Capstone Project

Culture Influences the 70-20-10 Adult Learning Model

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Abstract

Culture impacts the way we learn and should be considered at every stage of the professional learning transfer process in the workplace. For over 30 years, the Center of Creative Leadership has studied how executives learn, grow, and change over the course of their careers. Based on this research, they created the 70-20-10 adult learning model, which has been shown to be effective. However, others have provided caution with the exactness of the 70-20-10 adult learning model citing that it fails to deliver individual development among other weaknesses. What role does culture play in the learning transfer process and how could culture influence or change the 70-20-10 adult learning model? To answer this question, a quantitative survey was conducted with global practitioners that design the learning transfer process and global participants that are included in the learning transfer process. The results support an evolution to the adult learning model.

Introduction

Introduction

Culture impacts the way we learn, interact, and communicate (Lindsey et al., 2018). Lindsey (2018) defines culture as "everything you believe and everything you do that enables you to identify with people who are like you and that distinguishes you from people who differ from you" (p.29). The cultural context in how we recognize backgrounds, assumptions, and influential factors needs to be considered with how adult learning differs around the world. (Johansen & McLean, 2006). With 54% of working employees required to re-skill and up-skill within 3 years to stay relevant and competitive according to the World Economic Forum study (Hiremath, 2020), we need to avoid the trap of generalizing that all learners are the same from a cultural perspective (Mclean, 2006). Practitioners that can understand how to customize their learning transfer practices can improve learning outcomes, and generate better results (Brion, 2021).

For the past 30 years, the Center of Creative Leadership (CCL) has studied how executives learn, grow, and change over the course of their careers (Rabin, 2015). Based on this research, they created the 70-20-10 adult learning model, which is defined as 70% of learning is from experiential / on-the-job learning, 20% of learning is from developmental relationships / coaching and feedback, and 10% of learning is from formal learning / coursework and training (Rabin, 2015). While there is evidence that the 70-20-10 adult learning model is widely used, my hypothesis is set to demonstrate that culture influences this adult learning model.

Rationale

Global spending on workforce training reached $370.3 billion with an average of US $1,200 invested per learner in 2019 (Samuel & Durning, 2021). It is estimated that only 10% of the money invested results in learning transfer process (Brion, 2021). Because culture is a predominant force in people's personal and professional lives (Lindsey et al., 2018), multinational companies and institutions should take culture into account at every stage of the professional learning transfer process, or they will not obtain the desired result on their investments (Brion, 2021).

While there is literature to support the CCL 70-20-10 adult learning model, there is literature that supports the evolution of it. As it relates to cultural implications there is more literature through the lens of learning transfer process, and less literature as it relates to the ratios associated with the of 70-20-10 model and how they should evolve. Vermeulen and Admiraal (2009) defined learning transfer as a "two-way process" (p. 54), in which knowledge and skills are applied from the learning situation to workplace and vice versa. Demonstrating how culture influences the adult learning model and the ratios associated with the 70-20-10 is the intent of this research.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study, my hypothesis, is to demonstrate that culture influences the 70-20-10 adult learning model. The methodology is a quantitative research study designed to test my hypothesis using an interrelated set of variables that looks specifically at region of residency (where people live) and their preference for learning when designed as a combination of experiential (also referred to as on-the-job learning), developmental relationships (also referred

to as coaching and feedback, and formal learning (also referred to as coursework and training). Three sets of global groups in the study that are either participants in the learning process, practitioners that design the learning process, or both. Survey questions will be constructed according to specific categories and deployed using the Qualtrics survey tool.

Literature Review

70-20-10 Adult Learning Model

Georgeson (2016) reveals empirical evidence to support the 70-20-10 adult learning model based on a study of 1600 learners across the globe with favorable results on responses to business changes, motivation, and customer satisfaction scores. They highlight the importance that the 10% of formal learning is supported by the other 90%, which is the experiential learning (70%) and developmental relationships learning (20%) combined. Previously this model lacked empirical evidence and now results reveal that when applied, learners demonstrate a faster response to business change, are three times more motivated and twice as likely to report improvements in customer satisfaction scores (Georgeson, 2016).

