Cross-Cultural Coaching (Ccc) Framework for Global Leadership Development

Thomas G. Drape, Ph.D.
Director, School of Business
Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, USA
drapet@erau.edu

Abstract

A critical concern for top management is the development of global leaders with the ability to interact and successfully perform across cultures and around the world. Current training programs are criticized for a lack of direct experience for developing global leaders and the academic literature lacks research and conceptual models on the process for leadership development and learning across cultures. To fill this gap, this article proposes a Cross-Cultural Coaching (CCC) framework weaving together a theoretical and conceptual model on how individuals learn from their cross-cultural experiences to become more effective global leaders. The paper integrates the transformative and experiential learning process through reflection and cross-cultural coaching to develop cultural intelligence. The analysis for this framework connects and links insights from key and supporting theories and concepts overlapping various research disciplines resulting in the emergence of a key framework for global leadership development.

Keywords: Global leadership development, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural coaching, experiential learning theory, transformative learning theory, reflection and reflexive practices

Introduction

With the growth of globalization during the last two decades, a critical concern for companies is the lack of leaders with global leadership competencies (Maznevski et al, 2013). As companies have increased their training programs focused on building these competencies, the literature points to an increasing number of inadequate or failed training programs (Leung et al, 2014; Oddou & Mendenhall, 2013; Stensaker & Gooderham, 2015; Von Glinow, 2001). Scholars have predominately focused on the competency domain of global leadership (Jokinen, 2005) and the first attempt to categorize competencies found 56 competencies associated with effective global leadership (Mendenhall & Osland, 2002).

With the majority focus on generating competencies, very few scholars have focused on the learning process for leaders to develop these global leadership competencies. A better theoretical understanding of the process in global leadership development will assist in designing better and more impactful training programs (Mendenhall et al, 2017). To address this gap in the field of global leadership, this paper develops a theoretical process model of global leadership learning and development focused on direct experience resulting in culturally intelligent behavior.

Culturally intelligent behavior is the ability to successfully adapt to unfamiliar and culturally diverse settings and communicate cross-culturally effectively. Cultural intelligence (CQ) seeks to explain the dimension of intelligence that facilitates the grasping and transforming of experience in order to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003) and is broadly accepted as four individual dimensions consisting of metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral components (Ang et al, 2012).

Models for global leadership argue that competencies and intelligence are best developed through experiences challenging our assumptions and worldviews. These novel experiences result in the remaking or redrawing of mental maps (Black and Gregersen, 2000; Stevens et al, 2015) and the challenges to our assumptions are referred to as trigger events, crucible experiences and transformational processes (McCall and Hollenbeck, 2002; Osland et al., 2006).

The foundational and theoretical role of experience in affecting our learning is captured by the two learning theories, Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). TLT was initially theorized by Mezirow (1991) to explain how our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning we derive from our experiences. ELT (Kolb, 1984) highlights a four-stage continuous learning cycle for understanding and transforming experience into useful knowledge.

Theoretical background

Transformative learning theory (TLT) first emerged on the academic landscape more than 35 years ago and continues as one of the most researched and discussed theories in the field of education and adult learning (Taylor, 2007). Initially theorized by Mezirow (1991; 2000), TLT describes transformative learning as the process by which we transform our taken for-granted frames of reference (a prior interpretation) to construct new or revised interpretations of the meaning of one's experiences. We start to change in our thinking from what we know to how we know considering the underlying meanings in the construction of knowledge (Steyn, 2017).

