Interculturality as a Competence in Higher Education: Validation of an Instrument with University Students

Francisco Javier de Santos Velasco*

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7107-5323

Departamento de Educación Continua, Dirección de Gestión del Talento, Vicerrectoría de Educación Continua, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, México

Abstract

This article, based on the results of a doctoral thesis study, deals with two aspects: the adaptation and validation of an instrument to measure the intercultural sensitivity of university students and the relationship between the measurement of the intercultural sensitivity scale versus the experience profile of university students in the face of international and/or the multicultural experiences. The instrument was applied to 280 students from Universidad Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain. The results of the analysis of the technical characteristics of the scale indicate that it has content validity and that the instrument scores are reliable. It was found that all variables related to direct international and/or multicultural experience appear with a significant difference, except for the variable referring to number of foreign teachers, which supports research works that have found that the learning of the intercultural competence is an active process of constant learning throughout life, with a high experiential component, i.e., that it is carried out mainly through direct experience with "the other different," either in one-to-one or group interactions, either in their own country or abroad.

Keywords:

higher education, universal education, intercultural education, intercultural communication

La Interculturalidad como Competencia en Educación Superior: Validación de un Instrumento con Alumnado Universitario

Resumen

Este artículo, basado en los resultados de un estudio de tesis doctoral aborda dos aspectos: la adaptación y validación de un instrumento para medir la sensibilidad intercultural del alumnado universitario y la relación de la medición de la escala de sensibilidad intercultural frente al perfil de experiencia del alumnado universitario ante lo internacional y/o lo multicultural. Se aplicó el instrumento a 280 alumnos de la Universidad Pompeu Fabra en Barcelona, España. Los resultados del análisis de las características técnicas de la escala indican que cuenta con validez de contenido y que las puntuaciones del instrumento poseen confiabilidad. Se encontró que todas las variables que tienen relación con la experiencia directa ante lo internacional y/o multicultural aparecen con diferencia significativa, excepto la variable número de profesores extranjeros, lo cual apoya investigaciones que han encontrado que el aprendizaje de la competencia intercultural es un proceso activo de aprendizaje permanente a lo largo de toda la vida, con un alto componente vivencial, es decir, que se lleva

*e mail: desantosvelasco@gmail.com

a cabo sobre todo a través de la vivencia o experiencia directa con "el otro diferente", sea en interacciones de uno a uno, o bien, grupales; sea en el propio país o en el extranjero.

Palabras Clave:

Enseñanza Superior, Educación Universal, Educación Intercultural, Comunicación Intercultural

A interculturalidade como competência no Ensino Superior: validação de um instrumento com estudantes universitários

Resumo

Este artigo, baseado nos resultados de um estudo de tese doutoral, aborda dois aspectos: a adaptação e validação de um instrumento para medir a sensibilidade intercultural de estudantes universitários e a relação da medição da escala de sensibilidade intercultural *versus* o perfil de experiência do alunado universitário diante do internacional e/ou o multicultural. Aplicou-se o instrumento a 280 alunos da Universidade Pompeu Fabra em Barcelona, Espanha. Os resultados da análise das características técnicas da escala indicam que conta com validez de conteúdo e que as pontuações do instrumento possuem confiabilidade. Encontrou-se que todas as variáveis que têm relação com a experiência direta diante do internacional e/ou multicultural aparecem com diferença significativa, a exceção da variável número de professores estrangeiros, que sustenta pesquisas cujos resultados indicam que a aprendizagem da competência intercultural é um processo ativo e permanente com um alto componente vivencial, isto é, que se realiza através da vivência ou experiência direta com "o outro diferente", ora em interações um a um, ou bem grupais; ora no próprio pais ou no exterior.

Palavras-chave:

ensino superior, educação universal, educação intercultural, comunicação intercultural

Introduction

The study of interculturality as a competence in higher education has had different approaches. In the context of most Latin American countries, both public and private universities have focused on addressing the need to include minority social groups such as indigenous groups, migrants, and Afro-descendants in university studies.

