Cross-Cultural Approach to Organizational Leadership

3 CE hours

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Learning objectives

• Understand what leadership is and what it means to organizations.
• Recognize the challenges organizations face in effectively navigating diversity and culture.
• Explore the terminology and theories related to cross-cultural leadership and the impact of cultural and societal norms on organizations.
• Learn about some of the tools that are used to coach cross-cultural leaders.
• Understand the existing research approaches and recommendations for cross-cultural leadership.

Overview

Successful leadership, planning and implementation are key elements of an organization’s ability to be successful. Cross-cultural psychology attempts to understand how individuals of different cultures interact with each other (Abbe, Gulick, and Herman, 2007). Along these lines, cross-cultural leadership has developed as a way to understand leaders who work in the newly globalized market.

Today’s international organizations require leaders who can adjust to different environments quickly and work with partners and employees of other cultures (House, Javidan, and Dorfman, 2001). It cannot be assumed that a manager who is successful in one country will be successful in another.

There are many ways in which organizational leaders approach their interactions with others, both internally and externally. Recently, there has been an increased amount of attention to the elements of cross-cultural leadership and related training and research to help provide the tools leaders need to be successful in a changing society, economy and environment.

Today, the field of leadership focuses not only on the leader, but also on followers, peers, supervisors, work setting and context, and culture, including a much broader array of individuals representing the entire spectrum of diversity, public, private and not-for-profit organizations, and increasingly over the past 20 years, samples of populations from nations around the globe.

Leadership is no longer simply described as an individual characteristic or difference, but rather is depicted in various models as dyadic, shared, relational, strategic, global, and a complex social dynamic (Avolio 2007, Yukl 2006). Historically, leaders have often been tasked with goals of productivity and financial gain combined with meeting the expectations of stakeholders and their own financial interests. Changes in society and shifts to a more people-focused workplace have resulted in leaders needing to become successful in more complex, multi-faceted organizational outcomes.

ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP

Effective leadership

According to Davies and Davies (2004), strategic leadership refers to the manner in which top-level organizational leaders develop, communicate and implement. Personal integrity plays a significant role in leadership effectiveness, and overall has been found to be an important attribute of leadership across cultures (Yukl, 2006).

Research shows that certain leadership attributes, such as charisma, reliability and trustworthiness, and basic management competence in communications, problem-solving and so forth are important in all cultures (House et al., 2004). Some dimensions of leadership effectiveness, such as uncertainty, avoidance, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness and collectivism, show significant variation around the world (House et al., 2004). So at least some of the capabilities that leaders value and seek to develop will vary across cultures as well. Some of these (e.g., gender egalitarianism) may relate to the values that the coach and client hold as well, creating potential conflicts for some.

In addition to the content of the coaching and learning, preferences for the process of learning also vary (Peterson, 2004). Learning about business and management in India is typically very hands on; in France, the education system focuses on identifying the best and brightest and sending them to schools based on intellect.
Five performance areas have been identified as the critical leadership skills a principal must demonstrate to effectively lead an organization:

1. Promoting collaborative problem-solving and open communication.
2. Collecting, analyzing and using data to identify needs.
3. Using data to identify and plan for needed changes in the organization.
4. Implementing and monitoring improvement plans.
5. Using systems thinking to establish a clear focus on achieving goals.

These five areas are not a chronological step-by-step method. The performance areas are believed to be cyclical in nature and must be demonstrated continuously throughout the organizational and improvement process. The end product of this is the school improvement plan, and the end goal for the process is improved student achievement.

A leader’s cross-cultural leadership is rising in importance in a shrinking global economy. Leadership is about influence. A leader is only as effective as he’s able to convince those whom he leads that he is. It is essentially “selling” the leader’s point of view from the perspective of the receiver/follower (Cialdini, 1984), while at the same time, being conscious that the leader is not undermining the follower’s integrity (Forward, 1997).

Navigating through this terrain requires that the leader be self-aware (Goleman, 1998) and considerate of the other person’s worldview, cosmology or Weltanschauung. Conflict arises because in a multicultural society, multiple worldviews are competing with each other, none of which is necessarily better than the other. As a leader, acute awareness that a person’s cosmology is different from yours is key to getting the team behind your idea. We will explore the centrality of worldview, self-awareness, dimensions of diversity, and finally, we’ll look at a country example to see some real-world examples, and see how they might serve as models in peak organizations.

Every person has a concept of himself in relation to the world (Freud, 1936). It is this self-concept that enables him to make sense of all life experiences, people and events. To a person, this worldview makes absolute sense. “Happiness or joy,” says Nathaniel Branden, “is the emotional state that proceeds from the achievement of one’s values. Suffering is the emotional state that proceeds from a negation or destruction of one’s values” (Branden, 1969).

When another person presents a cosmology that’s different from one’s own, it can be unsettling and will be perceived as a threat to one’s fragile ego. Our reflexive response is to create barriers to protect this worldview; hence, people find it difficult to change. Anna Freud calls this our built-in defense mechanisms (Freud, 1936).

A leader’s first challenge, therefore, is to bring about a common understanding of the situation, knowing that the people around him see it differently than he does. A leader who is unaware of the subtle differences in culture, demographics and other dimensions of diversity will be unable to lead others and will face resistance or outright conflict.

Cross-cultural awareness starts with self-awareness, how our cultural lenses have shaped our view of the world. This includes early experiences within the family structure, school, church and work; interactions within the immediate community; and the broader geographic area that shares a common language or sub-culture. This “map” of the external world develops during the lifetime of the individual and becomes that person’s frame of reference with the outside world. The key to effective leadership in a multicultural environment, therefore, is having a keen understanding of one’s viewpoint, and being aware that this viewpoint may not necessarily be shared by those whom you’re leading.

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist and anthropologist, developed the cultural dimension theory to understand how individuals differ. According to Hofstede, a person’s cosmology is influenced by the following six dimensions: (1) power distance index, (2) individualism vs. collectivism, (3) uncertainty avoidance index, (4) masculinity vs. femininity, (5) long-term vs. short-term orientation, and (6) indulgence vs. restraint (Hofstede, 2001).

Power distance is the degree of acceptance of power imbalance that exists in any group. It refers to one’s attitude on how those power differences are distributed among the “haves and “have-nots” to maintain social harmony. For example, in cultures that rated high in power distance, such as most Asian countries, team members expect their leaders to be paternalistic and authoritarian. In contrast, in the U.S., where power distance is low, team members expect their leaders to treat them as equals.

Individualism vs. collectivism is the cultural leaning to form alliances or to keep one’s autonomy. Individualist societies, such as descendants of the Anglo-Saxons (UK, U.S., Canada) tend to value independence, and would seek status and recognition for their efforts. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, such as East Asians, Middle Eastern, and some Latin American countries, prefer to identify themselves with their group or ethnic background. They are uncomfortable being recognized for their individual contributions and would prefer to share this reward with their groups.