While some say the 70-20-10 adult learning model is effective, others contest it by pointing out its weaknesses. Harding (2021) provides caution with the exactness of the 70-20-10 adult learning model citing that it fails to deliver individual development. Furthermore, it has a central misleading assumption that modes of learning, 70-20-10, are independent, rather than interdependent and need to be considered holistically (Harding, 2021). There is overconfidence in the assumption that informal learning, defined as the 70% of experiential learning plus the 20% developmental relationships learning, automatically delivers capability development without any formal evaluation (Harding, 2021). From a theoretical perspective, informal learning

theory is explained as a cooperative action that takes place during daily interactions (70%) and shared relationships (20%) that is independent from professionally structured or pedagogically planned programs (10%) (Vries, Meyer, Wassenhove, & Bernuth, 2009). Therefore, while informal learning theory suggests it happens (Harding, 2021) how can we be so certain that there is learning transfer in the workplace and does culture influence it?

Cultural Influences related Learning Transfer

Brion (2021) acknowledged the influence that culture has on learning transfer and the challenges that learning practitioners encounter when altering the design of training. Leimbach (2010) citied a few reason that explain these challenges with one being related to learning practitioners not thinking about the impact of culture on learning transfer. The transfer of learning is when blended learning happens, which is defined as a combination of formal learning combined with informal learning (Rabin, 2014). Brion (2021) asserts that culture is the predominant enhancer and inhibitor to learning transfer and that culture affects the entire learning transfer process, which is described as the multidimensional model of learning transfer (MMLT). MMLT includes pre-training, learner, facilitator, material and content, context, and environment, and follow up. The consequences of not considering culture in the transfer leads to the learners not being able to implement the new knowledge and skills to their jobs (Brion, 2021), thus supporting my hypothesis.

Cultural Influences related to Experiential Learning

Experiential learning helps companies to improve their learning and development efforts to equip their employees with skills needed **(**Collings & Mcmackin, 2021). Experiences that initiate the learning process, the 70% of the model, can be planned or unplanned in both formal

and informal situations (Casey & Goldman, 2010). It can include job rotations, scope, or responsibility expansions, special or challenging assignments, leading start-ups, and leading turnarounds (Casey & Goldman, 2010). Interestingly, not all work experiences result in learning and that several factors are required for learning to take place (Casey & Goldman, 2010). This reinforces the earlier point in the literature that learning needs to be holistic, not independent.

Cultural Influences related to Coaching and Feedback

An imperative of adult learning in the modern workplace is the need for coaching and feedback, both during the learning experience and back in the workplace when it is time to apply what was acquired (Longenecker & Abernathy, 2013). Effective and on-going coaching is important for the acquisition, retention and application of both information and skill development and needs to be built into almost all adult-learning initiatives with great care (Longenecker & Abernathy, 2013).

Building a repertoire of learning opportunities in various cultural contexts requires healthy dialogue (Mullins, 2000). Coaching in a cross-cultural environment can contribute by assisting the learner to engender culturally appropriate behavior through an increased sense of self-awareness (Van, Horst, & Albertyn, 2018). Given this context, is the 20% of the 70-20-10 adult learning model enough?

Cultural Influences related to Training Coursework and Programs

The 10% of the model of the adult learning model has been disputed in terms of the transfer of knowledge, skills, or behaviors in the workplace (Brion, 2021). When designing training courses or programs, there are two principle cultural implications for training methods to be used (Thornhill, 1993). First is the recognition of any cultural and job differences in relation

to the content included, and second is the existence of cultural and institutional differences between countries may also lead to different beliefs and expectations on the role of the trainer and their interaction with the trainee (Thornhill, 1993). To ensure cultural adoption of the knowledge, skills, or behaviors in the workplace, there is a greater need for a high level of cognitive involvement, dialogue to discuss perceptual differences and participation on the part of trainees and for interaction with the trainer (Thornhill, 1993). To dismiss this effort, as the literature has stated, will impair effectiveness.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Hypothesis

My hypothesis is to demonstrate that culture influences the 70-20-10 Adult Learning Model. The foundation for the entire study is the following research question.