Therefore, this approach has had an objective of educational equity, in order to avoid the historical discrimination to which these groups have been subjected and to favor the access of these populations to the level of higher education, giving rise in some countries to the design of public policies, scholarship programs, the creation of institutions of Intercultural Higher Education (Intercultural Universities) or the design of training programs for teachers or educators, in order to fulfill this purpose. (Ladrón de Guevara, 2014; Pascual-Ortega, D. A. (2013); Mendoza, Blanca (2013); Bertely Busquets, M. (2011); Mato, D. (2009); Mato, D. (2009a); Mato, D. (2008).

In more recent years, the focus of minority groups has been extended to all university students, through the transversalization of interculturality in their integral formation, as well as to virtual learning environments (Cano Barrios, J. et al (2016); Ladrón de Guevara, (2014).

In the European context, studies have been oriented towards the strengthening of the European Higher Education Area, both from a citizenship perspective and from the perspective of labor mobility, so that university students feel part of the European Union, and that intercultural competence is strengthened, allowing them to move labor and be competent in any country that works. (Martínez-Lirola, M. (2018); Pozo-Vicente, C. et al (2012); Edwards Schachter, M. & López Santiago, M. (2008), and Bartolomé, M. (2002). This study carried out with university students in Spain is carried out within the framework of the European approach (De Santos, F.J. (2004).

Intercultural competence is one of the cross-cutting skills needed for future professionals and

employees to live and perform better in today's and tomorrow's organizations. It is no longer necessary to go abroad to meet the multicultural, the multicultural is almost everywhere, so that the ability to act internationally and intercultural and possess international and intercultural skills, become key skills for much of the workforce, even if it does not actually move beyond their borders.

Faced with this increasingly globalized and interconnected labor context, higher education institutions are faced with the need to respond with an educational offer that responds to the diversity of needs of current and future multicultural societies, where the training of teachers and university students is a priority, with the aim of preparing university students for the world of work, which is increasingly related to the international and multicultural (Espinosa Romero, M. (2009); Villar, S. A. (2008); Medina R. A.; Rodríguez M. A., and Ibañez, A. coords. (2005).

The study of this topic would complement the empirical knowledge in the field of university education of the Spanish-speaking academic world, both in the European and Hispanic-American context.

Intercultural Competence

According to Guo-Ming Chen, a professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Rhode Island in the United States, he approaches the concept of intercultural communicative competence as an umbrella concept, which encompasses the cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills of interacting people in the process of intercultural communication.

The *cognitive aspect* of the intercultural communicative competence is called **intercultural awareness**. The *affective aspect* of competence is called **intercultural sensitivity** and the behavioral aspect is called **intercultural effectiveness.**

This study will focus on the aspect of intercultural sensitivity, which refers to *the desire that motivates people to know, understand, appreciate and accept differences between cultures*. To measure this aspect, Chen & Starosta (2000) designed and validated a scale, the "Intercultural Sensitive Scale" (ISS), which is adapted and applied in this study.

Objectives

a) To translate into Spanish and adapt to Spanish culture the scale called "Intercultural Sensitivity Scale" (ISS).

b) To design a questionnaire, which includes the scale, as well as the context variables of the student body (profile of the student body's experience in international and/or multicultural environments).

c) To measure the level of intercultural sensitivity (attitude of university students towards interacting with people from different cultures), using the adapted scale, and to analyze whether there is a significant mean difference between the variable under study (intercultural sensitivity) vs. the context variables of the student body (student experience profile in international and/or multicultural environments).

d) Carry out studies on the reliability and validity of the content of the adapted scale.

Method

Participants

Students of the Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona. 280 members of the regular fourth-year bachelor's degree student body participated, from various University degrees, with 89% of the total sample studied being students of the Bachelor's degrees in Business Administration and Management (BAM), as well as the Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Administration (PSA).

