

# **Developing Cultural Competence: Challenges and Strategic Directions**

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**The 2008 Embracing Diversity  
Symposium: The Practice of Inclusion**

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# **Developing Cultural Competence: Challenges and Strategic Directions**

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- **Understanding the Matter**
- **Challenges: The Contexts and Positioning of Cultural Competence**
- **The Role of Cross-Cultural Training**
- **The Role of Community Organisations in Developing Cultural Competence**
- **Strategic Directions**



# Understanding the Matter: What is the Underlying Simplicity of Cultural Competence?

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**“Complexity is failed simplicity.”**

**“You need to understand the matter very well. It is simplicity after understanding that has a value.”**

**“You need to use concepts. It is the purpose of concepts to be general, vague and blurry. That is how they work.”**

Edward de Bono, *Simplicity*, 1998

Robert Bean, 2008



## Understanding Cultural Competence: A Simple Working Definition

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- **Cultural Competence:**  
**the awareness, attitudes, knowledge and skills to live and work effectively in situations characterised by cultural diversity, within the workforce, with customers and in the community.**



## Understanding Cultural Competence

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***"A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals and enables [them] to work effectively in cross-cultural situations."***

Cross T. et al (1989) Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care: A Monograph on Effective Services for Minority Children Who are Severely Emotionally Disturbed



## **Key Elements of Cultural Competence**

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- **Recognising the importance of culture**
- **Assessing cross-cultural relations**
- **Vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences**
- **Expanding cultural knowledge**
- **Adapting services to meet culturally-unique needs**

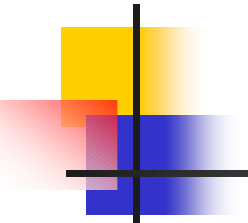
Source: Cross T, et al 1989 Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care



## 4 Levels of Cultural Competence

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- **Systemic** – policies, procedures, monitoring
- **Organisational** – skills, resources, supportive organisational culture
- **Professional** – education, standards
- **Individual** – knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, support for individuals



## Understanding Cultural Competence: Some Key Questions

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- What is the **relationship** between cultural competence and the practice of inclusion?
- In which **contexts** is cultural competence of greatest significance?
- What are the **consequences** of cultural incompetence?
- “Why bother?” & “What’s in it for me?”



# Challenges: The Contexts and Positioning of Cultural Competence

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## Contexts

- **Social capital: bonding & bridging**
- **Social cohesion and inclusion**
- **Equity and diversity policy**
- **Government effectiveness**
- **Organisational effectiveness**



## **Positioning Cultural Competence in the Contexts of Government**

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- **Charter of Public Service in A Culturally Diverse Society**
- **Queensland Multicultural Action Plan**
- **Economic & Population Development Policy**
- **Service Delivery Standards**
- **Community Engagement**



# Positioning Cultural Competence in the Context of Organisational Excellence

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## Organisational Excellence Depends On:

