

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”



**GUIDELINES
FOR COMMANDERS AND STAFFS:**

**HOW TO INCORPORATE
CROSS CULTURAL AWARENESS
INTO SYLLABI/CURRICULA
AND TRAINING PROGRAMS**

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MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

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MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	7
2.	Training, education and cross cultural awareness	7
2.1.	Introduction	7
2.2.	Cultural Capability	7
2.3.	The learning process.....	8
2.4.	Domains.....	8
2.5.	Educational and training methods.....	12
2.5.a.	Cognitive training	12
2.5.b.	Self-insight training	12
2.5.c.	Behavioural training	12
2.5.d.	Experiential training	12
2.5.e.	Attribution training	13
2.6.	Learning cross-cultural awareness in the armed forces.....	13
2.6.a.	Education.....	13
2.6.b.	Language proficiency.....	17
2.7.	Individual and collective training	18
2.7.a.	General training	19
2.7.b.	Predeployment training	22
3.	Conclusions.....	25

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MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

PREFACE

Nowadays, the Coalitions Forces are engaged and operating in high and complex environments where incorporation of local culture into the decision-making process becomes paramount. This reality represents a great challenge for the Armies, Commanders, Staffs and militaries in general, regardless of their ranks.

In order to operate adequately in such scenarios, the personnel working in the education and training realms within the Armies will have to identify, establish and develop methodologies, curricula and proper programs to educate militaries and train forces on the importance of integrating cultural awareness into operations.

Based on the learning process, the incorporation of the Cultural Awareness into the training and education fields will result in the setting up of different levels of educational curricula (initial and advanced), and various training programs (individual or collective; general training, predeployment training, homeland predeployment training, training in the Theatre of Operations).

Finally, these methodologies aim at providing the right education and training on the socio-cultural domain whose syllabi will depend on the rank and position occupied during the operation. Nevertheless we must understand that to reach the appropriate level of cultural expertise will require a long term effort.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

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MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”**1. INTRODUCTION**

Up to now, the CCA training in most armed forces has focused on the essential do's and don'ts while the impact on military planning has not been analyzed in depth. Military analysts have frequently focused on examining the most outstanding behavioural traits of a culture (e.g. in an Islamic country: not addressing a woman outright, not showing a shoe sole, not using the left hand, etc.) or on knowing the social structures (relevant and influential families, tribal leaders, etc.). Consequently, culture must be considered another military capability.

2. TRAINING, EDUCATION AND CROSS CULTURAL AWARENESS**2.1. Introduction**

This guideline is focused on identifying and establishing the methodologies and the education and training tools needed to enable the Armed Forces to develop and implement cross-cultural awareness (CCA) within a specific operational environment.

2.2. Cultural Capability

At present, most military operations are conducted by multinational forces in environments which are radically different from their homeland. This reality compels the military personnel, regardless of rank or job position, to interact with people with varied cultural backgrounds.

Iraq and Afghanistan serve well as an example of how ignoring the prevailing culture in the area of operations in the planning and execution of military operations can jeopardize the mission's success and the security of the forces. Up to now, the *cultural reality* has not been analyzed in depth in the military context. Military analysts have frequently focused on examining the most outstanding behavioural traits of a culture (e.g. in an Islamic country: not addressing a woman outright, not showing a shoe sole, not using the left hand, etc.) or on knowing the social structures (relevant and influential families, tribal leaders, etc.).

Experiences have proven that cultural realities should be given due attention. Latest COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance¹ may serve as an example of

¹ Version, 1st July, 2009, page 1.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

how important is to understand culture to achieve the mission. Quoting COMISAF “*we need to understand the people and see things through their eyes. It is their fears, frustrations and expectations that we must address. We will not win simply by killing insurgents...*”. And if you want to understand people and see things through their eyes... you must know their culture.

Consequently, culture must be considered another military capability².

2.3. The learning process

In order to develop any military capability, whether cultural or not, having personnel adequately prepared is an essential prerequisite. It is important to highlight that, although this guidelines is only focused on educating and training CCA, obtaining a capability is something more than having trained personnel. The other elements involved in a capability (doctrine, procedures, etc...) must also be considered.

In general, the armed forces preparedness is reached by linking theoretical knowledge, procedural skills and attitudes through a learning process.

From a methodological point of view, *learning* involves a behavioural change, which may be persistent or not, owing to cognitive or experiential inputs. In addition to that, learning is itself a psychological process which has been approached from different perspectives. One of the most widespread theories explaining the learning process was developed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom and colleagues. *Bloom's Taxonomy* states that learning takes place within three different domains: cognitive, psychomotor and affective³, and in all these domains learning is progressive and hierarchical.