Countries that rated high on uncertainty avoidance, such as Germany and Japan, prefer things to be predictable. In work settings, Germans won’t settle for anything less than a detailed plan of action. They tend to be conscientious, good project planners and strategists. In the U.S., which has low uncertainty avoidance, in contrast, there are risk-lovers and innovators. It’s no accident that the U.S. remains one of the most technologically innovative economies in the world, ranking sixth in patents per capita. Sweden, another low uncertainty avoidance country, ranked highest in innovation (Badenhausen, 2011).

Masculinity vs. femininity is contrasting qualities of assertiveness and nurturing. High masculinity countries such as Japan, Germany, Hungary, Austria and Switzerland, tend to prefer authoritarian or directive styles of leadership, whereas the Nordic countries of Norway and Sweden, scoring low on masculinity, tended to be more egalitarian and democratic in their leadership styles.
The **long- or short-term orientation** refers to a person’s view of time. In China and most Asian countries, people view time as circular rather than linear. Their long-term time horizons span generations, in contrast to the West, where the preference is for the here-and-now. This is most apparent in the way business is conducted. A westerner, who is short-term oriented, would find the long-winded introductions by Asians, Middle Eastern and some Latin American cultures a waste of his or her time.

**Restraint or indulgent behavior** preferences refer to hedonistic desires and how those are manifested. Western societies tend to be more indulgent in that respect, whereas most Asian and Middle Eastern countries prefer to hide or control these impulses. For example, public displays of affection are frowned upon in Asia and Middle East, but perfectly acceptable in Anglo-Saxon countries.

American companies have increasingly accepted the concept that a diverse workforce not only brings positive benefits, but may actually be fundamental to corporate success. Many corporate leaders have formulated goals for the kinds of diversity efforts that will add value to the mission and achievements of their organizations.

As companies move toward achieving the goals of broadening their workforce across gender, ethnicity, age, educational background and skill dimensions, some problems with diversity may solve themselves. However, for many companies that have experienced sweeping changes in the image of their workforce over the past two decades, previously unconsidered challenges may emerge.

New issues in managing people may present leaders with a pressing set of challenges that were not as dominating and perhaps even irrelevant in a more homogeneous workforce. No longer will good leadership skills be sufficient. Excellence across a broader range of skills will be a baseline requirement for successful leadership in a diverse workforce.

Diversity encompasses any characteristic used to differentiate one person from others. The concept of diversity includes differences across gender, race, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, religion, skills and tenure in the organization. This list reflects major sources of contention over diverse characteristics in organizations today.

Organizations often differ in their ability to capitalize on the diverse characteristics of their workforce, the result in part of entrenched, long-held attitudes and practices. Bennett proposed that individual attitudes toward diversity are not fixed, but that attitudes shift along a continuum. Baldwin and Hecht built on Bennett’s conceptualization by defining conditions of intolerance, tolerance and appreciation on the continuum.

- **Intolerance**
  In a stage of intolerance, organizations comply, at best, with legal requirements regarding the composition of the workforce. Diversity may be addressed at a surface level, but the organization is not committed to the idea that diversity has advantages. The organization’s routines and practices continue much as they always have. In a tolerance stage, diverse members of the organization are actively sought and included in the daily practices and routines of the organization, but the skills and talents of these members may not be fully utilized.

- **Tolerance**
  Typically, in a tolerant organization, leadership may embark on diversity initiatives for at least two reasons. First, the leadership may believe that a diverse workforce positively affects the bottom line; or second, that potential negative social or moral ramifications exist to justify a diversity initiative.

- **Appreciation**
  In an appreciation stage, organizations surpass acceptance and actively embrace diversity. Organizations are fully committed and are reflexive in the inclusion of diverse members in routines, practices, utilization and participation levels. This results from a true valuing of diversity among members rather than real or perceived regulatory pressures.

Diversity, as a relatively new phenomenon in the workforce, is not self-managing. In most instances, as diversity is introduced into a workplace, leaders must take a more proactive stance toward their own involvement with employees as work practices and routines are reviewed and, if need be, revised.

An organization’s current stage will predict how effectively it handles external perceptions and fears. Intolerant organizations run the risk of feeding into clients’ and customers’ fears, while tolerant organizations may send mixed messages about their internal support of diversity initiatives, thus adding to confusion. Organizations that truly appreciate diverse individuals are in a position not only to gain competitive advantage, but also to shape the perceptions of external constituents about the capabilities of a diverse organization. The key is for senior management to send the message loud and clear that they are working toward a stage of appreciation of diversity. Otherwise, newcomers with diverse characteristics may not become equal partners in the organization, negating the competitive advantage of the initial investment in diverse human talents.

### Participative leadership

Being a participative leader means involving team members in making decisions. This is most essential when creative thinking is needed to solve complex problems. You want to lead your team to the best of your ability. But should you be participative when making decisions or save time by making them yourself?

This type of leadership means involving your team in making some, but not all, key decisions. But first of all, what are the reasons why some managers aren’t very participative?

A major reason is that they think they need to be strong, tough, independent and decisive to be seen as an effective manager. They feel that being participative might make them seem weak or indecisive. The biggest criticism of participative leadership is that when soliciting input through group discussion, decisions are bogged down in lengthy debates (Nowicki and Summers, 2008).
Authentic leadership

Luthans and Avolio (2003, p. 243) defined authentic leadership as “a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development.”

This definition and subsequent work on authentic leadership was defined at the outset as multilevel in that it included the leader, follower, and context very specifically in the way it was conceptualized and measured. This addressed a typical criticism in the leadership literature summarized by Yammarino et al. (2005) who concluded, “relatively few studies in any of the areas of leadership research have addressed levels-of-analysis issues appropriately in theory, measurement, data analysis, and inference drawing.”

Until very recently, one would be hard-pressed to find in the leadership literature a general model of leadership development. Even more difficult to find is evidence-based leadership development. Specifically, what evidence is there to support whether leaders or leadership can be developed using one or more specific theories of leadership? This question led to a concerted effort to explore what was known about whether leaders are born or made, as well as the efficacy of leadership interventions.

Collectivism

Another well-known culture dimension is individualism vs. collectivism (IC). Cultures characterized by individualism can be seen as loosely knit social frameworks in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and look after their own interests and those of their close family only. A tight social framework with strong and cohesive in-groups that are opposed to out-groups is a key characteristic of high collectivism.

People expect their group to look after them and are loyal to it in return (Hofstede, 1980, 2001).

Schwartz (1999) takes a slightly different approach to this issue, describing it in general as the extent to which people in societies are autonomous vs. embedded in the group. Individuals in autonomous cultures are perceived as autonomous entities who find meaning in life through their uniqueness. High embeddedness means that people are perceived as part of the collective and find meaning and direction in life through participating in the group and identifying with its goals. Organizations tend to take responsibility for their members in all domains of life, and in exchange, loyalty and identification are expected.

Collectivism is clearly related to overall societal functioning. Diener, Diener and Diener (1995) showed that after controlling for income, human rights, social equality and heterogeneity, only individualism was positively related to the subjective well-being of nations. In a study among 47 nations, Schwartz and Sagie (2000) found that socioeconomic development as well as democratization increased the importance of independent thought and action, concern for the welfare of others generally (as opposed to specific others, like family members), openness to change, self-indulgence and pleasure and decreased the importance of conformity, tradition and security. Martella and Maass (2000) found that IC moderated the relationship between being unemployed and having lower life satisfaction, self-esteem and happiness, such that the relationship is stronger for individualists than for collectivists.

