# Global Leadership Competencies and Training

**Bryan Forsyth**
**Colorado Technical University**

**Kennedy Maranga**
**Colorado Technical University**

*This paper reviews literature review and analyzes the current state of developing competencies for and training global leaders. Different theories and concepts currently being tried and tested along with some others that are fairly well established and have some cases to learn from will also be examined. In the end, a gap in literature is identified. Given there is so much information out there on what competencies or skills global leaders should have, this study is an attempt to simplify and synthesize or consolidate some of the existing literature found today. Some of the competencies that have been put forth as global necessities will be covered here and the future state will be explored.*

According to Brake and Gergersen (1997; 1998), the Competency development process should start from an analysis of the dynamics of the global business environment and the core competencies, continuing to identifying the profiles of necessary human resources and ending with identification of necessary competencies for specific jobs/functions. Once the specific leader competencies have been identified, the next step is to build bench strength effectively ( para. 10)

The only difference with what is being stated in this above breakdown of steps leading to the identification of specific competencies is the word "global" being used in the mix. Moving forward there will be an attempt to describe the current state of affairs as it relates to this competency discovery as well as an attempt to take the mystery out of this entire mysterious "global leadership" topic that is all the rage these days.

## NATURE VERSUS NURTURE

In the beginning, there was training and development and it was good. After time passed, the practitioners in that function realized that it was necessary to expand and become global. This really is necessary and a good thing for all the consultants out there that want to have job security and for the growth of companies in general. What does it all mean however to everyone else involved? There are many changes happening throughout the world in business that are well documented and not the topic of this discussion. According to Holt and Seki (2012), some of these changes and the need for training and development require leaders to step up and take the lead in this area. The training and development practitioners should be the ones studying what is needed and making recommendations on how to best move forward.

Unfortunately, many learning professionals do not see themselves as leaders, much less as global leaders. Generally, four shifts are required for everyone:

1. cultivating the "being" dimension of human experience
2. developing multicultural effectiveness
3. appreciating individual uniqueness in the context of cultural differences
4. becoming adept at managing paradoxes.

If leaders become adept in these areas, global leadership can be shaped is practiced in our organizations.

Other scholars have made an argument that there is no true distinction between a domestic and a global leader; it is a matter of functioning at higher levels that creates a distinction and allows for more success than others in the global marketplace allow. The competencies are said to be the same more or less and it is more of a matter of how worldly the leader in question might be. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1992), and Baruch (2002) argued that there is no such thing as a "global manager" or any universal criteria for global managers. Instead, Bartlett and Ghoshal see global management as being a task of 'a network of specialists including business managers, country managers and functional managers.

There is a middle ground here and that there are some distinct competencies that can be uncovered and taught. However, it should not be made into a huge training empire with magic dust and mirrors that are cloaked in secrecy. Of course, not everyone is up to the task either. Chances are if the "leader" is not all that good domestically, then the same would hold true globally. However, Jokinen (2005) noted that "it has been frequently argued that many managers successful in domestic operations do not, for some reason, succeed in the international arena. The question is why? What, then, are the competencies required in the global context (p. 30)? The primary difference between the two is the ability to deal with complex cultural differences in a manner that leads to positive and successful outcomes. Is it only people that grow up in multi-cultural families or environments that will succeed in this bold new global world or can people coming from different countries with different backgrounds be trained to become experts at this complex task? Should the definition of a global leader involve the qualities of the person and their ability to function in cultures and organizations that are different from their own? Certainly , yes.

To build a more integrative framework for global leadership competencies, it's important to apply a more synergistic approach and focus on similarities across a variety of results (Adler, 1983, as cited in Jokinen, 2005), and on finding those types of competencies that are necessary when working across cultures globally.

