Response to Cultures Continuum and the Development of Intercultural Responsiveness (IR)

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This qualitative phenomenological research study investigated the perceptions of pre-service teachers' intercultural responsiveness. Findings from this study affirmed that pre-service teachers believed that positive dispositions, being culturally aware, and responding by incorporating cultural differences is a key to achieving Intercultural Responsiveness (IR) (Jones, 2013). IR self- actualization is the culminating professional and personal experience that enhances relationships between all cultures.

The research presented in this study provides educators with strategic Interculturally Responsive (IR) components with an explanation of the Response to Cultures Continuum leading to cultural self-actualization, which is the pinnacle of IR. This research highlights integral components of a cultural continuum and is a segment of another study on pre-service teachers' cultural development (Jones, 2013).

There is an urgent need of cultural preparation for educators (Barnes, 2006; Fairbanks et al., 2010; Gargiulo, 2010; Guo, Arthur, & Lund, 2009; Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005). With the increase of culturally diverse students (Martinez, 2005) and a decrease of culturally diverse teachers (Assaf, Garza, & Battle, 2010; Gargiulo, 2010; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006); a cultural mismatch within the classroom is produced (Barnes, 2006; Colombo, 2005; Cooper, 2007; Lessow-Hurley, 1996; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007; White-Clark, 2005; Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007). Many researchers (Barnes, 2006; Colombo, 2005; Cooper, 2007; Lessow-Hurley, 1996; White-Clark, 2005; Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007) agreed that culturally diverse students do not receive adequate educational support due to the cultural incongruence between student and teacher. As a result, culturally diverse students are often misjudged by educators, stereotyped, and often accused of false beliefs (Aronson, Cohen, McColskey, Montrosse, Lewis, & Mooney, 2009; Chamberlain, 2005).

Research Questions

The *overarching questions* of the study were: (1) What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers, in reference to teaching English language learners in the classroom setting? (2) What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers, in reference to Intercultural Responsiveness (IR) in the classroom setting? The *related questions* that were explored are: (1) What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers about their teacher education training related to intercultural sensitivity? (2) What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers, in reference to the relationship between their teacher education training and their perceptions towards English language learners? (3) What instructional strategies are seen as effective for English language learners? (4) What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers about their preparation for working with language learners?

Literature Review

In order to provide a strong foundation, the researcher exhausted the abundant literature on culture. The literature review provided a research-based development of the Response to Cultures Continuum (Jones & Mixon, 2015). Jones and Mixon (2015) believe that as one moves along the cultural continuum the goal of being interculturally responsive is obtained. It is imperative for teacher education programs to infuse these educational constructs into their curriculum. The Response to Cultures Continuum is illustrated below in Figure 1.0:

Response to Cultures Continuum

Figure 1.0 Cultures continuum.

Society must move toward cultural competency because of the diverse languages, ethnicities, religions, and cultures increasing due to previous and current immigration (Yee, 2002). Colombo (2005) defined cultural competence as "the ability to understand diverse perspectives and appropriately interact with members of other cultures in a variety of situations" (p. 2). The first step to becoming culturally competent is gaining an understanding of how culture shapes identities, values, beliefs, and actions (Merryfield, 2011) and connecting mind with the heart for cultural consciousness (Sims, 2011). According to Ward and Ward (2003), cultural competence requires teachers to be grounded in awareness, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity. While some pre-service teachers can become technically culturally competent; others struggle with being culturally competent (Fairbanks et al., 2010). Teachers who expect students to foster cultural competence should be culturally competent as well (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Keengwe, 2010). The journey toward IR self-actualization begins with the comprehension of being monocultural and is pictured in Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1. Monocultural mindset stage.

Monocultural – The Lack of Cultural Competence

Mejia and Navarro (2008) defined monocultural as being a culture dominated by one group. Monocultural institutions are guilty of attempting to reform ways of thinking and doing it in the dominant culture (Özturgu, 2011). Nieto (2010) described monocultural education as a familiarity in our nation's school. It's a situation in which school structures, policies, curricula, instructional materials, and even pedagogical strategies are representative of only the dominant culture. The American educational system has a deep monocultural (Anglocentric) orientation (Fenwick, 1996). The second construct of the continuum is comprehending cross-cultural competence and is portrayed below in Figure 1.2:

Figure 1.2. Cross-Cultural communication stage.

