

Learning Activity: Cultural Dimensions and Exchange Experiences

- **Objective:** The aim of this learning activity is to help students deepen their understanding of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and apply this knowledge to their own Erasmus+ exchange experiences. The activity is conducted in small groups.
- **Duration:** Approximately 30-45 minutes



Task Explanation

- Step 1: Start by introducing Hofstede's model, which can be found from the presentation.
- Step 2: Applying Dimensions to Exchange Experiences (20 minutes) Form small groups (3-5 students per group) and assign each group the task of relating Hofstede's cultural dimensions to their own Erasmus+ exchange experiences. Have them discuss how these dimensions apply to their experiences abroad. List of dimensions can be found from end of the presentation
- Step 3: Group Presentations (10 minutes) Each group presents a brief summary their discussions for each dimension. They should share insights into the cultural differences they've encountered during their exchange and how these compare to their home country.

Conclusion: This activity helps students put theoretical knowledge into practice during their Erasmus+ exchange, promoting discussion, sharing, and reflection. It fosters a deeper understanding of different cultures and enhances adaptability.

Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model

This Teaching Material Covers Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model.

It helps to understand the differences in national cultures across different countries.

You can use it when you prepare students to their Erasmus+ exchange!



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Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions:

Introduction:

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, has created a model that helps us look at national cultures in different countries.

This model is a useful tool for students participating in Erasmus+ exchanges, as they encounter various cultural traits.

While the model has been criticized for simplification, it provides indicative information about cultural differences.

Power Distance:

The power distance dimension measures how inequality or equality is handled in society.

High Power Distance:

- Hierarchy is clear, and power is in the hands of a few.
- Respect is given to elders, teachers, and superiors.
- Large pay gaps exist in workplaces.
- Authority is emphasized through external symbols.
- Status symbols hold importance.

Low Power Distance:

- Equality among people is crucial.
- Parents and children are equal.
- Less surveillance in workplaces.
- Smaller pay gaps.
- Subordinates and superiors are equal.
- Rules apply to everyone equally

Individualism vs. Collectivism

This dimension describes whether the focus is on the individual or the community in society.

Individualistic Culture:

- Expressing one's opinion is seen as honesty.
- Individual rights are important.
- Money and possessions belong to the individual.
- Job roles are based on competence.
- Equal treatment is essential.

In Collectivistic Culture:

- Harmony and the group's interest matter.
- Preference for relatives and close ones.
- Gender roles are closer to each other.
- Group success is highlighted in work.
- Community norms are respected.

Masculinity vs. Femininity:

This dimension explores the differences between tough and tender masculinity and femininity values in society.

More Feminine Culture:

- Relationships and quality of life matter.
- Roles of women and men are closer.
- Conflicts are resolved through negotiation.
- Leisure time is important.

More Masculine Culture:

- Achievements and success matter.
- Men are decisive and ambitious.
- Conflicts are resolved by winning.
- Work and money are emphasized.

Uncertainty Avoidance vs. Uncertainty Tolerance:

This dimension portrays how society deals with handling uncertainty.

Uncertainty Avoidance Culture:

- Uncertainty is seen as a threat.
- Rules are followed even if they don't work.
- Emphasis on insurances and security measures.

Uncertainty Tolerance Culture:

- Uncertainty is part of life.
- Tolerance for chaos.
- Citizens are interested in politics.
- More tolerance towards foreigners.

Time Orientation:

Time orientation involves setting long-term and short-term goals in society.

- **Long-Term Orientation:**

- Thriftiness and long-term goals are important.
- Learning and responsibility are highlighted in work life.
- Lifelong networks are essential.

- **Short-Term Orientation:**

- Social pressure to spend money is higher.
- Quick results matter.
- Traditions and maintaining face are emphasized.



Examples of Different Cultures Using Hofstede's Model



Power Distance:

High power distance:

For instance, Japan, South Korea, and Arab countries.

These societies emphasize hierarchy and respect for superiors and elders.

Low power distance:

For example, Nordic countries like Finland and Denmark.

Equality and egalitarian interaction are emphasized in these cultures.



Individualism vs. Collectivism:

Individualistic culture: Such as the United States and many Western countries. Individual rights and independence are important values.

Collectivistic culture: Like Japan and China. These cultures value group unity and family relationships.

Masculinity vs. Femininity:

More masculine culture:

Countries like Germany and Japan.

They emphasize achievement, competition, and success.

More feminine culture:

Countries like Sweden and Norway.

These countries focus on relationships, quality of life, and equality.

Uncertainty Avoidance vs. Uncertainty Tolerance:

Uncertainty avoidance culture: Such as France and Greece.

These cultures seek to avoid uncertainty and rely on rules and bureaucracy.

Uncertainty tolerance culture: Like India and Brazil.

These cultures are more flexible with uncertainty and approach it with a more relaxed attitude.

Time Orientation:

Long-term orientation:

For example, China and Japan.

These cultures emphasize thriftiness and long-term planning.

Short-term orientation:

Like the United States and the United Kingdom.

These cultures prioritize quick results and flexibility.

Task: Cultural dimensions in my Erasmus+ destination

1. Cultural Awareness:
2. Power Distance:
3. Individualism vs. Collectivism:
4. Masculinity vs. Femininity:
5. Uncertainty Avoidance vs. Uncertainty Tolerance
6. Uncertainty Avoidance vs. Uncertainty Tolerance:Time Orientation:
7. Respect and Open-mindedness:
8. Application in Personal Behavior:.

Here are some tips for Erasmus+ exchange participants based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions:

- 1. Cultural Awareness:** Stay open to different cultural traits and understand that cultural differences can affect how people think, behave, and communicate. Familiarize yourself with the host country's culture beforehand and learn how these dimensions manifest there.
- 2. Power Distance:** Understand how power distance affects interaction. In high power distance countries, respecting superiors is crucial. In low power distance countries, focus is more on equal interaction. Adapt to interaction styles respectfully.
- 3. Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Learn about the level of collectivism in your host country. Collective cultures may value group unity and family relationships more. Be open to forming new relationships and show respect for local traditions.
- 4. Masculinity vs. Femininity:** Notice how gender roles and emphasis on achievements manifest in the host country's culture. Tailor your communication and goals according to these values.
- 5. Uncertainty Avoidance vs. Uncertainty Tolerance:** Understand how the host country handles uncertainty. Be ready to adapt to different situations.

6. Time Orientation: Consider whether the host country is more long-term or short-term oriented. This can affect scheduling and planning. Adapt to the local time culture.

7. Respect and Open-mindedness: Show respect for diverse cultural traits. Ask locals questions, show interest, and try to understand cultural perspectives. A respectful attitude helps you integrate and enjoy your exchange.

8. Application in Personal Behavior: By understanding these cultural dimensions, you can apply this knowledge to your behavior and interactions with locals. This helps you avoid misunderstandings and build positive relationships.

Be Ready to Learn: An exchange is a great opportunity to learn about a new culture and yourself. Embrace new experiences, challenge your biases, and allow yourself to learn from mistakes.

Enjoy the Experience: Despite challenges posed by cultural differences, they can also provide new perspectives and opportunities. Enjoy your Erasmus+ experience!!