

Harmonizing Multicultural Competence, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and a Transnational Curriculum: A Literature Review

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Abstract

With a rising interest in teaching abroad, teachers understand their own and others' cultures as well as apply this understanding to the cultures in the classroom, thus harmonizing multicultural competence with culturally responsive teaching. These concepts can further be applied when using a distinct curriculum transnationally. This article reviews literature in three distinct yet intertwined theoretical concepts: multicultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, and transnational curriculum. The review sought to examine each concept individually by an overview, definition, and application in the classroom as well as how they may harmonize with the other concepts. An additional focus on how they are applied in an international context was also examined. The results found that while each concept is distinct, they are also tightly bound together and can be studied as such. Yet, a clear gap in literature exists in the area of the three theoretical concepts being examined together.

Keywords: multicultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, transnational curriculum, culture, diversity

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1. Introduction

In response to a growing need for English as a common language for global communication, schools abroad are incorporating more English into their curricula (Low & Ao, 2018). The increase in English classes offers teachers from other countries the opportunity to teach English abroad. Teachers are rewarded with valuable practice to shape their multicultural views, gain classroom experience, and travel the world (Sharma et al., 2011).

Schools choose a curriculum based on certain criteria and the needs and educational expectations of the school (Zhang & Heydon, 2016). Teachers may find difficulty understanding how to choose and implement outcomes of the curriculum in the cultural context of their students, which may be especially difficult when the curriculum is unfamiliar or not used as intended (Riedel & Moll, 2019). To implement any curriculum, teachers find more self-efficacy and student success when they hold multicultural competence by implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). Therefore, a review of literature proves beneficial in understanding a multicultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, and transnational curriculum in order to identify ways they coalesce.

The literature review examined empirical studies and articles regarding the concepts of the three theoretical frameworks of multicultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, and transnational curriculum. Articles were located that examined the concepts as single entities, then application of the concept in international contexts, and lastly a search was conducted to identify if any article combined the three concepts together. While some articles examined multicultural competence and culturally responsive teaching together in an overseas setting, none could be located that intertwined a transnational curriculum with these two concepts, which exposes a gap in literature. The literature examined were part of a larger empirical study that focused on teachers' lived experiences of teaching overseas (Toralba, 2023).

The first concept is multicultural competence, and the section includes its definition, the different dimensions that relate to it, and tools to build multicultural competence. The next concept is culturally responsive teaching, and this section examines the definition, how culturally responsive teaching and multicultural competence coalesce, instructional influences, and how culturally responsive teaching is implemented in an international context. The final concept of the theoretical framework is transnational curriculum. In this section is an overview as well as how a curriculum can be adapted and utilized in an overseas setting. The final section of this article addresses how the three theoretical concepts merge as a theoretical framework.

2. Multicultural Competence

2.1 Overview

Multicultural competence stems from the concept of multicultural education (Bennett, 2001). Multicultural education identifies a variety of cultures in a classroom, yet culture includes more than race or ethnicity; multicultural education can include gender, gender preference, ethnicity, race, social class, and exceptionality, and it involves sets of beliefs and values shared by these groups (Banks, 2020). Convertino et al. (2020) defined

culture as “the symbolic meanings by which the members of a group or society communicate with and understand themselves, each other, and the world around them” (p. 28). Individuals can incorporate many cultural identities as mirrored in Banks’ (2020) research so that in a classroom, even students with the same ethnicity may be culturally different in other aspects such as religion, social class, or gender, for example. The goal of multicultural education, then, is to connect resources, curriculum, activities, and perspectives to the diversity within the classroom so that all students can learn with equity. Teachers present opportunities to examine and share different perspectives with the goals of increasing equity and reducing prejudice (Banks, 2020; Gay, 2018).

