

**Cultural Intelligence and Mindfulness:
Teaching MBAs in Iran**

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Short Title: CQ in the Classroom

Acknowledgements: An earlier version of this paper appeared in Proceedings of the International Association for Business and Society 2014 Annual Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND MINDFULNESS: TEACHING MBAS IN IRAN

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Purpose: A dynamic global economy has increased the need for cross-cultural flexibility and cultural intelligence. While a large literature has examined various means to increase cultural intelligence (CQ) in student and expatriate populations, its importance for teachers in cross-cultural settings has been largely unexamined. In this paper, we utilize the experiences of a group of professors in an MBA program in Iran to investigate the effect of their activity on their cross-cultural skills.

Design/methodology/approach: Using structured interviews and content analysis, we draw on the experiences of business faculty from a Canadian business school who helped deliver an MBA program in Iran to investigate how their experiences in a country new to them were reflected in the components of cultural intelligence.

Findings: Using an established model of cultural intelligence, we find contributions to all three facets, knowledge, mindfulness and behaviour indicating that such exchanges can be regarded as important for students and teachers alike in an international educational context.

Originality/value: With more and more teaching extending across cultural boundaries in both domestic and international settings the capacity of instructors to read, interpret and react to the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of their students is an important factor in the success of these programs. To this point, at least within the business education literature, the influence of such encounters on the instructors involved has been neglected.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence, Iran, business education, cross-cultural

Cultural Intelligence and Mindfulness: Teaching MBAs in Iran

Introduction

As the integration of the global economy continues apace, there have been numerous calls for increased emphasis on building cross-cultural capabilities through business education (Earley and Peterson, 2004; Tuleja, 2008). Efforts by universities and colleges to bring more international content into undergraduate and MBA programs have been widespread although the design and effectiveness of these efforts have been questioned (Aggarwal and Goodell, 2011; Witte, 2010). These initiatives have taken a variety of forms, but in many programs, a key aim has been to augment individuals' ability to adapt to new cultural contexts (Morell, Ravlin, Ramsey and Ward, 2013; Tuleja, 2014). One of the most important measures of this skill, Cultural Intelligence, has served as both a guide for program designers and a measure of individual facility for successfully navigating cross-cultural situations. A considerable literature has emerged addressing the effectiveness of various methods for augmenting CQ both in domestic and international settings (Ahn and Etnner, 2013; Tuleja, 2008). There is also a growing literature on how teaching in a cross-cultural context requires adaptations affecting those involved (e.g. Roberts and Tuleja, 2008), but the use of CQ as an element to enhance our understanding of this process is still in its early stages. Teaching across cultures, no matter what the setting, involves interactions that will be influenced by the cross-cultural capabilities of all involved. To this point, at least within the business education literature, the influence of such encounters on the instructors involved has been neglected. "Although the number and variety of cross-cultural management courses offered by academia and industry grew dramatically, little systematic research exists on the effects of specific academic programs on students' cross-cultural competence" (Eisenberg, Lee, Bruck, Brenner, Claes, Mironski and Bell, 2013; 604).

An important aspect of gaining a higher level of CQ involves the ability to reflect on the process of knowledge acquisition which Early and Ang (2003) called metacognition. Thomas (2006) has modified this approach through the introduction of the concept of mindfulness, a focused awareness of the processes by which we experience both the external world and our internal states. Cushner and Chang

(2015) completed a study with 52 student teachers placed in a culture other than their own. The student teachers did not significantly enhance their intercultural competence after 8-15 weeks in their overseas placements. The study concluded that “assuming that intercultural gains will be acquired simply as a result of living and teaching in an overseas setting may be unrealistic” (p. 174) They also concluded that more attention to cultural concepts is required in such a placement and might be provided through pre, during and post orientation of student teachers. Such orientation may set the context for enhanced mindfulness. Mindfulness may also be linked to the nature of experiences a person has in a different cultural setting. Research by Walkington (2015) concluded that changed thinking, linked to the success of cultural immersion, was facilitated by “out of the comfort zone” experiences and a wide array of interpersonal encounters in a new cultural setting. Tuleja (2014), in her discussion of mindfulness as a means for increasing CQ among business leaders, provides a framework for further investigation of this augmented set of concepts.

We draw on the experiences of a number of business faculty from a Canadian business school who helped deliver an MBA program in Iran to investigate how their experiences in a country new to them were reflected in the components of CQ. As outlined by Thomas (2006) these include attention to specific attributes of the culture, mindfulness regarding the process of integrating this information and the skills to adapt behaviours to new situations. We attempt to understand how faculty interactions with students and other representatives of the local culture affected their impressions of the Iranian context, of teaching abroad in general and of their own place in the world. Following Tuleja (2014), we conceptualize the development of CQ within an educational context as an interactive rather than a unidirectional process. The findings from this analysis have implications for the ongoing discussion of design and implementation of international business programs including the selection and training of faculty participating in such endeavours (e.g. Alon and Herath, 2014; Hoare, 2013).

The paper continues with a review of current models of CQ and mindfulness as represented in the business literature. We then provide some background for the structure and operation of the Carleton University MBA program in Iran. After outlining the methodology we used to collect and interpret the data, selections from the interviews are employed to identify and illustrate themes related to the three components of CQ. Finally, we discuss some of the implications of our work for international teaching and future research in the area.

Cultural Intelligence

Over the past few decades, attempts to identify the skills and characteristics that facilitate cross-cultural interactions have accelerated (Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud, 2006). One of the most promising approaches to this set of issues has formed around the concept of cultural intelligence (Earley, 2002; Earley and Ang, 2003). The emphasis on cultural intelligence stems in part from the observation that intelligence is not a unitary attribute but may be divided into multiple types (Gardner, 1988). In this section, we examine the basic content of the CQ concept and one of its important modifications.

Earley and Ang (2003) argued that while social and emotional intelligence were important attributes for success, their application was likely limited by the cultural milieu in which they were developed. They suggested that for an individual to be successful across cultural boundaries, the ability to understand and react effectively to other cultures, what they termed cultural intelligence, was also necessary (Earley, 2002; Earley and Ang, 2003).

