Overview:
This lesson plan challenges participants to develop effective teaching and learning techniques while discussing cultural dimensions. In this activity, participants will be given a sheet of paper with two opposite cultural dimensions printed on them. In a series of six rounds, they will explain these dimensions to a partner using varying techniques. Then, they will identify where they belong on each of these dimensions.

Objectives:
As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:
1. Summarize what they learned about effective teaching and learning techniques.
2. Express the evolution of becoming more empathetic throughout the experience.
3. Identify where they are on the cultural dimensions in various contexts.

Time:
1 hour and 15 minutes

Group Size:
Pairs

Materials:
Copies of either the Round Robin Cultural Dimensions sheets or the Hofstede Cut Apart (both in Downloads).

Note: It is helpful to print the various dimensions on different colors of paper, so participants know not to talk to a participant with the same color of paper that they are holding (if it is necessary for some participants to have the same dimensions).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:
- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:
Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:
- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

Other Skills:
Mentorship & Leadership

Activity adapted by Michael Vande Berg from an unknown source and from the following:
**Activity Instructions:**

The activity's content consists of anywhere from eight to twelve pairs of cultural value dimensions (depending on how many participants are in the workshop, and how much time you plan to spend with this content—the more people, and the more emphasis you plan to place on these dimensions in a training program, the more dimensions you'll include). The Round Robin Cultural Dimensions document (available in the Downloads section for this tool) has two opposite cultural dimensions typed on each page. You should print each page on different colored sheets of paper (for example, the collectivism/individualism could be printed on green paper, the universalism/particularism printed on blue paper, etc.). Then, you should provide one piece of paper to each participant.

*Note:* You do not have to use all the dimensions included in this document; you can choose which ones are most appropriate/useful for the participants.

*Note from Michael Vande Berg:* I've found it useful in some workshops to include Kolb's LSI dimensions in this activity, treating them here as “cultural dimensions,” since one of the teaching aims here is to help participants understand the need “to stretch” toward the pole that's farthest from their own position along a value continuum.

The activity consists of two parts. The first is the round robin: this is a paired activity, with the pairs changing with each round of the activity. The second is a small group activity, with 4-5 members in each group.

*Note from Michael Vande Berg:* It's important to keep an eye on the clock with this activity: participants like it a lot and are happy spending a lot more than 75 minutes with it. (That's my time limit for the activity.)

**Part 1:**

The round robin part of this activity consists of six rounds. You'll give simple explanations at the beginning of each round. (By the way, if you have an odd number of participants, and since this is a paired activity in part 1, you ask one of them to observe the wide range of teaching and learning techniques that this activity engenders, and I ask him or her to note teaching and learning strategies that seem especially successful. This observer then briefly reports to the group, at the end of Round 1, describing a few of the most successful techniques. You'll especially want to ask him or her, before the fifth and sixth rounds, to comment on what is different, in terms of teaching and learning, during these two rounds.)

*Note:* The facilitator gives these directions for Round 1

**Round 1:**

Organize yourselves into pairs, finding someone that you don't know well, or haven't worked with before. You're now going to teach the other person in your pair the information that's written on the card I've given you. This information describes a “cultural dimension”—we'll talk more about “cultural dimensions” at the end of this activity. You can teach the information on your card in any way you want. It's very important, though, that you tell the other person the name of the cultural dimension, which appears at the top of each card. OK, go ahead and teach your partner the information that's written on your card. You have four minutes to complete this, so each of you will need to limit your teaching to no more than two minutes.
Round 2:

Find another partner, someone you don't know well and haven't worked with much in the past. Keep the same card with the information that you taught in round 1. Once again, you're going to teach the information on the card, and once again, it's going to be very important for you to name the cultural value dimension that you're teaching. This time, you cannot show the other person the information on the card—that is, your partner cannot simply read the information off of the card. Again, you have a total of four minutes.

Round 3:

Find another partner. Once again, you're going to teach the information on the same card, and once again, it's important that you name the cultural dimension you'll be teaching. This time, you cannot read the information from your card as you teach it to your partner.

Round 4:

Find another partner. Once again, you're going to teach the information on the same card, and once again, it's going to be important for you to name the cultural value dimension that you're teaching. This time, it's also very important that you teach the information on your card in a different way from the way or ways you've taught it before. You have a total of four minutes.

Round 5:

Find another partner. Once again, you're going to teach the information on the same card, and once again, it's going to be important for you to name the cultural dimension that you're teaching. Listen carefully to what I'm going to say now, because this is different from what you've heard up to now. This is round 5. During this round, you need to pay attention very carefully to what your partner will be teaching you—because in round 6 you are going to have to teach the information that you're about to learn in this round, round 5, to someone else in round 6—the round after this one. And you're going to have to teach that material without having the card in your hand—that is, you'll continue, in round 6, to hold the card you're now holding, but you'll be teaching information from the card that your partner has during this fifth round. [Teaching note: I find it useful to repeat all of this, at this point; some of the participants will get panicky if they don't understand exactly what they're going to have to do during both round 5 and round 6.]

Round 6:

Find another partner. This is round 6—the last round that we'll be doing. You'll recall, from what I said before round 5, that you're now going to teach your partner the information that you learned during round 5. You can teach that information in any way you like. You have a total of five minutes.

At this point, you finish Part 1 by briefly debriefing three different things:

1. You ask the observer to summarize, in two minutes, the things that particularly struck him or her about effective teaching and learning techniques.

2. You ask participants what they experienced in rounds 1-4 (many will comment that they experienced an evolution in the way they were going about teaching their particular cultural difference).
3. You ask participants to compare their experience in rounds 1-4, with their experience in rounds 5-6. (What we often hear is that the fifth and sixth rounds were quite different. You’re going to facilitate this so that the participants get to the point where they’re describing how rounds 5-6 became more “intercultural”: partners focused more intentionally, making attempts to bring more focus and energy to communicating and connecting with each other. Some of them make extra efforts to put themselves “into the shoes of the other,” including emotionally—which is what we mean when we talk about “empathy.” All of these are, of course, skills that are part of the “intercultural competencies” that we focus on in this sort of training.)

Part 2:

Identifying where each person is along the 8-12 cultural dimensions they’ve been teaching each other through this activity. This part involves organizing the participants into small groups of 5. Before the activity, you’ll have prepared a chart for the small groups, one that shows the dimensions you’ve taught, one after the other, from top to bottom of a flip chart page, organized as a continua. You ask each participant to mark with an x the point on the different cultural continua where they believe they are. You then ask the groups to imagine the following:

Management has brought you together as a special team in order to develop a new program that will, in its first year, bring a thousand Chinese students to the US for a one-year program of study at US universities. You’re meeting now for the first time, and you’ve just identified where each of your tendencies are for each of the cultural differences on the flip chart. Please identify, and be prepared to share with the large group, what you believe some of your strengths as a team might be, and where you believe you’ll be facing some challenges.

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- Communication Continuum Exercise (Detached, Attached and Intuitive)
- Hofstede Round Robin
- Origins of Cultural Contrasts

Tools to use in conjunction with this lesson:

- Direct-Indirect Communication
- High Road, Low Road
- Individualist-Collectivist Quiz
- Monochronic-Polychronic Quiz
- Power Distance Quiz
- Rational, Emotive, Intuitive