Bennett (2001) mapped the genres of multicultural education to include curriculum reform, equity pedagogy, multicultural competence, and societal equity. For the scope and purpose of this article, a focus on multicultural competence was utilized. Çiftçi and Gürol (2015) explored the meaning of multicultural competence and noted that the purpose of multicultural education is a transformation of understanding to inform and encourage social justice, change, and equity, which echoes Banks’ (2020) multicultural education theory. Teachers can differentiate by understanding students’ culture, and teachers should respect these cultures in all students. Competence encompasses understanding differences of other cultures and realizing that one’s world view may not be shared by other cultures. The multicultural competence genre adds value to classrooms as it focuses on the classroom environment, pedagogical strategies, and student outcomes and learning. Incorporated in this is a strong ethnic identity by the teacher who can understand others by their own self-awareness, as well as an impetus from the teacher to model appreciation for and consideration of diversity. Understanding that different does not equal wrong leads to a diminution in bias and prejudice, as teachers and students view differences as a strength (Bennett, 2001; Gay, 2002; Gay, 2018; Günay, 2016).

Bennett (2001) noted two assumptions within multicultural competence. One assumption is that building one’s multicultural competence reduces prejudice against other cultures and diversity, and this reduction is a positive attribute. The other assumption is that competence is possible in a way that people can become familiar and comfortable with another culture while still maintaining their own cultural identity.

2.2 Dimensions of Multicultural Competence

Researchers agree that multicultural competence incorporates the dimensions of awareness, knowledge, and skills, though some add attitudes (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015; Lehman, 2017; Lew & Nelson, 2016; Sharma et al., 2011).

2.2.1 Awareness. Awareness, sometimes labeled self-awareness, refers to a person’s understanding of their own cultural beliefs and cultural identity (Çiftçi and Gürol, 2015). While this definition is generally accepted, Miklitsch and Montrois (2017) noted that awareness is more than an understanding of one’s own culture; it guides understanding of self and others. A person may also be aware of limitations and influences of their own culture. Teachers delve into their own cultures to determine why they hold certain values or beliefs in an attempt to garner empathy and sensitivity towards other cultures. A conscious, caring approach from teachers raises a self-awareness that shapes one’s own understanding of culture in order to understand others (Bennett, 2001). Convertino et al. (2020) also reiterated the responsibility of awareness by the teacher in that educators need more than a simplistic understanding of diversity and other cultures and that cultural competence is more of a process than a final product. Increasing one’s own cultural competency by a self-awareness of their own culture shapes how teachers interact with students in the classroom.

While the call to improve multicultural awareness is necessary, many teachers lack the experience or the opportunity for interaction with other cultures (Sharma et al., 2011). Lehman (2017) noted that teachers often lack understanding of cultural diversity, as they do not have the opportunities to experience another culture personally. Further, a lack of awareness occurs when teachers are not cognizant of the needs or differences of other cultures, thus leading to pedagogical practices in line with a majority view. A universal approach is a disadvantage for diversity.

While not always feasible, international experience offers cross-cultural experiences that encourage self-awareness in an attempt to understand a different culture (Sharma et al., 2011). Sharma et al. (2011) noted that international experiences affect a teacher’s frame of reference and their prior knowledge affects their perceptions. This may include an awareness that the beliefs or culture of the host country conflict with one’s own cultural beliefs or expectations. Additionally, teachers’ awareness of privilege surfaces when in another country and culture (Shedrow, 2017). Awareness further encourages teachers to identify their own misconceptions about the host country and educational system and to process their own beliefs which transforms their mindset and educational practices (Sharma et al., 2011). Researchers agree that international experience increases opportunities and expectations of self-awareness, but without guarantee (Landa et al., 2017; Little et al., 2019; Marcus & Moss, 2015; Sharma et al., 2011; Shedrow, 2017).

2.2.2 Knowledge. Awareness is a foundational block that supports knowledge and skills (Lehman, 2017). Knowledge includes collecting information and knowledge about other cultures through vicarious or lived

experiences (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). Knowledge may be an understanding of theories and how knowledge can affect others, or it can be personal experiences with other cultures (Miklitsch & Montrois, 2017). Teachers must take initiative to increase their knowledge of their students' culture to increase their own competencies in implementing strategies that address diversity (Convertino et al., 2020; Lew & Nelson, 2016). While teachers often find a gap between theory and practice of multicultural education, listening to and communicating with students, parents, and the community can help teachers gain knowledge of diverse cultures (Lehman, 2017). Teachers can then identify biases and prejudices against other cultures and become more aware of a discriminatory approach of curriculum and resources towards minorities or disadvantaged students (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015).

