## OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Purdue University

# Learning Outcomes of an Intercultural Training for a Community of Practice

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This intervention took place on September 20, 2016 in West Lafayette as the first fall meeting of the Purdue InterCultural Learning Community of Practice

## Purpose/Background

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, a training intervention was offered to members of the Purdue University Intercultural Learning Community of Practice. Members were taught two ways of leading an intercultural learning activity, as well as a method of assessing learning from that activity. The activity being taught was the Describe-Interpret-Evaluate exercise ("the D-I-E"), a classic of intercultural training methodology; the assessment method was the One-Minute Paper.

A total of 18 members of the Community were able to attend, primarily consisting of staff who work in co-curricular student support positions. Over half of the attendees were qualified administrators of the Intercultural Development Inventory; e.g. this was an audience who came in with a high degree of knowledge about intercultural learning and assessment of intercultural learning. Sixteen of the participants completed the One-Minute Paper assessment at the end of the event.

## Research Questions

The InterCultural Learning Team was interested in finding out:

- 1) What the participants learned from this intervention;
- 2) Which InterCultural Learning skill the participants believed the D-I-E exercise teaches; and
- 3) Whether the participants could see ways to incorporate the D-I-E in their current jobs.

## Executive Summary of Findings

- > 94% of respondents reported at least one significant learning outcome.
- Participants varied in their perception of which intercultural skill the D-I-E exercise advances; the most commonly cited skill was Openness.
- ➤ 81% of the participants could envisage multiple ways to incorporate the D-I-E exercise into their current jobs.

## Analysis and Results

#### Question #1: Learning Outcomes of Participants

Participants were asked to list two significant learning outcomes of the training event. Fifteen out of sixteen participants, or 94% of the total, were able to identify at least one significant learning outcome they experienced as a result of attendance; most expressed two or more learning outcomes. (One participant cited a greater appreciation for ethnic food as his/her main 'learning' outcome.)

Over half of the group (9 out of 16 or 56%) expressed at least one **Self-Awareness** revelation, such as:

- "I like to create alternative possibilities."
- "My interpretation often differs from others of my same nationality."
- "My culture has taught me to see things a specific way."

Another half of the outcomes statements indicated that the participant had experienced a deeper insight into the complexity of factors which may influence others' Worldview:

"People really do bring different perspectives even if their backgrounds appear similar."

"Class and ethnicity do matter (not just national culture)."

"In a group, some people self-censor."

"For most people, it is difficult to avoid evaluation when we interpret."

Finally, about a third of the participants mentioned as one of their most significant learning outcomes a new concrete skill they could add to their InterCultural toolkit, such as a new way of leading a D-I-E activity or how to suspend judgement and observe more closely. We note that question #1 was in fact intended to lead participants <u>away</u> from a listing of concrete skills (e.g. "What did you learn about yourself and others?") so this finding does not indicate that other participants didn't also learn something concrete.

#### Question #2: In your opinion, which intercultural skill does the D-I-E improve?

The D-I-E is often described as having the purpose of teaching the learner to recognize that value judgements often cloud our perceptions. Dr. Mick Vande Berg has characterized the D-I-E as a tool for helping individuals learn to manage their emotions in the face of ambiguity, change & challenging circumstances or people.

In short, it is a flexible tool, and for this reason the trainers were careful not to overtly connect it to the Purdue Intercultural Learning rubric, and asked the above question of the participants, to further gauge their perceptions of the exercise. The group response is delineated in the table below. (Note that some respondents opined that the tool teaches more than one intercultural skill.)

Intercultural Skill	# of Mentions
Openness	Five (5)
Self-Awareness	Four (4)
Worldview	Three (3)
Frame-Shifting	Three (3)
Tolerance of Ambiguity	One (1)
Cultural Intelligence	One (1)
Observation/Evaluation	One (1)
Comfort with Difference	One (1)

#### Question #3: What are two ways you can envisage using D-I-E in your work?

Thirteen out of 16 respondents, or 81% of the group, envisaged using the D-I-E in a class, training or co-curricular program which they regularly lead for Purdue. Two individuals intended to use it to be more mindful of their own biases in pursuit of becoming less judgmental of others. Three individuals thought it would be a good exercise to do with peers in a professional development context (such as at a conference).

Several individuals were more specific about how they would use it:

- To teach scientific method ("to separate observation, claim, evidence").
- To challenge students' usual mode of thinking.
- To make students aware of their feelings.
- To encourage students to imagine other interpretations of what they see.
- To teach students to turn negative reactions into null or positive ones.
- To help students develop their writing skills.
- · To train orientation leaders to work with international students.

### Conclusion & Recommendations

This was a highly effective learning intervention for the Community of Practice; however, for audiences with less familiarity with the theory and/or practice of Intercultural Learning the team would make the following adjustments in order to maintain its high standard of effectiveness.

#### A. Transparency of What One is Attempting to Teach

The team was careful in this instance not to pigeon-hole the D-I-E as being 'about" one specific skill. It was the belief of the assessment designer that trainers would gain valuable insights into its potential uses on the Purdue campus by having Community of Practice members state what they thought the D-I-E exercise teaches. This evaluation was also designed to move the learner higher on the Bloom's taxonomy, towards internalization of an outcomes-based approach to learning and ownership of the tool as a co-curricular learning intervention.

With some audiences or in some situations, however, it might be helpful to show the Purdue Intercultural rubric just prior to giving the One-Minute assessment sheet, or to list the elements of the rubric on the sheet. This would presumably eliminate 'non-standard' answers to the question about intercultural skills.

#### B. Ambiguity of Interpretation & Evaluation

A few participants stated that they learned it is difficult to separate "interpretation" from "evaluation." This was, in fact, a key learning point mentioned explicitly by one of the trainers: when one begins interpreting it is nearly always aligned to a value judgment, which may be null, positive or negative.

With some audiences, however, the ambiguity of not being able to define clear differences between the two D-I-E categories will not be well-tolerated, and would merit a more extensive discussion and debriefing.