The definition of cultural intelligence advanced by Early and Ang (2003: p. 59), “a person’s capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts”, is relatively simple on the surface, but it contains three distinct facets that must be present for CQ to affect outcomes. The first element, the cognitive, consists of awareness of the self and one’s relationship to context. However, a high degree of self-awareness is

insufficient for effective cultural adaptation if it is not coupled with a level of flexibility that allows individuals to comprehend new situations and incorporate these into their cognitive structures (Earley, 2002). Recognizing that a new situation does not conform to existing cognitive categories is an important first step in making the necessary adaptations. A qualitative study by Devitt (2014), examining metacognitive CQ, found that four factors, language, teacher qualities, personal relationships and age and stage of life, played roles in facilitating cultural assimilation.

In addition to the recognition and category matching aspects of cognition, there is another level that involves thinking about these processes (Wood and St. Peters, 2014). For example, someone encountering a new culture may notice that the actions taken by locals in greeting each other are quite different than those in their home country or other areas they have visited. They can then move to what is known as the meta level by reflecting on how they understand these differences and what they imply for their own behaviour while in the new country. Earley (2002: p. 277) argues that such metacognition, “is a critical aspect of CQ since much of what is required in a new culture is putting together patterns into a coherent picture even if one doesn’t know what this coherent picture might look like”. Without these higher-level processes, new facts and practices are recognized, but not successfully integrated into the individual’s cognitive scheme. Due to its distinctive level of operation, some scholars treat metacognition as a separate facet of CQ with multiple sub-dimensions (Van Dyne, et al., 2012).

Once the relevant aspects of a new culture are recognized, CQ facilitates selecting and enacting appropriate behaviours (Earley, 2002). The behavioural aspect of CQ, which has links to extroversion (Ang, Van Dyne and Koh, 2006) has been shown to predict cultural adaptation and task performance (Ang, et al., 2007). A wide repertoire of behaviours that can be applied in a variety of situations is a key to successful cross-cultural adaptation (Ang, et al., 2007). Many categories of behaviour are nearly universal although they may receive greater or lesser emphasis. In Iran, for example, deference routines, which are highly significant, are governed by multiple factors including age, gender, social and religious

position as well as the immediate context that will influence the actions of participants. The complex interactions of these considerations are seldom obvious to an observer from outside the culture until they are identified and explained. Trying to copy the actions of natives may be a positive step (Earley and Peterson, 2004), but in some instances, such mimicry may be intrusive or even viewed as inappropriate. The cognitive processes emphasized in CQ that link self to the current context allow for the continuous readjustment of expectations based on reactions to initial experiments.

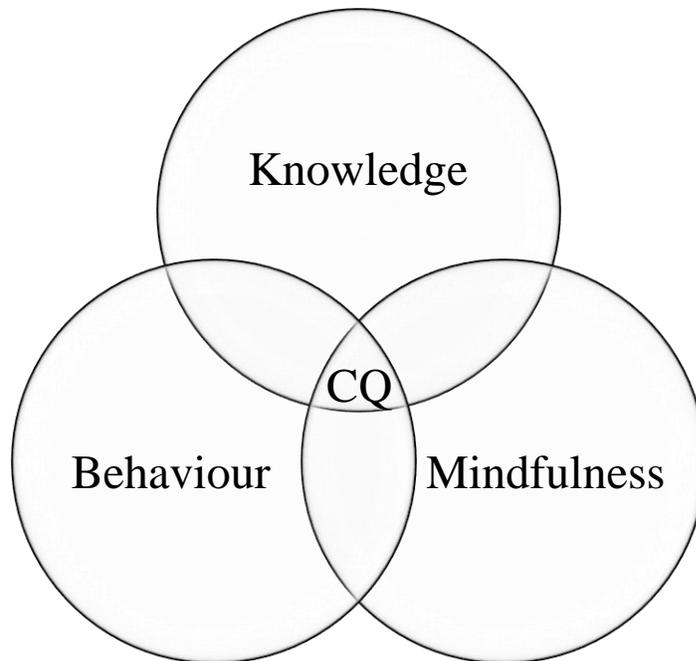
The impact of CQ on job performance has been established in a variety of settings. Metacognitive and behavioural capabilities are important predictors of effective task performance (Caldwell and O'Reilly, 1982; Roberts, 2005). In an intercultural setting, Ang, et al. (2007) showed that metacognitive CQ and behavioural CQ positively predicted task performance. Goh (2012) applies Ang, et al's (2007) finding to education noting that teachers who increase their own CQ profile are in a better position to teach in culturally complex situations.

Mindfulness and CQ

While the original formulation of CQ has been widely employed, Thomas (2006) proposed a modification of the components to include the concept of mindfulness. The idea of mindfulness implies focused attention on certain aspects of the immediate situation; these may include internal states and processes as well as external stimuli (Brown and Ryan, 2003). With heightened levels of mindfulness, this same link between cognition and behaviour may occur, but the steps are less automatic and more subject to internal scrutiny (Hola and Jankowski, 2013). There is an increased focus on current reality and a heightened awareness of participation in guiding mental and physical activity (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness has been an important component of cross-cultural communication through its emphasis on attentiveness to current interaction (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Thomas (2006) utilized mindfulness to modify Earley and Ang's (2003) original CQ framework defining three constituent components that parallel the three facets described above, but with a somewhat different emphasis.

Figure 1 Thomas' (2006) Components of Cultural Intelligence



As Tuleja (2014) noted, Thomas' link between CQ and mindfulness provides an important basis for understanding the learning process that may occupy an individual when faced with a new cultural context. In place of the cognitive aspect of CQ described by Earley and Ang, Thomas focuses on knowledge including understanding what is meant by cultures and the dimensions on which they may vary (Thomas, 2006). In this formulation, relevant knowledge includes specific information about the material and behavioural aspects of a culture as well as an appreciation for the values that underlie social structures and activities within them. There is also a process aspect of the knowledge component as defined by Thomas since it includes the mechanisms through which culture sets the context for and influences behaviour.