Knowledge of other cultures can easily be gained through experiences abroad, though for many teachers, that option is not feasible (Landa et al., 2017). Some teacher preparation programs offer local cultural experiences that are more affordable and more practical than going abroad. Landa et al. (2017) found that both international and domestic cultural experiences allow teachers to gain new and deeper perspectives, appreciation, and understanding of other cultures. However, one prevalent difference between the two experiences is that when teachers are in an international setting, their privilege decreases, as they become the minority in many cases. Not only do teachers gain cultural experience in the host country's culture, but many teach alongside faculty members from different cultures which furthers multicultural exposure (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018). Exposure to, interaction with, and immersion in other languages and diverse populations add valuable knowledge.

2.2.3 Skills. When a teacher holds self-awareness and knowledge of other cultures, they transfer this understanding into skills which are the application of awareness and knowledge (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). Skills are applied in an educational setting in the form of inviting a variety of perspectives when teaching a topic, using diverse sources of materials, and managing a classroom with sensitivity (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015; Lehman, 2017; Lew & Nelson, 2016). This understanding and application of skills built on awareness and knowledge inform pedagogical strategies that reach all learners in a diverse classroom (Convertino et al., 2020). Lehman (2017) went beyond instruction and noted the changing demographics of schools and how schools must meet more than the academic needs of their study body. Needs could include differentiated instruction as well as physical or emotional support which may stem from cultural awareness and knowledge. Yet, Miklitsch and Montrois (2017) noted that skills include not only application of awareness and knowledge in a variety of situations, but also being able to problem-solve and take responsibility for cultural misunderstandings.

An international setting aids teachers in empathizing what their culturally diverse students may be feeling in their classrooms, which can inform their approach to diverse education through an application of skills (Landa et al., 2017). Shedrow (2017) further noted that teachers overseas can construct meaning from their experiences to add to their multicultural competence. Through enhanced awareness and knowledge from a variety of experiences, teachers are able to apply these to skills in the classroom and create more applicable and meaningful lessons for diversity. Self-awareness and knowledge inform decisions and beliefs in the classroom (Günay, 2016). While many researchers focused on application of skills, Abduh and Rosmaladewi (2018) added streamed skills such as valuing, interpreting, and discovering when interacting with others.

2.2.4 Attitude. Most researchers agreed that multicultural competence includes awareness, knowledge, and skills, yet some included attitude also. Attitude involves the outlook of a person according to their awareness and knowledge (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). Teachers are expected to respect and foster a sense of pride in other cultures; diversity is seen as an advantage and a strength in the classroom (Bennett, 2001; Gay, 2002; Gay, 2018; Günay, 2016).

In an international approach, Sharma et al. (2011) identified attitude in terms of the way teachers' experiences may affect their perception of the host country in which they teach. Their attitude can include their own cultural beliefs and expectations as well as misconceptions about the host country and its educational system. Further, Abduh and Rosmaladewi (2018) identified three main perceptions as integral to competence: open-mindedness, interacting with reciprocity, and respecting diversity. These are intentional efforts of teachers to gain a more culturally competent attitude.

2.3 Tools to Build Multicultural Competence

While awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitude encompass multicultural competence, some researchers have proffered ways to intentionally build competence. Two ways to build competence include reflection, and mentoring and collaboration.

Researchers studied and explained the dimensions of multicultural competence, but some offered reflection as a way to intentionally build competence. Landa et al. (2017) suggested teachers to reflect on their awareness of their own culture as well as an understanding and knowledge of other cultures. A reflective practice encourages teachers to exhibit transformational teaching, as being aware of other cultures alone does not necessarily enact change (Landa et al., 2017; Little et al., 2019; Marcus & Moss, 2015; Sharma et al., 2011;

Shedrow, 2017). Reflection becomes a tool for identifying, enhancing, and understanding one's own cultural beliefs in order to understand and appreciate diversity, which follows the awareness and knowledge components of multicultural competence (Günay, 2016; Marcus & Moss, 2015; Muñoz, 2020).

Reflection can be encouraged through questions which prompt teachers to extend their self-awareness and understand the roots of their beliefs as well as what they can do to improve their intercultural interaction (Günay, 2016). Again, this must be an intentional act of the teachers to build their competence. Internationally, reflection can prove especially beneficial to teachers, as they can take note of their privilege, their place as a minority, and their beliefs regarding other cultures (Sharma et al., 2011).

