Enhancing Cultural Intelligence Through International Work Integrated Learning

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Introduction

Work integrated learning is an educational model that aims to provide students with relevant work experience that helps them apply the knowledge they learn in the classroom to the workplace, and also to develop competencies that lead them to successful and rewarding careers. Core competency development in areas such as personal management, organizational skills and others are crucial, as are discipline specific competencies that will enable the student to be successful in their chosen career (for example, chemistry, biology, business management, mechanical engineering). Another set of competencies that is important for students to develop, however, is international competencies. These enable students to not only be effective in cross-cultural encounters, but could help them be successful in internationally focused careers. In today’s globalized world, no matter what path students choose to take in their career upon graduation, they will be living and working in a culturally diverse setting. They will need to act locally and think globally (Kefalas, 1998).

Much research has been done in the area of global citizenship (as defined in a multitude of ways), and several tools have been developed to measure the development of these competencies. There is also significant research in the area of training to be successful working internationally. Despite this, little has been written about how to articulate the competencies students gain in such circumstances to prospective employers in order to improve their employment prospects. So while work integrated learning programs might be well positioned to help inform the discussion regarding international experiences and employability, not much has been reported to date.

Employability matters to students, and is one of the outcomes that motivates students to participate in work integrated learning. Employability also matters to institutions as they strive to produce global citizens who will contribute positively to their communities and society. It is an important factor that contributes to the success of graduates and their ability to contribute to the community, for only after they are successful at meeting their own needs can individuals effectively focus on contributing to others in society, be it by way of resources, or time and knowledge.

Can international experiences, and thereby the development of international competencies, help enhance students’ employability? If so, how can institutions help students articulate the learning gained from international experiences so that they can improve their employment prospects? In trying to respond to these questions, the author will begin with a review of international competencies and tools available to measure their development. The concept of cultural intelligence will then be explored as a potential framework to connect the outcomes of international (work term) experiences to student employability. The chapter will end with a synopsis of the institutions’ role in helping make this tool functional in this respect, for no matter how culturally competent one is, this asset lies dormant in an individual unless it is put into action to benefit the individual, and ultimately, society.

Assessing international experiences for learning outcomes

International competence, in the literature about internationalization, is referred to under different names: intercultural communication and intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986), global competence (CIEE, 1988 and 1994), intercultural competence (Vulpe, Kealey, Protheroe and MacDonald, 2001; Landis, Bennett and Bennett, 2004; Deardorff 2006), global mindset (Javidan, 2007), and cultural intelligence (Earley and Ang, 2003). There appears to be some agreement, however, on the two dimensions that constitute global competence. The first dimension is passive skills such as general knowledge, skills and abilities for example language ability or knowledge of world geography and global political and social issues. The second dimension is active skills involving more personal qualities such as empathy, resilience to stress, adaptation skills, self-awareness and intercultural sensitivity.

The assessment of passive skills learning and development has mainly focused on foreign language acquisition, grade achievement for individuals studying abroad or task performance in international assignments for
individuals working abroad (Massey and Burrow 2009; Caligiuri 2006). A wide array of assessments has been used to measure the development of active skills relating to international competence. These include the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), to evaluate an individual’s ability to adapt to other cultures (Kelly and Meyers, 1995), the Intercultural Sensitivity Index (ISI) which allowed assessment of the relationship between international experience and second language acquisition, intercultural sensitivity and global competence (Olson and Kroeger, 2001), and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman 2003). The IDI assesses where individuals are positioned on a scale of intercultural development ranging from extreme ethnocentrism to “ethno-relativism” based on Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (1986). Bennett argues that the greater the intercultural sensitivity, the greater the potential for intercultural competence. The DMIS and IDI therefore focus on one’s aptitude for intercultural competence, rather than the development of intercultural competence.

Braskamp, Braskamp and Merill (2010) developed a Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) that measures the three major dimensions of a global perspective – cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Another self-assessment instrument developed by the Kozai group (http://kozajgroup.com/) is the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) that evaluates the competencies critical to interacting effectively with people. Last but not least, Ng, Van Dyne and Ang proposed a conceptual model using Kolb’s theory of experiential learning and the concept of cultural intelligence, to explain how individuals learn and benefit from international experiences (Ng, Van Dyne and Ang (2009)).

Making sense of international work term learning outcomes using Cultural Intelligence

It is easier said than done to identify the learning that occurs during any type of experience, and perhaps even more complicated for international experiences. Overlaying the experience are elements of language, cultural values and norms, isolation and loneliness. However, there are parallels to what a student experiences when they engage in experiential education such as a co-operative education work term. Often students are moving from one culture to another as they transition from a familiar academic context to a workplace. Whereas they may still be speaking the same language, there may be very different terminology and understanding, values and norms may be quite new and often students do feel isolated and alone in a workplace. How can we use what we know about work-based learning to help us understand what is happening in an international context?