Cross - Cultural Competence via Communication

Cultural competence is a set of skills to be able to interact effectively with diverse culture groups (Martin & Vaughn, 2007; Wiggins et al., 2007; Yee, 2002); many times in cross-cultural situations (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). Fries (2006) and Lynch and Hanson (1993) defined cross- cultural as communication between two different cultural areas. According to Ward and Ward (2003), second language usage promotes cross-cultural competence. According to Fries (2006), cross-cultural awareness implied that more than one culture is involved. According to McAllister and Irvine (2002), teachers encounter increased challenges

dealing with standardized achievement in a culturally responsive environment. They suggested that cross-cultural competence is needed by teachers who teach at culturally diverse schools. The third continuum construct is multicultural competence and is pictured in Figure 1.3 below:

Figure 1.3. Multicultural Stage.

Multicultural Competence with Relating to All

Multiculturalism pertains to or is represented by many different cultures (Fries, 2006; Gargiulo, 2010). Banks (2007) and Gloor (2006) described it as relating to many different cultures. Multiculturalism is celebrating cultures that are different from the dominant culture, which adds to our diverse society (Gloor, 2006). There is much research indicating that multiculturalism needs to more than a skim off the surface level providing brief cultural segments (Irvine, 2003; Ladson- Billings, 1999; Nieto, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The final continuum framework is intercultural competence and it is portrayed below in Figure 1.4:

Figure 1.4. Intercultural interaction stage.

Intercultural Competence by Interacting and Investing

Intercultural competence is having the ability to appropriately interact effectively in intercultural situations through vehicles such as self-reflection (Guo et al., 2009), attitude, and intercultural knowledge (Deardorff, 2006). Defined by many (Brander, Cardenas, Gomes, Taylor, & de Vicente Abad, 2004; Deardorff, 2004; Fries, 2006) intercultural implies interaction between two or more cultures. Researchers (Govaris, 2005; Nieto, 2010) pointed out that the acquisition of intercultural competence is linked not only to teacher education but also to the dominant values concerning others in the social environment in which teachers operate. Interculturally competent teachers have the ability to adapt to intercultural groups in the classroom, lesson implementation, and students' needs in their implementation of lessons (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Brander, Cardenas, Gomes, Taylor, and de Vicente Abad (2004) defined intercultural societies as diverse cultural groups interacting together with mutual recognition within the same geographic location.

Participants and Setting for this Study

Batchelder (2008) suggested the confirmation of higher educational institutions implementation of these cultural training components is needed. As a result from this need, the researcher chose to examine teacher education programs and the preparation to teach culturally diverse students. The participants in the study consisted of five pre-service teachers who were

entering the student teaching phase in their respective teacher education program. Individual interviews were conducted and ranged from one hour to one and a half hours. Two students from each designated university were selected for participation. In order to provide a stratified sample, three of the participants were male and three were female. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) suggested "when enough information is known to identify characteristics that may influence how the phenomenon is manifested, then it may make sense to use a stratified purposeful sampling approach" (para. 5). All of the pre-service teachers chose to be anonymous for the duration of the study.

The setting for the study involved three teaching universities located in Texas. Each of these universities ranked Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies in their top five degrees awarded during 2012 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Almanac, 2013). The selection of participants was purposive in order to include the stories of pre-service teachers who met certain criteria for effectiveness. These criteria for selection included the following: (a) students had to be approved for student teaching and (b) the campus selection had to include one of the three selected Texas universities.

Findings

The findings from this dissertation study were reorganized into themes of Awareness, Sensitivity, and Responsiveness due to the product of this study being Intercultural Responsiveness (IR). Generally, educators have an awareness of cultures and a sensitivity to cultures, but few actually have the skillset of how to appropriately respond to students and teachers of different cultures (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2002; Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005). In order to be Interculturally Responsive (IR), one must be aware, sensitive and responsive because they are interdependent of each other (Jones & Mixon, 2015).

Awareness of Others

Being culturally aware can be defined as viewing cultural diversity as an asset while addressing multicultural issues in the society (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993). According to Lenski et al. (2005), the goal is to help prepare pre-service teachers to be more than culturally aware of students' needs but to respond beyond the issue of cultural awareness in schools. Pre-service teachers can be more efficient in awareness by utilizing differentiated instruction and fostering positive relationships in the classroom.

