

Lantz-Deaton, C. and Golubeva, I. (2020). Intercultural Competence for College and University Students: A Global Guide for Employability and Social Change. Switzerland: Springer. ISBN 978-3-030-57445-1

Reviewed by Agnieszka Strzałka

UNIwersytet PEDAGOGICZNY W KRAKOWIE

Intercultural Competence for College and University Students: A Global Guide for Employability and Social Change is a book I have been waiting for. While many intercultural materials pay lip service to our intercultural competence, Lantz-Deaton, and Golubeva's handbook is a tangible, step-by-step extrapolation of intercultural issues based on a massive bibliography. While many intercultural materials may be useful, finding them and making them pedagogically usable is so time-consuming – but this book is a collection of almost everything an academic teacher and student need in one place.

Looking at the beautiful royal blue cover of the book, we also see a number of clay (or Plasticine) figures, colourfully dressed, all looking in the same direction. What are they looking at? There is a treasure heap of coloured stones, each bearing a name of a virtue we would like to possess: knowledge, self-awareness, learning, mindfulness, diversity, critical thinking, and some more. They are stones which have been hand-painted, each according to the artists' will and creativity. This presentation seems to bring to mind the individual effort and creativity of ideas needed in pursuing the major virtue the book title mentions – intercultural competence.

While university teachers spend huge amounts of time looking for intercultural course materials in an attempt to aid students' reading in the sea of intercultural literature in a relatively short period of time, this handbook may now ease tutors' efforts and become a source which students may use to continue reading, thinking, and talking about intercultural issues with others after their course finishes. Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva have addressed their book to "students in any country and studying in any discipline" (from the back cover review of Professor Michael Byram).

One of the major virtues of the book seems to be the room for reflection that the authors leave in virtually every chapter. Let us briefly look at the particular units through which the text leads the course or independent students in their journey into a more conscious global citizenship and heightened awareness of intercultural communication.

In the first chapter we are invited to explore the very concept of intercultural competence (IC) – not so much through numerous definitions but by trying to think more deeply about the complexity of the competence needed in a number of professional and academic situations in which we have to face different types of diversity – national, religious, cultural, or even pub-attending/ non pub attending one (sic!) What is more, our understanding of intercultural competence is challenged – we are encouraged to work with the consecutive chapters of the book even if “we have travelled extensively”, “lived abroad”, or “have friends from other cultures”. Readers who have indeed already experienced intercultural contacts will have a lot to think about, reconsider, and offer as examples in group discussions of the questions (Think Boxes) included in the book.

Devoted to the notion of culture, chapter two offers the reader a discussion about different kinds of culture, a concept considered central to intercultural competence and truly an umbrella term which students often need to develop their understanding of. Further, the problem of cultural identity (background) as well as different dimensions of culture “proposed by mainstream theorists” (p. 25) are presented. It is in this chapter that the student meets the classic cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede.

Chapter three (Box 3.2) lists statements which prompt the reader to think to what extent they have been privileged or discriminated against in their lives. Power and privilege, prejudice, discrimination, racism, sexism, and victim-blaming are among the phenomena which the authors invite readers to reflect and talk about. At the end of the chapter, contact theory, supported by researchers since the fifties, is introduced. Students can discuss the controversy in relation to their immediate environment – academia – in an attempt to define the present university authorities and students’ own efforts to close the gap between different social, cultural, and ethnic groups. It is likely that the students will quote positive and negative experiences, at which point they can realise which factors actually aid the reduction of prejudice. The authors have thought out their task for the reader, not to make them passive receivers, but active participants throughout reading.

Chapter 4 gives students a chance to analyse the concept of intercultural competence. While it definitely means effective interaction with people of different cultures, it also includes issues of equal treatment of people “within the larger society”. Ambitious as it is, the authors treat intercultural compe-

tence as a skill within the readers' reach. Students will face difficult questions, and it will require cooperation and time to answer them. If students think deeply, they will be able, with the help of the instructor, to remember examples which make theories and models easier to understand. The instructor will have to decide how to facilitate comprehension of relatively difficult concepts related to intercultural development, such as "positively addressing (unacceptable) differences". The student readers will be invited to answer over 60 questions related to intercultural competence.