Instrument

The *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)* instrument, developed by *Chen & Starosta (2000),* was used. The original 5-level Likert scale consists of 24 items, which are distributed in 5 dimensions or factors, namely: a) Involvement in interaction; b) Respect for cultural differences; c) Trust during interaction; d) Enjoyment of interaction; and e) Attention during interaction.

Procedure

■ *Translation and adaptation of the scale*

a) Translation of the scale from English to Spanish (Intercultural Sensitivity Scale)

b) Cultural adaptation of the wording of each one of the items, elaborating from 2 to 3 op-

tions of items for each original item. Selection of the options of items that were considered to correspond to a better translation and/or cultural adaptation.

- *Questionnaire design*
  c) Once the scale was translated and adapted, 20 context variables were selected, of which 17 are related to familiarity, at an experiential level, with the theme of multiculturality. With these variables the design of the instrument was completed and the statistical analysis was carried out to verify the existence or not of significant differences.

The selected variables of exposure to the multicultural were:

- Own nationality, that of the father and that of the mother
- Studying or having studied languages other than the mother tongue/paternal language
- International Experiences
  - Have lived abroad
  - Have travelled abroad
  - Have participated in student exchange programs abroad
- Experiences with "foreign", "international" or "multicultural" in your own country:
  - Living with or having lived with someone of foreign origin
  - Having or having had foreign friends
  - Number of foreign professors at the University
  - Voluntary participation in various events related to other countries or

cultures (seminars, religious festivals, concerts, fairs or bazaars, exhibitions, etc.).

d) A pilot process was carried out with 6 students of the 3rd and 4th years of UPF, in order to *validate the instrument, both in the adaptation of the scale* (English-Spanish translation and cultural adaptation), as well as to verify comprehension of the language of the items of the scale (words and/or expressions used), as well as clarity of the instructions.

e) Based on the results of the pilot, suggested adjustments were made to the instrument (4 items of the scale were edited and 3 questions of multicultural exposure were edited).

- *Application of the instrument*

It was applied, individually, to 280 members of the university student body. The details of the populations and samples are shown in Table 1.

Through a coding guide with 65 variables, a database was created with the 280 surveys and the studies of descriptive statistics, as well as inferential statistics, were carried out in accordance with the proposed objectives, with the support of the SPSS statistical package.

Analyses of the technical characteristics of the scale (Reliability and Validity of scale content) were also carried out.

Results

Analysis of the technical characteristics of the scale

Table 1
Student Samples

POPULATION	SAMPLE
Students of BAM 4th year (252 registered and 160 regular) **Optional subject HR I** (185 registered and 90 regular) **Students of PSA 4th year** (60 enrolled and 45 regular)	**Group 1 BAM (208 students)** Degree BAM 4th core course (143) 3rd and 4th optional course HR (65) **Group 2 PSA (41 students)** Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Administration (Contrast Group vs. ADE) **Group 3 Not BAM (31 students)** not Bachelor's degree in BAM

☐ *Reliability of the scale*

In order to verify the internal consistency of the instrument, the *reliability analysis* was carried out, using Cronbach's alpha, obtaining an *alpha of .83*, slightly inferior to the alpha obtained in the original scale that was of .86, reason why it can be said that the translated and adapted instrument is an instrument with high reliability.

☐ *Validity of scale content*

Statistical studies were carried out to analyze the *validity of the content* of the instrument, through the following tests: a) homogeneity index of the items of the whole scale and b) discrimination index of the items.

☐ *Homogeneity index of scale items*

Of the 24 items in the scale, practically all obtain a significant correlation with the total scale, and therefore seem adequate, except for item 15, which obtained a negative sign, which could be subject to modification or rejection. It can be concluded that *the scale as a whole has significant content validity, since* of the 24 items, only 1 (4.1%) obtained a negative homogeneity index.

