Accelerating Global Leadership Development

By Joerg Schmitz

Two critical contributions have recently augmented our understanding of leadership: (1) the primal nature of emotional and social intelligence as a critical underpinning of leadership effectiveness, and (2) the identification of the universal and culturally conditioned or "contingent" leadership characteristics. Together, they create a powerful concept of global leadership and its distinguishing attributes. This article outlines this conceptual synergy and illustrates how the Cultural Orientations Approach™ provides a practical basis of accelerating the development of global leadership capabilities.

As weak as the leadership pipeline is in many organizations, it is likely to be even weaker for global leadership talent. This renders the questions about the nature of global leadership and how it is identified and developed more than academic: global leadership is critical for the evolution, sustainability, and success of our globally interconnected value chains. Two interesting contributions point into a fruitful direction for understanding global leadership, the clarification of universal and culture dependent aspects of leadership. This differentiation is critical to sharpening our ability to identify and develop truly global leaders.

The works most critical in this regard are the GLOBE Study (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) and the work on emotional and social intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2004). The former represents an ambitious macro-level study to illuminate leadership from a cross-cultural perspective. The latter represents the careful micro-level study of leadership interactions. Together, they create a practical framework for global leadership.

The GLOBE Study (House et al., 2004) uncovers (a) culturally determined clusters of leadership styles as well as (b) culturally universal and "contingent" leadership characteristics. The universal characteristics are equally important leadership attributes across cultures. However, the expression of these attributes will differ by cultural and social context. Culturally "contingent" attributes, according to the study, are valued differently in each cultural context. They may range from insignificant to critically important.

For global leaders, the GLOBE results imply that success requires a high degree of style versatility. Furthermore, the findings support the notion that such style versatility rests on:

(a) a broad *expressive repertoire* that allows for the recognition of universal leadership characteristics across cultural contexts, and

(b) *the ability to modulate the display* of specific attributes that may or may not be requisite leadership attributes (for culturally contingent attributes).

Table 1: "Universal" Leader Characteristics

Trustworthy	Decisive
Just	Excellence-oriented
Honest	Dependable
Foresight	Intelligent
Plans ahead	Effective bargainer
Encouraging	Win-win problem
Positive	solver
Dynamic	Administratively
Motive arouser	skilled
Confidence builder	Communicative
Motivational	Informed
	Coordinator
	Team builder

Note. Adapted from House, et al., 2004.

The GLOBE study does not answer the question concerning the criteria an individual leader should apply when using such style versatility. It would be too simplistic to assume that while the leadership attributes are culturally determined (at the societal level), the global leader needs to shift his/her expression and modulation according to the geography involved. While this may be appropriate in specific circumstances, it would also be utterly impractical and unrealistic. The nature of global organizations subordinates geography to other, often virtually enabled contexts of interaction. Also, the global rotation of staff dissociates geography from the expectation of leadership attributes.

For this reason, it is critical to answer the question on how a leader in such organizational contexts develops the ability to effectively apply style versatility if he/she runs the risk of being judged as ineffective, inauthentic, or lacking in credibility by some of his/her constituents due to their simultaneous access to his/her behavioral displays.

Table 2: Culturally "Contingent" Leader Characteristics

Anticipatory	Intuitive
Ambitious	Logical
Autonomous	Micro-manager
Cautious	Orderly
Class conscious	Procedural
Compassionate	Provocateur
Cunning	Risk taker
Domineering	Ruler
Elitist	Self-effacing
Enthusiastic	Self-sacrificial
Evasive	Sensitive
Formal	Sincere
Habitual	Status-conscious
Independent	Subdued
Indirect	Unique
Individualistic	Willful
Intra-group competitor	Worldly
Intra-group conflict avoider	

Note. Adapted from House, et al., 2004.