## DIFFERING POTENTIAL DIMENSIONS TO BUILD A PROGRAM

Meldrum and Atkinson (1998 as cited in Jokinen, 2005) suggested that global leadership competencies might be considered the underpinnings of a larger higher-order set of meta-abilities. These studies described competencies essential to being a good leader in a global environment as related to the application of attributes, which help determine when and how these skills should be used. These higher-order competencies may be broken down into three dimensions:.

a) cognitive skills (ability to see things in many different ways, and self-knowledge as ability to understand and manage oneself);
b) emotional resilience (ability to maintain confidence and objectivity under difficult circumstances); and
c) personal drive (determination to succeed, to be proactive and take personal risks) (1998 as cited in Jokinen, 2005, p. 203).

During literature review for a comparison, a case study on the United Parcel Service (UPS) conducted with the leaders of their organization was informative. In this study, it was found that a new system is needed to be designed and implemented to ensure that people are "strategically minded to connect their operations with overall business goals, prepared to manage younger generations, and prepared to harness

the full capabilities of the network, ensuring our people are 'fluent' with our entire global network" (Schwartz, 2011, p. 13).

In another study in the United Kingdom, where there was a developing need (in a certain global company) to build bridges across cultural boundaries between the UK and the French businessmen and women.  It was found that the leaders of the company observed much disharmony between the groups and meetings that were unproductive with targets not being met and relationships being soured. The French found the people from the UK side of the company were "too laid back and detached" while the people from the UK found a more emotional approach to be more "irrational and lacking credibility" (Berger, 1998, p. 124).

In this same company there were three exercises conducted to determine where to go next with training and development. The second exercise involved meetings that were set up so that the French would run a meeting the way they normally would and the opposite happened. After the meetings were conducted, questionnaires were handed out and completed and here is what was found. In summary, people from the UK are more focused on the agenda and achieving a concrete result or action plan within a specified time. In contrast, the French are more interested in a broad discussion of all aspects of a problem. The French are more relaxed about timescales and more rigorous in their analyses (Berger, 1998, p. 125).

In the end, it was determined that both styles were useful depending on what the end goal of the meeting was. If quick action was the desired outcome, the UK style would be used, for more discussions that are open and brainstorming as in marketing or strategy meetings, the French approach was used. This exercise obviously was meaningful and both side seemed to work together better as a result. This was then included in training of the managers where it applied.

Lastly, the group was interested in how values from differing cultures played into the desired behaviors and attitudes that were needed to be successful and how to adjust to those individual situations as required. Based on Hofstede's (1993, as cited in Berger, 1998, p. 126) work with cultural differences, values were determined that could be applied across borders between Asia, Europe, North and South America as well as the Middle East. Four basic sets of values were arrived at  as follows:

a)  Leadership style expectations of people in authority, which can vary from an autocratic approach to a consultative approach. Knowing how another culture makes decisions can enable one to develop a strategy for influence and to estimate the probable time scale.

b)  Degree of structure expected by people, which can vary from a high reliance on structures, plans and procedures to a preference for minimal structure. Knowing how rigorous or flexible another culture is about meetings can enable one to prepare documentation and to set an acceptable agenda.

c)  Loyalty to the group, family or collective versus loyalty to personal achievement. Knowing how individualistic or collective another culture is about their communication style can influence how open and direct your behavior should be. Being direct to a collective culture can cause offence. This value set also influences whether decisions are likely to be made by teams or individuals. Team decision making takes longer but can result in greater commitment to the results.

d)  The importance given to a competitive, highly profit-oriented approach versus caring for others, health and safety, quality of life, and the environment. This dimension gives information about what is most important to people, that is, their desired success criteria, and whether it is efficiency or the welfare of people (Berger, 1998, p. 126).

From the three different approaches shared above it is obvious that there are varying styles and dimensions possible to building a foundation of competencies that would ultimately result in a global leader-training program. What follows is a variety of content that came from the development of these differing approaches. In the end, this paper attempts to synthesize these approaches and suggest one that could be the most effective and  could be studied further to determine whether or not there is any validity to the claim.

