen to American music or eat pizza, regardless of where they come from.

In practice, the complex concept of culture means that one cannot regard culture as something inherent, a characteristic of the individual – but as something that is created in relationships between people. Culture is not something that all the members of a group agree on and culture will not always determine a person's actions, as there can be many other factors such as gender, age, education, etc. that apply.

In this presentation and understanding of intercultural competences, we are based on the complex concept of culture. Cultural concepts are understood to be:

- Culture as differences between people
- Culture as systems of meaning (e.g., different understanding of what it means to be polite)
- Culture as a practice in a global context (The actions we take in a global context where we are influenced by what others do)

Iben Jensen further elaborates on the concept of competences: intercultural competences are to have an overall awareness of how and when to pay attention to the fact that culture plays into people's actions. In relation to working life, it is a question of having a professional insight into culture, ethnicity, globalization, ethnic equality and links between language, identity and power. Such competence is now a necessity in the field of social care.

- You must have a cognitive (knowledge) competence. You must know something about the country where the citizen comes from. What are the preferred meanings in which circles? Which patterns apply where?
- You must have affective competence, which means that you must be able to understand the values of others. That does not mean you have to abandon your own values.
- You must have a cognitive (behavioral) competence, which is to make friendships, and to accept a different social role than the one you see at home (Jensen and Løngreen 1995).

This is equal to the common understanding of competences, divided into a dimension of knowledge, an affective dimension (feelings and thoughts) and a dimension of actions (communication).

How to developed intercultural competences?

What does it require?

Several different factors need to be present to learn intercultural competences. First, it requires the student to want to practice and engage in it, and the student must reflect and learn from what is happening. Having intercultural competences are, in practice, about having respect for others' views of reality, even if it contradicts one's own experience and one's own perception of reality. One must be able to think abstractly, imagine being the other person, experiencing something completely different. You must dare to listen to how other people think and justify what they do (Iben Jensen; Social Literature 2018).

Papadopoulos (2003) points out in his "Model for the Development of Cultural Competences" that increasing one's own understanding is essential for understanding the nature and construction of the culture of identity. Thus, it is unlikely that you can become culturally competent if you do not consider the awareness of your own standing. In other words, one must be aware of one's own cultural place to understand the lives of others.

In this way, you can only become interculturally competent if you wish. You cannot make the competences compulsory.

Papadopoulos (2003) model has four main points:

- Cultural understanding
- Cultural knowledge

- Cultural sensitivity
- Intercultural competences

The first step is about cultural understanding and is a study of a person's own values and beliefs. It is about a person's own self-awareness/understanding of culture. What is my cultural identity? Do I adhere to my own inherited standards? To what extent am I ethnocentric in my thoughts and actions? I must understand my own cultural starting point to understand others.

The second step concerns cultural knowledge. It is about cognitive knowledge as the perception and behavior of different cultures. It is about an anthropological and sociological understanding of the world. How does the individual act and which society is he a part of? There is also a need to look at man from a psychological and biological understanding. What are the similarities and variations? The purpose of cultural knowledge is not to provide detailed information on all different cultures, but to highlight the risk of misunderstandings due to an ethnocentric approach, the formation of stereotypes and the effect of an uneven level of power.

The third step focuses on cultural sensitivity. Being able to show empathy is a big part of cultural sensitivity. This sensitivity also implies that you have interpersonal skills and can form trusting relationships. It also requires that the approach to the other person is appreciative, respectful and that you are able to adjust your behavior. How does the professional view the citizens who are to receive the benefits? It is essential to see the citizen as a partner in a non-oppressive practice. Partnerships challenge the relationship of power because choices are given, which means that advocacies and negotiations are to be made, which can only be achieved on the basis of respect and empathy.

Step 4 is the achievement of cultural competences. It can be considered as a whole of the other three steps. This means, among other things, that prejudice, discrimination and inequality are challenged and prosecuted. In addition, in the context of health work, assessment skills, diagnostic proficiency and clinical proficiency can be achieved.

You have to understand the four steps as a circular process where you can always become more competent. You can always be better at understanding others. It is like communication, where you can always get better.

