

DEVELOPING A MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES FOR PUBLIC MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

The importance of interaction and trade in the international arena makes it increasingly necessary to become familiar with intercultural communication. In addition, the need to increase interactions in various political, commercial and economic areas will further increase the importance of familiarizing managers with intercultural communication. The main purpose of the present study was to develop a model for the intercultural communication competencies of public managers through the grounded theory approach. This research was a descriptive-exploratory study and the research design was inductive. The data collection method involved in-depth interviews with government executives with experience of international interactions, using snowball and purposeful judgment methods to determine them, and behavioral interviewing techniques were used to achieve this. Finally, seven main competencies were formulated. In addition to being useful for the self-evaluation of managers, the results of this study can be a good model for selecting appropriate government managers to work in international sectors of organizations and institutions of the country and can provide new syllabuses for training managers to operate internationally.

Keywords: Competence, Intercultural communication, Government executives, Grounded theory.

INTRODUCTION

A review of various studies shows the importance of intercultural competencies and their impact on performance effectiveness in other areas including politics, commerce, industry, etc. (Julia, 2018; Deardorf, 2009; Ting-Toomey, 2004; Morley and Cerdin, 2010). The emergence of multinationals and the importance of international trade make it increasingly necessary to become familiar with intercultural communication. In order to compete globally, individuals must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for appropriate intercultural behavior. Cultural diversity inevitably makes intercultural competences a very important skill in the global market. A 1987 study found that about 20% of US companies went bankrupt due to their inability to communicate properly in foreign countries (Tung, 1987). Another Japanese industry study found that lack of intercultural competencies among employees could reduce an organization's market share by up to 98% over its competitor. These failures not only harm companies economically but can also distort the public image of these companies in the long-term (Deardorf, 2009). That is why international organizations have always sought to create intercultural competencies in their staff. These efforts began after the Second World War with

the opening of the gates of the global economy in the West and the field of intercultural communication was formed. Indeed, the main reason for the creation of intercultural education has been its significant impact on trade, which subsequently led to the formation of models of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence models have been largely developed around the world since the 1980s (Bennett, 1986; Kim 1988; Howard et al., 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Imahori and Lanigan, 1989; Navas et al., 2005; Rathje, 2007; Deardorff, 2006; Prior to this, however, there has been extensive research on the recognition of intercultural competencies and their nature (Gullahorn, 1962; Smith, 1966; Godikanst, 1996). There is also a lack of research in global research with a sample of public managers, and intercultural competence models have been developed without reference to the specificity or publicity of the research sample. Therefore, one of the reasons that underlies the importance of the present study is the problems that may arise from the lack of a fit model for intercultural communication. These problems can be a waste of time, money, and effort and mistakes in selecting managers for international activities. In fact, due to the lack of a competency model, one or more competencies are sometimes exaggerated or overlooked. Therefore, the present study sought to develop a model for intercultural communication competencies of public managers through grounded theory.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND



The history of cross-cultural studies in the world goes back to World War II and the beginning of the Western industrial era. A review of the literature shows that the first cross-cultural studies were conducted by A.T. Hall in 1959. In his studies, Hall first tried to examine the cultural differences in individuals of different cultures. His emphasis and the scholars of his time led to the development of the field of "intercultural education" and then the "cultural diversity studies" in the 1960s. The primary purpose of these studies was to facilitate cross-cultural interactions between members of organizations and countries of different ethnicities, races, and genders (Landis, 1983). On the topic of intercultural communication, scientists are working in a variety of disciplines.

Linguists help to understand the role of language and its importance in interpersonal interactions. They believe that languages are at different levels, but when considering the depths of all languages, they are very similar.

Language is also influenced by the culture of each country. For example, the use of "you" in Spanish or Persian is used in both formal and informal forms. However, in the English language only the pronoun "you" is used and the formal form is of interest. In addition, linguists believe that learning languages other than the mother tongue enhances people's intercultural skills and insights into other cultures.

Anthropologists help to understand the culture in life and the importance of intercultural communication. In 1989, Rosaldo encouraged researchers to consider correct methods of studying culture.