Aware of cultural identity. The findings in this study led to the conclusion that connecting with one's own cultural identity is vital to be able to accept another's cultural identity. Kay admitted that her teacher education training encouraged her to connect with her own cultural identity while in the program. She shared the following:

> I am from a diverse family and also I grew up in Austin. So I grew up with much diversity within the city as opposed to like a rural, predominantly White town. I liked learning about struggles people experienced when immigrating to America.

Aware to make cultural connections. Pre-service teachers claimed the culturally responsive classroom takes what ELLs have in their home culture and connects it with authentic representation within the classroom. Ray claimed that his teacher education program seemed to focus on people of different colors connecting to their own cultural identity. He said, "I still don't know what my cultural identity would be. I feel that White isn't a culture, despite what some people might think." Ray claimed to appreciate people that

own their cultural identity by understanding their background while immersing themselves in their culture. Rob also felt that his teacher education training was lacking in teaching them how to become self-aware with our cultural identity. However, he reported:

> It is a personal goal of mine. I am aware for myself because while I am not as diverse as some people, I live in a fairly culturally and ethnically diverse area. The teacher education program highlighted a couple of things for me but it's more from my own interests.

Aware of cultural specificity. Pre-service teachers in this study shared feelings of uneasiness of working with ELLs. They said their teacher education programs covered cultural diversity but not enough instruction about ELLs. They felt unprepared because of the basic lack of classroom experience. Findings led to the conclusion that pre-service teachers need an increase with ELL interaction and specific ELL instruction. The findings revealed that it was important to the pre-service teachers to receive a class devoted to specific ELL instruction.

Kim also stated that intercultural sensitivity is the teachers' willingness to learn about cultures but also they actually incorporate diverse cultures in their classrooms. I know that I will sit down and learn about cultures that are in my classroom so I can appreciate and give the respect that these cultures deserve. For example, she mentioned:

> There is even differences in communication, such as eye contact if that is respectful or not, just different things they have different perceptions, different families have different priorities. It could be religious priorities.

Aware of ELL instruction. The pre-service teachers in this study understood the importance of being knowledgeable of effective ELL instructional strategies however felt a degree of inadequacy. Pre-service teachers reported to be only familiar with sound theoretical truths. Rob mentioned the differences in Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). He also noted if the BICS is strong that will help navigate the CALP, a little better, a little more confidently. The student will get to a certain stage that the language will simply transfer. Kay described BICS and CALP by giving an example. She noted that in the BICS stage, you can hold a conversation with somebody and get by in another country. Then once you advance to the CALP stage, then you can have a more academic understanding then you are able to comprehend at a higher level.

Kim stated that in her teacher education classes "they talked about how students can gain conversational English pretty fast. But the academic language is a lot harder to learn and be able to comprehend". She reported learning that the academic language takes about five to seven years to completely develop. Kim also stated:

> I feel a lot of times teachers may think that ELLs understand English because they hear them talking. However some ELLs may sound like they can speak and understand English but that does not mean that they will be able to read a standardized test.

As noted, multicultural awareness can be improved by becoming aware of cultural identity, aware to make cultural connections, aware of cultural specificity, and aware of ELL instruction. The next component is intercultural sensitivity.

Sensitivity to Others

Intercultural sensitivity has been defined as being interested in other cultures, sensitive to notice others, and modify own behavior (Bhawuk & Brinslin, 1992). Culturally responsive

teachers must develop positive dispositions that reflect their willingness to provide an equitable education to ELLs (Fregueau & Leier, 2012). Sinicrope, Norris, and Watanabe (2007) stressed that intercultural sensitivity reflects thinking and acting beyond ones cultural circumstances.

Sensitive of academic and cultural needs. Participants from this study noted that teacher education programs should provide a framework to support intercultural sensitive opportunities. Self-reflection, appropriate instruction, and intercultural communication among different cultural groups and pre-service teachers are linguistic accommodations and strategies that should be provided in the teacher education program.

Two pre-service teachers mentioned intercultural sensitivity was the result of an increase in diversity. Kay mentioned intercultural sensitivity was responding to the growing diversity within the schools. She claimed that diversity was everywhere and was a result of globalization. Rob also agreed that intercultural responsiveness was associated with diverse representation. He mentioned the goal of intercultural responsiveness was representation.

