

Intercultural Competence Training: The Case of an Irish Not-for-profit Community Based Organisation for the Homeless in the Republic of Ireland

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OVERVIEW

- Background to the Study
- Research questions
- Findings
- Training
- Evaluation of training

- Increase in numbers of customers who are culturally diverse
- Need for development of an intercultural training programme
- First iteration delivered to approximately twenty five staff members
useful but too generic in places
- Lead to an ethnographic study to explore the challenges staff face in supporting culturally diverse customers

Methodology

Stage 1

Participant
Observation

Interviews

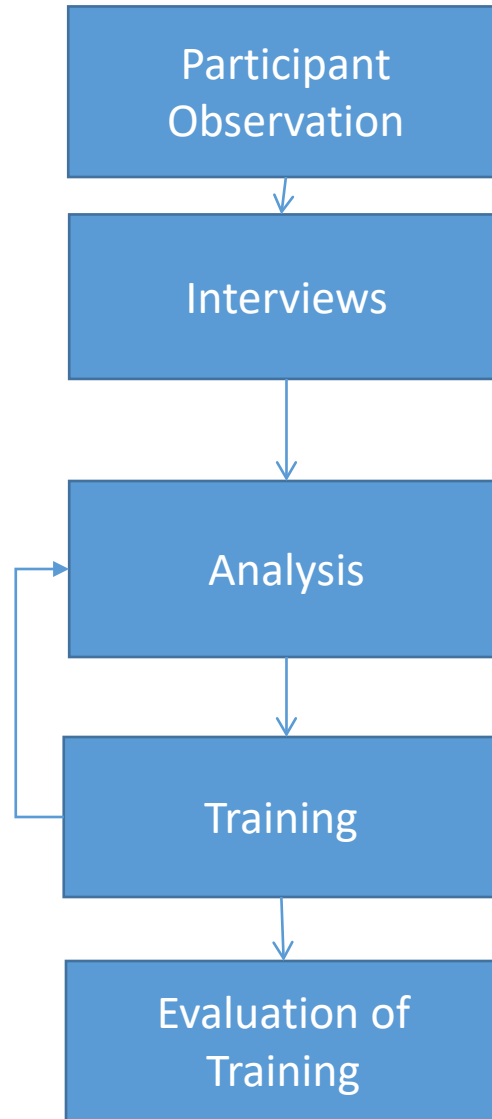
Stage 2

Analysis

Stage 3

Training

Evaluation of
Training



Observations :

- In Focus Ireland Coffee shop in Temple Bar Dublin
- In Focus Ireland Sligo the office and two Advice and Information sessions

Interviews:

- Cork, Dublin, Kilkenny, Sligo and Waterford.
- 18 group interviews; 53 members of staff

- Two four hour workshops approximately three months apart
- TS1 in Focus Ireland locations: Cork, Dublin, Sligo and Waterford
- TS2 in Dublin

Findings:

Some challenges:

1. Staff navigation of the semi private/ private sphere

Differing Cultural practices/rituals

The garden

P30 ...we'd one family who are housed in a housing estate in Waterford a council house and it was reported back to me that like every night at 5 o'clock it was sunny where there could be 20 men rock up and take their shirts off and they're out throwing up coins is it or.. playing games or having a few cans or whatever and that wasn't appropriate and that was considered by the other neighbours to be anti-social behaviour

Drawn curtains

P33: um one thing I would always have noticed with um I suppose clients with different culture uh a lot of the time they leave their curtains closed and I still don't know why that is uh

Interviewer: and you find that strange or?

P33: yeah yeah... uh especially cos they had children I think um and I just thought I don't know why I thought they should open the curtains if they had children but in general I just felt that maybe it would be nice I always find a house fresher

Removing shoes; Offering/accepting food; Sibling caretaking (Hafford, 2010)

2. Gender

- Challenge dealing with patriarchal family structures
- Differing cultural practices in the nurture of children
- Unconscious bias towards patriarchal/hierarchical family structures by staff
- Some male customers not wishing to deal with female staff members

3. Racism, discrimination & prejudice

Towards staff

Prejudice by Irish customers towards customers not born in Ireland

Racist acts directed towards culturally diverse neighbours

By landlords:

P30 [for a] Traveller to get private rented accommodation no matter what they do literally they can't even make a phone call their accent is quite distinctive em, and physically as well the way they present it you know, and no landlord wants to house them, that's in in my experience...it's almost impossible

4. Language competence

- Language use verbal and non-verbal communication
- Language brokers (Bauer, E., 2016)
- Children as language brokers- many staff uncomfortable so deterred it
- Professional interpreters

Intercultural Training

Intercultural competence is:

the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247-248).

