
A critical review of the academic article:
**'The importance of metacognition and the experiential learning process within a
cultural intelligence-based approach to cross-cultural coaching'**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a critical review of the peer-reviewed article 'The importance of metacognition and the experiential learning process within a cultural intelligence-based approach to cross-cultural coaching'. It is authored by Catherine A. van der Horst, a practicing leadership and cross-cultural coach, and Ruth M. Albertyn, an Associate Professor, Lecturer and Researcher, in affiliation with the Department of Management Coaching, University of Stellenbosch Business School in South Africa. The authors have more than thirty years combined experience in coaching and adult education. This article was published in May 2018 in the SA Journal of Human Resource Management, Volume 16 (1-11). It explores the theoretical relationship between metacognition, Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT), and cultural intelligence (CQ) and argues that their combined use can enhance cross-cultural coaching. This article is a well-structured presentation of the argument informed by a range of literature; however, one perceived weakness is that it is a theoretical exploration not based on empirical research.

An overview of the critical review as presented to academic assessors can be found in Appendix A and in the recording accompanying this paper.

SUMMARY

Van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) begin the article by suggesting that, due to globalisation, cross-cultural coaching is an increasingly relevant practice to help individuals successfully navigate situations of cultural differences and support leaders who manage intercultural teams in the workplace (van der Horst and Albertyn 2018). The authors define CQ as comprising metacognition, cognition, motivation, and behaviour and, as an intelligence construct that all people have and which can be universally applied, regardless of the cultural context they support its use in cross-cultural coaching (van der Horst and Albertyn 2018).

The use of metacognitive strategies; specifically, awareness-building, mindfulness, and perspective taking (reflective practices already used in coaching) are deemed helpful to "transform knowledge and experience into culturally appropriate behaviour" (van der Horst and Albertyn 2018, p1). For example, the authors explore the practice of a coach helping a client build awareness of self, of others, and of the external environment by observing and reflecting on their experiences and then applying the perspective to their interactions.

They also posit the importance of an individual translating knowledge into action and discuss how the use of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (Kolb 1984) applied in coaching with metacognitive strategies can enhance CQ for intercultural effectiveness. Van der Horst

and Albertyn (2018) illustrate how, as with metacognitive strategies, the stages of Kolb's ELT encourage observation and reflection of an experience to deepen understanding and to inform future more culturally appropriate behaviour.

EVALUATION - PERCEIVED STRENGTHS AND GAP

Van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) use a critical interpretative synthesis (CIS) approach and reference the work of Dixon-Woods et al. (2006), which presents this methodology as effective for reviewing a range of disparate and diverse literature. They follow a similar structure seen in Rakotsoane's 2019 paper titled "Structure and parts of an article". The authors begin their paper with an abstract that contains a summary of the research purpose, the research method, the findings, practical implications, and the paper's contribution to cross-cultural coaching. The introduction gives background information on the topic and includes a thesis statement, while the conclusion wraps up the argument. The other sections—the methodology, findings, and discussion—comprise relevant sub-headings. This structure is effective in developing a clear and consistent argument for the use of metacognitive strategies and Kolb's ELT in a CQ approach to cross-cultural coaching. The authors make strong connections between the three concepts and their application with an exploration of each concept in the findings section, followed by a discussion of the application of metacognition in cross-cultural coaching, the relationship between CQ and Kolb's ELT, and the inter-connectiveness between the three. The authors also include definitions of key concepts in the introduction, and support their points on cross-cultural coaching, CQ, and metacognitive strategies by drawing on a range of secondary literature, including academic books and journal articles. For instance, Horst and Albertyn (2018) refer to the cultural profiling works of Hofstede in the early 1980's and Booysen's 2015 work on coaching to help clients build cognitive self-awareness. Nevertheless, a perceived deficiency in the structure of this paper is the omission of a keywords section, placed immediately after the abstract, to explain words and phrases that are closely related to the topic and to signal what the article is about.

The article provides strong context for its argument with van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) describing both the impact of globalisation on the macro environment such as increased labour mobility, and the resulting individual impact such as greater management complexity for leaders. Their work builds on earlier research, which maintains that coaching as a practice of personal growth can help individuals navigate complex intercultural interactions (Rosinski 2003, Wilson 2013, Plaister-Ten 2013, Cox et al. 2014). However, unlike authors such as Cox et al. (2014) and Goryunova (2020), they do not comment on the drivers for

globalisation and intercultural interactions, such as migration patterns, technological advancements, and new areas of economic expansion which influence the type of intercultural interaction such as technological advancements enabling people in different countries to connect and collaborate using virtual channels.

In presenting their argument for the use of metacognition and CQ in cross-cultural coaching, van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) point to the empirical research and congruency of definitions that already exists for these two concepts. For instance, they reference the alignment of CQ definitions across literature, which Anderson and Bergdolt (2017) highlight in their review of 'global mindset' and CQ. Similarly, the works of Morris et. al (2019) and Goryunova (2020) speak to the empirical research into metacognition to support cross-cultural efficacy. In contrast, van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) reflect on what appears to be a lack of consistent empirical definition for cross-cultural coaching. However, there appears to be a consistent desired outcome — for cross-cultural coaching to build awareness and behavioural agility to better navigate intercultural interactions (Wilson 2013, Plaister-Ten 2013, Cox et al 2014, van der Horst and Albertyn 2018).

