Final Paper: Can the Acquisition of Cultural Awareness Help Local Teachers Facilitate

the Learning Process of Latin American Students?

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Abstract

Cross-cultural leadership studies have contributed to the understanding of how cultures around the world do businesses, negotiate, and perform. In order to develop cross- cultural awareness, there is a need to integrate the early studies of cross-cultural leadership with the most recent ones. Cross-cultural awareness is also constructed through developing cultural competencies and cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence plays a significant role in cross-cultural leadership as it contributes to an understanding of how people from different cultures behave from a position of equality. Understanding and reflecting on one's own culture is imperative to activate the process of cross-cultural awareness. Teachers are leaders who share a vision, facilitate processes and guide students to achieve their goals. Teachers of multicultural backgrounds, particularly Latin America, can benefit from the acquisition of cultural awareness to contribute to a more effective teaching and learning experience.

Can the Acquisition of Cultural Awareness Help Local Teachers Facilitate the Learning

Process of Latin American Students?

Globalization has created a need to understand how cultural differences and similarities

impact leadership performance. Globalization has also created a need for leaders to develop

cross-cultural awareness (Northouse, 2015). Cross-cultural leadership studies have contributed to

the understanding of how people from different nations interact, do businesses, negotiate, and

perform. In order to develop cross- cultural awareness, there is a need to integrate the early

studies of cross-cultural leadership with the most recent ones. Cross-cultural awareness is also

constructed through developing cultural competencies and cultural intelligence. Cultural

intelligence plays a significant role in cross-cultural leadership as it contributes to an

understanding of how people from different cultures behave from a position of equality-

understanding other cultures and civilizations with empathy (Livermore, 2010). The author of

this paper agrees with Warren (2016) who perceives teachers as classroom leaders as they share a

vision and guide students to achieve their goals. Teachers who understand and reflect on their

own culture activate the process of cross-cultural awareness. Research by Chin-Yin, Indiatsi and

Wong (2016) shows that the number of learners whose first language is not English and whose

cultural backgrounds come from different societies is on the rise. This paper begins by discussing

the importance of developing cultural awareness in multicultural classrooms with a focus on

Latin American students. Then, the paper provides a literature review on cross-cultural

competencies, cross-cultural dimensions and cultural intelligence for teachers as multicultural

leaders. Next, the paper discusses the best method of qualitative research to confirm or refute the

proposal research. Finally, this author discusses future recommendations, strengths and pitfalls of

the study.

      The author of this paper suggests the following research question for a qualitative study:

Can the Acquisition of Cultural Awareness Help Local Teachers Facilitate the Learning Process

of Latin American Students? This author aims to get ideas, perceptions of teachers who teach

adults from different cultural backgrounds (particularly Latin America) or of Latin American

students who came to the United States as adults to learn English or pursue a degree, on how

cross-cultural awareness of teachers might influence the learning process. Li (2013) states that

there is a general agreement in research that culture plays a critical role in culturally and

linguistically diverse students' learning and social integration in the host country. Additionally,

the author argues that there are different strategies that teachers can develop in order to help

students. One of the strategies refers to the ability and willingness a teacher can develop in order

to become aware of cultural differences. The author of this paper agrees with the findings of Li

(2013) who explains that teachers can become cultural workers by enhancing their cultural

awareness: "teachers also need to have the skills to incorporate the multiple cultural perspectives

into their curriculum, anticipate and adjust for students' different communication and learning

styles and abilities, and accept and value cultural differences in their classroom" (p. 140). There

is a need for teachers as classroom leaders to develop cultural awareness for classroom

effectiveness. McCalman (2014) argues that cultural differences when ignored in classroom can

discourage the learning process and most teachers don't receive proper training to work with

students whose first language and culture are different from their own. The literature review aims

to summarize relevant sources on cross- cultural competencies, cross- cultural dimensions and

cultural intelligence. For the purposes of this paper, the term culture is defined as "the learned

beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people"

(Northouse, 2015, p. 428). According to Ferraro and Briody (2013) there are many ways to learn

culture: through comparison with different scenarios, direct experience, discussions, case studies,

trainings, etc. Leaders who have a desire to learn about their own cultures and other cultures gain

an advantage to lead a cross-cultural setting successfully. Cross-cultural awareness can take place

when one views other cultural values in relation to his or her own.

