Cultural Indoctrination in Global Hypercompetition: A Conceptual Framework for International Management

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the potential influence of cultural indoctrination (CI) on international management and corporate performance today in an era of global hypercompetition. The specific organizational function targeted in this work is international human resource management (IHRM). As organizations are confronted with the need to engage with stakeholders from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, the need to understand the ways in which cultural imperatives play into individual and collective performances becomes increasingly important. Based on an encompassing literature review, this article examines the following seven factors which should be included in CI: Child Development, Cultural Institutionalization, Cultural Intelligence, Social Learning Theory, Religion, Social Capital, and Values Orientation Theory (VOT). It is from these factors that a conceptual framework is developed for potential future application in IHRM theory and practice.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Indoctrination, Institutionalization, International Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior, Productivity, Socialization

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the potential influence of cultural indoctrination (CI) on international management (IM) today in an era of global hypercompetition as there is neither sufficient research on CI nor on its connection with IM, and how the latter is affected by international human resource management (IHRM) practices. Cultural origins can permit the prediction of individual behavior in an organizational environment under various situations (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Hall, 1976). Therefore, as organizations are confronted with the need to engage with stakeholders from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, the need to understand the ways in which cultural imperatives play into individual and collective performances becomes increasingly paramount (Hannah et al., 2013).

This need ultimately provides the ability for organizations to sustain a competitive advantage and to remain profitable over time (Chatterji & Patro, 2014; Teece, 2014; Barney, 1991). Achieving these goals demands top management to appreciate and understand the four global forces affecting IM today (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015): urbanization, accelerating technological change, an aging world, and greater global connections including trade, people, finance, and data. Clearly, extensive, long-term changes are occurring in the world today.
However, none of these factors considers the vastly underresearched area of CI we all experience from birth (Winn, 1983; Livermore, 2011). This is critical for the IHRM function in particular because firms are obviously comprised of people who constitute the most important aspect of organizations. This article shall investigate the following factors which should be involved in CI: Child Development, Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Social Learning Theory, Cultural Institutionalization, Religion, Social Capital, and Values Orientation Theory (VOT). It is from these factors that a conceptual framework is developed for potential future application in IM and IHRM as they are affected by human productivity (Tolentino, 2008; Miner, 2005).

These factors were carefully selected via an encompassing literature review that covered psychology, human resource management, sociology, and organizational theory, among others. They were chosen because other factors involved in human behavior (e.g., personality) were not deemed to have as significant an impact as the ones chosen based on the results from the literature review that preceded the development of this article. In any case, it is important to reiterate here that no formal studies exist regarding CI or even its connection with other aspects of human activity such as business or sociology.

This article is organized in the following manner. First is a Literature Review covering a range of work by established theorists in fields such as cultural anthropology, education, social learning theory, cultural intelligence, social capital, and decision-making theory. At the end of this section are three Propositions for the reader to consider. Second is a Theoretical Framework that incorporates the coverage in the Literature Review and culminates with the conceptual framework itself. Third is a section on Future Research Directions. Last is the Conclusion.

The reader should consider this definition of CI before continuing with the Literature Review: Cultural Indoctrination (CI) is the process of inculcating ideas, attitudes, and cognitive strategies during the transfer of cultural traditions from one generation to the next with the expectation that such traditions will not be questioned in the future.

The major contribution of this article to the extant literature on IM and IHRM is to provide a springboard for future research which can have an impact on a variety of additional fields such as homeland security, information systems, or sales & marketing (Bartunek, 2007). This work is neither designed nor expected to be an empirical piece with specific solutions or answers; instead, that effort is left to those researchers who will use the conceptual framework for that purpose (see Bloom et al., 2012; Mudambi et al., 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories Pertaining to CI

The following theorists are all certainly highly regarded individuals in their particular fields; however, none of them examine or connect their work with the topic of CI. Following is a summary of their major, relevant contributions for the CI conceptual framework below.

The cultural anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn (1949, 1951, 1962) argued that humans share biological traits and characteristics which form the basis for the development of culture and that people normally believe their own cultural beliefs are natural, but consider those of others as inferior or abnormal (Hills, 2002). Building on Kluckhohn’s theory were Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck (1961) who developed three basic assumptions: 1) There is a limited number of common human problems for which all people must at all times find some solution; 2) While there is variability in solutions of all the problems, it is neither limitless nor random but it is definitely variable within a range of possible solutions; 3) All alternatives of all solutions are present in societies at all times but are differentially preferred. These assumptions formed the foundation of their Values Orientation Theory (VOT) which is incorporated into the proposed framework below because VOT is a culmination of the other factors involved in CI.
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