2.4. Domains

The cognitive domain refers to mental skills, **knowledge**. Is the most known and developed of the three domains and the proper one to learn concepts and datas. In terms of cultural preparation, in this domain, for example, the definition of culture, other cultural aspects, culture dimensions, etc... would be learnt.

² The Spanish Armed Forces' Joint Staff defines “military capability” as follows: Set of components (personnel, facilities, weapon systems and combat service support assets) intended to generate effects at the strategic, operational or tactical level to accomplish the missions assigned by applying appropriate procedures in accordance with doctrinal tenets.

³ B. Bloom develops mainly the cognitive domain. To learn more about this domain read “*Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, handbook I: the cognitive domain*”. B.S. Bloom (1956), New York, David McKay Co Inc

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

The following table shows examples of the type of learning within each domain using cultural studies as examples.

COGNITIVE DOMAIN

Category	Description	Examples
Knowledge	Recalling data or information	Learners can recall the different definitions of culture.
Comprehension	Understanding the meaning of the information received. State the problem in one's words.	Learners can summarize the different definitions of culture.
Application	Applying/using what was learned into novel situations.	Learners can apply “comprehended” cultural aspects to a specific environment: e.g. Afghanistan.
Analysis	Separating material or concepts into component parts to improve understanding.	Once the social structure in an area in Afghanistan is known, learners can analyze it and draw applicable conclusions to the operation.
Synthesis	Integrating pieces of information to build up a whole.	Once the social and political structure of an area is known, learners can design its power structure.
Evaluation	Making judgments about the value of observable facts.	Learners can assess women's roles in an area in Afghanistan and in his country of origin.

Table 1: Cognitive Domain

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

The psychomotor domain refers to **skills**. Employing appropriate gestures to greet, address or show gratitude to people with different cultural backgrounds belong to the learning taking place within the present domain.

PSYCHOMOTOR DOMAIN

Category	Description	Examples
Imitation	Observing and patterning behavior after someone else.	Once learners are taught to sit and talk to Afghans, they must be able to adopt the same posture.
Manipulation	Being able to perform certain actions by following instructions and practicing.	Searching a person in the presence of a training officer (who provides feedback).
Precision	Carrying out a task making minor mistakes. Acquiring the necessary skills and executing proficiently.	Searching a person without the presence of a training officer.
Articulation	Coordinating a series of actions combining skills.	Negotiating employing appropriate gestures, body language, vocabulary, etc.
Naturalization	Having high level performance become natural, “without needing to think much about it”.	Interacting with locals mastering the situation and acting naturally.

Table 2: Psychomotor Domain

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

Finally, the affective domain refers to the learner’s **attitude** towards to what he/she has learnt within the other two domains. It is expected that the learner carry out an appraisal and assessment of the process.

AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

Category	Description	Examples
Receiving	Showing interest to stimuli, being willingness to hear/learn	Learners are interested in the role of culture in military operations.
Responding	Active participation on the part of the learner (asking questions in class, participating in class discussions, etc.)	Learners volunteer, take part in discussions, etc.
Valuing	The worth or value a person attaches to what he has learnt.	Learners assess how valuable it is to know basic vocabulary used by locals in the area of operations.
Organization	Creating new behavioural patterns out of what has been learnt.	Learners are prone to carry out tasks such as check-points applying the CCA approach since it is regarded appropriate.
Complex values	Contents learnt become routines	Learners are likely to apply the contents learned naturally, without thinking much about it.

Table 3: Affective Domain

The three domains aforementioned are involved in the development of the cultural capability.

The Armed Forces have traditionally focused its preparedness efforts on the cognitive and psychomotor domains. However, the affective domain cannot be neglected when dealing with intrinsically complex cultural realities.

Considering the need to establish a new mindset in the military where cultural issues are important when planning and executing operations, the affective domain must receive the appropriate importance.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

2.5. Educational and training methods

Educating and training people in CCA has some peculiarities with regards training or educating other military activities. There are five basic different approaches that trainers may take when training CCA: cognitive, self insight, behavioural, experiential and attribution training.

2.5.a. Cognitive training

In this training, people are given information about what to expect when deploying in another country. This information can deal with diverse cultural topics such as expectations, social structures, political structures, history, religion etc... (this information can be provided by lectures, group discussions...). The advantage of this approach is that a great deal of information can be presented economically. However, its big disadvantage is that it is so focused on the cognitive domain.