Literature Review

Cross-Cultural Competencies and Multicultural Classrooms

Northouse (2015) discusses that culture can be learned. Adler and Bartholomew (as cited

in Northouse, 2015) affirm that there are five essential cross-cultural competencies: 1) leaders

need to understand business, political, and cultural environments globally; 2) leaders need to

learn different aspects of different cultures- from gastronomy to technologies; 3) leaders need to

learn how to work with people from different countries concurrently; 4) leaders need to learn

how to communicate with other cultures; 5) leaders need to learn how to live with people from

different cultures from a position of equality. Yamazaki and Kayes (2004) discuss that

cross-cultural learning is possible. The authors conducted a study on competencies for a

successful expatriate adaptation and separated competencies in a learning skill dimension: 1)

interpersonal; 2) information; 3) analytic; 4) action and 5) adaptive. The interpersonal dimension,

for instance, has two competencies: building relationships and valuing people from different

cultures. The authors also explain that it is possible to gain strength in those competencies by

establishing contact with people from different cultures and engaging in open conversations and

conclude that the communication ability is an exercise that needs to be practiced frequently in

order to achieve the full potential of learning skill dimension. Understanding own and other's

mood and emotions helps one to learn how to manage stress which is a very important factor in

adaptive dimension. Knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communications of other cultures is

also an important skill to develop cross-cultural awareness. McCalman (2014) conducted a study

on ESL American teachers in multicultural classrooms and how they can be facilitators in the

learning process if they are cultural sensitive. The author states that "it is important to note that

the new wave of immigrants to the United States is coming from collectivistic societies (Latin

American, Asia). Teachers with intercultural competence skills will quickly realize this and

incorporate the experiences of these cultures into their teaching repertoire" (McCalman, 2014, p.

80); the findings on that study confirm that cross-cultural or intercultural competencies should be

assessed so differences and similarities can be learned. The teachers participated in an

intercultural communication class where they discussed cultural diversity, cognitive aspects of

different cultures, and how students learn differently. Despite the recognition that it is not

possible to learn everything about all cultures, the main objective of the study was to prove that

teachers (as classroom leaders) can become cultural sensitive and find the best ways to lead a

cultural diverse scenario.

Understanding Cross- Cultural Dimensions and Latin American Characteristics

Hofstede (as cited in Ferraro & Briody, 2013), conducted a large- scale study of IBM,

which employed people from different cultures. Through the use of extensive amounts of

questionnaire data, Hofstede was able to rank the cultures along 6 dimensions: individualism-

collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity- femininity, long-term vs. short-

term orientation. Cross- cultural researches on leadership were influenced by the early studies of

Hofstede, but since then several patterns of cultural values have been suggested (Yukl, 2013).

One of the most recent studies was carried out by GLOBE (Global Leadership and

Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) researchers who collected data from managers

representing 951 organizations in 62 national cultures (Ferraro & Briody, 2013). The study

identified nine dimensions of national culture and six major leadership styles and it was

conducted through a contrasting values approach that provides an understanding of "how

cultures differ on a variety of key cultural attributes or dimensions" (Ferraro & Briody, 2013,

p.30). This section analyses four dimensions based on cultural dimension studies and

summarized by Ferraro and Briody (2013) to understand cross-cultural interactions. The first

dimension to understand cross-cultural interactions is the individual- collective dimension. Some

cultures focus on the individual over the group, others focus on the interests of the group above

their own. Understanding how individualism-collectivism play out in different cultures is

important to understand cross-cultural leadership performance. Research by Gabriela, Edit,

