

DEVELOPING GLOBAL LEADERS: THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

Globalization requires business leaders who can manage effectively in multicultural environments. Although many organizations assume leaders will enhance their multicultural skills through international assignments, it is unclear how leaders translate these international experiences into knowledge and skills that enhance their effectiveness. Based on experiential learning theory (ELT), we propose that cultural intelligence (CQ) is an essential learning capability that leaders can use to translate their international experiences into effective experiential learning in culturally diverse contexts.

Managing the “global leadership gap” is one of the major concerns of corporations operating in today’s global business environment (Sloan, Hazucha, & Van Katwyk, 2003). Two recent Economist Intelligence Unit (2006, 2007) CEO briefings based on survey data from over 1,000 senior executives across 40 nations identified lack of high quality talent that can

operate in multiple cultures as the greatest challenge facing global organizations. These findings underscore the importance of designing effective global leadership development programs that enable firms to build right-talented employees who have the capability to perform and lead effectively in culturally diverse situations.

International assignments have been consistently advocated as the primary vehicle for developing global leadership skills (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; McCall, 2004; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988; McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994; Osland, 2001). Hall, Zhu, and Yan (2001) argued that international assignments are a powerful means of leadership development because they provide opportunities for global leaders to experience surprises that will stimulate reflection and exploration that are crucial for learning. Traveling on business trips, working in cross-cultural teams, going on expatriate assignments, and managing foreign or regional offices are examples of how global leaders gain experience dealing with different cultures (Dalton & Ernst, 2004).

Increasingly, both organizations and individuals are recognizing the value of such international assignments. For instance, multinational firms emphasize international assignments as part of global leadership development programs, with many firms requiring high-potential leaders to have at least one important international assignment to acquire relevant experience (Hall et al., 2001). In support of this view, several studies have found that the international experience of CEOs was positively related to corporate financial performance of international firms (Carpenter, Sanders, & Gregersen, 2001; Daily, Certo, & Dalton, 2000; Sambharya, 1996).

Global leaders also report benefits of international assignments. In a survey conducted by Gregersen, Morrison, and Black (1998), 80 percent of respondents indicated that the opportunity to live and work abroad was the most powerful experience that helped them develop their global leadership capabilities. Likewise, Mendenhall and Oddou (1988) reported that expatriates indicated benefits of overseas assignments for their leadership capabilities, including having a more global perspective of the firm's business operations and an increased ability to communicate with and motivate people from different cultural backgrounds.

Although the importance of international assignments for global leadership development is undebatable, questions on how to effectively maximize leaders' learning and development from such assignments remain. As Hall and colleagues (2001, p. 328) remarked, "It is no longer a question of whether you need to use international assignments for leadership development – it is a question of how to make the best of them." Reflecting a similar concern,

McCauley (1986, p. 20) cautioned that “Events provide a stimulus to learn; the actual response of learning itself is never a sure thing.” Hence, more research is needed to understand factors affecting the effectiveness of learning from the experiences gained through international assignments.

In response, recent research has begun to pay attention to individual factors that affect how much individuals learn from their international assignments (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996; Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997; Van Velsor, Moxley, & Bunker, 2004). For example, Spreitzer and colleagues (1997) described ability to learn as including taking a proactive approach to learning, adapting to changes in the environment, learning from mistakes, and seeking and using feedback to make sense of the work environment. Van Velsor and colleagues (2004) highlighted other relevant characteristics including cognitive abilities, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and personality traits such as openness to experience and conscientiousness. Van Dyne and Ang (2006) described differences in global leader initiative to span structural holes as a key characteristic that differentiates those with high performance and positive reputations from those who do not thrive in international assignments.

What is still unclear, however, is *how* or *what processes* allow leaders to learn from their international experiences. Without a fuller, theoretical understanding of the processes that enable effective learning from experience, research is unlikely to guide practice on how organizations and leaders can best design and use international assignments for leadership development. Without this understanding, we are also less likely to articulate what capabilities global leaders need to learn from their international experiences and why these capabilities are important.

These gaps prompted us to ask several questions. What theoretical frameworks can inform research on the processes that enhance experience-based learning? How do global leaders translate their international and cross-cultural experiences into knowledge and skills that enhance their effectiveness? What attributes enhance the capabilities of global leaders to learn from their experiences?

In response to these questions, this chapter aims to provide a deeper and more systematic understanding of (i) the processes that translate global leaders’ international experiences into learning and enhanced effectiveness and (ii) the individual leader attributes that enhance their learning processes. Our point is that despite the popular emphasis on international assignments as a means of providing developmental experiences for global leaders, we know very little about the processes through which these experiences are translated into learning and effectiveness. Articulating the learning processes and differences in leader capabilities to learn from experience

should help organizations and individuals better leverage their international assignments for developing global leadership capabilities.