Many countries use this kind of approach when preparing their personnel before being deployed in a real operation.

2.5.b. Self-insight training

In this approach, people learn about their own culture and their possible reactions to other cultures, but not considering the cultural factors of these other cultures. The great advantage of this approach is that people can repeat this kind of training without considering the country of deployment (due to the training is always the same). A disadvantage is that the relation between gaining self-insight into one's own culture and the adjustments needed to find success in a specific culture is not necessary a direct one.

2.5.c. Behavioural training

It can be considered an extension of the cognitive training. Trainers help trainees to acquire overt and specific behaviours that are relevant in other culture and replace behaviours that may be offensive. The great disadvantage of this approach is that trainees must be unwilling to consider modifying some behaviour that has become habitual with them (a difficult task as people normally are reluctant to change behaviours). However, the advantage is that trainees have the opportunity to practice actual behaviours.

2.5.d. Experiential training

In this kind of training, trainees participate in simulations of another culture that are created by the training staff (simulating scenarios where the language of the host nation is used, where people behave the same way as hosts do etc...).

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

The advantage of this approach is that people can obtain realistic preview of the consequences that their actions may have. But, the great disadvantage is that a lot of specialized and well prepared personnel is required to implement the simulation.

2.5.e. Attribution training

Attribution (or isomorphic attribution) consists in using other culture's perspective when analyzing behaviours (and not using own culture's perspective). The aim of this kind of training is to encourage trainees to come to the same conclusions about facts as people of the host nation (or other culture) do.

The selection of any of the approaches aforementioned (or a mix of them) is a trainer's decision accordingly with the objectives expected to achieve at the end of the training and the experience of the trainer. Nevertheless, as new attitudes has to be established in learners when being trained in CCA, the behavioural, experiential and attribution training are the most recommended approaches.

2.6. Learning cross-cultural awareness in the armed forces

All the approaches suggested above, should be considered when learning CCA within the traditional fields of the military preparation: education and training. Although separate, both fields are linked and support mutually. Even more, some nations do not make such a difference between both areas. This separation has been made in order to express that to be culturally capable some knowledge is needed (mainly, although not exclusively, obtained through education), some skills are required (mainly gained by training) and a new attitudes should be gained (through both education and training).

2.6.a. Education

Military education varies from country to country, particularly the issues affecting levels and duration. However, there tends to be two stages: (1) initial education for personnel joining the Armed Forces for the first time; and (2) advanced education for experienced personnel. Consequently, for the purpose of our study two stages are set:

- **Initial education**, for personnel joining the Armed Forces for the first time. It is compulsory (whatever the military rank is obtained at the end of this stage) and takes place in military academies.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

- **Advanced education**, for experienced personnel. It is not compulsory and can serve a number of purposes: enhance initial education, enable personnel for promotion, specialization, etc.

5.1.1 First Stage: initial education

At this stage, essential concepts relating to culture must be learnt (definitions of culture, cultural aspects, culture dimensions, outstanding facets and traits, etc.). Culture should be approached from an anthropological perspective without focusing on a specific region or country⁴. The breadth and scope of the contents will be dependent on the time available and the learner's educational background⁵.

Also in this stage, due attention to understand and analyse “*own culture*” must be given. Anthropologists often refer to *own culture* as lenses through which a person interprets the world. Finding out what these lenses are made of in order to be aware of how they influence our interpretations, would facilitate the understanding of other interpretations/cultures.

So, every nation shall establish the learning objectives⁶ in accordance with their military education system. To achieve these objectives the appropriate teaching tools (lectures, group discussions, computer-based exercises, cases studies etc.) shall be established taking into consideration the kind of approach which is going to be used.

Whatever these tools are, the teaching methods that facilitate reflection, critical thinking and inquisitive mindset are more successful in generating learning, particularly adult learning⁷ (group discussions, case studies...)

Recalling *Bloom's Taxonomy*, and according to the categories presented in Table 1 and the learning objectives established, *knowledge* and *comprehension* categories are achievable at this stage.

⁴ Nonetheless, reference to a particular culture or environment may be suitable to make some concepts understood.

⁵ It consequently appears to be convenient to devote some time at Officers and NCO's education centers to explain the most outstanding features of cultures so that the learner can know and understand their relationships. On the contrary, for enlisted it will suffice to make them aware of how important those elements are for the execution of current operations.

