

Creating a Developmental Pathway for Developing Intercultural Effectiveness Competencies

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[Abstract] The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is posing an immense challenge to humanity. The need to develop intercultural competencies has become challenging and received extensive attention. The quest to develop intercultural effectiveness (ICE) competencies is on the rise. However, it has been a lack of theoretical justification for conceptualizing the developmental strategies of attaining ICE. This article connects the Theory of Transformative Learning (TL) with a sequence of processes to pave a developmental pathway for developing ICE. It helps adult learning and HRD professionals in planning, developing, and conducting training programs for the improvement of ICE.

[Keywords] novel coronavirus (COVID-19), intercultural effectiveness (ICE) competencies, theory of transformative learning, adult learning, human resource development (HRD)

Introduction

While the demands of globalization have transformed the boundaries of the world and the relationship of people between cultures and contexts, the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has changed the structures of global society and the patterns of human interactions (Díaz, Loayza, Ruíz, Mendoza, & Olivo, 2020). The COVID pandemic is climaxing serious insufficiencies in the communal mindset regarding our sustainable human well-being (Shelley, 2021). Hinchliffe, Manderson, and Moore (2021) urge to establish a planetary health policy with supranational forms of cooperation. These changes and quests are contributing to a demand for global talents.

Adams and Walls (2020) call for a global-ready workforce and intercultural competent individuals. Conner (2000) asserts that the accelerating globalization, new technology, and intense competition heightens need to develop global leaders with intercultural competencies and knowledge to face this ever-changing world. These scholars urgently promote healthy intercultural understanding and facilitate the development of intercultural competencies. The need to develop intercultural competencies has become challenging and received extensive attention (Adams & Walls, 2020; Briscoe et al., 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2009). For example, Shim and Paprock (2002) point out that the development of a globally effective workforce plays a key role in building the competitiveness of organizations. Many scholars posit intercultural competencies as the means to develop global mindsets (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2009; Stier, 2006; Wilson, 2000). These voices have had a significant impact on the field of adult learning and HRD in developing intercultural competence by providing cross-cultural-related training and interventions (Chang, 2009; Osman-Gani, 2000). However, there is a lack of theoretical support for conceptualizing developmental strategies of attaining ICE.

Globalization has brought together people of different cultures and values. Yet, it is difficult for people to build trust across cultural boundaries, generally because of a lack of understanding cultural differences. In a worst case scenario, globalization may lead to conformity that ignores

the differences across cultural boundaries. Under the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more important to understand how to facilitate a healthy sustainable world based on intercultural and international competence and cooperation. This demands a theoretical foundation to create a developmental pathway for developing ICE. As Cui and Van Den Berg (1991) assert, “Intercultural effectiveness is a theoretical construct that includes a set of factors that predict effective intercultural communication and adaptation” (p. 227). However, they have not developed the theoretical justification for ICE. Therefore, it is crucial to explore a variety of theories to conceptualize a blend of developmental strategies for understanding the processes of developing ICE.

This article explores a theoretical model for the development of ICE. It advances ICE theoretical justification and theoretical underpinning as the prerequisite study for ICE theory building. The study includes epistemological and ontological discussions. Ontology expresses what it is and epistemology elaborates on how we know what it is (Crotty, 1998). This article is an attempt to connect the theory of transformative learning (TL) with a sequence of processes to pave a developmental pathway for developing ICE. It helps adult learning and HRD professionals in planning, developing, and conducting training programs for the improvement of ICE.

Intercultural Effectiveness (Ice) Competencies

Cultural competence is a central determinant in explaining how people, working in global organizations, perform differently across cultural boundaries (Hofstede, 1994). The challenges of defining ICE have been problematic due to a lack of consensus and theoretical justification for ICE. For quite some time, different terms have been utilized for intercultural competence, such as cross-cultural effectiveness (Cui & Van Den Berg, 1991; Han, 1997, 2008; Page 2021), cross-cultural adjustment (Benson, 1978), cross-cultural competence (Ruben 1989), intercultural effectiveness (Cui & Van Den Berg, 1991; Hannigan, 1990), intercultural competence (Dinges, 1983), and intercultural communication competence (Spitzberg, 2000). Festing and Eidems (2011) claim it is important to understand the processes for facilitating the development of global talent because it has implication for adult educators and HRD professionals who ought to be called upon to developing pathways for attaining ICE..