To this end, we integrate two streams of research to inform our research questions. First, we apply experiential learning theory (ELT; Kolb, 1984) to expound on the processes that translate global leaders’ developmental experiences into learning. Defined as the “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38), ELT has immense potential to enhance the field’s understanding of how global leaders learn from their developmental experiences. Surprisingly, however, few management papers have done so. In our model, we build upon Kolb’s (1984) formulation of ELT to explore the blackbox between international experience and the learning outcomes of enhanced knowledge and skills.

Second, we examine how the novel construct of cultural intelligence (CQ; Earley & Ang, 2003; Ang & Van Dyne, 2008a), defined as an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings, affects the leader’s experiential learning cycle. CQ, with its specific relevance to unfamiliar cross-cultural contexts, is a capability that should affect learning effectiveness in the context of international assignments. Our focus in this chapter, on CQ as a learning capability, offers a fresh perspective to existing research on CQ, which has examined CQ for its impact on expatriate adjustment (Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2006), interpersonal trust (Rockstuhl & Ng, 2008), consequences of short-term business travel (Tay, Westman, & Chia, 2008), and performance outcomes (Ang et al., 2007). Thus, beyond informing the literature on global leadership development, our model also presents an additional reason why CQ is important for global leaders. Fig. 1 presents an overview of our model.

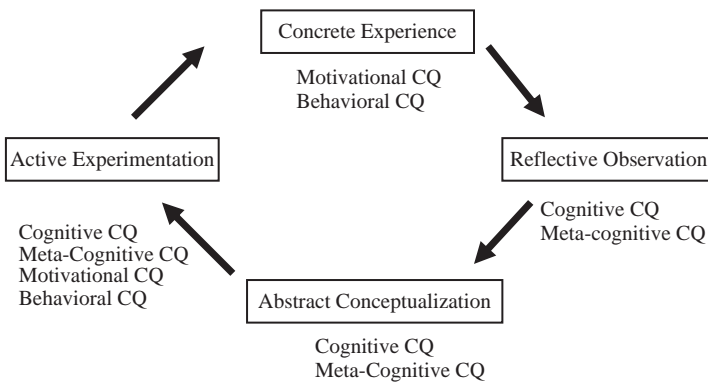


Fig. 1. Learning Stages in the Experiential Learning Theory and Enabling CQ Capabilities.

In the following sections, we elaborate on our theoretical model on how CQ capabilities will affect global leaders' ability to learn from their experiences. Specifically, we begin with a brief review of ELT (Kolb, 1984), followed by its application to global leadership development. We then describe the four-factor conceptualization of CQ and consider its role in global leader learning processes. We conclude with a discussion of implications for organizations and future research.

THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Experiential Learning Theory

ELT argues that experience plays a central role in learning and development. Kolb's (1984) formulation of ELT draws on the work of prominent educational and organizational scholars, including John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, who share the common view that learning involves integrating experience with concepts and linking observations to actions (see especially Dewey, 1938).

There are at least three reasons why the ELT theoretical framework should inform existing research on developing global leaders through international assignments. First, unlike traditional learning theories that focus on learning as behavioral or cognitive outcomes, ELT emphasizes learning as a process (Kolb, 1984). This process-oriented theory is consistent with our focus on understanding the intervening mechanisms that translate global leaders' experiences into enhanced skills and knowledge.

Second, ELT views learning as a holistic process of adapting to the world that goes beyond cognitive and perceptive faculties. Instead, learning requires the integrated functioning of the total person, which includes thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving. Furthermore, learning involves transactions between the person and the environment, where each influences the other in a reciprocal manner (Kolb, 1984). These premises of ELT parallel the nature of international assignments, where leaders have real responsibilities and goals to achieve in complex and dynamic environments.

Third, ELT views learning as a continuous process where knowledge is continuously derived from and tested against the learner's experiences. This implies that relearning, such as changing or modifying old ideas and integrating old ideas with new ones, is an important component in learning (Kolb, 1984). We argue that this emphasis on a continuous and dynamic cycle of learning is particularly crucial for global leaders given the uncertainties and complexities of culturally diverse business settings.

Kolb's (1984) ELT proposed a four-stage learning process based on two fundamental processes that enable learning from experience: (1) grasping the experience and (2) transforming the experience. Both dimensions are essential for learning because having (grasping) an experience without doing anything with it (transforming) is not sufficient. On the contrary, transformation cannot be done without an experience that can be acted upon.

Based on these two central components of grasping and transforming experience, the four-stage learning cycle comprises two dialectically related modes of grasping experience – concrete experience versus abstract conceptualization – and two dialectically related modes of transforming experience – reflective observation versus active experimentation. Concrete experiences and abstract conceptualization are different ways of grasping the experience. Concrete experiences focus on tangible elements of the immediate experience, while abstract conceptualization relies on conceptual interpretation and symbolic representation of the experience. Likewise, reflective observation and active experimentation are two different ways of acting upon the experience. Reflective observation relies on internal processing, while active experimentation emphasizes actual manipulation of the external world.