⁶ Learning objective: concise and measurable description of the knowledge or abilities acquired by a **learner** as result of teaching or training

⁷ Sparks, D&Hirsh (1997). *A new vision for staff development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

Concerning the *affective* domain, a similar process will take place (establishment of objectives and activities to reach them). According to the categories presented in Table 3, *reception* and *response* will be the goals to achieve.

The following tool box may serve as an offer to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes in this stage (Figure 1 shows the relationship between these tools and the learning domain):

1. Integration of a subject called cross-cultural awareness (CCA) into military curricula for initial education (its relevance embodied in the credits awarded is to be determined).
2. In case proposal 1. is not feasible, CCA may be strengthened by promoting subjects included in the Arts and Social Science curricula such as history, politics, economy, law, etc., which are already taught at the initial education and training stage.
3. Promoting teachers and instructors exchanges with foreign military academies and schools.
4. Encouraging student exchanges with foreign military academies and schools.
5. Audiovisuals for teaching CCA. In the case of students of Officers and NCOs academies/schools, and to enhance the learning process, they should write a project before the audiovisual sessions and hold a discussion after them. By proceeding this way, students will be highly involved in the learning process and it will be possible to assess the level reached in the affective domain. In the case of lower levels, using audiovisuals and a follow-up debate could serve well the purpose.
6. Reading field manuals (native or foreign) and other documents relating to cultural aspects of the operational environment. Annex II includes a number of experiences (or cultural narratives) collected by personnel from different countries where knowledge about the target culture may be derived.
7. Using cases study as an initial approach (followed by group discussions etc.)
8. Using Problem based learning.

The general knowledge achieved at this stage could be referred to as “**cultural awareness**”.

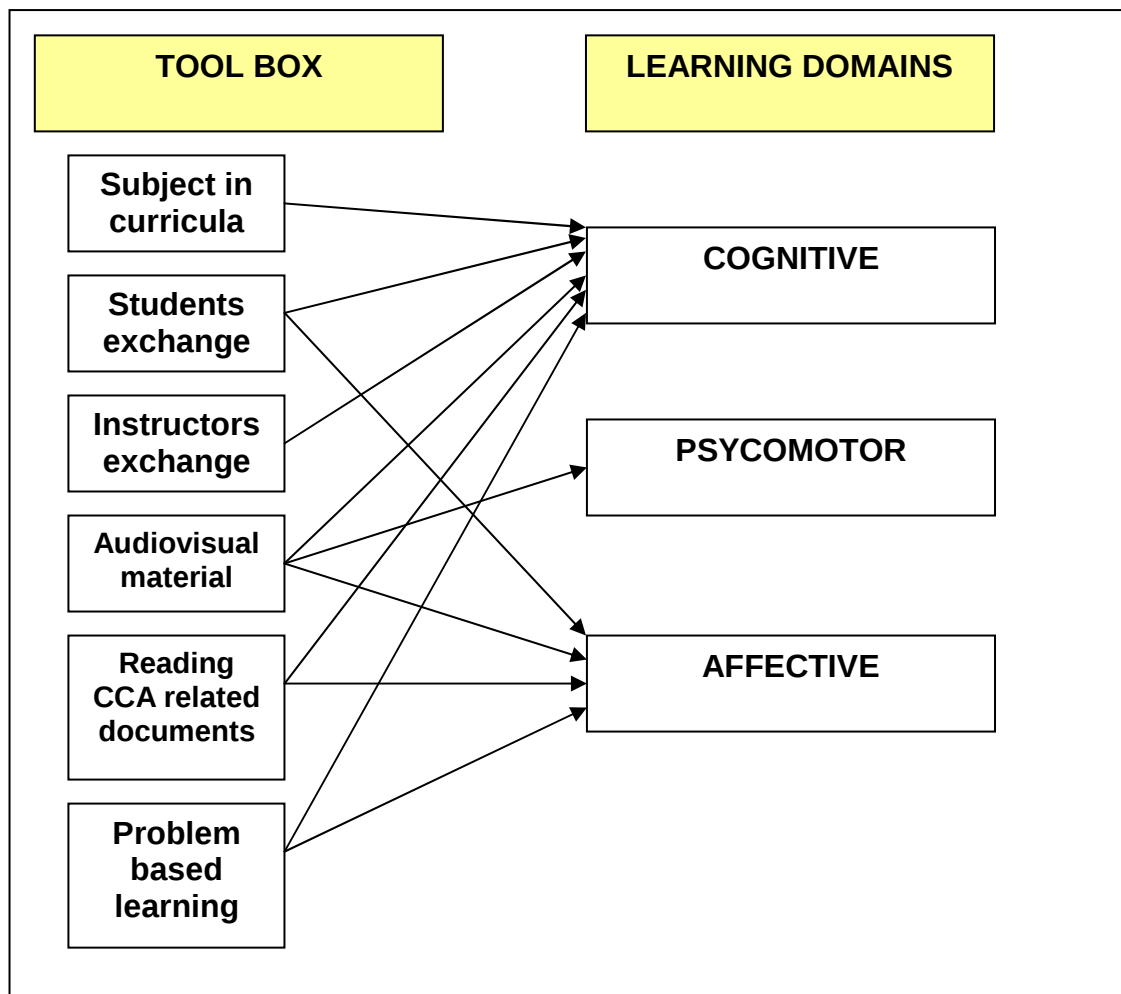
MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