Meaning schemes are the building block to our underlying meanings and our frames of references as indicated in Figure 1. Meaning schemes are small and narrow in scope including assumptions, feelings and expectations that build through life experiences and change on a more frequent basis. Two important dimensions that the meaning schemes impact are the habit of mind and resulting points of view (Mezirow, 2000) and they are influenced by the surrounding environment including family, community, culture and language (Cranton, 2006). A series of specific meaning schemes comprise our meaning perspectives or frames of reference providing the criteria for judging and evaluating actions as appropriate or inappropriate (Mezirow,1991).
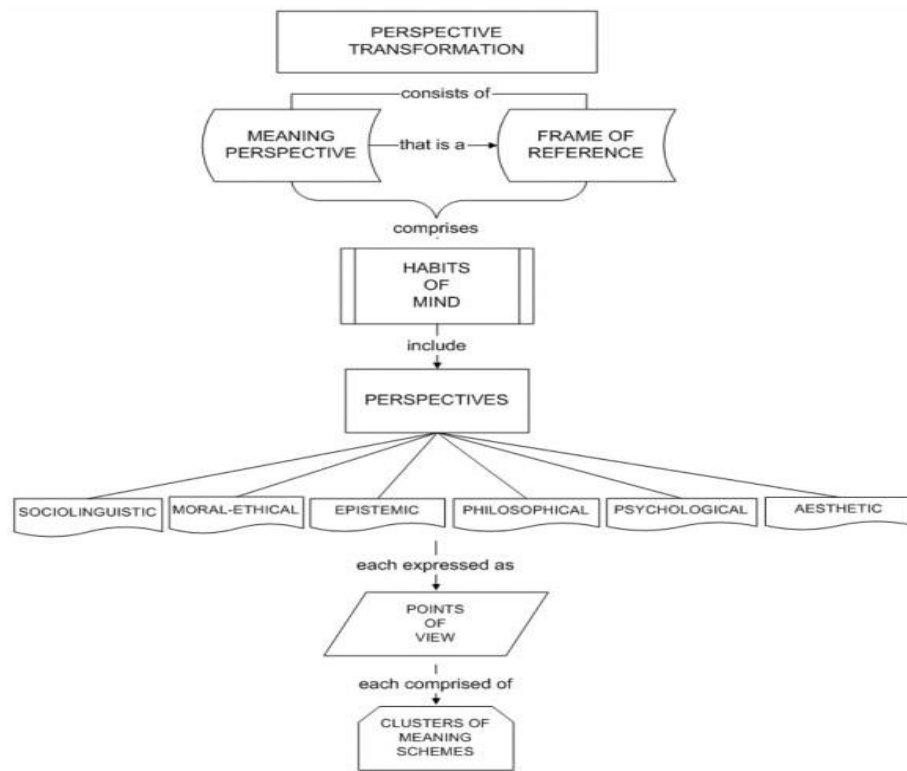
Figure 1: Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Kitchenham, 2008)

Our habits of mind, points of view and subsequent meaning perspectives are often deeply embedded and largely unquestioned until encountering a disorienting dilemma. Disorienting dilemmas are experiences that don't fit our current meaning perspectives resulting in reconsideration of our ways of knowing to fit the new experience into our worldview (Kitchenham, 2008). Learning becomes transformative when the meaning perspectives and frames of references are modified based on these disorienting dilemmas resulting in personal perspective transformation. Experience is the starting point for discussion leading to critical assessment of our assumptions and meaning schemes (Mezirow, 2000).

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is an adult learning theory that highlights the critical role of experience in affecting the process of learning and change. Within ELT, knowledge is created from the combination of grasping and transforming experience through a four-stage learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). From this model of learning, experience is translated through reflection into concepts, which in turn are used as guides for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences. Kolb refers to these four stages as concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE) as shown in Figure 2.
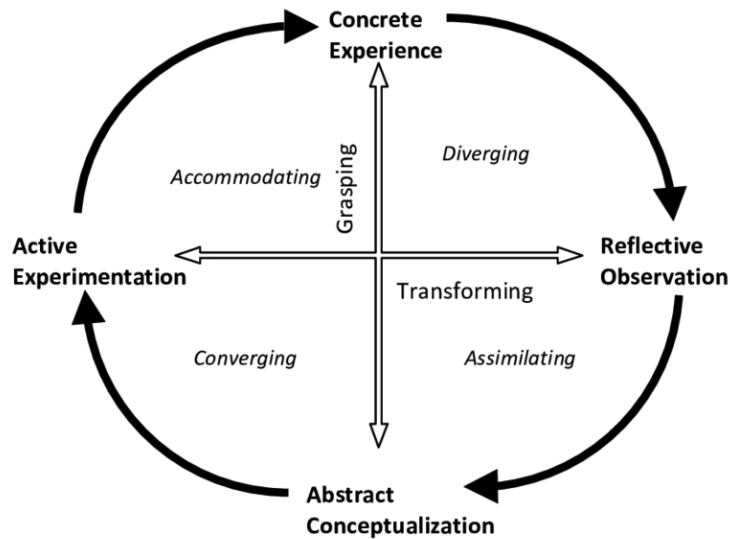
Figure 2. Experiential Learning Cycle

Experiential learning is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension among the four learning modes that is responsive to contextual demands. This process is portrayed as a learning cycle where the learner "touches all the bases"—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting—in a recursive process that is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Experiences are the basis for observations and reflections and these reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn (Kolb, 1984).