For the second element of CQ, Thomas relies on mindfulness which parallels the idea of metacognition included by Earley and Ang (2003) under their cognition facet. Indeed Thomas (2006) defines mindfulness as a metacognition strategy that, "focuses attention on the knowledge of culture and the processes of cultural influence as well as an individual's motives, goals, emotions and external stimuli" (Thomas, 2006: 86). Both approaches emphasize the importance of moving beyond the mundane recognition of differences across cultures that dominated many early efforts at facilitating acculturation, to understanding how these features can be integrated into one's cognitive structure and thus modify it.

The third element in Thomas's formulation, like Earley and Ang's, is the production of appropriate behaviours. Based on information gleaned through observation and mindfulness, the individual displays behaviour that is appropriate to the current context but at the same time is congruent with the actor's own self-image and associated goals (Thomas 2006). Mindfulness can serve as a facilitating state for many types of changes since it encourages questioning routine behaviour (Gondo, Patterson and Palacios, 2013). Projecting oneself into possible new behavioural patterns may provide the means for selecting those that satisfy the expectations of parties on both sides of the cultural divide (Tuleja, 2015).

Our understanding of the relationship between mindfulness and cultural intelligence is still evolving. The quality of mindfulness has been an important component of a global mindset facilitating learning through generating sensitivity to the outcomes of cross-cultural interactions (Cseh, Davis and Khilji, 2013). Classroom instruction appears to increase CQ though this is seen more strongly in the cognitive than the motivational or behavioural aspects (Eisenberg, et al., 2013). International experience has also been suggested as a factor in increasing CQ by exposing the individual to more opportunities to observe diverse cultural contexts and providing opportunities to practice appropriate behaviours (Engle and Crowne, 2014). In general, greater exposure to other cultures is linked with increases in CQ implying that repeated interactions are in themselves beneficial in this regard (Crowne, 2008; Morrell, et al., 2013). In addition to experience gained through travel or foreign assignments, short-term educational programs have also been found to have a positive effect on CQ (Engle and Crowne, 2014) and mindfulness in an international setting (Tuleja, 2014).

By far the majority of the investigations concerned with increasing CQ have been conducted with two groups in mind, students with international aspirations and employees with global responsibilities. One group that is conspicuous by its absence in these endeavors is teachers (Bodycott and Walker, 2000). With more and more teaching extending across cultural boundaries in both domestic and international settings the capacity of instructors to read, interpret and react to the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of their students is an important factor in the success of these programs. Especially when teachers encounter manifestations of an unfamiliar culture in the classroom, the level of sensitivity and flexibility they carry with them will influence both their ability to adapt their behaviour and the degree to which they can accommodate new surroundings. The implications of teaching abroad for personal development and cultural learning have received some attention (e.g. Crabtree and Sapp, 2004; Hoare, 2013; Smith, 2013) but is still regarded as an under-explored area (Smith, 2009).

In this study, we will analyze the experiences of 13 faculty members who were engaged in delivering an MBA program in Iran to examine their reaction to an unfamiliar cultural setting. Through this exercise, we hope to illuminate the processes by which this type of international exposure does or does not contribute to CQ in the context of international education. By doing so we bring into focus issues that will help frame further work in this area.

The Program

In December of 2001, just a few months after the attacks of September 11, the Sprott School of Business of Carleton University sent one of its faculty to teach a course on Qeshm Island, which lies just off the coast of Iran in the Straits of Hormuz. This offering was the first taught in Iran by a Carleton faculty member in a program leading to an MBA degree from that institution. Since all Western institutions of higher learning had either left or been expelled from Iran following the revolution of 1979, there were few models to follow in putting a program structure in place. When the first group of 22 students began classes, the program was only licensed for a single cohort with no guarantee that it would be extended.

In an effort to ensure quality the program comprised the same courses as offered in the home institution with the majority of these taught by Sprott professors in Iran. The main exceptions to this rule were a series of preparatory courses, taught by local hires, which were designed to provide the Iranian students with a business foundation and an opportunity to improve their language proficiency. The students were quite diverse, including industrialists, government officials, entrepreneurs, engineers from the petroleum industry and other professionals. For the first few cohorts all courses in Iran were delivered on Qeshm Island over a 14-15-day period. Classes met a minimum of three hours a day, often with additional time dedicated to study sessions and tutorials. Early cohorts also travelled to Ottawa to spend two months at Carleton taking classes and familiarizing themselves with the Canadian context. These valuable trips were later cancelled due to a serious diplomatic clash between Canada and Iran that made it almost

impossible for students to obtain visas. They were reinstated for the last few cohorts; however, not all students were able to obtain the necessary documentation for traveling to Canada.

Methodology

Over the ten years of the project, fifteen full-time faculty taught one or more courses in Iran. When the program was suspended in 2012, the three authors decided to interview those who had taught in Iran to try to understand the accommodations in teaching style and classroom management they had adopted as well as the reasons for these changes.

All fifteen of the full-time faculty who had taught in Iran agreed to be interviewed for this study, including two of the authors of this paper. The authors' responses are not included in the quotations used in the analysis as there might have been a temptation to provide "appropriate" illustrations. All the interviews, with one exception, were recorded and transcribed. The interview was structured with a series of questions, but the interviewees were allowed considerable scope in their answers. The interviews ranged from 25 to 90 minutes in length. As noted in Table 1 there was considerable variation in the length of experience teaching in Iran. Some of the instructors taught all nine cohorts making multiple trips to Qeshm Island, while two made only a single visit. Those teaching fewer classes tended to be newer faculty as instructors without tenure were discouraged from taking on additional duties. In one instance a more senior faculty member taught two courses early in the program but chose not to continue his participation.

Table 1 Instructors' teaching experience in Iran

Instructor	Number of Courses Taught	First Year Teaching in Iran	Last Year Teaching in Iran
A	10	2001	2012
B	4	2008	2011
C	8	2002	2010
D	10	2002	2012
E	6	2002	2009
F	8	2001	2008
G	4	2010	2012
H	2	2002	2003
I	2	2003	2003
J	9	2003	2012
K	2	2010	2011
L	4	2009	2012
M	1	2010	2010
N	1	2009	2009
O	3	2008	2010

The faculty interviewed come from a variety of backgrounds both in terms of cultural milieu and functional area. Six of the faculty, five males and one female, were born and raised in Canada. All but one from families who had been resident in Canada for several generations. Of the remainder three were from India and one each from China, Ghana, Uganda, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States. Two of those who taught in Iran were women. The faculty involved were drawn from most of the major subject areas including marketing, information systems, finance, management and strategy, international business, accounting and production and operations management. Most of those participating had at least some experience either in teaching and/or conducting research abroad although for at least one participant this was his first-time teaching outside Canada. None of the faculty had been to Iran before the program initiative began. For most of them, their initial exposure to Iran occurred when they went to teach their first class. Those participating in the study were granted anonymity for their interviews although the identity of those who had participated was known within the School.