Supporting a comfortable classroom climate. Four of the five pre-service teachers acknowledged that the affective filter impacts learning for ELLs. For example, Kim explained the relationship between ELLs and the affective filter as while ELLs are gaining English proficiency, emotions affect the learning process. She mentioned that the emotional factors such stress, anxiety, and self-confidence creates a filter that stops language learning. In reference to the importance of a comfortable classroom climate; some students that are learning English may have low self-esteem and are afraid of ridicule so their filter is blocked. She continued, many times these students are afraid if they say the wrong thing and make a mistake so they may not be willing to contribute as much for fear of making a mistake. Kim reported that her teacher education programs emphasized that teachers should always try to create a safe and warm inviting environment for any student. She claimed they noted that mistakes and risk-taking should be encouraged in the classroom of ELLs.

According to a couple of the pre-service teachers, another factor of a comfortable classroom climate is trust. Emma shared her thoughts of gaining trust of ELLs:

> Students from diverse cultures have diverse experiences inside and outside the classroom. I want to help each of these students through their life experiences. I feel what they have gone through depends on how I will be able to reach them. I think that it is important to build trust within a classroom.

As noted, intercultural sensitivity can be improved by teachers being sensitive of the academic and cultural needs of students and by creating a comfortable climate. The next component of the continuum is cultural responsiveness.

Respond Because of Others

The culture and diversity of students should be appreciated and explored by culturally responsive teachers (Dantas, 2007). Cultural responsiveness is defined as the ability to learn from and relate respectfully to people from your own and other cultures (National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, 2005). Being a culturally competent teacher suggests being responsive to students from all cultures, ethnicities, and linguistic backgrounds while valuing their cultural heritage (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Gur, 2010; Ward & Ward, 2003). Fairbanks et al. (2010) concluded cultural responsiveness produces thoughtful teaching.

Respond from cultural experiences. Pre-service teachers stated that one of the

most influential components of their teacher education program was learning from professor's experiences. Kay mentioned that she had a professor that shared his experiences while living in Mexico. She claimed that he would explain in detail of how to work with ELLs from his home country. She also noted that other professors would briefly explain how you would implement a certain strategy and then move on to another topic. Kim reported that the most influential component of her teacher education program was learning from the actual experiences of her professors. She shared the following:

> I feel that the stories from my professor's experience helped me the most in learning about ELLs. Some of professors would step away from the textbook and tell us about their personal experience. Instead of just reading about possible scenarios, we learned from their actual situations and their actual responses to those situations.

Respond with equitable education. Further, it was concluded that teacher education programs needed to encourage pre-service teachers to accept every student while attempting to provide an equitable education. Three of the five pre-service teachers claimed that their teacher education program provided encouragement to accept every student no matter ethnicity, race, language or socioeconomic status. Kim shared that in her Diversity of Learners class, they discussed how teachers cannot use cultural diversity as a barrier in class. Teachers should not look at cultural diversity as a burden but they should view it as an asset. For example, one of Kim's professors shared the historical saying "students are blank slates that teachers need to write on them" but it is not true! All students come with their unique backgrounds, which should not be a detriment but an asset in the classroom.

Two of the five pre-service teachers admitted that their teacher education program mentioned diversity but the focus on actually accepting every student was to a lesser degree. Ray reported that "every class liked to make a point to focus on diversity but I just feel there are things that are ignored or not talked about which bothers me but especially with cultural things." Kay also noted that her teacher education program encouraged pre-service teachers to accept every student while attempting to provide an equitable education for ELLs. As noted, cultural responsiveness can be enhanced by teachers if they respond from cultural experiences and with an equitable education for all students.

Intercultural Responsiveness (IR) Development

Jones (2013) coined the term Intercultural Responsiveness (IR) as a result of this study and through the synthesis of cultural research. *Intercultural Responsiveness* (IR) was defined as a merging of multicultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity while cultural responsiveness is overlapping both along a cultural awareness continuum (Jones, 2013). Educators are inadequately prepared to teach children of varied cultures (Fregeau & Leier, 2012; Keengwe, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Nathenson-Mejia & Escamilla, 2003; White-Clark, 2005; Wong et al., 2012). Several studies have suggested that multicultural professional development is needed for everyone as the world becomes more globalized (Batchelder, 2008; Bradley, 2007; Genesee, Lindohlm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Keengwe, 2010; Webster & Valeo, 2011).