RQ: Does culture influence or change the ratios associated with the 70-20-10 adult learning model.

Research Design

I will use a quantitative research study designed to test my hypothesis. There will be three sets of groups in the study that include participants that are enrolled in the learning process, practitioners that design the learning processes, and practitioners that are enrolled in the learning process. For the practitioner group, I will include global members from the Life Sciences and Educators (LTEN) network, and U.S. members from the Bausch Health Learning & Development function. For the participant group, I will include global employees from Bausch Health company and my LinkedIn network. I will use a survey tool, Qualtrics, to ask questions

related to the cultural considerations, learning transfer process, and learning design. The total amount of time for participants to participate in the research study is 10 minutes.

Operational Definitions

To support the quantitative research, an interrelated set of variables will be tested. The independent variable in the research is associated with culture in terms of participant region of residency. The dependent variables in the research are associated with the learning process: experiential-learning, coaching and feedback, and training, and the adult learning model ratios.

Participants

The participants in the study will be a mix of adult male and female individuals that are full-time employees for multinational companies in primarily the Pharmaceutical, Biotech and Medical Device industry, and other. For those in the practitioner group, they will associate themselves in these roles: Sales Training & Development, Learning & Development, Leadership Development, and Talent Development; they will also be members of the Life Sciences Educators Network (LTEN), a global community of practitioners. For those in the participant group, they will associate themselves in these roles: Sales & Marketing, Corporate Functions, Human Resources and other. Regardless they will be in positions of professionals, managers, directors, vice presidents, and C-suite. Those in the participant group would have participated and completed one or more of the current employee development offerings at Bausch Health, for example Emerging Leaders (future leaders leadership development program). Overall, the sample size is over 100. No compensation was provided. For the practitioner group, I gained approval from the LTEN Executive Director to survey Board and Advisory Council Members. In both surveys, data privacy language will be provided and the individual completing the survey

can choose to opt-out. Data from the survey will only be shared with faculty at Saint Joseph's University.

Instruments and Materials

The survey questionnaire was constructed in English only with an anticipate time to complete it in 10 minutes. The survey questions included 5-point Likert scales and open-ended questions. I surveyed individuals that work in the following regions of the world: North America, Latin America, Europe, Middle East, Oceania, and Asia.

The survey was organized according to the following categories and questions. All responders are asked about demographic information (gender, region of residency, position in company, functional roles; learner / participant preferences (what type of learning formats is preferred); workplace preferences (emphasis on specific types of learning by organization); adult-learning design (what should be the distribution of ratios as it relates to experiential / on-the-job learning, developmental relationship learning / coaching and feedback, and formal learning / coursework and training); cultural factors most important in the learning transfer process and inhibitors. Responders that are practitioners only are asked extent of cultural implications when designing learning and why. The survey tool to collect quantitative data used was Qualtrics, a Saint Joseph's University survey provided.

Procedure

The survey was first created in the Qualtrics survey tool then approved by the professor to begin data collection. In parallel, I gained approval by LTEN Executive Director to support survey collection from LTEN Board of Directors and Council Members. Following approval, the following message was sent by a LTEN leader: As part of his master's degree at Saint Joseph's

University in Organizational Development and Leadership, he's interested in demonstrating how culture influences adult learning. The answers are anonymous, and the results will only be shared with faculty at Saint Joseph's University. The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. For Bausch Health employees and with my LinkedIn network post, I used a similar message. I provided responders 2-weeks to complete the survey with two reminders.
Once data collection was completed, I analyzed the data to test my hypothesis and determine if additional data is necessary to support hypothesis. I reviewed the analysis with the professor and aligned on statistical significance data to support hypothesis.