To become interculturally competent, there is a broad consensus in the literature that the following issues cannot be avoided

- Communication
- Ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice
- Discrimination and racism
- Cultural identity

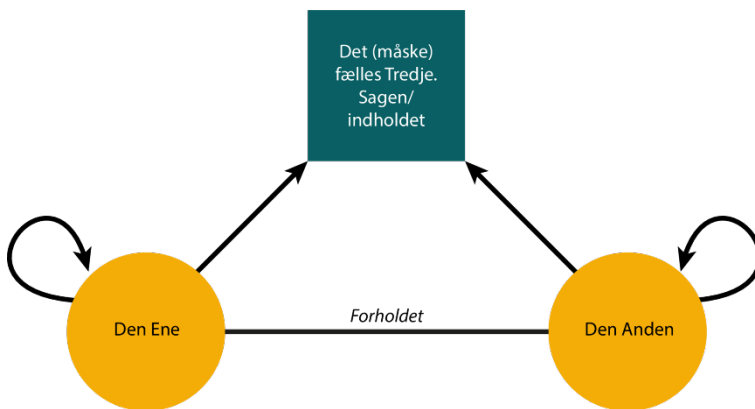
Communication

A communication model is a theoretical model that shows the communication between a sender and a recipient of a message or, to put it another way, who says what to whom through which channels, with what effect.

Conversation promotes understanding and what constitutes a good conversation?

1. Conversation is two or more people talking - the first step is therefore to get the parties to talk
2. There is some form of content when you are part of a conversation - what we are talking about
3. When we talk, there is a relationship - the relationship you have with each other
4. A third dimension is what we call the (perhaps) common third - the way in which the things we talk about is understood by the parties

One can illustrate it with a triangle (communication triangle by Benedicte Madsen):



One person is talking to *Another* about something – they are having a conversation

They each have a way of understanding the content of the conversation - they provide content - illustrated by the arrows of *One* and *Another* up to the (perhaps) common third.

There is a relationship between the two. Many things can characterize relationships between people. Sympathy/antipathy, respect/disrespect, curiosity/lack of interest etc. There will be several signs in the communication that gives an indication of their relationship – we call it relationship messages. Relationship messages consists often of nonverbal communication - especially if the relationship is problematic. The nonverbal signs are felt by the other party and can also often be observed from the outside by third parties - they will most often be unconscious.

There are arrows pointing at the characters themselves in the model. They are the expression of an inner dialogue - some inner voices. The inner dialogue can be open and curious in terms of what is going on in the conversation and be instrumental in having the conversation develop positively. But it can also be the opposite - distrustful, prejudiced and make it impossible to have a positive development in the conversation.

The model can be used to analyze communications. It can help the participants in the communication to see how the relationship between them is, how the inner voices - if they can be expressed - are positively or negatively effecting the outcome of the communication. It can clarify any differences in content-messages, thus helping participants to understand how misunderstandings can arise as a barrier in communication and cooperation. However, it requires that the relationship is characterized by respect,

openness and trust - something almost everyone will mention if you ask what can help make communication good.

Intercultural communication occurs when our membership of a cultural group affects our communication with others. Intercultural communication is a symbolic process of exchange between people from different cultures, while trying to establish common meaning or common ground in a particular context. Through this symbolic exchange process, all intentions are derived, and cultural interpretations are made.

Ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice



Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own cultural background, behavior, values, norms and ways of thinking and being are better than all other cultural groups. It is an instinctive mechanism that distinguishes clearly between what is mine and what is yours and between people from here and people from somewhere else. All cultures and people use stereotypes. To put it differently, if you are human, you create stereotypes. Ethnocentrism

becomes a barrier in intercultural communication and international business settings when it prevents people from seeing things from other's points of view, and therefore only determine right or wrong in accordance with their own cultural background.

Ethnocentrism means attributing everything positive to your own views and culture and negative things to others culture. The ethnocentric approach to other people provides opportunities for the formation of stereotypes and prejudices. Iben Jensen believes that stereotypes can be both useful and harmful.