This is where Goleman's (2004) works on emotional and social intelligence add significant value by their uncovering of the primal processes in interaction and specifically leadership efficacy. They clearly establish the primal nature of emotional intelligence and its significance to social resonance processes underlying any leadership interactions. Further supported by Ekman's (2007) cross-cultural work, the quality of empathy and emotional resonance emerge as a critical, culturally universal underpinning to successful leadership.

The global leader's accurate and effective use of style versatility is critically enabled by a highly developed level of empathy and social resonance. The leader needs to be able to perceive and be attuned to the emotional undercurrent of his/her interactions, accurately repairing and/or preventing "social dissonance." Empathy and the ability to create social resonance in any given social context guarantee the authenticity that makes style versatility a credible aspect in a leader's interactions in the first place.

What are the practical implications for the development of global leaders?

One of the distinguishing characteristics of *global* leadership (in differentiating from *local* leadership) is a high degree of cultural competence. Cultural competence, however, resides beyond mere intellectual comprehension of cultural differences. It requires the credible and authentic use of style versatility through which cultural differences in expectations of leadership are bridged. The requisite levels of authenticity and credibility are enabled through the qualities of empathy central to both emotional and social intelligence.

Therefore, the development of global leaders needs to commence with an accurate gauge and acceleration of the individual's level of empathy and social resonance skills. The integration of added complexities can be fruitful upon this foundation. The leader is ready to assimilate the wide spectrum of culturally

regulated expressions of universal characteristics as well as the additional, culturally specific aspects authentically into his/her frame of reference and behavioral repertoire. This leads to increasing numbers of successful leadership interactions and relationships in a globally diverse context.

Developmental processes and experiences will need to be carefully structured to facilitate the assimilation and integration of this increasing complexity of cognitive frames, behavioral expression, and emotional resonance. Tools and interventions will need to be applied at critical points to accelerate the developmental process.

Acceleration Through the *Cultural Orientations Approach™*

The Cultural Orientations Approach**™** has been developed as a suite of tools, frameworks, and methods to function as just such an accelerator. To appreciate the comprehensive nature of this approach, a quick summary is necessary of (a) the underlying framework of culture, (b) levels of cultural analysis, (c) the core tools of the Cultural Orientations Model™ (COM™) and Cultural Orientation Indicator® (COI®), and (d) the flexible, blended learning system that supports it.

(a) The Framework of Culture

Reviewers like to point to the plethora of competing definitions of culture as evidence for the concept's elusiveness. However, one of the more frequently used definitions describes culture as "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group of people from another" (Hofstede, 1984). The Cultural Orientations Approach**™** seeks to extend Hofstede's definition and capture in its definition the "programming language" or "code" of culture. It distinguishes culture as the *"complex pattern of ideas, emotions, and observable/ symbolic manifestations (including behaviors, practices, institutions, and artifacts) that tend to be expected, reinforced, and rewarded by and within a particular group."* This definition recognizes that the culture code consists in

specific conditioned associations between cognitive elements (ideas, concepts, beliefs, etc.), emotional states, and behavioral strategies.

This framework is highly compatible with the elements of the GLOBE study and the key tenets of emotional and social intelligence. First, it recognizes emotions as the common core around which all cultural variation of humankind is organized. This core is the common connector in intercultural interactions and global leadership effectiveness. However, because we cannot interact on the emotional level exclusively, we need to build dexterity in navigating the intricate connections between cognitive and behavioral levels.

(b) The Levels of Cultural Analysis

The Cultural Orientations Approach**™** is based on the premise that culture is a phenomenon that exists at multiple levels of social interaction. It rejects the elevation of national culture to the most meaningful and significant level, as some approaches suggest.

The Cultural Orientations Approach™ agrees with Eric Wolf (1982) when he points out:

> …by endowing nations, societies or cultures with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects, we create a model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls. Thus, it becomes easy to sort the world into differently colored balls.

