Book Review

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Intercultural Competence for College and University Students

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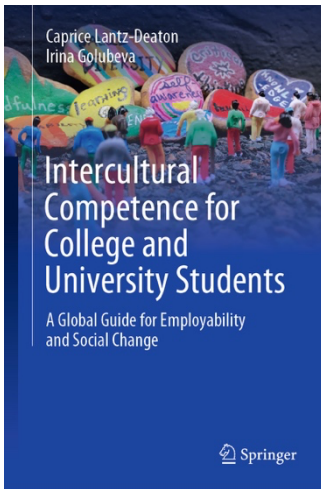
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Globalization has provided the modern world with a great deal of convenience, but it has posed many challenges which need to be overcome by adopting systematic approaches. In the globalized world, land and sea borders do not bear much weight as international interactions increase. Such interactions can cause friction if interactants are not sufficiently interculturally competent, leading to the rise of obstacles and communication breakdown. Intercultural competence (IC), therefore, has become one of the main concerns of educational institutions (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Consequently, many educational institutions now strive to incorporate IC training into their educational programs, so that graduate global citizens can perform effectively in intercultural contexts.

The book *Intercultural Competence for College and University Students*, co-authored by Caprice Lantz-Deaton and Irina Golubeva, comprises eight chapters and details how college and university students can become better prepared, both academically and socially, for their future careers. IC is discussed under the three main topics: how IC can contribute to a more peaceful world and enhance intercultural interaction, how it can contribute to the academic and career success of each individual, and how

potential IC can mitigate such issues as "equality, diversity, and inclusion worldwide" (p. vii).

Chapter 1 begins by introducing the concept of IC and its constituent components, followed by the reasons why IC is a must for the future careers and social lives of graduates. Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva describe how diversity can serve as a two-edged sword; it can contribute to the co-existence of different cultural values in society and the workplace, while also posing inequality challenges, such as prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping, both in and outside the workplace. The chapter invites the reader to reflect on how interculturally competent they consider themselves to be and offers reasons why they might mistakenly overestimate their IC, such as their educational profile, having international friends, extensive travels abroad, speaking more than one language, and many more factors that can contribute to IC but do not necessarily guarantee it.

The authors devote Chapter 2 to the core concept of culture to ground their discussion of IC as "a complex and not well understood concept" (p. 25). Specifically, the authors investigate different aspects of culture, both intrinsic and extrinsic, and consider the reasons for differences between cultures. They also discuss identity -- both personal and social -- and address cultural concepts from different perspectives, such as deep culture, superficial culture and the values associated with them, i.e., high and low context cultures. Before proposing their own definition of culture, Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva discuss implicit and explicit norms by providing examples from different cultures and consider individualism versus collectivism.

Chapter 3 focuses on the factors that hinder IC and the ways in which cultural differences produce negative reactions such as prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination. By discussing two dichotomies of discrimination, explicit versus implicit discrimination and overt versus covert discrimination, Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva describe how discrimination is manifested as a result of prejudice. To this end, they use reliable statistical data to outline how racial and gender discrimination is manifested. By adopting social identity theory, group conflict theory and concepts such as power and privilege, they discuss how and why prejudices are formed and why people are discriminated against. Furthermore, they support the solution suggested by the literature, that intergroup contact needs to occur under facilitative conditions, such as equal status, support from figures of authority, common goals and intergroup cooperation.

Chapter 4 is devoted to delving into IC models and theories, such as: compositional, co-ordinational, developmental, adaptational and causal path models. Additionally, the authors provide an overview of Deardorff's (2006) pyramid model, which is classified as a compositional model, and

briefly examine the main components of IC in this model. To determine whether equality, diversity and inclusion are incorporated into IC, the authors compare Deardorff's (2006) model with Barrett's (2013) compositional model and conclude that the need for all three is highlighted in the latter model. To discuss the role of cultural awareness (interaction) in IC, Byram's (1997) co-ordinational model of intercultural communicative competence and its five components are also examined.

Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva highlight the principle of the model that "[o]ne's development into a more intercultural person is predicated upon constant critical exploration of ourselves as cultural beings" (p. 120). As a model focusing on the development of IC over time, the authors provide a detailed discussion of Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). They examine the link between the DMIS and the general classification of IC components: attitudes, knowledge and skills. Berry et al.'s (1987) model, which consists of four acculturation strategies, is presented and the question 'What makes interactions intercultural?' is addressed. The authors state that IC is a matter of degree, and then go on to discuss this aspect through the lens of cultural distance, presenting competencies deemed to be essential for raising IC levels. Next, they introduce the reader to several instruments, including a self-reflective activity located at the end of the book. The authors also provide an action plan, which includes a range of activities aimed at helping the reader to develop one's own IC. They conclude the chapter by acknowledging the complexity surrounding IC in terms of its definitions, components and models, confirming that a single definitive definition or model of IC is almost impossible to reach.

Chapter 5 draws the reader's attention to the main direction of the volume: the use of IC in a variety of tertiary contexts. Two initiatives commonly used by the majority of institutions for the development of IC, Internationalization (IZN) and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), are then introduced. Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva present some suggestions to improve the practices that institutions are currently adopting in their efforts to facilitate the adaptation of international students.

The focus of Chapter 6 is the concept of critical incidents, and how these critical incidents can contribute to the development of IC by university or college students. Using a collection of examples from different intercultural contexts, the authors try to develop an understanding of critical incidents, which can be categorized as either positive or negative. To conclude the chapter, Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva encourage students to apply their critical incident competencies in their attempts to develop IC, by

emphasizing the three most influential competencies: self-awareness, critical thinking and empathy.

Chapter 7 centers on career development, specifically the link between IC development and employability. Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva consider the benefits that staff with an enhanced level of IC can bring to an organization and the reasons why staff with high levels of IC are preferred by employers. The authors conclude the book by devoting the final chapter to intercultural leadership (IL), an increasingly important concept for intercultural companies the world over. Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva begin the chapter by investigating leadership, moving to transformational leadership before arriving at IL, which still has some way to go before it can be considered as an established concept.

The reader-friendly approach that is adopted throughout the book is a salient feature of this volume. To this end, the authors have used a diverse range of strategies, such as scenarios, Boxes and Thought Boxes, which allow the discussions to unfold while at the same time engaging the reader. In this way, the authors attempt to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge and facilitate the application of findings and solutions to real contexts. With IC becoming increasingly more important in modern society, this volume is a timely resource that will address the spectrum of evolving roles: college and university students becoming job-seeking graduates and potential company leaders whose IC proficiency appears to be one of the key requirements of employability.

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