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that culture influences the adult learning model. The methodology included three sets of global groups in the study that are either participants in the learning process, practitioners that design the learning process, or both. Survey questions were constructed according to specific categories and deployed using the Qualtrics survey tool. Data was analyzed to compare how those in North America compare to those regions outside of North America, and their preference for how learning should be designed.

Descriptive Data

The survey was disseminated through a combination of direct email communication by both me and through others, and on LinkedIn with a link to the survey with a standard message that explained the objective. The survey was open for a two-week period in April 2022.

Table 1:

Direct Email Communication	LinkedIn Post	Total number of Responders
200 People	5990 Connections / Followers	111

Of the 111 total responders, the breakdown by region of residency is as follows. This is important to note as this is an independent variable. Due to number of responses received in Asia, Europe, Oceania, and Latin America, I created an Other Region.

Table 2:

Region of Residency	Participants
North America	67
Other Region (Asia, Europe, Oceania, Latin America)	44

Analysis of Research Question

Tables 3 – 4 shows the mean data associated with how responders selected how learn effectively when learning is designed as a combination of experiential / on-the-job learning, developmental relationships learning / coaching and feedback, and formal learning / coursework and training (score must equal 100%). Comparing the 70-20-10 adult learning model to the

responses below suggests that culture influences adult learning with the greatest comparable change specific to Developmental relationships learning.

Table 3: North America

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiential / On-the-job learning	67	52.24	17.865
Developmental relationship learning / Coaching	67	23.81	10.734
Formal learning / Coursework & Training	67	23.96	16.156

Table 4: Other Regions

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
On-the-job learning	44	48.07	14.950
Developmental relationship learning	44	31.48	10.542
Formal learning / Coursework & Training	44	20.45	8.270

Tables 5 – 6 compare North America to Other Regions which demonstrated a statistical significance ($p < .05$) with Developmental relationship learning (coaching and feedback). T-test is also included given small sample size.

Table 5:

			t-test for Equality of Means							
					Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Experiential / On-the-job learning	Equal variances assumed	1824	1.281	109	.101	.203	4.171	3.255	-2.281	10.622
	Equal variances not assumed		1.329	102.649	.093	.187	4.171	3.137	-2.052	10.393
Coaching & Feedback / Developmental relationship learning	Equal variances assumed	.038	-3.709	109	**<.001**	<.001	-7.671	2.068	-11.771	-3.572
	Equal variances not assumed		-3.723	93.305	<.001	<.001	-7.671	2.060	-11.763	-3.580
Training / Formal learning	Equal variances assumed	8.553	1.326	109	.094	.188	3.501	2.639	-1.731	8.732
	Equal variances not assumed		1.500	103.809	.068	.137	3.501	2.335	-1.129	8.130

Table 6

t-value calculated using: Student T-Value Calculator - T Table

Adult Learning Model	df	Significance level	t-value
Experiential	109	.101	1.2836
Coaching & Feedback	109	.001	3.1667*
Training	109	.094	1.3248

Notes: *p < .05

Tables 7 - 8 show the cultural factors that responders rated as most important in the learning process. Two factors were statistically significant ($p < .05$): learning available in the spoken language, and most notably, learning design adapted to your region of residence – this demonstrated that culture influences adult learning. T-test is also included given small sample size.