IC has been studied widely in organizational research at different levels of analysis. For example, IC has played a role in studies on reward allocation as well as evaluation. Gomez, Kirkman and Shapiro (2000) found that collectivists gave more generous evaluations to in-group members than did individualists, and Kirkman and Shapiro (2000) found collectivism to be positively related to receptivity to team-based rewards. IC’s effects are also found in research on teams. For example, a team collectivistic orientation was positively related to cooperation, which in turn mediated the collectivism-performance relationship (Eby and Dobbins, 1997). Overall, IC has been shown to be a meaningful dimension at the individual, team, organizational and societal levels of analysis.

Leaders and followers

Great followers can create great leaders (Yukl, 2006). There is an interesting dynamic in any leader-follower relationship. Followers who commit to the vision and decisions by their leader are also at greater risk than those who haven’t fully dedicated themselves to being a strong follower. Employees who are closest to their managers are often the most susceptible to the crucibles created by their leaders’ weaknesses (Kersten, 2009). Quaquebeke and Eckloff (2010) discuss respect as a critical piece of the leader-follower relationship and note that recent studies have begun to focus on the impact of respect in organizations.

Leadership involves disproportionate influence, and all over the world, the leadership role is associated with power and status.

Thus, the way in which power and status are divided in society is obviously relevant to the leadership role. Hofstede (1980, 2001) defines power distance (PD) as the extent to which a society accepts that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally. In cultures with large differences in power between individuals, organizations will typically have more layers, and the chain of command is felt to be more important.
Charismatic leadership

Prior to the 1980s, charismatic leadership was a relatively obscure research topic within the field of organizational behavior. Only a handful of references are to be found from this period, and these consist of speculative, formative theories. Since the late 1980s, however, interest in the topic has grown significantly. More comprehensive theories have been developed which in turn have encouraged empirical studies.

Power and influence

While some leaders rely on power to create a level of influence that often comes from their title or position, there is a shift within society that is beginning to focus more on a person’s ability to lead (Shelton, 2009). Power and influence often relate to motivation (Nandi, 2008). As a result, a leader may use pressure tactics. While such pressure tactics often render immediate results for the task at hand, such actions have not proven to hold any success in the effective implementation of leadership across cultures.

In line with Hofstede, Schwartz (1999) contrasts hierarchical and egalitarian cultures. In societies that are hierarchical, there are chains of authority and hierarchical structures. An unequal distribution of power and status is legitimate and expected among employees and within the organization. Employees comply with directives without questioning them. In contrast, people in egalitarian cultures view each other as moral equals.

Leader-member exchange theory

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory suggests that leaders develop a separate exchange relationship with each subordinate that leads to an understanding of the subordinate’s role (Yukl, 2006). Those with limited interaction with others within the group develop a lower LMX relationship with their leader (Nishii and Mayer, 2009). Therefore, the environment itself sets the stage for concepts of this theory to exist.

Group members who offer to take on additional tasks as needed are often given additional attention from the group leader. Because it is unlikely for leaders to develop and maintain high quality relationships with all group members, it may be more beneficial for them to focus their time and effort on those who produce more or higher quality work (Nishii and Mayer, 2009).

The original work produced by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) on the role-making and role-taking processes has been extended by Uhl-Bien and colleagues (2000) to examine how leader-follower dyads transform from individual interest to shared interest based on the development of trust, respect and obligations to each other.

Similar work along these lines has examined the effects of goal congruence on the quality of the LMX relationship. This work suggests that to the extent that goals are similar or mutually reinforcing, one would expect to produce a higher-quality LMX relationship.

While theoretical work has tended to focus principally upon the behavioral dimensions of charismatic leaders, the existing theories do predict certain follower effects. For example, it has been hypothesized that charismatic leadership produces higher performance levels among followers as well as more motivated and satisfied followers. In a review of empirical investigations of charismatic and transformational leadership, researchers have found that charismatic leadership was indeed positively correlated with followers’ performance and satisfaction.

Employees typically have their say in decisions affecting them and share in goal-setting activities (Den Hartog and Dickson, in press; Sagiv and Schwartz, 2000).

Power distance and a hierarchical orientation in society have an impact on management policies in organizations. For example, power distance in society is negatively related to having employee stock ownership plans in organizations and the accompanying decision-making authority (Schuler and Rogovsky, 1998). It also influences the preferences and attitudes of individuals. For instance, job level is less strongly related to job satisfaction in a low power distance context than in a high power distance context (Robie, Ryan, Schnieder, Parra, and Smith, 1998). Earley (1999) investigated the effects of cultural power distance and status characteristics on group efficacy and team performance on a managerial simulation task.

Additional LMX research on individual differences has examined the impact of gender on the quality of the LMX relationship, although these findings have been mixed. For instance, Adebayo and Udegbe (2004) reported that followers in opposite-sex dyads perceived a better LMX quality in comparison with those from same-sex dyads.

Recent research has moved beyond examining LMX in terms of antecedents and consequences and has examined the quality of the leader and follower relationship as a moderator or mediator of performance. For example, Sparrowe et al. (2006) reported that the quality of the relationship moderated the relationship between downward-influence tactics and helping behaviors. Martin et al. (2005) reported that LMX either fully or partially mediated the relationship between locus of control and several work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, work-related well-being, and organizational commitment.
Organizations face many challenges, from day-to-day operations to bigger-picture planning and development. The following detail some of the challenges organizations face with diversity and cross-culture leadership.

**Challenge one: Changed power dynamics**

Constituency management may be the most challenging, yet most unrecognized difficulty that a leader will encounter with a large shift in the diversity of an organization’s workforce. With the infusion of new, diverse individuals who may not fit the traditional organizational mold, traditional constituents may feel an erosion of power.

For example, one study of organizational attachment found evidence that as diversity increased, commitment and attachment decreased. White males were more likely to indicate higher levels of detachment as the number of women in the work group increased. As power is redistributed, doubts may emerge within the traditional constituencies about how they will fit into the new organization.

Power struggles are natural consequences of competition for scarce resources and control of social structures. Diversity dynamics interact with unstable power structures and can lead to both lowered individual and organizational performance. Potential negative outcomes from this instability include poor work attitudes, withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover, and perceptions of procedural injustice.

At the intolerant stage, organizations may give the appearance of smooth functioning, because power struggles may not be explicit. This is likely to occur because diverse subgroups wield lower or nonexistent levels of power. If intolerance is accepted, those who go against the norms of the dominant coalition are likely to be sanctioned. The organization is unlikely to experience explicit power struggles because the costs are too high for minorities.

For example, some employees may suppress their opinions in staff meetings when they know that the dominant coalition disagrees with them. Minorities may reserve their voices for significant events that blatantly discriminate or offend them, such as a quid-pro-quo case of sexual harassment or extreme violations of equity in workload or monetary distributions. (Joplin, 1997)

Companies facing these dilemmas often send all employees to diversity training. However, companies at the stage of intolerance may not yet be ready for such initiatives. If employees are forced to attend diversity training that they or their organizations do not support or believe in, the training can actually make the situation worse.

