

## **DRAFT CURRICULUM**

### **THE CONCEPT OF DIVERSITY**

The growing diversity in societies shows the complexity of its multiple factors and elements. Traditionally, diversity refers to gender issues, disability, age, socioeconomic status, religion and geographical location. The current discourse on diversity emphasizes cultural keys and those elements derived from them, such as languages, customs, beliefs, ways of living...

Culture influences the way people perceive and manage the environment. It influences the decisions they make in order to gain use of basic services –education, health and social services-, the kind of help requested and/or accepted, preferred methods, social support, perception of own needs, possibilities, resources and how they will be appreciated.

### **Factors that affect access and acceptance of basic services**

There is a significant number of factors related to cultural diversity which can affect access to and use of the basic services by people in minorities, mainly:

- ❑ Differences in language and usage of language in the society of stay
- ❑ Diversity of values and cultural beliefs with regard to fundamental aspects such as illness, healing, education, family, counselling, learning, equality...
- ❑ Socioeconomic status and perception of it
- ❑ Distrust towards Civil service's programmes and towards the civil servants
- ❑ Rejection of social benefits due to a different appreciation of them
- ❑ Resistance to search guidance or help for fear of its possible bureaucratic or social consequences
- ❑ Different answers to critical, important or significant situations in life
- ❑ Lack of appropriate and comprehensive information about available services
- ❑ Situations derived from migration
- ❑ Perception of social rights, social relations between majorities-minorities
- ❑ Expectations with regard to treatment and understanding in the host country

Organizations and administrations must reflect about their principles and practices and develop strategies to answer in accordance to social changes, to satisfy the needs of a changing society, more and more diverse, multilingual and culturally dynamic.

## **DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES; EDUCATION, HEALTH, CITIZEN SERVICES**

In order to develop good working services in the field of diversity, it is necessary to understand and accept cultural keys and to tackle structural barriers.

Every person, every professional is requested to reflect about his/her home culture, about the organization's cultural guidance and about how sensitive they are towards habits and behaviours of the people they are working with.

*Cultural competence*, the capacity to cope with intercultural processes, is defined as the set of behaviours, attitudes and policies which allows them, from inside the system or the organization and through their professionals, to be effective in cultural diversity situations.

The concept *cultural competence* is made up of two terms which imply, on the one hand, orientated action, the ability necessary to interact in diversity situations, and on the other, they refer to the concept of culture and its fundamental role in shaping human behaviour.

The development of *cultural competence* refers to the creation of skills, to the importance of changing both the ways of knowing and communicating and also the relations and representations we make of the others.

Competence implies knowledge, learning and changing our habits, behaviours, ways of establishing relationships. It requires the development of social skills in multicultural environments which favour and reinforce democratic relations and coexistence. It relates every person to the others in his/her real identity.

In more and more multicultural societies, social services, education, health... providers must be able to manage and communicate with a wide variety of people. They must be aware of the practices of the organizations and of the professional behaviours influenced by culture; they must also know how to redirect them, how to open them to diversity in such a way that users know that services and professionals will be really sensitive to their circumstances and at the same time professionals will feel sure in their practice.

In order to get effective basic rights, that can be fully exercised without being conditioned by the consequences of diversity:

- **Services** must be qualitative and quantitatively adapted to needs so they are **appropriate** and **sufficient**. For instance, when schooling children and young people in a language different to their mother tongue, it is necessary to have a sufficient number of programmes and teachers trained in second language teaching, having into account the right to compulsory education, that is to say, all those who need this service must be provided for.
- The way these services are offered must be appropriate, sensitive to cultures, values and beliefs, to the people's situations and necessities. For instance, the health system must count with active dynamics to attract certain groups, bearing in mind their customs, in order to prevent them from missing important programmes such as children's vaccination, birth control...
- Information must be correct and symmetrical, that is to say, a common language for users, professionals and the organization must be used, to try and avoid disadvantages born out of ignorance in relation to rights and how to exercise those rights. This can be achieved by having people from minorities in the staff, counting with translation services to communicate really comprehensive information...
- People's expectations and real expectations, that is, the distance between what a person wants and his/her possibilities to get it, must be consistent for the service to be acceptable. For example, many immigrants' expectations of getting a job clash with the real situation of the labour market.

