



Forward Thinking Using Backward Design

7 Steps to Designing Effective Intercultural Learning Curricula

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Brings together research and literature in:

- intercultural training,
- international educational exchange,
- intercultural communication, and
- the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL)

to address how to design effective intercultural curricula.

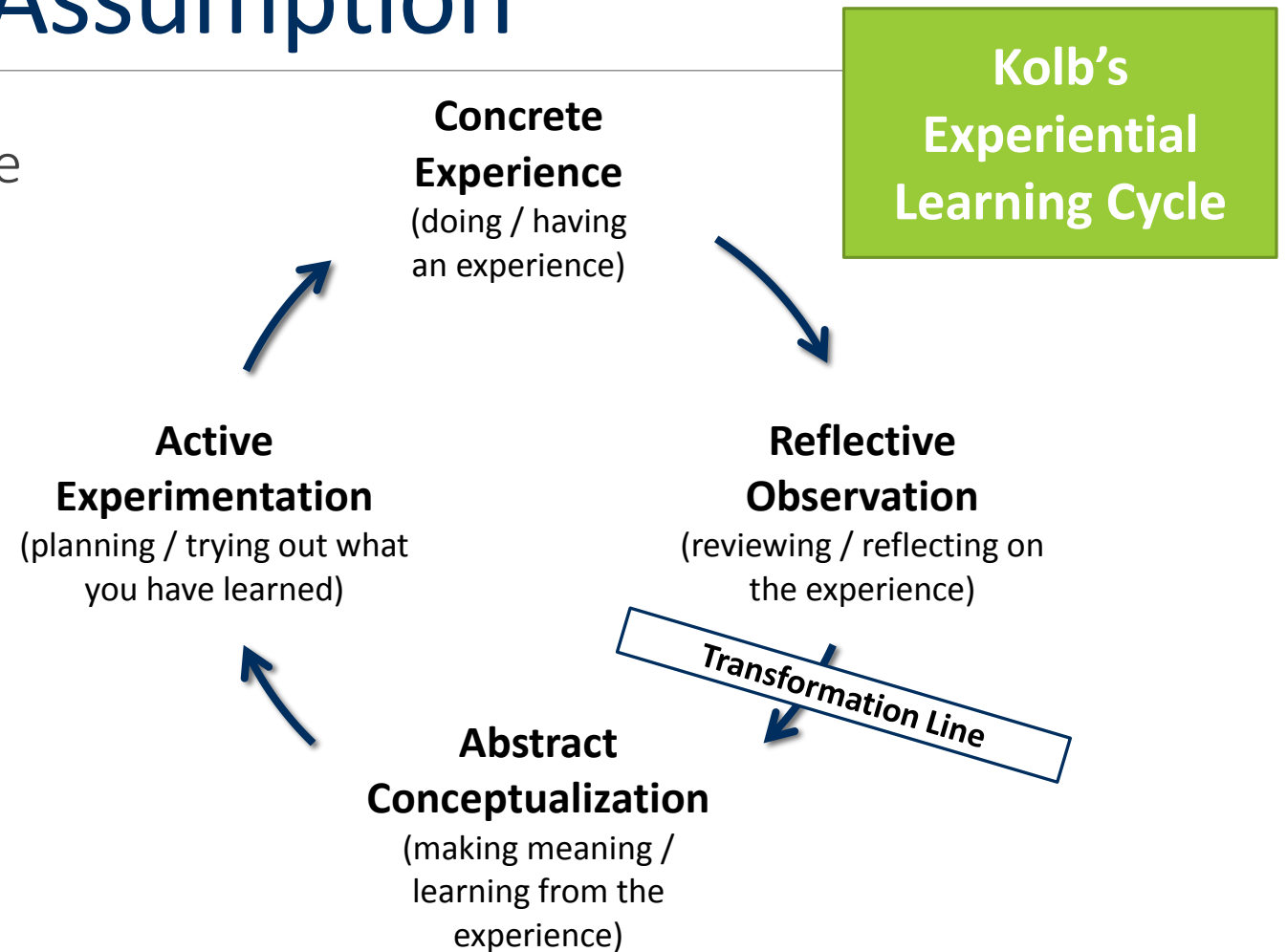
Definitions

- **Intercultural Curriculum:** A structure or framework through which educators intentionally facilitate intercultural learning
- **Intercultural Learning:** Developing one's intercultural competence
 - Includes, yet goes far beyond, engagement/immersion or culture-specific learning

Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate and act *appropriately* and *effectively* across cultural differences.

Key Pedagogical Assumption

- Experience and immersion are important, yet insufficient for producing deep intercultural learning



Four Core Intercultural Competencies*

- I. Increasing awareness of our own characteristic ways of making meaning and behaving in various contexts.
- II. Increasing awareness of others' ways of making meaning and behaving in various contexts.
- III. Managing our emotions and thoughts in the face of ambiguity, change, and challenging circumstances and people.
- IV. Bridging cultural gaps—shifting our perspective, attuning our emotions and adapting our behavior within unfamiliar and/or challenging contexts.