In their exploration of the use of the metacognitive strategies; specifically awareness, perspective-taking, and mindfulness, van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) provide examples of strategies such as a two-step process for reflecting on an experience and challenging assumptions, as well as the process of expanding their perspective to apply learning in future experiences. The suggestions can be particularly helpful for coaches practicing cross-cultural coaching and compares positively to other articles that support cross-cultural coaching but provide no specific practical guidance. Similarly, incorporating Kolb's ELT can further aid coaches, given that adult learning theory, as a process of personal development, is already considered a foundation-stone of coaching (Cox et al. 2014). The authors echo the explanation by McLeod (2017) on how Kolb's model encourages a process of reflecting on an experience to gain deeper perspective, which informs future action. With the already established link between reflective practice of awareness and perspective-taking in both coaching and CQ, the use of Kolb's ELT could be considered an appropriate strategy to help coaches gain an understanding of the complexities experienced in cross-cultural interactions.

What isn't clarified, however, is the author's definition of culture itself. Cox et al. (2014) describe the risk of cross-cultural coaching oversimplifying a complex paradox — that all coaching is cross-cultural, or no coaching is cross-cultural as everyone brings their unique

differences and sources of influence into a discussion. For example, there is the national cultural profiling works of Hofstede (1981) and Hampden-Turner (1997), which differ from the 2002 American Psychological Association's definition of multiculturalism referred to by Chin et al. (2016) that incorporates gender, status, religion, and national culture. This author further notes that the article was written in South Africa where there is an increasing call to incorporate indigenous cultural knowledge into coaching as evidenced in Geber and Keane's (2013) paper 'Extending the worldview of coaching research and practice in Southern Africa: The concept of concept Ubuntu'. In the macro environment, with global mobility increasing as outlined in the paper's introduction, another theory is that there is an increasing blurring of the cultural lines of what Plaister-Ten (2013, p53) refers to as 'creolising' of societies. In coaching, Boyatzis et al. (2022) observe that this increasing intersectionality and complexity of society is influencing the types of issues clients seek coaching to address. Further, in the workplace, Chmielecki (2021) refers to the cultures that exists within organisations and even teams. A clear articulation of the author's definition of culture would help one understand whether or not the authors view cross-cultural coaching as different from other fields of coaching that also seek to help individuals to improve their interactions with others. It is also noted that this article was written prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a significant impact on society and intercultural interaction such as increasing virtual teams and remote working (Mangla 2021, Reuil 2022). These global shifts will also likely influence the issues clients experience.

That said, this article is helpful in encouraging a coach's reflection on the macro environment clients are operating in and provides strategies already tested in coaching to support clients who are facing challenges navigating different cultures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting on a range of literature highlighting the need to develop strategies to successfully navigate today's more interconnected environment, van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) provide a clear and compelling approach that draws on pre-existing practices in coaching and a foundational learning model to apply in a clearly defined framework for CQ in a coaching context. However, as the authors themselves acknowledge, there is a need for empirical research into more specific and practical applications of these concepts in the field. This author supports the recommendation, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic has further shifted the global landscape and the knowledge gained will provide coaches with a feasible, relevant methodology to support clients to navigate an increasingly complex world.

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APPENDIX A – SLIDES USED IN PRESENTATION TO ACADEMIC ASSESSORS

BMPF7100 – Research and Academic Communication

Presentation of a critical review

Alannah Britz (Student number 2029338)
Tuesday 8 November 2022

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Subject of the critical review

‘The importance of metacognition and the experiential learning process within a cultural intelligence-based approach to cross-cultural coaching’

Authors:

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Article summary

Van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) explore the theoretical relationships between:

- Metacognition
- Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT)
- Cultural intelligence (CQ)

Suggest that used together they can enhance cross-cultural coaching in context of globalisation.

Use the critical interpretative synthesis (CIS) approach discussed by Dixon-Woods et al. (2006).

Argument is well structured and informed by a range of literature.

One gap is it is a theoretical exploration not based on empirical research.

Evaluation – Strengths and gaps

Structure

Strengths:

- Well structured with a clear and consistent argument following similar structure to Rakotsoane's 2019 "Structure and parts of an article".
- Clear definitions of cultural intelligence, metacognitive strategies and Kolb's Experiential learning theory (ELT)

Gaps:

- There is no keywords section.

Evaluation – Strengths and gaps

Context

Strengths:

- Describe both macro and micro impact of globalisation
- Context for coaching and culture ([Rosinski 2003](#), [Wilson 2013](#), [Plaister-Ten 2013](#), [Cox et al. 2014](#)).

Gaps:

- No comment on the drivers for globalisation and intercultural interactions which influence the type of intercultural interaction ([Cox et al. 2014](#) and [Goryunova 2020](#)).

Evaluation – Strengths and gaps

Argument

Strengths

- Exploration of empirical research and congruency of definitions for metacognition and CQ ([Morris et. al 2019](#), [Anderson and Bergdolt 2017](#), [Goryunova 2020](#))
- Helpful examples for coaches practicing cross-cultural coaching.
- Kolb's ELT also helpful as already used in coaching ([Cox et al. 2014](#)).

Gaps

- No definition of culture despite many in literature ([Hofstede 1981](#), [Hampden-Turner 1997](#), [Plaister-Ten 2013](#), [Chin et al. 2016](#), [Chmielecki 2021](#))
- Macro context of country published in not mentioned ([Geber and Keane 2013](#)).
- Noted article written pre COVID-19 pandemic which has cultural impacts ([Mangla 2021](#), [Reuil 2022](#))

Conclusion and recommendations

- Van der Horst and Albertyn (2018) reflect on a range of literature, provide a clear and compelling approach that draws on pre-existing practices in coaching, and a foundational learning model to apply in a clearly defined framework for CQ in a coaching context.
- However, empirical research is needed especially given the COVID-19 pandemic has occurred since the paper was published.
- The knowledge gained will provide coaches with a feasible, relevant methodology to support clients to navigate an increasingly complex world.

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