Original Paper

Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Competence & Intercultural Intelligence: A Review of the Literature and a Proposition of a Linear Relationship

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Abstract

The ideas, terms and concepts surrounding intercultural competence are robust and offer varying degrees, phases and precursors. Working off of the definitions, models and stages of previous works, this review starts by providing working definitions of culture, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural competence and intercultural intelligence. This presentation of literature is sequenced in a way to give insight into how and why each of these terms lead into and overlap each other and how a causal relationship is manifested in each step. This review is approached through the lens of education and how these concepts can and are applied in a classroom environment. Conclusions are made regarding the linear, yet not prescriptive relationship among these steps.

Keywords

cultural studies in education, intercultural competence, intercultural intelligence, intercultural sensitivity

1. Introduction

This review of the literature concerns itself with perceived levels of intercultural competence among teaching faculty and students. Often placed under the umbrella of "intercultural competence" are a variety of terms. These subsections of what intercultural competence consists of but are not limited to intercultural sensitivity, intercultural training, intercultural learning, intercultural literacy and intercultural understanding. The current review includes a review of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural competence and intercultural intelligence and suggests a linear relationship between the

three.

Due to the necessity of such competencies and/or skill sets in today's globalized world, there have been many attempts by scholars to define them, understand how they develop and how they can be measured (Deardorff, 2006). Some terminologies overlap each other, some take very broad approaches to define these competencies while others' foci are on different dimensions of these constructs. Deardorff (2006) notes that the most common terminology in the literature regarding these issues is "intercultural competence" yet no single definition has been agreed upon. She also states that "helping students acquire intercultural competence presumes that we know what the concept is" (Deardorff, 2008, p. 38). An attempt to define it simply comes from Perry and Southwell (2011) who state intercultural competence is "the ability to effectively and appropriately interact in an intercultural situation or context" (p. 455). Perry and Southwell (2011) also point to the complexity of each individual's journey through an intercultural experience as a reason why it is not known how this competence develops. Similar definitions and concerns are echoed by Earley, Ang and Tan (2006) in their exploration of Cultural Intelligence or "CQ" in the workplace. They argue individuals often come to each intercultural situation differently and may, at times, show evidence of differing stages of intercultural competence (Earley, Ang, & Tan, 2006).

There have been many debates among culturists regarding how intercultural competence itself can be measured (Perry & Southwell, 2011). Although she often professes the idea that intercultural competence can be measured and assessed, Deardorff acknowledges that it is a point of contention with scholars who believe it cannot (Deardorff, 2009). Byram (1989) notes that individuals may display attributes of different levels in different interactions with different cultures. An example is how certain levels of intercultural competence may be displayed in a professional context, while others might be seen in a social context (Byram, 1989). There seems to be no general consensus on this issue which continues to be unresolved and studied further.

In the field of education, Ziegler (2006) found that, international teaching faculty often have varying degrees of both knowledge of what intercultural competence is, as well as varying degrees of it. Considering this disparity of knowledge of intercultural competence among teaching faculty, Ziegler (2006) writes that international educators "should be aware of their own developmental issues so that they can transparently meet the students' needs rather than let their own issues cloud their work" (p. 201). This necessitates the need for intercultural training for international teaching faculty members.

The literature on intercultural competence and similar constructs continues to grow and covers many fields of study making navigation and clarity of understanding especially arduous. This study moves forward with the idea that there are three stages of this competence which can be identified. Some stages may seem to overlap due to the lack of understanding where one stage ends and the next begins. I approach my analysis and review of the literature with the understanding that the progressive development of intercultural competence is with the prerequisite of intercultural sensitivity and extends beyond these definitions with the level of intercultural intelligence. First, this review examines the

literature on how culture can be defined and then moves onto an examination of intercultural sensitivity with particular attention paid to M.J. Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) and how this model includes components of what others consider to be intercultural competence. It will then relate these ideas to the concept of intercultural intelligence as presented by other culturists.

