



# Intercultural Competences

Conceptual and Operational Framework

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# C o n t e n t s

- I. FOREWORD
- II. THE CHALLENGE
- III. CONCEPTUAL VOCABULARY
- IV. A VISUAL CONCEPTUALIZATION,  
the Intercultural Competences Tree
- V. OPERATIONAL PLAN
  1. Clarifying Intercultural Competences
  2. Teaching Intercultural Competences
  3. Promoting Intercultural Competences
  4. Enacting Intercultural Competences
  5. Supporting Intercultural Competences
- VI. CONCLUSION

## I. FOREWORD

All living cultures are outcomes of intercultural communication. Human history is the tale of such journeys. This becomes particularly evident in the globalization era where the ever-fast evolving cultural landscape is characterized by an intensified diversity of peoples, communities and individuals who live more and more closely. The increasing diversity of cultures, which is fluid, dynamic and transformative, implies specific competences<sup>1</sup> and capacities for individuals and societies to learn, re-learn, and unlearn so as to meet personal fulfilment and social harmony. The ability to decipher other cultures in fair and meaningful ways is predicated not only on an open and pluralistic spirit but also on self-cultural awareness. When a culture is critically aware of its own strengths and limitations, it can extend its horizons and enrich its intellectual and spiritual resources by learning from alternative visions in epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and worldviews.

UNESCO, like the entire United Nations, was created to promote mutual understanding, peace, democracy and development. Its specific mandate as a specialized agency is to translate these goals into everyday practice by fostering intercultural sensitivity and solidarity while fighting intolerance, stereotyping, discrimination, hate speech and violence. According to UNESCO's Constitution, "... peace must be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind". This means that the Organization values and enhances human potential and capabilities for living together peacefully, free and equal, through its fields of competence: education, culture, sciences, communication and information, which are transformative tools for human dignity, mutual trust and shared responsibilities. Yet, the constant question remains as to the best approach to unity-in-diversity, or, even more, to the achievement of unity beyond diversity through full participation in the infinite wealth of the cultures of the world. This is the essence of the newly adopted UNESCO's "Programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence" with a twofold objective: highlighting the emergence of a sense of belonging to a shared, plural and fragile

humanity and giving prominence to the wealth of cultures as well as to the mutual respect that must exist between them with a view to facilitating an effective culture of peace.

Approaching cultural diversity requires that the broadest possible range of competences be identified and promoted, especially those that societies have devised and transmitted throughout succeeding generations. Because intercultural interactions have become a constant feature of modern life, even in the most traditional societies, the very manner in which





individuals and communities manage encounters with cultural others is under scrutiny. Hence the growing awareness among policy-makers and civil society that intercultural competences may constitute a very relevant resource to help individuals negotiate cultural boundaries throughout their personal encounters and experiences. They are becoming an integral part of the reflection on what the UNESCO Report directed by J. Delors, *Learning: The Treasure Within* (UNESCO, 1996), had termed as “learning to live together”. It must be noted that “learning” is first and foremost

about considering any matter, object or being as a symbol to be deciphered, or interpreted.

Intercultural competences are abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, in other terms, abilities to perform “effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). Schools are a central place to nurture such skills and abilities, as was underlined by UNESCO in a previous publication, *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (UNESCO, 2006b). Nevertheless, given their relevance for social and political life, the scope of intercultural competences is much wider than formal education. They have to reach out to a new generation of cybercitizens, notably young men and women who have unimagined opportunities for global conversations.

This idea was further developed in the *UNESCO World Report Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (UNESCO, 2009): “it is a new kind of literacy, on a par with the importance of reading and writing skills or numeracy: *cultural literacy* has become the lifeline for today’s world, a fundamental resource for harnessing the multiple venues education can take (from family and tradition to the media, both old and new, and to informal groups and activities) and an indispensable tool for transcending the clash of ignorances. It can be seen as part of a broad toolkit of worldviews, attitudes and competences that young people acquire for their lifelong journey.”

Intercultural competences aim at freeing people from their own logic and cultural idioms in order to engage with others and listen to their ideas, which may involve belonging to one or more cultural systems, particularly if they are not valued or recognized in a given socio-political context. Acquiring intercultural competences is a thrilling challenge since no one is, naturally, called upon to understand the values of others. This challenge is a unique opportunity in the history of humankind.



It invites everybody to avoid all phenomena of confinement or ghettoization by offering new opportunities of multiple interpretations and unexpected discoveries. These opportunities sometimes lead to rediscovering one's own identity under the deciphered forms of the 'other'. Therefore, intercultural competences empower the participating groups and individuals and enable them to interact with cultural 'others' with a view to bridging differences, defusing conflicts and setting the foundations of peaceful coexistence.

While a number of intercultural competences and skills have been identified, and proven strategies exist for strengthening their teaching, there are also countless others that remain to be discovered. Culturally diverse societies around the world have devised traditional practices, representations and expressions that allow them to enjoy the benefits of diversity and to diminish its possible costs.

With the aim of promoting the understanding and the enhancement of intercultural dialogue conducive to peace, a comparative study on concepts, methods and tools related to intercultural competences and skills was commissioned by UNESCO (2009). This comparative study, entitled "Promoting understanding and development of intercultural dialogue and peace" has drawn the main lines and trends of the actual debate on intercultural competences by: i) establishing a state of the art of main concepts, tools and methods that have been developed and applied successfully in the field of intercultural communication and mediation; ii) reflecting on diverse ways that societies have elaborated to mediate cultural difference, combat prejudice and strengthen social cohesion; and iii) identifying those skills, competences and social institutions that are of broader applicability and propose methods for conveying such skills to communities elsewhere.

Furthermore, an experts meeting was convened to both discuss the contents and the recommendations of the abovementioned comparative study with the objective of setting up proper strategies for its implementation. This meeting offered a precious opportunity for discussion with experts who had not contributed to the study but who were very much involved in this topic.

Drawing upon its longstanding experience, UNESCO is

currently working to enrich the content of intercultural competences with the principles and values of human rights. This exercise is expected to result in the development of a set of guidelines intended to mainstream the use of human rights-based intercultural competences in various fields of policy-making. The guidelines are to be accompanied by a training manual to support their implementation. Both the guidelines and the manual are intended for a variety of actors and stakeholders, from ministerial officials and planners to local authorities and youth leaders.

The present publication seeks to address this topic of growing interest to many audiences in all the regions of the world, intercultural competences. What are they? Why should do they matter so much today – and why will they matter even more tomorrow?

In that spirit, the content and the structure of this publication is to provide everyone with a pool of ideas and keys that can be reflexively used. The flexible organization of the booklet allows the reader to espouse constellations of concepts and guidelines, the ultimate coherence and relevance of which is to be found in their context of meaningful application.

It is hoped that the following pages will provide a good start on the basic terminology needed in order to develop intercultural competences and to permit intercultural dialogues, as well as outlining a series of minimally necessary steps to take in sharing this knowledge with the largest number of others, across the greatest selection of contexts, possible. Training a set of designated facilitators, no matter how skilled, has already proved inadequate to maintaining human rights and world peace. Therefore it becomes essential to implement further reaching changes: everyone needs intercultural competences today as a result of globalization, and so efforts must be made to ensure that everyone gains them.

UNESCO remains more than ever committed to raise awareness on intercultural competences, ensuring that they are studied, taught, and promoted not only at a theoretical level but also as a toolbox of knowledge, skills and abilities to prepare individuals to a wide variety of diverse situations in daily life within and among our contemporary plural societies.



**W**hat are intercultural competences and why are they necessary in this globalizing world that has moved people of different backgrounds closer together? What place do intercultural competences take – and what place should they take – in shaping this world?

## II. THE CHALLENGE

**G**lobalization shrinks the world, bringing a wider range of cultures into closer contact than ever before. Inevitably, cultural boundaries are shifting, therefore the pace of social transformations is increasing. As a result, cultural diversity and intercultural contact have become facts of modern life, so intercultural competences become a requisite response (UNESCO, 2009)<sup>1</sup>. Since cultural diversity serves as a resource (in the ways that biodiversity serves as a resource), and since it is impossible to stop contact between cultures, learning to positively shape a common future for humankind at all levels becomes essential. To this end, cultural diversity serves as a valuable resource to engage in lasting intercultural dialogues, with which it is intimately linked: neither of these two notions can flourish without the other. The resulting socio-cultural fabric of our societies, combined with global interconnectedness, necessitate specific attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, skills and abilities to cope with the new cultural, media and emotional landscape when systems have shown limited capacity to embrace diversity. Therefore, the development of intercultural competences facilitates relationships and interactions among people from various origins and cultures as well as within heterogeneous groups, all of whom must learn to live together in peace. Intercultural competences permit,

inter alia, sharing an awareness of selfhood and otherness with more and more people, thus avoiding risks such as the reproduction of stereotypes and the promotion of an essentialist perspective on culture<sup>2</sup>.

In fact, cultures are driving forces for sustainable development and harmonious coexistence by connecting meanings conducive to self and mutual understanding as well as to contestation or accommodation of differences. The idea of culture as a shared, stable living space, supported equally by all members of the group, which passes it onto the next generation, is becoming less and less a reality. In this new environment, cultures observe one another, asking the same question: how to coexist and interact in a more and more interconnected world?

This recurrent question is precisely the *raison d'être* for the creation of the United Nations and UNESCO in particular, the latter tasked with a soft power mandate organically integrating the culture of peace, sustainable development and knowledge societies.

In this regard, important sources for developing the content of intercultural competences are the several key UN documents on human rights. In 1948, *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was the first international instrument to establish a comprehensive list of rights to be applied to all individuals in all societies and settings, thus providing a basis for managing



relations between various peoples and their multiple groups, notably through education. “*Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace*” (Article 26, paragraph 2). Intercultural competences complement human rights as a catalyst for promoting a culture of peaceful and harmonious coexistence. Human rights include:

1. Civil and political rights (life, security, integrity, fundamental freedoms, access to justice);
2. Economic, social and cultural rights (education, health, work, food, housing, participation in economic, social and cultural life);
3. Fundamental principles such as: universality and inalienability; indivisibility, interrelatedness and interdependence, equality and non-discrimination (women’s rights, rights of indigenous people, children’s rights, rights of persons with disabilities, rights of migrant workers), participation and inclusion, accountability and rule of law;
4. Individual and collective rights (free determination, development, environment, rights belonging to such groups as indigenous peoples; freedom of religious expression);
5. Elements and dimensions such as: availability, accessibility, adaptability, acceptability, quality and appropriateness.<sup>3</sup>

In 2001, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity affirmed the position that “No one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope” (UNESCO, 2001, Art. 4). Cultural diversity and human rights must co-exist, not compete. In fact, “cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are key levers for strengthening consensus on the universal foundation of human rights” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 27).

The connection between human rights and intercultural dialogue holds great significance, since these are mutually reinforcing in the creation of inclusive soci-

eties. A global culture of human rights requires competence in holding intercultural dialogues. And it is through intercultural dialogue that members of different groups learn about one another. Human rights serve as an obvious topic for those holding intercultural dialogues, and so form part of a program designed to lead to a culture of peace, since “the culture of peace is above all a culture of peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution, education for non-violence, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, dialogue and reconciliation” (UNESCO, 2011a). At the same time, an environment where all human rights are fully respected provides the fertile ground for intercultural dialogue to blossom. All of these goals are furthered through intercultural dialogue, and hindered when people who are in contact with members of other cultural groups fail in their interactions.

The report *Learning: The Treasure Within*, prepared by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (UNESCO, 1996), identified four pillars as the foundations of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. Intercultural competences obviously play an integral role in learning to live together. Learning to live together in an increasingly globalizing world, and thus at risk both of cultural homogenization and cultural fragmentation, means that everyone should be able to understand the stakes behind cultural differences and the potential benefits of cultural change<sup>4</sup>.