**SUGGESTED COMPETENCIES/SKILLS OF A GLOBAL LEADER**

Cross-cultural skills such as communication are noted as being critical and nobody can deny that assertion. Skills such as knowing how much and what type of jargon one might be using and perhaps the speed in which you deliver your message are vital. Non-verbal behavior would likely have differing meanings and being able to recognize and adjust to that would be important in a transcultural environment. In addition, listening skills and being able to put yourself in the shoes of another is challenging enough for most in their local culture; one would imagine it might be two to three times as difficult with other people and another language. Also, building relationships and trust with other cultures is a key skill that must be learned as well.

Berger (1998) stated there were some behavioral expectations needed that would include meetings and how those are handled during the preparation as well as what behaviors might be the norm in these meetings. When there is a deadlock or negotiations that are necessary what types of skills are required to succeed?

Lastly, Berger (1998) discussed cultural values and knowing what those might consist of and how to adjust to them once you discover what they are. Such areas as styles of decision-making and how people lead in other cultures are important to Berger. Questions about the society being more collectivist and individualistic are of concern and make or break a meeting or relationship quickly if not understood and applied. There are terms used related to time orientation and one culture might be polychromic and be more open with time or monochromic and more conscious and worried about time.

**MORE CURRENT AND PERHAPS ESOTERIC APPROACHES**

In comparison, some scholars have posited that there are many other more esoteric competencies that should be considered. Holt & Seki (2012) suggested that "cultivating being" was one to be considered (p. 32). Doing' is what we do, while 'being' is who we are. Being is our energetic presence. Interculturalists estimate that as much as 93 percent of message interpretation relies on nonverbal channels. Cultivating the being dimension of human experience requires getting in touch with our identity as well as our energetic presence, and then behaving in more congruent and authentic ways (p. 32).

What follows are the extended thoughts and ideas from these authors and other thought leaders in the field of global leadership and potential competencies? Developing multicultural effectiveness is one that is likely to be more common as well with skills such as being aware of your own worldview and how you feel about other cultures in general. The traditions and wisdom of other cultures may very well be a better solution to solving a problem or inventing the next great cell phone application. Therefore, the skillset we need to have here is to be mindful, open and aware of our thoughts and remain tolerant throughout our interactions with people from other cultures. Desired mental characteristics of global leaders as advocated by Holt & Seki (2012) include optimism, social judgment skills, empathy, motivation to work in an international environment, cognitive skills as well as the acceptance of complexity and its contradictions.

Optimism means many different things to many different people and can be applied in differing ways. For the sake of argument here, optimism will be considered being able to take risks and feeling confident that things will work out if one applies their skills well. A global leader should be able to go into uncertain environments with a sense of confidence and a thought process that exudes positivity in others and ultimately leads to desired results.

Social judgment skills refer to seeing the big picture or taking a perspective, which have been described by many authors as one of the key leadership competencies, whether in a domestic or an international context. Social judgment skills are also referred to in terms such as awareness of different constituents, ability to switch perspectives and understand global interdependences (Brake, 1997, as cited in Holt & Seki, 2012, p. 34), political awareness (Boyatzis et al. 1999, as cited in Holt & Seki, 2012, p. 34), social and organizational awareness (Goleman, 2000, as cited in Holt & Seki, 2012, p. 34), drive for a broader picture (Rhinesmith, 1996, as cited in Holt & Seki, 2012, p. 34), ability to understand cause-

effect chain reactions, and long term orientation (Srinivas, 1995; Moran and Riesenberger, 1994, as cited in Holt & Seki, 2012, p. 34).

Empathy is not like sympathy, which would not work all that well in leading a global environment. Empathy is being sensitive and caring about the person and their situation but not involving yourself deeply into it where you end up in the same situation. When you bring in other cultures into the equation this is another justification for immersing yourself into the culture to gain enough understanding in order to even be empathetic to their causes and concerns. How one uses and exhibits empathy here may not be accepted in other cultures the same way. This is another skill that would make a huge difference in building relationships and trust with other cultures leading to positive outcomes.

Empathy concerns one's ability to interact with others (Goleman, 1998). It means being participative and sensitive to others' needs and assumptions (Harris and Moran, 1987; Srinivas, 1995; Rhinesmith, 1996), having genuine concern for others (Gregersen et al., 1998), participative warm-heartedness, and respect (Jordan and Cartwright, 1998). It can be seen both as an antecedent and an outcome of an open and flexible approach to others (Harris and Moran, 1987), goodwill (Gregersen et al., 1998), social commitment (Mumford et al., 2000), and service orientation (Goleman, 1998).