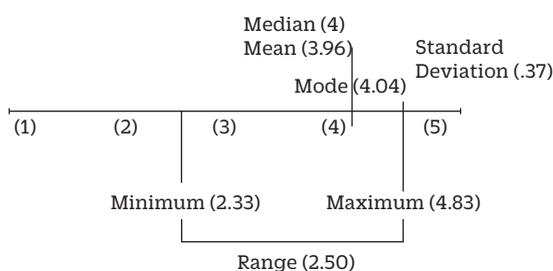☐ *Discrimination rate of scale items*

The discrimination indices were obtained through the Student t test (comparing the averages of extreme groups at 50%, that is, dividing the students by their degree of attitude in two halves), as well as through the correlations, finding that the only least discriminatory item in both tests, is item 15, which when obtaining negative discrimination, means that the lower group has a higher average than the upper group, so perhaps it would be necessary to think about modifying or suppressing it. It can be concluded that *the scale is mostly discriminatory*, except in 1 item (4.1%) that obtained a non-discriminatory result.

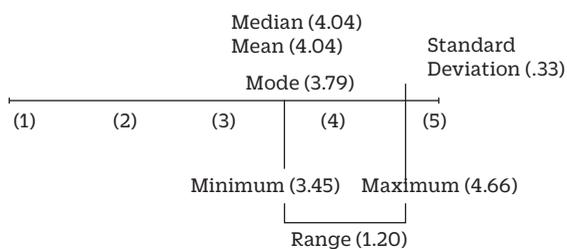## Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity of University Students

The distribution of the scale scores obtained by the students of the three groups is adjusted to a normal distribution, which indicates that the scale adequately measures the attitude it seeks (attitude of university students towards interacting with people from different cultures). If we assume that the minimum possible score of the scale is *24 points* (which would show an *attitude against*) and the maximum of *120 points* (which would show a *very favorable attitude*), being the score of *72* the one that would show an *indifferent or indecisive attitude.*
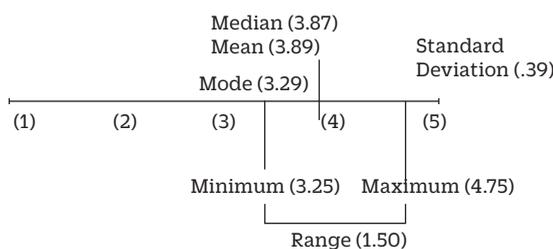
In the BAM Group, *a distribution of attitude ranging from 56 to 116 points was obtained,* with a *median of 95.19 points and a standard deviation of 9.08,* that is, *between 2.33 and 4.83 with a median of 3.96*, which could be schematized in this way:

Median (4)
Mean (3.96)
Mode (4.04)
Standard Deviation (.37)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Minimum (2.33)   Maximum (4.83)

Range (2.50)

In the PSA Group, *a distribution of attitude ranging from 83 to 112 points was obtained,* with a *median of 97.07 points and a standard deviation of 7.9, that* is, *between 3.45 and 4.66 with a median of 4.04*, which could be schematized in this way:

Median (4.04)
Mean (4.04)
Mode (3.79)
Standard Deviation (.33)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Minimum (3.45)   Maximum (4.66)

Range (1.20)

In the non-BAM Group, *a distribution of attitude ranging from 78 to 114 points was obtained,* with a *mean of 93.52 points and a standard deviation of 9.37,* that is, *between 3.25 and 4.75 with a median of 3.89*, which could be schematized in this way:

Median (3.87)
Mean (3.89)
Mode (3.29)
Standard Deviation (.39)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Minimum (3.25)   Maximum (4.75)

Range (1.50)

The following descriptive interpretation could be made: the score of the three groups is distributed as a normal curve starting before the theoretical average (72 points) in the case of the BAM Group (56 points) and above the theoretical average in the PSA and non BAM groups (78 and 83 points), so that in the three cases the spectrum of the attitude is covered from indifferent or insecure to very favorable, being situated in the case of the ADE Group from unfavorable to very favorable.