*The UNESCO World Report Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* makes it clear how crucial it is to acquire a cultural literacy to understand cultures in their creative diversity: “This is a new kind of literacy, on a par with the importance of reading and writing skills or numeracy: cultural literacy has become the lifeline for today’s world, a fundamental resource for harnessing the multiple venues education can take (from family and tradition to the media, both old and new, and to informal groups and activities) and an indispensable tool for transcending the ‘clash of ignorances.’ It can be seen as part of a broad toolkit of worldviews, attitudes and competences that young people acquire for their lifelong journey. The advocacy

for linguistic and cultural diversity within education is an awareness-raising campaign in need of holistic and official recognition at the highest possible levels in order to convince all parties of its benefits and relevance” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 118).

Intercultural competences are closely integrated with learning to know, do, and be. Learning to know about cultural others provides the first step in gaining intercultural competences, a step that can never be complete, for there are always still more others to meet. Learning to do serves as the active step of interacting with cultural others; through such interactions people both apply knowledge already gained, and acquire more, learning from interactions with others in the past, and designing future interactions. Learning to be relies upon the reflective step of thinking about one’s social self as having a place in the global world. A culture of peace relies upon intercultural dialogue, as well as conflict prevention and resolution, and so UNESCO is committed to promoting intercultural competences, making these common competences to be studied, taught, and promoted not only at a theoretical level but as a way to approach a wide variety of diverse situations in daily life.

Once the need for intercultural competences is accepted and felt as urgency, it becomes essential to develop a broad range of theoretical concepts and definitions acknowledging multiple understandings, taking into consideration the existing plurality of languages, religions, histories and identities. Increasingly different groups co-exist in close proximity and need to understand and negotiate concepts, perceptions, opportunities, and actions. Mutual trust and exchange about similar and differing experiences and values and overlapping lives serve as the beginning points for developing these common definitions and creating a new space of interactions. The following pages first provide a glossary of key concepts and a conceptual framework to nurture the debate on intercultural competences - learning to know - and then an operational plan to turn debate into action - learning to be, to do, and to live together.



### III. CONCEPTUAL VOCABULARY

One early step must be to provide a set of terms useful in discussing intercultural competences and managing interactions across cultural groups despite differences. The conceptual vocabulary through which topics are discussed matters as these concepts shape what can easily be said. In defining terms, it is necessary neither to limit nor fix a normative approach. Instead, the goal becomes opening minds and understandings to the multiple meanings of intercultural competences, incorporating a plurality of backgrounds, perceptions, and intentions. Attempts at defining this one concept have implications for the definitions of related concepts as well, including: cultural diversity, peace, relationship, self, other, globalization, adaptation, empathy, etc. Numerous possible interpretations arise, connected with the diversity of our worldviews, opinions, languages, cultures, disciplines, beliefs, etc. Promoting a better and shared understanding of the diverse meanings of these concepts can foster informed ways of using them. In this spirit, the following explanations of terms should be understood as providing only a starting point, not the final word on the subject.

The first set of key concepts includes those already widely accepted as essential to understanding intercultural competences; the second set provides a set of ideas less frequently used, or drawn from a broader range of contexts. These have great potential value, but would benefit from elaboration with regard to what they can offer discussions of intercultural competences, and especially in how the different concepts fit together.

**Culture** is that set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group, encompassing all the ways of being in that society; at a minimum, including art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs (UNESCO, 1982 and 2001). Each culture is the sum of assumptions and practices shared by members of a group distinguishing them from other groups, and so one culture comes into clearest focus when compared to another culture maintaining

different practices. However, cultures are themselves multiple, so that to insiders, every group reveals itself not as homogeneous but rather a nested series of progressively smaller groups whose members are all too aware of distinctions between themselves. Cultures themselves are seldom the focus of attention in discussion of intercultural competences, for cultures have no existence apart from the people who construct and animate them. Thus members of cultural groups more adequately serve as the focus of attention.

**Cultural Identity** refers to those aspects of identity shared by members of a culture that, taken as a set, mark them as distinct from members of other cultures. Like most forms of identity, cultural identity is socially constructed – that is, people do something to create and then claim it, whether that be speaking a particular language, eating particular foods, or following particular religious practices. Individuals have multiple identities, and these change over time (Hecht, 1993) being constructed and reconstructed through communication in intercultural interactions. While others can be easily classified as having singular, monolithic identities, everyone understands their own identity to be a more complex matter, with multiple identities relevant to different contexts: gender, class, age, ethnicity, region, history, nationality, occupation, each becoming relevant at different times in the same person's day. Identities change over time: the child grows up and becomes a parent; the citizen of one country moves, becoming a citizen of another; the student graduates and becomes a teacher. Recognition of the multiplicity and fluidity of identity complicates our understanding of cultural pluralism (implying that people cannot accurately be categorized as only members of one group). At the same time, these facts simplify intercultural dialogue: since everyone has had the experience of moving between contrasting identities, it makes sense to recognize others as members of multiple groups as well. Being constructed, identities must be communicated from one individual to the next, and passed down from one generation to the next, most explicitly from parents to children. Children of parents raised in different cultures provide an obvious example of individuals holding multiple

cultural identities, since children frequently become competent in all (e.g., Akindes, 2005).

**Cultural diversity** refers to the existence of a wide variety of cultures in the world today. Cultural diversity permits, and intercultural competences require, understanding one's own culture but also recognizing that each culture provides only one option among many possibilities. Cultural diversity requires, and intercultural competences permit, the ability to convey information to others about one's own culture through communication with them, as well as to interpret information about the other and his or her culture. Culture is the result of constant negotiation with members of one's own group; communication is the vehicle through which that negotiation occurs. Intercultural interactions are the result of comparable negotiations with members of other groups; intercultural communication is the vehicle through which those negotiations occur. Cultural diversity is thus "a mechanism for organizing the most productive dialogue between meaningful pasts and doable futures" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 11).

**Values, beliefs, and attitudes** key aspects of culture, underlie all communication with others, whether within a culture or between members of different cultures. One possible distinction suggests *values* are understood to be true or false; *beliefs* are assumed to be good or bad; and *attitudes* refer to individual characteristics such as curiosity and interest in others (Condon & Yousef, 1975). Values, beliefs and attitudes are most often taken for granted, not normally questioned, simply accepted by members of a cultural group as baseline assumptions rarely made explicit, learned during childhood and assumed to be obvious truths by adults. Substantial interactional difficulties occur when participants discover their assumptions differ, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts even during well-intentioned intercultural dialogues or interactions. Attitudes relevant to intercultural competences include: respect, empathy, open-mindedness, curiosity, risk-taking, flexibility, and tolerance of ambiguity<sup>5</sup>. In the same vein, UNESCO lays stress on the common values, deep inter-

actions and cross-cultural borrowings that have taken place among different cultural and spiritual traditions, whether during the past or continuing today, and the need to foster reciprocal knowledge among these various traditions in order to achieve respect for pluralism, respect for beliefs and convictions, and to serve as the basis for creating harmony in pluricultural and pluri-religious societies.

**Intercultural** describes what occurs when members of two or more different cultural groups (of whatever size, at whatever level) interact or influence one another in some fashion, whether in person or through various mediated forms. Included in a broad definition of the term would be international political or economic interactions, when members from two or





more countries interact or influence one another in some fashion. However, since it is again a logistical impossibility for entire cultures to interact, even political entities such as nation-states must rely upon individuals to represent their interests in interactions with other individuals, representing in their turn other, comparable entities. A further complication: no human belongs to only a single culture – everyone has multiple identities, multiple cultural affiliations, whether or not everyone else is aware of all the shadow selves standing behind the self relevant to, and thus made visible in, any specific interaction. While multiple selves each play significant roles in different contexts or at different stages of life, they may also exist simultaneously. An extended family, neighbors in the same apartment complex, work colleagues, people who play a particular sport, pursue a particular hobby, practice a particular religion, or those whose parents came from the same geographic location: all these clusters develop into *subcultures or co-cultures*<sup>6</sup> – that is, they all have their own ways of being in the world, their own expectations, traditions, and goals. So even what appears to be intracultural communication (that is, communication between members of the same cultural group) frequently requires substantial intercultural competences of participants.

**Communication** often said to be a message conveyed from one person to another, more adequately should be viewed as joint construction (or co-construction) of meaning (Galanes & Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Communication includes language as well as *nonverbal behavior*, which includes everything from use of sounds (paralanguage), movements (kinesics), space (proxemics), and time (chronemics), to many aspects of material culture (food, clothing, objects, visual design, architecture) and can be understood as the active aspect of culture. Culture may be understood as the more static, noun form – knowledge, behavior, language, values, beliefs, and attitudes learned by social actors through experience from the time they are children. Communication then would be the more active, verb form – the act of transferring cultural knowledge, behavior, language, values, beliefs, and attitudes from one generation of social actors to the next (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989).

**Competence** refers to having sufficient skill, ability, knowledge, or training to permit appropriate behavior, whether words or actions, in a particular context<sup>7</sup>. Competence includes cognitive (knowledge), functional (application of knowledge), personal (behavior) and ethical (principles guiding behavior) components, thus the capacity to know must be matched to the capacity to speak and act appropriately in context; ethics and consideration of human rights influence both speech and actions. Typically competence does not depend on any one single skill, attitude, or



type of knowledge, instead engaging a complex set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge. *Skills* typically mentioned as most directly relevant to an understanding of intercultural competences include: observation, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, relating (including personal autonomy), adaptability (including emotional resilience), the ability to be non-judgmental, stress management, metacommunication (the ability to communicate about communication, moving outside an interaction to discuss what has occurred or will yet occur; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989), and creative problem resolution. (UNESCO's 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report entitled *Youth and Skills: Putting education to work* proposes three sets of skills: *foundation skills*, referring to the most elemental, including literacy and numeracy, are a prerequisite for acquiring the other two sets; *transferable skills*, which include the ability to solve problems, communicate ideas and information effectively, be creative, show leadership and conscientiousness and demonstrate entrepreneurial capabilities; and *technical and vocational skills*, referring to the specific technical know-how required in different settings)<sup>8</sup>. A list of *attitudes* relevant to intercultural competences has been specified earlier (under values, beliefs, and attitudes). Types of relevant *knowledge* include: cultural self-awareness, cultural other awareness, culture-specific knowledge, culture-general knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness (of such topics as codeswitching or moving between languages or dialects), the cultural adaptation process, ethnocentrism, ethnorelativism, culture shock, and reverse culture shock.<sup>9</sup>

**Communicative competence** implies both understanding and producing appropriate words and other communication forms in ways that will make sense not only to the speaker/actor but also to others. Hymes (1967, 1972, 1984) pointed out that knowing how to put words into a sentence is only the start of communication; speakers must also gain familiarity with a wide variety of social and cultural contexts, so they will know when to produce utterances at appropriate times, taking into account a host of contextual factors. Learning to communicate appropriately with cultural others requires far more than learning the basic grammar rules for a language; one must learn the rules of

use as well in order to achieve communicative competence. What can be said to whom, in what context and with what connotations is never a simple matter. But this complex understanding must be the goal.

**Language** is both the generic term for the human ability to turn sounds into speech as a form of communication, and a specific term for the way in which members of any one group speak to one another. As with other forms of cultural diversity, scholars recognize that language can serve as a vehicle to separate people, but at the same time, the mere existence of multiple languages provides a superb repertoire of different solutions to what are often the same problems, different vocabularies for similar (or different) experiences, different expressions of ideas and values and beliefs. There are two parts to any utterance: what is said, and what is left unsaid. The unsaid includes what is assumed, what is implicit for a group of speakers, what is taken for granted to the point that remains unquestioned. Bridging the gap between the said and the unsaid requires making implicit assumptions explicit, an essential component of intercultural competences. Language serves only not as a channel for communication, although of course it is that: language also must be recognized as shaping our experiences, ideas, and understandings. Any idea is sayable in any language, ultimately and with enough effort, but not all concepts may be described equally easily in all languages. What is important to members of one group most often can be said quickly, in few words of that language; what has not yet become relevant to a particular group of speakers frequently takes many words to explain, and may be cumbersome, or insufficiently precise. A concept found in one language and culture often comes to be understood in another by metaphor if not by extended description. For example, when first introduced to automobiles, the Achumawi, a Native American group in California, named the car battery *hadatsi*, a word previously used to describe the heart of a human being (de Angulo, 1950). Thus do people interpret the new in light of prior experiences.

