

Lead 902: The Cross-Cultural Leadership Challenge

Xavjah Streeter I

Beulah Heights University

## CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

### Abstract

Recent studies have indicated that developing cross-cultural leadership competencies inspire individuals to transcend national boundaries. To compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global marketplace, it is vital that an organizational leader understand how to lead cross-culturally. A review of the literature on the current state of transformational leadership and the contemporary cross-cultural leadership challenges facing organizational leaders demonstrated the need to address the question: How does developing cross-cultural leaders influence organizational outcomes? The purpose of this research paper is to utilize all the resources on transformational and cross-cultural leadership identified in the course to select a research methodology that can answer the proposed research question. This research paper includes a discussion of common key themes and findings from scholarly and peer-reviewed published material from researchers in the field of leadership development. This short research paper explores the methodological portion of a proposed study. This paper includes an explanation of which methodology would be most appropriate to answer the research question and why, a description of the potential weaknesses of the research method, and measures to mitigate the weaknesses.

*Keywords:* transformational leadership, cross-culture leadership, global leadership

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### *The Cross-Cultural Leadership Challenge*

#### **Background**

Global leadership remains at the forefront of all businesses and institutions today (Torres, 2016). Numerous scholars have published material on developing transformational leaders and the importance of multi-cultural leadership training. Ayiro (2014), in the article *Transformational Leadership and School Outcomes in Kenya*, evaluated the effects of transformational leadership on school performance in Kenya. Ersoy (2014) examined the role of cultural intelligence in cross-cultural leadership effectiveness in the article *The Role of Cultural Intelligence in Cross-Cultural leadership Effectiveness*. The result from the study, *Transformational Leadership: The Nexus Between Faith and Classroom Leadership* by White, Pearson, Bledsoe, and Hendricks (2017) revealed that transformational leadership is slowly moving from applications in business and medicine into the worlds of education and faith. Sider (2014) provided an examination of school leadership issues within Haiti as well as lessons that organizational and institutional leaders can learn about leadership capacity-building opportunities across two cultures in the article *School Leadership Across Borders: Examining a Canadian-Haitian Partnership to Support Educational Capacity-Building in Haiti*. Torres (2016), in the book *The Transformation to Effective Global Leadership*, emphasized the theoretical framework, methodology, and empirical evidence for the transformation of an effective global leader. The conclusion from these researchers highlighted the cross-cultural leadership challenge organizational leaders face today.

#### **Problem Statement**

Recent scholars confirmed that interest in cross-cultural leadership has exploded among governmental, organizational, and academic institutional realms (Torres, 2016; Musamali &

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Martin, 2016). Although most organizations understand the need to be global, many organizations and institutions focus solely on building the infrastructure to do business globally but do not invest time and effort into identifying, selecting, and developing cross-cultural leaders (Torres, 2016). As a result, the cross-cultural leadership challenge today is the inability to understand how to lead in a different cultural environment. Today's globalized workforce requires leaders to adapt to a variety of cultural situations. Leadership in a cross-cultural context requires leaders to (1) adopt a multicultural perspective rather than a country-specific perspective, (2) balance local and global demands which can be contradictory, and (3) work with multiple cultures simultaneously rather than working with one dominant culture (Rockstuhl, Seiler, Van Dyne, & Annen, 2011). The ability to lead across borders has quickly become the contemporary leadership issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Purpose of the Research Paper**

The purpose of this research paper is to examine how developing cross-cultural leaders can positively influence organizational outcomes based on the scholarly material reviewed in this course. Organizations and institutions realize that some of their most significant business opportunities lie in new cultural markets where cross-cultural leadership competencies are required (Livermore, 2015). Addressing this question may encourage institutional and organizational leaders to promote cross-cultural competencies to equip their workforce in achieving optimal success.

### **Proposed Research Question**

The proposed research will address the following question: How does developing cross-cultural leaders influence organizational outcomes?

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### **Nature of the Study**

The research methodology that is most appropriate to explore the research question is the qualitative method. Depending on their views, researchers choose qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of both methods. The key difference in the three methods is the manner in which each method treat data (Brannen, 2017). Instead of assuming prematurely that they have selected the most suitable method, Mason (2017) suggested that researchers examine why they wish to use a method.

The qualitative research method allows the researcher to comprehend how people deal with their everyday situation (Yin, 2014). This research method is suitable for answering research questions that lend themselves to the analysis of a relatively small number of cases but a large number of variables and attributes (Scott & Garner, 2014). The qualitative method allows the researcher to collect data through observation, focus groups and interviews using open-ended probing questions to obtain the most suitable, accurate, and in-depth information (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The quantitative method is not suitable for this study because the purpose of the study does not involve the testing of hypothesis, statistical analysis or investigating the relationships between variables (Scott & Garner, 2014). The mixed method is a combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods where either method cannot solely answer the research question (Creswell, 2014). The mixed method is not the most suitable method for a study of this nature because the combination of the two methodologies is not necessary to answer the research question.