Behaviorologists help to understand stereotypes and prejudices in cross-cultural debates. In 1979, Gordon Allport explained how prejudices and biases can alter normal human cognitive activities such as structuring and generalization. Other psychologists, such as Richard Brisellin and Ian Godikantz in 2002, identified three main approaches to intercultural communication:

1. Social Sciences Approach
2. Interpretive approach

3. Critical approach

There are different and close definitions of it which can be mentioned as follows:

- A set of complex communication abilities that results in correct and effective interactions with people from different languages and cultures (Fantini and Trimizi, 2006, p. 12).
- Ability to communicate correctly and effectively in intercultural situations based on one's knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Deardorff, 2009, p. 247-248).
- Ability to communicate effectively in intercultural situations and to communicate appropriately in diverse cultural contexts (Bennett, 1993).

The following is an overview of these models.

Table 1: ICC models

No.	Model	Research	Year of research
1	Intercultural competence components model	Howard Hamilton et al.	1998
2	Facework-Based Model of Intercultural Competence	Ting-Toomey and Kurogi	1998
3	Deardorff Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence	Deardorff	2006
4	Global Competencies Model	Hunter, White, and Godbey	2006
5	Worldviews Convergence Model	Fantini	1995
6	Intercultural Competence Model	Byram	1997
7	Intercultural Competence Model for Strategic Human Resource Management	kupla	2008
8	Coherence-Cohesion Model of Intercultural Competence	Rathje	2007
9	Intercultural Maturity Model	King and Baxter Magolda	2005
10	Developmental Intercultural Competence Model	Bennett	1986
11	U-Curve Model of Intercultural Adjustment	Gullahorn and Gullahorn	1962
12	intercultural Communicative Competence Model	Kim	1988
13	Intercultural Communicative Accommodation Model	Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles, and Coupland	1988
14	Attitude Acculturation Model	Berry, Kim, Power, Young, and Bujaki	1989
15	Relative Acculturation Extended Model	Navas et al.	2005



16	Model of Intercultural Communication Competence	Arasaratnam	2008
17	Intercultural Communication Model of Relationship Quality	Griffith and Harvey	2000
18	Multilevel Process Change Model of Intercultural Competence	Ting-Toomey	1999
19	Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Model of Intercultural Competence	Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen, and Bruschke	1998
20	Deardorff Process Model of Intercultural Competence	Deardorff, 2006	2006
21	Relational Model of Intercultural Competence	Imahori and Lanigan	1989

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach of the present research is illustrated as follows:

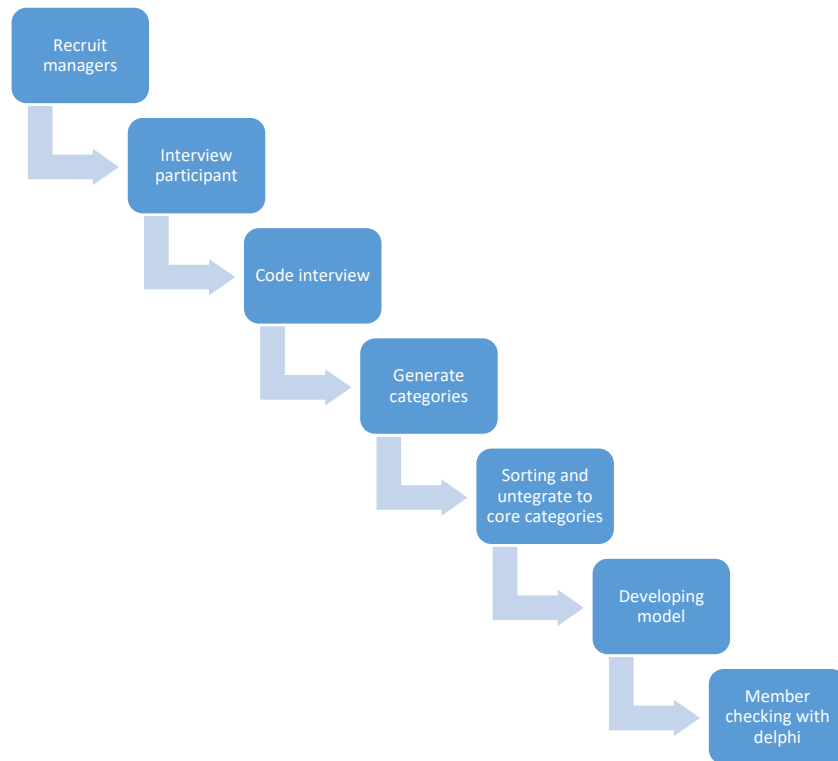


Figure 1: research methodology

Unlike quantitative research, in qualitative research, large samples are not required and more attention is paid to samples that, despite being small, can give the researcher a deeper and more comprehensive view. Participants should include a range of specificity which in the present study means selecting top managers with excellent communication effectiveness, and in the