Daniela and Iona (2014) shows that "in individualist societies people are supposed to look after

themselves and their direct family only, named as an "I" society. In collectivist societies people

belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty, named as a "We" society. In

collectivistic cultures individuals expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to

look after them in exchange for loyalty" (p. 81). Individual- oriented cultures value task

completion, autonomy and independence, success as an own ability and they perceive individuals

as major units of social perception. Collective- oriented cultures value relationships,

interdependence, group achievements and strong connections to a few groups. They perceive

groups as units of social perception (Ferraro & Briody, 2013). The second dimension to

understand how cross-cultural interactions work is the equality-hierarchy dimension. Ferraro and

Briody (2013) divide this dimension in two categories: egalitarian cultures and hierarchical

cultures. The authors note that this dimension helps businesspeople understand about power, formality, delegation of authority, among others. The decision- making process, for instance, takes longer in egalitarian cultures where all levels are asked for feedback. Northouse (2015) explains that gender egalitarianism is also an important aspect of cultural dimensions. Sweden, for instance, is considered to be one of the most gender- egalitarian countries where women and men share power and influence equally. A leader who belongs to a gender- egalitarian culture and is leading a cross-cultural setting with the presence of hierarchical cultures should understand how power and influence are perceived differently. The third dimension in cross- cultural interactions is the change orientation dimension. Hofstede and GLOBE researchers used the phrase *uncertainty avoidance* to "refer to the lack of tolerance for ambiguity and the need for formal rules and high-level organizational structure" (Ferraro & Briody, 2013, p. 41); this dimension focuses on change-embracing cultures and change-fearing cultures or low to high uncertainty avoidance. Characteristics of change-embracing cultures include: differences are tolerated, more risk taking, hope for success and willingness to change employer. Characteristics of change-fearing cultures include: differences are considered dangerous and initiative of subordinates is discouraged, less risk taking, loyalty to employer and fear of failure. As stated previously, globalization has created the need for cross-cultural awareness for leaders who have accepted the challenge of leading cross- cultural diversity. For instance, leaders at specific occasions will have to learn how to make decisions in a setting with risks and uncertainty (Ferraro & Briody, 2013). It is important, as stated by Northouse (2015), that leaders understand how different cultures do businesses and how their own culture does as well. The last dimension explained by Ferraro and Briody (2013) is the time orientation dimension. Different cultures deal with time in different ways. Some cultures value punctuality and rigid schedules. Others value

social relationships and flexibility. This dimension includes future orientation that "refers to the extent to which people engage in future- oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification" (Northouse, 2015). Different cultures perceive benefits based on time orientation: "people from future oriented societies believe that is far more important to trade off short-term gains in the present for more long-term benefits in the future" (Ferraro & Briody, 2013, p. 34). It is important to note that the dimensions above are some of the lenses for leaders to comprehend differences and similarities across cultures and why it is important to recognize them while working in a cross-cultural scenario. Despite the recognition that understanding those dimensions is relevant for a successful leadership, Ferraro and Briody (2013) also state that leaders should avoid overreliance on cultural generalizations. The dimensions should be analyzed, studied and considered. But other variables such as education, biology or experience might affect behaviors as well. According to the official website of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (2017), the list for the top countries of citizenship of international students in the US includes Taiwan, Japan, China, Mexico and Brazil which are collectivist societies. Teachers who prepare themselves for the new wave of students to the United States that is coming from collectivistic societies can help them succeed in the learning process by understanding how, when and why they learn (McCalman, 2014). This author agrees with the findings of Ferraro and Briody (2013) who affirm that learning about different cultures can help one to develop cultural awareness, but one should avoid overreliance on cultural generalizations. Northouse (2015) explains that Latin American countries place the most importance on charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, and self-protective leadership; the clusters do not place importance on autonomous leadership. Students from Latin American societies also place importance on those values. Arevalo, So and McNaughton-Cassill (2016)

argue that collectivism plays a big role among Latin students. The authors conducted a study that

revealed that Latino American college students were more likely than non-Latinos to endorse

situations that involve helping and interacting; "data of revealed that Latino American college

students are more inclined to meet and/or help other individuals, such as neighbors, friends, and

classmates, compared to non-Latino students" (p. 8). Additionally, the authors concluded that

Latin American students perceived group studies as beneficial. "In collectivistic cultures,

individuals are taught to suppress their aggressive tendencies in order to avoid any type of

arguments that may jeopardize harmony" (Arevalo, So & McNaughton-Cassill, 2016, p. 8).

