

**Intercultural Communicative Competence:  
A Professional Development Model for  
College Nursing Faculty**

Canada-Alberta Enhanced Language Training for Skilled Immigrants  
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**Public Report**

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**Submitted by: Hana Taleb Imai**

The project *Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Professional Development Model for College Nursing Faculty* combined experience garnered within the Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement (CEIIA) at Bow Valley College (BVC) in both delivering professional development and in intercultural communicative competence (ICC) scenario development to produce a professional development model for faculty instruction enhancement.

This project investigated professional development models currently employed in faculty development and explored the particular needs of nursing faculty grappling with an increasingly diverse population of learners. The focus was on developing intercultural communicative competence and teaching and learning strategies for nursing faculty to aid learners in accessing content in nursing programs. This indirectly benefitted English language learners (ELL) in nursing programs (both Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN) and other ELL) by providing faculty with knowledge, skills and awareness to support ELL in nursing programs through more interculturally competent instructional methodology and delivery.

***Summary:***

Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Professional Development Model for College Nursing Faculty was designed and delivered in partnership with the School of Health, Justice and Human Services (HJHS recruitment) and the Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement (course creation and delivery) at Bow Valley College. Programming which will indirectly support Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) in a college nursing program involves a concerted and collaborative approach which has a significant amount of flexibility built in, in order to remain responsive to emerging needs. Partnerships, even those that are internal to an organization, present a unique set of benefits and challenges which will be outlined in this report. The following narrative explores and expands on findings from the project, learnings discovered along the way, and recommendations gleaned from the experience.

***Research:***

The literature review uncovered several approaches to intercultural competence development within a nursing context. The overall aim of this professional development initiative was to support nursing educators as they “strive to effectively work within the context of culturally diverse learners”. Their ability to do this was enhanced by a professional development model that involved faculty in a process of:

- *increasing cultural desire*: (to “want to” rather than to “have to” respond to the lived experience of diverse learners). Sample survey results indicated attitudinal

openness (the desire) to deepen understanding of culturally diverse learners and improve teaching practices

- *developing cultural awareness*: becoming aware of the complexity of their own culturally derived identity, values, assumptions and world view, as well as the perspective and biases that may get in the way of teaching all students equitably
- *building cultural knowledge*: investigating the cultural worldview of learners, the impact of culture and language on learning as well as understanding the context of student's lives (personal and academic)
- *acquiring cultural skill*: using knowledge of similarities and difference to make adjustments in the learning environment that will be beneficial to all learners (not just marginalized groups)
- *engaging in cultural encounters*: fostering a culturally inclusive climate in the classroom and structuring opportunities to interact with culturally diverse learners and seek "windows" into their experiences

***Retention:***

There was 100% retention in this workshop series. The participants who committed to engaging in this learning opportunity were in attendance for all sessions. It should be noted that the project manager worked with both the scheduling coordinator and the Director of Nursing to ensure that the time allocated for the sessions was at a time when a significant number of faculty could attend. This professional development opportunity was not mandatory. A certificate of participation was given to all of the participants upon completion of the series. There was a great value add to these certificates as all nursing professionals need to take a certain number of documented hours of professional development on an annual basis to remain certified and this counted towards 12 hours. There is a commitment from the department to continue to offer this series for all staff.

***Staffing:***

A project lead, researcher and facilitator were contracted for the duration of this project. Consideration was taken when hiring as the ideal candidate should possess both a significant amount of experience working with both faculty and IEPs in college career programs and also have a solid foundation in intercultural communication competence with proven research capabilities. Careful selection of project staff for these types of initiatives is essential. Learners, in this case faculty, come to the course with a lot of life and teaching experience, education and high expectations for professional development to be relevant, engaging and directly applicable to their contexts. Dedication by the project lead to weave ICC, language enhancement techniques, and socio-cultural skill development practice has resulted in a responsive professional development series that participants found useful in both classroom and clinical

contexts. There is a lot of potential to use this model with other faculty groups with content adjusted to their contexts.

***Challenges:***

When working with a faculty group other than your own, there can be significant challenges. In this project, while the challenges were few, the ones we did have had a major impact. The most significant challenge was time. This presented itself as a challenge in several ways. In the research phase of the project, it was difficult to find time to meet with the nursing faculty to present on the project and opportunity for professional development and to conduct interviews and focus groups. Working with leadership to ensure buy in and commitment was a significant asset to the success of the project.

Time was also a challenge during the delivery phase. It was difficult to find a time when we could schedule the modules so that a maximum number of staff were able to attend. This coupled with faculty vacation and other absences led us to offer the delivery in two formats (excluding the community of practice delivery which was an emergent component of the design phase).

At the onset, one of the challenges was ensuring that the content was relevant for nursing faculty. To combat this challenge, a community of practice was introduced. This allowed the project lead/facilitator to work with faculty directly to 'test out' the materials and tweak them where necessary before delivery to a larger group of faculty. Not only did this work well for the purpose of vetting the material, but it also gave a smaller group of faculty the opportunity to delve deeper into the material and to become champions for the professional development series.

***Learnings:***

Learning occurred on a variety of levels during this project. The CEIIA at Bow Valley College has increased its capacity to deliver programming for faculty in other disciplines. Partnering with another department in our college contributed to further learning for the CEIIA at BVC. The learnings experienced on both sides of the partnership were immeasurable and as we move forward, invaluable. The realization that there are differences in operation styles of departments in the same institution was one of the major points that will be considered as future collaborations across disciplines are initiated. Open and clear communication channels and plans need to be kept at all times and contribute to all stakeholder success. Having already worked with the nursing area on another long arc project allowed our second project with them to be that much more open and clear. Working with them on this professional development project has allowed our understanding of our respective areas to be further strengthened and promotes promise for future endeavours.

**Recommendations:**

- *Alternate delivery options should be explored:*  
A need to balance busy schedules with a desire to engage in meaningful professional development should be investigated. While much of the value in a series like this comes from the dialogue generated in the face-to-face classes, a need to offer flexible delivery modes was echoed by participants who were not able to make the commitment to attend the in class offerings.
- *Online component could be used to thread face-to-face sessions together and connect learners who miss a session.*  
For a professional development type of offering, the online component should be a stand-alone piece rather than fully integrated. Using the online component for reflection and discussion is one suggestion that would augment the face-to-face course and provide a thread to foster engagement.
- *Collaborate in designing recruitment plan and materials.*  
Recruitment for this type of initiative needs to be undertaken through a marketing lens. Engaging posters and invitation emails should be crafted by the delivery area in consultation with the receiving area to ensure fit and effectiveness.
- *Build in content area vocabulary and concepts to engage participants.*  
Examples and case studies should reflect the discipline of the target group to ensure engagement. Both the facilitation and the materials should take this into consideration.
- *Allow for enough flexibility in program design and delivery to remain responsive to needs.*  
Conceptual design of a program offering and the actual delivery can vary drastically. Allowing for flexibility in design will ensure that programs remain responsive to learners' and providers' evolving and emerging needs.
- *Keep lines of communication open and clear between partners.*  
It is important to have a lead at the partnering department that can answer questions and make decisions in a timely manner.