Although the qualitative method is the most suitable approach for this research paper, it has limitations. According to Yin (2014), limitations are issues that may affect the results of research through participant responses, potential biases, or weaknesses that may limit the

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transferability of the results, or affect the validation of a study. Qualitative research is context-sensitive and exploratory because researchers aim to gain an understanding of opinions and motivations (Mason, 2017; Park & Park, 2016). While the process of gathering qualitative data via interview allows for more in-depth information relevant to the researcher's topic, the process may be time-consuming and costly (Creswell, 2014). Also, because researchers often collect data from multiple participant's perspective as in a case study (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay, & Gray, 2017), researchers rely on participants to provide accurate information that may be open to misinterpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Though potential weaknesses and limitations in a study are mostly beyond the control of the researcher, a researcher must not be biased (Scott & Garner, 2014). An entirely unbiased study does not exist according to Scott and Gardner (2014), but a researcher can take steps to mitigate any potential bias. A researcher is biased if they fail to exercise an independent viewpoint outside their social experience, learned behavior, or if they distort or suppress data (Yukl, 2013). A research study should only reflect the viewpoint of the participants.

Researchers can also mitigate some of the limitations of a study by using methodological triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Triangulation helps to test validity through merging information from various sources (Creswell, 2014; Turner, Cardinal & Burton, 2017). According to Creswell (2014), the use of triangulation can confirm results and offer different perspectives. Member checking allows the researcher to check participant's response for accuracy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data saturation is also a concern in a qualitative case study, especially if the sample size is small (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, and LaRossa (2015) stated that a researcher could reach data saturation after they adequately capture all the data that will provide the answer to

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their research question without any new themes. Data saturation is essential to ensure the validity of the data a researcher gather to answer the research question.

### **Significance of the Study**

Developing leaders with cross-cultural and transformational leadership skills has become an essential subject of many universities and corporations. Preparing cross-cultural leaders for the marketplace and academic affairs requires a non-traditional approach to teaching (Ivy, 2016). Numerous top-rated online MBA and Ph.D. programs assure prospective students and employers that their curriculum will develop global leaders, yet there is little done to measure and develop the cross-cultural leadership capabilities in their learners (Livermore, 2015). The universities and corporations recognize that as the world evolves so must our understanding of leadership on a diverse theatrical stage.

### **A Review of Literature on Transformational and Cross-Cultural Leadership**

Leadership is an expanding field of study that someday may join the high-ranking traditional disciplines of history, philosophy, and the social sciences in scholarly recognition (Burns, 2003). Over 350 definitions exist for the word leadership (Daft & Lane, 2015) and leadership involves an interaction between the leader, the followers and the situation (Hughes, Thompson, & Terrell, 2009). According to Northouse (2007), the core functions of leadership include setting directions and exercising influence. Some leadership behaviors that appear effective within one situational context may be ineffective in another (Avery, 2004).

The lack of cross-cultural and country-specific training in patterns of cross-cultural behavior have provided ineffective short-term results that have not led to organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability (Torres, 2016). Today's international organizations require leaders who can adjust to different environments quickly and work with partners and

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employees of other cultures (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006). Therefore, leadership preparation and development can make a significant difference in the effectiveness, efficiency, and the transformation of an organization.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership has become a phenomenon that has managed to maintain its relevance among the social sciences and has grown exponentially over the past forty years (Day, 2014). According to White et al. (2017), transformational leadership is well documented in organizational and business literature; however, recent interest in the classroom and faith-based applications has gained attention among academic scholars. The ability to think globally, embrace diversity, cultivate a shared vision, and be able to develop and empower others are the pillars upon which cross-cultural and transformational leadership stand.

An emerging body of scholars suggested that the most effective style of leadership in today's world is transformational (Ely & Rhode, 2010; Geoffee & Jones, 2015; Warrick, 2011). According to White's et al. (2017) research in the area of transformational leadership is slowly moving from applications in business and medicine into the worlds of education and faith (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Scarborough, 2010). Gujral (2012) defined transformational leadership as an approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. Yukl (2013) described a transformational leader as one who strengthens the existing vision or builds commitment to a new vision. The application of transformational leadership is relatively recent to the instructional context, despite documented success with learning and motivation in classrooms (Noland & Richards, 2014). In business, current theories of transformational leadership is the process by which leaders appeal to followers' values and emotions (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). In a classroom environment, it is the notion of teachers empowering students.

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There is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and student's ability to master certain outcomes. Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) argued that transformational leadership as it applies to teaching appear to impact students' mastery of such key course concepts as their attitudes, beliefs, and skill development. Noland and Richards (2014) suggested that transformational leaders play a significant role in the classroom by providing guidance, motivation, and assistance. Transformational leadership theory highlights the importance of leaders' influence on followers' emotional state (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000). Transformational leadership is the most effective leadership style to drive change within an organizational culture, classroom setting (Ivy, 2014), or in an online learning environment.