The interviews focused on the pedagogical experience of teaching in Iran with an emphasis on adjustments and accommodations, if any, that the instructors made. A preliminary analysis of the transcripts suggested that the three facets of CQ outlined by Thomas (2006), knowledge, mindfulness and behaviour, provided a useful orientation and powerful analytical tool for understanding the experiences of the faculty. We then turned our attention to coding and identifying instances where and how these aspects of learning took place. Two professors familiar with the program, one of the researchers who had taught in Iran and one external both to the research project and the School of Business, examined the transcripts for themes related to teaching and classroom interaction using inductive category development (Mayring, 2000). The process included the following: Firstly, reading all data to develop a sense of the whole. Secondly, reading data word for word to find text that captures key concepts. Thirdly, notes on impressions from the data are made. Finally, codes emerge that are sorted into categories and then into a manageable number of clusters (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The clusters discussed in this paper were among those most often mentioned by the interviewees as relevant to their own reactions to teaching in Iran.

Iran, Teaching and Cultural Intelligence

As described above both Early and Ang (2003) and Thomas (2006) suggest three elements of cultural intelligence that are useful for recognizing when an individual has acquired information or formulated a behaviour that indicates increased perception and flexibility in a new culture. In practice, the three elements are not always distinct, with knowledge shading into reflection or mindfulness generating a new skill or behaviour. This tendency is especially notable when considering motivation. For Thomas (2006) understanding a culture through experience includes comprehending the motivations of others that underlie their perceptions and performance. Mindfulness, reflecting on the processes by which new knowledge is integrated, may involve decoding one's own motivations for trying to understand the new

phenomena and translating this insight into action. In this section, we explore several aspects of cross-cultural interaction reported by the faculty to illustrate the operation of all three elements of CQ.

Knowledge and Understanding

To gain the increased insight and adaptability inherent in the CQ concept, individuals must first recognize differences across cultures. These contrasts may appear in the material aspects of the local context but are usually more relevant when observed in the activities of individuals and groups. Thomas (2006) distinguishes between knowledge of content and process, both of which may then interact with existing cognitive structures. Content refers at one level to noting differences that mark distinctions between cultures. At another level, it refers to identities, values and attitudes that can be deduced from behaviours. Process is concerned with the way that motivation and cognition, especially existing cognitive structures, influence actions in the novel culture.

Preparation and first encounters. In a world where information or at least opinions on almost any society is readily available, salient cultural differences may already have been identified through various media, leaving these qualities to be confirmed, modified or discredited by firsthand experience. Since all our informants were academics, none of whom had journeyed to Iran before the initiation of this program, most sought out relevant information when preparing for their first visit by consulting with colleagues, looking online or examining relevant academic works. An important part of their initial reactions to Iranian culture involved evaluating this received wisdom against their own observations. Much of the publicly available information concerning Iran related to religion and its effects on social life as well as Iran's political relations with other countries. Given the emphasis on differences between Iran and the West, some of the teachers anticipated that they would be met with suspicion or disapproval, but found a more welcoming atmosphere than they had anticipated.

“I found the people and the students were much...I mean they were as open and as kind or whatever you want to call it. ... I mean in the personal context you feel that it was much more than expected, basically, better than expected.”

Another faculty member who had a great deal of experience teaching abroad began with a cognitive framework that was quite open to such situations.

“My experience has shown that the hype and what you hear, the rhetoric, political rhetoric that comes out is usually not there when you meet the people. People are people. And I found the Iranian people to be very nice, very entrepreneurial.”

Given his prior experience, he felt little need to adjust his cognitive framework as it was prone to be flexible and inclusive.

Even though most faculty found the Iranian students and staff welcoming, there was still an understanding that they were not part of the local cultural milieu, *“On the standing out as an outsider, that definitely happened”*. Being regarded as the other, an individual identified as external to the dominant group, gave notice that the standards by which behaviour would be judged had shifted not simply because the local practices were different, but also because the visitor existed in a different category (Poole, 2000; Irazuzta, Muriel and Santamaria, 2014). This provides an instance where the first element of CQ, noting aspects of the new culture, led to mindfulness, considering what being an “other” implied for one’s own understanding.

There were also expectations of more rigid application of religion norms in the classroom because the rules are imposed by the government and not adopted by choice. The expectations stemmed from the past experiences of faculty visiting and living in countries with a large Muslim population. While the dress

codes emphasized in the Western media were evident, they were, in the words of one faculty member, “*more nuanced*” than he had expected with variations tolerated depending on the social context and external conditions such as weather. At times women were much more relaxed about how the scarf appeared. At the same time, some of the expectations were confirmed by experience. “*To some extent, there were challenges across the gender divide and age divide. So, older males would tend to dominate or stifle the ideas of, in the worst case, younger females*”.

“*You wanted to organize something and you realize that the treatment of men and women was quite different. You can't do this because you're a woman or you can't do that or you can't do this and that together. But in class, again, I had this sense that everyone, as they explained, in Iran has two lives. There is a public life and a private life. So, in private life, they are very tolerant, equal, etc. But in public life, there are always their rules that they had to follow and that's what impacted their behaviour*”.

These reactions are interesting; although information about the influence of gender differences in Iran are widely disseminated in the results of the Globe Study (Dastmalchian, Javidan & Alam, 2001), it appeared that only when encountering them in this specific form were the faculty able to incorporate them fully into their cognitive structures. In the Globe study the findings regarding gender were “the norm in (Iran) is to maximise, or at least not to minimise, gender role differences and gender discrimination” (p. 541). Norms of gender equality are highly salient in Canada, scoring medium to relatively high in the Globe study (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004) so that dealing daily with the new realities posed by Iranian society was necessary to allow these facts, even though previously known at a theoretical level, to influence understanding and behaviour.

