



# Mobility and Cross Cultural Understanding

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# Why Me?

I am here not because I am a sociologist or a cultural anthropologist or whatnot but because I have been on the sides of the spectrum of cultures.

I have been a “foreign” student for 15 years starting in high school up to Ph.D. studies and now I am on the on the other side of receiving students and preparing the grounds for their optimum advantage.

**Mobility** (Would mean any movement from one place to another of students and academic members crossing international borders.)

**Cross Cultural Understanding** (Would mean the admittance of the existence of another culture different from ones' own.)

**What Steps do we need to take to achieve cross-cultural understanding for mutual benefits in an internationalization plan?**

# Internationalization

The process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education.

Jane Knight, 2003

# Internationalization

- “**process**” an ongoing and continuing effort
- “**integration**” denotes the process of infusing or embedding the international and intercultural dimension into policies and programs to ensure that the international dimension remains central, not marginal, and is sustainable.

# Culture

- Culture is a set of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs of a group of people by which they organize their common life.

**Gary Wederspahan**

# Culture

Culture is an integrated system of **learned behavior** patterns that are characteristic of members of a given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of a particular group of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does and makes- it's customs, language, material artifacts and shared systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation.

Robert Kholis



# Culture

Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another.

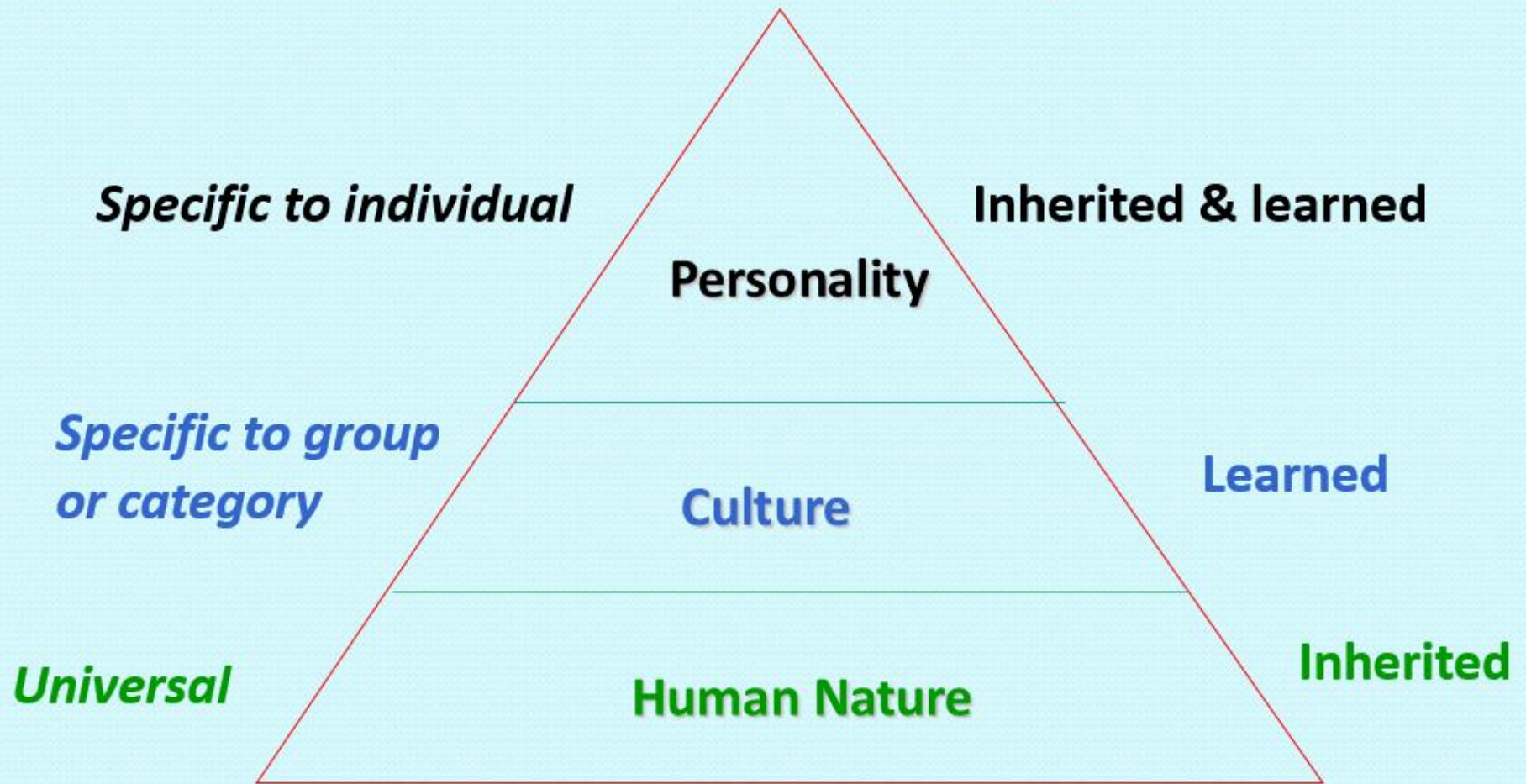
**Geert Hofstede**

# Culture

- Culture refers to a group or community which shares common experiences that shape the way its members understand the world. It includes groups that we are born into, such as **race, national origin, gender, class, or religion**. It can also include a group we join or become part of. For example, it is possible to acquire a new culture by moving to a new country or region, by a change in our economic status, or by becoming disabled. When we think of culture this broadly **we realize we all belong to many cultures at once.**