Lehman (2017) identified a lack of training of multicultural competence for preservice teachers as well as a lack of experiences or opportunities for lived experiences which contribute to a deficiency in competence. She found mentoring and collaboration to be effective tools for implementing multicultural education skills. Learning vicariously or through personal experience aids in building multicultural competence, and a collaborative effort with support for inexperienced teachers builds a stronger foundation of competence.

Mentoring and collaboration are especially beneficial in an international setting. Mirroring Lehman's (2017) information, Little et al. (2019) noted that collaboration with teachers of varying degrees of global experience could lead to mentoring opportunities as well as learning from and through others. Seeing how other teachers process their awareness and knowledge guides teachers who are new to a culture. Further, teachers who are new to an international setting learn details of cultural nuances in a personal setting.

3. Culturally Responsive Teaching

3.1 Overview

To teach diversity effectively, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is necessary. Gay (2002) is the leading researcher and theorist in this concept and defined culturally responsive teaching as "Using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). CRT encourages students to voice their experiences and stories which serve as resources for lessons so that other students are more knowledgeable of different cultures. CRT requires an intentional effort from the teacher to gain knowledge of students' cultures in order to effectively connect content to cultures. Utilizing resources from a variety of sources and perspectives offers students a multicultural view of lessons, events, and issues. Thus, CRT encourages student learning by connecting information with students' cultures (Lew & Nelson, 2016).

One goal of CRT involves a transformative approach to teaching and learning by equipping students with decision-making and critical thinking skills to act on social justice issues (Banks, 2020; Gay, 2018). Another key goal of CRT includes diminishing bias, discrimination, and prejudice through knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures; therefore, diversity serves as a powerful tool in the classroom and is not perceived as a disadvantage (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015; Gay, 2018; Günay, 2016).

3.2 CRT and Multicultural Competence

CRT and multicultural competence complement each other. Teachers increase their awareness of their own culture in the attempt to gain knowledge of other cultures, as in multicultural competence, and they use awareness and knowledge to apply culturally responsive instructional strategies (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). They are active in responding to diversity so that all students can learn in their own way, and above all, teachers must care about diversity and commit to a transformative approach to teaching (Bennett, 2001; Gay, 2018; Muñoz, 2020). Teachers must strive to build knowledge of their students' cultures to manage the classroom without offense and with an understanding of cultural nuances, especially with English learners (Lew & Nelson, 2016). Teachers must also understand diverse cultural nuances to aid in instruction and classroom management (Gay, 2018; Lew & Nelson, 2016). With increased awareness and knowledge, teachers can implement skills in fostering a classroom with sensitivity and respect (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015; Snyder & Varghese, 2020).

Multicultural awareness of teachers should improve culturally responsive instructional strategies (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015; Snyder & Varghese, 2020). Yet, Cherng and Davis (2019) viewed awareness not as a self-awareness as outlined in Lehman (2017). Their study of identifying a connection between multicultural awareness and pedagogical efficacy defined awareness as an awareness of cultural diversity in the classroom and having sensitivity towards diverse students and not as an awareness of one's own culture. A higher awareness of diversity in the classroom and sensitivity towards it promotes a more positive learning environment which enhances student learning (Cherng & Davis, 2019). This type of awareness reflects CRT in that it requires an intentional effort from teachers to notice diversity and to include different perspectives, resources, and strategies which include all cultures and learners (Gay, 2018).

3.3 Instructional Influences

In implementing CRT, a keen attention to diversity in the classroom is necessary (Gay, 2018). Thus, a one-size-

fits-all strategy to instruction is a disadvantage to diversity (Lehman, 2017). Teachers must view students as individual members of cultures and seek to guide learning through cultural perspectives. Using their multicultural competence dimensions of knowledge and skills, teachers adapt their teaching methods for effectiveness, and this can be seen on an individual level, as teachers understand and respect each student's cultural identity. This adaptation could apply to culture, ability, background, and other elements that differentiate students, and it enhances effectiveness of instruction (Banks, 2020; Parsons et al., 2018). Adapting for effectiveness is a conscious effort and one that experienced teachers make on a daily basis according to informal assessments within the classroom (Gay, 2018; Parsons et al., 2018). Adaptive teaching reflects responsive teaching in that the teacher employs an active awareness and knowledge of students in order to adapt lessons to their needs.