2. Defining Culture

A discussion of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural competence or intercultural intelligence must begin with a discussion of the term "culture" itself. One would do well to be careful when using this term or referring to any one specific thing as a distinction of a region, sect, religion or community, which the word culture is often attached to. The word itself is fraught with dangers in terms of national, political, economic, structural or other possible connotations that might offend or indiscriminately categorize peoples. "Culture" is a concept that lends itself or rather is claimed by a variety of branches of academia including anthropology, sociology, theology, psychology, linguistics, communications, philosophy and other disciplines (Knowledgeworkx Inc., 2013).

The analogy of culture as an iceberg has been cited by more than a few culturists. The tip or visible part of the iceberg is what can be seen and observed and is often what people call the attributes of a culture. This is only 20% of the iceberg itself. The remaining 80%, below the surface is often cited as the values, beliefs and deep culture which constitute what inform and drive the tip of the iceberg itself.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, "culture" can be defined as "The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought" (The American Heritage Dictionary, Fourth Edition, 2000). While this explains the outward appearance of culture, the norms and practices, it fails to acknowledge the values that inform and drive the "tip of the iceberg". Peterson (2004) takes a few steps back, or rather, deeper from the standard dictionary definition and offers,

> *Culture is the relatively stable set of inner values and beliefs generally held by groups of people in countries or regions and the noticeable impact those values and beliefs have on people's outward behaviors and environment* (Peterson, 2004, p. 17).

Here, both the tip of the iceberg and its foundation are accounted for and acknowledged.

While this definition works well with what this review explores, I would like to omit the mentioning of "countries or regions" from this to formulate a better working definition. In reference to this review, while teachers and students may be of differing national cultures, which comply with Peterson's definition, they are often of the culture of the same organization or the same academic discipline which Peterson does not account for.

The fact is and what problematizes defining culture is that some definitions may not really specify anything concrete and useable for professionals and researchers without knowing the given context of how the term culture is used. For example, one could look at Geertz's definition of culture as "a system

of symbols" or Hofstede's notion that culture is "collective mental programming", yet without the context of what these terms refer to, a clear sense of what culture is, remains a challenge (Geertz, 1973, p. 3; Hofstede, 1980, p. xi).

I am reminded of Holliday (2002) as he states the term "culture" itself can be in reference to two different things, large cultures and small cultures. These small cultures can exist within a profession, a company, a business or even a classroom and may include tenets and values which may differ from what he calls a large culture which is of national, ethnic or regional boundaries (Holliday, 2002). The components that comprise this concept of large culture may be complex and are certainly ever-evolving. Holliday (2002) argues that within a large culture may be multiple small cultures to which individuals belong. Herein lies the challenge in trying to operate within boundaries of both the large culture of the nation as well as the small culture of one's organization, or even smaller, family. Although, we can see Holliday's distinction as pertinent to any discussion regarding culture, I tend to disagree with the terminology. What Holliday dubs "small culture" to me smacks of ordinal inferiority. The large cultures he refers to, being national culture resonates with a more unambiguous tone in that clear boundaries are given, those of a nation. What he refers to as small cultures could very well be called more explicitly, organizational cultures, religious cultures, ethnic cultures or regional cultures.

Given the complexity of the term, Hofstede opts to present culture as an onion-skinned concept of many layers (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G., & Minkov, 2010). These layers listed from the core to more outward features consist of values, beliefs, rituals, heroes, symbols, and others into which are the external "noticeable" attributes of culture. It is evident that similar elements are used in a variety of metaphors being the "below the surface" foundation of the iceberg (Peterson, 2004).

DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) attempt to define culture as "universal, multifaceted, and intricate. It permeates all aspects of human society; it penetrates into every area of life and influences the way people think, talk and behave" (p. 21). Typically, this involves the beliefs, ideals, norms, values, attitudes, practices and traditions that one holds. This definition works well in that it accounts for the potential of individuals having variants of these beliefs, norms values and so on, hence the mentioning of the 'intricacies' that culture can include.