Marya Axner

# Culture = Human mental programming



**From most definitions of cultures and based on studies on human behavior some studies have concluded that**

**“culture influences between 25% and 50% of our attitudes, whereas other aspects of workforce diversity, such as social class, ethnicity, race, sex, and age, account for the remainder of these attitudinal differences.”**

**And if we take Axner’s definition, then we are mostly in, as Iranian sociologist Dr. Shariati would call, a prison of humanity that shapes our way of life unless we use our innermost ability to change our attitudes and free ourselves**

Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster. But if we really want to globalize, there is no way around them so we better take them for what they are.

Geert Hofstede

# Understanding Cultural Differences

- Family is defined differently by different cultures
- The concept of an exact time is not used or reinforced in some cultures.
- Some cultural groups stress the veneration of ancestors
- Eye contact varies by culture.
- Physical distance during social interactions varies by culture.
- Culture greatly influences attitudes about physical contact.
- Different cultures regulate the display of emotion differently
- Some cultures may use different standards for loudness, speed of delivery, silence, attentiveness and time to respond to another's point

# Culture

Customs, habits, traditions  
Food & its meaning  
Music, clothing  
Religious practices  
Health practices  
Child raising  
Family structures  
& relationships

Beliefs, values  
Spirituality  
Perceptions  
Attitudes  
Expectations

Meaning of language  
Interaction pattern  
Communications  
Verbal & non-verbal

# What does this mean?



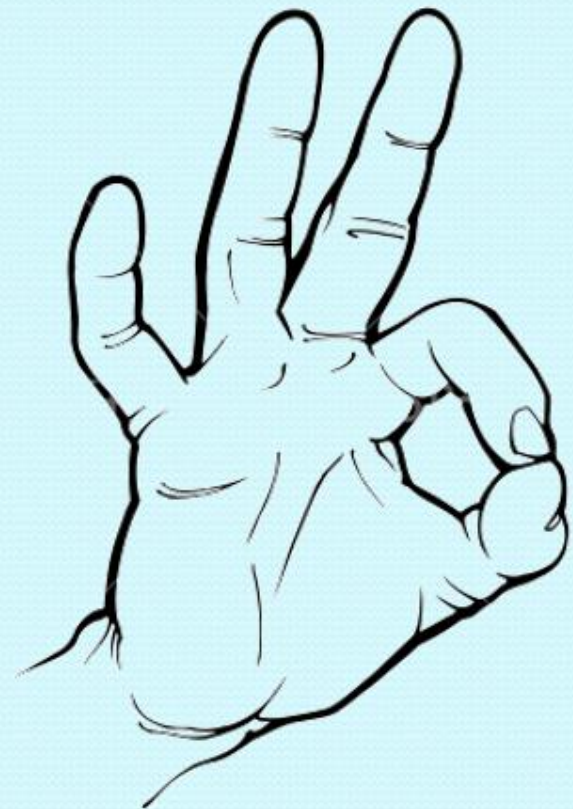


# What does this mean?



# Cultures and Personal Meanings

- “zero” in French culture
- “money” in Japanese culture
- “insult” in some cultures
- “Fine and Okay and safe” in many cultures influenced by western culture
- Personally, in my home it means “sit straight”