Ferraro & Briody (2013) also state that relationships are important for Latin American societies

and harmony and strong connections are expected among individuals.

The Importance of Cultural Intelligence for Teachers as Multicultural Leaders

The concept cultural intelligence, or simply CQ, was firstly introduced in 1986 with the

Sternberg and Detter- man's multiple intelligences framework (Ersoy, 2014). Many approaches

to cross-cultural leadership are either too simplistic or far too extreme. One does not cover the

aspects of cross-cultural leadership by simply being nice or avoiding certain taboos but one does

not have to become a cross-cultural expert to become a cross-cultural leader according to

Livermore (2010); the author defines cultural intelligence as "the capability to function

effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures" (p. 4). Cultural intelligence is

needed in different situations; it helps leaders, for instance, to address the challenge of recruiting

and retaining cross-cultural talent. Livermore (2010) also states that other intercultural

approaches are significant to address the theme cross-cultural leadership but cultural intelligence

presents several advantages over them, such as: 1) CQ is a meta-framework rooted in strong

research and it has been tested across multiple cultures, samples and times; 2) the concept is

aligned to the study of multiple intelligences research; 3) the approach also considers a leader's

personal interests, strategic thinking that aligned with sociological differences in cultural behaviors and values from other approaches can successfully address cultural interactions; 4) the approach emphasizes that any leader can enhance his or her cultural dimensions through training and experience and 5) the approach focuses on developing an overall repertoire of cultural understanding. Ersoy (2014) conducted a qualitative study on cross-cultural leadership through detailed and substantial interviews with six Western expatriate managers and thirteen local Turkish managers who represent top and middle-level executives working in a hotel operating in Turkey. The author of the study observed that cultural intelligence played a significant role in cross-cultural leadership effectiveness. Ersoy (2014) states that "most expatriate managers emphasized the importance of a deep understanding of Turkish culture and cultural differences" (p. 6102); they demonstrated cross-cultural awareness thorough the in-depth interviews. In the behavioral perspective, the managers cited enthusiasm, balance and flexibility as relevant characteristics to adapt to new cultures. Most of them were exposed to trainings and previous cross-cultural experiences that allowed them to develop cross-cultural awareness. "Cultural awareness is the foundation of communication and it involves the ability of becoming aware of cultural values, beliefs and perceptions" (Ersoy, 2014, p. 6105). The ability to adapt effectively to cross-cultural settings can be optimized by following a four-step cycle of CQ (cultural intelligence) exemplified by Livermore (2010): CQ Drive- the motivation for the assignment; CQ Knowledge- cultural information needed to fulfill the assignment; CQ Strategy- what the plan is for the initiative and CQ Action- behaviors and competencies needed to adapt to the initiative effectively.

CQ-Drive

"Leaders with high CQ drive are motivated to learn and adapt to new and diverse cultural settings" (Livermore, 2010, p. 41); the confidence in the adaptive abilities can influence the way

leaders behave in multicultural situations. Leaders can develop CQ drive by 1) being honest with

themselves; 2) examining their confidence level; 3) hanging out with people; 4) counting

benefits and 5) working for bigger causes such as fiscal, humanitarian and environmental causes.

Some leaders might not be honest with their biases. Livermore (2010) states that everyone has

biases and one should not pretend they do not exist; instead, leaders should understand why there

are biases and understand the differences from different perspectives in order to make deliberate

choices to remove prejudices. Examining the confidence level is another step to develop CQ

drive. When leaders believe that they will be successful at a task, they are more likely to be

successful in cross-cultural contexts. Setbacks exist and leaders who demonstrate self-efficacy

will face challenges in a stronger way. Sense of confidence for particular tasks varies according

to different situations and context. Therefore, leaders should grow their confidence and analyze it

periodically to enhance CQ drive. The third aspect of CQ drive is hanging out with people.