With an awareness and knowledge of diversity, teachers gear lessons towards the diverse cultures within a classroom. This adaptation can also take a transformative approach in that creating a positive environment in the classroom invites multicultural aspects of instruction and learning (Aslan, 2019). Students feel respected and appreciated as the teacher is sensitive to and cares about student inclusiveness (Convertino et al., 2020; Gay, 2018). Multicultural views are seen as an influential instrument in pedagogical strategies, and Aslan (2019) identified some strategies that teachers preferred to implement through CRT instruction. The drama method of instruction was a preferred strategy, as it allowed students to display their cultures and for others to view a representation of diversity. Other strategies included case studies and student-centered activities in the classroom. For English learners, strategies may look different. Snyder and Varghese (2020) offered strategies for teaching English as a Second Language students and bilingual education, though the chapter focused only on teachers in the United States. The authors noted that educators teach content as well as language. For example, students learn math in their native language as well as in English, and students generally understand mathematical concepts but learn strategies and English vocabulary. Therefore, more visuals, organizers, and hands-on learning activities and strategies develop English learners' language and content knowledge. Alhamad (2018) added that to combat low English proficiency levels as well as student apathy towards learning English, other strategies can be implemented such as student-centered projects, behavior management routines and plans, and planned differentiated lessons and activities. Snyder and Varghese (2020) further emphasized respecting cultural aspects of students and being sensitive to their culture, and this comes through knowledge in multicultural competence.

3.4 CRT Used Internationally

Teachers are seen as agents of change (Çiftçi and Gürol, 2015). In the United States, CRT and multicultural education focus on transformative learning to initiate societal changes for equity (Banks, 2020; Gay, 2018). Intentional teachers acknowledge and build their multicultural competence and apply it through CRT practices. CRT internationally, however, has less of an emphasis on transformational learning and social justice issues, and literature on international applications of CRT focuses on adapting to life in an international classroom with culturally diverse students (Firmin et al., 2007; Firmin et al., 2008; Little et al., 2019; Savva, 2017). Internationally, a need for CRT is evident, as teachers enter a classroom of culturally diverse students, and teachers are often a minority in various ways such as race, religion, and ethnicity (Firmin et al., 2007; Firmin et al., 2008; Savva, 2017). Merging multicultural competence and CRT in an international setting involves understanding some different dimensions.

One area that educators who implement CRT internationally should understand is language (Firmin et al., 2008; Savva, 2017). Teachers must first realize that language will be a barrier in instruction, as students abroad may not be native English-speakers, and teachers may not speak the host country language (Savva, 2017). Teachers adjust their instructional strategies as well as their language and vocabulary level for English learners and use more visuals and adaptations to help students learn visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically (Firmin et al., 2008). Teachers may also slow the pace of their speech, adapt lessons to meet the language needs of the students, clarify their accents, and use simplified vocabulary to assist students in more readily understanding what is being taught (Firmin et al., 2008). For English learners, a more hands-on approach to learning assists students in learning both content and vocabulary (Alhamad, 2018; Snyder & Varghese, 2020). Interestingly, teachers who learn the language of the host country find a higher ability to empathize with students in learning a new language, and this awareness can improve their instructional strategies as they are aware of what techniques were effective in their own language acquisition (Savva, 2017). Firmin et al. (2008) also noted that language affects teachers' ability to connect with students and to build meaningful relationships.