Put together, Kolb's ELT model portrays a learning cycle where the learner "touches all the bases" of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting – in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Specific tangible episodes or events (concrete experiences) are the basis for descriptive processing (reflective observations), which are then assimilated and distilled into conceptual interpretations (abstract conceptualization) that become the basis for action (active experimentation). This fourth step (actively testing ideas in the real world) generates new experiences for the learner and triggers another cycle of learning (concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation).

Experiential Learning in International Assignments

International assignments offer global leaders valuable developmental experiences. However, not all international assignments are equally developmental in nature (Oddou, Mendenhall, & Ritchie, 2000), nor are all leaders equally likely to learn from these experiences (McCauley, 1986). For instance, company international travel policies that emphasize short-term overseas

assignments with efficient use of time and financial resources often dilute or wash out developmental opportunities for the leader (Oddou et al., 2000). Likewise, individual leader learning ability and personality traits influence whether learning opportunities are maximized during overseas assignments (Dalton & Ernst, 2004).

To date, the literature on global leadership development has recognized that both organizational and personal factors are important boundary conditions that can affect the usefulness of international experiences for developing leadership capabilities. Research, however, has not sufficiently considered how these organizational and individual factors influence learning processes and learning effectiveness. This is, in part, due to the absence of a theoretical framework that depicts how global leaders learn and develop from their experiences.

We suggest that ELT addresses this critical gap and hence has the potential to advance understanding of global leadership development. Specifically, we contend that merely providing global leaders with the concrete experiences of international management or cross-cultural interactions does not ensure learning. Applying CQ to ELT allows us to propose that *whether* and *how much* global leaders learn and benefit from cross-cultural and international experience depends on whether they follow through with all four stages of experiential learning: concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. We argue that both organizations and individuals play important roles in ensuring that all four components of the ELT model are activated. In the next section, we discuss how individual CQ capabilities can affect the learning cycles depicted in ELT. Then later in the section on practical implications, we consider what organizations can do to facilitate effective experience-based learning.

Cultural Intelligence

A major objective and highlight of this chapter is our focus on CQ as a set of learning capabilities that allows global leaders to maximize their learning from international experiences. This focus is consistent with the major thrust of ELT research that examines individual differences in preferences and abilities to engage in the four modes of learning. Examples include the Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 1999a, 1999b), the Adaptive Style Inventory (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1993), and the Learning Skills Profile (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991). In essence, ELT suggests that individuals who are able to

adapt their learning styles to balance the creative tensions and integrate the dual dialectics of grasping experience (immediate and concrete experiences with abstract conceptual interpretation) and transforming experience (reflective observation with active experimentation) will be more effective learners (e.g., Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002).

Building on this stream of research, we position CQ as a set of learning capabilities that influences the extent to which individuals engage in the four learning modes of experiencing (grasping), reflecting (transforming), observing (grasping), and acting (transforming) when exposed to cross-cultural learning opportunities. Focusing specifically on CQ, rather than on generic learning styles, fits the international context of our research questions on global leader learning and effectiveness. In the next section, we review Earley and Ang's (2003) conceptualization of CQ and then build on this to discuss CQ and effective experiential learning for global leadership development.

CQ refers to an individual's capabilities to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003). CQ is a timely concept given the prevalence and importance of effective cross-cultural interactions and management. The theory of CQ is drawn from Sternberg and Detterman's (1986) framework of multiple intelligences, which integrates multiple perspectives of intelligence to propose four complementary ways of conceptualizing individual-level intelligence: (a) metacognitive intelligence refers to awareness and control of cognitions used to acquire and understand information; (b) cognitive intelligence refers to knowledge and knowledge structures; (c) motivational intelligence acknowledges that most cognition is motivated and thus focuses on the magnitude and direction of energy as a locus of intelligence; and (d) behavioral intelligence focuses on individual capabilities at the action level (behavior). This framework is noteworthy because it recognizes multiple forms of intelligence, unlike traditional research that has focused narrowly on linguistic, logical-mathematical, and spatial intelligence, and ignored forms of intelligence related to self-regulation and interpersonal relations (Gardner, 1993).

Drawing on these contemporary perspectives on intelligence, Earley and Ang (2003) conceptualized CQ as a multidimensional construct with mental (metacognitive and cognitive), motivational, and behavioral components (see also Ang & Van Dyne, 2008b). Metacognitive CQ is the capability for consciousness and awareness during intercultural interactions. It reflects mental capabilities to acquire and understand culturally diverse situations and includes knowledge of and control over individual thought processes (Flavell, 1979) relating to culture. Relevant capabilities include planning,

monitoring, and revising mental models. Those with high metacognitive CQ are consciously aware and mindful of cultural preferences and norms before and during interactions. They question cultural assumptions and adjust mental models during and after experiences (Nelson, 1996).

