

## Cross-cultural Training in International Cooperation Efforts

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**Abstract :** As the global and national communities and governments strive to address ongoing and evolving threats to humanity and pervasive or emerging “shared” global priorities on environmental, economic, political, and security, it is more urgent than ever before to understand each other, communicate effectively with one another, identify models of cooperation that yield improved, mutually reinforcing outcomes across and within cultures. It is within the backdrop of this reality that the presentation examines whether cultural training as we have approached it in recent decades is sufficiently meeting our current needs and what changes may be applied to foster better and more productive and sustainable intercultural interactions. Domestic and global relations face multiple challenges to peaceable cooperation. The last two years, in particular, have been defined by a travel-restricted COVID-19 pandemic yielding increased intercultural interactions over virtual platforms, polarized politics dividing nations and regions, and the commensurate rise in weaponized social and traditional media communication. These societal and cultural fissures are noticeably challenging our collective and individual abilities to constructively interact both at home and abroad. It is within this pressure cooker environment that the authors believe it is time to reexamine existing and broadly accepted inter- and cross- cultural training approaches and concepts to determine their level of effectiveness in setting conditions for optimal human understanding and relationships both in the national and international context. In order to better understand the amount and the type of intercultural training practitioners professionally engaging in international partnership building have received throughout their careers and its perceived effectiveness, a survey was designed and distributed to US and international professionals presently engaged in the fields of diplomacy, military, academia, and international business. The survey questions were designed to address the two primary research questions investigators posed in this exploratory study. Research questions aimed to examine practitioners’ view of the role and effectiveness of current and traditional cultural training and education as a means to fostering improved communication, interactions, understanding, and cooperation among inter, cross, or multi-cultural communities or efforts. Responses were then collected and analyzed for themes present in the participants’ reflections. In their responses, the practitioners identified the areas of improvement and desired outcomes in regards to intercultural training and awareness raising curricular approaches. They also raised issues directly and indirectly pertaining to the role of foreign language proficiency in intercultural interactions and a need for a solid grasp on cultural and regional issues (regional expertise) to facilitate such an interaction. Respondents indicated knowledge, skills, abilities, and capabilities that the participants were not trained on but learned through ad hoc personal and professional intercultural interactions, which they found most valuable and wished they had acquired prior to the intercultural experience.

**Keywords :** cultural training, improved communication, intercultural competence, international cooperation

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