Another area that international teachers should understand when implementing CRT is culture (Firmin et al., 2007; Riedel & Moll, 2019). Teachers may not be able to teach as they had been prepared, and they may encounter unexpected pedagogical challenges, as their instruction may not reflect their pre-service education or other educational experiences (Firmin et al., 2007). This may take the form of a school's or country's educational system and its expectations and requirements, class size, learning styles, and cultural differences (Heffernan et al., 2010). Cultural differences affect classroom management and instruction, and understanding

the cultural expectations helps teachers manage their classes more effectively (Firmin et al., 2007; Riedel & Moll, 2019). What is acceptable in one culture may be offensive in another, so an intentional quest for knowledge of culture aids teachers in creating a respectful classroom environment. Teachers learn more about the culture in which they are immersed and notice cultural and political nuances that apply to multicultural competence's aspects of awareness, knowledge, and skills. Teachers who have taught in different countries learn new cultural differences, as culturally responsive strategies that prove effective in one country are not necessarily applicable or effective in another country because of cultural differences (Riedel & Moll, 2019; Savva, 2017). One participant in the study by Firmin et al. (2007) indicated that understanding the characteristics of her learners' culture forced her to adjust her teaching style, as the students were social and enjoyed talking; therefore, she incorporated more social work in her lessons because, as she said, "...they love to talk...whether I wanted them to or not" (p. 142). Intentionally seeking ways to adjust and adapt to cultural changes and differences encourages teachers to employ CRT strategies and to forge meaningful relationships.

4. Transnational Curriculum

Effective teachers are those that intentionally build their multicultural competence and implement culturally responsive practices (Lew & Nelson, 2016). In an international setting, teachers apply multicultural competence and CRT to a curriculum that may not have been developed for overseas use (Zhang & Heydon, 2016).

4.1 Overview of Transnational Curriculum

Zhang and Heydon (2016) defined transnational education as an education of one country that is implemented to students in another country. Knight (2016) and Heffernan et al. (2010) related transnational education to partnerships that involves an institute of higher education and a foreign educational organization, and the two organizations have an agreement that the program will be taught in a host country. Knight (2016) posited two categories of transnational education: collaborative and independent. In the collaborative category, the host country allows a local partner to assist in the delivery of the transnational program. In the independent category, the foreign entity does not collaborate with a higher education institute in design and/or delivery of a program; rather, it serves as a branch of the higher education institute (Knight, 2016; Riedel & Moll, 2019). Many of the articles and studies examined focused on higher education and transnational use of curricula; therefore, a gap in literature exists with more studies needed in primary and secondary education.

Knight (2016) focused more on universities that branched to other countries, but schools may also have a different focal area such as offering teachers a global teaching experience where they could, often as novice teachers, gain practical experience teaching as well as experience with diversity. Knight (2016) continued that the universities promote the teaching experience in a symbiotic relationship to supply teachers to the school as the school fulfills monetary obligations. An established definition and framework reflect the use of a transnational curriculum in that it must be flexible to allow for cultural differences, relevant to the foreign culture, and understandable to both the host country and the sending country.

Partnerships to implement transnational curricula exist to the benefit of all sides, and Smith (2010) added reasons why schools may participate in transnational partnerships. Symbiotic reasons included fostering global education, creating global citizens, income from international partnerships, association benefits, varied instructional strategies, and benefits of learning English. Zhang and Heydon (2016) reported similar findings to Smith (2010) of monetary gains, educational alternatives, and global advantages of using a transnational curriculum.

4.2 Use of a Transnational Curriculum

Guidelines of the use of a curriculum transnationally are encouraged for reasons that benefit the stakeholders of the partnership. Smith (2010) investigated three countries' transnational guidelines, which they noted were not always strictly regulatory but often served as best practices. The guidelines further outlined roles and responsibilities of host and partner organizations. The expectations recognized that the guidelines would be embedded in a host country's culture and subject to sensitivity therein. Partnership organizations often play a dominant part in implementing roles, curriculum, and practices, and while adaptation to the host country's culture is usually allowed, it is done so under ambiguous measures in regards to what can be adapted and whose role it is to create the adaptation. While universities create some guidelines for successful implementation of transnational curricula, the adaptation, if allowed, seems to hold an ambiguous station. Flexibility is to be expected, as a curriculum may not be implemented as it was intended (Heffernan et al., 2010; Zhang & Heydon, 2016).