The words people use matter, and the effort to discover or invent words to bridge gaps in understanding plays

a part in how people display intercultural competences. **Multilingualism** (communicative competence in multiple languages) and **translation** (conveying the same idea through different languages) are thus obvious requirements for intercultural dialogue, and indications of intercultural competences, enriching each group's understanding of the other(s) as well of themselves. Equally, monolingualism is a barrier to acquiring intercultural competences since only one of the participants in an intercultural interaction undertakes the difficult work of understanding the other's language. Merely learning to understand another language opens a window to another culture's world, whether or not a full set of intercultural communicative competences is ever mastered.

**Dialogue** is a form of communication (most often linguistic, though not always) occurring when participants, having their own perspectives, yet recognize the existence of other, different perspectives, remaining open to learning about them. As such, dialogue stands in contrast to alternate forms such as "soliloquy" (where one speaker presents to one or more others, and the communication is unidirectional), or debate (essentially, serial monologues, with the goal of presenting one's viewpoint to others, not seriously listening to, considering and responding to, theirs). Dialogue requires both speaking (about one's own ideas, interests, passions, concerns) and listening (to those of others), but even more, dialogue entails "remaining in the tension between standing your own ground and being profoundly open to the other" (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 46). Dialogue requires comprehension but not necessarily agreement, although listening to diverse viewpoints most often takes as its eventual goal compromise between competing positions, collaborative planning, and problem solving. Dialogue may be only the beginning point for reaching agreement or compromise, but without it, participants have little possibility of either. The goals of sustainable development and social cohesion require that culturally diverse groups learn to engage in intercultural dialogue. Luckily, intercultural dialogue is both learnable and teachable, for "to engage in dialogue is to engage in a learning conversation" (Spano, 2001, p. 269). In

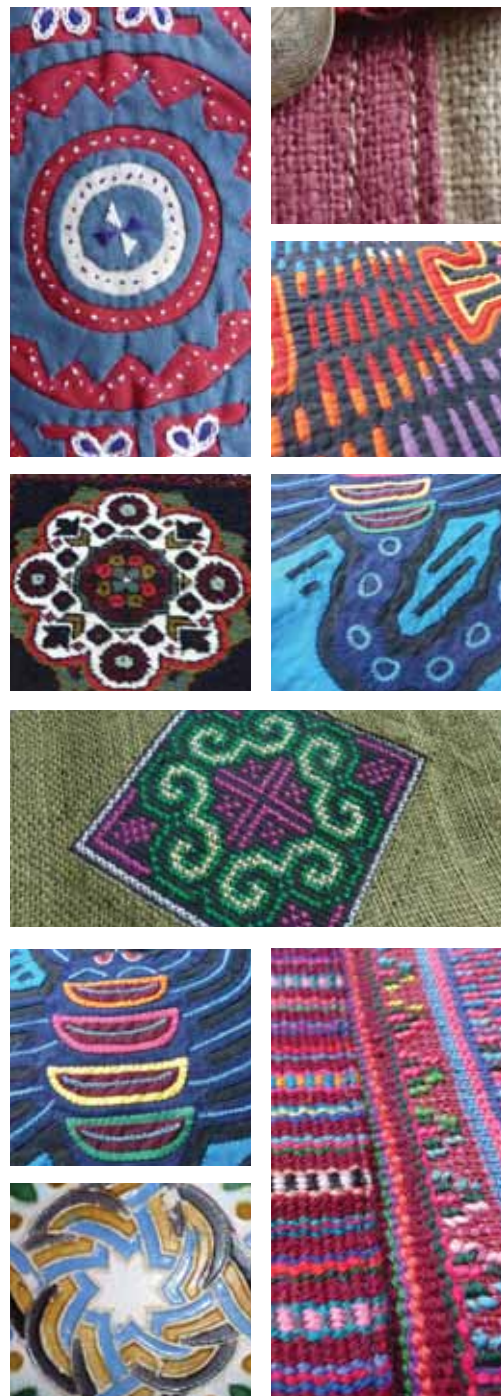
Pearce and Littlejohn's term, dialogue is "transformative conversation" (1997, p. 215). Penman suggests any dialogue requires "a commitment to mutual collaboration" (2000, p. 92). To recall, "dialogue" derives from the Greek term "dia-logos", widely mistranslated and wrongly understood because of a confusion between "duo" and "dia". It does not mean a conversation between two persons or two groups, but an acceptance, by two participants or more, that they will compare and contrast their respective arguments. The prefix "dia-" is equivalent to the Latin "trans-", connoting a considerable shift in space, time, substance or thought. Dialogue is not designed to lead to a definitive conclusion. It is a constantly-renewed means of re-initiating the thinking process, of questioning certainties, and of progressing from discovery to discovery.

**Intercultural dialogue** specifically refers to dialogues occurring between members of different cultural groups. Intercultural dialogue assumes that participants agree to listen to and understand multiple perspectives, including even those held by groups or individuals with whom they disagree. As phrased by UNESCO, intercultural dialogue encourages readiness to question well-established value-based certainties by bringing reason, emotion and creativity into play in order to find new shared understandings. By doing so, it goes far beyond mere negotiation, where mainly political, economic and geo-political interests are at stake. It is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. According to the Public Dialogue Consortium, dialogue is "inclusive rather than exclusive...the freedom to speak is joined to the right to be heard and the responsibility to listen...differences are treated as resources rather than barriers...conflict is handled collaboratively rather than adversarially...and decisions are made creatively rather than defensively."<sup>10</sup> These characteristics would serve as a good beginning for any intercultural dialogue. Although common usage refers to cultures interacting, or holding dialogues, it is actually individuals who interact and who hold intercultural dialogues, not the cultures themselves; similarly, it is individuals who manage their in-



teractions more or less interculturally competently. The complication is that one person in an interaction cannot be interculturally competent alone – for interaction is a process co-constructed jointly by all participants. If together participants manage well, then together they have been interculturally competent; if not, then it is simply inaccurate to say one of them was competent and the other incompetent; rather, all must admit that together they were incompetent. This notion of co-construction, of jointly making our interactions with others, rests at the heart of any intercultural encounter. Each encounter is about making something, creating something, jointly with at least one other person, and so the process of interaction must serve as focus. In any case, intercultural dialogue is the first step to taking advantage of different cultural traditions and histories to expand the list of possible solutions to common problems. Intercultural dialogue is thus an essential tool in the effort to resolve intercultural conflicts peacefully, and a precondition for cultivating a culture of peace.

**Universality**, refers to those elements common to all cultures – such as having a language, or having values and beliefs. There is, of course, a tightrope to walk between assuming universality and respecting the inevitable cultural differences between groups. Appiah (2006) proposes the definition of cosmopolitanism as “universality plus difference” (p. 151), thus bringing together several seemingly contradictory concepts. **Cultural rights** refer to the rights of individuals to embrace a culture disposing unique elements, different from those of any other culture, and are an “enabling environment for cultural diversity” (UNESCO, 2002, p. 13). Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights; they have been a central part of the international agenda since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and were further reinforced by the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* of 1966. More recently, the 2001 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity recognized the right of all persons “to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Art. 5). In specific cases, and especially in relation to indigenous peoples, cultural rights refers to the group’s right to control



their own heritage or knowledge, as with traditional ethnobotanical knowledge sometimes exploited by multinational companies without compensation to the bearers of that knowledge (Buck & Hamilton, 2011; Greene, 2004).



**Intercultural citizenship** refers to a new type of citizen, the one required for the new global village. Traditionally, a citizen had certain responsibilities and rights in relationship to a political body, such as a city, state, or country. But today, in keeping with the shrinking world, and understanding of universality, a new form of intercultural citizenship becomes relevant. Just as competent citizens engage in activities that help and do not hinder their own cities, states, and countries, competent intercultural citizens must take into account, and show respect for, a continually expanding geopolitical and sociocultural context for their words, deeds, and beliefs. Taking into account the impact of one's words, deeds, and beliefs on those who reside in other cities, states, and countries, has become an essential element of behaving responsibly in the modern world. Intercultural citizenship relies upon conciliating multiple identities and contexts simultaneously, assumes the ability to engage in intercultural dialogues respecting the rights of cultural others, and ideally becomes one step toward promoting peace.

**Intercultural competences** refer to having adequate relevant knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about the sorts of issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures. One way to divide intercultural competences into separate skills is to distinguish between: *savoirs* (knowledge of the culture), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting/relating), *savoir apprendre* (skills of discovery/interaction), *savoir etre* (attitudes of curiosity/openness), and *savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness), as Byram (1997, 2008) has done (see discussion in Holmes, 2009). Substantial research has already been devoted to sorting out these basic elements of intercultural competences by researchers across the disciplines (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Guilherme, 2000; Deardorff, 2009). The goal must be to build upon and ultimately move beyond existing work, providing a broader theoretical framework



for understanding and expanding upon that initial set of ideas. To account for the complex interrelations of so many elements, the term is most often used in the plural form: either “competences” or “competencies” depending on the country where discussion originates. Sometimes, intercultural interactions go well: participants listen to and understand one another, at times even leading to agreement about ideas or actions. At other times intercultural interactions go badly, leading to misunderstanding, arguments, and conflict, even war. One necessary intercultural competence becomes the ability to discuss such difficult and critical topics as values, beliefs and attitudes among members of multiple cultural groups in a way that does not lead to conflict. At the heart of the multiple intercultural competences, then, lies *intercultural communicative*

**competence** (Hymes assumed this, but Byram (1997) is best known for the phrase). Social actors need to be able to produce meaningful speech and behaviors and to do so in ways that will be understood as relevant in context by other participants in an interaction. Hymes' notion of communicative competence has been widely applied to language teaching due to the obvious need for students to learn not only how to put grammatically correct sentences together, but also to learn when to say what to whom (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007). Context has crucial influence over how language and behavior are interpreted, but this is the most confusing aspect to learn as an outsider to a group. And since the same behavior may have different meanings within different cultural groups, thinking one's words or actions will be interpreted in one way cannot prevent them from being understood quite differently. Pearce (1989) used the term **cosmopolitan communication** in describing interaction between individuals having substantial intercultural communicative competence, arguing that: "when performed well – with high levels of social eloquence – cosmopolitan communication enables coordination among groups with different, even incommensurate, social realities" (p. 169). Hannerz (1996) uses cosmopolitan with a similar connotation, but many others mean something quite different by it (Coulmas, 1995).

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The following terms have been less often used in discussions of intercultural competences. They are presented here because they highlight aspects of intercultural competences that otherwise might be ignored, or give a name to something otherwise difficult to understand and discuss, and they will provide important vocabulary permitting examination of specific aspects of intercultural competences worthy of more attention than received to date.

**Intercultural literacy**, which might be glossed as all the knowledge and skills necessary to the practice of intercultural competences, has become an essential tool for modern life, parallel to the development of information literacy, or media literacy (Dragičević Šešić & Dragojević, 2011). The particular value of this phrasing is that, just as with these other forms

of literacy, some active teaching or modeling must occur, though it need not occur as part of formal education. Shared experiences, conversations, and storytelling are among the ways in which members of a diverse group can come to understand one another. Following Luhmann (1990), it is important to acknowledge "the improbability of communication", recognizing that the numerous differences between groups makes any understanding unlikely, and appreciating the times people can achieve understanding across cultural boundaries, rather than only noticing the occasions on which understanding fails. Some of the research on crossing disciplinary boundaries (Dillon, 2008; Gieryn, 1983; Postlethwaite, 2007), or the **boundary objects** used as tools when initiating boundary crossings (Star & Griesemer, 1989; Trompette & Vinck, 2009), should be relevant to facilitating intercultural competences. Boundary objects are those retaining enough meaning across contexts that participants can use them to discuss otherwise slippery (or differently defined) concepts.