Useful when:

- They are used deliberately, that is, when we are aware that they describe the norm for a group and not for a particular individual
- They are descriptively and non-evaluative
- When they are right, i.e., when they embody a core of truth about the group
- When they are the expression of a "first, best guess" about a social group
- When they are continuously corrected by new observations and experiences with the current group

Harmful when

- They are used unconsciously
- When used normatively and not descriptively
- When they are wrong and misleading

- When used without considering individual differences
- When they are not open to change, even after gaining new knowledge about the group

Creating stereotypes can be defined as:

- An excessive tendency to believe that the characteristics of one's own group or race are better than those of other groups or races
- Mental short cut

Prejudice is an irrational, preconceived opinion that leads to discrimination for some people and unfavorable hostility towards others because of ignorance of (or in direct contradiction to) facts. Prejudice literally means pre-judgment.

Prejudice is based on emotion, not on facts. For the most part, they are based on suspicion, fear and hatred.

Discrimination and racism

According to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, it is prohibited to discriminate against (threaten, mock or degrade) groups of persons because of their race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, sexual orientation, property, birth or other social position.

Racism requires four elements

- Believe in a separate, definable and recognizable races
- Believe that one race is superior to the other races
- The superior race has the power to act against subordinate races without them being able to defend themselves effectively
- Actions that are both arbitrary and harmful

It is typical that when it comes to racism, you do not look at the individual, but you look at a category of people e.g., asylum seekers and that the individuals themselves have no influence on what is going to happen. There are several different forms of discrimination.

Forms of discrimination:

- Directly
- Indirect
- Institutional
- Structural
- Micro aggression

Direct: when a person is treated less favorably than another is in a similar situation due to age, disability, gender, race or ethnicity, religion or belief or sexual orientation. It means that you are violating the law if you treat a person less favorably for one or more of these reasons.

Indirect: When you have special demands to a particular group.

Institutional: When an institution is designed in a way in which a group of people do not have the necessary opportunities to perform on equal terms with others. It is rooted in formalized rules.

Structural: it is implicit in norms, rules and normative expectations of behavior. Structural discrimination is embedded in institutional and linguistic practices and discourses on otherness that shape and influence individual behavior and expression. It may happen unintentionally in informal situations.

Micro aggression: a subtle form that occurs in the counterpart in conscious positioning.

Discrimination is always a difficult subject. It is difficult for those who are discriminated against because it feels unfounded and humiliating that one must justify simply wanting the same terms as everyone else. At the same time, it can be difficult to relate to if you have not been discriminated against yourself.

Intercultural competence is to have a professional knowledge of anti-discrimination and ethnic equality, so that in practice one can point to structural inequalities that are most often hidden. Intercultural competence is to have awareness and knowledge of various forms of discrimination.

Intercultural competences are to be able to identify both direct and indirect discrimination and to avoid the various forms of discrimination.

"If there is a foreigner and a Dane who are equally proficient in their profession - then they choose the Dane. It does not matter. I am sure we would do that ourselves. We will not be sad. That is the way it is. But what we do not like is when we are not being considered at all, but you just discard us because of our name or skin color." (Bosnian journalist, in Jensen 2000. This quote has been translated from its original language, Danish).

Intercultural competences are to be aware of the existence of national values in a professional setting and from a professional standpoint to consider its fairness. Papadopoulos points out that the intercultural competent person challenges prejudice, discrimination and inequality.

Cultural identity

Cultural identity is socially constructed. Identity is about how an individual perceives themselves and how other people perceive them in return. A socialization process that takes place within various social constructs such as family, school and even media shapes identity.

Cultural identity can be seen as a collective name for all our identities. In this understanding, it is based on the notion that we do not have a core identity, but that we have multiple identities that we develop in relation to other people. The fact that we do not have a core identity does not mean that we wake up as new person every day; It just means that we are not governed by an inner core, and that our identity is shaped in relation to the people we associate with and by the ways in which we perceive and talk about ourselves.

Cultural identity is what a person wants others to see, but it is important to say that one's own understanding is not always identical to others. They do not see the identity you want them to see.

You can perceive cultural identity as a backpack you always carry with you. It is filled with different content depending on what each individual has "packed". It may be:

- Nationality

- Ethnicity
- Language
- upbringing
- Family structure
- Religious faith
- Political affiliation
- Educational background
- Past experiences in your private or professional life
- Values
- Assumptions

The backpack contains everything you have learned. They can look the same on the surface, but there are always differences in the content.