Figure 1: Relationship between the learning tools and the learning domains

5.1.2. Second Stage: advanced education

The present stage is not constrained by time as it was the case with the initial education stage; thus, a higher degree of knowledge and specialization is feasible. It is sought the application of the previous **cultural awareness** to particular countries and regions or the improvement of cultural knowledge.

In conjunction with the cognitive learning from the previous stage, the categories of application and analysis of the Bloom's taxonomy would be achievable goals. Such improved understanding of the target culture is called **cultural understanding**.

If the cultural knowledge gained is deep enough, the highest level of cultural capability can be achieved. To get to this level of **cultural competence** it is recommended to have an appropriate linguistic skill in addition to the knowledge and skills acquired at the both stages. Experience in the area of operations

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

(interacting with natives during long tours of duty) will be another prerequisite for personnel to achieve this level of cultural expertise.

All this cultural knowledge shall be acquired through courses, workshops, fieldwork etc. (duration and contents may vary) focusing on particular regions, countries, or areas where the forces are deployed or are likely to deploy in the future. According to each nation capability, these courses should be developed not only in military centres, but also taking advantage of the university and other academia centres.

The access to these specific courses may be limited to a reduced number of learners, but in order to keep on gaining cultural knowledge, it should also be integrated into the enabling courses designed for promotion where further knowledge concerning the planning and execution of operations is gained and where the number of attendants is higher.

In the case of high order courses which already include the analysis of regions or countries (e.g. postgraduate or Staff courses), cultural analysis could be fostered and strengthened.

2.6.b. Language proficiency

It has not been stated that language proficiency is an essential requirement for CCA though language embodies part of the cultural reality. Only when it has been made a reference to cultural expertise or competence, a recommendation has been made on the need to have linguistic skills. The intention was to make a difference between cultural competence and language skills. Language and culture are closely linked but we may achieve different levels of knowledge about them separately (a person may know Afghan history, its customs, morals, etc... while being constrained by a lack of language proficiency in Pashtun or Dari).

Learning a language is a time-consuming activity and depends, to a great extent, on personal skills or abilities. It would be an unattainable goal to have military personnel proficient in the language used in the area of operations in short periods of time.

However, learning some basic vocabulary could be a short-term and feasible objective. This type of learning should take place during the individual and collective training phase⁸, since it is the process designed to prepare the personnel to be deployed in a particular area of operations.

⁸ Language learning may also be integrated into the education domain though it will depend on the nation's ability to foster it.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

Regardless of the aforementioned, military personnel should be prepared, at the same time, to be able to communicate with other military (e.g. other coalition members) or civilians (e.g. people from IOs or NGOs) in the area of operations.

Nowadays, most of the verbal communication is carried out in English even if the personnel do not belong to a NATO's member nation. Thus, the relevance of the English language is worth highlighting (as obvious as it may seem).

For that purpose, time should be allocated to learning English at both education stages. Every nation should establish the appropriate English proficiency level for its forces taking into account that the learning process of English generally starts well before joining the Armed Forces⁹.

2.7. Individual and collective training

The knowledge gained at the education stages must be applied to the execution of tasks and missions during the training stages. Again, each nation organizes training in their Armed Forces differently, but there must be something in common: training can be individual or collective whenever is focused on a single person or on a unit.

Individual training¹⁰ can be defined as a set of activities designed to prepare the soldier morally, technically and physically to perform specified duties or tasks individually or collectively (up to team level). On the other hand, collective training¹¹ is defined as the set of activities designed to prepare Units (platoon and higher echelons) to accomplish their missions.