**Intercultural responsibility** builds on understandings of intercultural competence by considering the importance of related concepts such as intercultural dialogue, ethics, religion (including interfaith dialogue), and notions of citizenship. Guilherme introduced the concept, applied to professional and personal interactions in multicultural teams in organisational contexts (Guilherme, Keating & Hoppe, 2010). Holmes' (2011) treatment of the term expands upon this concept to include the moral choices and values that inform how individuals engage with one another in intercultural encounters. Further, it accounts for and explores dimensions of religious identity and values as they guide communication and rules for intercultural interaction. The conceptualization also embodies the notion of the responsible citizen, the person who displays critical cultural awareness in intercultural communication.

**Reflexivity** refers to the ability to step outside one's own experiences in order to reflect consciously upon them, considering what is happening, what it means, and how to respond (Steier, 1991). Cultural diversity provides members of any group the necessary insight

that there is more than one way to do things; that their own assumptions are just that, their own, and not universal. It is natural that each culture teaches members that it does things in the best possible way, for who would want to belong to a culture that acknowledged other ways as better? Yet given the extent to which modernity brings cultures together, the ability to be reflexive, to step back and recognize one's own traditions as but one possible solution to commonly faced human problems, has become essential. A related term proposed by Frye, *transvaluation*, refers to "the ability to look at contemporary social values with the detachment of one who is able to compare them in some degree with the infinite vision of possibilities presented by culture" (1957, p. 348). Todorov first tightened the definition: "ce retour vers soi d'un regard informé par le contact avec l'autre" [a reflective look at oneself informed by contact with the other], and then went on to call for a "crossing of cultures" (1987, p. 17), arguing that transvaluation both demonstrates and brings about progress through the shift from the individual subject to a larger world. In other words, learning about others teaches not only about their cultures but prompts examination of one's own.

**Liquidity**, the term proposed by Bauman (2000) to describe the fluid nature of modern life implies change as a central element of human experience. Liquidity proposes a state of near constant change, with consequences for the ability of individuals to cope with change. Many in the past assumed cultures to be static, although today scholars in many disciplines have demonstrated that all cultures change over time. Exposure to many groups and traditions provides evidence of change over time, demonstrating as well that change in itself should neither be valued nor feared. As applied to intercultural competences, liquidity alludes to the flexibility with which competent participants manage their interactions. Multiple identities, contexts, goals and assumptions must all be considered and managed by interculturally competent participants engaging with one another. Such multiplicities entail a level of complexity difficult to accommodate, yet there is no choice, and so people must learn to manage, often improvising their responses in search of what

works best at a specific moment, in a specific context, and with specific others. One set of questions concerns whether and how participants learn to discuss with interactional partners what has occurred, reflecting jointly upon experience in order to add a second layer of understanding. Another set of questions concern whether people improvise well or badly, whether they learn from those times when interactions go well, and whether they share with others what has been learned.

**Creativity** is the most evenly distributed resource in the world. It is, indeed, our ability to imagine that gives us the resilience to adapt to different ecosystems and to invent "ways of living together", the term used by the World Commission on Culture and Development to describe culture. The resilience will help individuals and decision-makers to form and reform institutions of democratic governance, sociability and global interaction. Having acknowledged the range of possibilities across cultures, as well as the continuous nature of change, how else to respond but with creativity? And interactions with cultural others sparks creativity. It is always easiest to understand those who are most similar, yet always most enlightening to interact with those who are different. Luckily, human nature encourages exploration of difference and learning for its own sake. In this regard, creativity becomes the wellspring of cultural diversity, which refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression, thus opening up new forms of dialogue, transforming viewpoints and creating links between individuals, societies and generations all around the world. In other terms creativity implies a constant process, supporting, amplifying and regenerating cultural diversity across time and space, so that it may continue to instill expressions with new meanings for our time and for our future generations (UNESCO, 2001, Art.1).

**Cultural shifting** refers to the cognitive and behavioral capacity of an interculturally competent person to shift or switch language, behavior, or gestures according to his/her interlocutors and the larger context or situation<sup>11</sup>. Cultural shifting holds most direct relevance for those concepts conveying obvious meaning within one cultural context but requiring considerable explanation to those new to that context. Humor provides a



particularly good example of content requiring skill in cultural shifting, given the extensive understanding of cultural context required by non-group members to interpret what group members intend to be funny. **Contextualization cues**, Gumperz' (1992) closely related phrase, describes the ways participants convey information guiding the interpretation of their own words and actions by others. Essentially, both cultural shifters and contextualization cues help to explain how social actors manage to understand one another on those occasions when they do. Of course, because both are culture specific, they frequently serve as a source of ambiguity in social interaction: speakers may think they have been quite clear, but those whose experience has been in another culture may not have understood even the denotation (basic, literal meaning) of a word or utterance, let alone all of the connotations (more subtle implications). Thus intercultural competences include the ability to anticipate when ambiguity may result in confusion. One solution provides an explanation in advance to avoid confusion, rather than engaging in repair work afterwards.

**Disposition**, refers to the mind set progressively acquired through primary (family) and secondary (school) socialization. So dispositions are both personal and socially shared. For sociologists, socially shared dispositions are related to social class. While Bourdieu (1977) preferred to revamp the Latin term *habitus* (defined as *principium ad actum* in the scholastic tradition) to refer to embodied categories of perception, appreciation and action, other contemporary social scientists developed formulas like “dispositions + context = practices” (Lahire, 2012, p. 24), to stress that action is never produced *in vacuo* on the single basis of a disposition. A disposition is not a causal trigger, always being mediated through a particular context. Thus there is no simple “intercultural disposition,” be it xenophobic or xenophilic. On the one hand, there is always a context to filter, diffract or amplify the disposition; on the other, there is always a possibility of a tertiary socialization (e.g., through media), which reshapes the disposition. As a result of this perspective, intercultural education should be encouraged, at all ages.

**Semantic availability**, proposed by Hempel (1965), describes the plasticity of ideas: when a concept is dimly understood, but not clear; pre-emergent, not yet fully formed; having a word at the tip of one's tongue, except that the word has not yet





been invented in that language. This notion is complemented by Bateson's (1979) concept of *warm ideas*, referring to ideas still incomplete, in the process of being formed. Bateson's insight was that ideas should be maintained in this condition until they could be distilled, rather than committing them to permanence too quickly. Such discussions are difficult because speakers are used to treating thoughts as finished, but he found the effort worthwhile. Blumer had a related idea: *sensitizing concepts* "suggest directions along which to look" rather than "providing prescriptions of what to see" as definitive concepts do (1954, p. 7). As with warm ideas, sensitizing concepts provide a point of departure, a beginning only (Bowen, 2006).

**Conviviality** is the term Illich provided for "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment... in any society, as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrial productivity can effectively satisfy the needs it creates among society's members" (1973, p. 24). Conviviality does not just appear of its own volition: it must be established as a specific goal, and encouraged in a variety of ways. Conviviality is both made possible through, and contributes to, the sharing of social worlds, whether these be the organizations in which people work or the neighborhoods in which they live. Managing interactions in these various social worlds does not require shared values, beliefs, attitudes, but only shared curiosity, interest and tolerance. Conviviality ultimately changes our perception of the nature of social relationships between individuals and groups, coming close to an Asian-centric worldview valuing relationality, circularity and harmony, thus emphasizing interconnectedness and interdependence between people above individuality (Miike, 2003).

**Resilience** is a key characteristic to consider when addressing cultures in their handling of tradition and modernity. In many debates, the idea that traditions should be preserved or respected is equated to an attempt at resisting the winds of change blown by modernity. But such a view is inaccurate in its ne-

glect of the fact that cultures evolve constantly, able to combine tradition and innovation in unique ways when confronted with unprecedented situations. The important debate should not focus on the preservation of cultures construed as immutable monoliths, nor on change confused with an irremediable destruction of their past and memory, but on how cultures can preserve room for resilience, that is their endogenous capacity to organize a debate between tradition and change. Since change imposed from outside is cultural hegemony, not creativity, resilience should be explored as a culturally authentic path to modernity. Resilience has been discussed at the individual level (Cyrułnik, 2009) and linked to "'hybridity,' flexibility, and creativity" (Bird, 2009) and to "capacity development" (Sigsgaard, 2011) at the group level.

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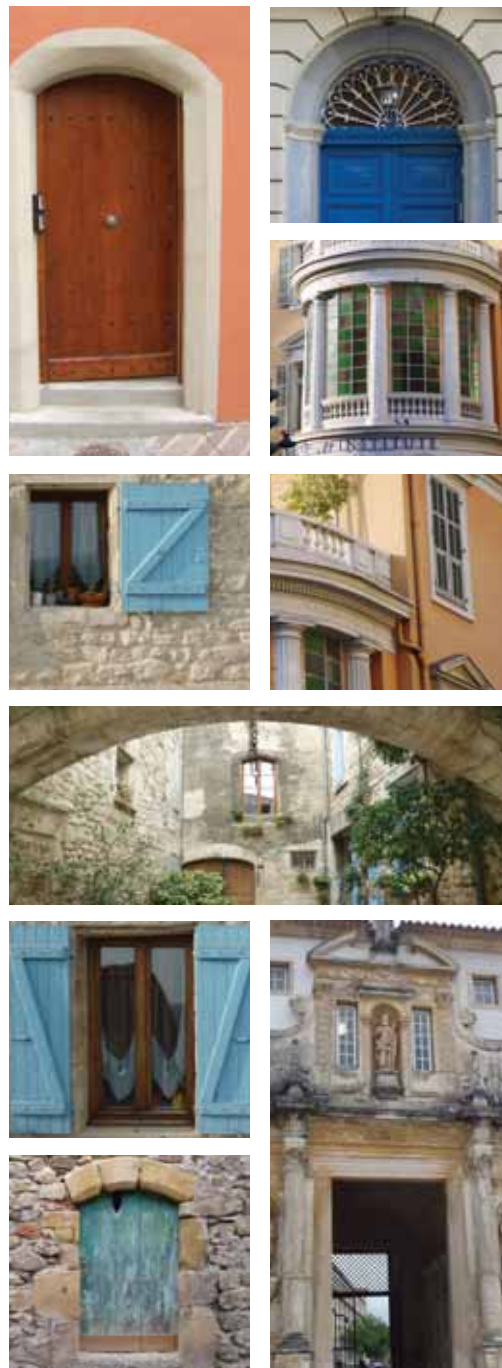
**M**any languages have specialized vocabulary used to describe aspects of the interrelationships between individuals and groups, and of course, many cultures have terms that imply how people should treat others, e.g., *guanxi*, or relationship building, is important in Chinese communication, while in Maori, *whanau*, or family, denotes being together, sharing a community and supporting one another. Two such terms are introduced at greater length below. These (and many others) should be brought into the glossary of key concepts as they identify ideas not traditionally used in discussing intercultural dialogue or competences or such core values as human rights, but which facilitate that conversation. In requesting the regional reports (cited in note 1), UNESCO recognized the importance of understanding this concept from multiple perspectives.

**Ubuntu**, an African word referring to a philosophy of human interconnectedness and relationship, serves as both an ethical ideal and an aspect of southern African identity. "The Xhosa proverb, *ubuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which translates roughly as 'a person is only a person through other people,' encapsulates the philosophy of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is not just a commendable quality of a human being or a set of values and practices, but it is the very essence

of being human when recognizing the humanity of others. Moreover, personhood is constituted through *ethical relations* with others. To say that someone has *ubuntu* is the highest form of praise. The concept of *ubuntu* simultaneously describes what it is to be a person (human-ness) and it is instructive of an ethical way of being (humane-ness). *Becoming ethical* is the very essence of being human and it is integral to the wellbeing of both the individual and to the community” (Steyn, 2009, p. 18). *Ubuntu* thus provides one culture’s idea about the ways humans are ultimately connected, and posits reciprocal relationships as a valued goal.