Notwithstanding the difference in the form of the dispersion of scores among the groups, the mean of the three groups is between 93.52 and 97.07 (3.89 and 4.04), which means that *the university students surveyed in the three groups have a favorable attitude on average toward interacting with people of different cultures,* since the result is at level 4 *"in agreement", with a median also close to the "in agreement", which indicates a favorable attitude on average.*

Is there a difference in intercultural sensitivity between the groups studied?

In order to know whether the differences found in the means of the three groups are significant or not, statistical tests were carried out, obtaining the following results:

a) *According to the Levene variance homogeneity test,* **no** *significant difference was found in the variances of the three groups.*

b) According to *ANOVA,* **no** *significant difference was found between the means of the three groups.*

No significant difference was found between the means between the three groups studied, which indicates that the degree of intercultural sensitivity is similar in the three groups. This may be due to a number of reasons, including (a) a similar social and university context, including curricula, which generally have little international and/or intercultural orientation or focus, and (b) the similarity in the life experience of the student body in the sample.

Experience profile of the university students with regard to international and/or multicultural issues

In relation to the context variables related to the degree of exposure of university students to the international or foreign, I would highlight the following descriptive results.

a) *More than half* (58%) in all groups *have* **NOT** *lived abroad*, while one third (26-35%) have lived for a period of 1-6 months.

(b) Between 32-41% have travelled more than 6 times abroad in the three groups and 29-37% have travelled 1-3 times.

(c) Most of the students (*65-71%)* in the three groups *have* **NOT** *participated in an exchange program abroad.*

(d) *Slightly more than half* (52-56%) of the students in the three groups *have* **NOT** *lived with foreigners in the same house or flat.*

(e) *The majority* (55-77%) *of students* **do NOT** *have foreign friends*, with the highest percentage for the non-BAM group.

Contrast between the intercultural sensitivity vs. the context variables of the 3 integrated groups as a single sample.

Since no significant differences were found between the means of the three groups, through *the Levene variance homogeneity test,* as well as *with ANOVA,* it was decided to carry out the study of comparison of means for each one of the variables considered in the instrument with the three groups of students gathered as a single sample (n= 280).

Comparative analyses of means between the total variable of the scale (sum of items) vs. each of them were carried out, using *the T Test (t)* with two parametric groups; the *Mann-Whitney Test (m-w)* for two non-parametric groups and the *Kruskal-Wallis Test (k-w)* for more than two non-parametric groups, *obtaining significant differences in 27 of the 44 comparisons of means carried out*, as shown in table 2.

It is important to highlight some aspects of the results derived from the analysis of the averages of the compared groups:

a) Most of the groups compared **with no significant difference** in the means, are related to the *general variables* (Gender, age, time of work experience, own nationality, of the mother and of the father, as well as mother tongue (Castilian vs. Catalan).

b*) The study and/or mastery of languages* appears with *significant difference, especially*