Scholars, in the different disciplines, throughout the past30 years have defined intercultural competence in a great variety of ways. The definitions of competence are inconsistent, according to Lusting and Koester (2003).Moreover, Fantini (2002) suggests a broader concept for intercultural competencies that includes real-world knowledge and cross-cultural skills, attitudes, and awareness. Cui (1989) indicates ICE is about the ability to communicate effectively across cultures while Kelley and Meyers (1995) position ICE as cross-cultural success. Stier (2006) determined that intercultural competencies include content competencies and procedural competencies. Deardorff (2004) argues that the process of achieving intercultural competence involves awareness, understanding, acceptance, respect, appreciation, and developing new attitudes, skills, and behaviors in reaction across cultural boundaries.

Notably, in several studies authors postulate that adult learning is crucial to intercultural competencies (Chuprina, 2001; Han, 1997, 2008). There is, however, limited research exploring the relationship between adult learning theories and intercultural competence (Han, 2010). Regarding developing culturally competent professionals, Campinha-Bacote (2002) has identified five components: (1) cultural awareness, (2) cultural skill, (3) cultural knowledge, (4) cultural encounter, and (5) culture desire. Lister (1999) also has developed a taxonomy for culturally

competent professionals. Han (1997, 2008) defines ICE as five measurable variables and conceptualizes the ICE as (1) the ability to handle psychological stress, (2) the ability to effectively communicate, (3) the ability to establish interpersonal relationships, (4) the ability to have cross-cultural awareness, and (5) the ability to have cultural empathy. In these studies, ICE refers to the multiple measurable abilities allowing one to interact effectively and appropriately across cultures. In the Han study, a measurement of ICE was developed and validated with a quantitative instrument and applied to a variety of demographic groups to investigate ICE competencies and develop an ICE data baseline. This verified that a dynamic relationship among the five ICE competencies exists.

In addition, scholars have asserted that acquiring intercultural competence is a process of cross-cultural learning (Bartel-Radic, 2006; Han, 1997, 2008; Hannigan, 1990). Hofstede (1994) further posited that cross-cultural learning only occurs when the individual has realized the impact of cultural differences, engaged in critical reflections, and examined practical experiences. In Table 1, a summary of exploring the definitions of the concept of intercultural competence is presented.

Table 1
Definitions and Perspectives of Intercultural/Cross-Cultural Competence

Authors	Concept	Definition/ Perspective
Cross et al. (1989)	Cultural competence	A set of congruent behavior, attitudes, and policies that come together to work effectively in a cross-cultural situation
Collier (1989)	Intercultural communication competence	Intercultural communication competence “requires that individuals understand the meanings, rules, and codes for interacting appropriately” (Collier, 1989, p. 216).
Black and Mendenhall (1990)	Effective cross-cultural interactions	Cross-cultural skills development, adjustment, and performance
Gertsen (1990)	Cross-cultural competence	The ability to function effectively in another culture.
Cui and Van den Berg (1991)	Intercultural effectiveness	Intercultural success
Adler and Bartholomew (1992)	Global or transnational competency	Specific knowledge, skills, and abilities
Redmond and Bunyi (1993)	Intercultural communication competence (ICC)	ICC is defined as “a multidimensional concept consisting of communication effectiveness, adaptation, social integration, language competence, and knowledge of the host culture and social decentering” (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993, p. 1).
Han (1997, 2008)	Intercultural effectiveness (ICE) Competencies	ICE is defined as five measurable competencies
Lusting and Koester (1999)	Intercultural communication competence	Intercultural communication competence requires that individuals understand the meanings, rules, and interact appropriately.

Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999)	Cross-cultural competency	Knowledge, skills, abilities, other attributes
Spitzberg (2000)	Intercultural communication competence is located in perception rather than behavior.	“competent communication requires attention to the factors of context, locus, and abstraction” (p. 111).
Earley (2002)	Cultural intelligence (CQ)	Cultural intelligence is a person's capacity to adapt to a new culture based on multiple facets including cognitive, motivational, and behavioral features.
Landreman (2003)	Intercultural consciousness	Intercultural consciousness is a more appropriate educational goal than multicultural competence
Thomas (2003)	Intercultural competence	The ability to help/shape the process of intercultural interaction, avoid misunderstandings and create the problem –solving opportunities.
Deardorff (2004)	Intercultural competence	Pyramid model and process model of intercultural competence
Hunter (2004)	Global competence model	Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences are necessary to become globally competent.
Bartel-Radic (2006)	Intercultural competence	The ability to adapt one’s behavior to these meanings to produce effective behavior.
Stier (2006)	Intercultural competencies (IC)	IC includes content competencies and processual competencies.
Spitzberg and Changong (2009)	Intercultural competency	Intercultural competency is the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent effective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world.