As the faculty were in Iran to present various courses, they naturally were attentive to aspects of the culture that bore directly on their teaching experiences. Several of the professors mentioned the high level of respect that students exhibited in the classroom. Some contrasted this to the disengagement they often

observed on their home campus. *“The students, that was the best part of it. They were so genuine and sincere and they looked like they wanted to learn something new”*. This perceived attitude contrasted with students’ attitudes toward academic integrity, an issue discussed in a later section. Feeling that they had the respect of students who displayed a real interest in the material, some faculty felt betrayed when evidence of cheating or plagiarism appeared. According to Crittenden, Hanna, Peterson (2009), who did a study looking at student cheating across 36 countries, *“the cheating culture is not just a capitalistic phenomenon (p. 337).”* What struck the faculty in the Iran program was not that cheating was occurring but the level of cheating. *“... that was a huge shock. That level of flagrancy...”*. Students shared their assignments and exams with each other on a regular basis. It is possible the collectivist nature of the Iranian culture impacted the propensity for students to assist other. Research has found that students from collectivist cultures (Iran being more collectivist than Canada (Hofstede, 2017)) will work together in groups more than students from individualist cultures when assigned individual assignments (Heuchert, 2004) Fitting these, to Western minds, contradictory experiences into a coherent cognitive framework caused a certain amount of confusion and distress, which, in some instances, was never completely resolved. The professors could not reconcile the high levels of personal and professional respect they encountered with the disrespect they felt was implied by persistent academic misbehaviour.

Negotiation and course structure. There was another aspect of classroom behaviour was novel for most faculty. *“The biggest professional challenge was the constant bargaining between students and the professor. It seemed like everything was up for bargaining”*. When readings, projects or exams were announced, students would often question the necessity for such activity, its scope or its format. In part, this reflected pedagogical differences between the two educational systems, but it also grew out of basic cultural attitudes toward the way that agreements were negotiated. Javidan and Dastmalchian (2003) argue that while the high power distance found in Iranian society leads subordinates to accept orders, there is also a preference for humane leadership that considers the needs of all team members. The religious aspect behind this negotiation style would mean that it would apply to a wide range of issues

(Farazmand, Tu and Danaeefend, 2011). It was difficult for some faculty to accept the constant challenges to their authority (as they perceived this behavior) with the students' acknowledgement of their expertise and the respect that was exhibited toward them.

While some of the faculty stuck closely to the course structure they employed in Canada, others tried to adapt the material, especially cases and illustrations, to the local context. This met with some resistance, which is hardly surprising given the distinct leadership and management styles identified in Iran and their impact on relationships within organizations (Dastmalchian, Javidan and Alam, 2001; Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003; Soltani and Wilkinson, 2011). *“At least on the surface of it Iran seems to reject Western ways of thinking, Western ways of doing things”*. In part this is due to political tensions that cause any differences to take on a large and often sinister implications, but it also reflects, as the comparisons referenced above have shown, the influence of basic cultural differences on business practice.

Although the students to some extent resisted the application of Western business practice to the Iranian context, they were still intensely interested in how management operated outside the country. Indeed, for many of them, that was one of their prime motivations for pursuing the degree through Carleton.

“This became very clear when I tried to get the students to talk about doing business in Iran. And they were saying, forget about anything that is being done here. They were not really interested; they just wanted to know how business is done outside Iran.”

This is an interesting instance where many of the faculty had gone to some lengths to learn about and adapt their teaching to the differences in business practice, modifying behaviour in anticipation of a different context (indicating a certain level of CQ), only to find that the new approach was inappropriate. Since many of the students worked full-time, some for many years, they believed they understood the

specific context and procedures obtaining in Iran. Many were interested in Western views because they intended to establish a career outside Iran while others believed that when sanctions were eased they would have to partner with foreign firms to survive. There was also an underlying curiosity generated by the restrictions placed on interacting with international businesses. Almost all the students wanted to contrast their local experience with activities beyond Iran's borders.

For some faculty, this resistance set undesirable limits around their instruction. *"This was a frustration for me because when I teach in these countries, I want to make sure we talk about the local as well as the global..."*. This comparative valuation of the foreign and domestic may provide a useful insight for those teaching abroad as their role is often seen as conveying knowledge from a different milieu. That is, if they attempt to integrate too completely into the local educational context, they may be straying from the main purpose of the program as the locals view it. This principle may have greater applicability where foreigners are valued precisely because of the knowledge they bring from outside the host country.

Mindfulness

When mindfulness is applied to cross-cultural experiences the concept appears to operate at two levels. At one level mindfulness is indicated by reflecting on new experiences and how they interact with one's own attitudes or cognitive structures (Tuleja, 2014). At the second level, which appears to dominate the idea of mindfulness found in Thomas' (2006) formulation, two aspects of the process are more salient. The first is the importance of focused consciousness, being in the moment when experiencing cross-cultural encounters. The second characteristic occurs at the meta-cognitive level, which emphasizes attention to cognitive processes themselves, thinking about the way in which new information is being identified and absorbed. In the data we collected, the majority of mindfulness was understood as reflection, while the minority of views accorded with the more rigorous conceptualization that sees mindfulness as metacognition. We discuss some possible causes for this phenomenon and some of its implications below.

Academic integrity. One of the issues that was mentioned by virtually every interviewee was the Iranian students' attitudes toward what is commonly termed academic integrity. Evidence of activities that were contrary to the university's code of conduct occurred frequently. The instructors involved took steps to minimize opportunities for such behaviour, but at the same time, they reflected on the cultural basis for the students' attitudes.

"The first thing that springs to mind is the whole notion of what we expect in terms of academic integrity and what they expect and the culture around ... plagiarism, citations and acknowledging other people's work. I think that is something we should look at, what the culture there entails and what we need to do to bring them up to speed in terms of what our expectations might be."