Table 2
Comparison of means with significant difference

VARIABLE	COMPARATIVE GROUPS	STATISTICAL TEST	P= Significance (at 0.05%)
Study of English language	Little vs. A lot	t= - 3,494	.001
Study of French language	Nothing vs. A lot	t= - 2,650	.009
Study of German language	All groups	k-w= 12,340	.002
Study of Italian language	All groups	k-w= 13,821	.001
Mother tongue	Languages State Spanish vs. foreign languages	t= -2.535 m-w= 1233,500	.012 .000
Language proficiency	> 5 vs. < 5	t= 4,319	.000
Time to live abroad	Never vs. 1-6 months	t= - 4,334	.000
	All groups	k-w= 23,280	.000
Exchange abroad	YES vs. NO	t= -3,938	.000
No. Of trips abroad	1-3 times vs. + 6 times	t= - 4, 140	.001
	All groups	k-w= 26,643	.000
Living with foreigners	YES vs. NO	t= -3,235	.001
Foreign friends	YES vs. NO	t= - 7,718	.000
Seminars, conferences or forums	NO vs. Ever	t= - 3,033	.003
	All groups	k-w= 10,704	.005
Religious or popular festivities	NO vs. Ever	t= - 4,630	.000
	All groups	k-w= 18,460	.000
Public demonstrations	NO vs. Ever	t= - 3,484	.001
	All groups	k-w= 24, 335	.000
Concerts	NO vs. with some frequency	t= - 3,156	.002
Fairs or Bazaars	NO vs. Ever	t= - 3,149	.002
	All groups	k-w= 11,186	.004
Exhibitions	NO vs. with some frequency	t= - 2,818	.006
Participation in events	=> 3 vs. < 3	t= 5,143	.000
Interest on results	YES vs. NO	t= -2,556	.011
Workshop interest (BAM only)	YES vs. NO	t= - 1,935	.054

between those who have studied a language a lot vs. those who have studied it a little or nothing, not finding significant differences between those who have studied a language a little vs. nothing.

c) All the *variables related to direct international and/or multicultural experience appear **with significant difference**, except for the variable number of foreign teachers.*

Comparison of intercultural sensitivity with international and/or multicultural experience in extreme profiles

In order to be able to carry out a comparative statistical analysis of the extreme profiles of the continuum of experience with the international and/or the multicultural and to see if there is a significant difference or not vs. the result of the scale of attitude (intercultural sensitivity), two extreme groups of analysis were formed. At one extreme would be the profile of high experience and at the other extreme the profile of null or little experience.

In order to create such extreme profiles, 7 variables were considered, related to their personal experience:

- Living abroad
- Participate in exchange programs abroad
- Traveling abroad
- Living with foreigners
- Have foreign friends
- Study foreign languages

- Participate in events related to other cultures

A value of one point was given if they have had experience and 0 if they have not. Therefore, by adding the scores obtained by each of the students in the different variables, a continuum of experience profiles is obtained, ranging from profile 0 to profile 7.

At one end of the continuum would be the profile of high multicultural experience (profile 7 or who have scored on all variables) and at the opposite end, the profile 0 or null experience (who have not scored on any of the variables). Table 3 shows the two profiles that delimit the ends of the continuum.

Two extreme groups of analysis were formed, depending on whether they scored on 4 or more of the variables that define the multicultural experience profile (group 1) and those that scored on 3 or less of the variables (group 2).

According to the statistical analysis, *IF there is a significant difference between the two profiles of groups analyzed*, from which it can be deduced that there is a relationship between intercultural sensitivity and experience of the international and/or multicultural. In this way, we can say that the group of students with a high average experience with the international and/or the multicultural, also has a high average of intercultural sensitivity. See summary of results in Table 4.

It is worth highlighting some aspects related

Table 3
Extreme profiles

HIGH EXPERIENCE PROFILE (4 to 7)	ZERO OR SCARCE EXPERIENCE PROFILE (0 to 3)
Having lived abroad > 6 months	NOT having lived abroad
Having participated in an exchange abroad	NOT having participated in an exchange abroad
Having travelled abroad > 6 times	NOT having travelled abroad
Having lived with foreigners	NOT having lived with foreigners
Having foreign friends	NOT having foreign friends
Having studied at least 2 foreign languages (a lot)	NOT having studied any foreign language or only one (a little)
Having participated in at least 2 types of events (with some frequency)	NOT having participated in any type of event

Table 4
Comparison of means between extreme groups (profile 1 vs. profile 2)