This is in contrast to looking at national culture as Hofstede does in arguing that culture is not exclusive to the individual rather it is a "collective mental programming of the people in an environment" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 19). Kramsch (2001) phrases her definition of culture in a more voluntary manner than Hofstede as a "membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space in history, and common imaginings" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 103). A more simplified definition is often cited in Introduction to Cultural Anthropology texts as "A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (Goodenough, 1982, p. 54). These definitions are not without danger of being cast as reductionist however. Holliday argues this treatment of large cultures leads to overgeneralization and imposes "othering" on foreign teachers abroad in that they can be marginalized or even ostracized should their individual cultural values differ

from those perceived to be the norm of their country or national culture (Holliday, 2002). Further moving away from an essentialist view of culture, Holliday (2005) writes that,

> [a] culture is not a geographical place which can be visited and to which someone can belong,
> but a social force which is evident wherever it emerges as being significant (p. 23).

I embrace this definition especially due to its disregard for assigning borders or "place" to an exploration of culture. It is here that the perilous approach to culture appears in that designating a place or boundary of culture invites stereotypical notions of culture based solely on those boundaries. As mentioned earlier, the road "easily travelled" when discussing culture is to regard it in terms of nationalities however, another more difficult road would be to consider all cultures as equal regardless of these boundaries. The underpinning of this review attempts to take neither stance and leans toward the notion that to deny a distinction between cultures or worldviews is irresponsible and equally irresponsible is to assume that one's own culture is superior. However, these distinctions I acknowledge are not based on nationalities or large cultures. Acknowledging these distinctions of culture in this way could be viewed as promoting stereotypical lines of thinking. This review takes into full account the complexities and uniqueness of the individual.

The basis and purpose of this or any cultural exploration is in place purely due to the fact that these cultural distinctions in terms of worldview can and do exist.

I move forward with this literature review with an examination of three common definitions of skill sets that individuals in an intercultural setting will have varying degrees of. They are presented in a sequence which reflects my proposition of a linear relationship.

3. Intercultural Sensitivity

I agree with Straffon (2003) in seeing intercultural competence as a skill set only developed after elements of intercultural sensitivity are developed. He defines intercultural sensitivity as "a person's response to intercultural difference" (Straffon, 2003, p. 487). While this general statement could include a great number of phenomena, Chen and Starosta (2000) take us back a few steps in the process and define intercultural sensitivity as one's active desire to understand, appreciate and accept differences among cultures. As mentioned, there is no agreed upon instrument to measure an individual's intercultural competence or sensitivity, however Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) points to the time duration as a link between immersion and the possible development of intercultural sensitivity, which I argue is a prerequisite for intercultural competence.

What I propose is that there is a causal relationship between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. Elements such as those mentioned by Chen and Starosta (2000) are necessary for one to consider themselves interculturally competent. This idea of intercultural sensitively is further broken down by Bennett (1993).

3.1 Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

One of the tenets that underpin the framework of this review is M.J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, hereafter referred to as DMIS. Bennett defines intercultural sensitivity as "the experience of cultural difference, an experience that is dependent on the way a person constructs that difference" (Bennett, 1993, p. 52). The DMIS is used to explain how people understand or view cultural difference. Interculturally sensitive people have an ethnorelative orientation while less sensitive peers have an ethnocentric view (Bennett, 1993).

Bennett sought to understand the differing stages that one encounters in contact with intercultural difference and how that is translated into intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993). Bennett makes a distinction between early stages of the DMIS as "ethnocentrism" being the belief that one's own culture is centrified or superior and later stages which include "ethnorelativism" which is the belief that one's culture is simply one of a number equally valued cultures. He defines six stages of intercultural sensitivity found in Table 1.