The recognition that culture played an important part in forming the students' attitudes was relatively common. *"They didn't take the issue of plagiarism ... as seriously as here because I think the background is that it was almost acceptable. If it serves the purpose, why not?"* One professor saw this as part of a wider view of accountability. *"They thought it was okay to make copies from a book or from whatever ... whether it was copyright reading or not. Those niceties did not apply to them, they thought"*. Though many of those teaching in the program reacted to academic integrity issues in an emotional way as it was hard to reconcile these problems with the high level of respect they experienced, a number moved beyond this level to reflect on the cultural roots of the problem and what this implied for possible remedies. Doing so required some consideration of their own attitudes and how they compared with those of the Iranian students.

There was another element related to evaluation, which touched on the issue of academic integrity but extended to take in the relations among students. At least some of the motivation for cheating was perceived to be pressure to assist fellow students. *"They thought it was okay if one of the group members*

needed answers and they used that as part of their answer. They thought that was okay". This was seen as a general tendency. *"I do find that in the classroom their willingness to carry each other along is greater than we would see here"*. The same dynamic operated during group presentations; teams tended to have clear leaders who were responsible for guiding the other members. The power and deference accorded to leaders is an important characteristic of social organization in Iran (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003). Questions posed to individual students were often answered by the leaders. *"To force the person to talk, it would embarrass that person because they would know the leadership should be speaking, but it would also make the leader feel as if he was being challenged"*. The central figures in groups took their position seriously. *"If there were slackers in the groups, I didn't hear about them; or any dysfunctional behaviour in the groups, I didn't hear about it. I doubt there was because things seemed well ordered. You know, the leader in a group wouldn't take that off them"*. Although there were semi-official class leaders, there were still social divisions. *"They had in-groups and outer groups and I think they were accountable within groups and not necessarily across"*.

Cultural differences. For issues of both academic integrity and social organization the instructors indicated that they both recognized the contrasts between Canadian and Iranian culture and tried to relate these differences to their own attitudes and behaviours. As one professor put it, *"People can be quite different and you have to understand that. In the way they treat you, in the way you treat them, in the way they view the process, in the way, you know, they view evaluations and the whole communication"*. In some cases, these reflections were fairly sophisticated.

"I think that as a prof. the going-in position would be to ensure that you are absolutely tolerant and to avoid intolerance... I think being intolerant in the sense of being not in control of how you deal with the person is inappropriate everywhere, but I would be much more willing to use intolerance as a way of making a point in certain situations."

In other words, this informant recognized the importance of flexibility (tolerance) that is central to CQ, but also saw that situations exist where exhibiting less flexibility, for example in the case of academic integrity, may be appropriate. Another professor expressed a similar view. *“I think for me the key lesson is to play off what’s there in the room and what’s feasible in the room. You have to work with what you’ve got and you can’t have one size fits all and just go and lay it out”*. There is a level of mindfulness exhibited here through reflecting on the necessity of adaptability and the limits that the individual’s own framework places on changes made to accommodate local expectations.

Motivation for foreign teaching. Those involved in the project also reflected on their own motivations for travelling to Iran to teach. For some, it was simply the chance to visit a new environment and meet those from a different culture. In some cases, this tied directly to their teaching. *“It’s something that I draw on when I’m doing my teaching because there’s examples that always come out of that ...not so much the ideologies, but the ideas of emerging economy...”* For another faculty member, one who had initially been critical of the Iranian project, there was a desire to examine his own attitudes. *“I remember I had a conversation with the Dean about [the Iran program] and then I thought at the end of that conversation, well, I think I better go find out because I don’t know what I am talking about”*.

Most of the examples of mindfulness cited thus far are nearer the reflection end of the spectrum than the metacognitive pole. There were, however, some instances where this second level of mindfulness was exhibited. *“Well, the way in which one would be thoughtful differed, but it’s just to think things through and be analytical and to use the information that’s available to you and to avoid knee-jerk responses...whether it’s finance or ethics, it’s just that kind of thing”*. The interviewee displays an awareness that the cognitive processes involved may differ, but that examining his initial impulses in a situation, in this case the classroom, allows him to adapt to new demands on his performance. It is interesting that, while prompted by a discussion of cultural differences, he was willing to expand his

insight to a larger context indicating that mindfulness has the capacity to generate a more extensive reordering of the cognitive structure through prioritizing this type of flexibility.

Faculty used a variety of ways to make sense of the cultural differences they encountered. Some drew from their own past to understand the cultural difference. *“I’m from that part of the world originally. So I know how...the Muslim culture is, how people behave”*. Another faculty member made parallels with countries and political regimes he/she was familiar with. *“But when you see it up close and personal it really hits home. And you think, my god, look at all the booze.... And you think how did you get all of these brands into this country? We paid off lots of people. And that was when I first learned about the similarities between their system and the communist system”*. One faculty member pushed boundaries to see where the resistance points would be thereby creating create greater understanding or the limits and difference. Faculty also socialized with the students outside of class to help deepen their understanding of the Iranian people and the cultural differences. *“I have yet to socialize with any of my students domestically the way I did with the Iran MBA students”*. Finally, faculty also engaged in reviewing, re-evaluating and rethinking the way they approached the Iranian culture. This processing occurred through returning to Iran to teach to rethinking cultural reference points. *“They don’t understand many of the references...cultural references. So you want to talk about Walt Disney or Pixar or Steve Jobs, well they won’t get them. So, it forces you to rethink everything”*.

Behaviour

The third aspect of CQ involves shifting behaviours or skills in accordance with the information and insight generated through interaction with the new culture. As Earley and Ang (2003) suggest these behaviours may already be available but are deployed in response to new stimuli. Thomas (2006) emphasizes that such behaviours represent skills that can be deployed in adapting to new cultures and not simply a repertoire of existing behaviours. Such adaptation may also involve the modification of existing

scripts either in the details of performance or the cues for enacting them. One example of the latter occurred in response to the students' tendency to negotiate mentioned above. *"I mean I've learned quite quickly, basically from the second, third day, I started to request more so at the end of the bargaining we got to the point I wanted to start with"*. The bargaining itself was not a new behaviour, but its context, within the classroom, and its ubiquity were new. It is interesting to note that although the faculty member adapted to the circumstances, he still felt that this behaviour was, to some extent, inappropriate given his position as a professor.