Leaders form more industrialized and developed countries should understand that for some

cultures, eating together has a great meaning, for instance. Socializing and eating with people

from different cultures demonstrate willingness to get to know their culture better. The fourth

aspect to enhance CQ drive is about counting the perks or benefits. Livermore (2010) explains

that "the fatigue, fears, and anxieties that accompany cross-cultural work can be overwhelming"

(p. 53) but leaders should be encouraged by the fact that there are payoffs such as career

advancement, creativity and innovation, expansion of global networks and profits. Increased

wages for those leaders who have to deal with the fallout from a cross-cultural venture, for

instance, are rewarding perks that are well worth the investment. The last aspect of CQ drive is

about living for something bigger. "Cultural intelligence offers a way of making the world a

better place" (Livermore, 2010, p. 60) and CQ cannot exist apart from true love for people and

for the world. Once leaders understand cross-cultural differences, they activate their motivation

that goes beyond selfish interests.

CQ Knowledge

Livermore (2010) explains that leaders with high CQ knowledge understand better how

cultures shapes behavior. Yukl (2013) and Northouse (2015) also discuss that leadership behavior

is influenced by cultural values and traditions and it is important that leaders understand

cross-cultural differences and similarities. In order to activate that understanding, Livermore

(2010) illustrates four aspects of CQ knowledge: 1) leaders should see culture's role in

themselves and others; 2) leaders should review the basic cultural systems; 3) leaders should

learn the core cultural values and 4) leaders should understand different languages. Livermore

(2010) corroborates the findings of Hofstede and the findings of GLOBE researchers (as cited in

Ferraro & Briody, 2013; Northouse, 2015; Yukl, 2013) that discuss the importance of

understanding individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, low uncertainty avoidance vs. high

uncertainty avoidance and different languages, among other factors. Leaders can gain cultural

awareness by understanding the differences and similarities of cross-cultural organizations and

how their cultures impact their behaviors. Practices to gain CQ knowledge include: studying a

foreign language, reading novels and watching movies about other cultures, being globally

informed and learning a topic from different cultural perspective (Livermore, 2010).

CQ Strategy

"Leaders with high CQ strategy develop ways to use cultural understanding to develop a

plan for new cross- cultural situations" (Livermore, 2010, p. 113). In order to develop CQ

strategy, it is important to develop self-awareness, other awareness and plan cross-cultural

interactions. It is imperative to understand what is going on internally and apply that same type

of awareness to others and to the environment as explained by Livermore (2015). Ferraro and

Briody (2013) argue that how well leaders and negotiators understand themselves and the

assumptions and values of their own cultures will influence their objectives and motivations in

negotiating across cultures. Livermore (2010) says leaders should constantly ask themselves

"why?" to get to the deeper levels of an issue. Planning cross-cultural interactions help leaders to

develop CQ strategy as they understand a task they usually do with people from the same culture

might need alterations with cross-cultural interactions. Other practices to develop CQ strategy

include: keeping a journal of cross-cultural reflections to discuss with coworkers or friends;

engaging in active planning to define a better approach of a task and finding someone with a

good measure of multicultural awareness that will serve as cultural mentor (Livermore, 2010).
CQ Action
  Ersoy (2014) defines behavioral adaptation as a crucial element of effective cross-cultural

leadership. Leaders who are open to new cultures and are willing to understand differences and

similarities between them can create a balance between their own cultures and other cultures to

lead effectively. Changing verbal and nonverbal actions accordingly when interacting

cross-culturally demonstrates a willingness to adjust behaviors. "Leaders with high CQ action

can draw other three dimensions of CQ to translate their enhanced motivation, understanding and

planning into action" (Livermore, 2010, p. 133). Ferraro and Briody (2013) affirm that the

nonverbal dimension is as important as the verbal one when interacting cross-culturally. Eye

contact, for instance, might be considered disrespectful in some cultures. In order to develop CQ

action, Livermore (2010) explains several practices that will help leaders in their cross-cultural

journey: leaders can learn practices and taboos that are most important for key regions; leaders

should look for an honest assessment of their work consistently; leaders should develop a

zero-tolerance policy for cultural jokes and inappropriate language. Ferraro and Briody (2013)

explain that being sensitive to time and preparing carefully are behaviors a leader should have

while negotiating across cultures. Several benefits are experienced when leaders enhance their