Table 1. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

Stage	Definition
1) **Denial**	This stage is one of lack of interest in cultural differences so much so that cultural differences are not even recognized.
2) **Defense**	People at this stage recognize cultural differences but react negatively to them. They expect conformity to their own cultural norms or worldview and tend to avoid "the other".
3) **Minimalization**	One can appreciate cultural differences but still tend to see their culture as superior and thus confine contact with "the other" to a minimum.
4) **Acceptance**	Recognition of all cultures and that all cultures are valid, yet not yet equal.
5) **Adaptation**	Ability to adapt to intercultural contexts while still maintaining one's own cultural roots.
6) **Integration**	Ultimate level of "ethnorelativism" where one can recognize that his or her own culture is one of many equally-valued cultures. People at this stage can function on multiple planes of cultures in that they can interact effectively and collaborate with other cultures.

This process of development, according to Bennett is progressive and linear (Bennett, 1993). This is based on the understanding that, as Perry and Southwell (2001) state "each stage is moving deeper to a level of intercultural sensitivity" and "as each person's experience or understanding of cultural difference becomes more complex, his/her potential for intercultural competence increases" (Perry & Southwell, 2011, p. 454). This statement supports Straffon (2003) and my view that intercultural

sensitivity is necessary first before intercultural competence can be attained. I suggest that the term intercultural sensitivity relates to a phenomenon which is very internal and has more to do with one's own attitude toward cultural difference and how that evolves rather than the behavior which may result from it. The behavior, interactions and more outward effects of intercultural sensitivity could be seen as intercultural competence.

This model of intercultural sensitivity is not without its complexities however. Perry and Southwell (2011) note that while Bennett's DMIS is useful in understanding the evolution of intercultural sensitivity vis-à-vis how it is developed, they question the assumption by Bennett that each stage is linear and progressive. They argue that individual differences mean some stages can be skipped and people often spend longer amounts of time in each stage and can even move backwards along this continuum (Perry & Southwell, 2011). They proclaim that lived experiences in individuals are "often not as simple and straightforward as [it] concepualises" (Perry & Southwell, 2011, p. 455). To this, I would add that we as individuals could be seen at differing stages of this scale in different contexts. Earley et al. (2006) would also agree that this simplicity of such a model can be misleading. They state,

> *There is not simple, linear, cause-and-effect relationship between cultural knowledge and behavior that is culturally adaptive and flexible* (Earley, Ang, & Tan, 2006, p. 105).

As mentioned earlier, many definitions of such issues often overlap each other and while this review utilizes Bennett's DMIS for later analysis, it is only in part. I see intercultural sensitivity as internal, involving one's attitude toward cultural difference. While the first two stages regard how the person views cultural difference, stages three and four also include internal attitudes or sensitivities. What differentiates parts of stages three and four and stages five and six from stages one and two are the outward effects of such internal attitudes. As I use Bennett's DMIS in further review it is with the assumption that intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence are separate skill sets, the former being an internal attitude while the latter being how that is projected into one's outward behavior.

Hammer and Bennett (2003) developed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) which draws heavily from Bennett's previous DMIS and has been used to measure development of intercultural competence using the continuum from highly ethnocentric to highly ethnorelative. This framework has been used by Mahon (2006), Pederson (1997) and others to give approximations of individuals' stages of the DMIS. Others, such as Pappamihiel (2004), however have simply used the DMIS as a guide in their own assessments of their participants' levels of intercultural sensitivity and/or intercultural competence.

Paige (1993) offers a conceptual model relevant to the development of intercultural sensitivity. Although many of the 10 situational variables in his model echo previous models of such competence by Bennett (1993), he offers more specificity in labeling facts which yield greater intensity in the intercultural experience and thus the development of intercultural competence, notably in his 7th variable which deals with the expectation of the individual in an intercultural environment (Paige, 1993). He states that if the individual's expectations of the new culture are too unrealistic, the

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inevitable result is a feeling of "psychological let down" while the opposite result of having too high expectations not of the new culture but of one's own abilities and/or competence to deal with and cope with cultural differences leading to unwanted stress and necessity to adapt culturally in ways which the individual had previously not anticipated (Paige, 1993, p. 17).