Rather, culture is based on finely-tuned processes of social interaction and construction that shape and are shaped by meaning, experience, and responses by those involved. Specifically, it recognizes four levels at which the interaction and construction processes of culture can be observed, namely (1) the interpersonal, (2) the group, (3) the organization, and (4) the national or societal levels. Culture is a dynamic, situation-

dependent, and often inconsistent process that operates at each of these levels.

(c) <u>The Cultural Orientations Model™ and Cultural Orientations Indicator®</u>

The COM™ dimensions are derived from an overlapping body of theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of cultural differences, including those of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Hall, Hofstede, Hampden-Turner, Stewart and Bennett, Trompenaars, and Rhinesmith.

Figure 1: Contributors to the COM™
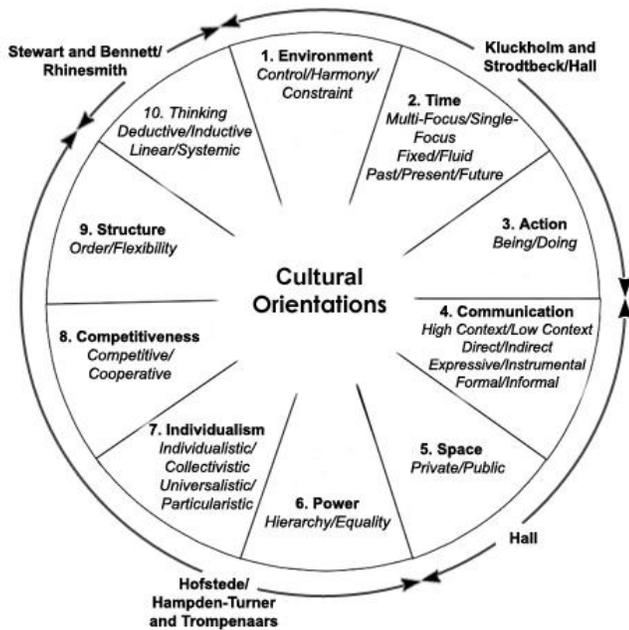
In practice, the COM™ provides a non-judgmental vocabulary for referencing and decoding culturally-based behaviors, norms, expectations, and experiences. They define the dimensions within which aspiring global leaders need to develop versatility and which can be applied to interpersonal, group, organization, and national/societal levels of analysis.

The COI® is a validated self-assessment of preferences or affinity for specific cultural orientations. Personal COI® profiles frequently form the foundation of cultural self- and other-awareness by marking a gateway into the

Table 3: Similar GLOBE and COM™ Dimensions

GLOBE Cultural Dimensions	Equivalent COM™ Dimensions
Power Distance	Power
Uncertainty Avoidance	Structure
Collectivism I (Institutional)	Individualism
Collectivism II (In-Group)	
Assertiveness	Competitiveness
Future Orientation	Time
Performance Orientation	Action
Humane Orientation	-
Gender Egalitarianism	-
-	Space
-	Environment
-	Thinking
-	Communication

Note. GLOBE dimensions from House, et al., 2004.

recognition of the deep cultural conditioning and related implicit and explicit associations, patterns of experience, and responses that characterize the individual, presenting both opportunities and limitations.

In addition to indicating preferences for the various orientations recognized by the COM™, the COI® results can be accessed through three interpretive filters, namely the individual's culturally conditioned sense of self, way of information processing, and interaction style. The first filter, Sense of Self, incorporates those cultural orientations with deep emotional connections to an individual's sense of identity; they comprise an orientation cluster that should mark the needed expansion of empathy and resonance skills during global leadership development. The second filter, Information Processing, marks those orientations most significant for the shifting of "cognitive frames." The third filter, Interaction Style, defines the cluster of cultural orientations most appropriate for behavioral adaptability.

According to the Cultural Orientations Approach™, the COM™ and COI® are integral parts of acquiring four cultural competence skills: (1) cultural due diligence (the ability to assess and prepare for the possible impact of cultural differences and similarities); (2) style

switching (the ability to use a broad and flexible behavioral repertoire to accomplish one's goals); (3) cultural dialogue (the ability to negotiate new and common cultural standards); and (4) cultural mentoring (the ability to facilitate the cultural adaptation and learning of individuals and groups).