While metacognitive CQ focuses on higher order cognitive processes, cognitive CQ focuses on knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in different cultural settings acquired from education and personal experiences. This includes knowledge of economic, legal, and social systems of different cultures (Triandis, 1994). Individuals with high cognitive CQ are able to anticipate and understand similarities and differences across cultural situations. As a result, they are more likely to have accurate expectations and less likely to make inaccurate interpretations of cultural interactions (e.g., Triandis, 1995).

In addition to mental capabilities that foster understanding of other cultures, CQ also includes the motivational capability to cope with ambiguous and unfamiliar settings. Motivational CQ is the capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences and is based on the expectancy-value theory of motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) that includes intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2002). Those with high motivational CQ experience intrinsic satisfaction and are confident about their ability to function in culturally diverse settings.

The fourth aspect of CQ recognizes that cultural understanding (mental) and interest (motivational) must be complemented with behavioral flexibility to exhibit appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions, based on cultural values of a specific setting (Hall, 1959). Thus, behavioral CQ is the capability to exhibit situationally appropriate actions from a broad repertoire of verbal and non-verbal behaviors such as being able to exhibit culturally appropriate words, tones, gestures, and facial expressions (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988).

A major contribution of this approach is that CQ provides a theoretical framework that can be used to integrate the previously fragmented research on intercultural competencies (Gelfand, Imai, & Fehr, 2008). To date, CQ research has extended the conceptualization and theoretical grounding of CQ (e.g., Ng & Earley, 2006; Triandis, 2006) and has begun to examine relationships with cultural adaptation and performance (Ang et al., 2007), expatriate effectiveness (Templer et al., 2006; Janssens & Cappellen, 2008; Kim, Kirkman, & Chen, 2008; Shaffer & Miller, 2008), personality (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006; Oolders, Chernyshenko, & Stark, 2008), intercultural training (Earley & Peterson, 2004; Harris & Lievens, 2005),

and multicultural teams (e.g., Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Janssens & Brett, 2006; Rockstuhl & Ng, 2008).

CQ and Experiential Learning Capabilities

Unlike existing research on CQ that has theorized and demonstrated the importance of CQ for performance in the cross-cultural contexts, this chapter focuses on CQ as a set of *learning* capabilities that are important for global leaders. Specifically, we consider how the four CQ dimensions affect an individual's likelihood to engage in the four stages of experiential learning – concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Fig. 1 summarizes the CQ dimensions that have direct relevance for the four experiential learning stages.

Concrete Experience

Experiential learning begins with a concrete experience. Individuals, however, differ in level of involvement and the degree to which they enjoy learning from concrete experiences (Black, 2006). According to Kolb (1984), individuals with an orientation toward concrete experience are open to new experiences, emphasize feeling rather than thinking, and function well in unstructured situations.

In the context of international assignments, individuals differ in their degree of cultural involvement and hence the amount and quality of cross-cultural experiences they have. Stahl and Caligiuri (2005), for instance, suggested that expatriates who adopt an emotion-focused coping strategy tend to avoid contact with host country locals to deflect culture shock. These individuals are therefore less likely to benefit developmentally from their international assignments because they have fewer concrete experiences to serve as the basis for learning. We suggest that two CQ dimensions – motivational CQ and behavioral CQ – will affect the amount and quality of concrete experiences leaders seek during international assignments.

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2002) suggests that individuals who are more confident of their ability to complete a particular task are more likely to initiate effort, persist in their efforts, and perform better. Given that intercultural interactions are typically stressful because of unfamiliar cultural norms and cues (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Oberg, 1960; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006), we suggest those with high motivational CQ – those who are interested in and feel efficacious in cross-cultural settings – will actively seek cross-cultural experiences during their

international assignments. This is consistent with Yamazaki and Kayes' (2004) point that valuing people of different cultures is an important learning skill for engaging in concrete experiences. Conversely, those with little interest or confidence will minimize their degree of cultural involvement, thus restricting the amount and quality of concrete cross-cultural experiences they could learn from. Accordingly, we posit a positive relationship between motivational CQ and seeking concrete cross-cultural experiences, such that individuals with greater motivational CQ are more likely to seek concrete cross-cultural experiences and learn from their international assignments.

Gaining concrete experiences requires people to engage with the environment and typically involves interpersonal interactions. As such, those with good interpersonal competencies (Kolb, 1984) are better able to learn from their concrete experiences. Accordingly, we theorize that those with high behavioral CQ – the capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions in culturally diverse situations – will seek and engage in more cross-cultural experiences. Since cultures differ in their norms for appropriate behaviors (Hall, 1959; Triandis, 1994), the ability to display a flexible range of behaviors is critical to creating positive impressions and developing meaningful intercultural relationships (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984). Building relationships with locals, in turn, creates more opportunities for cross-cultural contact, which facilitates learning (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). Accordingly, we suggest a positive relationship between behavioral CQ and seeking concrete cross-cultural experiences such that individuals with greater behavioral CQ are more likely to seek concrete cross-cultural experiences and learn from their international assignments.