### **An organization's capacity in multicultural environments**

Five key elements contribute to increase an organization's capacity in multicultural environments.

1. **Appreciating diversity**: organizations must appreciate diversity in order to establish the necessary policies and procedures which allow them to become culturally competent.

2. **Auto evaluation capacity:** organizations must establish and understand their own identity, in order to elaborate and implement their objectives.

3. **Being aware of the dynamics inherent to the interaction of cultural identities:** methods, ways and means, and the place where services are rendered are keys issues (attitudes, images...)

4. **Institutionalizing cultural knowledge:** all levels inside the organization must be culturally competent.

5. **Adapting social benefits** to the understanding of cultural diversity: programmes and benefits must be offered showing sensitivity towards the culture and traditions of those they are addressed to.

## **INTERCULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Integrating the diversity issue into organizations is an effort-consuming process; to be successful it must be intentional and well orientated. When talking about organizations we include two key elements: organizational culture and professionals.

### **Characteristics of intercultural organizations:**

1. Intercultural commitment is obvious at all levels, especially at those of higher responsibility. Professionals will feel more motivated if they see actions and not only words coming from those who have responsibility positions and act as leaders.
2. In their strategic plan they have defined their mission and vision, their concept of interculturality and diversity in an operative and significant way
3. They have developed an intercultural action plan with clear and well-timed objectives
4. They have created teams, either formal or informal, aimed at cultivating, developing and monitoring how close the organization is to getting its targets defined in their intercultural action programme.
5. They actively ask for feedback from workers and members of the organization with regard to ethnic group, culture, gender, sexual orientation, etc. in order to get useful information about work atmosphere, corporate policies and organization practice.

6. They promote responsibility and intercultural awareness inside the system. Certain departments or units are responsible for achieving the targets set for an effective management of diversity.
7. They introduce assessment criteria, based on principles such as interculturality, contracting and workers promotion.
8. They acknowledge that promoting and helping network support activities for workers who belong to ethnic minorities is important to avoid that these people remain in lower positions and intercultural change be blocked.
9. They keep systematic and long-term commitment with their professionals as to their training in the understanding of interculturality.
10. They are seen as part and reflection of a bigger community. Links with social environment are very important for the organization in order to fulfil their objective of start, stay and promotion of workers belonging to ethnic minorities.

### **What do organizations need to be culturally competent?**

- ❑ To develop a project to increase the organization's cultural competence; this project is to be integrated in the strategic plan, the mission and the activities.
- ❑ To understand the importance of identity and cultural diversity.
- ❑ To count with staff with skills in languages and/or interpreters for the provision of especially sensitive services.
- ❑ To use approaching methods appropriate and accepted by people belonging to minorities.
- ❑ To make sure that general information and particular messages on key issues are translated to other languages and/or expressed through images in such a way that they are really understandable.
- ❑ To develop strategies for the continuous evaluation of the organization's cultural competence and examine the activities' effectiveness

### **What do professionals need to be culturally competent?**

- ❑ To have a training plan to increase cultural competence included in the continuous training programme of the organization.
- ❑ To be aware of their own cultural identity and how it affects their interaction with people from other cultures.
- ❑ To understand the influence of cultural characteristics in communication, in certain behaviours, reactions...
- ❑ To respect people's beliefs and relevant values.
- ❑ To appreciate the different responses in the different cultures to certain situations.
- ❑ To avoid stereotypes based on the knowledge of the general characteristics of a given group.
- ❑ To be aware of how discrimination, oppression and historical traumas affect the people's daily life.
- ❑ To appreciate the effort of communicating in a foreign language and to pay attention to non-verbal communication.
- ❑ To recognize their limitations to understand some aspects of other cultures and languages, and offer the people they work with the means to express discomfort or disagreement when it appears.
- ❑ To be respectful, well-informed and to admit the scope and the limitations of the service he/she provides,
- ❑ To count with people who have previously used the services they provide, to get feedback of their experiences in especially relevant situations