A framework that might support this learning process, and that recognizes the unique dimension of an international experience might be the concept of cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003). Cultural intelligence defined as “an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings” could be a concept that would be of benefit to international experience programs as well as programs sending students into a variety of workplaces that are culturally diverse.

The idea of cultural intelligence is rooted in other intelligences, such as emotional and social intelligence, but recognizes that being in an intercultural setting requires additional dimensions of intelligence. Earley and Ang’s work identifies four factors that are critical to cultural intelligence: cognitive skills, metacognitive skills, a motivational dimension and a behavioural dimension (Earley & Ang, 2003). While measures of emotional intelligence (EQ) also have similar constructs of the cognitive, motivational and behavioural, studies have shown that just because someone has a high EQ does not mean that they will be able to interact effectively in an intercultural setting that requires “appropriate cultural knowledge, motivation and behaviour” and that this is best measured looking through a cultural intelligence lens (Kim, Kirkman & Chen, 2008).

Cognitive ability is important, as a certain amount of knowledge, including language is required to function in an international setting. Having an understanding of how things work, traditions and customs, values and norms are necessary. The meta-cognitive skills required relate directly to the Kolb/Hughes-Wiener models of learning. Being able to reflect, be self-aware, develop both emic and etic understandings are critical to learning and understanding in an international setting.

The motivational dimension links to emotions and those going into international settings need to have the predisposition to change and the ability to express emotions appropriately as the conditions require (Bhawuk, 2009). Recognizing and finding ways to articulate this dimension is key to Mezirow’s notion of transformative learning, which takes the student beyond transmission and transactional learning into a place of owning the learning (Mezirow, 1991). The motivational piece is also central to the concept of self-efficacy, or a student’s belief in their ability to manage and to persist under difficult circumstances (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy provides the motivational fuel to keep going.
It is one thing to understand what is going on in an international setting on a cognitive and meta-cognitive level and to have the right kind of motivational forces, but it is another to be able to act on that understanding and motivation in ways that are culturally appropriate. This is where the behavioural dimension is so important as individuals who are living in another culture are learning new behaviours at the same time (Bhawuk, 2009). The central tenet of social learning theory is that people anticipate actions and their consequences and decide how to behave accordingly based on these previous observations and experiences (Bandura, 1977). Without the ability to make these adaptations it would be very difficult to function appropriately in an international setting.

Using this four-factor framework of cognitive, meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions of cultural intelligence, an instrument was developed, the 20 item Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), see Table 1. Reliability and validity testing of the CQS has shown it to be a “clear, robust and meaningful four-factor structure” that is stable across samples, time, methods and countries. Research on cultural intelligence has demonstrated that it can be used to predict adjustment, well-being, cultural judgement and decision making, and task performance in culturally diverse settings. Furthermore, it has been shown to have predictive validity over and above demographic characteristics, personality, general mental ability, emotional intelligence, cross-cultural adaptability, rhetorical sensitivity, cross-cultural experience, and social desirability. (Van Dyne, Ang & Koh, 2008).

The CQS can also be used for self-reporting, peer-reporting and supervisor-reporting, with self-rated scores having been shown to be positively correlated with observer-rated scores (Van Dyne et al., 2008). This could provide the individual with a concrete frame to support their reflections, come to emic and etic conclusions about their experiences and have the vocabulary to articulate their learning and cultural intelligence to others, such as prospective employers.

**Connecting Cultural Intelligence to Employability**

Studies applying cultural intelligence as a framework to measure competence in a range of workplace settings show the connection to employability. In a study that gathered data from global managers about their use of cultural intelligence in their position, the researchers were able to not only show connections between the four-factors and twenty items in the CQS, but also identified additional items, such as knowledge of workplace behaviours and norms, that might be appropriate in the context of the workings of a global manager (Janssens & Cappelen, 2008).

Work done on expatriate success concludes that cultural intelligence plays a role in elements of success such as adjustment, performance, retention and career success (Shaffer & Miller, 2008). Shaffer and Miller’s work suggest that cultural intelligence plays a role as a “moderator” in strengthening positive inputs (such as openness to new experiences) and lessening negative inputs (such as cultural novelty) to success. They also show how cultural intelligence acts in an “intervening” role, especially in language fluency and previous experience, to lead to greater success.
Considering the case of multi-cultural teams, (Shokef and Erez, 2008) concluded that facilitating employee’s global identity and cultural intelligence “may help them adapt to work in global environments”. With many current workplaces consisting of multi-cultural teams, this is a significant finding and supports the role that cultural intelligence can play in a number of contexts.

Capabilities in cultural intelligence have been linked to effectiveness in global managers, expatriates and effectiveness on multi-cultural teams. Clearly there is a connection between having successful cultural intelligence and working in an international context.

There exists, therefore, an opportunity for institutions and co-operative education professionals to use this tool to measure the effectiveness of international programs they offer. Inherent in this, exists an obligation to educate students on how to use this tool to enhance their chances of employment for work terms or post-graduate employment.

