

FRAMEWORK FOR MODELING AND IMPLEMENTING CROSS-CULTURAL
LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES – ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF PRIOR RESEARCH

Framework for Modeling and Implementing Cross-Cultural Leadership Competencies -
Analysis and Synthesis of Prior Research

John Michael Donohue

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Abstract

Leadership efficacy in a global environment requires that managers fully comprehend cross-cultural leadership competencies and be capable of modeling, synthesizing, and implementing these competencies in diverse occupational settings. In this paper, the author advances a conceptual framework on which these cross-cultural competencies can be organized and summarized based on the principal schools of thought, tendencies in the academic literature, and common grounds within current scholarly research. The author evaluates the implications of these main concepts for practicing managers with a focus on application to management practice, how the presence or lack of these competencies may affect the performance of the organization, and their impact on positive social change. The author also provides examples of how global organizations are or are not utilizing global leadership practices and what this means for the future of these organizations.

Keywords: cross-cultural management, leadership competencies, global organizations

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A central element to the Foundations of Global Leadership theme is cross-cultural leadership competencies. Leadership efficacy in a global environment requires that managers fully comprehend these competencies and be capable of modeling, synthesizing, and implementing them across diverse occupational settings. Cross-cultural competencies are positively correlated to global leadership effectiveness and in fact have predictive capacity with regard to this effectiveness. In retrospect, the formalization of cross-cultural competencies has developed in tandem with the expanding global competitive market. In a prospective sense, understanding these competencies illuminates a forward path toward the organization's ability to shape its own future.

A Primer on the Global Environment and the Global Executive

Why Cross-Cultural Competencies Matter

For purposes of discussion, it may be useful to first offer the following underlying premise: that an organization which has some degree of global business activities, interests or goals must effectively deploy its limited resources to succeed in those activities just like any other organization. By virtue of its global strategic aims, however, its administration and leadership must command a new set of cross-cultural competencies. Accordingly, global leaders may be defined as high level professionals such as executives, vice presidents, directors, and managers who occupy organizational positions entailing global integration responsibilities, and who play an important role in developing and sustaining the organization's competitive advantage, and in the context of a dynamic global market, organizations who expect to remain competitive must consider certain criteria for the effectiveness of its leaders (Caligiuri and

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Tarique, 2009). Historically, while many North American organizations have taken a global approach to overall business strategy, design of financial systems, marketing, and production and operations, many others have lacked globally competent leaders (Adler and Bartholomew, 1992).

Cross-Cultural Competencies – Their Goal and Identification

By virtue of its global strategic aims, an organization must develop its administration and leadership so that they may command cross-cultural competencies. What specifically comprises the framework of such competencies and what should be its overarching goal? Its goal should be to build global leadership competencies which will, in turn, positively relate to performance on global leadership tasks (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012). In terms of specific cross-cultural competencies, four such frameworks are briefly described below

The Mendenhall Competency Framework

In terms of the specific competencies, Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, and Oddu (2010) indicated that social scientists have delineated over fifty competencies which influence global leadership but many of these overlap conceptually and are separated only by semantic differences. In reducing the number of competencies to a reasonable and non-replicative number, Mendenhall (2006) offers a taxonomy consisting of six major elements: (1) Relationship Competencies; (2) Personal or Psychological Dispositions; (3) Business Expertise; (4) Organizing Expertise; (5) Cognition; and (6) Visioning. Arguably however, Mendenhall's taxonomy is minimally differentiated from competencies that would be required in an organization having no global ambitions.

FRAMEWORK FOR MODELING AND IMPLEMENTING CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES – ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF PRIOR RESEARCH

The Caligiuri Competency Framework

Caligiuri (2006) proposes ten specific tasks of a global leader, and eleven knowledge-skill-ability-personality competencies. The ten global leader tasks include (1) working with colleagues from other countries; (2) interacting with external clients from other countries; (3) interacting with internal clients from other countries; (4) language abilities; (5) must be capable of supervising employees of different nationalities; (6) develop strategic plans on a worldwide scope; (7) budget on a worldwide scope; (8) negotiate with people from other countries; (9) manage foreign suppliers and vendors; and (10) manage risk on a worldwide basis. The eleven knowledge-skill-ability-personality competencies include (1) Culture-general Knowledge; (2) Culture-specific Knowledge; (3) International Business Knowledge; (4) Intercultural Interaction Skills; (5) Foreign Language Skills; (6) Cognitive Ability; (7) Extroversion; (8) Agreeableness; (9) Conscientiousness; (10) Emotional Stability; and (11) Openness or Intellect.