Role of Reflection

While direct experience is central to both TLT and ELT, it is the process of reflection that allows for individual transformation leading to the popular phrase that people don't learn from their experiences, they learn from reflecting on their experience. Kolb (1984) defines reflection as an intentional and iterative process focused on improvement by thinking about past experiences, developing an understanding of why things happen and to look critically at situations from different perspectives. Mezirow and Taylor (2009) define reflection as a process where people seek new meaning through critically examination, understanding new meaning structures and transforming meaning perspectives.

Mezirow (1991) distinguishes between three types of reflection as identified in Figure 3; content, process and premise. Content reflection is reflection on the content or description of the problem, while process reflection focuses more on the problem-solving strategies. Both content and process reflection focus on the transformation of the lower-level meaning schemes. Mezirow (2000) later refined his work on critical reflection focusing on content and process reflection resulting in "straightforward transformation" of meaning schemes (Kitchenham, 2008).
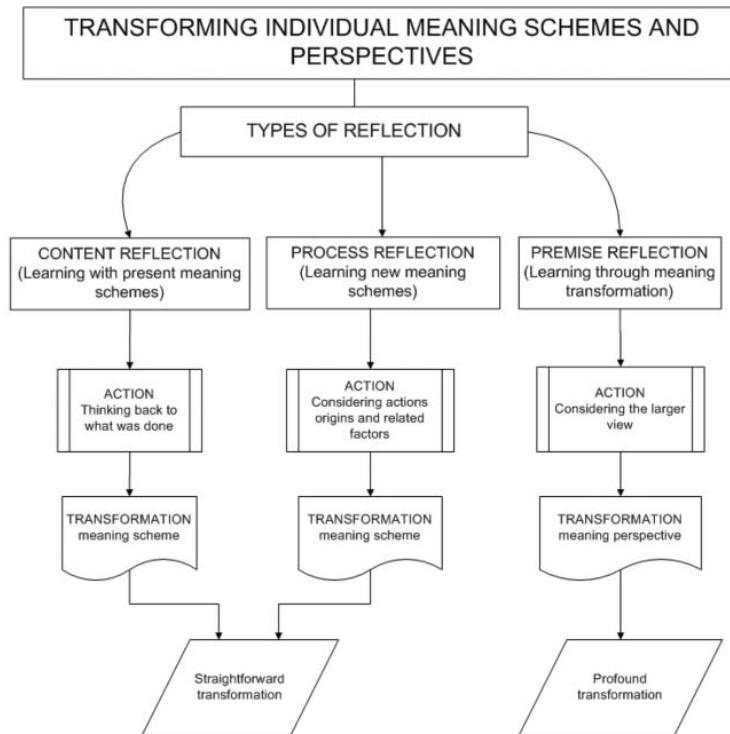
Figure 3: Mezirow's three types of reflection (Mezirow, 2000)

In contrast, premise reflection is less common, but focuses on the more profound transformation of the meaning perspectives through critical reflection. This reframing involves critical self-reflection on one's own assumptions as the basis of premise reflection resulting in "profound transformation" of meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 2000; Kitchenham, 2008). This transformation and reframing commonly involves intensive and difficult emotional struggle as old perspectives become challenged and transformed (Mendenhall et al, 2017).