Table 7:

			t-test for Equality of Means							
					Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Learning available in your spoken language	Equal variances assumed	11.153	4.189	109	**<.001**	**<.001**	.850	.203	.448	1.252
	Equal variances not assumed		3.889	69.669	<.001	<.001	.850	.218	.414	1.286
Learning design adapted to your culture of residence	Equal variances assumed	5.473	3.019	109	**.002**	**.003**	.594	.197	.204	.984
	Equal variances not assumed		2.824	71.771	.003	.006	.594	.210	.175	1.014
Adequate time to reflect on the learning to form insights	Equal variances assumed	1.330	1.336	109	.092	.184	.219	.164	-.106	.545
	Equal variances not assumed		1.305	84.660	.098	.196	.219	.168	-.115	.554
Recognition of any cultural differences in relation to the content included	Equal variances assumed	.055	1.485	109	.070	.140	.278	.187	-.093	.649
	Equal variances not assumed		1.472	89.306	.072	.145	.278	.189	-.097	.654
Beliefs and expectations on the role of the trainer/leader and their interaction with the participants	Equal variances assumed	.024	-.890	109	.188	.375	-.150	.168	-.484	.184
	Equal variances not assumed		-.902	96.276	.185	.369	-.150	.166	-.480	.180

Table 8

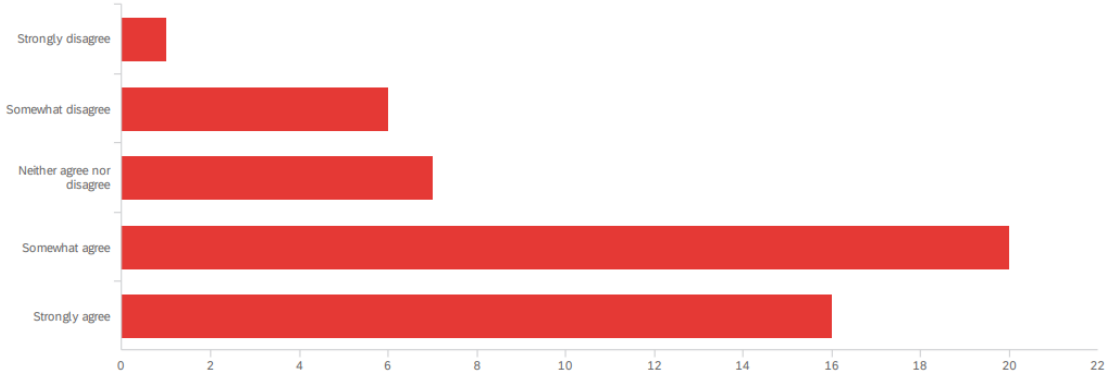
t-value calculated using: Student T-Value Calculator - T Table

Adult Learning Model	df	Significance level	t-value
Learning available in spoken language	109	.001	3.1667*
Learning design adapted to your culture of residence	109	.002	2.9407*
Adequate time to reflect on the learning to form insights	109	.092	1.337
Recognition of any cultural differences in relation to the content included	109	.070	1.4866
Beliefs and expectations on the role of the trainer/leader and their interaction with the trainees/participants	109	.188	0.88893

Notes: *p < .05

Other Observations

Table 9 illustrates that Practitioners of Learning and Development consider cultural implications when designing learning for on-the-job learning, coaching and feedback, and training. When we consider the participants in the learning transfer process, a few responders cited in the comments section that "Learning needs to be relevant for the learner or it can inhibit the uptake of the skill."; "If a participant sees something that doesn't fit their culture, it negatively impacts what is retained and internalized. It has to be right."; "Ability to apply and influence change is highly dependent on the culture one operates in." This demonstrates an awareness of the importance of culture by practitioners.



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Only answer if you are a Sr. Learning Leader or Learning Professional: To what extent do you consider cultural implications when designing learning e.g. on-the-job learning, formal learning, etc.)	1.00	5.00	3.88	1.05	1.11	50

Discussion

Conclusion

To summarize, the purpose of this study was to demonstrate that culture influences the adult learning model. A quantitative research approach was used to test my hypothesis using an interrelated set of variables that looks specifically at region of residency (where people live) and their preference for learning when designed as a combination of experiential / on-the-job learning, developmental relationships learning / coaching and feedback, and formal learning / coursework and training. The methodology included global participants and practitioners. I analyzed the survey data in Qualtrics by comparing the North American region to Other Regions to determine statistical significance ($p < .05$) in learning design influenced by region of residency.