- **Knowledge Management**
- **Innovation**
- **Social Cohesion**

Source: OECD 1998



# Positioning Cultural Competence in the Context of Organisational Alignment

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Policies

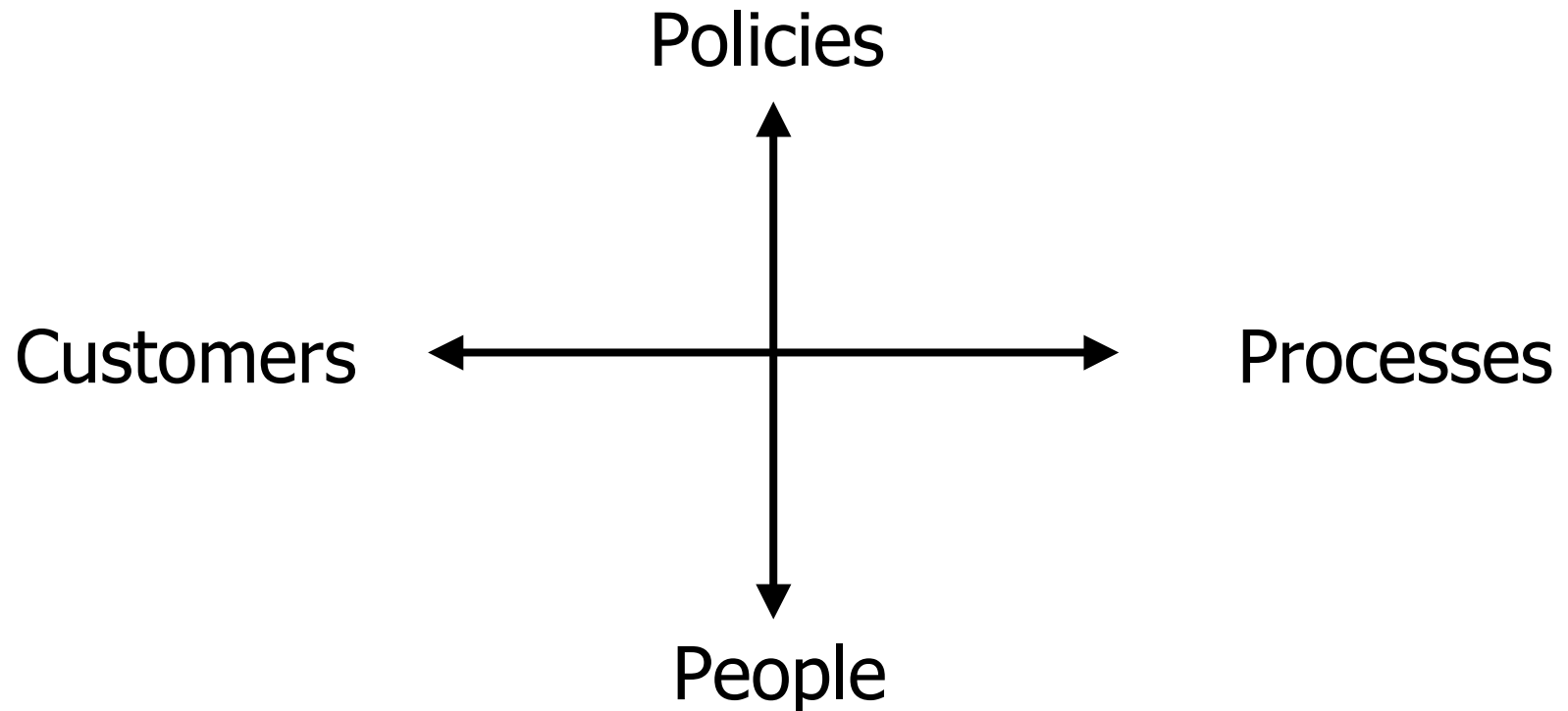


People



# Positioning Cultural Competence in the Context of Organisational Alignment

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## **Positioning Cultural Competence in the Context of Personal Performance**

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**The quality of your performance depends  
on the quality of your thinking, which  
depends on the quality of your  
information.**

**How well do you understand – and need  
to understand - the dimensions and  
impacts of workforce and client cultural  
diversity on individual and team  
performance?**



## Challenges: Obstacles to Integrating Cultural Competence into Core Business

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- **“Selling” the concepts & practices of social inclusion to those never excluded**
- **Low perception of need in a generally cohesive and successful multicultural society** (Scanlon report, 80/20 rule)
- **Historical ‘baggage’ of compliance, deficit and blame models**



## **Challenges: Obstacles to Integrating Cultural Competence into Core Business**

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- **Prevalence of “Bolted On” models that rely on “the dedicated with the designated”**
- **Perception of cultural competence as special, optional, the responsibility of others (especially the dedicated!)**
- **Reluctance to acknowledge disparities of power and privilege**



## Challenges for the Cross-Cultural Training Field

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- **Market perceptions association of CCT with 'heavy' compliance training**
- **Inconsistency of training aims and approaches**
- **Negative reports creating fear of risk of failure**
- **Lack of quality standards or benchmarks**
- **Lack of professional development & quals**
- **Limited provider capability and capacity**



# Developing Cultural Competence: The Role of Cross-Cultural Training

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- **Cross-cultural training** is a significant contributor to cultural competence.
  - **Cross-cultural training categories:**
    - General, Culture-Specific (Indigenous & Multicultural), Diversity Management, Interpreters, Occupation-Specific
- **National research evidence** strengthens the case for increased, on-going CCT.



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT) Recent Australian research

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- **The Effectiveness of Cross-Cultural Training in the Australian Context (2005-2006)**

Robert Bean et al, for Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

- **Cross-Cultural Training and Workplace Performance (2007)**

Robert Bean, for National Centre for Vocational Education Research

**1357 responses:**

- **266 public and private sector organisations**
- **129 training providers**
- **794 from 649 training participants**



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT)

# Current Practice in Workplace CCT

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- **72.3% of employers predict increased demand for cultural competence and CCT**
- **60% of employers include cultural competence in career development strategies**
- **Importance of cultural competence: Scale 1-5**
  - **Employers' over all rating** **4.3 (86%)**
  - **CCT participant ratings**
    - **Customer/client service** **4.5 (90%)**
    - **Co-worker relations** **4.2 (84%)**