Realizing the effective characteristics of transformational leadership will allow professors and business leaders to utilize each of its components with intentionality in their classrooms and workplaces, thereby facilitating students and employee's motivation, learning, and transformation. Therefore, understanding transformational leadership and its relationship to culture is a fertile market for research. In every aspect of life, it appears that individuals are competing in an intercultural marketplace designed for a different type of leader.

### **Culture**

Kluckhohn and Kelly (as cited in Livermore, 2015) defined culture as the beliefs, values, behaviors, customs, and attitudes that distinguish one group from another. In concord, Torres (2016) noted that organizational culture is a by-product of societal culture, which in turn affects the individual's values and ethics, attitudes, assumptions, and expectations. Cultural awareness is the foundation of communication, and it involves the ability to become aware of cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions.

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Torres (2016) recognized that the global cultural evolution of business and technology calls for a new type of leader to combat the elements of change. The global economy requires a new set of leadership skills that were not as critical a decade ago (Gundling, Hogan, & Cvitkovich, 2011). According to Livermore (2015), leaders from around the world recognize that some of their most significant business opportunities lie in new cultural markets requiring cross-cultural leadership competencies. However, Torres (2016) argued that an understanding of cultural differences and cultural dimensions in a general sense is not enough on its own to achieve cross-cultural leadership effectiveness.

### **Cross-Cultural Leadership**

There is a global connection between the usefulness of the social and behavioral sciences behind cross-cultural leadership and the advancements in academic settings. Cross-cultural leadership focuses on leaders who lead diverse organizational groups. The psychology of cross-cultural leadership attempts to understand how individuals of different cultures interact with each other in society (Abbe, Gulick, & Herman, 2007). Cross-cultural leadership is more about listening, acceptance, and persuasion than dictatorship. Torres (2016) insisted that at the center of this multicultural leadership phenomenon is effective communication and cautioned future leaders about the hazards of not learning cross-cultural leadership skills.

Torres (2016), Ivy (2016), and Grisham (2009) made a compelling case as to why organizations and institutions should provide cross-cultural training prior to sending employees on an assignment in a foreign country. The rapid development of today's global economy has critical implications for leadership development. Ivy and Grisham reported that there are core leadership dimensions that are universally effective regardless of the ethnicities, the culture, the economic environment, the structure of the firm, or the complexity of a project or program.

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Companies are entering the American economy at an unprecedented rate. Therefore, organizational leaders must be locally and globally cross-culturally trained if they want to achieve optimal success in a new globalized economy (Torres, 2016). It is essential that scholars continue to research the relationship between cross-cultural leadership and other disciplines utilizing different methodological approaches.

### **Cross-Cultural Leadership Issue**

It is widely known that leadership is practiced differently across cultures and can create tremendous financial opportunities if an individual is willing to learn a new culture. However, leaders leading diverse organizational groups can present a host of issues. A leader can overcome the challenges of cultural diversity by learning how to become a skilled cross-cultural leader. “It is essential that leaders learn the origins of their global follower’ values and beliefs since followers from different countries will behave differently and therefore have different motivations” (Torres, 2016, pp. 5-6). Furthermore, understanding the influence of culture on leadership is essential in developing and facilitating effective leaders (Kumar & Chokar, 2013; Marquardt, 2011). Torres (2016) maintained that as the world becomes interdependent and interrelated, it has become the norm for a leader of one country to lead followers from another country—whose values and ethics may be different.

Cross-cultural leadership has developed as a way of understanding leaders who work in the newly globalized market (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006). According to Alves, Manz, and Butterfield (as cited in Torres, 2016), “...effective leadership today is dependent on an understanding of attitudes, expectations, and behaviors of followers and is seen as a multidisciplinary field that is concerned with ethics and moral orientations” (p. 18). Salacuse (2006) argued that effective leadership is much more than merely showing the way—effective

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leadership implies the ability to persuade or cause persons to whom the way is shown to move willingly in that direction. Similarly, Musamali and Martin (2016) asserted that cross-cultural leadership is characterized as a process in which members of a culturally diverse group are intentionally motivated, influenced and guided toward a goal by appealing to their shared knowledge and meaning-making systems.

### **Methodology in Recent Cross-Cultural Leadership Literature**

#### **Qualitative**

Qualitative methodology is popular in social sciences. Creswell (2014) referred to qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. Qualitative research may be the best approach when the researcher aims to discover a problem while convening multiple perspectives from the participants. Qualitative researchers gather data through various means including interviews. If the study participant does not sufficiently address the interview question, or offer a short answer, the use of exploratory questions encourage additional responses. The role of researchers involves interpreting the data.