In an increasingly globalized reality, it is necessary to:

- Recognize that understanding different cultural backgrounds from different ethnic groups, cultures and nations not only challenges, but also provides a broader platform for solid and global meetings, both in business and in private life
- This understanding builds bridges of meaningfulness between the contents of one's own backpack and others' backpack, as one will be able to use several strategies that can be adapted to the cultural framework in which one operates.

Cultural identity is a very complex issue, but one thing is certain: if you want dialogue and change, it is problematic if both sides idealize their own values while simultaneously interpreting people from other cultures based on their own values. It can make people from other cultures seem unsympathetic, illogical and incoherent. Cultural self-understanding is thus an idealized conception and description of the group one belongs to. The special feature of cultural self-understanding is that it occurs exclusively in cultural meetings. It is in the construction of the "cultural other" that you create an idealized image of your own culture.

Based on the following questions, you can examine your own and others' culture

- Knowledge: What do we have of insight into 'our' and 'their' cultures?
- Attitudes: What feelings and thoughts do we bring when we meet each other?
- Experiences: Which individual and collective experiences are in the backpack?
- Personality: Is anyone 'born diplomats'?
- Context: Time, place . . .
- Knowledge: Information about our own/others' cultures (e.g., language, history, traditions)
- Attitudes: Perception and social cognition, prejudice, presumptions, etc.
- Personal attributes: Listening actively, patience, inclusiveness, empathy, etc.
- Experiences: Own, concrete experiences and the ability to reflect on and learn from these
- Experience: "She looks strange"

- Analysis: What makes her look strange?
- Generalization: What theories might explain my experience?
- Experiment: How do I test whether my explanation is true?

The citizen with a different ethnic background and dementia

For the professional, this requires both intercultural competences and competences in the field of dementia.

Person-centered care and support for people from all ethnic groups requires a proactive, intercultural approach in which cultural diversity is not only accepted but also promoted through the development of:

- cultural awareness (knowledge and understanding of differences between themselves and people from other countries and backgrounds)
- cultural sensitivity (recognition of cultural differences and similarities without judging)
- cultural competences (combining such knowledge with appropriate attitudes and skills)

It takes time to develop awareness, sensitivity and competences. Mistakes will happen and that is part of the learning process. It is important to take an interest in people from other communities and to ask questions. The questions will of course depend on the situation and the ongoing transition or interaction, but may, for example:

- What kind of food do you miss the most since you came to live here?
- Is there anything I can do to help you celebrate Ramadan?
- What is the most important celebration/festival in your religion?
- What do people usually offer in the Vietnamese community to make guests feel welcome?
- When I arrive, you always say 'As-salāmu alaykum'. What does it mean and what should I normally say back?
- What's the reason people take their shoes off when they enter someone else's home?
- I noticed you were chatting with Mr. Brøgger this morning and I was surprised when you appeared to speak different languages? How do you manage to understand each other?
- How do you say 'sleep well' in Sámi?

This will usually be seen in a positive light as genuine interest and not as being curious or drawing attention to your lack of knowledge. The goal is that you get to know your clients and that the care or support you provide is consistent with their needs, hopes and expectations.

Do not underestimate the importance of people's freedom to choose how they want to dress.

- If people with dementia need help to dress and you do not know how to wear certain garments, find out, as it is likely to be important for them and perhaps also for how they are perceived by others.

Check whether people with dementia have spiritual or religious beliefs, and if so, whether they want any support to continue worshipping or be involved in a particular spiritual or religious community.

- Discuss possible difficulties (only with the permission of the person with dementia) with a leader from the relevant spiritual or religious community to see what kind of support may be needed and whether members of that community can help.

Cooperation among colleges in a multicultural team



To work in a multicultural context is a major challenge to the individual when it concerns delivering healthcare to a person with another background than your own, but you are there in your professional capacity and are paid to do your work. However, it is even more challenging to work in a multicultural team where you are equals with the other team members, and have to bear with their “peculiarities”.

To gain the benefits from a multicultural staff it is absolutely necessary that the members of the team is intercultural competent, at least to some degree. This also means that the team deals with racism and prejudice

While national expertise is an invaluable asset, it's also important to foster integration among team members to avoid colleagues from different countries working in isolation and limiting knowledge transfer. This can be a challenge to overcome, particularly if there are underlying prejudices between cultures, making them less inclined to work together. Negative cultural

stereotypes can be seriously detrimental to health care morale and affect care. Although not all stereotypes are necessarily negative—like the notion that Americans are confident or Asians are intelligent—all are simplifications that can prove limiting or divisive in the workplace. And while outright prejudice or stereotyping is a serious concern, ingrained and unconscious cultural biases can be a more difficult challenge of workplace diversity to overcome.