Note. Definitions and Perspectives of Intercultural/Cross-Cultural Competence. Modified and adapted from “Cross-cultural learning and intercultural competence” by P. C. Han, in V. Wang (Ed), *Encyclopedia of Information Communication Technologies and Adult Education Integration* (p.296), 2010, IGI Global. Copyright 2010 by IGI Global. Reprinted with permission. .

A number of scholars link intercultural competence to cross-cultural learning and consider that gaining such intercultural competence progresses with cross-cultural learning experiences (Bartel-Radic, 2006; Fantini, 2000; Han, 1997, 2008, 2012; Hannigan, 1990; Mendenhall et al., 2008). However, cross-cultural learning only occurs when the individual has grasped the impact of cultural differences, critical reflections, and practical experiences, according to Hofstede (1994).

Transformative Learning (TL) Theory and ICE

Early in the literature, Taylor (1994) argued that developing intercultural competence is a transformative process and advances the relationship between ICE and transformative learning.

Subsequently, studies by many scholars reveal that attaining intercultural competence is a personal transformational process (Chang, 2007; Chin, Gu, & Tubbs, 2001; Taylor, 1994). It is an integrative and transformative process according to authors who investigated this phenomenon over three decades (Kim & Ruben, 1988; Han, 2012; Mezirow, 1991). Specifically, Kim and Ruben (1988) stressed that the process of gaining intercultural competence is transformational and that learning is a developmental process allowing individuals to function effectively across cultural and national borders. Their study confirms ICE as a transformative intercultural learning process. Bartel-Radic (2006) posits intercultural learning as “the acquisition or modification of the representations of intercultural situations” (p. 652).

Bartel-Radic further states that the representations of intercultural learning are the learning outcome, while acquisition and modification are the learning process. Taylor (1994) interpreted intercultural competence as an adaptive capacity that allows individuals to integrate their worldview and to function effectively in another culture. Moreover, Mezirow (1991) posited that all changes or modifications from cross-cultural learning can be viewed as transformative processes. He argues transformative processes are essential to making meaning and how adult learners make sense of their own life (Mezirow, 1996).

Transformative Learning Theory (TL) continues to evolve as the most influential theory for teaching adults (Taylor, 2018). Eschenbacher and Fleming (2020) considered TL an appropriate learning framework for lifelong learning even during the COVID - 19 pandemic. Notably, Taylor (2018) stated, “The growth is so significant that it seems to have replaced andragogy as the dominant educational philosophy of adult education, offering teaching practices grounded in empirical research and supported by sound theoretical assumptions” (p. 12-13).

According to Mezirow (2012), the transformative learning process begins with an experience of a disorientating dilemma for learners. Encountering the COVID-19, the experience of not knowing, or the challenge with social restriction and physical isolation is an example of the disorientation dilemma stage from TL theory. With anxiety about the pandemic all over the world, coping with ambiguity and psychological stress is a given. This is a central theme in TL as posited by Mezirow (2012), “identifying the common in the contradictory, tolerating the anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis, and reframing” (p. 80). Mezirow (2000) later proclaims that “the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, and mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and options that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (p. 8).

In Mezirow’s (1991) earlier theory analysis, he proposed four components in terms of transformative learning as being: (1) experience, (2) critical reflection, (3) reflective discourse, and (4) action. Based on multiple learners’ experiences, the self-examined critical reflection follows. After testing the new meanings, learners participate in the reflective discussion to gain a fresh and empathic perspective. Lastly, learners take action to establish the learning at a deeper level (Mezirow, 2000).

Founded on the examination of the association between transformative learning and cross-cultural learning, Han (2012, 2021) suggests an *Integrative Model of ICE* (Figure 1). This model has been utilized in identifying the developmental processes for female marriage migrants’ leadership development in Taiwan. The model supports the idea of developmental processes for developing ICE and contributes to providing explanations to how female marriage migrants can develop ICE and global talent. The model utilizes the theory of transformative learning as

theoretical justification to conceptualize the developmental processes and strategies for attaining ICE. It helps adult learning and HRD professionals to recognize a sequence of developmental strategies that might be added to training curricula development and to plan, develop, and conduct training programs for the improvement of ICE.