According to Creswell (2014), in qualitative research researchers engage in interpreting data and in the process of describing, classifying and interpreting the data, develop codes or categories to sort text or images into categories. Researchers also classify data by taking the text or qualitative evidence apart and looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of information. According to Palmer, Fam, Smith, and Kilham (2014), researchers must ensure the mitigation of ethical consideration and the privacy of the study participants.

The qualitative method is suitable for answering research questions that lend themselves to the analysis of a relatively small number of cases but a large number of variables and

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attributes (Scott & Garner, 2014). Sider's (2014) article, *School Leadership Across Borders: Examining a Canadian-Haitian Partnership to Support Educational Capacity-Building in Haiti* used a qualitative methodology. The research question that Sider examined was: How can a project that partner principals in Canada and Haiti, using digital technologies, support educational leadership capacity-building in Haiti? At the core of qualitative data analysis is the task of discovering themes. Scott and Garner (2013) maintained that themes come from reviewing literate—richer literature yield more themes.

Ersoy (2014) examined the role of cultural intelligence in cross-cultural leadership effectiveness utilizing a qualitative approach. The questions focused on the participants' perceptions of cross-cultural leadership effectiveness in the context of cultural intelligence. Ersoy utilized an ethnographic analysis to conduct the study. The findings demonstrated that expatriate leaders' cultural intelligence affect cross-cultural leadership effectiveness positively. Ersoy's research addressed a contemporary cross-cultural leadership issue that could have only been supported by employing a qualitative methodological approach.

### **Quantitative**

Researchers use quantitative methods when analyzing numeric data or performing experiments. Researchers test a predetermined hypothesis using a quantitative methodology (Wells, Kolek, Williams, & Saunders, 2015). Unlike the qualitative methodology, this approach involves the study of a vast number of cases with a few variables (Scott & Garner, 2013). Schatzman and Strauss (as cited in Scott & Garner, 2013) suggested four tactics for questions that stand a pretty good chance of producing reliable information: the devil's advocate question, the hypothetical question, posing the ideal question, and offering interpretations or testing propositions.

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Questions in the quantitative method must include the dependent and independent variables. Quantitative research is the best approach in situations where the researcher tries to understand the relationship between variables or determine if one group performed better than another group. Scott and Garner (2013) argued that, in the end, what you want out of the interview is the most revealing and truthful information on a given topic, event, subject, community, relationship or phenomenon. Leadership research has a long history of utilizing a quantitative approach, although it remains the most commonly used approach among leadership researchers, scholars in a variety of fields now apply mixed methods to their research as a way to advance leadership theory (Stentz, Clark, & Matkin, 2012).

### **Mixed Methods**

Mixed methodology use a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative research by combining the best features of both methods. White et al. (2017) used mixed methods by gathering both qualitative and quantitative data via a survey. According to Creswell (2014), this combination of data provides a better understanding of the research outcomes than an individual method. Although costly and time-consuming, mixed methods research helps answer questions that researchers may not be able to answer with quantitative or qualitative approaches alone.

The mixed methods approach is best in specific areas of study such as nursing because the complexity of the phenomena may require data from a large number of viewpoints (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). Ayiro (2014) used the mixed methodology to evaluate the effect of transformational leadership on school performance in Kenya. Ayiro's study was conducted for the specific purpose of advancing and expanding research on emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in Kenyan schools.

### **Conclusion**

This research paper included an overview some of the recent literature on transformational and cross-cultural leadership. Leadership is a multifaceted topic, and given the pace of globalization, organizations and institutions need leaders who can work efficiently and proficiently in global leadership roles (Javidan et al., 2006) utilizing cross-cultural organizational skill sets. Cross-cultural leadership preparation and development can make a significant difference in the world. Therefore, it is important to examine how developing cross-cultural leaders can positively influence organizational outcomes.

There is a high demand for cross-cultural leaders in various sectors of society. Based on a careful review of the literature, the most appropriate research methodology to explore the proposed research question in this paper is the qualitative method. The research question addresses a contemporary leadership issue that organizational leaders face. The significance of the proposed study is that findings may help organizational and institutional leaders to prepare cross-culture leaders for the marketplace.

The intercultural marketplace requires a different type of leader to meet the demands of a global society. Transformational and cross-cultural leadership has become a phenomenon that is vital to the future success of organizations and academic institutions. Therefore, the usefulness of the social and behavioral sciences behind cross-cultural leadership is a worthy topic for research.

This research paper highlighted the main differences between qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. It included a synthesis of scholarly and peer-reviewed published material from researchers in the field of leadership development to justify the choice of qualitative method as the most appropriate approach to answer the proposed research question. This research paper also presented a compelling case for studying cross-cultural leadership and

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provided various leadership studies that supported why organizations and academic institutions should offer cross-cultural leadership training.

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