Figure 2: Three Filters of the COI®
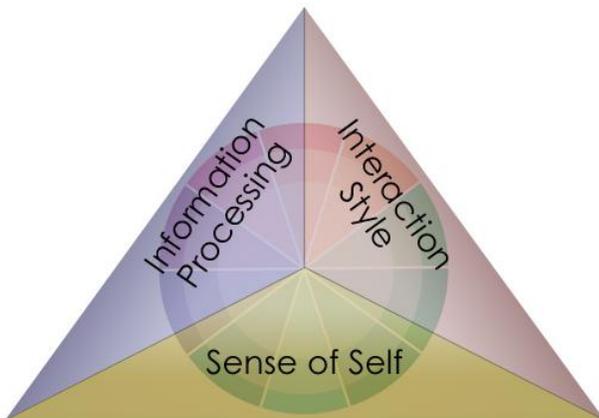
While the GLOBE study assumes that local expectations and characteristics of leadership are meaningfully extrapolated on the broader canvas of global leadership, experience with the Cultural Orientations Approach™ suggests that the capabilities of global leaders are insufficiently described through style versatility alone. It is precisely the transformational capacity of cultural dialogue and mentoring that distinguishes the global leader. The awareness tools of the Cultural Orientations Approach™ are designed to unleash this transformational potential.

(d)   Flexible, Blended Learning System

The Cultural Orientations Approach™ can be embedded into the development of global leaders in a variety of ways through the flexibility of its associated blended learning system. The COI® resides in the Cultural Navigator™ (www.culturalnavigator.com), TMC's web-based platform. The online results enable self-guided exploration, individual and team analysis, and the identification of cultural gaps. The individual can conduct a preliminary assessment of cultural fit with key societal profiles and test his/her understanding with several cultural simulators.

While these are significant self-guided development resources, the full impact is only unleashed when it is embedded in a personal and facilitated development process. These may include specific workshops, action learning experiences, or rotational, relocation, and other developmental stretch assignments. It is the guided development, reinforcement, and contextualization through a specifically trained coach or practitioner, however, that produces the most significant results.

Summary

The findings of the GLOBE study and the discovery of emotional intelligence and social resonance are critical contributions that sharpen our ability to identify and develop truly global leaders. The GLOBE findings suggest the importance of style versatility based on a broad expressive repertoire allowing for the recognition of universal leadership characteristics across cultural contexts, and the ability to modulate the display of culturally contingent attributes. The emphasis on the primal connector of empathy provided by the work on emotional and social intelligence suggests emotional intelligence as the basic success factor upon which the complexity of cultural competence needs to be build into the development of global leaders. The Cultural Orientations Approach™ is a suite of tools, frameworks, and methods to accelerate such development. Additional benefits of this approach include a sound notion of culture with application for various levels of practical relevance and emphasis on transformational capabilities of global leadership.

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About the Author

Joerg Schmitz, Vice President, Strategy and Innovation, for TMC – a Berlitz Company, has extensive experience in delivering learning and consulting solutions and is currently focused on developing innovative solutions addressing the global effectiveness challenges of TMC's clients. He has contributed to the development of the Cultural Orientations Indicator (COI®) and led the development of TMC's Cultural Navigator™ and TMC's unique blended learning capabilities. He is co-author of *Doing Business Internationally* (2002) and the author of *Transcendent Teams* (2000) and *The Cultural Orientations Guide* (2007, 5th ed.). His latest publication is *The Guide for Inclusive Leaders* (2007).

A native of Germany and a cultural anthropologist trained in communication analysis, Mr. Schmitz holds degrees from German institutions in English and Educational Sciences as well as degrees in Psychology, Philosophy and Anthropology from U.S. universities, and received his Masters of Arts degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of South Carolina.

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