The Japanese concept **Uchi-soto** 内外 provides a way to describe how group membership changes across situations and over time by providing an important distinction differentiating those who belong to the group (*uchi*) from others (*soto*).<sup>12</sup> According to Japanese social codes, this has a strong impact on language use, notably in terms of politeness. The in-group shows humility, as the out-group deserves appropriate signs of respect. For instance, *-san* is a very common suffix to express respect, e.g. “Suzukisan” or “Miyekosan”. But one will not use *-san* in talking about family members, or colleagues, with people outside (in sign of modesty – *uchi* vs *soto*), although participants use it in the in-group with true respect. Equally, while talking about a child, spouse, or colleague, casual deprecations (such as “stupid” or “immature”) should not be understood as signs of disrespect or insults but only evidence of familiarity. A related concept, *honne-tatema* 本音と建前, refers to the social expectation that everyone will restrain themselves from expressing their true feelings (*honne*), instead acting and behaving in socially expected ways (*tatema*, facade). *Honne* refers to what is felt internally or stated privately; *tatema* to what is stated or displayed publicly. As with *uchi-soto*, distinction between in-group and out-group becomes relevant, and consideration of context and situation crucial. Everyone attends to context in order to avoid conflicts and maintain harmony with others in that context (demonstrating the spirit of *wa*) using these and other social codes to clearly display the art of being Japanese. As related to

intercultural competence, these concepts embody the assumption that appropriate behavior is situational. Gaining intercultural competence includes learning to be flexible, and to respect the different varieties of flexibility expected across cultural groups.



## IV. A VISUAL CONCEPTUALIZATION

The key concepts described in the preceding section have been presented individually for clarity's sake, but concepts do not stand alone; rather, they must be understood in relation to one another as a set. The following "Intercultural Competences Tree" attempts to offer a symbolic view of intercultural competences as an organic system of concepts. In this image of a tree, all concepts are distinct while nurtured by the same intellectual and moral sap. As was the case for definitions of terms, this visual conceptualization is put forth as but one of many possible ways to show relationships between these ideas. The central concepts – cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and human rights – are best understood as parts of a whole, with numerous other concepts supporting them, most significantly culture and communication. Intercultural competences (including not only the knowledge, skills and attitudes so often mentioned, but also all of the new concepts presented in the prior section) are an essential response to the existence of cultural diversity (linked closely to the existence of culture generally but also to the increasing diversity of cultures). Intercultural competences can be understood as resources put to work during intercultural dialogue (relying upon the human ability to use various forms of communication, including most especially language and dialogue). And human rights both require and result from holding intercultural dialogues. The relationship is established by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which affirms: "cultural diversity can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms...are guaranteed" (2005, Art. 10A). The new concepts presented in the prior section still can best be described as *warm ideas* – that is, while it is clear they have relevance to this discussion, their exact significance and interrelations have not yet been solidified. Therefore, they are shown in the Intercultural Competences Tree, but with more exact relationships between them not yet illustrated.

The Tree has Culture and Communication as its roots, Cultural Diversity, Human Rights and Intercultural Dialogue as its trunk; and five operational steps as the

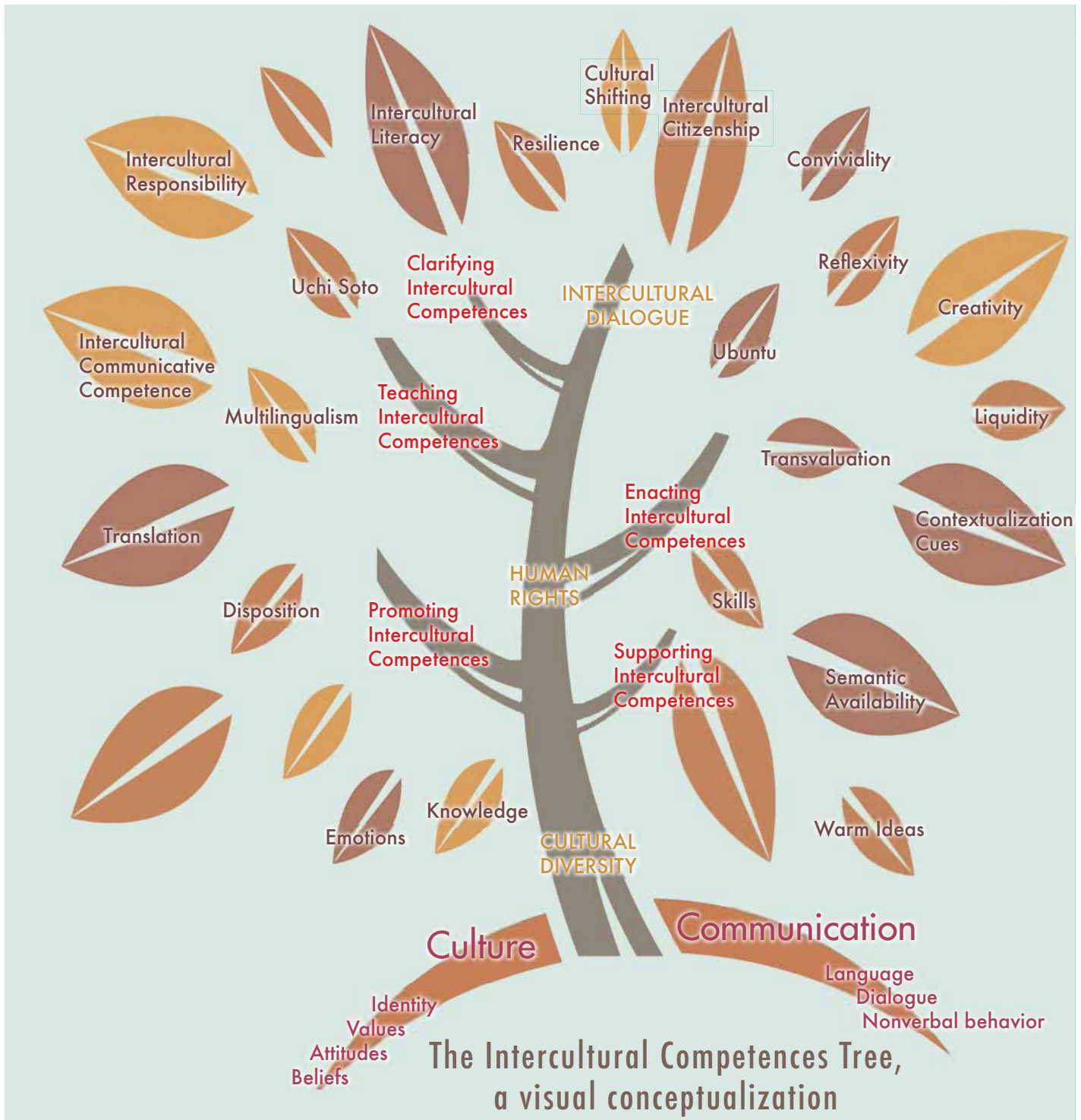
branches (see p.23). The leaves represent the various manners in which the intercultural competences can be understood or articulated in concrete contexts.

## V. OPERATIONAL PLAN

The operational plan to be presented in the following pages builds upon all these concepts, and so is depicted in the visual conceptualization as branches on the trunk of the tree. No match is intended between a specific branch and the theoretical concepts appearing closest to it – all concepts should be understood as having at least potential relevance at all operational steps.

Having a set of concepts as a framework for how they relate together provide a good start only. Concepts must be applied in some fashion, made operational, put to use. Following are five ways to put the key concepts just presented to work in the service of intercultural competences. These five steps (represented here as branches) are complementary: no one alone is sufficient and all are essential. The greatest amount of attention to date has been granted to the first step, **clarifying**, but intercultural competences also must be actively **taught, promoted, enacted**, in order to play a role in a wide range of contexts: in formal as well as non-formal education, and in social institutions of all sorts – political, cultural, or economic – and some potential applications will be described here. Specific universities as well as the academic community at large have been responsible for most of the work at the first step, clarifying ideas. Various national and international bodies have begun to take action at the other four steps with a different wording including but not limited to: National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO Clubs, the United Nations University, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors and Artists for Peace, UNESCO Category I and II Institutes, Council of Europe, and even many youth associations. This section also presents ideas about what is required **to support** the spread of intercultural competences, including securing adequate funding and institutional facilities. Again, some of the organizations just listed have already begun this process, but more will be required.





**Roots:** Culture (Identity, Values, Attitudes, Beliefs, etc.) and Communication (Language, Dialogue, Nonverbal behavior, etc.)

**Trunk:** Cultural Diversity, Human Rights, Intercultural Dialogue

**Branches:** Operational steps (Clarifying, Teaching, Promoting, Supporting and Enacting Intercultural Competences)

**Leaves:** Intercultural Responsibility, Intercultural Literacy, Resilience, Cultural Shifting, Intercultural Citizenship, Conviviality, Reflexivity, Creativity, Liquidity, Contextualization Cues, Transvaluation, Ubuntu, Semantic Availability, Warm Ideas, Skills, Uchi Soto, Multilingualism, Disposition, Emotions, Knowledge, Translation, Intercultural Communicative Competence. Some of the leaves have been left free so that this Tree which is very much alive, can be complemented upon the rich diversity of contexts available worldwide.

Examples help to turn a theoretical discussion into a pragmatic one, and so concrete examples are provided for steps 2-5. This report itself serves as an example of step 1. A final example demonstrating good practice integrated across several steps accompanies the conclusion.

As not all good intentions have good results, the following cautionary tale may help to warn of inherent complications. Despite the Croatian National Programme for the Roma (described in the Council of Europe's Compendium) being specifically designed to increase multiculturalism and protect Romani rights, the project design did not adequately consider that individuals have multiple identities. As a result, the policy has been critiqued for disregarding women and women's issues (Open Society Institute, 2005). To summarize the issue briefly, since women are subordinate in traditional Romani culture, strengthening the culture diminishes the gains possible by individual women within the larger society. Because the primary goal of the policy was to enhance cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue, this example highlights the difficulties caused even by good intentions if program design omits consideration of the complex and multiple nature of identity.



## 1. Clarifying Intercultural Competences

Understanding intercultural competences serves as the first operational step, and everything in this report is intended to contribute to clarifying understanding. But one report (even given all the research and publications that preceded it, by a wide range of scholars) cannot

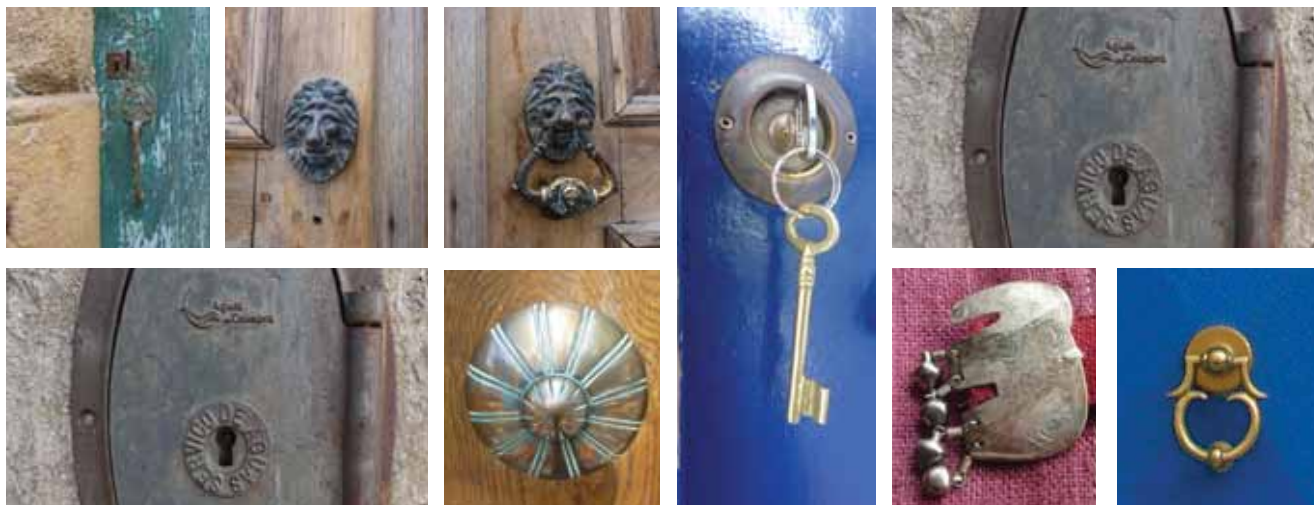
be sufficient: yet more work remains. Synthesizing research from multiple disciplines and cultures into a coherent whole requires ongoing effort because such research continues within a variety of disciplines. Just as one definition is inadequate (and inappropriate), so one disciplinary approach, or investigations prepared by scholars based in a single country, will be insufficient to providing a full understanding of a complex topic. Tools to assess and evaluate intercultural competences can be refined. Research findings should be far more widely disseminated, and made accessible to a broader public.

