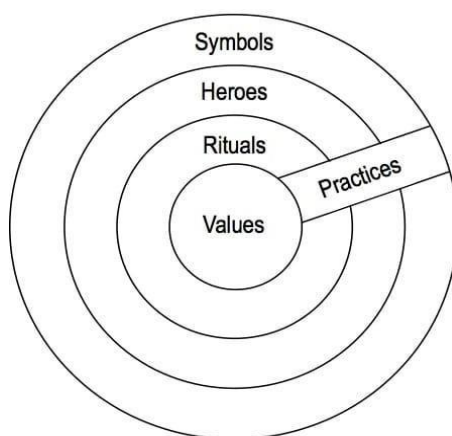


Intercultural Communicative Competence Training Programme_Module 1

Exercises to Improve Intercultural Communication Skills

EXERCISE 1 – The Culture Onion



Hofstede, 1991.

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable learners to reflect on their own understanding of culture. To introduce a model of culture and cultural influences. To raise awareness of both visible and non-visible components of culture.
Time	10 to 15 minutes
Materials	Five alternative definitions of culture handout

Background rationale

This is a simple exercise that explores ‘Why is culture important?’ and clarifies its visible and less visible elements.

Procedure

1. Provide the learner with the five alternative definitions of culture.
2. Ask the learner to reflect on which definition(s) he or she prefers. They can choose as many as they wish.
3. Ask the learner to indicate his or her preferred choice(s), giving reasons for the decision.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

Many learners will opt for one or perhaps two of the statements, rather than seeing each one as part of a larger concept of culture. In fact, each of the descriptions reflects one aspect of culture. Discussion will benefit from using the Iceberg graphic (Introduced in Reading 1) to explore how each of the statements fit together. The aim is to form a more comprehensive understanding of culture as a framework of values, attitudes and behaviors.

Five alternative definitions of culture handout

Below are five alternative definitions of cultures. Which definition(s) of culture do you prefer? You can choose as many as they wish.

1. Objective visible artefacts such as rituals, superstitions, heroes, myths, symbols and taboos.
2. Basic truths about identity and relationships, time and space, ways of thinking and learning, ways of working and organizing, and ways of communicating.
3. Ideals shared by group members to which strong emotions are attached.
4. The 'right' and 'wrong' ways of doing things. The rules people live by in practice.
5. Subjective behavioral orientations to do things in one way, rather than another. They are most noticeable in relationship styles, thinking and learning styles, organization and work styles and communication styles.