We do not posit relationships for cognitive CQ and metacognitive CQ with concrete experience. This is because the two mental CQ capabilities emphasize knowledge and analytical processes involved in reasoning about cultural issues. Neither of these mental CQ capabilities contributes directly to seeking concrete experiences. They are, however, critically important for the next two stages of the experiential learning cycle, as described in the following sections.

Reflective Observation

Reflective observation is the internal processing that occurs when people think about experiences and reflect critically on their assumptions and beliefs. This allows them to understand their role in shaping the experience (Schon, 1987). Reflective observation helps people to describe the situation objectively and develop an understanding of why things happen (Kolb &

Kolb, 2005). It also allows them to consider different perspectives or views of the situation.

We argue that both cognitive CQ and metacognitive CQ are important for reflective observation. Individuals high in cognitive CQ possess elaborate cultural schemas, defined as mental representations of patterns of social interaction characteristic of particular cultural groups (Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984). Having elaborate cultural schemas with many interconnections enhances conceptually driven information processing (Hanges, Dorfman, Shteynbert, & Bates, 2006; Taylor & Crocker, 1981) and enables more accurate identification and understanding of cultural issues. Bird, Heinbuch, Dunbar, and McNulty (1993), for instance, demonstrated that area studies training aimed at increasing cultural knowledge enhanced accuracy of interpreting social behaviors across cultures because trained participants were less likely to apply their own cultural assumptions to other cultures. Similarly, Ang and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that cognitive CQ enhanced accuracy of judgment and decision-making about cross-cultural interactions.

Those with high cognitive CQ have greater understanding of differences and similarities across cultural systems. Thus, they are more aware of what cues they should look for. They are also less likely to make negative evaluations of cultural norms and behaviors and are more objective and accurate in their observations of cross-cultural experiences (Osland & Bird, 2000). We thus posit a positive relationship between cognitive CQ and reflective observation of cross-cultural experiences such that individuals with greater cognitive CQ are more likely to reflect on their cross-cultural experiences and learn from their international assignments.

We also suggest that reflective observation requires a high level of metacognitive CQ – thinking about thought processes related to cross-cultural experiences. Those with high metacognitive CQ monitor and think about their own assumptions, beliefs, and emotions as well as the way they process external environment and behavioral cues provided by others. They are more active in their cognitive processing of observations as they create new categories in their memory storage and actively consider multiple perspectives in making sense of their experiences (Flavell, 1979). Thus, we theorize a positive relationship between metacognitive capabilities and the learning mode of reflective observation such that individuals with greater metacognitive CQ are more likely to reflect on their cross-cultural experiences and learn from their international assignments.

Given that reflective observation emphasizes perceptual and cognitive capabilities, we do not expect motivational CQ or behavioral CQ, which deal

with the “heart” and the “body” of the learner, respectively (Earley, Ang, & Tan, 2006), to be of direct relevance to this stage of experiential learning.

Abstract Conceptualization

The third stage of experiential learning requires learners to distill their reflections into more general concepts that can guide their future actions. Abstract conceptualization allows people to build general theories using scientific as opposed to intuitive approaches. Therefore, they emphasize thinking rather than feeling (Kolb, 1984).

As with reflective observation, we suggest that cognitive CQ and metacognitive CQ are key to abstract conceptualization. Research in cognitive psychology demonstrates that experts – defined as individuals with extensive knowledge gained from experience – have better-organized knowledge structures with stronger linkages among domain-related concepts. This allows them to conceptualize problems more efficiently and effectively in terms of the relevant principles. In contrast, novice representations tend to be based on salient surface elements (Chase & Simon, 1973; Chi, Glaser, & Rees, 1982). Research also shows that existing knowledge affects knowledge acquisition because the lack of pre-organized schemas to aid in classification of knowledge (Kalyuga, Ayres, Chandler, & Sweller, 2003) causes novices to experience overload in processing new information.

Accordingly, we posit that individuals with higher cognitive CQ will be more accurate and effective in developing general ideas and conceptual interpretations of culture. This is because they have more organized and elaborated knowledge structures that enhance their information processing and abstract conceptualization. Without a fundamental understanding of cultural concepts (low cognitive CQ), insights and reflections about particular experiences are less effectively integrated into coherent knowledge structures about culture, thus impeding the formation of higher order concepts and theories. Thus, we theorize that individuals with greater cognitive CQ are more likely to develop conceptual interpretations of cross-cultural experiences and learn from their international assignments.

In addition, metacognitive CQ is also directly relevant to abstract conceptualization. This is because many cross-cultural situations do not fit typical norms or tendencies, even when expectations are based on scientific and rigorous research (Osland & Bird, 2000). Instead, cultural paradoxes – situations or interactions that involve contradictory norms or behaviors – are common in all cultures. Moreover, Osland and Osland (2006) reported that expatriates who are more involved in the host culture are more likely to encounter paradoxes.