Requires practice!

Backward Design

The designer starts the process by imagining a time when the course is over, say one or two years later, and then asking, ‘What is it I hope that students will have learned, that will still be there and have value, several years after the course is over?’ The answer to this question forms the basis of the learning goals. Then the designer moves backward in time to the end of the course and asks the assessment question, ‘What would the students have to do to convince me—and themselves—that they had achieved those learning goals?’ The process of working out the answer to that question clarifies the real meaning of the learning goals. And then it’s time to move back in time once more, to the time of the course itself, and ask, ‘What would the students need to do during the course to be able to do well on these assessment activities?’

- L. Dee Fink, 2013, p. 71

7 Steps to Designing Effective Intercultural Learning Curricula*

1. Identify important situational factors
2. Conduct a needs assessment
3. Identify/define key learning objectives
4. Decide upon feedback and assessment methods
5. Choose the most appropriate teaching and learning activities
6. Integrate activities into a coherent whole
7. Reflect on the process and identify key learning

*Adapted by Tara Harvey from L. Dee Fink's Twelve Steps of Integrated Course Design (2013)

STEP 1

Identify important situational factors



Identify important situational factors

- Identify the audience and consider other important situational factors involved
 - How many participants?
 - When? Before, during, and/or after a significant intercultural experience?
 - Where? On the home campus? Abroad?
 - Online, in-person, or a hybrid format?
 - For credit or not for credit?
 - How often will you meet and for how long?

STEP 2

Conduct a needs assessment



Conduct a needs assessment

- Conduct a needs assessment of the audience and any key stakeholders
- Find out all you can about the learners through whatever means appropriate
 - Informal (conversations) to formal (survey)
- Understand how your work fits into wider organizational needs or goals

STEP 3

Identify/define key learning objectives



STEP 4

*Decide upon feedback and
assessment methods*

STEP 5

*Choose the most appropriate
teaching and learning activities*

STEP 3

Identify/define key learning objectives



STEP 4

*Decide upon feedback and
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STEP 5

*Choose the most appropriate
teaching and learning activities*

In your deepest, fondest dreams, what kind of impact would you most like to have on your students? That is, when the course [or program] is over and it is now one or two years later, what would you like to be true about students who have participated in your course [or program] that is not true of others? What is the distinctive educational impact you would like for your teaching and your courses to have on your students?

- L. Dee Fink, 2013, p. 10



Identify/define key learning objectives

Objectives are nothing more or less than our hopes, dreams, and desires, stated succinctly. They provide the justification for every planning decision, the guiding principles by which we operate, and the foundation for any evaluative process we undertake.

- Peggy Pusch, 1994, p. 115

- What impact would you like this curriculum/experience/program to have on students?
- What do you want participants to understand, know, and be able to do upon completion?
- Consider:
 - What's realistic given the length of program and participants' background or previous experience?
 - Appropriate balance between culture-general and culture-specific

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Examples of Learning Objectives Using the Intercultural Competencies Framework

| Curricular Program | Example of a Program-Specific Learning Objective (and related competency) |
|--|---|
| Study away orientation for students going to multiple locations | Participants will identify at least one personally-held value or belief that may be in contrast to values identified by members of the host culture. (I) |
| Summer “Business & Culture” study away program in Brazil | Participants will compare and contrast how culture influences attitudes toward—and practices related to—business in the U.S. and in Brazil, identifying at least two differences and two similarities. (I & II) |
| Ongoing orientation for new international students on a U.S. campus | Participants will become more comfortable with not knowing and will come up with personal strategies for engaging ambiguity. (III) |
| Intercultural training program for faculty working with a diverse student body | Participants will identify the cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions represented in their course syllabus (I); consider how students from different perspectives may view the course syllabus and their teaching approach (II); and adapt their syllabus to be more inclusive of different cultural perspectives on teaching and learning. (IV) |

Meta-Curriculum of Immersion Experiences

- In an immersion experience, program logistics impact learning as well (part of a “meta-curriculum” supplementing formal curriculum)
- Important to intentionally design the entire program with the learning objectives in mind
- Most effective approach combines immersive program components with intentional intercultural facilitation

What are your
learning objectives?



STEP 3

Identify/define key learning objectives



STEP 4

***Decide upon feedback and
assessment methods***

STEP 5

*Choose the most appropriate
teaching and learning activities*

Decide upon feedback and assessment methods

- How will you assess whether participants have achieved the learning objectives?
- Backward-looking: What did you learn?
- Forward-looking: What will you do in the future as a result of what you've learned?
- Informal: self-assessment, action plan, role plays, case study, etc.
- Formal: pre-/post-IDI or similar, graded paper or application project, etc.

