Literature Review On Cultural Intelligence: The World Is Flat By Thomas Friedman

Globalization has taken over our world in the past decade and is a constantly growing phenomenon. With that intercultural communication or cultural intelligence has become a crucial approach to consider and to study as it comes with its inevitable problems. As author Livermore expressed in his book leading with cultural intelligence. It has become a vital necessity for us to understand the role cultural intelligence plays in the workforce, it is one of, if not the only way to understand the diverse cultural interactions dealing with the extremely competitive world we live in. (Livermore, 2015).

In the light of the growing right-wing and racist hateful tendencies throughout the world motivated by the contempt of others, researchers and scientists confirm that the ability to coexist with other cultures is a strong indication of a presence of cultural intelligence among the person. This cultural intelligence often referred to as CQ, is a type of intelligence that can be easily measured and specially acquired through training but is different from emotional intelligence or traditional IQ. CQ is a theory that emerged from the cumulative studies and research done by several universities and institutions in the western and occidental milieu that defines it as the ability to perform work effectively with a variety of people from multiple cultures. It’s not surprising when we hear companies such as “Starbucks” who initially struggled to enter new markets that were culturally diverse and even failed to operate successfully as in other countries initially to resort to measuring the cultural intelligence of their employees. This indeed turns out to be a potential success indicator for coexisting among others. Author Livermore shares an interesting point while traveling for work to different countries: “It’s amazing how life and work in our rapidly globalizing world bring us an unprecedented number of encounters with people, places, and issues from around the world. I guess the world is flat—isn’t it?” (Livermore, 2015). What is particularly interesting in this quote is the use of the phrase the world is flat which was originally written by author Thomas Friedman who defined our world as being a battleground with constant emerging economies with rapidly growing and competitively challenging markets that level the plane field. (Friedman, 2005)

Author Thomas shares an important point of view in developing cultural intelligence in a global world: “ In order to acquire cultural intelligence, you must practice, by living and working in culturally different environments, or by working with culturally different people. But in order to live and work effectively in culturally different environments, or to work successfully with culturally different people, you first need to acquire cultural intelligence.” (Thomas, 2009). This can be seen in different situations in the workforce. We tend to as human beings assume that we are culturally intelligent and when facing an issue or a disagreement with disregard at it as being a cultural problem and tend to define it as a personal problem. Being said as author Thomas shares in his book, it is primordial to acquire cultural intelligence by putting yourself in situations where you are adapting and constantly learning from the other culture. Living in a different country or being culturally diverse doesn’t necessarily mean that cultural intelligence is automatically restored but being showing mindfulness and knowledge of a certain person’s culture is what develops your cultural intelligence. The term culturally intelligent from the point of view of individuals in other cultures includes the speed of application of information and the knowledge that the individual has previously learned and acquired about these cultures, and on

the other hand, cultural intelligence refers to traits and skills of individuals that are used to cope with stress when interacting on a large scale in cultures. Going back to author Thomas's description of cultural intelligence, he explains CQ as being a combination of skills that are used cross-culturally, in line with mindfulness and knowledge. (Thomas, 2009). So what are these cross-cultural skills needed to develop your CQ? These attributes and behaviors needed can be grown by training them in order to gain these skills. Author Dolan says in his book "Cross-cultural competence: A Field Guide for Developing Global Leaders and Managers." that there are three main cross-cultural skills needed to achieve cultural intelligence and they can be grouped into three which he categorizes as the following: " those that help a person maintain him- or herself in a new environment (in such areas as stress reduction, feelings of self-confidence, mental health, and psychological well-being); those needed to create relationships with people in the new or different culture; and the cognitive skills necessary to correctly perceive new or different cultures and their members." (Dolan, 2015). These categories are self-explanatory, they can be broken down into more simplistic skills depending on each individual's level of CQ.

There are few recommendations that can be drawn from all these different points of view in regard to the effect of CQ in the work environment and its efficiency. First being, companies should conduct CQ assessments prior to recruiting new employees and especially if they are coming from a different environment. CQ has proven to be effective and efficient in seeing results but these results have nonetheless proven to be only sometimes accurate which is why research for a combination between emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence should be done in terms of seeing how they go hand in hand and how they can increase the efficiency in the workforce and teamwork. Finally, as author Earley suggests: "Cultural neuroscience becomes increasingly popular in management research, examining CQ at the brain level is one example of a novel unit-of-analysis approach that offers exciting research opportunities. Approaching CQ from this biological perspective can reveal intriguing insights on how different CQ factors map onto different regions of the brain and how individuals tune their neural activity to varying cultural contexts." (Earley & Ang, 2003).

References

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