Mean of profile group 1 (=>4) Statistical value (Likert scale)	Mean of profile group 2 (< 4) Statistical value (Likert scale)	P= (significance at 0.05%)
100.13 (4.17)	93.87 (3.91)	.000
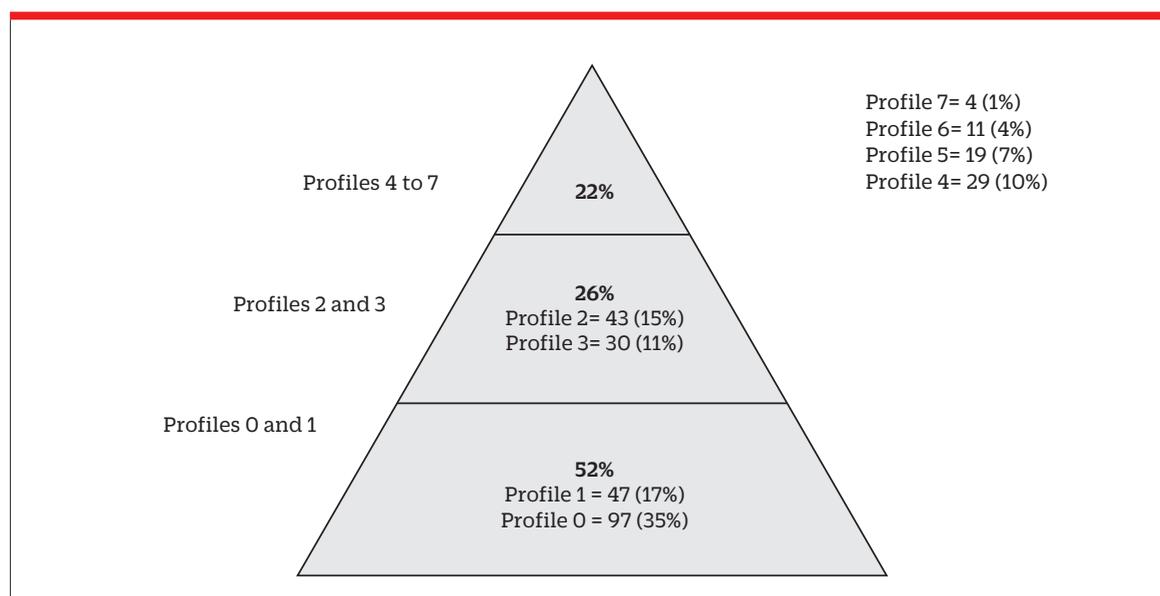
Figure 1. *Distribution of students surveyed by profiles*

to the distribution of the members of the sample, as detailed graphically in Figure 1.

- If the sample is divided into three groups, the *lower group (profiles 0 and 1) is occupied by 52% of the students* surveyed; profiles 2 and 3 by 26% of the sample and the high profile at the top of the pyramid (profiles 4 to 7), the remaining 22%.

The maximum score of the profile is 7 points, which were obtained by 4 male students (all part of the foreign own nationality student body and ERASMUS Exchange Program students).

When it was found that the members of the maximum profile were all foreign nationals and also students of the ERASMUS Program, a descriptive analysis was made of the foreign students in the sample and the following aspects were found that are worth highlighting:

- Although the foreign student body is only 7% of the sample (20 persons), 85% of them (17) are in the high profile (profiles 4 to 7).
- Of these 17, 13 (76%) belong to the ERASMUS Exchange Program and the rest (4) do not participate in the ERASMUS program, but all of them have in common that they have lived more than 3 years abroad.
- In relation to the seven variables considered in the profile of high experience before the international and/or multicultural, the *students with their own foreign nationality* have the following distribution, which is well worth highlighting:
  - *94% have traveled abroad more than six times*
  - *82% have lived with foreigners in the same house or flat*
  - *76% have participated in an exchange program abroad*

- *76% have studied a lot two foreign languages, different from their mother tongue*
- *70% have foreign friends among their best friends*
- *47% have participated in at least two types of events related to other countries or cultures (with some frequency)*
- *41% have lived abroad between 7-12 months and 29% more than three years*