Emma mentioned another way to interpret intercultural responsiveness. She noted that it means how students are supposed to act within their culture while intercultural sensitivity means how sensitive a student is inside their culture. Her perspective was from the student and how the students respond within their culture. Ray understood intercultural responsiveness to mean understanding that everything you learn in your culture is not

something that everyone in the other culture is going to understand. Cultural sensitivity while being responsive is required.

In regards to awareness, Kim stated, "In a classroom, no matter what, you are going to have people that come from different cultures and different backgrounds." Kim commented being interculturally responsive is the result of the teacher responding to the differences in the classroom. She claimed that these differences should be assets to teaching instruction because each student comes with the background and that the teacher can build upon. Kim commented that intercultural responsiveness is how a teacher can respond to student differences but intercultural sensitivity is being aware. She continued it is the teacher's response to their student's differences and then using it to develop instructional lessons.

Intercultural Responsiveness Through Self-Reflection

Culturally responsive teachers make it a priority to reflect on their own cultural perspectives and respect other perspectives. Much research indicated that self-reflection components should be included in teacher education programs (Barnes, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Han & Thomas, 2010; Montgomery, 2001; Wiggins et al., 2007). It is important because teachers do not view their self-perceptions as reflected biases or prejudices (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). Researchers (Clark & Medina, 2000; Nathenson-Mejia & Escamilla, 2003) suggested that pre-service teachers need to self-reflect upon their own cultural identities to be able to understand other cultures. In addition, pre-service teachers benefit from understanding cultures that are different from their own (Street, 2005) and as cultural beings appreciating perspectives of other cultures (Han & Thomas, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2008). Self-reflection provided a systematic inquiry into diverse cultures that can be infused into the curriculum (Cochran-Smith, 1995). McAllister and Irvine (2002) and Wiggins et al. (2007) agreed that self-reflection had the greatest impact on pre-service teachers if conducted authentically.

Participants in the study shared their thoughts about the importance of reflection. Kim shared the following:

I think that my teacher education training does a great job with emphasizing the importance of self-reflection. After every lesson plan you write, after every discussion, and at the end of a course. Our professors always want us to reflect on our experience. Emma also provided some insight into her teacher education training and the implementation of self-reflection. She shared the following:

> We participated in self-reflection a lot throughout our teacher education training. We were required to reflect on our actions within the classroom and then on our actions while we were in our teacher education classes. Sometimes we were expected to reflect on our mentor teachers' classroom.

Rob shared the following:

> There is a self-reflection for just about everything in my teacher education program. In just about everything you do whether it is an assignment, group project, or assessment, a reflection is expected to be included. I think that each course and assignment required it.

As noted from the pre-service teachers, the importance of true self-reflection on cultural issues as an educator was highlighted and emphasized.

Another result from this study was the development and creation of the Response to Cultures Reflection Model. The model provides opportunities for self-reflection while reflecting on the main components of Intercultural Responsiveness (IR). The reflection

model incorporates awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness aspects of the continuum in triangular form binded by reflection. Below is the Response to Cultures Reflection Model and the questions associated with the continuum. Journaling these experiences that deal with cultural self-identity and various cultural situations is expected to reach intercultural self-actualization.

Response to Cultures Reflection Model

Awareness
What is the cultural situation that you are becoming aware of?; What are some resources (website, people, books) that can assist in building a knowledge base of the cultural situation?; What is the level of turbulence of the situation? (mild-moderate-severe-extreme); What steps are you taking to personalize the situation?

Sensitivity
How would your culture deal with the situation?; What are similarities and differences between the cultures?; How do you feel about the cultural situation?; What ways are you internalizing the thoughts and actions?; What ways could the cultural situation been approached differently?; Were predetermined dispositions evident in the response(s) to the situation?; Were there expectations of certain assimilation?

Responsiveness
Was there a response or lack of response to the culture?; Was there an appropriate/inappropriate response to the culture?; How would you respond differently? Same?; What is the teachable moment from the response?; What adjustments are being made in behavior to improve responding?; What happened to the level of turbulence in the situation based on responses?; How did the response add to the awareness of the cultural situation?

