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RFC: ATI120618V12

Revista Dilemas Contemporáneos: Educación, Política y Valores.

<http://www.dilemascontemporaneoseducacionpoliticayvalores.com/>

Año: XI

Número: Edición Especial.

Artículo no.:8

Período: Diciembre, 2023

TÍTULO: Fomento de la agilidad cultural a través de la internacionalización del curriculum en un curso de comunicación de negocios.

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RESUMEN: El objetivo de este estudio es caracterizar como se promueve la agilidad cultural a través de la internacionalización del curriculum en un curso de comunicación de negocios en estudiantes de primer año de una universidad estatal pública mexicana. En este estudio etnográfico se utilizaron las técnicas de revisión documental y la observación participante en un grupo con 45 estudiantes de la carrera de administración. Los informantes demostraron el desarrollo de esta habilidad a través de materiales educativos en los cuales experimentaron y reflexionaron sobre las diversas situaciones culturales presentadas, lo cual se logra cuando hay compromiso por parte del docente y el apoyo de los administradores de la institución educativa.

PALABRAS CLAVES: internacionalización, internacionalización del curriculum, agilidad cultural.

TITLE: Promotion of cultural agility through the internationalization of the curriculum in a business communication course.

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study is to characterize how cultural agility is promoted through the internationalization of the curriculum in a business communication course in first-year students of a Mexican public state university. In this ethnographic study, documentary review techniques and participant observation were used in a group of 45 administration students. The informants demonstrated the development of this skill through educational materials in which they experimented and reflected on the various cultural situations presented, which is achieved when there is commitment on the part of the teacher and the support of the administrators of the educational institution.

KEY WORDS: internationalization, internationalization of the curriculum, cultural agility.

INTRODUCTION.

Cultural agility is a term that emerged due to the phenomenon of globalization and the process of internationalization of Higher Education. It refers to a skill that allows an individual to be more flexible and perform effectively in intercultural situations avoiding cultural shock or differences.

It is a sign of an effective professional as well as an important indicator of how an organization operates, because it involves a range of skills, knowledge, and abilities to implement in the business world to navigate appropriately in different cultures and contexts.

The objective of this study is to characterize how cultural agility is fostered through the internationalization of the curriculum in a business communication course for first year students in a Mexican public state university.

Informants demonstrated to have developed this skill with the constant exposition to cultural situations through the materials designed by the professor. Educative materials enabled informants to experience different scenarios where they could reflect or consider themselves in the presented situations.

It is suggested to make use of training sessions, language lessons, readings, or any other material for creating the desired learning experience supported by the commitment of the facilitator, as well as the participation from the university administrators.

DEVELOPMENT.

Internationalization is the process of integrating an international, an intercultural or global dimension in teaching, learning, research, or service according to Knight (2004) and it also needs to be oriented to the institutional values (Knight, 2011).

For Gacel-Ávila (2012), internationalization is a way to response to globalization by university administrators through which cultural identity is promoted and reinforced, but also it is a way to show commitment in the education on global citizenship.

De Wit (2014) explained that the internationalization process can be achieved through the following strategies:

- a) Internationalization at home, where the curriculum is oriented to international understanding and intercultural skills.
- b) Internationalization abroad, through mobility of students, faculty, scholars, and programs.
- c) Internationalization of the curriculum where topics are oriented and related to global perspectives.

d) Global or intercultural competences, for an effective interaction with people from other cultures.

According to Botero Montoya & Bolivar Garcia (2015), the following five actors must be involved in the process of internationalization:

a) Institutional governance.

b) University direction.

c) Professors.

d) Students.

e) Service and support units.

Internationalization of universities represent a change based on political will from the university administrators for social pertinence and international recognition or visibility (Sorolla Fernández, 2019).

Macazana Fernández et al. (2021) highlighted the engaging role of the faculty to guarantee the success of any of the strategies implemented, but also the necessity of internationalization to comply with the objectives planned by the university administrators to project the alignment with international or national policies and actions.

Internationalization of the curriculum.

Gacel Ávila (2009) indicated, that it was a recent term and must have been integrated in university programs especially due to the lack of international professors in campus. Hernández (2009) stated that the inclusion of an international dimension in university programs allowed students the opportunity to experience living and studying abroad in order to awaken a global conscience.