Intercultural competence

Knowledge

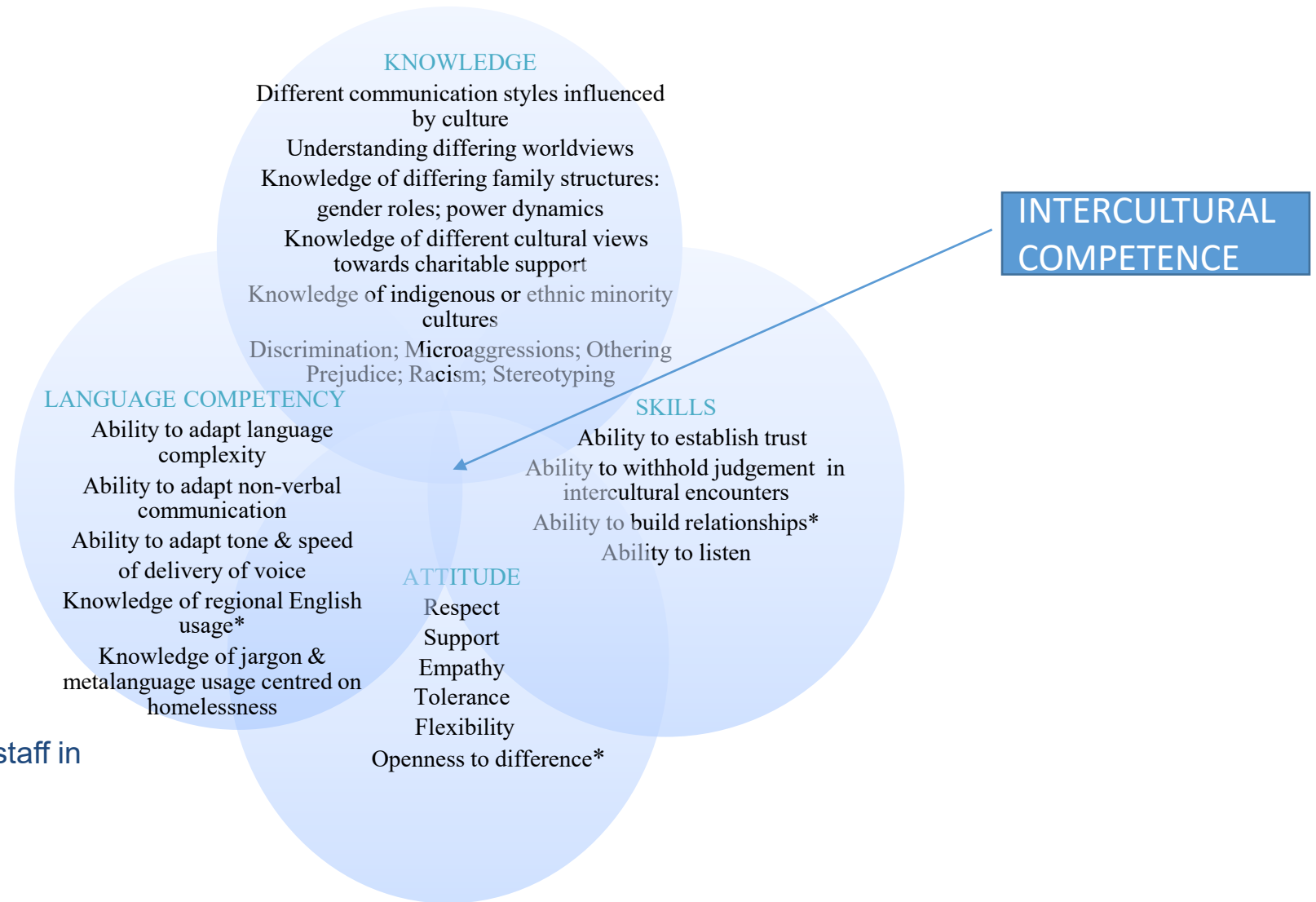
- Different communication styles influenced by culture
- Understanding differing worldviews
- Knowledge of differing family structures: gender roles; power dynamics
- Knowledge of different cultural views towards charitable support
- Knowledge of indigenous or ethnic minority cultures
- Discrimination; Microaggressions; Othering Prejudice; Racism; Stereotyping

