

Constructivist Grounded Theory of Intercultural Learning

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Abstract : Intercultural learning is one of the approaches taken to understand the cultural diversity of the modern world and to accept changes in cultural identity and otherness and the expression of tolerance. During intercultural learning, students develop their abilities to interact and communicate with their group members. These abilities help to understand social and cultural differences, to form one's identity, and to give meaning to intercultural learning. Intercultural education recognizes that a true understanding of differences and similarities of another culture is necessary in order to lay the foundations for working together with others, which contributes to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, appreciation of diversity, and cultural exchange. Therefore, it is important to examine the concept of intercultural learning, revealed through students' learning experiences and understanding of how this learning takes place and what significance this phenomenon has in higher education. At a scientific level, intercultural learning should be explored in order to uncover the influence of cultural identity, i.e., intercultural learning should be seen in a local context. This experience would provide an opportunity to learn from various everyday intercultural learning situations. Intercultural learning can be not only a form of learning but also a tool for building understanding between people of different cultures. The research object of the study is the process of intercultural learning. The aim of the dissertation is to develop a grounded theory of the process of learning in an intercultural study environment, revealing students' learning experiences. The research strategy chosen in this study is a constructivist grounded theory (GT). GT is an inductive method that seeks to form a theory by applying the systematic collection, synthesis, analysis, and conceptualization of data. The targeted data collection was based on the analysis of data provided by previous research participants, which revealed the need for further research participants. During the research, only students with at least half a year of study experience, i.e., who have completed at least one semester of intercultural studies, were purposefully selected for the research. To select students, snowballing sampling was used. 18 interviews were conducted with students representing 3 different fields of sciences (social sciences, humanities, and technology sciences). In the process of intercultural learning, language expresses and embodies cultural reality and a person's cultural identity. It is through language that individual experiences are expressed, and the world in which Others exist is perceived. The increased emphasis is placed on the fact that language conveys certain "signs" of communication and perception with cultural value, enabling the students to identify the Self and the Other. Language becomes an important tool in the process of intercultural communication because it is only through language that learners can communicate, exchange information, and understand each other. Thus, in the process of intercultural learning, language either promotes interpersonal relationships with foreign students or leads to mutual rejection.

Keywords : intercultural learning, grounded theory, students, other

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