Cultural differences among team members come from various factors, including geographic origin, language and dialect, migratory status, race, shared traditions, religious, values, and symbols, literature, food preferences, folklore, and music, settlement and employment patterns, institutions serving and maintaining the group, politics, and homeland, and external and internal perceptions of distinctiveness. Even though multicultural teams serve great significance, the practice is facing significant challenges. Some of the challenges multicultural organizations are facing, are ineffective communication, culture difference,

direct vs indirect communication, power and hierarchy, racial discrimination, and difficulty in undertaking the decision-making process.

Communication difficulties

Communication is an essential aspect of a multicultural team (and any other team). Note that the language barrier can hinder the utilization of multicultural teams in the healthcare. This is captured due to different ways in which team members speak, words used as well as tools utilized to convey ideas, feelings, and hopes. Every member of the team is tied to their respective language. The team members from another country than the one they work in may face linguistic difficulties when the common language is not so fluent. Whereby they can lose a lot of useful knowledge or problem-solving skills. This can cause frustration in the team. Even though the language is an essential component, it is not the only one involved in effective communication; various non-verbal cues are also crucial to communication among the multicultural team. For instance, Americans are taught to keep eye contact when communicating in contrary to other cultures like Arabic origin who consider it as impolite and aggressive and an Indian might stare at the ground as a sign that they are listening.

Usually, people from western cultures are quite different from persons from eastern cultures. With varying cultural norms, different persons within the multicultural team have a different interpretation of culture, norms and ways of communicating. E.G. Direct vs indirect communication whereby some people are used to direct communication, which means asking something directly. Some again prefer indirect communication, which means just not pointing out the problem. The direct communication could be perceived as an insult to the person who prefers the indirect communication and vice versa the indirect communication can be perceived as circling around the topic and a waste of time for the person who communicate directly

It is suggested that immigrant health staff and host health staff try to learn from each other regarding the different styles, manners, and body language used in communication across cultures. Effective communication cannot be achieved without considering the impact culture has on communication. To avoid misinterpretation of information, there is a need to learn to communicate simple and straight forward. It is useful to be careful about applying meaning to nonverbal behaviour because nonverbal communication is assertive and can contradict verbal input.

Power and Hierarchy

Power and hierarchy can be seen differently in different cultures. This creates a challenge for multicultural team leadership. An egalitarian culture poses a challenge to team members who are from the hierarchical culture. If these team members were to defer to a higher status in an organization, they would find it uncomfortable to adapt to a flat structure, and their behaviour would be deemed inappropriate, consequently damaging their stature and credibility. Nursing practice in some developing countries is more undervalued than in developed countries.

However, challenges facing multicultural teams can be mitigated through appropriate education and training, thus effective learning in cultural diversity, due diligence as well as diplomacy to attain improved quality health care services.

Challenge: Colleges from some cultures may be less likely to let their voices be heard

However, the presence of diverse brain power alone is not enough. It's also critical to create an open and inclusive workplace environment, so all team members feel empowered to contribute.

This can be particularly challenging for colleagues from polite or deferential cultures. For instance, professionals from Asian countries such as Vietnam or Japan may feel less comfortable speaking up or sharing ideas, particularly if they are new to the team or in a more junior role.

Conversely, assertive colleagues from the U.S. or Western Europe, or those from Scandinavian countries who emphasize flat organizational hierarchy, may be more inclined to speak up in meetings or negotiations when others don't.

Different understandings of professional etiquette

Colleagues from different cultures can also bring with them different workplace attitudes, values, behaviours, and etiquette. While these can be enriching and even beneficial in a diverse professional environment, they can also cause misunderstandings or ill feelings between team members. For instance, the expectation of formality (or relative informality), organizational hierarchy, and even working hours can conflict across cultures. Where a Japanese colleague may not feel it appropriate to leave work before their manager (or, indeed anyone else), a Swedish professional may be used to a 6-hour working day.