4. Intercultural Competence

In this section, some working definitions of intercultural competence are provided from the literature. Generally, it can be defined as the ability to interact, work, study, teach and live with cultures that we consider being different from our own (Guilherme, 2004). Muller-Jacquier (2004) goes further into the linguistic proprieties of intercultural competence defining it as "how people handle difference in linguistic behavior and its various effects; the analysis of results in descriptions of culturally specific ways of expressing and interpreting the situated linguistic action of the co-participants" (p. 24). To this, I would add that intercultural competence is not only how people handle but also the ability to handle these situations. Muller-Jacquier's definition assumes this ability is something that all people possess.

Hiller and Woziak (2009) link intercultural competence to tolerance for ambiguity, behavioral flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect for others, and empathy. Byram and Zarate (1997) suggest that intercultural competence focuses mainly on the relationship between two or more sides of communication and interaction. This is done by standing outside of one's self and having the ability to have double points of view, change and adapt one's own behaviors in relation to the duality of beliefs, values and norms that might exist among participants (Byram & Zarate, 1997).

Bennett, J., Bennett, M. and Landis (2004) point to many commonalities in such definitions. They offer that most culturists would agree in saying that intercultural competence is "a set of cognitive, affective and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, J., Bennett, M., & Landis, 2004). Perry and Southwell (2011) cite Bennett (1993) in stating "the development of intercultural competence requires the teaching of subjective culture, in which the focus turns to exploring alternative worldviews and cultural self-awareness" (p. 456).

Howell's (1982) intercultural model offers many similar foci as Bennett's model yet also accounts for interpersonal components, namely the first stage of "unconscious incompetence" in which the individual misinterprets others' behavior but is not aware of it followed by the second stage called "conscious incompetence" in which the individual is aware that he misinterprets others' behavior yet does nothing about it.

It seems difficult for one to imagine having successful and effective interaction while possessing these beginning levels of intercultural competence. Due to this and as recognized by Cushner and Mahon (2009) intercultural competence should be the "central dimension of teacher preparation" (p. 307). As a result, intercultural training is of special and crucial importance in developing these levels of intercultural competence. However, Deardorff (2009) also warns that,

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...one single workshop or course, while a possible start in framing some of the issues, is not sufficient in this development process; rather, the integration of aspects of intercultural competence must be addressed throughout one's education and professional development (p. xiii).

Many arenas where intercultural interaction is rife, namely global corporations, institutions of higher learning and other educational entities often attempt to engage this kind of intercultural training through companies such as Knowledgeworkx and others. Studies by Goode (2008) and Sunnygard (2007) produce findings which suggest many international institutions of higher learning in particular do not adequately prepare their faculty or students for the intercultural experience and do not foster cultural self-awareness needed to result in intercultural competence in either.

5. Intercultural Intelligence

In addition to the notion of intercultural competence is the further step of this becoming or evolving into intercultural intelligence. Knowledgeworkx (2013) describes this as a skill which includes collaboration when facing intercultural conflict. This collaboration is what they refer to as the 3rd cultural space, an idea first proposed by Kramsch (1993). Intercultural intelligence is defined by Knowledgeworkx (2013) as,

The ability to create new cultural spaces to facilitate win-win solutions; by anticipating, correctly interpreting, and adjusting to the culturally defined behaviors of others.

Peterson (2004) also makes a distinction between intercultural competence and intercultural intelligence, stating that competence is merely the basic minimum requirements needed to operate within a cultural or group, whereas intercultural intelligence is,

the ability to engage in a set of cultural behaviors that uses skills (i.e., language or interpersonal skills) and qualities (e.g., tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility) that are tuned appropriately to the culture-based values and attitudes of the people with whom one interacts (Peterson, 2004, p. 87).

The literature provides a variety of terminology for these ideas. The terms of "intercultural intelligence" and "interculturalism" are often used interchangeably and project more advanced set of skills than simple "intercultural competence". Further to this, Trahar (2003) refers to another term "transculturalism" where a "common and different culture emerges from the dialogue of the transcultural spaces between teachers and students" (p. 130). This idea builds on Kramsch's (1993) idea of intercultural intelligence which calls for a 3rd and negotiated cultural space to be created in intercultural relations. Both definitions echo Bennett's (1993) DMIS stage of "integration". In all of these definitions, there is a relationship at work amongst differing cultures and one which may need time to develop.