# Cultures and Personal Meanings

- V for Victory
- V for Violence
- Peace
- Two
- Seven in Farsi

۱ ۲ ۳ ۴ ۵ ۶ ۷ ۸ ۹



To use the title of Harris' book and bring it to bear beyond individual psychology to cultures that we have had no choice in being born into

*I'm Not OK, You're OK (Inferiority)*

*I'm Not OK, You're Not OK (Pessimistic view of the world, revolt withing the societies and war with the outside, choice of exclusion)*

*I'm OK, You're Not OK (Superiority)*

*I'm OK, You're OK (My culture is OK, Your Culture is OK) (peace and understanding; a choice of inclusion)*

**I'm from a normal culture-  
you're from a strange and  
therefore unaccepted culture**

## Various Students

- What they need to know about the culture they step into



## Host Universities

- What do they need to know in receiving the students from variety of backgrounds and cultures



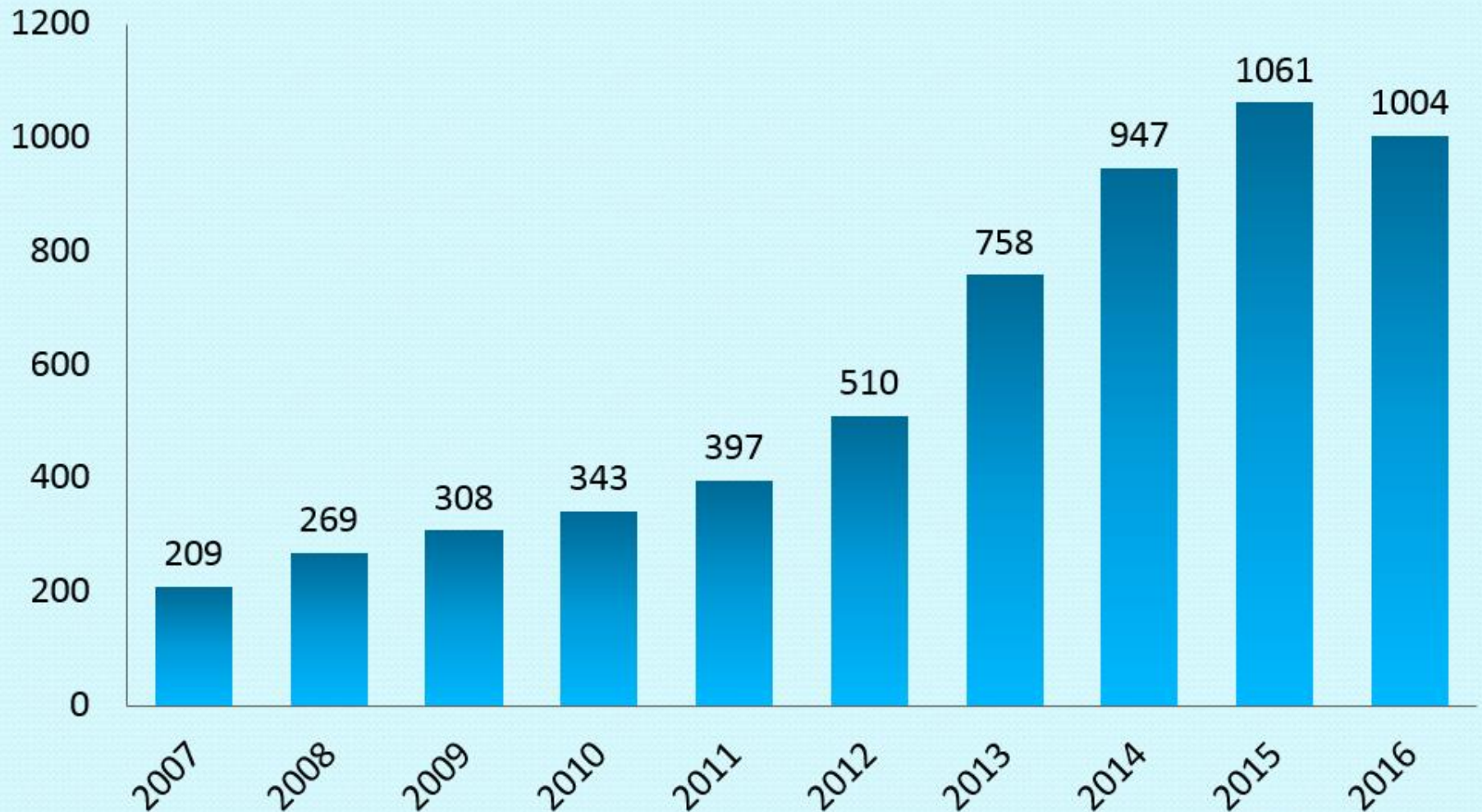


# Configuration of International Students; University of Tehran

- Degree Seeking
- Non-Degree short term studies



# International Students Statistics

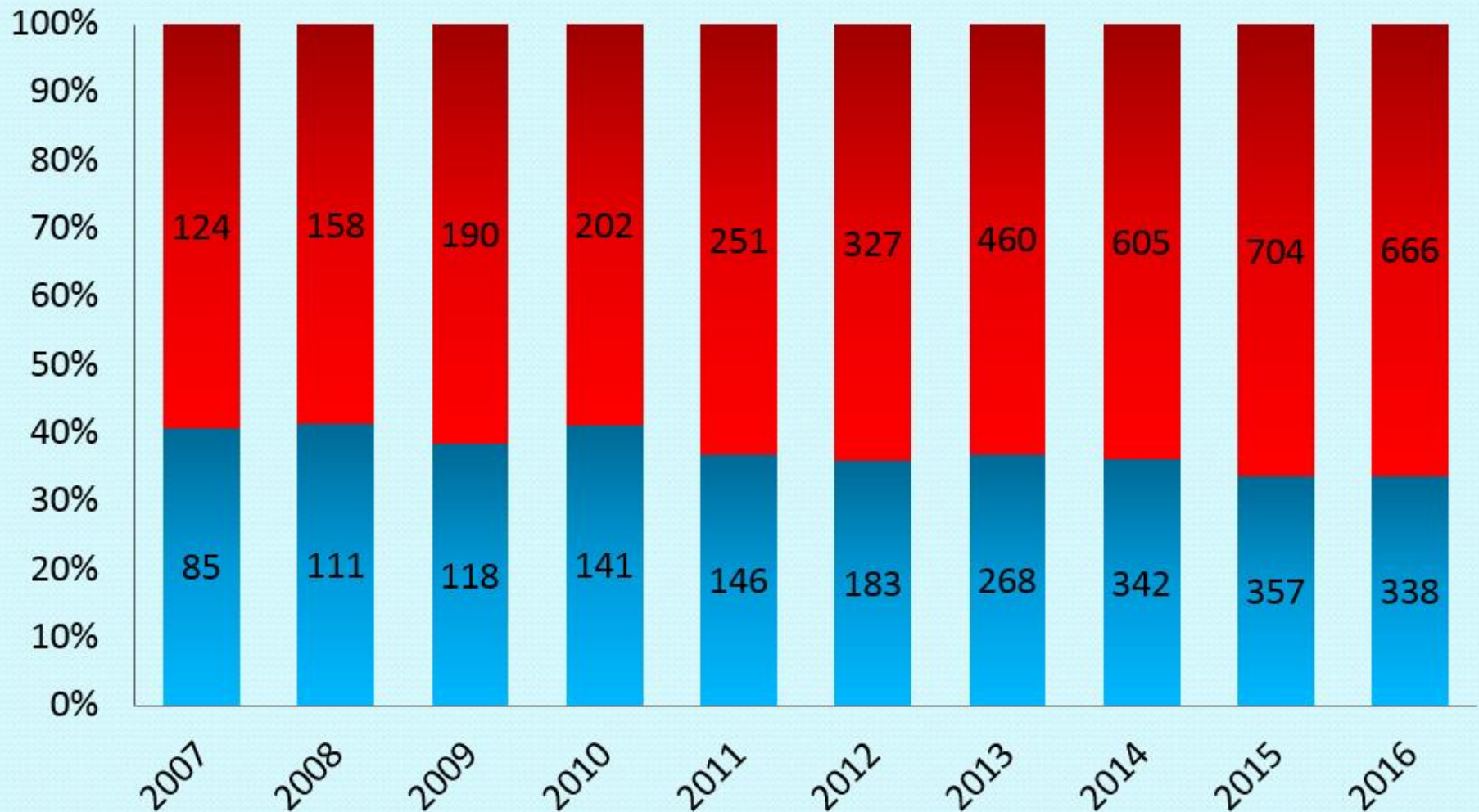


■ Number of Students



University of  
TEHRAN

# University of Tehran's International Students by Gender



**One third of our academic members  
have received their doctoral degrees  
from universities of other countries**

PhD from



■ Iran ■ Abroad

# Human Condition

- Even within a cultural setting, we have the four OK not OK challenge as even siblings might have problem understanding each other.
- And within a larger culture, we have neighborhoods and sections of a city or a country
- Ethnic groups at UT
- Dormitories: 12000 residents

# Have you Been Unfairly Judged Because of a Cultural Difference?

Think about a situation when someone made a biased judgment about you or acted unfairly toward you because of a cultural difference.