### TABLE 1
The 20-item four scale CQS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CQ-Strategy:</th>
<th>Strongly DISAGREE</th>
<th>Strongly AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MC1</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MC2</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>MC3</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MC4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<th>CQ-Knowledge:</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CGO1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>CGO2</td>
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<td>CGO3</td>
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<td>CGO5</td>
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<td>CGO6</td>
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<tr>
<th>CQ-Motivation:</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>MOT1</td>
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<td>MOT2</td>
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<td>MOT3</td>
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<td>MOT4</td>
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<td>MOT5</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CQ-Behavior:</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEH1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BEH2</td>
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<td>BEH3</td>
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<td>BEH4</td>
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<td>BEH5</td>
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Note: Use of this scale is granted to academic researchers for research purposes only. For information on using the scale for purposes other than academic research (e.g., consultants and non-academic organizations), please send an email to queryCultural.com.

Role of institutions in developing helping enhance student employability

While research has looked at how international experience results in development of cross-cultural skills such as knowledge of the host country, self-awareness and personal development (Bond, 2009), Kitsantas (2004) determined that students did gain cross-cultural skills and global understanding as a result of international experiences, and that the most significant factor predicting this development was goal setting for cross-cultural competence (Kitsantas, 2004).

It falls on the institutions offering international experiences to students to help connect the dots for the students, to help see the linkages between students development as a result of international experiences, how those developments can be articulated and the connection to employment related skills and aptitudes.

For work-integrated learning educators, then, there exists an opportunity, indeed an obligation, to ensure that students embarking on international work terms have the best conditions possible within which to develop cultural intelligence. This ranges from the quality of the work term experience, to effectiveness of pre-departure training and onsite support that help establish and develop learning objectives specific to development of cultural intelligence, to post-work term debriefing sessions that would focus on how to articulate their international experiences and cultural intelligence on their resumes and during interviews to enhance their employment prospects.

Using the 20 items as a basis for reflection could occur at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of each international experience. Students could do a self-assessment using the scale. They could then identify certain areas from the items where they might want to develop, and set some specific learning goals accordingly. Midway through their experience they could then do another assessment that might be supplemented with an assessment by their work term supervisor. A final assessment could be done at the end of their experience to examine areas of growth, goal achievement and provide the students with some clear feedback regarding their cultural intelligence. Students could be encouraged to document evidence that demonstrates their cultural intelligence in some of the items.

An example of how the CQ model demonstrates cultural intelligence to students could be examining any of the twenty items before and after the experience. From the meta-cognitive factor a student might reflect on ways that they have demonstrated the item: “I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures”. Have they been thinking about their own views and biases when interacting with others? Have they asked others for clarification on their understanding of the culture? Reflective questions exploring the meta-cognitive skills of checking assumptions, strategizing before engaging with others and cultural self-awareness could be informative and lead to “etic” understanding.

From the cognitive factor a student might choose to find ways to demonstrate their cultural intelligence in the item: “I know the rules (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) of other languages” by identifying their level of language capability. They might also be able to demonstrate their knowledge of business practices, economic and legal systems, values, norms and religious beliefs.

Within the motivational factor a student might look at the item: “I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me” by reflecting on times when they have done just that during their international experience. Students could offer examples of when they have demonstrated interest in other cultures, have experienced joy in exploring new cultures and acted with confidence when faced with challenges posed by international experiences.

For the behavioural factor a student might consider the item: “I change my non-verbal behaviour when a cross-cultural situation requires it” and give examples of how they have modified this behaviour accordingly. They might also describe culturally appropriate modifications to their verbal behaviours and to their speech acts such as the manner and content of their communications.

By considering all twenty items and reflecting on the ways they have demonstrated their capabilities with these items students come away armed with the ability to articulate their cultural intelligence to others. They should be able to provide concrete examples demonstrating their capabilities and be able to identify why these capabilities matter in the workplace and society.

Conclusion
Examining the contribution that international experiences might make to a student’s employability is not only about success in getting a job. Fundamentally, if we want our students to act locally while thinking globally they will likely be doing that in some sort of workplace upon graduation. The will be enacting their “global citizenship” while an employee of an organization, whether that organization is a small business, a large multinational, the public service or a not-for-profit agency. A powerful measure of the success of international experiences could be how these students are able to learn from their experiences, develop international competencies, embrace a “global mindset” defined as “a set of individual attributes that enable an individual to influence individuals, groups and organizations from diverse social/cultural/institutional systems” (Javidan, Steers, & Hitt, 2007) and bring that to bear in employment settings.

The concept of cultural intelligence provides a mechanism by which students can achieve this level of success, not only in employment settings but in the enactment of their global citizenship as they strive to contribute to community and society.

References

Massey, J. and Burrow, J (2009). Evaluating the Experiences of Participants in Queen's University's International Exchange Program.

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