There were other changes in classroom behaviour that stemmed from the characteristics of the students and the surrounding culture. *"When you're working with the crowd and there is interaction and questions and answers ... the more senior dominant men in the room, I think needed to be treated accordingly"*. This meant in this instance, allowing the group leaders to state their views, often at the beginning of a discussion, so that the opinions of others, who were normally more reticent, could be heard later. There were also behaviour modifications that impacted directly on the teacher's normal style. *"I have to really go through the material and make sure I'm not including anything that may be perceived as controversial... I was a little more aware of that, but at the same time I also like to push the boundaries a little bit"*. So, the instructor not only understood the required shift in behaviour but also saw how it affected his sense of self in the classroom.

Finally, some behaviours were not so much modified in response to the new cultural surroundings as reinforced. One of the professors, *"spent a certain amount of time talking with them about what the rest of the world is, but they had this very tunnelled, biased ideological interpretation of life..."*. Since the person in question was a widely-travelled professor of international business, this attitude disturbed him. *"One of the things I tried to do was ... give them ... a global mindset"*. This was not a new behaviour on his part; it was an integral aspect of his whole approach to teaching, but under the circumstances, he emphasized an already existing behaviour to fit the new context.

Changes in behaviours are a natural outcome of an adequate level of CQ (Earley, 2002). Indeed, if there is no behavioural adaptation, then even in the presence of new knowledge and mindfulness (or metacognitive activity), CQ is not increased and the effectiveness of the individual in the new cultural context remains at the initial level. Most the professors who taught in Iran made some modifications to their approaches both inside and outside the classroom. A significant number of them consciously reflected on these new behaviours, some in terms of how they contrasted to their normal practice in Canada, others in how they related to the Iranian culture and still others pondered the process by which these changes had occurred. From this perspective, new or, more frequently, modified behaviours provide an insight not simply to the degree of CQ change available through the experience of teaching in another culture, but also of the steps experienced by the individual in arriving at this stage.

Discussion

The analysis above utilized the elements of cultural intelligence as outlined by Thomas (2006) to understand how teachers adapted to a context that was unfamiliar to them (see Table 2). In conducting our investigation, we were especially aware of instances of mindfulness both as one of the facets of cultural intelligence and as a more general aspect of the adaptation process.

Table 2 Implications of Results

CQ Dimension	Description	Implications
Knowledge & Understanding	Preparation and First Encounter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-orientation for both faculty and students to address cultural differences, expectations, and questions • Sharing research on differences across cultures and within cultures (e.g. generational differences), dialogue, post-orientations (to gather any further knowledge) • Student and faculty structured social events, Post orientation (to gather further knowledge),
	Negotiation and Course Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-orientation setting out expectations for students regarding course work. Parallel course work between overseas location and domestic location. Faculty engaging

		in minor modifications to recognize differences in delivery (e.g. one week straight of class till course completed versus weekly classes)
Mindfulness	Academic Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-orientation for students on university policy regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. • Pre-program course on referencing. • Grading on referencing in all courses.
	Cultural Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty and student selection, orientation, faculty mentoring, student and faculty structured social events, linkages between partner organization and faculty
	Motivation for Foreign Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for faculty self-reflection and exploration • Development of professional skills
Behaviour	Adaptation and Modification of Existing Scripts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-orientation (to share understanding of key motivators and behaviours of students) • Post-orientation (to gather further knowledge) • Faculty mentoring
	Challenges linked to Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty and student mentoring through the program. • Mid-program orientation for students to reaffirm expectations.

Knowledge, the first facet of cultural intelligence suggested by Thomas was evident in three different guises in the interviews. First, the faculty had, to a greater or lesser extent, sought out information concerning both the social and educational background in Iran mainly from electronic sources and from colleagues who had previously taught there. There was a good deal of variation in the effort expended to collect this knowledge ranging from a few casual discussions to careful questioning of several colleagues. Second, the faculty involved, again with considerable variation, utilized their own experiences in Iran to refine previous knowledge and gather additional data. Finally, this knowledge was used to modify existing routines both inside and outside the classroom. Obviously, this aspect is related to the third facet of CQ, skilled behaviour, but it also indicates the willingness to employ the knowledge gained rather than see it as a passive resource.

Understanding knowledge from this perspective indicates that one of the common methods of preparing individuals for teaching abroad, the provision of specific information about the social, economic, political and cultural context, may be less important than the willingness of potential appointees to seek out such

information on their own. This does not mean, of course, that such briefings are irrelevant, but they might be structured to provide access to appropriate sources the exploitation of which is left to the candidate thus promoting active rather than passive learning. At the same time, the activity of a candidate in acquiring relevant information can itself serve as an indicator of the knowledge aspect of CQ. For instructors who have already taught abroad, the amount of knowledge gathered and the purposes to which it has been applied would also contribute to an assessment of the practical impact of this facet of CQ.

As noted above, mindfulness, the second facet of CQ in Thomas's formulation, has been interpreted in two ways, as a reflection on one's experiences, which can also be a means of generating knowledge, and reflection on the process by which this newly acquired information affects one's cognitive structures. Our interviews uncovered considerably more of the first form of mindfulness than the second with many instances of faculty contemplating what their experiences meant in terms of course structure and conduct as well as more general implications for their situation vis-à-vis their Iranian students. Mindfulness in the second sense did occur most frequently in terms of using cross-cultural experiences to reflect upon one's own sense of self and how they may shift one's self-image. Understanding how others understood, or as some instructors thought, misunderstood, the basis or intent of actions, led to questioning our own perceptions and how they were constructed.

Both versions of mindfulness have implications for the selection and training of instructors for international assignments. Candidates' propensity to reflect on cross-cultural encounters can be evaluated either through their reaction to prior international experiences or through their analysis of scenarios such as those employed by Tuleja (2014). Various methods have been employed for increasing mindfulness (e.g. Dobkin and Hutchison, 2013; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010), but relatively few of these have been applied within the intercultural context.

The use of what we may call deep mindfulness is more problematic both for selection and training. Although most of the faculty interviewed for this study had spent considerable time abroad, we discovered relatively few instances of reflection on the process of cognitive restructuring. That is, they exhibited an awareness of how their experiences in other cultures had affected their approach to teaching or, on in more general terms, to understanding their own roles in these situations, but had spent little effort on examining how such changes had come about. The effects of the cognitive restructuring, the addition or reordering of categories and associated schemas, were visible to them, but the mechanisms by which this occurred generally were not. This implies that using selection criteria for foreign assignments based on the presence of this form of deep mindfulness would be both difficult and unrewarding.