CQ such as enhanced performance, better decision-making process, flexibility and personal

satisfaction are some of the benefits (Livermore, 2010). When leaders activate their CQ, they are

able to better understand their own culture and other cultures. Leaders become more adaptive as

they use different strategies in different cultural situations. Livermore (2010) explains that

cross-culture leadership studies, cross-cultural experiences, educational level and the willingness

of understanding a subject from different perspectives are some of the ways one can start

developing cultural intelligence. Through the four steps presented in this section, teachers of

multicultural classrooms, as classroom leaders, can grow in the journey towards becoming more

effective cross-culturally.

Method of Qualitative Research

The method of qualitative research that this author suggests to answer *Can the*

Acquisition of Cultural Awareness Help Local Teachers Facilitate the Learning Process of Latin

American Students? is the use of focus group. Scott and Garner (2014) argue that focus group

method "explores the malleability of individual beliefs in interaction with others, a type of data

that interviews could not reveal" (p. 300). The authors explain fourteen important steps to

conduct the process successfully. One of the steps refers to the ability a researcher must have to

set up the interview guide that can move from simple questions to complex topics. Kellmereit

(2015) states that "the research method of focus groups enables the researcher, without

pressuring the participants to make decisions, to examine what and how they think and why they

think in a special way about the issue of importance" (p. 49). Salkind (2012) explains that a

focus group is a gathering of people who are being moderated by a member of a research team;

the setting in which the focus group takes place should be neutral so the participants feel

comfortable to expose their opinions. Focus groups have four major functions: gather

information, generate insight, determine how group members reach decisions, and encourage

group interaction (Salkind, 2012). This author believes that one can study and learn about

perceptions of local Latin American students and local teachers of ESL (English as a Second

Language) who teach primarily adult Latin American learners, for instance, by gathering

different people to discuss determined topics. An interaction with participants from different

local schools could help this author to investigate characteristics of cultural awareness

acquisition in teachers or needs of Latin American students that are not met in classrooms due to

cultural dimensions differences; the focus group can also help this author to assess if any

difficulties that teachers of Latin American learners might have occur because of cross-cultural

differences. Focus group methodology is incredibly difficult to execute, but with the use of

neutrality and right questions, a researcher can obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest

(Scott & Garner, 2014). Focus groups are a good way of getting an idea of how members of a

particular community feel about a particular topic and what can be done to improve the situation

(Schermerhorn, Osborn, Uhl-Bien, & Hunt, 2012); the research question of this author invites the

use of focus group method as it involves interaction between students and teachers and focuses

on specific topics such as importance of understanding other cultures, characteristics of Latin

American students, learning process, etc. Chin-Yin, Indiatsi and Wong (2016) suggest some

discussion topics for a qualitative research study with a focus on ESL (English as a second

language) teachers; this author believes the topics can be suitable for a focus group discussion

with local teachers who teach multicultural classrooms, particularly Latin American students:

1) how prepared the teachers feel to create culturally inclusive learning materials; 2) how

prepared they feel to distinguish culturally- appropriate behavior from misbehavior; 3) how

prepared they feel to assess different learning strategies for different cultures.