Deardorff (2011) summarizes the five regional reports prepared for UNESCO (Dragičević Šešić & Dragojević, 2009; Grimson, 2011; Holmes, 2009; Steyn, 2009; Youssef, 2011). Her final list of skills and competences understood as the minimal requirements to attain intercultural competences includes:

- Respect (“valuing of others”);
- Self-awareness/identity (“understanding the lens through which we each view the world”);
- Seeing from other perspectives/world views (“both how these perspectives are similar and different”);
- Listening (“engaging in authentic intercultural dialogue”);
- Adaptation (“being able to shift temporarily into another perspective”);
- Relationship building (forging lasting cross-cultural personal bonds);
- Cultural humility (“combines respect with self-awareness”).

Building on these minimum requirements of intercultural competence, the additional concepts discussed in this paper form an even broader, more elaborate set of skills and competences that will contribute to preserving and promoting cultural diversity and human rights.

Similarly summarizing the regional reports, Deardorff proposes two primary social institutions as the obvious ways to address intercultural competences: educa-



tion systems (at the individual level) and legal systems (at the societal and organizational levels). These figure prominently in the concrete steps provided not only immediately below, but also throughout all five levels. Again, they are not sufficient in themselves, and so other social institutions (including the media, and the cultural and political instances) are mentioned as well. Ideally intercultural competences should permeate all social institutions.

### Specific steps to be taken:

- Expand current efforts to integrate intercultural competence into many disciplines ensuring that the topic receives continued investigation. Utilize a core group of international and multidisciplinary experts to investigate previously established key concepts, which need expansion within an intercultural competence frame, but far more critically, ensure development of the new theoretical concepts introduced above. Existing interdisciplinary research into topics related to intercultural competence as studied by a wide range of disciplines, such as International Relations, Psychology, Communication, Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Humanities, Linguistics, Literature, Religious Studies, Political Economy, must be expanded.
- Coordinate academic efforts providing first, some guidance so that topics relevant to intercultural competences receive attention. Secondly, synthesize what is learned through such activities as conferences and publications, so insights gained by individual researchers can be made readily available for use in the later operational steps described here. One group, center, or organization needs to be assigned responsibility for synthesizing what is known and helping to map out remaining work, most likely through holding periodic conferences of interested parties.
- Refine current tools for assessment and evaluation of intercultural competences. In doing so, at least the following aspects are essential: who measures; what is measured; with which instruments, tools, and criteria; using which units; and which uncertainties. Fantini (2009) provides a long list of techniques to be used in assessing intercultural competence once decisions have been made about who will measure what.
- Publish research findings in non-traditional as well as traditional venues, including not only articles and books intended for scholars, but also at least some materials aimed at reaching a wider public. This is critical because knowledge of intercultural compe-



tences has direct relevance beyond academia, and so the essential ideas must be distributed widely. Discussion of the other steps below present concrete suggestions for facilitating such distribution of ideas.

- Collect striking examples of cases in which the cultural context is a key factor in the effective exercise of universally recognized rights and freedoms, so as to highlight the cultural dimension of all rights and freedoms.
- Map exchanges within and between minority groups and between majority and minority communities, especially in the context of 'global cities', in order to create informal networks of solidarity, and widely publicize such exchanges.
- Study the diversity of intangible cultural heritage as a source of examples of modes of democratic governance based on the empowerment and participation of all communities. Intangible heritage includes traditions inherited from prior generations, among which are events (life cycle rituals), special knowledge (which indigenous plants are valuable for what purposes) and skills (how to weave traditional patterns). Understanding the intangible cultural heritage of other groups is both required for, and a result of, intercultural dialogue, as such knowledge can increase respect for other ways of life.

## 2. Teaching Intercultural Competences

After researchers come to conclusions about intercultural competences, what they learn must be widely shared. Typically intercultural competences are gained through a combination of experience, training, and self-reflection. Despite the fact that much of what becomes intercultural competences can be acquired through personal experience, many programs have been designed to provide formal teaching or training, and they often help substantially. Understanding one's own culture and understanding cultures as human constructions are both necessary steps in learning to cope intercultural interactions, and usually precede

learning about other peoples, other cultures, other ways of being. However, learning is circular: there is no better way to discover the socially constructed nature of one's own culture than to be faced with another culture having quite different assumptions.<sup>13</sup> The practice and learning of intercultural competences never ends but is a lifelong pursuit, evolving over time through the accumulation of experience, training, and thoughtful reflection upon both (Deardorff, 2009; Dervin, 2010).

At the very least, it is often possible to teach knowledge of others, and an attitude of respect for the beliefs and values of others, to the point of permitting others to hold different truths to be self-evident. Recognition of differences serves as an essential beginning point for, without such recognition, understanding of the implications of difference cannot develop. Ultimately, the goal must be to teach concrete skills for success-





ful interaction with members of different cultures, the “intercultural communicative competence” described previously. Establishing a safe context in which people can ask naïve questions without the assumption of malice is a critical step. Developing a trusting relationship in which such questions can not only be asked but also answered takes time, repaying the effort through increased understanding. Often merely holding intercultural dialogue suffices if understanding is achieved; agreement need not be the expected result. Sometimes groups that meet simply to learn about one another are successful; other times, establishing multicultural groups engaged in a common task works better, with acceptance of difference arising from joint effort rather than being the explicit focus. Since a diverse group typically brings a wide range of knowledge and experiences, they often are successful in resolving problems.

As described in UNESCO’s *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (2006a), the study of international standard-setting instruments and other documents resulting from international conferences highlights the international community’s view on education relating to intercultural issues. A certain number of recurrent principles can be identified that may guide international action in the field of intercultural education:

- Principle 1: Intercultural education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.
- Principle 2: Intercultural education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, atti-

tudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.

- Principle 3: Intercultural education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.

These principles are directly related to the third pillar of education: “Learning to live together”, which consists in “developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence – carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts - in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace. This is also closely related to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which mentions that the aim of education should be to “promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups”.

### Specific steps to be taken:

- Incorporate intercultural competences in all levels of formal, informal and non formal education systems to facilitate learning of intercultural competences and gain flexibility in interactions with cultural others, even with education as but one part of the solution. Prejudice depends in large part on a lack of accurate knowledge about, and experience with, a wide range of cultures; education solves that problem. Humans learn by creating classification systems, and so prejudice and stereotypes

can sometimes be one result when minimal new knowledge leads to categorizing people over simply, but further knowledge gains should lead to greater experience and sophistication of understanding, and thus less prejudice. Students can be taught not only content information about a wide range of cultures, but also a general openness to difference. Teachers play a particularly important role then, both in terms of choosing what they teach, and in modeling curiosity about, and thoughtful creative responses to, different cultures. Learning to speak multiple languages obviously helps students learn about multiple cultures (as in the curriculum proposed by Beacco et al, 2010).

- Shift the terms used to discuss interculturality in order to modify the ideas of those who use them by explicitly teaching new terminology. Not only the key concepts discussed earlier are useful here, but also metaphors used to describe interaction between groups (Halstead, 2007).
- Provide expertise to existing pedagogical centers/teacher training institutes on intercultural competences, so to equip teachers with supportive content and relevant techniques. Current teacher education must be expanded to prepare the students for life as active, responsible citizens in democratic societies as well as citizens of the world, aware and available to address global issues (e.g. loss of peace, destruction of natural and cultural heritage), thus, taking advantage of diversity and turning it into an invaluable asset for a better future. Given the availability of information and communication technologies (ICTs), new media, and social networking, some supportive activities can occur online, especially those connecting teachers and classrooms into wider global communities, to learn, un-learn and re-learn.
- Support classroom learning by developing and improving manuals, curricula, and textbooks both for the teachers and for their students in

order to address cultural bias, intolerance, stereotyping, discrimination and violence (Schissler, 2009). One part of the solution involves instructing students and staff in conflict management; another expands teaching into areas of global history, nonviolent communication, human rights and tolerance; as well as establishing intergenerational dialogues. The next generation requires knowledge of a far wider sense of the history of the world than is typically taught in order to discover both similarities and differences across cultural groups. UNESCO's *History of Humanity* series (de Laet, et al, 1994-2008) was specifically designed for this purpose, and should be widely implemented. In addition, the Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence has already proposed using the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network to "develop a model interactive educational programme to stop violence involving schools (including students, teachers and parents) the media and professional bodies (UNESCO, 2011).

- Internationalize schooling as an easy way to increase knowledge about other cultures, including any and all of the following: internationalization of the curriculum, teaching foreign languages, teacher mobility, student exchanges, enriching the curriculum with intercultural and international content (such as sustainable resource development, since cultural assumptions influence interactions between humans and the natural world); taking into account the diverse learning styles, life experiences, and cultural and linguistic diversity of students; as well as encouraging critical thinking and a capacity for self-reflection among students (so that they may consider their words and actions, and better handle themselves when faced with diversity, whether inside or outside the classroom).
- Undertake a global comparative survey of educational content and methods, including traditional modes of transmission, with particular



reference to the recognition and accommodation of cultural diversity.

- Support efforts to identify and/or create opportunities and facilities for culture-specific learning in each educational system, making use of existing instruments such as UNESCO's EFA National Assessment Reports.
- Adapt teaching methods to the requirements of the everyday life of learners, with the necessary support of educational policy-makers, educational professionals at all levels and local communities, recognizing the cultural dimension as a central pillar of Education for Sustainable Development.
- Develop relevant guidelines for the promotion of intercultural dialogue notably through the arts, based on the identification of good practices in arts education.
- Incorporate the teaching of intercultural competences in programmes and initiatives on human rights education, for instance within the context of the UN under the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing), as well as on intercultural education and education for global citizenship.
- Implement other projects like “Developing Intercultural Competence Skills – a key challenge to build a better future in South Eastern Europe,” to be co-implemented by UNESCO and the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) in the framework of the AoC Regional Strategy in South Eastern Europe. This project will explore a range of teaching and learning strategies that can be used in developing students’ and teachers’ intercultural competences. Training seminars and opportunities for teachers will offer a cross-cultural dimension for educators and officials, providing a space for reflection, mutual exchange, experiential learning and cooperation on joint projects related to intercultural competences and dialogue.

- Reach out to those in a wide variety of professions in order to apply intercultural competences at an organization level. For example: health care workers, social/community workers, legal experts (human rights lawyers, judges), decision makers, civic leaders and local authorities at national, regional and local levels, cultural and media professionals, youth leaders and or-



ganizations, as well as business leaders. Essentially continuous professional development or lifelong learning, this sort of training assumes that even those beyond the reach of the traditional classroom still have something to learn, and are still capable of learning.