Beyond Cultural Awareness to Intercultural Responsiveness
Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that for pre-service teachers to be interculturally responsive means being aware and sensitive to cultures while being willing to respond to cultural differences in the classroom (Jones, 2013). Awareness of culture elements within the classroom results in sensitivity to cultural differences. The pinnacle of the cultural continuum is intercultural self-actualization.

Intercultural Self-Actualization
`Self-actualization is "the basic need, the ultimate goal and a continual process of growth for human beings, and demonstrates itself in the form of peak experience in psychology" (Hongyu & Lu, 2013, p. 11). Maslow (1967) suggested it brings out a person's maximum potential and creates organic abilities while still remaining loyal to one's own self. According to Murtaza (2011), self- actualization is referenced as the meta-motivation because it's realization that "full inner potential" also known as wisdom is attainable by everyone. Self-actualization leads to the pinnacle of human welfare (Maslow, 1970) and for the population of teachers that interact each year with millions of students, it is imperative that students are being instructed by self-actualized professionals in the cultural realm.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have direct implications for pre-service teachers and teacher education programs. As immigration and globalization increases in the United States, the cultural fabric of the educational system is becoming more diverse (Petsod, Wang, & McGarvey, 2006). In addition, the student population is becoming more diverse while the teacher work force is becoming less diverse (Nieto & Bode, 2008). A cultural mismatch will overtake this widening gap if teacher education programs do not teach pre-service teachers the components of intercultural responsiveness. Teacher education programs should include the following: (a) appreciating the importance of cultural identity; (b) implementing intercultural responsiveness; (c) engaging in self- reflection; (d) increasing the awareness of cultural differences and language acquisition; (e) providing education on the importance of connecting culture to the classroom; (f) mandating a specific course pertaining to ELLs and sound ELL theoretical strategies; (g) offering continuous trainings to pre-service teachers and in-service teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because there is a need to provide equitable education for all ELLs, it is important to consider multiple ways to explore the perceptions of pre-service teachers. Other research recommendations include the following: (a) create a longitudinal study following pre-service teachers as they enter the teacher work force seeking for changes in perceptions and beliefs about ELLs; (b) research effective teacher education programs that produce pre-service teachers who are equip to teach ELLs in a culturally diverse classroom; (c) compare the beliefs of the teacher education faculty and their implementation of such components to the perceptions of pre-service teachers as they complete their program; and (d) conduct a quantitative study to measure intercultural responsiveness.

Response to Cultures Continuum
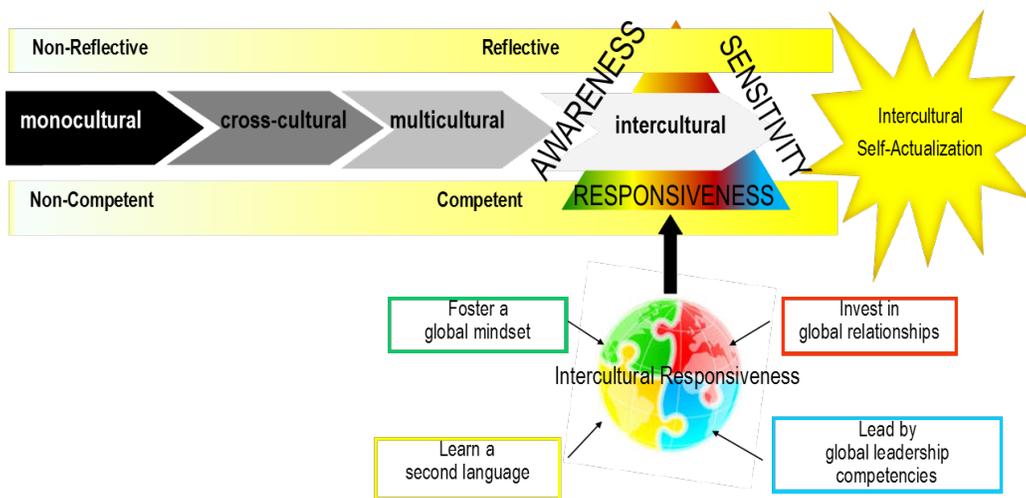
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