Additionally, different approaches to punctuality, confrontation or dealing with conflict can prove an issue. Conflicting working styles across teams is a challenge because, working styles and attitudes towards work can be very different, reflecting cultural values and compounding differences. If not recognized and accounted, conflicting approaches to work can put the brakes on productivity.

For instance, approaches to teamwork and collaboration can vary notably. Some cultures, including many in Asia and Central America, value collective consensus when working towards a goal. Whereas others, such as Germany and America, put emphasis on the independence of the individual. Likewise, emphasis on order, rigor, and organization in the workplace versus flexibility and spontaneity can also reflect underlying cultural values.

The affective level of working in an intercultural team

When you work in an intercultural team you might have experienced how a person in the team from another cultural background than yours, irritates you. You don't know why but it still affects you and the team.

In developing intercultural competences, one also need to address the affective levels of intercultural interactions. As any other social encounter, intercultural interactions prompt emotional response as well as cognitive appraisal of events happening around us. Together they help interpret the event and form appropriate course of action.

In order to develop effective interaction processes in the team, one has to understand the role of emotions in team context. Emotional intelligence is associated with empathic perspective taking, self-monitoring, social skills and cooperation, all of them facilitating interpersonal relationship. Studies confirm the positive relationship between emotional competences and team processes, team effectiveness, team performance and conflict resolution.

Research reveal that the emotional investments of individual team members increase relationship commitment and hence facilitate team survival. Emotions influence the degree of effort exerted in the team and determine the willingness to commit oneself to the team. Positive emotions can trigger an

upward spiral excitement which enhances personal involvement and procedures positive attitudes towards the task at hand.

The display of emotions is culturally determined. This causes difficulties when it comes to accurately recognizing, interpreting and judging emotions in other people. Perceptions of dissimilarities provoke emotional reactions that can enhance or limit team performance. Frequently negative emotions of individual team members lead to tensions and conflict in the team, which affect team performance. While emotions are culture- general in their underlying dimensions, they become manifest indifferent behaviour. The important questions are how much emotion is appropriate to reveal to others in social situation, as well as when and how such emotion expressions get sanctioned or rewarded?

Emotion management in multicultural teams

One can distinguish between neutral and affective cultures, which varies in the extend of emotions displayed to other people.

These distinct emotion expression rules make it difficult to interpret someone else's emotional state because the behavioural cues normally used for decoding emotions and their intensity are misleading. People have to develop intercultural skills allowing them to determine antecedents of emotions in other people, to recognize and decode emotions and anticipate and understand the resulting behaviour. With regard to their own emotion display, individuals have to develop an awareness of when it is appropriate to show particular emotions openly. This helps to avoid offending other team members unintentionally and contributes to maintaining a positive team climate.

Emotions and feelings seem to play an important role in development of trust and assessment of another person's trustworthiness. Studies have consistently shown the positive effect of interpersonal trust on cooperation and interaction. Adapting to new and unfamiliar cultural values, practices and behaviour can be emotional challenging. Individuals have to learn to understand the sophisticated process underlying affective response in intercultural interactions and have to develop ways to deal with them effectively. Team members need to be able to interpret others and their own emotions accurately and take appropriate action. By means of experimenting learning, team members manage to identify and challenge their own and other participants emotional responses in multicultural team settings, thereby increase their confidence when dealing with their own and others emotions.

Benefits of working in multicultural teams

The multicultural teams are very beneficially to the organization and especially to the persons in need of care from same countries as some of the staff themselves. It is important that the person with dementia has a caregiver who speak his language and even when the language is lost, the caregiver still knows the values, norms and customs of the person with dementia. This way the person with dementia receives equitable healthcare, have a better quality of life and will be more satisfied

Research has shown that diverse groups are more effective at problem solving than homogenous groups, and policies that promote diversity and inclusion will enhance the ability to draw from the broadest possible pool of talents. Where there is a lack of diversity there is also a lack of diverse thought. This can limit creativity and breadth of ideas and perspectives within the organization.

Diversity in healthcare has measurable benefits for both healthcare professionals and the communities they serve. Some of the key advantages of increasing the diversity of healthcare organizations include:

1. Benefit: Diverse cultural perspectives can inspire creativity and drive innovation

Our culture influences the way in which we see the world. A variety of viewpoints along with the wide-ranging personal and professional experience of an international team can offer new perspectives that inspire colleagues to see the workplace—and the world—differently.