Motivation to work in an international environment. Yukl's (1994) description of "commitment" consists of personal drive, goal orientation, perseverance and dedication. Willingness, defined through self-awareness (Goleman, 1998), to enter situations and exercise different global leadership competencies is an important outcome of motivation and base for learning and developing necessary skills (Yukl, 1994). It may also be the fundamental factor affecting the entire career choice. As Schein (1985) suggested that people often select a career for all the wrong reasons, and find their working environment incompatible with their true values. This situation results in feelings of unrest and discontent and in lost productivity. In addition, one's own motivation is commonly seen as prerequisite for being able to motivate others.

Cognitive skills. Cognitive skills influence the way we experience and interpret our environment. They also have an effect on how much and how effectively we learn from those interpretations and experiences. Wills and Barham (1994) identified "cognitive complexity" as core competence of international managers. International environment is commonly characterized by increased uncertainty and complexity.

Acceptance of complexity and its contradictions. Acceptance of complexity and its contradictions describes a personal attitude towards the ambiguous and unpredictable. It is essential in that it legitimizes the need for learning and thus creates motivation for personal development. Srinivas (1995) defined acceptance of complexity and its contradictions as seeing opportunity in adversity, using diversity to stimulate creativity, and being capable to lead life on many levels.

## THE BEHAVIORAL LEVEL GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

The behavioral level global leadership competencies are related to abilities to perform concrete actions and producing visible results. They are the outcomes of and more explicit in nature than the "core of global leadership competencies" and the "desired mental characteristics of global leaders" discussed above. The behavioral level global leadership competencies include social skills, network management skills, and knowledge.

*Social skills*: Overall, social skills are outcomes and culminations of other dimensions of emotional intelligence, and combine logical intelligence, emotional intelligence and technical skills into coherent global leadership competence. Social skills make it possible to get the work done through other people and to move people in the desired direction (Goleman, 1998).

*Networking skills:* As was noted above, the networking skills refer to another approach to "relationship management" than social skills. It is more related to formal relationships, created and maintained on an organizational rather than personal level. Networking skills are referred to by items such as building and

maintaining networks (Srinivas, 1995), building partnerships and alliances (Brake, 1997; Goldsmith and Walt, 1999), building relationships and linking capabilities and activities globally (Jordan and Cartwright, 1998), pursuing partnerships actively, building connections, creating internal networks, and community building (Brake, 1997).

*Knowledge:* The knowledge of tasks at hand refers to the type of technical knowledge needed to perform certain tasks, that is, to fill the job description. The knowledge of tasks is also described with such terms as computer skills (Goldsmith and Walt, 1999), language skills (Barham and Oates, 1991 and 1992; Wills and Barham, 1994; Coulson-Thomas, 1992; Birchhall et al., 1996; Spreitzer et al., 1997; Conner, 2000; Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy, 2002), technical expertise (Goldsmith and Walt, 1999), balancing global vs. local tensions (Rhinesmith, 1996; Tung and Mille, 1990; Black et al., 1999), hiring staff (Goldsmith and Walt, 1999), depth of field, professional expertise, and understanding and utilizing financial concepts and principles (Brake, 1997).

*Self-awareness:* Self-awareness means that a person has a deep understanding of his/her emotions, strengths and weaknesses, needs and drives, sources of frustration and reactions to problems (Schein, 1978; Goleman, 1998). Schein (1978) maintains that one has to become aware of one's own defensiveness and its operation before one can realistically assess one's problem or what one's resources are to deal with it. Self-insight enables one to listen to others and assess the value of what they have to offer. This is also related to openness and value diversity (Spreitzer et al, 1997; Rhinesmith, 1996). Both Schein (1978) and Goleman (1998) state that self-awareness is fundamental to self-regulation and social awareness, which in turn are fundamental to social skills required for effective relationships management (Goleman in Bernhut, 2002).