According to reactance theory, threatening an individual’s freedom to choose an activity may lead to an attitude change in the direction opposed to that being advocated. Employees who are required to attend diversity training against their will, and who already hold extremely negative attitudes and stereotypes regarding minorities, are likely to become even more negative, rather than more positive and accepting.

While there is always a danger that diversity training may be misdirected and misinterpreted, especially if the qualifications of the trainers are questionable, intolerant organizations court trouble if they implement training too early.

Because stereotypes often originate from ignorance or lack of exposure to others who are different, one possible solution for such organizations is diversity pairing. Individuals are paired with others who are dissimilar in cultural background, gender or ability. Such pairings, used by organizations such as Southwestern Bell in management development programs, may serve to slowly eradicate some entrenched stereotypes. After a time, people may feel comfortable enough to ask questions and learn about the other individual on a truly personal level.

Individuals in intolerant organizations must address their personally held prejudices and stereotypes before the organization can move toward a position of tolerance, where group-level diversity initiatives may be more effective.

Organizations at a stage of tolerance or acceptance will experience explicit power struggles, which may undermine the effective functioning of the organizations if not addressed. One solution is for tolerant organizations to conduct teambuilding with a sharper focus on integrating traditional power holders with emerging powerbrokers (e.g., long-time employees and new employees).

Leaders must have the human and interpersonal skills necessary to integrate individuals from different constituencies in all vital aspects of the daily functioning of the organization. They must acknowledge the benefits of creative tension between constituencies, and make the integration of constituencies a subtle exercise. Leaders must effectively navigate between acknowledging potential benefits from creative tension and overemphasizing the process of diversity integration, which creates skeptics among employees and can be self-defeating for the organization. The best tactic for leaders is a daily, deliberate and continuous active emphasis on the key role that each employee has in the organization’s success.

In organizations at the appreciation stage, power struggles and dynamics will not be as much of a concern as at the other stages. However, organizational leaders must understand that power struggles are never totally eliminated and may escalate if not monitored. Organizations at the appreciation stage may be prone to more subtle power struggles, such as alliance development within subgroups or departments. Alliances can be very powerful forces and are, by definition, exclusionary. Once again, leaders must be aware of such alliances and monitor their growth. Group and team level incentives may be appropriate at this stage, and may serve as a boost that is needed to keep individuals motivated to work together, rather than against each other.
Organizations at the appreciation stage may be in particular danger in times of scarcity or economic crisis. It is during these times where organizations may revert back to the tolerant stage as a part of the process of ensuring more organizational stability. Organizations that are new to the appreciation stage may feel more comfortable with old patterns of behaviors that are more familiar and take less time and energy.

**Challenge two: Diversity of opinions**

We live at a time when there are four generations working for organizations: (1) the Silent Generation, born between 1925-1942; (2) baby boomers, born between 1943-1964; (3) Gen X, from 1965-1978 (Conger, 1998); and (4) Gen Y, those born between 1979-1994 (Hewlett, Sherbin, and Sumberg, 2009). Because the shaping events in these generations’ lives all differ, all four cohorts have different ways of seeing their world, and they all make sense to them. Unless the leader is adroit enough to know these differences, this intergenerational diversity is yet another dimension that needs masterful handling.

Teams are becoming increasingly the organizing unit in organizations today. Team building and team facilitation skills are requisite skills that a 21st century leader needs to master. It is the ability to facilitate a team’s process from forming, storming, norming and performing (Tuckman, 1965).

A team is as effective only as its weakest member. One of the unwritten job descriptions of future leaders is the ability to coach members in the team and help these people discover their potential. Every problem encountered is a teaching moment, and it takes an intuitive leader to capitalize on these moments to bring lessons on team core values and group dynamics.

As an organization’s workforce changes, the number and range of perspectives increase exponentially, and leaders must synthesize a diversity of opinions from individuals’ unique values, cultural grounding, and the resulting accepted behaviors. Two people can view the same event with very different interpretations and formulate opinions on the basis of those perceptions and interpretations.

For managers, getting to the crux of critical issues while respecting and maintaining the core integrity and dignity of participants is essential. Even in the best of circumstances, miscommunication will almost inevitably occur, because each employee has a unique social frame of reference. The challenge for the leader will be to identify and recognize, at least implicitly, the different frames of reference that are represented and to extract common denominators that may serve as a foundation for issue resolution.

In traditional homogenous organizational settings, agreement on important topics may have been readily achieved, at least in part because the participants had similar demographic, educational and cultural characteristics. Synthesizing diverse opinions, finding the shared ground, and reaching agreement may be one of the most time-consuming, emotionally wrenching and energy-draining activities a leader undertakes. Each differing perspective is likely to reflect the emotional attachments of the bearer. Leaders must separate substance from rhetoric and determine the true content of the message, rather than get lost in the manner of delivery or the particular characteristics of the delivery person.

Organizations where relative intolerance exists will be characterized by an explicit disrespect for other members who differ from the majority of organizational members (e.g., women, Hispanics). This lack of respect may be translated into visible disdain. Meetings and decision-making situations may often be characterized by my-way-or-no-way attitudes designed to intimidate minority members.

Once again, members of diverse subgroups may choose not to engage in conflict and may fail to voice their concerns for fear of sanctions. This will result in less manifest conflict and present the illusion of agreement and cooperation. If conflict does emerge, it will do so when there is a punctuation mark or triggering event, and it is likely to be more pronounced.

In contrast, in the company moving toward tolerance, acceptance and on to appreciation, there will be more continual conflict as differences are aired, discussed and remedies tried and modified. At the appreciation stage, the conflict will tend to lose the venomous tones of previous stages, but will still openly manifest itself. Without solid conflict resolution skills and mechanisms in place, organizations may experience decreased commitment and productivity.

At the intolerant stage, leaders must be sensitive to the underlying cues of latent conflict and able to handle the explosions and diffuse them when they occur. At this and all other stages, leaders must have the skills to productively channel conflict. A core requirement of leaders confronted with a diversity of opinions is that they be role models and teachers, and that they possess the ability to effectively demonstrate facilitation and reconciliation processes.

Organizations at a stage of tolerance pay lip service to valuing the broad diversity of opinions and experience conflict that is apparent and that may create gridlock. Perceived or real lip service can be seen in documents emanating from top executive and managerial offices touting the benefits of capitalizing on diverse opinions to both internal operations and external stakeholders, such as customers. At the tolerant stage, however, these varied perspectives may be actively sought and aired, but dismissed without real consideration.

The organization spends valuable resources to gain access to a potential competitive advantage, yet sabotages its own
Political intelligence requires some knowledge and understanding of the organization’s authority structure, both formal and informal. Without knowledge of the varying factions within the organization and past divisions over contentious issues, a leader may not be able to effectively forge a common ground and achieve effective facilitation and reconciliation processes. A skilled facilitator will draw out the more reticent, perhaps newer, members, while balancing the interests of the traditional power holders. The leader lacking these critical skills risks losing control over the meeting and agenda and creating ill will between members and toward the leader. For these reasons, organizational tenure may be advantageous when appointing individuals to leadership positions.