In terms of behaviour, the final facet of CQ, there were numerous instances where the faculty in Iran changed their behaviours in reaction to perceived differences in the cultural context. In some cases, for example, when confronting endemic academic misconduct or dealing with persistent negotiations, the new behaviours were not designed to accommodate cultural differences so much as to deal with new realities that shaped classroom interaction. Obviously, faculty with experience abroad would have a greater repertoire of behaviours on which to draw, but as Thomas (2006) indicates, there is a skill in adapting available behaviours to new situations, which is rather harder to evaluate. It may even be that individuals who have been successful abroad rely too heavily on approaches that have worked elsewhere, approaches that may not be appropriate in a new setting. This discrepancy would be more likely when the setting is unfamiliar and the cultural distance large.

Based on the feedback from our interviews there appear to be three components of behaviours that could contribute to higher levels of CQ and greater effectiveness for teachers abroad. First, the repertoire of behaviours could be expanded by increased exposure to the target culture through sessions with faculty or students from that country. These might be framed as relatively unstructured interactions or as specific scenarios that highlight situations the instructor is likely to encounter. Second, feedback from participants

would indicate the appropriateness of responses and interactions, thus honing the behavioural skills that Thomas (2006) identifies as important for completing cross-cultural tasks. Exposure to interactions with those from the target culture, especially when they occur in a home country context, will have limited effect unless guidance is provided for identifying acceptable and effective behaviours. Finally, drawing on the mindfulness aspect of Thomas's formulation, individuals could be encouraged to reflect on discrepancies or contrasts in behaviours they observe. This type of experiential approach has been found to be effective in CQ training through the combination of contact and reflection (McNab, Brislin and Worthley, 2012). Such reflection serves the double function of highlighting the bases of behaviours both customary and acquired while at the same time cultivating the habit of reflection in cross-cultural situations.

Applying these recommendations, especially those related to appropriate behaviours, may face certain difficulties when applied to university level faculty preparing to teach abroad. Instructors hired for their expertise in each subject area may perceive requests to alter or even examine their behaviour as a challenge to their professional standing or as irrelevant to their task. We noticed that there was a tendency for instructors in the more technical areas such as accounting and information systems to focus heavily on content while making relatively few accommodations. Those involved with more behaviourally based topics such as management and marketing were more attuned to the cultural context of their courses and more likely to adjust both in their own behaviours and those required from their students. This difference was certainly not definitive, but it was noticeable enough to invite further investigation. In some areas, notably academic integrity, the faculty believed that their standards and associated behaviours could not and should not be altered. Both observations indicate that attempts to increase the behavioural flexibility of faculty designated for foreign teaching need to be sensitive to areas where professional expertise and academic integrity are involved.

Conclusion

In conducting this analysis our main intention was to utilize the concept of cultural intelligence to understand the behaviour of a group of professors teaching in an unfamiliar international setting. In parallel with Tuleja's (2014) work we employed Thomas's (2006) revised version of CQ with its three components of knowledge, mindfulness and behaviour to examine the impressions of several professors teaching in an MBA program in Iran. Our work indicates that many of those involved recognized that the situation offered important differences to their customary context, reflected on the impact of these contrasts on both classroom activities and their own sense of self and used these insights to modify their behaviours thus touching on all three facets of CQ. The concepts underlying cultural intelligence provided a highly useful framework for distinguishing the different aspects of these cultural encounters and the changes that flowed from them.

One can draw several conclusions from this exercise. First, it seems likely that teachers with the interest and motivation to teach abroad, especially in a relatively unknown setting like Iran, will already possess a modicum of CQ. Though we could cite some examples from our data where there was resistance to adapting to local conditions, a large majority of those involved displayed the three facets of knowledge, mindfulness and altered behaviour in the face of an unfamiliar culture. This implies that CQ in some form could be considered as a selection tool for assigning instructors for foreign teaching assignments. CQ evaluation would provide guidance in how effective the instructor might be under new circumstances. Such an assessment might also provide insight into the degree and type of stress likely to be encountered especially when an instructor is experiencing a culture for the first time. Here a tendency toward mindfulness with its ability to reflect on how the experience impacts one's own cognitive structures would warrant special attention in similar short-term teaching assignments. As indicated above this type of analysis also points to specific types of training that may be employed either as a general approach to increasing CQ or with the aim of developing specific aspects such as behavioural skills.

There is also a theoretical implication to be drawn from our analysis. The concept of cultural intelligence was developed and has been largely used for understanding the link between CQ and effectiveness in cross-cultural encounters (Earley and Ang, 2003). In this work, we employed the CQ framework to categorize and interpret the perceptions and activities of individuals working in another culture. This approach allowed us to understand the linkages among the three facets of CQ and how they affect not just overall adaptation, but component parts of the task, in this case, teaching. Using CQ in this way would require a more formal specification of the theory for this purpose, but our limited experience indicates that such an effort could deliver important benefits for work in this area.

As with any study, this work faces some limitations. Specifically, the professors studied were from a single institution embedded in a particular cultural context who were teaching in one other country. We are, therefore, unable to generalize these preliminary findings although we would argue our results suggested that further investigation would be warranted given the wide applicability of the concepts under consideration. The study was also limited by the collection of data through recall rather than direct measurement as the phenomena unfolded. In such cases, retrospective rationality may distort recollections although it should be said that several of those interviewed reported mistakes and missteps as part of their experience.

While further research on the effect of CQ on teachers and teaching proficiency in foreign settings could take several directions, there are two steps that seem to flow naturally from this exploratory work. First, a study that was designed to assess the effect of overseas teaching experience with measurement of CQ at appropriate intervals would extend current research to a new area of international activity as well as subjecting our findings to a more rigorous test. Second, an investigation of the link between CQ and teaching effectiveness, measured from several points of view including teachers, students and administrators, would provide an estimate of the importance of CQ in these circumstances. These and

similar studies would require a more thorough elaboration of the principles of CQ and its impact in more formal theoretic terms, a task which should advance the field.

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