Diversity of thought has been shown to breed creativity and drive innovation, helping to solve problems and meet customer needs in new and exciting ways. Multiple voices, perspectives, and personalities bouncing off one another can give rise to out-of-the-box thinking. By offering a platform for the open exchange of ideas, businesses can reap the biggest benefits of diversity in the workplace. A recent study from Forbes echoed this notion, concluding that “the best way to ensure the development of new ideas is through a diverse and inclusive workforce.” A wide range of perspectives can lead to better solutions.

2. Benefit: Cultural sensitivity, insight, and knowledge of a person’s culture means higher quality in healthcare.

Cross-cultural understanding, along with specific cultural knowledge, makes the collaboration with relatives better and they are more likely to trust a person from their own cultural circle. A more diverse group of healthcare professionals will have a better understanding of colleagues’ and client’s different belief systems because they have an enhanced understanding of value sets

3. Benefit: Drawing from a culturally diverse talent pool allows an organization to attract and retain the best talent.

Many western countries have a challenge in an aging population and lack of working capacity in the health care sector. Making diversity an important part of the recruiting process will broaden your talent pool of prospective employees. Not only does hiring from a more diverse talent pool makes the working place attractive to ambitious, globally minded candidates, it also helps you to keep them on board. Diversity, including diversity of gender, religion, and ethnicity, has been shown to improve retention and reduce the costs associated with employee turnover. In a diverse workplace, employees are more likely remain loyal when they feel respected and valued for their unique contribution. This, in turn, fosters mutual respect among colleagues who also value the diverse culture, perspectives, and experiences of their team members. An inclusive atmosphere of cross-cultural cooperation is an excellent way to bond colleagues and teams across the work place. People take pride in working organizations that are making a positive impact in society, this improve employee engagement and retention.

4. Benefit: Diverse teams are more productive and perform better.

The range of experience, expertise, and working methods that a diverse workplace offers can boost problem-solving capacity and lead to greater productivity. In fact, studies have shown organizations with a culture of diversity and inclusion are both happier and more productive. Where working in homogeneous teams can seem easier, it can cause a business to settle for the status quo. Diversity, on the other hand, can breed healthy competition, stretching a team in a positive way to achieve their best.

5. Benefit: Greater opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Fundamentally, an inclusive and culturally diverse organization will attract talented, ambitious, and globally minded professionals who will appreciate the opportunity for personal and professional growth. Working across cultures can be a truly enriching experience, allowing others to learn about perspectives and traditions from around the world. Bonding over similarities and differences can help you to become a global citizen, abandoning prejudices or an ethnocentric world view—something that is increasingly valuable. A diverse set of colleagues can be professionally enriching too—exposing you to new skills and approaches to work.

All things considered, improved cultural competence and ethnic and racial diversity can help to alleviate healthcare disparities and improve healthcare outcomes in diverse patient populations.

In the area of dementia care it is even more important with intercultural competence since persons from another ethnic background with dementia is double affected, since the dementia makes them forget their second language and, in the end, also their first and they do not recognize the surroundings so there is nothing familiar about the country, its people or their customs. This makes it very important to have multicultural competences in the staff so that the person feels recognized, accepted and valued

To the employees the work in an intercultural team is an amazing opportunity for competence development both professionally and personally



The goals for the module

Developing intercultural competences and awareness of the challenges and benefits of working in multicultural teams.

Intercultural competences include:

- Being able to communicate discovering differences and being able to accommodate them, being able to adjust language in the situation
- Maintaining relationships: the result of successful communication, which requires empathy, perspective change and negotiation of practices
- To develop linguistic sensitivity, to be aware of which words are appropriate/inappropriate

- Being curious to know what traditional and modern ways of thinking look like (to find out other people's reasoning)
- To have an eye on how practices are carried out to be able to meta-communicate around them
- To be prepared to discover and reject your own understanding, and to follow the logic and reasoning of others

“To be ready to pause your own logic, accept that one does not understand a practice, does not condemn it, but engages in dialogue about what values it is based on.” ⁷

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Pictures in sequence:

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