**Challenge three: Perceived lack of empathy**

The challenge of integrating diverse viewpoints and opinions is integrally linked with the third challenge, overcoming a perceived lack of empathy. The ability to establish an emotional identification with followers from a variety of cultures is an attribute that distinguishes leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy and Mahatma Ghandi, who recognized the needs of their followers and incorporated those needs into their convictions.

Perceptions that the leader does not have the capacity for empathy with his followers may be most disruptive in organizations characterized as intolerant. In some intolerant organizations, there may actually be a lack of empathy with minority subgroups. Appearing empathetic will not be a priority.

Less extreme organizations face the dilemma that one group may preempt empathy from other groups. For example, some males may feel that an organization that espouses concerns for women’s issues is not concerned with them. The competition between factions can place the leader in the middle of a political battle. Much like children of divorced families who learn to play one parent against the other, individuals within the factions may learn to capitalize on the leader’s dual loyalties by trying to invoke feelings of guilt within the leader. If not aware of the process, leaders can become enmeshed in a social war between these diverse factions.

Claims of favoritism and lack of empathy occasionally exist in tolerant, accepting organizations. If not kept in check, they can lead to slippage in an organization’s progression toward appreciation. Leaders can prevent the development of such feelings by advocating and expressing the position that empathy need not be mutually exclusive. Leaders must be masters at perception and anticipate when such misperceptions are likely to arise. By being keenly aware of the climate of the diverse groups, leaders can forestall problems and prevent them from escalating. Once this critical skill is developed, the leader can begin to move the organization toward a stage of true appreciation of diversity where individuals are not personally threatened when a leader exercises empathy with another diverse group member.

Perceptions of lack of empathy are not solely the domain of followers. Just as followers believe leaders don’t understand
them; leaders often believe that followers don’t understand what it’s like to lead. As individuals assume leadership roles, work tasks become differentiated from other group members’ tasks, leading to feelings of isolation that may further distort the perceptual process. Misperceptions also occur between groups of constituents and can contribute to the volatility of communication in a diverse work group. (Earley, 1997)

Leaders must be masters at perceiving the feelings, stances and approaches to issues of others and must be able to anticipate the varied reactions that any proposal or issue of substance is likely to draw. With this foresight, leaders can anticipate reactions and potentially disarm hostilities before they break out. Leaders must learn how to listen with empathy in a way that inspires openness and trust, attempting to understand where others are coming from, what they have been through, and where they are going. Leaders must step out of and see beyond their own life histories and frames of reference if they are to express and fairly distribute empathy.

A leader’s success will, in part, be determined by ability to motivate through words. Leaders must also have the ability to read nonverbal communications and to interpret the hidden meanings in verbal communications. Leaders with broad educational backgrounds can be more effective in expressing empathy. Exposure to the humanities, arts, classics, history and diverse cultures helps them understand varied perspectives and uncover common ground upon which to build an integration of constituents.

**Challenge four: Tokenism, real and perceived**

A traditional barrier faced in the early stages of a more diverse workforce is that of real or perceived tokenism. Real tokenism occurs when an employee is hired over other clearly more qualified candidates in an effort to address stakeholder concerns or simply to fulfill numbers. Quota systems, which often communicate tokenism, are rarely in the best interests of an organization. In intolerant organizations, however, quota systems may be the only method to ensure that diverse individuals are included in recruitment and selection processes. Yet it is at the intolerant stage where organizational members are likely to feel the most resentment toward members hired under a quota system and where tensions between individuals are likely to be exaggerated.

Tolerant organizations and organizations that appreciate diversity are not as likely to need quota systems to ensure the selection of a diverse workforce. We advocate that all organizations phase out quota systems and replace them with active recruitment across diverse categories. Organizations that continue to use quota systems to fulfill numbers will find it difficult to move beyond the stage of intolerance because of the resentment created by the system.

Increasing the diversity of an organization often carries with it a perception that less qualified individuals are being hired. Hiring less qualified individuals is poor business practice, is questionable on legal grounds, and is likely to develop negative attitudes and feelings throughout the organization. Employees hired under any system other than merit may react defensively, feel vulnerable and question their own value and capabilities.

Employees who are aware of the hiring process may resent new employees hired under a quota system and see them as threats to their own perceived value. The new employees may not receive fair hearings from longer-term employees, and may be excluded from informal or formal work groups. Finally, those who make the hiring decisions may unconsciously affect how the new individuals are treated, the responsibilities and assignments they are given, and the messages that are broadcast about their abilities.

While real tokenism can be avoided by not using quota systems, perceived tokenism presents a different situation. Perceived tokenism occurs when an individual is hired based on merit and ability, yet is perceived by others to have been hired based on gender or ethnic criteria. Where tokenism is perceived, there is a tendency to attribute failures to the individual’s gender or age or race and to attribute successes to happenstance or to the benevolence of the organization. These beliefs can damage the employee’s self-esteem and self-identity and can eventually lead to poor performance.

Setting standards and adhering to them communicates that the leader is serious on the issue of diversity. The leader must also have the skills to draw out the best from individuals who may be considered tokens. Capitalizing on, even showcasing the skills and talents of an individual who is different on some dimension clearly communicates that the individual is a fully participating, valued member of the organization. It is also critical that the leader dispel rumors as soon as he or she is aware of them, countering them with facts regarding selection and promotion decisions before they become embedded in the organization’s climate.

By combating the perils of perceived tokenism, the whole organization will see the positive effects realized in heightened conscientiousness, job satisfaction, job involvement and greater innovativeness from employees. The organization’s bottom line can be directly affected and its performance will be reflected in higher product quality, greater productivity and lower turnover.

**Challenge five: Participation**

In a diverse workforce, employee participation in critical organizational processes enable the organization to capitalize on new, different and creative ways of thinking. Such participation can ease the tension from the issue of power sharing and changed power dynamics; the expression and gathering of different perspectives and opinions; the building of perceptions of empathy; and the reduction of real or perceived tokenism. Without participation of all members to arrive at plausible, workable solutions to these challenges, the goals of capturing the best that diversity brings will not be achieved.
Ensuring that everyone has a voice is a critical first step toward a full appreciation of diverse organizational members.

Time management is one of the major dilemmas a leader will face with a fully participating, diverse work force. Participation processes and diversity initiatives both take a lot of time. Setting priorities and developing work agendas around them are essential to effectively managing diversity.

Effective coaching skills in cross-cultural leadership

Let’s take a closer look at coaching across cultures. The following guidelines outline an approach to coaching that focuses on the uniqueness of the individual being coached, while showing explicitly how insight into cultural differences provides a direct benefit to the coaching process. (Hicks and Peterson, 1999).

- **As you build the coaching partnership, search for hidden layers.**
  Effective coaching, even within a single culture, requires a high degree of interpersonal perceptiveness and sensitivity or emotional intelligence. Coaching across cultures magnifies the coach’s challenge. A good coach recognizes that people look at the world through different lenses. Good cross-cultural coaches recognize that sometimes they may not even know what that lens looks like, and so will scan for important dimensions they may not fully understand or appreciate.