Reflection and Metacognitive CQ

While CQ comprises four components, our focus is on cultural metacognition as several authors have argued it is the central component of CQ for intercultural capability and cultural intelligence (Thomas et al, 2008). Metacognition focuses on the structure and form of thought and the process to acquire knowledge (Earley & Gibson, 2002). Metacognitive CQ reflects mental capabilities to acquire and understand culturally diverse situations and relevant capabilities including revising mental models and is key for developing cultural intelligence as indicated in Figure 4.
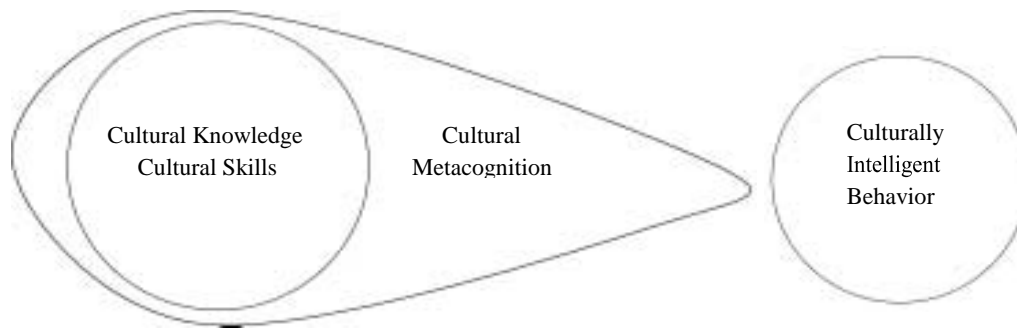
Figure 4: Domain of cultural intelligence (Thomas et al, 2008)

Metacognitive CQ reflects mental capabilities to acquire and understand culturally diverse situations and relevant capabilities including revising mental models and is key for developing cultural intelligence. To enhance metacognition, Blasco et al. (2012) suggest individuals' ability to be critical towards one's own worldviews and frames of reference acquired through prior experiences and to adjust mental models during and after experiences. Metacognitive CQ should also enhance abstract conceptualization as many cross-cultural situations involve cultural paradoxes or contradictory norms or behaviors (Osland et al, 2000).

One key way in which cultural metacognition develops is through reflective observation during cross-cultural interactions and reflecting critically on one's cultural assumptions and beliefs (Ng et al., 2009). Mezirow (1991) emphasized the ability to engage in rational discourse or discussion with others is crucial to transformative learning where critical reflection often occurs through interaction with others by sharing experiences. Moreover, in contrast to everyday discussions, the sharing of experience has greater intentionality as a way to highlight contradictions or blind spots.

Reflection, Metacognitive CQ and Cross-Cultural Coaching

This intentionality of critical reflection through conversation to develop cultural intelligence aligns well with the emerging practice of cross-cultural coaching as reflective practices are used extensively (Lorenz et al, 2018). Booysen (2015) provides practical steps that coaches could use for building metacognitive CQ including journaling, continuous questioning of cultural assumptions and self-explanation. Van der Horst et al (2018) identify a variety of reflexive practices from the literature where coaches can assist with the process of reflection including perspective taking (Nardon & Steers, 2008; Van Dyne et al., 2012), suspending judgement (Triandis, 2006), raising awareness (Whitmore, 2009) and cultivating mindfulness (Thomas, 2006). As an example, cross-cultural coaches would dialog with individuals with individuals on perspective taking viewing their experience from multiple cultural perspectives. The more often one practices perspective taking, the greater the likelihood of creating new and common meaning schemes and perspectives.

CCC Framework

By linking the theoretical process of global leadership learning and development with the role of reflection, this paper proposes the cross-cultural coaching (CCC) framework to increase cultural