absence of a communication effectiveness model in the organizations studied, the top managers were introduced through the Public Relations and International Affairs Unit of the organizations. In this process, these units were asked to announce the criteria for selecting top managers. Finally, 16 managers were selected for interview. After making initial contact with these people, the interview guidelines were emailed to them, explaining how the interview was going to be conducted and the type of questions and concept of competence. Also, given the newness of intercultural literature and many of the topics of this field in Persian in the country, an almost complete list of the topics used in intercultural literature was sent to these people and they were asked if they had any doubts about the meaning or function of each of these titles for clarification by the researcher. This process continues until new data fails to provide new insights (Charmes, 2008). In this study, after 10 interviews, it reached 99% saturation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

As each interview was written, coding began, and each code was assigned a phrase, sentence, or paragraph that seemed to refer to a particular topic. Then, MAXQDA software was used for data analysis. After coding the first six interviews, 136 different codes were used on 446 notes, and while 76 codes were used only once or twice, 9 codes were used 10 times or more. Initially, 16 categories were discovered which were reduced to 14 categories during secondary coding. Also, after identifying 14 categories, these categories were re-examined and similar categories were combined to obtain 12 categories.

Table 2: competency categories

No.	Classes
1.	Not to be afraid to interact with aliens and new spaces
2.	Adaptation and consistency
3.	Friendship and interaction
4.	Respect for other cultures
5.	Curiosity and interest in learning
6.	Cooperation
7.	Communication skills
8.	Language skills
9.	Cooperation stability
10.	Introduction to international law
11.	Great attention to detail
12.	Managerial training

Then, as the note-taking process continued, it was found that some of the classes in Table 4 were not well supported by the data. Therefore, two classes were combined with the other classes as shown in the table below. The category "great attention to detail" was removed because it was mentioned by only one interviewee.



In order to define competencies, to create the initial model of competence, relevant notes and sections of the interview were reviewed and modified as follows:

Table 3: initial competency model

Main classes	Competencies
Not to be afraid to interact with aliens and new spaces	Tolerance of ambiguity
Adaptation and consistency	Consistency
Friendship and interaction	Openness
Curiosity and interest in learning	Curiosity and learning
Cooperation	A sense of partnership and collaboration
Communication skills	Mastery of communication skills
Language skills	Mastery of language skills
Trust and stability	Create a sense of trust and stability
Introduction to international law	Being aware of international law

Model review through Delphi method and formulation of final competences

At this stage, after identifying the initial competencies, participants were asked to indicate, by means of forms, the importance of each of the codes (indicators) in achieving effective intercultural communication. The Likert scale was used to measure this issue with five items of “Not at all Important”, “Slightly Important”, “Fairly Important”, “Quite Important”, “Very Important”. In order to measure the score, the “Very important” option was assigned a score of 5 and the “Not at all Important” option was zero. All primary indicators were then reviewed and ranked in order of importance.

Table 4: final competency model

No.	Competencies	Rank
1.	Flexibility	1
2.	Tolerance of ambiguity	2
3.	Law of Consciousness	3
4.	Openness	4
5.	General communication skills	5
6.	Language skills	6
7.	Curiosity and learning	7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the present study was to develop a model for the intercultural communication competencies of public managers that led to the formation of 7 competencies using grounded theory and behavioral interviews with Spencer and Spencer approaches that can be applied to the following factors:

- Increasing the knowledge of managers, businessmen and other activists of economic, cultural and political areas of the country through intercultural communication and increasing the efficiency of the performance of domestic and national organizations and institutions as a result of increasing intercultural knowledge
- Assessment and self-assessment of managers, businessmen and politicians of the country on the effectiveness of international interactions;
- Selection, training, and development of country managers, businessmen, and politicians on the effectiveness of international interactions;
- Improving the economic situation of the country due to the direct link between commercial, political and cultural success with cross-cultural skills;
- The importance of using cross-cultural concepts in different sciences such as marketing, human resources; education, etc.;
- Continuing the process of globalization and the need to master the tools of intercultural communication during this process;
- Helping social networks and the Internet become more interactive and the need to increase the effectiveness of these interactions;
- Importance of the tourism industry in the economies of countries and attention to understanding the merits of intercultural communication as one of the most important factors of this industry.

Suggestions

According to the results, one of the most important future research could be to test the present model in predicting the success of public managers in international interactions; in other words, to what extent can this model be a good metric for measuring the effectiveness of public managers' communications in international interactions.

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