  Such coaches assume there is always more going on than meets the eye. One of the best ways coaches can improve their ability to spot hidden meanings is to become familiar with the various ways that people differ, by studying cultural dimensions and distinctions as well as individual values, motivations and personality variables (Aluja and García, 2004; Dweck, 1999; Markus and Kitayama, 1998; McCrae and Costa, 1997; Paunonen and Jackson, 2000).

Because cultural differences can be quite distinct, cultural norms can often help a coach generate hypotheses about the person being coached. Is this person likely to be better motivated by a collective goal than an individual one? Might this person prefer authoritative expertise and clear direction from a coach to a collegial, free-flowing discussion? Should the coach vault quickly into the task or spend a significant amount of time getting to know the person? Will the coach’s preference for quick, linear decisions be suitable when working with this person? Testing relevant hypotheses like these can often help avoid obvious pitfalls.

- **Personalize the approach.**
  As a coach gains insight into another individual’s makeup, he or she can ask questions to identify the most effective methods and approaches for this particular person, independent of culture: What’s the best way to foster the coaching relationship with this person? What’s the best way for this person to learn? What skills, approaches and style will be most useful for this person in his or her context?

  One of the best ways to personalize the approach is to simply talk with the individual directly, asking questions such as, “What would you like from me as your coach? How can I be most helpful to you?”

In some cultures, such direct and personal lines of inquiry will not work well. Singapore, for example, has such a strong focus on the teacher as expert authority, that such questions may undermine the credibility of the coach, who is more likely to be viewed as a teacher than a facilitator.

Two alternate approaches are recommended. First, a coach can explore the same issues by presenting them as assignments rather than as open-ended questions. For example, in teaching a coaching workshop in Singapore, I found it more effective to instruct participants to prepare a written assignment describing the three techniques they would find most beneficial than it was to ask the comparable open question.

Second, a coach can ask questions about what is typical, rather than what the participant would want, such as, “What are the most common techniques that a coach would use in this culture? What would other people find most helpful if they were using a coach?”

A coach in these cultures needs to be able to project a sense of expertise and authority about the coaching process, even though the person may be learning about the individual and the culture at the same time.

A cross-cultural coach needs to walk into every coaching engagement prepared to learn about new ways to be helpful to the person, and even prepared to learn new ways of going about his or her own learning, to readily adapt to new cultures and styles.

- **Facilitate change in a manner that’s suited to the individual.**
  Some authors present coaching as a collection of activities, such as gathering and delivering feedback, writing development plans, offering advice and teaching skills (Kampa-Kokesch and White, 2002). Thinking about coaching in this way may lead coaches working in cross-cultural settings to ask the wrong questions, such as “How do I give feedback in this culture?”

  In contrast, some authors, including Peterson and Hicks (1996) define coaching in broader terms: “coaching is the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective” (p. 14). Such a definition leads to a different type of question, such as, “What does this person need in order to become more effective?” Feedback, advice, or a development plan may not be the answer (Hicks and Peterson, 1999a).
Insight

In the United States, feedback is commonly viewed as such an essential part of coaching and development that many definitions of coaching specify feedback as an integral aspect. In reality, feedback is not absolutely necessary to effective coaching and development – it is just one means to the desired end, which is insight (Hicks and Peterson, 1997; Peterson and Hicks, in press).

Hoppe (1998), for example, points out that 360-degree multirater feedback is well-suited to American culture because of a preference for quantification, measurement and empirical data; a focus on the individual; and the presence of a low-context environment that requires more explicit communication. He states that it is less well-suited for cultures with a preference for theory over data (e.g., France, Germany); a preference for relational and metaphorical thinking over quantification (e.g., Japan, China); or more collectivistic or high-context cultures that provide information about where people stand through family relationships (e.g., India), education (e.g., France), or tribal membership (e.g., certain Arab countries).

In some areas, such as Saudi Arabia, feedback is likely to be viewed as a personal criticism or even an attack. In France, intellectual challenge is valued, but feedback, which is perceived as a personal challenge, is less welcome. French culture is typically more impersonal than American culture, where many people share personal information readily. Thus the French may also be less inclined to openly discuss their own strengths and weaknesses in general (Roussillon, 2002).

Self-reflection and self-observation are other means to gaining insight that might be more acceptable in some cultures. Confucian approaches to learning (Tweed and Lehman, 2002) emphasize learning from role models. Insight can be gained from observing someone with the desired qualities and comparing oneself to that ideal. In some cultures, feedback from an outsider is not common nor is it welcomed. Coaches can thus expand their repertoire of coaching techniques by considering ways to cultivate insight through asking questions to promote self-reflection and by encouraging people to self-monitor and compare their behavior and results to others.

One of the more interesting anecdotes about insight concerns Japan, where feedback is traditionally seen as overly direct and inappropriate, given people’s desire to save face. However, I have heard from several Japanese managers that there is at least one vehicle for providing upward feedback to people’s managers. It is not uncommon for managers to go out for an evening of dining and drinking with employees. Late in the evening, after a number of drinks have been consumed, an employee may occasionally offer very direct negative feedback to the boss. The next morning, however, that individual will take it upon himself to apologize to the boss for any inappropriate behaviors. “I may have had too much to drink last night and perhaps made comments that I did not intend and that I certainly did not mean,” he or she might say. “However, I cannot remember the details too clearly. If I gave offense in any way, please accept my apologies.”

Even in cultures where direct feedback is not common, it is inevitable that people in organizations will find a way to express their feelings to others. Coaches should search for the culturally acceptable ways that people create to meet their needs, not just for sharing feedback, but also for gaining insight (Stone-Romero and Stone, 2002).

Motivation

Individuals are motivated to seek coaching and development for different reasons. Clients may seek to improve their performance because they want more money, autonomy, respect and recognition, power, control over their lives, variety and change, life balance, or because they want to provide for their family. Culture may play a role in defining which values are more common and socially acceptable. Triandis (2004) summarizes different sets of values that are common to two broad cultural categories.

Values that are representative of the Eastern orientation to collectivism and harmony include:
- Group achievement.
- Harmony.
- Keeping relationships over time.
- Being responsive to the needs of others; contributing to the well-being of the family and group.
- Being agreeable, friendly and sympathetic.

Values that are representative of the Western orientation to individualism and control include:
- Personal achievement and advancement.
- Dominance.
- Autonomy and self-reliance.
- Openness to new experiences.
- Having fun.

Individuals in collective cultures give more weight to norms than to personal attitudes as determinants of behavior, whereas people in individualistic cultures prefer behavior to be guided by personal attitudes and values (Triandis, 1996). This in itself may be difficult for coaches of different orientations. Western coaches may feel that self-actualization is a condition that everyone should seek; some coaches even define their practice as actualizing the person’s potential to bring out the best in them, which is a very individualistic perspective.

A similar contrast is evident in what some have described as the Western focus on “doing” and the Eastern focus on “being.” Some traditional Chinese, following the Confucian example, revere a leader with high moral character, independent of what the leader may accomplish through the group (Hui and Tan, 1999).