Thus, we argue that having the metacognitive CQ capability of thinking about thinking is also important for abstract conceptualization. Considering personal assumptions and being open to disconfirming experiences is a form of higher order reasoning that allows individuals to analyze new cross-cultural experiences without being biased or constrained by past experiences or expectations (Earley & Ang, 2003). Those with high metacognitive CQ have analogical reasoning capabilities that enable them to translate their insights from a particular experience into more general concepts and interpretations that can be applied to other cultural contexts. Thus, we suggest that individuals with greater metacognitive CQ are more likely to develop conceptual interpretations based on cross-cultural experience and learn from their international assignments.

We do not posit relationships for motivational CQ and behavioral CQ here because abstract conceptualization primarily involves mental capabilities. The capabilities of channeling energy (motivational CQ) or displaying appropriate behaviors (behavioral CQ) are less relevant to the mental processes of developing conceptual interpretations.

Active Experimentation

The last stage of the ELT model is actively testing and experimenting to see if enhanced understanding fits reality. Active experimentation involves a pragmatic focus on influencing the environment and getting things done (Kolb, 1984). Since active experimentation involves the entire person, we expect all four CQ capabilities to be important. First, cognitive CQ and metacognitive CQ are important because they enable learners to organize and map out action plans. Action, without clear goals and plans, is less likely to produce desired outcomes. Thus, those with enhanced understanding of culture (cognitive CQ) and those who have clear plans and strategies for action (metacognitive CQ) are more likely to follow-through and test their ideas and understandings. Accordingly, we theorize positive relationships for cognitive CQ and metacognitive CQ with active experimentation in cross-cultural situations.

Second, motivational CQ is also important for active experimentation. Individuals with the desire and self-efficacy to deal with cross-cultural interactions tend to seek and persist in challenging cross-cultural situations (Bandura, 2002). Moreover, given that self-efficacy is a “generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral subskills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes” (Bandura, 1997, p. 37), having high motivational CQ enables learners to carry out sequences of action steps to achieve specific goals (Earley et al., 2006).

Accordingly, we suggest that individuals with greater motivational CQ are more likely to implement and test their ideas in cross-cultural situations and learn from their international assignments.

Finally, since active experimentation typically involves interaction, behavioral CQ is also critical for effectiveness in cross-cultural interactions. One reason is language. Those who are not flexible in their language skills have fewer opportunities for meaningful contact with locals. This limits the quantity as well as quality of their cross-cultural experience and makes it difficult to engage in active experimentation. In addition, having the capability to adapt verbal and non-verbal behaviors to specific cultural contexts provides people with greater latitude for experimentation. In other words, those with high behavioral CQ are less constrained and better situated to implement and test their ideas. Therefore, we posit a positive relationship between behavioral CQ and active experimentation in cross-cultural situations such that individuals with greater behavioral CQ are more likely to implement and test their ideas in the cross-cultural situations and learn from their international assignments.

Overall, our theory suggests that global leaders need to engage repeatedly in all four stages of experiential learning (concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation) to maximize their learning from international assignments. In addition, our theory suggests that specific types of CQ capabilities are linked to specific stages of experiential learning. Motivational CQ and behavioral CQ facilitate concrete experience. Cognitive CQ and metacognitive CQ facilitate reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. All four CQ capabilities enhance active experimentation in culturally diverse settings.

Our theory also suggests that leaders who are low in specific CQ capabilities will have the tendency to short-circuit the experiential learning cycle. Instead of using all four stages of experiential learning (seeking concrete experiences, developing reflective observations, formulating abstract conceptualizations, and actively testing and experimenting), these individuals may overemphasize some stages at the expense of other stages. This, in turn, will limit their learning and most likely will detract from their effectiveness as global leaders. For instance, leaders with high motivational CQ and high behavioral CQ may involve themselves in many concrete experiences in international settings. However, without the cognitive CQ and metacognitive CQ capabilities, they will not learn fully from their experiences. This is because they lack the observational skills and conceptual understanding to transform their experiences into knowledge they can use to guide them in the future. Conversely, leaders with high cognitive CQ and

high metacognitive CQ may develop sophisticated understanding of different cultures. Without the motivation or behavioral flexibility to venture out into new cultural settings, they will not encounter powerful and life-transforming experiences that would stimulate greater learning and development. Instead, cross-cultural learning for these individuals remains an intellectual exercise that lacks the surprises and shocks that often jolt people into discovery and growth (Hall et al., 2001).

In sum, we have argued that individual CQ capabilities are important competencies that enhance learning acquired through international experiences. Global leaders who have all four CQ capabilities can balance and integrate the dual dialectics of conceptualizing/experiencing and acting/reflecting as part of their learning processes. This allows them to balance the creative tensions between grasping experience (immediate and concrete experiences with abstract conceptual interpretation) and transforming experience (reflective observation with active experimentation). It also allows them to be more effective learners.