The Gabrielson Seristo Darling Competency Framework

Gabrielson, Seristo, and Darling (2009) provide a framework consisting of seven cross-cultural leadership perspectives, but as in the case of the Mendenhall Competency Framework, there appears to be only minimal differentiation from competencies that would be required in an organization having no global outreach: (1) Paradoxical Thinking; (2) Controlled Reflexing; (3) Intentional Focusing; (4) Instinctive Responding; (5) Inclusive Behaving; (6) Purposeful Trusting; and (7) Relational Being.

The Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, and Oddou Framework

Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, and Oddou (2010) propose a Domain of Intercultural Competence in global leadership having three primary dimensions with various subcompetencies: (1) Perception Management with subcompetencies of nonjudgmentalness,

FRAMEWORK FOR MODELING AND IMPLEMENTING CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES – ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF PRIOR RESEARCH

inquisitiveness, tolerance for ambiguity, cosmopolitanism, and category inclusiveness; (2)

Relationship Management with subcompetencies of relationship interest, interpersonal

engagement, emotional sensitivity, self-awareness, and social flexibility; and (3) Self

Management with subcompetencies of optimism, self-confidence, self-identity, emotional

resilience, non-stress tendency, stress management, and interest flexibility.

Present Scholarship on Cross-Cultural Leadership Competencies

Tendencies in the Academic Literature

In assessing the existing principal schools of thought on cross-cultural leadership competencies, the experiential time frame has been relatively brief, and the field of global leadership itself has suffered from a lack of agreement regarding what the domain of cross-cultural competencies should include (Bird, et al., 2010). Morison (2000) conducted one of the first literature reviews of research which examined issues related to global or cross-cultural leader development, finding that most of the existing literature was limited to essays based on small convenient samples, and on the author's consulting work.

Common Grounds in the Academic Literature

In contrast to the preceding shortfalls, Bird, et al. (2010) showed that literature on global leadership has exhibited an evolution of six core dimensions on the development of core competencies comprising a systematic terrain of global leadership constructs: (1) cross-cultural relationship building construct; (2) traits and values construct; (3) cognitive orientation construct; (4) global business expertise construct; (5) global organizing expertise construct; and (6) the visioning construct. Each of the six literature constructs has their own emphasis. Furthermore, all reviews agree that a major dimension of global leadership involves the mastery of intercultural competencies (Bird, et al., 2010).

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Implications for Practicing Managers

Application to Management Practice

Almost no American corporation is immune from the impact of globalization, and for such corporations, they must increasingly cope with diverse cross-cultural stakeholders (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, and House, 2006). What the literature indicates is that cross-cultural leader development is still in itself developing in terms of its appropriate frameworks and various intentions, given a lack of agreement on definition as to what the constructs should include or contain. Advice to global managers needs to be specific enough to help managers understand how to act in different surroundings; and although there may be universal aspects of leadership, people in different countries have a wide variety for assessing their leaders (Javidan, et al., 2006).

Conclusion - Impact on Positive Social Change

An organization which has some degree of global business activities, interests or goals, must effectively deploy its limited resources to succeed in those activities just like any other organization. The organization's global strategic aims require its administration and leadership to command a new set of cross-cultural competencies to ensure the proper execution of global integration responsibilities and competitive advantage. Accordingly, leadership efficacy in a global environment requires that managers fully comprehend cross-cultural leadership competencies and be capable of modeling, synthesizing, and implementing these competencies in diverse occupational settings.

FRAMEWORK FOR MODELING AND IMPLEMENTING CROSS-CULTURAL
LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES – ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF PRIOR RESEARCH

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FRAMEWORK FOR MODELING AND IMPLEMENTING CROSS-CULTURAL
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