In working with cross-cultural organizations, coaches need to be especially sensitive to not letting their own preferences result in negative evaluations of what others value.

Another important motivational factor to note involves the varying cultural beliefs about how much change and development is even possible. North American culture, perhaps more than any other, believes that personal change and growth are almost unlimited. The business culture of the
United States is frequently presented as highly tolerant of active experimentation, trial and error, uncertainty, risk, and failure.

Americans’ belief that they are in charge of their own destiny is a foreign idea to much of the world. For example, many members of Eastern and Middle-Eastern cultures believe in harmony and accepting one’s circumstances. People in China, as another example, are more likely to attribute success to hard work than to abilities. Therefore, working to improve abilities through coaching may be a rather indirect way to achieve identified goals compared to simply working harder and longer.

**Change management**

Change management is a systematic approach to dealing with change, both from the perspective of an organization and on the individual level. A somewhat ambiguous term, change management has at least three different aspects, including adapting to change, controlling change, and effecting change. A proactive approach to dealing with change is at the core of all three aspects. For an organization, change management means defining and implementing procedures and technologies to deal with changes in the business environment and to profit from changing opportunities.

Change management can be broken down into three distinct areas of focus:

- **The set of tools, processes, skills and principles used.**
  Change management requires structure and intent. It is no longer enough to simply have a communication plan or a training plan. The people side of change plays too important a role in meeting objectives to approach it in an ad hoc manner.

- **Managing “the people side” of change.**
  A key component for managing the people side of change is understanding how one individual makes a change successfully. In the end, organizational change occurs one person at a time. Said another way, the individual is the unit of change. Even for very large and complex changes, the ultimate success of the initiative is tied to how successfully each individual who must adopt the change makes his or her own personal transition from the current state to a future state.

**Canadian experience**

Canada may perhaps provide us with a working model of how multiculturalism works in the real world. The country’s culture is influenced by its vast landscape covering six time zones (Cole and Berengut, 2009). Historically, there are three distinct cultures that overlap: first nations, French, and Anglo-Saxon.

Amidst this vast land mass, pockets of communities grew out of 13 provinces/territories. Between those communities lay flatlands and towering mountain ranges that provide natural barriers. The Canadian Pacific Rail and Trans Canada Highway connect the east and west coasts, facilitating both tourism and trade. In addition to the main cultures, there has been a growing number of Chinese, East Indian and Southeast Asian immigrants, which together comprise 9 percent of the 34 million population (Statistics Canada, 2011).

With this diversity, one would surmise that Canada is a hotspot for conflict, but that is not the case (Cole, and Berengut, 2009). According to Bass, who studied cross-cultural leadership across many countries, “an ideal leadership style includes elements of transformational leaders” (Bass, 1997). This style includes

- **Achievement of the required outcomes of the project or initiative.**
  This area of focus connects change management to the ultimate value or objectives that the organization is looking to derive from implementing the change (the project or initiative). Benchmarking data clearly shows the connection between managing the people side of change and achieving the required outcomes of the project or initiative.

Once a common ground has been carved between the leader and the led, the leader’s next task is being able to lead the group to the higher ground, a task naturally well-suited for a transformational type of leader. This requires not only change management skills, but also large doses of emotional intelligence (EQ) and cultural intelligence, CQ (Earley and Ang, 2003).

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a wide-scale change management technique first developed by David Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University’s Weatherhead School of Management (Cooperrider, 2007). Appreciative inquiry uses a strengths-based approach to introduce change and highlights the positive aspects of peak performance. By focusing on these positive qualities, members are able to generate their own energy, which then feeds into a virtuous cycle. The method has commonalities with other management theories such as positive psychology (Seligman, 1991), and neuro-linguistic-programming, NLP (Grinder, and Bandier 1979).
The fields of psychology and in particular, the branches of industrial and organization psychology have recently begun to give more focus to the topic of cross-cultural leadership within organizations. This has led to an increased awareness of issues and discussions of barriers and needs identified. It has also resulted in advances and refinement in the definition of culture and the identification of dimensions of culture, with clear application of these dimensions to cultural variation in leadership.

Cross-cultural leadership as a specific topic of study has also been propelled forward by several specific events, including the development of The Leadership Quarterly, the advent of Advances in Global Leadership (an annual series edited by William Mobley and his colleagues), and several large multi-investigator, multinational studies of culture and leadership.

One of the large research endeavors on cross-cultural issues in leadership is the GLOBE Project.

Robert J. House is the principal investigator of GLOBE (the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Project). Along with several co-principal investigators and a multinational coordinating team, he leads a group of more than 180 researchers from around the world in a study of the interacting effects of leadership, societal culture and organizational culture. Data have been collected from over 60 countries, using surveys, unobtrusive measures, interviews, media analysis and archival data (often from the United Nations).

Leadership research is a tricky endeavor. As many have noted (Bass, 1997; Chemers, 1997), there is no consistently agreed-upon definition of leadership and no clear understanding of the boundaries of the construct space (though in the organizational sciences, this is certainly not unique to the topic of leadership). Adding a cross-cultural component to leadership research has made the whole process even more complex. Without an identified framework to help narrow and guide cross-cultural leadership research, there is likely to be little coherence to the research being conducted.

Geert Hofstede is one of the people arguing for such a framework. Hofstede is a central figure in the development of literature on cultural variation and the dimension-based approach to assessing and classifying cultures. His book “Cultures’ Consequences,” (1980; 2001) was a major advancement in the application of the culture construct to organizations. Hofstede (1998), among others, emphasizes that cultural differences are primarily encountered as differences in shared values, with values being defined as “broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others.”

Hofstede has long argued that culture is often inappropriately applied in research settings because too often there is little theoretical justification for expecting cultural differences and no model to identify what differences should be expected. In short, Hofstede says that in all cross-cultural research, there are three core questions that have to be addressed:
- What are we comparing?
- Are nations suitable units for this comparison?
- Are the phenomena we look at functionally equivalent?

Similarly, Drenth and Den Hartog (1998) posit that there are two basic questions to be addressed in cross-cultural organizational psychology. First, we have to determine whether organizations in different countries have consistently different characteristics or patterns of member behavior (or whether characteristics and behavior patterns interact consistently within cultures and differently between cultures). Second, we have to determine whether these differences are actually due to differences between the cultures, and this is largely determined by whether there is theoretical rationale for expecting the differences.

In other words, these authors generally concur with Hofstede (1998b) about the importance of theory and solid design in cross-cultural leadership research.

One of the primary questions in all cross-cultural research is whether phenomena are universal or culturally dependent, and this is particularly true for the field of cross-cultural leadership research (Dickson, Hanges, and Lord, 2001). However, as Bass (1997) has pointed out, “universality” can mean a wide variety of things when applied to leadership. Thus, before addressing the question of the universality of leadership, we need to first understand what is meant by universal.

Dorfman et al. (1997) also found partial evidence for universality of leadership behaviors, in this case, and partial evidence for cultural contingency. This study had a more detailed theoretical base than many studies assessing the universality model, in that that the authors used House’s (1971) path-goal theory and Yukl’s (1971) multiple linkage model as guides for hypothesis development.