As it may be observed in these definitions, the main difference between both types of training relies on the unit size. In the case of the Spanish Army, individual training applies to individual soldiers up to team-sized units, while collective training applies to platoon and higher echelons. Although this distinction is not necessary universal, it is worth noting that the training intended for individuals or small groups differs from that intended for larger units.

⁹ STANAG 6001, “Language proficiency levels” is applicable to language learning in NATO participating nations. Nevertheless, this document may serve as a reference to measuring proficiency skills in a language.

¹⁰ *Manual de adiestramiento MA 1-001*, Mando de Adiestramiento y Doctrina español (enero de 2005), Anexo B “Categorías de Instrucción y Adiestramiento”, page B-2. [*Training Manual MA 1-001*, Spanish TRADOC (January 2005). Annex B “Training categories”, p. B-2.

¹¹ *Manual de adiestramiento MA 1-001*, Mando de Adiestramiento y Doctrina español (enero de 2005), Anexo B “Categorías de Instrucción y Adiestramiento”, page B-3. [*Training Manual MA 1-001*, Spanish TRADOC (January 2005). Annex B “Training categories”, p. B-3.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

Hence, laying a gun may be carried out by a single layer or by a small crew, which will fall under the category of individual training. However, a fire mission belongs to the field of collective training since only a full artillery battery can carry out such a mission.

In spite of the difference, henceforth the term “training” will be used indistinctively as cultural preparation affects both individual soldiers and units and it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss which activities correspond to individual or collective training.

Apart from the unit size, training is also different when is carried out as a routinary activity for the sake of unit preparedness, **general training**, or when is designed to train a particular unit which is going to deploy in a specific area of operations, **specific training**.

Resorting to Bloom’s Taxonomy again, training is closely linked to the psychomotor domain (the learning of skills and abilities) but not in an exclusive manner. Escalating the hierarchy of categories presented in table 2, the level of *manipulation* is attainable (performing a task making minor mistakes). Reaching higher levels is not considered to be necessary as possessing advanced cultural knowledge would be a prerequisite.

Military personnel must also develop the intellectual domain in order to become aware of why they are required to operate in a given way and to facilitate the application of the skills acquired into novel situations. That is to say, the level of *application* (table 1) should be reached.

Finally, within the affective domain the level of *assessment* (appraisal of what has been learnt) should be reached. Training activities should aim at promoting learners’ participation to make them be willing to perform new tasks. They should be guided to be able to value the training they are receiving (*assessment level*).

2.7.a. General training

The foremost principle at this stage is the need to integrate cultural knowledge into all the training activities¹² carried out by a military unit. Those in charge of planning the training should avoid limiting the “cultural training”¹³ to the lowest ranks personnel (soldiers, sergeants, lieutenants...).

¹² Training activities include a vast number of exercises: planning exercises, command post exercises, force exercises, etc.

¹³ There does not exist a definition for “cultural training”. However, it refers to the integration of cultural knowledge/understanding into training activities.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

Every service person should be able to apply cultural knowledge to their duties according to their military rank or job position. Hence, the commander, planners, military specialists (CIMIC, Intelligence, etc.) or riflemen should routinely integrate culture into their daily training activities.

A team leader should be able to search a house or perform a checkpoint in such a way that his behaviour minimizes rejection by locals. On the other hand, the unit leader or a CIMIC specialist should be trained to negotiate with a local leader applying cultural knowledge to gain his trust and make the process be effective. So, it is proven that “cultural training” may vary¹⁴ depending on the job position, but all members of a unit need to be trained.

The objectives in this stage are:

1. Integrate culture in all the training activities performed by the unit.
2. Get all the unit's members involved in the “cultural training” activities.

As already aforementioned, the contents included in the training programs should be closely linked to the job position within the unit and, since it is intended to be general by character, it does not have to be focused on a particular region or country.

However, if cultural knowledge is to be integrated into all the training activities a benchmark culture is required to plan and execute all these activities. And culture cannot be dissociated from its environment.

The dilemma may be sorted out by employing a “fictional” scenario for these activities. A “fictional” scenario is created ad hoc to facilitate training, using fabricated names, conflicts, participants, terrain, etc., which may resemble reality to a greater or lesser extent.

This is a widespread practice among Armed Forces which prevents misunderstanding with other countries (it seems rather inappropriate to use data relating to a particular country or region). A further advantage is that cross-cultural awareness may be developed and strengthened through the effort needed to define the “fictional” culture¹⁵.