*Engagement in personal transformation*: Brake (1997) connects this phenomenon with the "entrepreneurial spirit". He describes it as commitment to the ongoing development of personal knowledge and skills, creative dissatisfaction, and "drive" to stay up to date. In personal effectiveness, Brake includes items such as strong, intrinsic desire to experience new things, avoiding limiting assumptions, and reflective learning, which can all be seen as reflections of engagement in personal transformation.

Finally, there is the knowledge of people, understanding the impact of cultural factors on behavioral communication (Harris and Moran, 1987). Noting the absence of consensus as to what being a global leader is all about Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy (2002)) have concluded that it is "only when leaders establish a state of complementarity with the universal motivational need systems [compare with Maslow (1954)] of their followers (whatever the national culture may be) that a global corporation comes into full bloom".

What about experience? Several empirical studies provide support to the organizational benefits of international work experience. Black et al. (1999) found that a positive relationship between the level of employee internationalization and firm's return on net assets. Carpenter et al. (2000 and 2001) found that US multinationals with international assignment-experienced CEO performed better than those led by CEOs without such experience. Sambharya (1996) and Athanassiou and Nigh (2002) report that, within US multinationals, international experience is positively related to the extent of MNC's internationalization. Results of Elron's (1997) research of subsidiary top management teams of US multinationals, suggest that cultural heterogeneity of these teams contribute positively to subsidiary performance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*Align your training with your business strategy*: The training and leadership development models must take into account that our managers should have an understanding of how the core of what companies do

every day - logistics - help customers compete on a global scale thus creating job models and leadership competencies that align with the company's goals and priorities.

*Start where you are.* Keep what works: Companies should always strive to make managers partners in the company, partners who have a stake in the company's success and are rewarded for long-term service. In other words most top executives should have begun their careers in entry level positions, working their way up.

*Assess and redesign talent management and training programs*: Millennials should be a huge part of any company. Research has shown that millennials learn differently than previous generations. Corporations should adapt their training and talent management programs so that they resonate with this generation.

*Assess group and individual strengths and weaknesses*: Companies should be in a position to customize career paths to meet individual and group needs. This can be done by empowering employees who understand the business and have promising leadership potential, to take on various job responsibilities within the company, based upon his or her strengths.

*Focus leadership development programs for strategic development*: A Corporate culture School program that aligns with the development of leadership competencies is recommended; kept pace with the enterprise demand for development; leverage more cost effective, progressive and timely methods of training; and offer a more flexible and customized approach to training.

Whether it is taking lessons learned from the recent economic downturn or adapting cultures to meet the needs of younger workers, change is abundant in today's corporate culture. Now is the time to take a hard look at training and leadership development programs that impact your entire workforce to ensure that your company is positioned for long-term, global growth.

## CONCLUSION

The world has a desperate need for better global leaders to navigate all the complex and ambiguous challenges that lie ahead. Our profession must take responsibility for creating better global leaders in our organizations- starting with developing ourselves as global leaders.

It can be concluded that there are many listings of global leadership competencies, containing items very similar to the previous examples. The various terms used reflect only semantic differences of the recurrent items presented in the given examples. Many of existing frameworks combine personal traits, behavioral skills, and knowledge into the same model indicating that "competencies are configurations of behavior, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, intelligence and skills" (Bonnstetter, 1999). In the global context, technical expertise, factual knowledge and customer or shareholder orientation seem to gain much less attention than the "soft" qualities such as self-awareness, self-mastery, flexibility, and social skills. Many authors share the view that although the increasing need for global leaders is clear, the specific competencies of these leaders are far from clear ( Morrison, 2000 and Jordan and Cartwright, 1998)

Results from previous studies accumulate into a long list of competencies characterized by only minor semantic differences of a much smaller number of key competencies (Jordan and Cartwright, 1998). Practically no longitudinal research has been reported that would validate the relevancy of different competencies defined. As a result, there is little agreement among researchers on the definition of global competence, its antecedents or outcomes Beechler et al., 1999).

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