STEP 3

Identify/define key learning objectives



STEP 4

*Decide upon feedback and
assessment methods*

STEP 5

***Choose the most appropriate
teaching and learning activities***

Choosing appropriate activities

- Select activities that will push participants outside their comfort zone, although not excessively so
 - Design in flexibility to allow for different levels/types of participation
- Consider:
 - Potential group dynamics
 - Participants' relationships
 - Cultural make-up of group



Types of Activities

- Structured or semi-structured activities
- Case studies or critical incidents
- Reflective activities
- Mindfulness exercises
- Practices and processes
- Film/TV clips or other audiovisuals
- Simulations
- Role plays
- Instruments
- Lecture
- Reading materials

STEP 6

*Integrate activities into a
coherent whole*



Typical curricular elements

- Opening/introduction
- Trust-building
- Body
- Debriefing
- Application/closing
- Evaluation/assessment

The systems approach to program design means that we try to see all the participants in their respective places (in their homes and organizations), the whole program in its place, and all the participants together in the program there.

- George Renwick, 2004, p. 440

Sequencing activities

| Learning Activity | Amount of Time | Learning Objective(s) and/or Primary Intercultural Competencies Addressed | Learning Style Emphasis (CE, AC, RO, AE)* | Learner Risk-Level | Activity Level (passive, interactive, active) | Developmental Worldview Emphasis (Denial – Adaptation) |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Describe – Interpret – Evaluate Activity | 45 – 60 minutes | self-awareness / awareness of others | AC / RO | Low | Interactive | Polarization / Minimization |
| Non-Verbal Communication Simulation | 25 – 35 minutes | self-awareness / awareness of others / managing emotions | CE / AE | Low - Medium | Active | Minimization |
| Mindfulness Meditation: Body Scan | 15 – 20 minutes | self-awareness / managing emotions | CE / RO | Depends on learners' experience | Active | All |

*CE = Concrete Experience; AC = Abstract Conceptualization; RO = Reflective Observation; AE = Active Experimentation

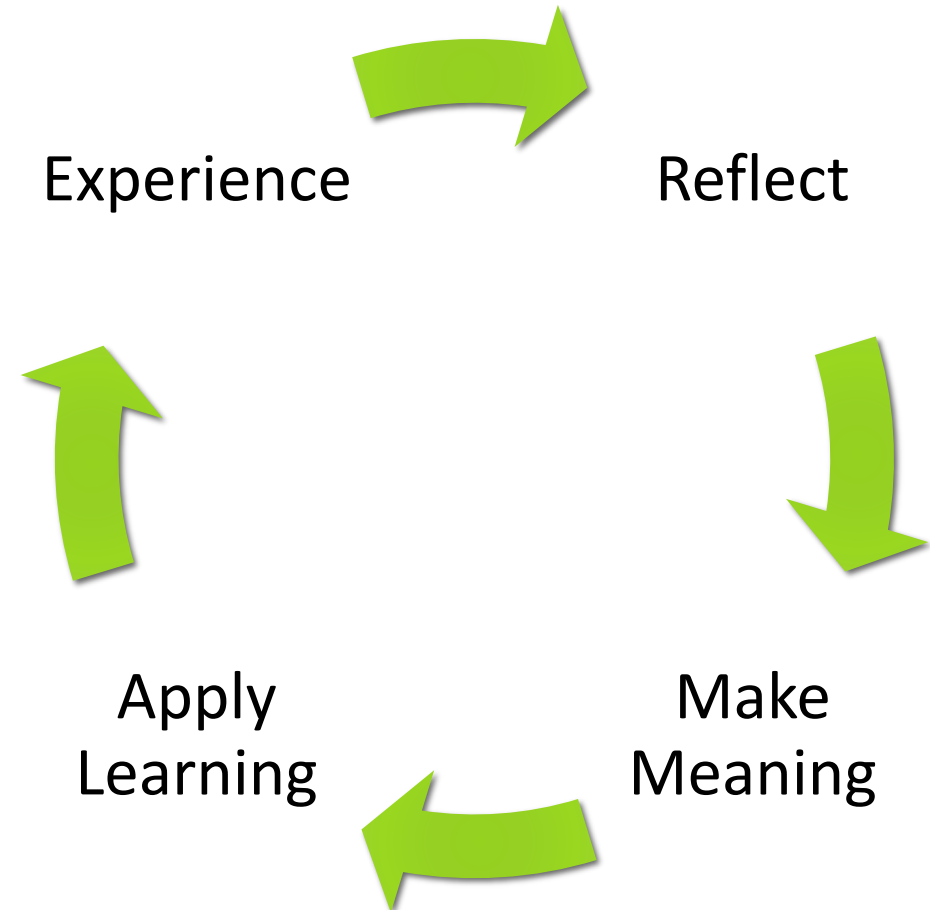
STEP 7

*Reflect on the process and identify
key learning*



Reflect on the process and identify key learning

- Reflect on process via:
 - Your own experiences
 - Participants' assessments and/or evaluations
- What have you learned?
- How can you improve the design and facilitation in the future?



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Thank you.

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