But for those who did not have the opportunity of going abroad, McGill & Matross (2013) suggested that an internationalization of the curriculum would help students develop global competence as they could be exposed to international perspectives in their formative education.

Leask (2014) defines this process as the way of engaging students with internationally informed research, cultural and linguistic diversity, so they can develop international and intercultural perspectives as global professionals and citizens.

Internationalization of the curriculum in Mexican HEIs.

Cuevas Álvarez (2018) indicated that Mexican public Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] have struggled with the inclusion of an internationalized curriculum and have only implemented mobility for domestic and international students, offered a second language acquisition in their language centers, and created efforts for cultural awareness.

Velázquez Martínez & Pimienta Rosales (2018) detected lexical cohesion and reading comprehension struggles so they suggested strategies for helping students overcome those difficulties, but it is inferred from that study that the detected deficiencies were a result of their lack of abilities in their mother tongue.

Another aspect to consider is that professors must be trained and must have the international experience, the international, global, and intercultural competences to plan lessons and activities with those perspectives as a way of providing creative, innovative solutions to problems and to the personal development and awareness in their students (Salazar Ibarra & Cervantes Holguín, 2018).

Cultural agility: concept and definition.

Cultural agility is the capacity to collaborate with people from various cultures or cultural settings in a courteous, knowledgeable, and successful manner. It refers to being open to new experiences, changing fear or tension into curiosity and enjoyment. It is also the knowledge of how personal and

professional ideals may clash or align, as well as the ability to connect to or accept various cultural ideas, and the willingness to undergo a personal shift in perspective (Williams, 2023).

Employees that are culturally agile are especially beneficial in cross-functional teams. Even inside companies with strong overarching cultures, groups and business units develop their own microcultures. A sales team's risk tolerance, for example, may be very different from that of the technical department. Individuals with cultural agility may detect the distinctions and assist both groups in working together. If the sales team is prone to making client promises about new product features that engineering considers dangerous, agile personnel can assist in finding compromises that bring sales and engineering together to clinch the deal (Johnson, 2021).

Cultural agility is the new competitive advantage for today's multinational enterprises. Leaders who comprehend cultural subtleties are more adaptive and inclusive. They can manage the complicated dynamics of multinational, multicultural teams – and clients – more successfully (Hu-Chan, 2023).

Postsecondary outcome in Mexican institutions.

In Mexico, first year university students who come from public schools ignore the abilities that a business student must have in order to demonstrate cultural agility compared to those who come from private institutions. It is misunderstood that the leader of a company only directs the organization, holds a diploma, and works in an office without the need of creating long-lasting business relationships, especially with people from different cultural backgrounds.

The majority of students enrolled in a business degree in the state university come from institutions that only form students with generic and disciplinary abilities. Generic abilities refer to those which can be key, cross-sectional, and transferable, such as:

Key: Those which can be applied in academic, personal, social, and working scenarios. They are lifelong learning.

Cross-sectional: Those which are relevant to all academic fields of study, complementary activities and scholar support processes for students are also included here.

Transferable: Those that reinforce the ability to acquire other abilities.

The disciplinary ones refer to those related to fields of study, such as: Math, Experimental Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Communication. Communication abilities are limited to reading, communicating, and discussing ideas in an effective, clear written or oral way, using ICTs for different communication purposes and oriented to the reflection of the nature of language as well as its use as a tool for logic thinking. There is a 12-point list regarding to this ability, but only the following are recovered for the objective of this proposal:

10. The student identifies and interprets a general idea and possible development of a written or oral message in a second language, making use of previous knowledge, non-verbal elements, and cultural context.

11. The student communicates in a second language with a logical and congruent discourse, in a second language according to the communicative situation.

12. The student makes use of ICTs for doing research, problem-solving, producing materials and communicating information.

In private institutions, both generic and disciplinary abilities are covered as indicated by the Secretary of Public Education [SEP]; however, they are not limited to those indicated by this organization, private institutions have the liberty to add others considered suitable or complementary for their students, such as the cultural agility ability (Caligiuri, 2013), which is an ability to operate effectively and successfully in cross-cultural and international environments with complex cultural situations. It is included in several subjects, especially in those oriented to acquiring a second language, students have more sessions per week or more hours are designated for its instruction.