Given that the teaching tools suggested in the educational area have been duly resorted to, personnel assigned to a unit must have achieved the goals below mentioned when initiating “cultural training”:

¹⁴ Special emphasis is put on “vary” as distinctively different. It is not the intent to discuss whether the leader should be more proficient than a subordinate though it must be highlighted that cultural knowledge should be given due importance in the training activities.

¹⁵ However, relevant features of given cultures may be used due to the overwhelming burden of creating an ad hoc culture.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

1. General knowledge about culture gained at the initial education stage (all personnel).
2. Knowledge of how to integrate culture into the planning procedure (personnel who have taken advanced courses for promotion).
3. Specific cultural knowledge about a definite region or country (personnel who have taken part in the specialization courses held after advanced education).
4. Experience in previous operations (personnel who has been deployed in real operations).

Personnel having gained knowledge labelled 2, 3 and 4 could be responsible for the creation of fictional scenarios.

To facilitate cultural training, the following resources could be useful:

1. Training manuals where cultural knowledge is applied to task-based activities (if these field manuals are not available, cards devised by the units themselves out of their experience in previous operations may be used).
2. Opposing Forces (OPFOR) and “Green elements” (GREENEL)¹⁶ at Training Centers, which renders high fidelity to the exercises. These elements should be aware of the TTPs¹⁷ (tactics, techniques and procedures) applied by the OPFOR as well as of the GREENEL’s customs, beliefs, values, etc.
3. Smart cards (pocket size) dealing with cultural aspects such as basic vocabulary lists, local security forces’ rank insignia etc....
4. Computer based exercises, presenting situations where the “player” is to make decisions yielding results. Training may be improved by the application of test, trial and assessment procedures.
5. A further consideration would be resorting to “reservists” (in the case of countries where it is feasible) who due to his professional activities already possess a vast knowledge of the target culture. Reservists could

¹⁶ OPFOR includes all the elements present in the Area of Operations that opposes or hinder the accomplishment of the mission. But in a real scenario, other actors are present in the area as: local population, personnel from IOs/NGOs etc...that do not difficult the mission but of great importance when planning and executing an operation. GREENEL refers to all this personnel.

¹⁷ Information relating to TTPs is generally classified since it is derived from experiences in actual operations. Consequently, every nation should determine the procedure to employ it in training.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

refine the OPFOR/GREENEL preparedness and become observers in evaluation teams to assess training.

After this period of training a basic level of cultural knowledge (level 1) should be reached: all unit members take into account cultural knowledge when dealing with training activities.

2.7.b. Predeployment training

After being assigned to a particular mission, the unit must undergo a new training period. Then, there is a move from general training to predeployment training where a real scenario is used instead of a fictional one. Furthermore, the new planning process should consider culture through all the stages.

An assessment of time available is also paramount at this stage (ranging from days to months) since the training and activities programs rely on it. The commander should also assess the unit's cultural capability (including local language) gained via educational and general training programs as well as experience from other missions.

Both assessments should serve as a basis for planning all the training activities.

The training may not have been fully completed when the unit is projected to the area of operations. However, before properly initiating the mission, the unit performs a number of tasks (reception of materiel and personnel from the homeland, etc) in the host nation, which contributes to be readily prepared to assume the assigned responsibilities.

All these activities fall under NATO's RSOM¹⁸ process (reception, staging and onward movement). Staging is the part of the process where units should be able to carry out their training in the area of operations.

Therefore, two training stages can be differentiated according to the location where the training is carried out: homeland predeployment training and predeployment training in the area of operations.

At the conclusion of both stages, the unit should have reached the level of application (level 2): all the unit's members take culture into account when dealing with predeployment training.

¹⁸ PD 3-402 *Publicación Doctrinal [Doctrinal publication]. Recepción, transición y movimiento a vanguardia (RSOM)[Reception, staging and onward movement –RSOM-]* defines RSOM as the process by which units, equipment and materiel arriving at the theatre of operations as individual components of a movement plan become a force capable of accomplishing the assigned mission.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

6.2.1. Homeland predeployment training

The resources used during the general training may be used at this stage though locals may also be involved since the area of operations is already known. It may be complicated to have locals available, yet the host nation's local security forces (if any, police and Armed Forces) may provide observers/trainers to the contributing nations¹⁹.

Further to the advantage of counting on locals for training purposes, requesting the host nation's contribution also helps to build up trust and make our culture known to them (as those host nation instructors are able to assess/value how important is their culture to an army that is going to deploy in their country) .

At this stage, all personnel will be given essential courses on local languages to meet their needs, again in accordance with the job position in the Unit (a CIMIC officer may need to have a broader knowledge of the language than an infantryman).