In their study of relations between Canada and China, Zhang and Heydon (2016) reported that their site school in China sought to retain Chinese culture while implementing a transnational curriculum. Students would be functional in English while retaining Chinese language and cultural foundations. The school offered coursework from the Chinese national high school curriculum in tandem with the Ontario curriculum. The

school took liberties to adjust meet the cultural needs and expectations of its students by offering, for example, more business courses which were in the interest of Chinese families. With an integration of Eastern and Western curricula, guidelines for following curriculum from Ontario were blurred. Further adjustments were made with language and multicultural aspects, as the Chinese school implemented an English-only style of instruction by Western teachers, which was not the intended multicultural and language expectation of the Ontario curriculum as the students used English as an additional language in their home country and not as students in Ontario would (Hu et al., 2019; Zhang & Heydon, 2016). Similarly, Riedel and Moll (2019) noted that working with a Canadian curriculum and resources was familiar for teachers, but that curricular relevancy to international students as well as a discrepancy between host and foreign values and insights added a strangeness to teachers' experiences.

Cultural learning styles must be considered when implementing a transnational curriculum, and they are taken into consideration when planning for cross-cultural students (Heffernan et al., 2010). This planning integrates CRT, and while planning itself may be familiar to teachers, doing so in a different context and with a different curriculum may be unfamiliar (Riedel & Moll, 2019). Heffernan et al. (2010) suggested a balance of catering a curriculum and instructional strategies to students' cultural learning styles while also developing areas of weakness. Using a variety of learning strategies as well as strategies that increase internal motivation may encourage success in diverse students; therefore, teachers may understand the students' perspective in order to choose the outcomes and activities that encourage cognitive learning strategies as well as strategies for building intrinsic motivation and independent learning (Nazri et al., 2016). Furthermore, while students exhibit similar characteristics of their age groups, students in another country also have notable differences such as social and familial pressure to succeed in school, cultural background differences, and perhaps being English learners (Riedel & Moll, 2019).

Heffernan et al. (2010) included students' preference for English-medium classes, as the classes were more interactive, progressive, and dynamic while Chinese classes in the study focused more on rote memorization and strict routines. Western instructional styles utilized in the classroom could offer more flexibility and interesting strategies to engage learners in another culture. Interestingly, Heffernan et al. (2010) echoed Zhang & Heydon (2016) in that the curriculum was not implemented as it was created; however, they reported a need for more "true binational, bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate interaction and cooperation" (p. 560).

Concerns of using a curriculum transnationally exist. Reflective of CRT in an international setting, low levels of English may inhibit student understanding of and mastery of a curriculum written for students in another country (Firmin et al., 2008; Hu et al., 2019; Savva, 2017). Curriculum outcomes and expectations may not always be delivered faithfully, and students may not have the English abilities to meet the expectations as intended. Another concern is high rates of teacher turnover. Many international teachers often view a global experience as temporary and not as a career of working overseas; therefore, frequent turnover, coupled with the high number of teachers needed, affect staffing classrooms with qualified teachers, and to fill classrooms with teachers may find schools abroad sacrificing quality for quantity. (Hu et al., 2019; Riedel & Moll, 2019).

5. Summary of Findings

For this review, literature addressed the three theoretical concepts: multicultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, and transnational curriculum. However, they are largely examined separately in literature, thus a gap exists.

The three concepts merged to create a framework for the current article. Awareness is an understanding of one's own cultural beliefs and values, and it guides sensitivity towards other cultures with a determination to understand others through understanding oneself (Bennett, 2001; Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). In an international setting, teachers have more opportunities for awareness, as being immersed in another culture affects how a person views their own culture (Sharma et al., 2011). Awareness informs a quest for knowledge of other cultures. Knowledge involves seeking an understanding of other cultures than one's own and is an intentional effort, either through lived or vicarious experiences (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). To build knowledge, teachers must make a concerted effort to identify and discover the myriad cultures in the classroom, and in doing so, they can create or adjust lessons to address the cultures so that all students can connect to content (Convertino et al., 2020; Lew & Nelson, 2016). This is reflective of CRT in which teachers seek to understand the cultures in the classroom through student voices which inform pedagogical practices (Gay, 2018).

Awareness and knowledge are applied through skills (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). In a classroom, this may be identified as content, instruction, resources, and classroom management, and with sensitivity acquired by awareness and knowledge, teachers can plan and implement appropriate lessons that connect content in some way to all learners (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015; Lehman, 2017; Lew & Nelson, 2016). Similarly, CRT integrates cultures in the classroom to guide instruction that include all cultures for higher student connection and learning (Gay, 2002). With application of skills, teachers utilize and adapt various activities, resources, and perspectives to address the classroom diversity (Gay, 2018; Parsons et al., 2018).

