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SEMMELWEIS UNIVERSITY

Center for Educational Development, Methodology
and Organization

director

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Instilling “Human Literacy” into our Educational Processes (EUniHuLI) *Cross-cultural agility*

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Human Literacy is a concept relating to critical thinking and intercultural competence, but it is also about digital communication situations and the use of ethics in everyday life. The project EUniHuLI aims to foster the mentioned skills in higher education by collecting good practices in the participating six universities. On May 25, Semmelweis University organized an online workshop for teachers and students in the topic of cross-cultural agility to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences.

After a short introduction round, the participants created a word cloud about the phrase “cross-cultural agility” to get some ideas and perspectives for the upcoming discussion:

Inter/cross-cultural means...

Mentimeter



Question 1: What does cross-cultural agility mean in the context of your subject? How it could be adapted to other subjects?

The word cloud was followed by a discussion in breakout rooms (3-4 participants per room) about the meaning of cross-cultural agility in the context of the participants' subjects. The conversation was based on some prompt questions in a Word document, which the teachers could download and fill in with their answers. After returning to the main session, the participants shared their opinions and thoughts, gathered during the discussion.



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Although the participants' subjects differed, some common themes were **understanding the other culture** and acknowledging that cross-cultural agility is not only related to international differences, but also to differences between **people with different backgrounds, ages and professions**. (For example, in medical education students need to be prepared to treat patients from not only different ethnic groups, but from different ages or backgrounds.) It's important to note that cross-cultural differences are **not problems but opportunities** to learn from each other and collaborate to reach better solutions.

In the classroom it starts with accepting the diversity of the students, and being able to recognize the value of other cultures without thinking that ours is the only "right one". Teachers could take time to educate themselves of other cultures, for example, to **gain knowledge by reading books**, but it is also important to **have practical experiences**, like taking part in mobility programs or intercultural events. It is also worth pointing out that developing and teaching cross-cultural agility takes time, and it could be considered as an aspect of "lifelong learning".

Question 2: Describe an example when you have managed to implement cross-cultural agility in your teaching. (Was it successful? How did you assess it?) OR How would you try to implement cross-cultural agility in your teaching?

The participants returned to their breakout rooms to discuss the practical implementation of cross-cultural agility in teaching, then went back to the main session to share their ideas. **Elective courses** were suggested as a possible method to improve students' intercultural agility, alongside with **extracurricular activities**, like language tandems, "international weeks" and other social occasions. Students can also take part in **mobility or volunteering programs abroad**.

Teachers could also be trained to foster cross-cultural agility **in their respective subjects**, thus teaching cross-cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills in relation with the learning outcomes of the specific course. Regardless of the subject, **study materials** can be used not only from the Western world, but also from China or the Middle East. Students could be put into **interprofessional teams** to practice collaboration (for example, medical students and nurses). Moreover, the teaching methods could be adjusted to the different **learning cultures**, for example in terms of groupwork or individual learning, text or video format of the study materials, etc.

However, **teachers probably need more specific training** to instill cross-cultural agility in their classrooms, which presents some challenges (who should train them? in what format?). **Assessing the success of the applied methodologies** may also bring up some difficulties which need to be addressed.



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Recommended books

Author	Title	Main topic
Richard E. Nisbett	The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why	cultural psychology; the differences between Asian and Western thinking
Ikujiro Nonaka, Hirotaka Takeuchi	The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation	differences between explicit and tacit knowledge; Japanese way of creating knowledge
Joseph Henrich	The WEIRD People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous	psychological attributes of people of the West