The sample consisted of managers and professionals in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico and the United States, who assessed the leadership behaviors of their supervisors. Leader supportiveness, contingent reward and charismatic leadership were consistently endorsed in all five cultures, whereas participative leadership, directive leadership and contingent punishment behaviors were culturally contingent, in different ways.

Contingent punishment had positive effects in the United States but undesirable effects in the other countries. Directive leadership behaviors had positive effects in Taiwan and Mexico, while participative leadership behaviors had positive effects in the United States and South Korea. Thus, simple universality was again only slightly supported.

One study in which simple universal effects from leadership were found is a study that took a somewhat different approach to the topic. Mellahi (2000) built from Peterson and Hunt’s (1997) concerns about an American bias in cross-cultural leadership research, and assessed the origins of leadership perceptions of Asian, Arab and African managers who had received a Westernized MBA education.

Mellahi found that Western leadership values are emphasized as most important in the UK MBA programs, while indigenous leadership values are neglected in the educational system, and through this neglect, are interpreted by international students to be unimportant. This was proposed to promote increased
consistency of perceptions by managers trained in Western-style business programs.

An emerging area of research investigates the universality of social intelligence levels in leaders. Aditya and House (2002) recently presented an integration of the research in the area of interpersonal acumen and implicit leadership theories within different societal cultures.

Interpersonal acumen refers to the ability to decipher the underlying motives or intentions of other’s behavior. Aditya and House, using data from the GLOBE Project, presented evidence that the implicit leadership theories of members in different societies include characteristics related to interpersonal acumen.

For example, leaders in Colombia rated cunning as contributing to outstanding leadership, whereas in Switzerland, cunning – or being sly and deceitful – is rated as inhibiting outstanding leadership. Because cunning includes being deceitful in its description, one can infer that this trait represents a discrepancy between one’s public actions and one’s private intentions, which creates a need for interpersonal acumen.

Other characteristics of leaders that represented a need for interpersonal acumen were indirect communication, evasive behaviors and sensitivity. Each of these characteristics varied by societal culture, with some cultures rating these characteristics as contributing to outstanding leadership and others as inhibiting outstanding leadership.

Other characteristics of leaders that represented a need for interpersonal acumen were indirect communication, evasive behaviors and sensitivity. Each of these characteristics varied by societal culture, with some cultures rating these characteristics as contributing to outstanding leadership and others as inhibiting outstanding leadership.

Javidan and House (2001) present arguments for the necessity of global managers to have cultural acumen or to be sensitive to cultural differences. Also using data from GLOBE, they present findings relevant to global managers on how to interact with members of various cultures. In short, they provide advice for creating effective cross-cultural communications.

In Russia and Thailand, where hierarchical and status differentials (i.e., power distance) are high, communication is mostly one-way, from the top down. Further, managers are expected to know more than subordinates, and input from subordinates is neither solicited nor appreciated (Javidan and House, 2001).

One way to approach the study of culture is through the identification and measurement of dimensions of culture, and several different typologies of societal cultural value orientations or culture dimensions have been developed. The most widely recognized (as well as strongly criticized) culture dimensions are undoubtedly the ones described by Hofstede (1980, 2001).

Hofstede’s (1980) well-known original study was based on a survey among IBM managers and employees in over 40 countries. Later research also includes other countries and different samples (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede originally found four culture dimensions (individualism-collectivism; masculinity-femininity; uncertainty avoidance; and power distance) and in later work, a fifth dimension (future orientation) was added.

Conclusion

Organizations can benefit greatly from effective leadership from a cross-cultural standpoint. It helps to break down barriers, provide understanding, and clear goals and expectations. It also provides an opportunity for overall organization improvement from retention, productivity, quality assurance and strategic planning. Through cross-cultural training, leaders can improve their relationship-building skills, self-awareness, communication skills, and methods to use common ground as a foundation to lead their team to success. This can occur on a local, national or international level.

With trends of globalization and internationalization growing louder and stronger, very few successful businesses can now escape the need to work across cultures. Even if businesses or organizations are not working abroad or with foreign entities, it would be a challenge to identify any that have a monocultural workforce.

With this move towards a cross-cultural business environment comes a need for people to be aware of how culture impacts the workplace. Unfortunately, as many quickly discover, the rest of the world does not do things “like we do.” Cultural differences impact everything from interpersonal communication to health and safety procedures to project management.

It is within this context that the idea of leadership is being challenged. Our Western conceptualization of who leaders are, what they do and how they do it is not shared the world over. Today’s leaders need to be experts at leading and managing people of different cultures; they need to listen to the voices of the people as well as understand what those voices may actually be telling them. Without an informed knowledge of the elements of cross-cultural leadership, their leadership efforts are likely to fail.

Research has provided a lot of information on cross-cultural leadership. While complex, much of this information continues to be instrumental in the development of coaching techniques and training material. In addition, it has provided us with an understanding of what remain as unanswered questions in hopes of sparking additional future research and learning opportunities.

References


23. Feedback is:
   a. Universally seen as absolutely necessary for effective coaching.
   b. Well-suited to the American culture.
   c. Well-suited in cultures that prefer theory over data.

22. A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self development, refers to:
   a. Charismatic leadership.
   b. Collectivism.
   c. Authentic leadership.
   d. Participative leadership.

21. Agreeable, friendly and sympathetic are all socially accepted to the well-being of the family and group, and being agreeable, friendly and sympathetic are all socially accepted values associated with which cultural orientation?
   a. Western orientation.
   b. American orientation.
   c. Eastern orientation.
   d. Southern orientation.

20. A feedback that is:
   a. Universally seen as absolutely necessary for effective coaching.
   b. Well-suited to the American culture.
   c. Well-suited in cultures that prefer theory over data.

19. People are complex and the world is messy: A behavior-based approach to executive coaching. In D.R. Stober & A. M. Grant (Eds.), Evidence-based coaching handbook: Putting best practices to work for your clients (pp. 51–76).

18. What we know from the literature and experience and where we should go from final Examination Psychology.EliteCME.com to complete your final examination

17. What is the primary purpose of leadership development? A. Its primary purpose is to benefit management. B. Its primary purpose is to benefit management. C. Its primary purpose is to benefit management. D. Its primary purpose is to benefit management.

16. A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self development, refers to:
   a. Charismatic leadership.
   b. Collectivism.
   c. Authentic leadership.
   d. Participative leadership.

15. A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self development, refers to:
   a. Charismatic leadership.
   b. Collectivism.
   c. Authentic leadership.
   d. Participative leadership.

14. Developing, harmonizing, keeping relationships over time, being responsive to the needs of others, contributing to the well-being of the family and group, and being agreeable, friendly and sympathetic are all socially accepted values associated with which cultural orientation?
   a. Western orientation.
   b. American orientation.
   c. Eastern orientation.
   d. Southern orientation.

13. A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self development, refers to:
   a. Charismatic leadership.
   b. Collectivism.
   c. Authentic leadership.
   d. Participative leadership.