*The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters materials prepared by the Council of Europe (2009) were deliberately designed to help start intercultural dialogues, and thus improve intercultural competences; one set was especially shaped for younger learners for use in schools, but another is designed for adults, through informal education contexts. Participants in this exercise use reflexivity to describe one event or experience with someone different from themselves, reflecting upon their own feelings and experiences and taking into consideration those of others in the encounter, then share their stories as a way to both learn from their own past experiences and begin a process of dialogue with others.*

### 3. Promoting Intercultural Competences

**E**xplicit teaching about intercultural competences will reach only some individuals and groups, yet everyone in the modern world needs to gain intercultural competence. From a pedagogical point of view, education refers to systems (formal or non-formal) that organize teaching and learning. But teaching cannot be automatically equated with learning. We can be taught and not learn. Likewise, we can learn without being taught, as we also learn on our own, or with peers. Learning, then, is about the acquisition of information, knowledge, skills and values. It happens in many different and complementary ways, including educational systems. Learning, according to Gilles Deleuze, is first and foremost about considering any matter, object or being as if emitting signals to decipher, to interpret. Intercultural dialogues, as collective learning processes, do not need to be held once a year at specially organized events, with only the participants learning intercultural competences; rather, intercultural dialogues must become an everyday occurrence, among all the people interacting in a day. Similarly, a few individuals cannot be designated experts to manage intercultural compe-

tence for their group; instead, everyone must become interculturally competent on their own behalf to survive in today's global society. Spreading ideas related to intercultural plurality, diversity and human rights more broadly will require using a wide range of media to distribute and share ideas. It will require fostering awareness in media professionals of the positive contributions of intercultural understanding. The new social media (jointly known as Web 2.0), such as web-based forums, or wikis, provide new opportunities for crossing group boundaries and sharing information among diverse cultures given that they permit the active creation of content, rather than just the passive reading of content posted by others. Essentially, the goal must be to create a wide variety of open spaces, both online and face-to-face, in which to hold intercultural dialogues among innumerable groups, even though the role of formal education is increasingly being challenged by the ICTs, the digital media and the diversification and multiplication of sources of knowledge (often contradictory).

#### Specific steps to be taken:

- > Help to construct a widespread sense of common community across disparate groups living near one another through community dialogues. For example creating opportunities for storytelling across gender, ethnic, class, and generational lines takes advantage of the opportunities provided by cultural diversity. This requires training of individuals, matched to the establishment of new organizations to develop, manage and maintain the process. Deliberate design of the structure of events that facilitate dialogue, as well as careful design of the process by which individuals and groups participate in the dialogue, are both significant. Spano (2001) provides a detailed outline of how both were managed successfully in one particular community, creating a context within which intercultural dialogue was developed among competing groups with little history of cooperation.
- > Reach out to adults by providing family learning contexts, as children are not the only ones who can be taught. Students bring what they

learn home to their parents, but such knowledge can and should be supplemented by offerings directly for those parents, and also for the adults in a community without children presently in school (such efforts are typically termed “lifelong learning,” and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning provides one example). In terms of specific topics, teaching the management of cultural conflict, and combating discrimination, are examples of ways to promote conviviality, and thus increase the intercultural competences of a population. Libraries are beginning to take on the role of providing a safe space in which to begin intercultural dialogues; this could be broadly expanded, and the multimedia options available more fully, frequently, and deliberately used.

- Recognize the current importance of the various forms of new media, co-productions fostering dialogue between media professionals from different cultures, particularly on sensitive issues combining intercultural dialogue, media information and literacy. For example, bringing journalists of different countries together to participate in training in such areas



as conflict-sensitive reporting and choice of images, and particularly training young media professionals, could use the UNESCO Power of Peace Network, among other resources, to promote intercultural competences.

- Support recognition of and respect for knowledge (including traditional knowledge and the knowledge of indigenous peoples) that contributes to safeguarding biodiversity and promoting sustainable development as another vehicle through which intercultural competences can be developed. This has the double advantage of providing opportunities for cultural contact and learning, but also for supporting sustainability of natural and cultural resources.
- Elaborate a roadmap for global consciousness as one way to put the frequent expression “global village” into deliberate practice (UNESCO, 2011a). Current and future generations need to be encouraged to think not only about local contexts but also about the larger world in order to find and shape their places in it. This is not only a matter of teaching in schools, although of course activity must begin there, but of promoting the development of a global consciousness at all levels of decision making. This will require preparation of support materials, and workshops designed to shape the way in which both children and adults, both women and men think, relate to, and approach the problems they face.
- Create a digital library of major scientific and cultural landmarks in order to demonstrate humankind’s intercultural solidarity, taking into account available UNESCO documentation (such as the General and Regional Histories as described in UNESCO, 2011a). Again, these can be used in formal education contexts, but also should be made available more broadly to the general public. Particular emphasis should be paid to a truly global vision of history, bringing the Arab-Muslim and Western worlds together, as intended by the *Intercultural Vademecum* programme, within the framework



of the UNESCO-UN Alliance of Civilizations cooperation (UNESCO, 2011a).

- Encourage cultural sensitivity in the creation, production, distribution and consumption of various communication and information content, thereby facilitating access, empowerment and participation. To this end, action should be taken to support the production and distribution of innovative and diversified audiovisual materials, taking account of local needs, contents and actors, and having recourse as appropriate to public-private partnerships.
- Assess the impact of ICT-driven changes on cultural diversity, with a view to highlighting good practices of multilingual access to written and audiovisual productions. Technology can only facilitate intercultural dialogues if the individuals involved can understand one another.
- Promote media and information literacy for all age groups in order to increase the ability of media users to critically evaluate communication and cultural contents. Children are often the focus of attention, due to their presence within schools, but such populations as the elderly and the poor often lag behind in their adoption of new media tools.

*Dan Bar-On has developed a method of storytelling designed to bring together groups that have great difficulty speaking with each other for clear and obvious historic reasons. He monitors these groups and follows a certain sequence in how people tell their story (moving from rage, acknowledgement of pain – one's own pain as well as the pain of others – to eventual reconciliation. In the process, he uses storytelling as a way to bring people on opposite sides into dialogue by creating a safe space in which that conversation can occur. He uses storytelling to start participants on a journey together exploring their memories, bringing private experience into public conversations. Telling each other their stories becomes "a narrow bridge across the abyss" dividing them – stories provide only a start, but every solution requires a beginning (Bar-On, 2006, p. 25; Kutz, Wegner & Bar-On, 2000).*

## 4. Enacting Intercultural Competences

The fourth step applies what has been learned through practice. The practice of interculturalism must become part of the fabric of daily social life, not something demonstrated only during a conference, festival, or in school. The values, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as the knowledge and skills that jointly comprise intercultural competences are put to work in this stage of the process. Enacting intercultural competence includes taking advantage of the wide range of opportunities already or potentially provided by cultural organizations to create intercultural hubs within particular communities. Competence in intercultural interactions is gained not only through formal or non-formal teaching, though such is appropriate, but also through the activity of interacting with cultural others. Thus all efforts to begin intercultural dialogues are tools enhancing intercultural competences, and all strengthen understanding of basic human rights.

### Specific steps to be taken:

- Enhance the intercultural competences of public and private cultural organizations by ensuring that their programs take into account cultural diversity. Public spaces such as museums can promote a context in which to share cultural experiences, not only through static exhibits, but also by organizing related activities. Like the libraries mentioned previously, museums are most often neutral, safe spaces in which to hold difficult conversations, and they have the advantage of already being well known to community members. For the museums and libraries facing reduced usage by a generation less likely to read paper copies of books or visit a physical display when they can see it online, holding intercultural dialogues helps to bring disaffected community members back into their territory. This kind of approach will put strong emphasis on experiential rather than passive learning, involving members of multiple communities in a common experience.

- Support a wide range of civil organizations, such as those providing expressions of artistic collaboration and creativity (professional and amateur), all of which develop intercultural competences. For example, art, intercultural theatre, music, dance, pantomime, festivals, fairs all provide opportunities for members of different cultural groups to speak for themselves, expressing some of their ideas and experiences through a public platform, as a way to spark intercultural dialogues. Such contexts also promote the role of creativity, a fundamental attribute both of innovation and of exploration of what is new and different, thus leading to an increase in intercultural competences. One example would be Project Lull, adapting *The Book of the Gentile* and the *Three Wise Men*, a play written by Ramon Llull in the 13th century about Christianity, Judaism and Islam on the Iberian Peninsula, for international presentation today, thus using theatre as a way to spark intercultural conversations.<sup>14</sup>
- Use new media forms to educate a broad public about diversity and intercultural competences. The question is only to catch up to the possibilities, since new media are rapidly developing, and new uses for old media are expanding, daily. An innovative approach to spreading intercultural competences is to design and distribute intercultural comics to children, taking advantage of the possibilities offered not only current mass media but also by the many social and new media forms, as in the examples produced by Grupo Comunicar in Spain,<sup>15</sup> or the innovative use of large interactive public screens to connect citizens of one country through acts of creativity constructed jointly with citizens in another country (Papastergiadis, 2006). Other possibilities include “e-notebooks on peace and intercultural dialogue” providing a readily accessible vehicle for young people around the world to use in sharing personal initiatives and experiences for everyday peace and dialogue (UNESCO,2011), and the “Peace and Dialogue E-



portal”, a UNESCO project providing young people with an e-space where they can learn and access information and literature on tolerance, reconciliation and a culture of peace, exchange experiences and enhance intercultural dialogue. The “Peace and Dialogue E-portal” will be released as an Open Educational Resource and designers foresee the creation of an e-course on communication skills enhancement in dialogue.

- Embrace high profile events, such as sports, as an instrument for training the capacity for intercultural agility (including cultural code-switching, as well as socialization to fair play), devoting development of commitment to peace. Since so many people already attend sporting events, using them as a vehicle for practicing understanding of and respect for others makes good sense.

- Enhance the programs specializing in intercultural competences training as essential, but also integrate intercultural competences into multiple existing higher education degree programs to ensure that these ideas reach more people.
- Ensure that cultural policies take intercultural competences into account (including policies at national, regional, and local levels), seeing that they are put into practice across a wide variety of venues.
- Promote dialogue for reconciliation and intercultural understanding as a way to help people learn from the past. For example, building on



the experience of the ongoing *Breaking the Silence, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project* continuing to provide activities for networking and exchange to increase awareness and deepen knowledge about the causes and consequences of the Transatlantic Slave Act works towards a future free from racism, discrimination, and intolerance (UNESCO, 2011a, p. 111).

*The Dah Theatre performed In/Visible City during the normal route of bus no. 26 in Belgrade as a contribution to the Decade of Roma Culture, paid for by the Serbian government. Bus no. 26 connects the two parts of the city where the Cultural Centre Rex and the Dah Theatre Research Centre are situated. It is always quite crowded and drives across parts of the city having high proportions of immigrant and cultural minority communities, especially Roma people. Artists from the Dah Theatre, supported by young people and musicians from the minority communities, acted like “strange passengers”, playing the music of specific ethnic communities or wearing the costumes of minorities; they performed actions and dances and told stories or sang songs in minority languages. The performances were aimed at raising awareness of the multiculturalism of Belgrade – a facet of the city that is slowly disappearing or hiding its face behind global billboards and the new emblems of a post-modern city geared towards consumption. The action was targeted at the preservation the cultural heritage, especially the intangible heritage, of minorities or ethnic communities such as the Jewish community, the gypsies, Buddhist kalmik, the Byeloussians and Albanians who live dispersed throughout the city. The idea to perform on a public bus was aimed at demonstrating the new contemporary spatialization of social relations in the city. The stage was the street, the neighborhoods the bus passed through, and important city landmarks – buildings that still keep memories of lost communities. The aim of the action was to provide the different minority communities in Belgrade – including those that “disappeared” with spaces where their songs, dances, plays etc. could be performed. The action also aimed at creating spaces for inter-ethnic dialogue among the passengers on the bus and the performers.<sup>16</sup>*



## 5. Supporting Intercultural Competences

The final step supports intercultural competences through providing adequate resources for investing in any and all of the above activities, the understanding that these are necessary, and a structure within which they can develop and grow. The starting point becomes appropriate cultural policies, that is, a clear statement regarding a course of action, regulatory measures, laws, and funding priorities promulgated by a governmental entity (on any administrative level) or its representatives relevant for a wide area of culture. Cultural policy is expressed through three means:

- Theoretical assumptions and definition of cultural field and public interest in culture through charts and relevant jurisdiction (i.e., artistic and cultural creativity; cultural heritage and participation, the availability of cultural goods and services to the population);
- Definition of cultural policy goals and tasks (i.e., defining strategies and action plans); and
- Implementation (i.e., applying a system of methods and instruments for achieving the cultural policy goals and tasks)(Dragičević Šešić & Dragojević, 2011).