6. Intercultural Sensitivity, Competence & Intelligence in Education

These differing and overlapping definitions and ideas present challenges to all individuals tasked with negotiating intercultural interaction. Intercultural competence is needed by all parties understand the culture between them or to create the third cultural, leading to collaboration so that all objectives, be they academic, or otherwise are met.

Many before have considered the dynamics teachers' and students' intercultural sensitivity and competence in differing education al contexts. A study by Staffron (2003) found a great disparity between students' levels of intercultural sensitivity and that of their teachers. Using Bennett's DMIS in the form of a Likert scale, Straffron (2003) found that students attending international schools in Southeast Asia had a 71% acceptance rate of intercultural sensitivity compared to only 26% in their international teaching faculty. Straffron (2003) deduces that this is due to two main factors; one, the relative age of exposure to multicultural education and also the length of immersion in a multicultural environment, both of which were responsible for students' heightened levels.

Byram (2009) takes this further looking beyond Straffron's two factors by stating,

> *Developing intercultural sensitivity and competence is not achieved in the cognitive-only approach to learning that is common in most classrooms today, be it with children or preservice teachers. Cultural learning develops only with attention to experience and the affective domain that is then linked to cognition* (p. 324).

Merryfield (2000) has suggested and that, consistent with the conclusions made here, when teachers leave their comfort zone for an extended period of time, they are better equipped to empathize with "the other" and this can serve as a major foothold in developing intercultural competence.

A recurring factor in the literature is the issue of time and/or experience and how this affects the development of intercultural competence in both students and faculty members. It is a factor which has been mentioned repeatedly and becomes clear in the data and findings of this research (Perry & Southwell, 2011; Glowacki-Dudka & Treff, 2011; Deardorff, 2006; Ziegler, 2006; Straffon, 2003; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Byram, 1997; Bennett, 1993). Byram (1997) comments on this factor affecting those in contexts of immersion, such as expatriate teachers in stating,

> *Experience of fieldwork, particularly over the long term…provides [one] with the opportunity to develop attitudes which include the ability to cope with different stages of adaptation, engagement with unfamiliar conventions of behavior and interaction, and an interest in other cultures which is not of the tourist or business person* (p. 69).

Immersion, though not to the same degrees, is what both the faculty members and students encounter in the context of international education. In an education context such as an English-learning environment, for example, teachers live within differing cultures abroad or students are immersed in an English-speaking, Western educational model in an English-speaking country. For the teachers, this "Experience of field work" as Byram (1997) calls it, or length of time within that immersion may directly result in developing intercultural competence.

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Vital to the development of intercultural competence and intelligence in an education context is for the international teachers to be in tune with the cultural precepts that underpin their students' behavior and norms.

7. Conclusion

This review has presented current views of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural competence and intercultural intelligence and the reader can see the progressions which lead to each term. This review is with the contention that certain these skills sets are attained in a linear manner with the beginning step being mere exposure or interculturality as Bennet's DMIS states (1993). After this, one can see how living, working and interacting in an intercultural context would lead to the acquisition of higher levels of both the DMIS and eventually, the skill sets of intercultural competence (at varying degrees) and then with an ability to collaborate interculturally, create a 3rd cultural space and attain the skill and possess the worldview involving intercultural intelligence. Although the position of this review would concede with Perry and Southwell's (2011) idea that steps or levels may be skipped, ebbed back or surface in differing contexts, the main concepts of the three skill sets often do manifest themselves in a linear manner.

This way of conceptualizing the three ideas may lead to a better understanding of how we can define each in a more uniform way and perhaps may be further step in separating them so that greater clarity and less overlap in ideas could be presented by culturists and understood by those who study and live them.

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