Interpretation of Findings

The research was intended to answer if culture influences or changes the ratios associated with the 70-20-10 adult learning model. The results revealed that culture does influence the 70-20-10 ratios of adult learning in the overall design. Statistical significance was achieved as it relates to the importance of adapting the learning design to region of residence (where people live), which includes the ratios associated with experiential / on-the-job learning, developmental relationship / coaching and feedback, and formal learning / coursework and training. The bottom line, the 70-20-10 must evolve. This validates Brion (2021) point that the practitioners should begin to evaluate how they can evolve the learning design. Practitioners that can understand how to customize their learning transfer practices to the cultures, can improve learning outcomes, and generate better results (Brion, 2021).

Findings reveal there are opportunities for the 70-20-10 adult learning model to evolve on a global scale. In both North America and Other Regions (tables 3 – 4), participants indicated they learn effectively when experiential learning / on-the-job is 48.07 (Other Regions) – 52.24% (North America). This is a ~ 18 - 22% difference compared to the 70% in the CCL model. Clearly there is opportunity here for practitioners to think about how to evolve and embed learning strategies like action-learning projects, job shadowing, and actionable and relevant data in real-time from peers, managers, and customers. Participants indicated they learn effectively when development relationships / coaching and feedback is 23.81 (North America) – 31.48% (Other Regions), this is a ~3 - 11% difference compared to the 20% in the CCL model, and statistically significant ($p < .05$). Practitioners can evolve this by embedding strategies like coaching and feedback from peers along with a continuation from managers. Participants

indicated they learn effectively when formal learning / training coursework and programs is 20.45% (Other Regions) – 23.96% (North America), this is a ~10% - 14% difference compared to the 10% in the CCL model. Practitioners can evolve this by embedding strategies like learning journeys and capability academies while continuing leadership development programs and offering stand-alone courses.

Limitations

The main limitation in the research is the sample size outside of North America. Originally, the intent was to show data comparing North America to each region listed within Other Regions.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Overall, the 70-20-10 adult learning model is not a one-size-fits-all approach when considering the influence of culture. Based the data, the adult learning model can evolve to 50% / 30% / 20%. Clearly, there is a preference more coaching and feedback (30%) and formal learning (20%), while still incorporating experiential learning. This could better enable practitioners to act on the data by the World Economic Forum to re-skill and up-skill 54% of people over the next 3 years to stay relevant and competitive.

As I reflect on real-world examples that align with the results of this research, there are global leadership development programs that my team has designed, created, and implemented during the past few years. Programs like Emerging Leaders and Frontline Leader Impact had an emphasis on embedding learning strategies like action-learning projects, peer-coaching and feedback through cohorts, mentoring, and networking throughout the 3 – 6 month programs. It is

clear now why those programs consistently yielded positive outcomes and recognition from participants and senior leaders.

Next Steps and Recommendations for Future Research

While the research focused on cultural influences related to region of residency, future research should look at how company culture influence adult learning compared to region of residency. It would be interestingly to also look at how specific workplace roles prefer learning design differently, for example would Sales and Marketing employees prefer learning design differently than Finance, Supply Chain, Information Technology, Manufacturing, or Legal. And how does it compare within specific cultures, both regions of residence and company culture. Also, what influence would the position within the workplace have an influence, again comparing to culture, for example C-Suite, VP, Director, Manager, and Professional. Lastly, how could we measure all the above to demonstrate an impact on business.

Conclusion

Global workforce training spend is a billion-dollar business. With only 10% of the money invested resulting in learning transfer, multinational companies and institutions should take culture into account at every stage of the professional learning process, or they will not obtain the desired result on their investments. This research supports specific actions that practitioners can take today to adjust their learning transfer practices to the cultures and obtain the desired result on their investments.

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