Returning to our primary research question about how global leaders translate experiences into learning, we offer one final, integrative set of relationships. Based on ELT, we suggest that global leaders with high CQ will engage in all four stages of the experiential learning cycle and that these learning behaviors (seeking concrete experiences, reflecting on observations, interpreting conceptually, and actively experimenting) will enhance their learning. This in turn will lead to enhanced global leader effectiveness. Fig. 2 summarizes these relationships.

DISCUSSION

Our model, which integrates CQ and experiential learning, offers two sets of key insights for organizational policies and interventions that can help maximize the developmental benefits of international assignments for global leaders. We first discuss the organizational implications stemming from

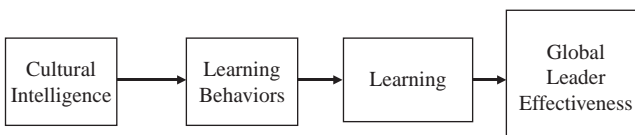


Fig. 2. Cultural Intelligence, Learning, and Global Leader Effectiveness.

consideration of ELT, followed by implications arising from consideration of CQ.

Implications Based on ELT

Experiential learning suggests that leaders must be engaged by cross-cultural experiences to learn from their international assignments. This is an important point because simply being assigned to an international assignment does not assure that global leaders will actively experience each of the four stages of ELT. Expatriate assignments entail demanding work responsibilities and often include generous pay packages with expensive cars and exclusive homes that can isolate global leaders from the host country culture. Even in short-term overseas trips, Oddou and colleagues (2000) observed that organizational policies that focus on efficient and effective travel can shelter global leaders in a “bubble” that separates them from direct and meaningful contact with the local culture. To avoid this sort of isolation, Kolb and Kolb (2005) emphasized the importance of providing “space” – physical, mental, and psychological – so that global leaders feel they can (and should) participate actively in all four stages of experiential learning.

To maximize experiential learning for leadership development, organizations can encourage their leaders to get involved in the host culture in several ways. First, emphasizing *concrete experiences* should enhance experiential learning. For example, organizations can clearly explain that leadership development is an important component of the assignment. This framing should help global leaders view the experience as more than just another business trip (Oddou et al., 2000) or just another work assignment. Another strategy is to structure international assignments so that they facilitate interdependence with locals. This will provide leaders with more concrete and meaningful interactions with locals, which should increase their sense of being engaged by the local culture (Osland & Osland, 2006). Organizations could also consider rewarding leaders for learning foreign languages and increasing their knowledge of the local culture during their assignments. Each of these should facilitate and encourage cultural involvement (Oddou et al., 2000).

The second stage of experiential learning is *reflective observation*. Global leaders have heavy responsibilities and workload that allow them very little time for reflection. Recognizing this reality, Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) recommended that international management programs should factor in

modules for personal reflection. Results demonstrated this was extremely useful and revealing for participants. As one manager commented “It was great meeting myself!” (p. 68). Another way to stimulate reflection is encouraging global leaders to be disciplined and keep a journal to document their cross-cultural experiences and learning points (Oddou et al., 2000). By writing down their experiences and thoughts, global leaders are more likely to compare their experiences with their expectations. They also will be more likely to compare their experiences across time and across situations. Thus, organizations can enhance experiential learning by encouraging global leaders to set aside time to reflect on their cultural experiences.

The third state of the experiential learning process, *abstract conceptualization*, also has specific implications for organizations and things organizations can do to enhance learning that occurs as a function of international assignments. For example, organizations can encourage global leaders to work toward forming more general understanding about cultures. As such, training that focuses on inductive logic and reasoning skills can help global leaders make sense of as well as translate their concrete experiences and reflections into more abstract understanding of the culture (Earley & Peterson, 2004). For example, organizations can describe the benefits of developing more abstract and general appreciation of different cultures based on specific personal experiences rather than based on stereotypical tendencies. Organizations can also explain how these sorts of abstract conceptualizations can be applied across settings and used in future jobs. For example, consolidating experiences to form more general guiding principles for effective cross-cultural interaction and leadership should help leaders learn from their experiences. Unfortunately, in preparing global leaders for international assignments, most training programs focus on providing country-specific knowledge (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Although such training is important for anticipating cross-cultural differences, it does not adequately equip global leaders with the capability to engage in abstract conceptualization that can help them understand novel and paradoxical situations.

The final stage in the ELT process is *active experimentation*. This involves attempts to apply newly acquired insights and ideas. Organizations can facilitate this process by providing incentives and resources that encourage global leaders to set specific and measurable developmental goals for exploration and experimentation (Pucik, 2006). They also can make sure that reward systems do not contradict or dampen the importance of development. For example, if goals emphasize short-term business results, global leaders will be less likely to maximize experiential learning opportunities. Another

organizational option would be to provide coaching and mentoring resources to leaders in their experimentation processes and provide them with feedback. All of these should promote active learning (e.g., McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; Oddou et al., 2000).