Attitudes

- Respect
- Support
- Empathy
- Tolerance
- Flexibility
- Openness to difference

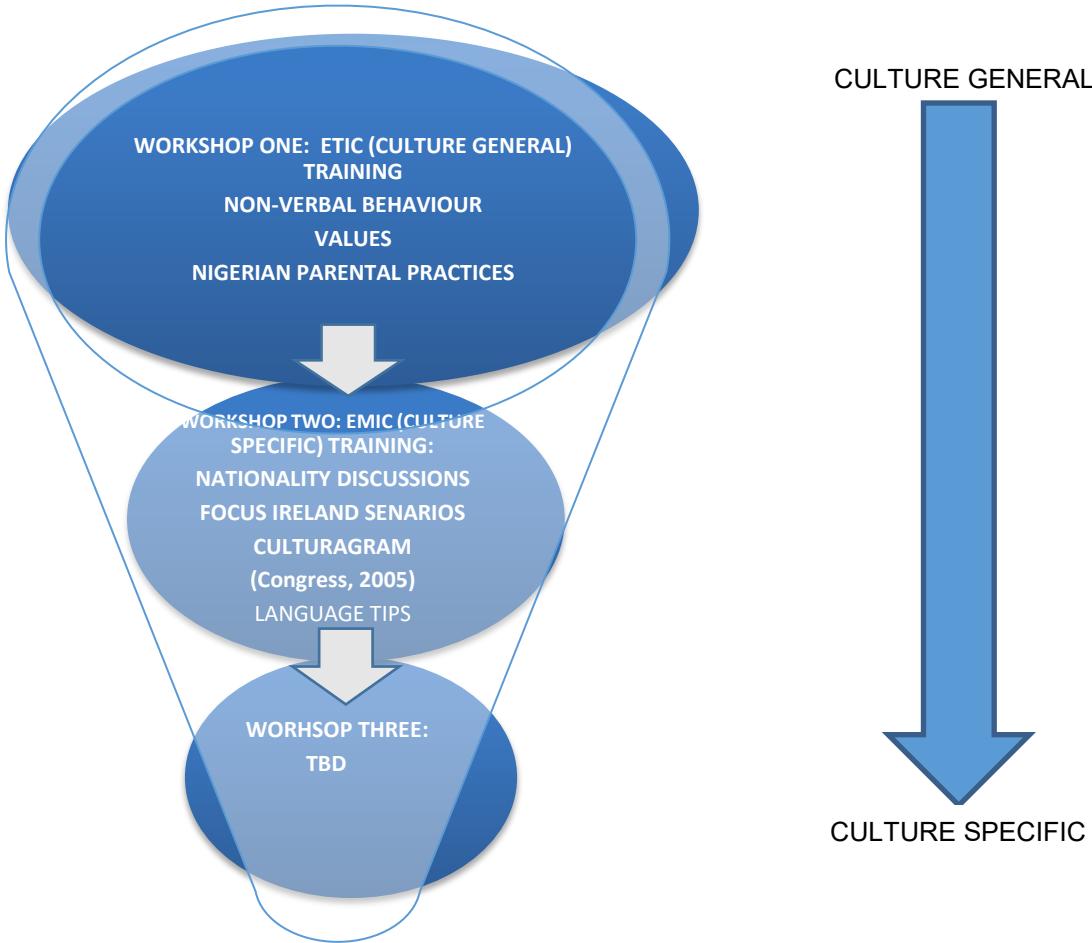
Skills

- Ability to establish trust
- Ability to withhold judgement in intercultural encounters
- Ability to build relationships*
- Ability to listen
- Ability to adapt language complexity
- Ability to adapt non-verbal communication
- Ability to adapt tone & speed of delivery of voice
- Knowledge of regional English usage*
- Knowledge of jargon & metalanguage usage centred on homelessness



A model of intercultural competence for staff in homeless not-for-profit provision (Toal, 2021).

The training process: session One and session Two



Evaluation of training

Training based on ethnographic research extremely useful and beneficial:

Practical drawing on our experiences and challenges.

Very interactive, very informative and training was based on our previous interviews with the trainer. Trainer was very knowledgeable about different cultures. Practical examples were good.

The structure and quality of the information combined with the delivery. This I felt led to a greater ability to understand, and then in turn use this in your practice environment.

I liked the real examples used. It made the information provided easier to apply to everyday life.

Opportunities to explore specific work situations/ challenges.

Development from Training session One to Two

From Knowledge to skills and attitudes also

Lots of new knowledge about different cultural norms and value systems. International ways to manage differences respectfully. How to use the knowledge within the workplace. What my own values and norms are. My level of knowledge and how to be more aware how my own values and norms can impact my work.

I hope I will be able to communicate better, to build relationships with customers from other cultures now that I am more aware of intercultural (competence).

Staff saw benefits not only to their work but wider society

A great benefit to myself and all staff members and service users and Ireland continues to evolve into a multicultural country. This training is very necessary and progressive to avoid and prevent future social issues and possible exclusion.

Confidence in having open conversations with customers about cultural experiences and the journey to our country.

Integration of non-Irish families to Irish society.

Conclusions

- Some trainees developed a more sophisticated and complex level of intercultural competence as a result of attending the sessions
- Trainees indicated improved abilities in non-verbal communication skills
- Trainees highlighted the importance of adapting one's speed of delivery and simplifying verbal messages when communicating with customers with low levels of English proficiency.
- Intercultural competence training is an ongoing process
- Ethnographic bottom up approach to training very useful

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Thankyou!

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