Teachers overseas apply skills to lessons that respect the cultures in the room. Keen cultural sensitivity is necessary so as not to seem rude or offensive (Firmin et al., 2008). Internationally, teachers may approach multicultural competence through the lens of their own cultural beliefs and values, which may or may not conflict with their host country (Sharma et al., 2011). Similarly, in an international setting, CRT is essential to effective teaching. Teachers enter a culturally foreign classroom and must seek to understand the cultures within. Literature of the application of CRT internationally focused more on CRT as a method of informing pedagogical practices in a particular country (Firmin et al., 2007; Firmin et al., 2008; Savva, 2017).

Multicultural competence and CRT rely on an intentional, caring attitude of the teacher to include all cultures and to strengthen lessons through diversity (Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015). Teachers who exhibit multicultural competence intentionally understand their own culture, seek knowledge of other cultures, and utilize this understanding and knowledge in pedagogical practices (Bennett, 2001; Gay, 2018; Muñiz, 2020). Both multicultural competence and CRT include elements of transformative learning in that teachers equip students with the knowledge and power for social change (Banks, 2020; Gay, 2018). Yet, in empirical studies of these practices in an international setting, the transformative element is absent, as teachers are immersed, often as a minority, in another culture (Firmin et al., 2007; Firmin et al., 2008; Landa et al., 2017; Savva, 2017; Shedrow, 2017).

The relationship between multicultural competence and CRT is clear, and the understanding of these two concepts can be applied to teaching using a transnational curriculum. Transnational curriculum is a curriculum that is implemented in a country other than where it was created and intended for use (Zhang & Heydon, 2016). Teachers abroad enter a school where a curriculum is utilized, and they may not be familiar with it or be able to apply it as they would in the country of origin (Heffernan et al., 2010; Zhang & Heydon, 2016). While guidelines are often in place, they usually allow adaptations of the curriculum to reflect the culture of the host country (Smith, 2010; Zhang & Heydon, 2016). When planning using a transnational curriculum, teachers must apply CRT strategies and integrate multicultural competence as well as learning styles of students (Riedel & Moll, 2019). The school and teachers must also understand that curriculum outcomes and learning objectives may not be feasible for students who are English learners which may inhibit a full execution of the curriculum (Firmin et al., 2008; Hu et al., 2019; Savva, 2017). Further, teachers must understand how their awareness and knowledge of their own culture inform their skills and application of CRT strategies in the classroom. An added issue is that teachers are often a minority in the classroom in an overseas setting, and their application of a transnational curriculum takes an intentional effort to connect to students and to maintain a respectful environment (Firmin et al., 2007; Firmin et al., 2008; Landa et al., 2017; Savva, 2017; Shedrow, 2017).

The combination of multicultural competence, CRT, and transnational curriculum is key to the framework of the current article. Teachers' influence of multicultural competence and use of CRT in planning activities based on curricular expectations are applied to a curriculum that was not written for students overseas (Lew & Nelson, 2016; Riedel & Moll, 2019). When a curriculum was written in one country, references to that country are usually embedded, leaving teachers to wonder if they should cover the learning outcomes and if so, how (Riedel & Moll, 2019).

The theoretical framework of this article provides a deeper understanding of how multicultural competence and CRT are applied to a transnational curriculum in a school overseas. An examination of how to approach a transnational curriculum through the lens of multicultural competence and CRT is of interest. Adapting a transnational curriculum for effectiveness through a reflection of knowledge of diversity and use of CRT is key to the literature review (Gay, 2018). The review of literature indicates that while CRT and multicultural competence have been studied independently and cooperatively as well as in an international context, a gap exists when incorporating a transnational curriculum. The study associated with this literature review sought to coalesce these theoretical constructs to further understand teachers' lived experiences and attitudes of implementing a transnational curriculum in an international context (Toralba, 2023). Yet, the study had its limitations which included data collection at one school only, and a broader scope of more schools and more curricula could add rich data to this framework.

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