The exact middle of the book is the place where individual components of intercultural competences (see the cover of the book described above) are explained. This leads us directly to self-evaluation of our competence. Many teachers wonder if their students' IC can be objectively measured. Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva offer an answer to the question: while measuring IC may be important, more important than that is to treat measurement as a starting point for development, remembering especially about those areas in which we "score" lower (either objectively, in case studies, or in assessment by self or peers).

Chapter 5 opens the part devoted to internationalisation of universities and workplaces. While we are asked to think about particular study and work abroad programmes, the authors suggest that, ideally, an IC curriculum should last the entire time foreign students spend abroad. Student readers will be given a warning against socialising with conationals when staying abroad, advice to keep an intercultural journal, and many other strategies for developing IC. The value of the chapter lies in its calls for more intercultural dialogue (on top of policies of equality, diversity, and inclusion) in the life of universities, so that all who work and study there practice their international mindset – because internationalisation, as the authors stress many times in the book, should not be driven by instrumental and profit motivations. It is also important that, in this chapter, the authors look at the activity of learning a foreign language as one which can help towards intercultural competence. We cannot help but agree, as it is the successful learning of English that lies at the heart of the international success of the book. Finally in this chapter, the student is led to consider the intercultural meaning of active and democratic citizenship.

Chapter 6 is a collection of CI (critical incidents). The reader is given a chance to analyse an incident which somebody else has already described, expressed how they felt, and given what conclusions they drew. This way students may learn not to jump to conclusions as well as the general attitude of suspending judgement at interculturally difficult moments. Tolerance, openness, and empathy are advocated to the reader, who can reach further in an attempt to see things from different perspectives. A growing self-awareness is

necessary to improve our participation in intercultural encounters, and critical thinking allows us to become more dispassionate in the face of differences and mismatches between expectations and reality.

In chapter 7 we find many practical questions referring to students' future career prospects, job search and problems at work in the light of intercultural issues. I think the information there opens their eyes to the pragmatic dimension of communication at work and in business. It also shows that intercultural skills can become a strong asset they will bring into the companies and institutions they work for after leaving university. The lack of those skills, on the other hand, may close many interesting opportunities, so it is in the students' interest to continue working on them.

Finally, chapter 8 concerns "intercultural leadership". It seems to me that the concept may be quite new to many students, mainly because of its multiple definitions. Once again, the authors have proven how well read they are in the research literature and every source connected with the psychology of the intercultural. It is possible, however, that this last chapter will be of interest mainly to those student readers who think about organisational and political leadership in the future.

The guide is an outstandingly valuable publication, as it not only binds together a plethora of sources dealing with interculturality but also lists endless questions pertaining to the issues crucial to intercultural competence. It can be called an exhaustive and real guide to intercultural competence, as it makes the reader think about cultural differences on every occasion and encourages them to act in ways that develop their IC. The numerous questions that the book poses in the Think Boxes are not easy. In many places student readers might struggle to answer them but learning from each other's answers or even leaving the questions with no answer (but living with them) is meant to sensitize the reader to intercultural problems.

Is it a guide to employability? The words "employment", "employer", and "employees" feature infrequently in the pages of the book, until the last but one chapter. The whole text, however, seems to be food for thought for the student who, sooner or later, becomes an employee. Will they face differences then? In their workplaces as well as where they live, today every young person will almost certainly have a chance to encounter differences. And it is their openness, sensitivity, and perspective that will help them bridge and appreciate them. These are the virtues that the book promotes from its cover to the last page.

Address: Agnieszka Strzałka, Instytut Filologii Angielskiej, Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. KEN w Krakowie, ul. Karmelicka 41, 31-128 Kraków, Poland.