Discussion

In view of the results of the analysis of the technical characteristics of the scale, it can be concluded that the translated and adapted instrument *is a high-reliability instrument.* Also, according to the results of the studies validity of scale content, it can be concluded that *the instrument has content validity*. However, it is suggested to delete item no. 15, as removing it would increase the alpha to .8567, practically the same as the original scale, or, make the attempt with a new wording of the item and see the result obtained in a new application. It is also suggested to include within the events related to other cultures, sports events. I consider that with these adjustments, the instrument is valid and reliable to be used in the Spanish university context.

I am aware that the sample has been limited to students from a single Spanish university, which is a limitation given the extent of the phenomenon. Even so, the sample is sufficiently representative of the total population and I consider that with the validation of the instrument carried out, I would be in a position to test it in other Spanish-speaking university contexts, both public and private, in order to verify its validity outside the Spanish context.

As for the result of measuring the intercultural sensitivity variable (attitude of university students towards interacting with people from different cultures), it can be concluded that *the university students surveyed have a favorable attitude on average towards interacting with people from different cultures,* since the result is at level 4 *"in*

agreement," with a median also close to the "in agreement," which indicates a favorable attitude on average.

According to the analysis carried out between the variable under study (intercultural sensitivity) vs. the context variables of the student body, I believe that the most relevant thing is to verify that **all** *the variables that are related to direct experience before the international and/or multicultural appear with significant difference, except for the variable number of foreign teachers.*

I consider that the most significant finding of the study arose when the analysis of the extreme profiles of experience was carried out, since when considering only the averages there was information that was not visible, but when analyzing the significant differences of the groups with profiles of high or null or scarce experience before the international and multicultural the relevance of the experiential component in the development of the competition appeared clearly. In finding that *there is a significant difference between the two profiles of groups analyzed*, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between intercultural sensitivity and experience of the international and/or multicultural. In this way, we can say that the group of students with a high average experience with the international and/or the multicultural, is expected to have also a high average of intercultural sensitivity.

These results corroborate what several authors have mentioned in their studies about the fact that learning intercultural competence is an **active process of lifelong learning** (Taylor 1994), **with a high experiential component, that** is to say, that it is carried out above all through the experience or direct experience with "the other different one", either in interactions of one to one, or in groups; either in one's own country or abroad (Anderson, 2000; Arthur, 2001).

Finally, I would not like to finish without making some reflections, I believe relevant, based on the results of the experience profile of the university students surveyed.

The fact that 52% of the university students surveyed have a profile of little or no experience in international and/or multicultural environments raises the question of whether university students are sufficiently prepared to work in mul-

ticultural and/or international business environments.

The fact that the student body that is located in the low profiles of the scale is a student body of Spanish nationality leads me to ask if it is convenient for the current university student body, as a professional potential of the European Union and an increasingly global world, to be located at the bottom of the pyramid?

The high profiles of the scale are occupied by foreign students (85%), not because they are foreigners, but because they have accumulated experience that could be summarized as a) high mobility (travel, exchange programs, living abroad); b) coexistence or friendship with foreigners, c) study of at least 2 foreign languages, as well as d) frequent participation in events related to other cultures or countries.

The big challenge is how to motivate and encourage students from Spanish universities or other Hispanic American universities to gradually acquire greater mobility, study languages, participate in events related to other cultures and have greater opportunities for coexistence, which leads to a high profile exposure to international and / or multicultural, and thus is more sensitive and prepared to diagnose, relate and face multicultural work environments.

Faced with this challenge, higher education institutions need to develop contexts or environments that allow university students to have access to diverse strategies of experience with the international or multicultural, such as: a) living abroad; b) traveling abroad; c) studying languages; d) participating in events in other countries or cultures and e) living with foreigners, so I believe that such strategies should have priority importance in any educational intervention program that seeks to develop the intercultural competence of university students.

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