Recommendations and Final Considerations

Despite the recognition that cross-cultural leadership studies are important and necessary in a globalized context, Northouse (2015) affirms that there are still limitations and criticisms. Minkov & Blagoev (2012), on their empirical study on GLOBE, state that the study has contributed to the understanding of earlier studies on cross-cultural leadership, especially the individualism- collectivism dimension. Globalization of business is a reality that is redefining how people work together. The studies carried out so far have contributed significantly to understand dimensions, competencies and cultural intelligence awareness, however, there are still questions to be answered. Future studies can concentrate their focus on cultural values changes in developing countries or the implications for leaders when a global organization's values are inconsistent with the social values in some cultures where a certain organization has its facilities (Yukl, 2013). With respect to cultural intelligence study, Hudtohan (2010) states that one of the future challenges for researchers is to assess "an instrument to localize and indigenize a cultural intelligence instrument to push further cultural intelligence and use Livermore's four stage cultural programs as key areas to measure development of cultural intelligence must be created" (p. 113). Hudtohan (2010) also explains that there is a call for a leadership brand to address the cultural demands of emerging economies and market (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea and Turkey) and concludes that "for a leader to survive, there is a need to match Livermore's four stages of cultural intelligence with very specific cultural targets specified by the GLOBE researchers" (p. 112)- what the CQ drive (or level of confidence and motivation) is across the nations, for instance. Another observation by Hudtohan (2010) on cross-cultural studies is about "the possibility of doing cultural intelligence research in a given locality of GLOBE cultural cluster is mathematically progressive" (p. 113). The author also emphasizes the contribution that research could give to

world economic sustainability and world peace. As stated by Livermore (2010), culture intelligence cannot exist apart from true love for people and for the world. Li (2013) states that teachers should enhance their abilities to learn cultural diversity so they can move their students to the next level of education.

This paper aimed to explore the importance of cross-cultural leadership studies, cross-culture competencies and cultural intelligence to develop cross-cultural awareness in multicultural classrooms with a focus on Latin American students as the new wave of students who come to the US is mainly from collectivist societies such as Latin America. The author of this paper perceives teachers as classroom leaders as they share a vision and guide students to achieve their goals. Teachers can become cultural sensitive by changing the mindset, implementing strategies and learning new dimensions. This paper focused on demonstrating the role of cultural intelligence in cross-cultural leadership and why teaching a cross-cultural scenario requires cross-cultural awareness. In the past three decades, many studies have focused on identifying dimensions of culture such as the GLOBE studies and the studies of Hofstede. The GLOBE studies offer a strong body of findings as they help leaders to understand how cultures around the world view leadership and how the dimensions help leaders to change their behavior when leading cross-culturally. Although cross-cultural studies have criticisms, they mainly offer valuable information about the unique ways culture influences the leadership process. Cross-cultural leadership studies are relevant to understand how different cultures present different leadership styles. Understanding, for instance, how one's own culture works in order to understand others, is an exercise to enhance cross-cultural competency. There are, however, some important considerations to make when learning other cultures: leaders should avoid overreliance on cultural generalizations, leaders should learn about other cultures and live with them from a position of equality, leaders should be aware of different possible behaviors within

the same culture. Cultural intelligence can be learned; when leaders activate their CQ, they are

able to better understand their own culture and other cultures. Leaders become more adaptive as

they use different strategies in different cultural situations. Understanding one's own culture,

cross- culture dimensions, cross-culture competencies and activating culture intelligence through

different aspects (reading, planning, engaging, learning, experiencing) can help teachers to

develop cross- cultural awareness and be more effective facilitators in the learning process of

students from different cultural backgrounds. The research question proposed by this author *Can*

the Acquisition of Cultural Awareness Help Local Teachers Facilitate the Learning Process of

Latin American Students? can help school communities to identify some pitfalls in the learning

process in multicultural classrooms with a focus on collectivist societies (particularly Latin

America). The qualitative methodology proposed by this author is the use of focus group as it

aims to get ideas, perceptions of teachers who teach adults from different cultural backgrounds or

of Latin American students who came to the United States as adults to learn English or pursue a

degree. The methodology can lead to biases and it is not easy to execute; however, this author

aims to find ways to compensate the weaknesses of the study. The primary goal, according to this

author, is to develop cultural sensitivity to better address students' needs and expectations and

guide them to accomplish their goals. This author also believes it is important that students learn

the culture of the country they are pursuing their studies in; however, the focus of this paper was

to formulate a research question that addresses cultural awareness for teachers as classroom

leaders so they can facilitate students' learning. Additionally, this author agrees with Livermore

(2010) who states that cultural awareness can give important contributions to the world such as

economic sustainability and world peace.

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