Implications Based on CQ

The CQ framework also has important implications for ways in which organizations can enhance learning that results from international assignments. We focus on two areas that are especially salient: selection and training.

Selection is the basic mechanism organizations use to get the right people into the right positions (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). When organizations view experiential learning and development as important components of international assignments, CQ can serve as an important selection tool. As we have explicated in our model, there are solid theoretical reasons for expecting that those with higher CQ (metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ) will be better able to utilize all four stages of the experiential learning process. As a result and as depicted in Fig. 2, they should engage in more learning behaviors that will enhance their learning. In turn, this should lead to higher long-term overall effectiveness. Thus, CQ can be used to select people for overseas assignments when organizations emphasize developmental goals as part of the assignment.

The second organizational implication is based on the fact that CQ is a malleable capability that can be enhanced over time through experience and training (Earley & Peterson, 2004). As such, organizations can develop training programs to enhance global leader CQ capabilities. These programs can prepare leaders to deal with unfamiliar cross-cultural interactions and enhance their ability to learn from their cross-cultural experiences. This would entail moving beyond traditional cross-cultural training methods that focus on imparting cultural knowledge (cognitive CQ) and instead emphasize metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ. Earley and Peterson (2004) described training interventions that target these CQ capabilities such as cognitive structure analysis for examining knowledge structures and enhancing awareness and reflection (metacognitive CQ). They also include interventions that help global leaders internalize the goal of getting engaged in the local culture (motivational CQ). Finally, training interventions can also use dramaturgical exercises such as role-plays and simulations involving physical, emotional, and sensory processes to help global leaders enhance flexibility of their actions (behavioral CQ).

Research Directions

In this last section of the chapter, we consider research implications of our integration of CQ and experiential learning. We note that Spreitzer and colleagues (1997, p. 26) concluded that “perhaps the most important direction for future research is the creation of a theoretical framework for understanding the *processes* by which end-state competencies and the ability to learn from experience contribute to the development of executive potential” (*italics added*). We suggest that our model that integrates CQ and ELT to delineate specific links between CQ capabilities and the four stages of experiential learning represents an important step toward reaching this goal. This is because ELT and CQ frameworks can enrich our understanding of how global leaders can best learn from their international experiences. Thus, future research should be able to use our model as a guide for empirical examination.

Specifically, research can examine the relationships between CQ factors and ELT stages. This should provide valuable insights for the growing literature on learning capabilities. Studies could assess CQ capabilities and test whether specific CQ capabilities facilitate specific learning stages. Given potential problems with self-report bias, these studies should assess CQ and learning stages using multiple methods and sources. Alternatively, research could track individual learning experiences through reflection logs or journals and assess whether learning differs across individuals with varying CQ capabilities.

Another stream of research can examine CQ capabilities, different types of experiential learning, training, and leadership development. Here, we recommend quasi-experimental designs that contrast responses to specific training interventions as a function of CQ capabilities. It also would be useful to consider different experiential learning techniques as applied to each of the four stages in the experiential learning cycle. This would allow examination of differences in timing and training techniques. It would be especially interesting to see which of these leads to the greatest improvement in global leadership capabilities as a result of overseas assignments. To do this, researchers could identify two similar groups of global leaders who have been selected for overseas assignments. In one group, this would involve assessment of CQ (Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh, 2008) and experiential learning training before departure. Training would include information on the four stages of learning as well as hands-on skill development targeted at experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. The other group, which would represent the control condition, would involve assessment of CQ followed

by traditional cross-cultural training that emphasizes factual knowledge of cultures. After, for example, three or six months depending on the length of the international assignments, it would be important to measure CQ capabilities as well as global leaders learning experiences. This would allow comparison of training techniques and would also allow examination of CQ – training intervention interactions.

SUMMARY

The primary point of this chapter is that CQ is a set of individual capabilities that allows global leaders to learn from their experiences. Thus, CQ facilitates the transformation of experience into experiential learning. Drawing on ELT, we have argued that mere exposure to cultural diversity and international assignments does not necessarily enhance learning. Instead, global leaders must balance the creative tension of all four stages in the experiential learning process: concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Thus, as Oddou and colleagues (2000, p. 161) commented “it is not the quantity of travel that is important but rather the *quality* of the travel experience that aids global leadership development.”

Consistent with Hall and colleagues (2001), we recommend that organizations should shift their focus from providing *experience* to ensuring that effective *experiential learning* occurs for global leaders. Part of this shift requires the recognition that individuals have different propensities and capabilities to learn from their experiences. Those who are culturally intelligent – individuals who possess the cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, as well as behavioral capabilities for dealing with cross-cultural interactions – will gain more from international assignments and exposure to culturally diverse settings.

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