intelligence. Starting with the TLT and ELT learning process as indicated in Figure 5, the direct experience is towards the center of the model.
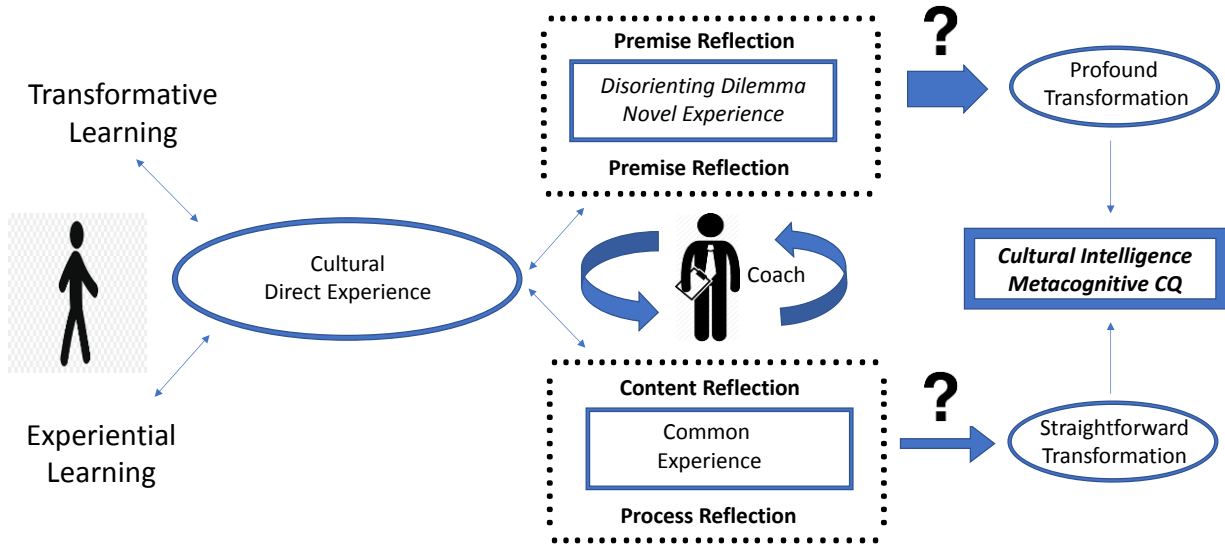
Cross Cultural Coaching (CCC) Framework

Figure 5: Cross Cultural Coaching Framework

As discussed though, not all experiences are the same and two different types of experiences are indicated. The top experience in the framework is the disorienting, novel or crucible experiences challenging our current worldview with a greater likelihood for profound transformation. The bottom experience is the more common daily experience resulting in changes to our meaning scheme and straightforward transformation. Surrounding each of the experiences in a recurring process is the respective type of critical reflection (premise versus content/process reflection) for each of the type of experiences through rational discourse and conversation with a cultural coach.

The coach is at the center of the two types of experiences facilitating the reflections on a recurring basis. Following each of the experiences and reflections with the coach is the potential (indicated by the question mark above each box) for either profound or straightforward transformation. The straightforward transformation is a longer line to indicate a more frequent process in the cycle, while the profound transformation is a thicker and shorter line to indicate a less frequent, but more impactful type of transformation. Both of these types of transformations feed into the goal of increasing the global leaders metacognitive and overall CQ.

As identified by Earley et al (2007), a defining feature of CQ is that it is an etic construct meaning it is universal and independent of culture and therefore not culturally bound. This is an important attribute as the above development process in the CCC framework is a general framework applicable to all cultures regardless of the cultural context.

Conclusion

The aim for this paper was to design a framework connecting the theoretical and key insights from learning theory including the need for reflection with the practical application of the emerging field of cross-cultural coaching to develop a process-oriented framework for global leadership development. As companies seek more global leaders that can communicate and interact successfully across cultures, this framework is an important part of that discussion in developing cultural intelligence. This framework provides context for the design of effective training programs as well as fills a gap in the literature by providing a conceptual model on the process for cross-cultural learning and global leadership development.

References

Ang, S.,Van Dyne, L. & Tan, M.L. (2012). Cultural Intelligence, in Sternberg, R.J. & Kaufman, S.B. (Eds.), The Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence, Cambridge University Press.

Booysen, L.A.E. (2015). Cross-cultural coaching. In D. Riddle, E. Hoole, & E. Gullette (Eds.), Center for creative leadership handbook of coaching in organizations (pp. 241–288). San Francisco, CA: Wiley, Jossey-Bass.

Boyd, E. M., & Fales, A. W. (1983). Reflective learning key to learning from experience. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 23(2), 99-117.

Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. (2000). High impact training: Forging leaders for the global frontier. Human Resource Management, 39(2 & 3), 173-184.

Blasco, M., Feldt, L. E., & Jakobsen, M. (2012). If only cultural chameleons could fly too: A critical discussion of the concept of cultural intelligence. International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 12(2), 229–245.

Cranton, P. (2006). Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Earley, P.C., & Ang, S. (2003). Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Earley, P.C., & Gibson, C.B. (2002). Multinational work teams: A new perspective.New York: Routledge.

Jokinen, T. (2005). Global leadership competencies: A review and discussion. Journal of European Industrial Training, 29(3), 199-216.

Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of John Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Journal of Transformative Education, 6(2), 104-123.