Figure 1

Integrative Model of ICE



Note. Integrative Model of ICE. From “Developing Intercultural Effectiveness Competencies: the Journey of Transformative Learning and Cross-cultural Learning for Foreign-born Faculty in American Higher Education,” by P. C. Han, in C. J., Boden & S. M., Kippers (Eds.), *Pathway to Transformation: Learning in Relationship* (p. 229), 2012. Copyright 2012 by Information Age Publishing. Adapted with permission.

In Han’s (2012) Integrative Model of ICE, the theory of TL conceptualizes ICE as an ongoing social and culturally constructed learning process. The five ICE competencies might be developed through cross-cultural learning and effective reflections with acquisitions and modifications in the social and cultural matrix. Within the context of the pandemic, TL theory not only contributes to building an organizing theoretical framework for the Integrative Model of ICE (Han, 2012) but also defines the developmental strategies and processes for attaining ICE competencies. It conceptualizes a developmental pathway for ICE. In this model, cross-cultural learning resulting in intercultural acquisition and modification from self-examining and self-reflection is recognized.

Resistance to change is a natural reaction. The journey of the developmental pathway will be met with setbacks. The concept of TL accounts for such barriers to transformation with its emphasis on critical reflections that results in transformative learning to overcome the resistance to change. In the

presented model, achieving transformative learning is defined as *the Process Outcome* of developing ICE competencies while attaining ICE is defined as *the Optimal Outcome*. Notably, along the way, the model guides individuals to not only pay attention to the pathway-building processes with cross-cultural learning and transformative learning, but it emphasizes the future development potential and aspiration for individuals to attain ICE. Therefore, the model creates a theoretical guideline for adult educators and HRD professionals in planning, designing, and conducting programs and interventions to develop global-ready individuals for IC. A sequence of developmental strategies supports adult educators and HRD professionals in mapping out ICE training curricula.

Conclusions and Implications

This article discussed the importance of the epistemological and ontological position in the knowledge base and attempted to make the case of a connection between transformative learning and ICE. The COVID-19 is unquestionably a global crisis positioning a colossal challenge to humanity. According to the national performance study by Kandel, Chungong, Omaar, and Xing (2020), only 104 (57%) of 182 countries have the global competencies to function under COVID-19. There are 32 (18%) that countries lack of global preparedness to cope with the threat of the pandemic. This world needs more effective intercultural educators to foster a better intercultural understanding and collaboration. Transformative learning helps facilitate intercultural development such as is proposed by Page (2021), who encourages advancing personal and professional intercultural development to prepare a cadre of intercultural-ready educators. McLean (2006) also suggests adult learning and HRD professionals should engage in continuing education and need to be proactive to develop effective cross-cultural learning programs for adult learners in the organization.

Higher education as a civic learning organization needs to prioritize developing a sustainable world and support lifelong learning (Lin, Pearce, & Wang, 2009; Reimiers, 2009). It is necessary for higher education to mandate internationalization and to take the lead in adding more international curricula and courses to enrich students' their understanding of this world. In addition, more interdisciplinary collaborations in higher education or other organizations and organizations in the public and private sector need to base instruction on adult learning theories.

The pandemic continues to threaten humanity. How to create a shared world and a sustainable world is a crucial task for education professionals. The solution may be found in the developmental pathway that is presented in methods for cross-cultural learning and transformative learning. The Integrative Model of ICE is an attempt at ICE theory building. It is grounded in the premises of the developmental pathway as posited in the theory of TL. TL is seen as the theoretical means to facilitate a reflective and developmental journey for individuals to attain ICE. TL provides the theoretical foundation for ICE. It benefits adult educators and HRD professionals as they increase their professionalism with intercultural competencies. The *Integrative Model of ICE* offers a blueprint to develop ICE and facilitates ICE knowledge transfer based on a sequence of processes of critical reflections and acquisition and/or modification of one's knowledge and held beliefs. With the provided spectrum of strategies, a cadre of global talent can be developed. It is recommended that adult educators and HRD professionals take a progressive approach to advance their professional development with intercultural competencies and to be the change agents in their organizations, who advocate the importance of continuing learning to manage change.

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