The aim involves learning vocabulary which facilitates interaction with locals: greetings, good-by saying, thanks giving, numbers, names of goods such as bread, water, etc. The linguistic knowledge gained will depend on the time available and the individual's abilities.

Further to the language skills, it will be necessary to practice communicating using interpreters. The unit's leader along with all the personnel who will routinely interact with locals shall be well acquainted with that procedure. So far as possible, the interpreter employed for training purposes will deploy with the unit.

6.2.2. Predeployment training in the theatre of operations.

This kind of training basically comprises the same activities already carried out at previous stages with the advantage of being able to employ local population, local interpreters, etc. as supporting personnel. This should be considered a service provided in the staging areas.

These staging areas serve to finally prepare units to be ready to accomplish their mission. Although units must arrive in these areas with the appropriate preparation, nations must consider how useful can be extend the training period in these staging areas before moving to its final destination area.

¹⁹ The Afghan National Army (ANA) has offered native instructors to the Spanish Armed Forces's Operations Command so that they can contribute to the training received by personnel deploying to Afghanistan. Statement by Maj. Gen. Jaime Domínguez Buj, Operations Command's Commander. Granada, 17 September 2009.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

This stage is also intended to let the forces become acclimatized to the area of operations: physical environment (climate, food, etc.) and the human environment which, of course, includes culture.

Finally, the different levels of cultural preparation reached through education and training will be

1. **Cultural awareness:** obtained through initial education and basic training.
2. **Cultural understanding:** obtained through advanced education and general and predeployment training.
3. **Cultural competence:** obtained through higher military studies or at the university. This level of cultural preparation requires personal experience in a specific culture.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”**3. CONCLUSIONS**

Education and training in cultural aspects is a pre-requisite to enable a cultural understanding and cultural awareness although they are not enough to develop adequately the cultural competence capability, since the experience acquired over time is also paramount. Therefore, cultural understanding and awareness are necessary but insufficient components upon which to build the broad cultural capability needed by general-purpose forces to meet current and future challenges. Acquiring cultural competence is more extensive than gaining cultural awareness or understanding.

Cultural competence can only be instilled in a military practitioner following educational instruction of some depth using a carefully structured curriculum aimed at fostering a general knowledge of how operational culture is applied during operational planning and decision-making processes. The level of education needs to be considerable to gain the required higher levels of expertise, although as above mentioned time and experience are pre-requisites.

Education on CCA is to be considered in a bottom-up approach, as a type of a long-career process from the most basic military education and training courses. It is to impregnate all the curricula and syllabi. Curricula may need to be designed for several levels of expertise. Therefore, it may begin with an “initial education” when joining the military and then continue with an “advanced education” tailored to the career profiles, including, as appropriate, the development of specific cultural SMEs.

Cultural expertise is a long-term investment. There are several useful levels of knowledge that may be required basing on the military function or operational level required.

A true area cultural expert, such as a cultural SME, may require many years of both general and specific area language, cultural education and experience. This is because his purpose is to assist commanders and staffs to reach levels of awareness and competence they could not reach on their own. This is the cultural competence.

Other key people such as Commanders, planners, specialists in certain areas (INTEL, CIMIC, INFOOPS, Public Affairs, etc.) should have a deeper level of knowledge to understand how culture applies to his military specialty and to understand how to synthesize that information with other LOOs. It can be considered as cultural understanding.

The rest of individuals/practitioners should receive proper cultural awareness training in the specific operational environment (or specific region/area). The aim will be to teach the basics on the human fabric of the Area of Operations for them to be able to assimilate socio-cultural information from any theater and, in particular, from the one to be deployed.

MNE-6, OBJ 4.3 “CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS”

As for the Training, the cultural understanding and awareness should be included in the general collective training of Units/HQs and routinely practiced in exercises as appropriate. It should not be considered specifically in a kind of single cultural training event, but be embedded in the periodical individual and collective training programs. Besides, some pre-deployment courses should be designed to acquire cultural awareness specific for an operation. The courses ought to be tailored to the scenario and the role to accomplish (commanders, staff officers, troops). That training can focus and deconflict the cultural SME roles and responsibilities as well as the mission to accomplish.

Finally, it is also advisable to train the commander and staff on some reframing and self-awareness techniques. These techniques are aimed at facilitating a more flexible mindset within the whole staff, which would in turn make better use of the Cultural SME. It would help understand others' mindset and anticipate reactions when planning and executing operations.