Kolb, D. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Leung, K., Ang, S., & Tan, M. L. (2014). Intercultural competence. Annual Review of Organizational Behavior, 1, 489-519.

Lorenz, M., Ramsey, J., & Richey, R. (2018). Expatriates' international opportunity recognition and innovativeness: The role of metacognitive and cognitive cultural intelligence. Journal of World Business. 53. 222-236.

Maznevski, M., Stahl, G. K., & Mendenhall, M. (2013). Towards an integration of global leadership practice and scholarship: Repairing disconnects and heightening mutual understanding. European Journal of Management, 7(5), 493-499.

McCall, M. W., Jr., & Hollenbeck, G. P. (2002). Developing global executives: The lessons of interna- tional experience. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Mendenhall, T., Weber, T., Audur, A., Oddou, G. (2017). Developing Global Leadership Competencies: A Process Model, Advances in Global Leadership, 117-146.

Mendenhall, M., & Osland, J. (2002). Mapping the terrain of the global leadership construct. Symposium presentation at the Academy of International Business, San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 29, 2002.

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformative dimensions of adult learning. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. (In J. Mezirow & Associates, eds. Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. p. 3–33.)

Mezirow, J., & Taylor, E. W. (2009). Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Nardon, L. and Steers, R. 2008. "The New Global Manager: Learning Cultures on the Fly", Organizational Dynamics, 37(1):47-59.

Ng, K.Y., Van Dyne, L., & Ang, S. (2009). From experience to experiential learning: Cultural intelligence as a learning capability for global leader development. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 8(4), 511–526.

Oddou, G., & Mendenhall, M. E. (2013). Global leadership development. In M. E. Mendenhall,

J. Osland, A. Bird, G. Oddou, M. Maznevski, M. J. Stevens, & G. K. Stahl Global leadership: Research, practice, and development. (2nd ed., pp. 215-239). London: Routledge.

Osland, J. S., Bird, A., Mendenhall, M. E., & Osland, A. (2006). Developing global leadership capabilities and global mindset: A review. In G. K. Stahl & I. Bjorkman (Eds.), Handbook of research in international human resource management (pp. 197-222). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Osland, J., Bird, A., June Delano, & Mathew Jacob. (2000). Beyond Sophisticated Stereotyping: Cultural Sensemaking in Context. The Academy of Management Executive (1993-2005), 14(1), 65-79.

Steyn, G.M., (2017). 'Transformative learning through teacher collaboration: a case study,' Koers Bulletin for Christian Scholarship 82(1).

Stensaker, I. G., & Gooderham, P. N. (2015). Designing global leadership development programmes that promote social capital and knowledge sharing. European Journal of International Management, 9(4), 442-462.

Stevens, M. J., Fox-Kirk, W., Thompson, B., Fawcett, A. M., & Fawcett, S. E. (2015). Developing intercultural competencies: Elaborating the personal barriers to change. Journal of Strategic Management Studies, 7(1), 19-34.

Taylor, E. W. (1998). The theory and practice of transformative learning: A critical review. Information Series No. 374. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, College of Education: Ohio State University.

Taylor, E.W. (2007). An update of transformational learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005). International Journal of Lifelong Education, 26:173–191.

Thomas, D.C. (2006). Domain and development of cultural intelligence: The importance of mindfulness. Group & Organization Management, 31(1), 78–99.

Thomas et al (2008). Cultural Intelligence: Domain and Assessment. International Journal of Cross Cultural Management 8(2):123-143.

Triandis, H.C. (2006). Cultural intelligence in organizations. Group & Organization Management, 31(1), 20–26.

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., Ng, K.Y., Rockstuhl, T., Tan, M.L., & Koh, C. (2012). Sub-dimensions of the four factor model of cultural intelligence: Expanding the conceptualisation and measurement of CI. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 6(4), 295–313.

Van der Horst, C.A., & Albertyn, R.M. (2018). The importance of metacognition and the experiential learning process within a cultural intelligence–based approach to cross-cultural coaching. SA Journal of Human Resource Management

Von Glinow, M. A. (2001). Issues in global leadership development. In M. E. Mendenhall, T. M. Kuhlmann and G. K. Stahl (Eds.), Developing global business leaders (pp. 264-271). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Whitmore, J. (2009). Coaching for performance (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Nicholas Brealey Publishing