**How did that make you feel?**

# Challenges to Academic staff facing students from different Cultures

Different cultures view studying and methods of learning;

- Confucian learning culture requires students to follow the academics instruction – believe this as absolute and therefore to be memorised (and not questioned),
- Socratic approach encourages students to think for themselves, express their opinions, seek information, acknowledge its sources and critique it – to critically appraise information from their lecturers

**Academic members of a culture  
tend to assume and expect that  
students know the customs and  
rules of behavior, and these  
students are evaluated regularly**

# What Prevents More Undergraduates from Studying Abroad?

- Costs – financial aid is important; however other factors often make a bigger difference
- **Institutional culture**
- Curriculum constraints
- Language skills
  - college cannot offer language at a high enough level to meet the minimum program requirement
  - languages taught on campus don't match best/desired study abroad location and/or major
- Safety concerns
- Family support



- As academic or administrator of a university, one needs to understand that our international students are diverse and we have to accept them as students in having their own customs, ways of seeing, and forms of communication and not judge them by our own standards and not to force them to accept our ways and to provide a framework in which people from different cultures could **peacefully** come to understand and learn from each other. Literally speaking, we need to create a universe if we want to have a university.

What are the challenges for students and what do they need to be **aware** of in order to have a better life and a stronger opportunity to learn and socialize?

knowing a country's  
language, although clearly  
helpful, is not enough and not  
a guarantee of understanding  
its cultural mindset!

- Educational practices in any country are influenced by the cultural and philosophical traditions that prevail there. Understanding these influences – or at least being familiar with the central values and practices – is essential.
- The extension of the international dimension of universities represents a challenge from the perspective that modern universities have built their academic culture in a national context. They are financed mainly from national funds and they are a symbol of the nation state (Enders, 2004).

- *the student's own educational, personal and social context .... the topic itself could have important implications (especially in terms of gender, ethnic, political and religious sensitivities ...the subject/disciplinary context may be differently perceived amongst different cultures.... the institutional context.*

- 1. Self-control and self-confidence**
- 2. Awareness of the other internal culture that might be very different from one's own**
- 3. Awareness of our own internal culture**
- 4. Self-awareness of our own values and identity**
- 5. Not assuming that people from other cultures are all the same and at the same time different from one's own**

# Religious Perspective



أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ  
شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind! We created you from a male and a female, and made you into races (nations) and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is that who is most righteous and pious. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (Verse 13 of chapter 49, Al-Hujurat)





To know a culture is to have one more window from which to look at the colorful world of humanity. Let us have windows open up to one another!

**Thank You**