The shock for first year university students.

Another reality of the public system is that language second acquisition may or not may happen as it depends on special programs and funding according to the planning of the sitting president. It is very common to observe that students from public institutions have deficiencies or zero basic knowledge or domain of a second language, as well as in their generic and disciplinary abilities.

When students are enrolled in university lessons, they face with the problem of not understanding why professors do not give lectures, do not ask the student to take notes, or provides material for previous reading and then discuss materials read during the lessons.

Another situation encountered is that students expect to be taught using a step-by-step procedure, and do not understand the study case, the research or isearch methodologies.

As for second language acquisition, they also expect to receive lessons as if learning the second language for the first time, but instead, programs are oriented towards learning and discussing themes or topics in a foreign language, changing the Mexican mindset for the target mindset, especially in business programs.

Professors cannot allocate time for teaching basic topics, explain basic tenses, or focus on pronunciation. Time must be destined for problem-solving, analytical, logical, and critical thinking, in order to provide results on a specific task, as expected in the real world.

University curricula must include training and development processes for cultural agility (Mukerjee, 2014). The main concern is the deficiency detected in second language acquisition, the lack of cultural agility, and the absence of generic and disciplinary abilities in first year students.

Methodology.

The objective of this article is to characterize how cultural agility is fostered through the internationalization of the curriculum in a business communication course for first year students in a

Mexican public state university. Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, the university where this qualitative study was conducted, a group of 45 administration students was observed in the Economic and Administrative Sciences Department for a four-month period in the year 2022. This ethnographic study used the techniques: documentary review (Restrepo & Tabares, 2000), and participant observation with moderated degree of observation (Spradley, 1980).

Procedure.

Students received lessons twice per week with two hours per session making a total of 64 hours at the end of the school period. Readings, short videos, or images were provided in advance. During the lessons, students had to discuss the new topic from questions raised by the professor for eliciting responses, including a specific cultural factor; from receiving or giving gifts in a business situation, organizing business meals or meetings, sending instant messages or e-mails, making business telephone calls, to visiting a business partner on special days or occasions, just to mention a few examples. In every lesson, the cultural factor was present in every activity planned.

Findings.

Students demonstrated to have developed cultural agility because of the constant cultural factor in the materials selected by the professor. They also made comments during lessons, that they appreciated the carefully selection of materials, because they had to imagine themselves in every situation and this changed their mindset allowing them to analyze the cultural background of the person, they have in front of them in order to determine how to effectively interact avoiding shock or difference. They also considered that speaking the target language was enough for interacting, they discovered that other elements are necessary such as the non-verbal ones, and the cultural context.

Discussion.

This ability is relevant because it has become a required ability in business, as it helps to communicate, negotiate, and build trust between two people or parties from different cultural backgrounds.

It is also necessary for people from other fields of study, and it must be included in every university curriculum from the entry and reinforced in every subject, as the constant presence in lessons will help students develop it and practice it until they insert themselves in the laboral market and put into practice the knowledge acquired in the real world.

CONCLUSIONS.

Cultural agility has become a necessary trait in today's global economy because it is a skill that allows the person to comfortably and effectively work in different cultures, countries, or organizations; or vice versa, organizations need to acquire, develop, and retain professionals who can demonstrate it.

The recommended way to boost it is with training sessions, language lessons, books and materials designed by a facilitator, a person who can create a learning experience, because information is not enough, it has to be learned by doing or experiencing, as performed in this study.

As mentioned by Botero Montoya & Bolivar Garcia, there are five main actors to be considered; firstly, university administrators who are the ones who generate the institutional objectives aligned either to international or national educative policies; therefore, they are in charge of identifying social pertinence which will be included in the curricula.

Secondly, and specified by Sorolla Fernández, professors and students because they are part of the teaching and learning process. They are the ones in direct contact on a daily basis revising or going over lessons, and contents which will lead to the development of this skill. Finally, faculty must demonstrate commitment towards the generation of contents with different perspectives, and oriented to the inclusion of an international dimension.

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RECIBIDO: 10 de septiembre del 2023.

APROBADO: 3 de octubre del 2023.