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT) Evaluation of CCT Effectiveness

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- **Satisfaction with CCT: 3.8 (76%)**
- **65% would like more CCT**
- **85% would recommend CCT to others**
- **77% said CCT should be mandatory for everyone in their organisation – including their managers**



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT) Participant Evaluation of CCT Effectiveness

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- **89% said CCT should be mandatory for everyone in their organisation in customer contact positions.**

**Why did they say this?**

**What are the implications for managers and for strategic planning?**



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT)

# Improvements resulting from CCT

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- **Understanding issues & policies** **3.5**
  - **12.3% increase in longitudinal study**
- **Knowledge of cross-cultural skills** **3.7**
  - **17.1% increase in longitudinal study**
- **Knowledge of other cultures** **3.6**
  - **16.7% increase in longitudinal study**
- **Cultural self-awareness** **3.7**
- **Confidence in cross-cultural interactions** **3.6**



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT) Contribution to Workplace Performance

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- **Percentages reporting improvements in:**
  - **Customer service** **77%**
  - **Workplace relations** **73%**
  - **Interactions in personal life** **49%**
  - **Community relations** **43%**
  - **Compliance with policy, laws** **37%**



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT)

# The deeper meaning and effects of CCT

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- **Providing 3, 6, 10 or 30 hours of 'training' can't fully explain these results**
- **CCT is a conduit for dialogue, interaction, negotiation**
- **CCT is a catalyst for personal growth, making sense of complex realities**
- **CCT stimulates lifelong learning and reflection**



## The Role of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT) Summary of Research Findings

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- **CCT delivers proven benefits to individuals, organisations and communities**
- **CCT provision is increasing**
- **Demand for CCT is growing**
- **Policy and educational frameworks are in place**
- **CCT should be more widely available but more facilitators, resources and professional development support are needed**



## The Roles of Multicultural Organisations in Developing Cultural Competence

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Benefits of CCT & Cultural Competence for multicultural practitioners:

- **More accurate **analysis** of intercultural dynamics**
- **Better informed **advice** and assistance to all stakeholders**
- **Stronger **advocacy** for CCT and cultural competence development strategies**



# The Roles of Multicultural Organisations in Developing Cultural Competence

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## ■ **Modelling Cultural Competence**

- **Awareness** - **Cultural self-awareness**
- **Attitudes** - **Openness, mutual learning**
- **Knowledge** - **Cultural literacy**
- **Skills** - **Bridge building, collaboration**



# **The Roles of Multicultural Organisations in Developing Cultural Competence**

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- **Transferring Cultural Competence**
  - **Providing cross-cultural training**
  - **Explaining the psychological stages of cultural adaptation to newcomers and hosts**
  - **Promoting lifelong learning approaches**
  - **Creating opportunities for participation**
  - **Acknowledging and addressing issues of race, power and privilege**



## **The Roles of Multicultural Organisations in Developing Cultural Competence**

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- **Advocating for recognition of the contribution of cultural competence to:**
  - **Social services**
  - **Migration and settlement**
  - **Community development**
  - **Economic and environmental development**
  - **Business and industry**
  - **Education and training**



## **Developing Cultural Competence: Strategic Directions**

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- **Unless organisations and professionals can confidently say they understand and are actively addressing the nature and influences of cultural diversity in their workforces and customer bases, they are by definition culturally incompetent.**



## **Developing Cultural Competence: Strategic Directions**

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- **Position cultural competence within the broader contexts of social capital and social cohesion**
- **Position cultural competence within the central leadership and management paradigms of systems and organisations**



## **Developing Cultural Competence: Strategic Directions**

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- **Advocate and monitor the inclusion of adequately resourced cultural competence development strategies within policy implementation**
- **Educate stakeholders in the concepts and practices of cultural competence, rejecting 'box-ticking', simplistic and trait-based approaches**



## **Developing Cultural Competence: Strategic Directions**

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- **Promote cross-cultural training as a key enabler of cultural competence. (Use the research.)**
- **Collaborate generously with all stakeholders**



# Developing Cultural Competence: Challenges and Strategic Directions

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- **Passion**
- **Practice**
- **Persistence**



# Cross-Cultural Training in Australia: The National Research Studies

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- **The Effectiveness of Cross-Cultural Training in the Australian Context (2006)**
  - Robert Bean et al, for Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, managed by Dept of Immigration & Citizenship
  - <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/index.htm>
- **Cross-Cultural Training and Workplace Performance (2008)**
  - Robert Bean, for National Centre for Vocational Education Research
  - <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2027.html>