In this regard, it should be noted that the *Cultural Diversity Programming Lens* (UNESCO, 2011b) works like a lens augmenting vision, specifically designed for decision- and policy-makers, program managers and community leaders. It is an interdisciplinary checklist of criteria and questions, supplemented by indicators, providing a means for integrating cultural diversity issues while ensuring the participation of all stakeholders across all phases of a given project, including in upstream research and needs assessment.

### Specific steps to be taken:

- Forge new partnerships and networks to promote intercultural competences. UNESCO has a unique role to play here because of its mandate to promote cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, and of its ability to establish partnerships and networks.
- Map existing initiatives related to intercultural competences: there is much work already on-

going, and unnecessary duplication should be avoided. The goal rather is to coordinate that current work, then see what is missing, filling in the gaps with new work.

- Promote high profile events, and existing relevant prizes: i.e. the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes and the Calouste Gulbenkian prize for “defending or fostering the universal values of the human condition”.<sup>17</sup> Again, the primary role will be in helping to promote existing events and prizes, but it may prove possible to also create new ones as gaps are discovered relating to improving intercultural competences or upholding human rights.
- Revisit founding texts coming all over the world that preceded and laid the foundation for intercultural competences: ensure that these have been made available to a wide audience, but also conduct new work to present complementary perspectives on these issues. Here the essential matter will be ensuring an international perspective, as well as translations into multiple languages (e.g., the Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Award for Translation, organized by the King Abdulaziz Public Library, in Saudi Arabia). What is known needs to be presented in a manner accessible to broad audiences, but also in languages permitting broad dissemination.
- Supply information about intercultural competences to governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations: the aim is to develop seminars, workshops and training opportunities in order to disseminate new content. Leadership in presenting such seminars, workshops and other training opportunities should be given to those with experience in the area so long as current research is also incorporated.
- Promote inter-institutional cooperation and funding for intercultural competence topics



and projects: UNESCO can liaise with other members of the UN family and relevant interagency initiatives, as well as with regional inter-governmental organizations active in this field, such as the Council of Europe, ALECSO and ISESCO. These contacts would facilitate the conversation about who will support what through its existing network, leading as much as possible to cost sharing. Since intercultural competences have value to every international organization, every country, and every city, necessary funding should not be impossible to obtain. Inter-institutional cooperation should include both the business sector and the media. In this regard, the international annual campaign “Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion” launched together with the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) on the occasion of the UN World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development on 21 May, has to be mentioned. In fact, it aims at building a world community, committed to supporting diversity with concrete, everyday life gestures, thus combatting polarization and stereotypes.

- Promote intercultural competences within the framework of UNESCO’s Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence: the Programme aims at rethinking strategies and operational modalities to draw the benefits from cultural diversity, respectful to human rights, while providing individuals and societies with the skills and tools for living together in harmony. These strategies and modalities are tailored to the requirements of an era of social transformations marked by fluidity, complexity, uncertainty, calling for new articulations between cultural diversity and universal values.
- Expand the list of professions recognizing the need for intercultural competences that are willing to modify the training of practitioners appropriately. For example, medical providers discuss not only the need for cultural competence but also for “cultural humility” when they work with patients from different cultures (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Community development workers have applied the same concept to their own context (Ross, 2010). The focus on cultural humility is designed not only to emphasize the

ongoing nature of gaining competence, and the commitment to self-reflection and self-critique, but also to deliberately reduce the power differential between participants to whatever extent possible. A particularly innovative program, *Experiencias Interprofesionales* [interprofessional experiences], offered in collaboration between the Centro de Estudios y Documentación Internacionales de Barcelona and the United Nations University International Institute for the Alliance of Civilizations, brings professionals from diverse realms together. The most recent example, the EU-Maghreb Cross-Meeting, brought together judges with journalists, from Italy, France Spain, Tunis, Algeria and Morocco. According to the organiser, Yolanda Onghena: “participants explored the political dimension of the relationship between information and communication. They also discussed the conditions of acceptance and negotiation and the regulation of the spheres of responsibility in different societies of journalists (who play a threefold role as providers of information, disclosers and critics) and judges (who are experts in guaranteeing the law and upholding the essential balances of political and legal pluralism).”<sup>18</sup>

- Enhance and support the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs, relying upon their expertise to help implement all levels of the operational platform, and taking advantage of the strengths of this network, in order to make good use of a currently existing network with directly relevant knowledge and connections. In this regard, the development of a programme on intercultural dialogue-based learning has to be mentioned in cooperation with the World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations” and the UNESCO Chair on Philosophy in the Dialogue of Cultures.
- Create new centers for excellence and innovation as necessary in any and all of the areas

discussed in this report, taking advantage of the support of the UNESCO institutes, Associated Schools, and UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs as appropriate. Such centers can serve as vehicles to expand the impact of successful activities, and should be established in many different parts of the world, not only a few locations.

*Legal decisions already often integrate cultural aspects of a situation, as in Colombia, where the U'wa people believe that twins must be expelled from the community. In 1999, a couple asked the State to accept temporary custody of their twins in order to request permission from their community's authorities to change the tradition so that they, and future parents, might keep their children. Eventually, the community did change the tradition, but it was important that they do so as a result of their own initiative, rather than being forced to do so by the State. The complexity of the case caused much discussion, and serves as a good example of the need for not only intercultural but also intracultural competences.<sup>19</sup>*

*The city of Helsinki's Caisa International Cultural Centre, a result of Finland's Program for the Integration of Immigrants (Ministry of the Interior, Finland, 1999), was quickly successful in both helping recent immigrants maintain their own cultures, and in helping them successfully integrate with the majority. The act focused on attitude education and the creation of a physical space where immigrants, and immigrants' associations, could meet with city representatives, church representatives, and others interested in issues relating to their welfare. Caisa International Cultural Centre was able to improve the public image of immigrants, thus reducing prejudice and discrimination, while simultaneously introducing immigrants to Finnish society. As a result, Caisa has grown substantially in the last few years, hosting the Eurovision Song Contest, and giving out €20 million in grants, both in 2007 (Joronen, 2003; Timonen, 2007).*



## VI. Conclusion

Many who encourage intercultural competences are coming to understand that people either are competent jointly, or are incompetent, but there is no such thing as one person being interculturally competent alone. Only through joint construction of a relationship in which people listen to one another can

individuals demonstrate their intercultural competences. The costs of intercultural incompetence are so high, including all the dangers of conflict and war, that it is vital to invest in activities necessary to clarify, teach, promote, enact and support intercultural competences. Just as our future depends upon actions taken today, so the future of cultural diversity respectful of human rights in our social world depends upon our ability to gain and demonstrate intercultural competences today. Individuals are not born interculturally competent, they become competent through education and life experiences. The implication, then, is the critical importance of offering



sufficient quality, formal and non-formal learning opportunities for everyone to acquire the intercultural competences required for successful living in the modern complexity of our heterogeneous world.

Intercultural dialogue, the process of holding conversations among members of different cultural groups whereby individuals listen to and learn from one another, serves as the essential starting point. Knowledge of the other does not ensure friendship or liking, but can reduce the chance of perceiving “others” only in terms of broad and inaccurate stereotypes. The many new media forms available today permit digital connection among people, notably youth, who actually live half the world apart; thus the new media can serve as decisive tools, permitting members of different cultural horizons to encounter one another virtually when they have no opportunity to do so physically. The fact that numerous challenges to intercultural dialogue exist does not provide adequate reason to forego such conversations, since intercultural competences can be developed that would facilitate them. As the world grows smaller, the incentive to improving intercultural competences among all members of the global community grows in proportion. The question remains as to how UNESCO and its partners within governments and civil society can “redress the balance between the viral and massive flow of information and disinformation in today’s world and the relatively poor development of the institutions of communication, in the sense of community and common humanity, allowing ordinary people to distinguish between information and misinformation, notably when depicting different cultures” (Appadurai, 2012).

The world may be shrinking and the possibilities of dialogue expanding, our ultimate goal nevertheless remains to achieve unity beyond diversity as a tapestry of peace where common threads of intellectual and moral solidarity bind us together. Without this sense of common purpose, the very fabric of human existence will sunder.



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## Notes

- 1 The term is used in the plural since there are many related skills, attitudes, and many types of knowledge that must co-exist simultaneously. Publications in the U.S.A. often use the variation “competencies”.
- 2 In 1998 the United Nations General Assembly stipulated that a culture of peace “consists of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavor to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society” (Resolution 52/13 of January 15, 1998. Available from <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N98/760/15/PDF/N9876015.pdf?OpenElement>).
- 3 Adapted from documentation provided in United Nations (2001) and UNESCO (2006a).
- 4 Social and economic homogenization and fragmentation are also part of the issue, of course.
- 5 No one publication includes all of these, as this is a compilation of current thinking within intercultural communication research, mostly as practiced with the United States.
- 6 “Co-cultures” evolved as a response to concern that the earlier term “subcultures” might be viewed as somehow denigrating. Subcultures are smaller groups existing simultaneously within a larger culture; calling them co-cultures emphasizes the essential equality of all of these smaller groups (Orbe, 1998).
- 7 One typical division is into the categories of attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes, as in Deardorff (2011).
- 8 For more information, consult the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report at the following link: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002180/218003e.pdf#page=185>.
- 9 Again, no one publication includes all of these, as this is a brief compilation and summary of current thinking within intercultural communication research.
- 10 <http://www.publicdialogue.org/pdc/index.html>
- 11 The term was suggested by Yves Winkin as part of group discussion at the UNESCO Experts Meeting on Intercultural Competences, Paris, France, September 21-22, 2011, drawing on the previously existing term “shifters” (Silverstein, 1976).
- 12 Discussion of uchi-soto comes from Eric Cattelain and Yoshitaka Miike; see Bachnik and Quinn (1994) and Makino (2002) for further details.
- 13 Despite not incorporating the vocabulary of reflexivity, the Council of Europe’s Autobiography of intercultural encounters works by relying upon the individual’s ability to describe a personal experience of intercultural difference, reflect upon what occurred, and draw conclusions to employ in future encounters.
- 14 <http://projectlull.com>
- 15 For analysis of this technique, see Federici and Reggiani (2005); for examples, see <http://www.grupocomunicar.com/index.php?coleccion=comicsi>
- 16 Documentation available on <http://www.dahteatarcentar.com>; discussion from Dragičević Šešić & Dragojević (2011).
- 17 <http://www.gulbenkian.pt/>
- 18 <http://unu.edu/news/2012/07/exploring-the-political-dimension-of-information-and-communication.html>
- 19 Discussed by Grimson (2011); original documentation in Sánchez de Guzmán (2006).

“We must promote a positive vision of cultural diversity and advance cultural literacy through learning, exchanges and dialogue. These are essential for fighting against discrimination, prejudice and extremism. Cultural diversity and cultural literacy are essential forces for the renewal of our societies.”

*Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General*



What are intercultural competences and why are they necessary in this globalizing world that has moved people of different backgrounds closer together? What place do intercultural competences take – and what place should they take – in shaping this new landscape? Globalization shrinks the world, bringing a wider range of cultures into closer contact with one another more often than in previous generations. Cultural diversity and intercultural contact have become facts of modern life, so intercultural competence becomes a requisite response. Since we understand cultural diversity to be a resource (in the ways that biodiversity serves as a resource), we must learn to cope with the implications, using cultural diversity as the resource that it can be. To develop intercultural competences facilitates relationships and interactions among people from various origins and cultures as well as within heterogeneous groups, all of whom all must learn to live together in peace.

Once the need for intercultural competence is accepted and felt as urgent, it becomes essential to develop a broad range of theoretical concepts and definitions, taking into consideration the existing plurality of languages, histories and identities. Mutual trust and exchange about similar and differing experiences, values and overlapping lives serve as the beginning points for developing these common definitions and creating a new space of interactions. This document first provides key concepts to nurture the debate on intercultural competences and then an operational plan, to turn debate into action demonstrating that everyone needs intercultural competences today as a result of globalization, and so efforts must be made to ensure that everyone gains them.