Foreword

Barbara Covarrubias Venegas*

IACCM,
c/o WU/IVM,
Welthandelsplatz 1, Gebäude D2,
Eingang B/2. Stock, 1020 Vienna/Austria
Email: bcovarrubiasvenegas@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Marie-Therese Claes

WU Wien,
Institute for Gender and Diversity,
Welthandelsplatz 1, 1020 Vienna/Austria
Email: marie-therese.claes@wu.ac.at

Roger Bell

ESADE Business School,
Universitat Ramon Llull,
Av. de Pedralbes, 60, 62, 08034 Barcelona, Spain
Email: roger.bell@esade.edu

Biographical notes: Barbara Covarrubias Venegas is an expert for new ways of working and digital leadership, virtual learning journeys. She defines herself as a virtual enthusiast, researcher by education, speaker by passion and author by results. She is passionate about new ways of working and learning, positive leadership and culture overall. For the past ten years, she has been very involved with the intercultural community across the globe, not only as a researcher or professional, but also as a virtual team leader and team member. As an educator, she has been designing virtual learning journeys for the past years: her signature #virtualexchange project is the global case study challenge, an award-winning global teaching project with more than 600 students from 22 countries across the globe.

Marie-Therese Claes is the Head of the Institute for Gender and Diversity at the WU Vienna University of Economics and Business. Previously, she was a Professor Cross-Cultural Management and the Director of the Executive MBA programme at the Louvain School of Management (UCLouvain, Belgium). She was also Dean of the Faculty of Business at Asian University in Thailand, and has been a visiting professor at several universities in Europe, Asia and the USA, as well as consultant for international organizations. She is past president of SIETAR Europa (Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research), and of European Women Management Development Network (EWMD). She is also Fulbright and Japan Foundation alumna.

Roger Bell was a Lecturer in Cross-Cultural Management in the Department of People Management and Organization of ESADE, Barcelona for 15 years. He is a graduate in economics by the University of London with post-graduate teaching diploma from Roehampton College, London, executive diploma in management from ESADE and Masters in Management Development from the Euro Arab Management School in Granada. For over 15 years in ESADE he has created, co-ordinated and taught courses on comparative culture, cross-cultural communication, inter-cultural negotiation, and management communication. He has represented ESADE on the CEMS faculty group for cross-cultural management and published and presented widely on the impact of culture on business as well as publishing numerous book reviews and several book chapters.

While globalisation with its rapid flows of people, information and technology has been a fact of life for many years, and many lessons have been learnt, the ever-increasing scale and pace nonetheless adds to the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) the world is experiencing today, with the challenges we face seemingly increasing rather than decreasing (Johansen and Voto, 2014). VUCA has mainly been discussed in the context of business, but recent events - from viral threats to looming climatic catastrophe – have shown dramatically how the interconnectedness and volatility of the world extends far beyond the world of business and into myriad institutions, while local communities face disruption all round the world. This special issue therefore addresses the role that intercultural competence and cultural intelligence play in such a volatile and complex environment, characterised both by ever increasing connections and the threats that these connections pose through growing diversity and the political push to restrict and reverse it.

Intercultural competence or cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2006), namely the capacity individuals need to communicate effectively across cultures and be able to integrate into new cultural contexts, have so far often been associated with individual decision making, task performance, success in global leadership (Tarique and Takeuchi, 2008; Ang et al., 2007), job performance (Erez et al., 2013; Vedadi et al., 2010), multicultural team performance (Van Dyne et al., 2012), and firm-level strategic decisions such as offshore outsourcing (Ang and Inkpen, 2008). This has made intercultural competence a very desirable attribute among business professionals, affecting the competitiveness of their businesses (Alon et al., 2016), industries and countries, and often linked to performance at individual, team, and firm levels as a key factor in international business success (Bird et al., 2010).

And yet, what constitutes intercultural competence in the age of VUCA has been less deeply explored, and questions remain regarding how intercultural competence and cultural intelligence should be conceptualised and promoted in education to help address the challenges posed to organisations and individuals in a world fraught with disruptions, ambiguities, and uncertainties.

This special issue provides the reader with further insights into these questions.

The first paper, written by Constanze Ruesga Rath, Sina Grosskopf and Christoph Barmeyer, with the title 'Leadership in the VUCA world – a systematic literature review and its link to intercultural competencies' contributes to the discussion with a systematic literature review classifying the existing leadership literature under VUCA conditions. The paper contributes to the field by synthesising the vast amount of literature and aiming for a more structured overview of research outcomes over the

past 20 years (2000–2020). Since leadership is a more and more global activity in organisations, the authors analyse these findings from an intercultural perspective, linking the field of cross-cultural management and especially intercultural competencies to the leadership environment in the VUCA world.

The second contribution, written by Birgit Breninger, with the title 'Creating leadership minds for the digital VUCA world – sculpting functional perceptual architectures via cultural expertise', discusses the fascinating changes in our perception of successful leadership in constantly changing environments, and suggests that to lead successfully in a world of digital VUCA a fundamental transformation of individual minds is necessary, due to the novel bio-cultural paradoxes involved. The author claims that 'VUCA resilient' minds emerge from the integration of cultural otherness with interlinked perception, cognition, affect and action systems. An innovative perceptuo-cognitive experimental pilot shows the resultant changes in vision, enriched with eyetracking (implicit) and questionnaire (explicit) data.

The third paper written by Daniela Gröschke, with the title 'Global agility – going beyond intercultural competence' seeks deeper insights into the competencies needed in environments characterised by VUCA by examining the research on intercultural competence and agility, and their links to creativity and innovation. The authors identify the similarities and differences between the two concepts by conducting an extensive literature review. The proposed conceptual framework integrates the individual and collective levels of IC and agility, and introduces the concept of global agility, strongly linked to creativity and innovation.

The fourth contribution written by Nadine Binder and Ulrich Kühnen, entitled 'Teaching cultural intelligence for a VUCA world' seeks to add to our understanding of how to conceptualise and promote intercultural competencies in a VUCA environment. The authors argue that leadership that deals with VUCA positively in organisations and core elements of cultural intelligence correspond conceptually, to such an extent that promoting students' cultural intelligence may also equip them with the necessary skills to deal with VUCA. Specifically, teaching cultural intelligence should focus on the role of self-reflection, mindfulness and self-efficacy. Both quantitative and qualitative data that provide evidence for the effectiveness of this approach are reported.

The fifth contribution written by Petia Genkova and Henrik Schreiber, with the title 'Stays abroad and intercultural competence of students', examines the relationship between stays abroad, intercultural competence and individual personality traits. Reference is made to the length of stay, the attitude to work, and the level of integration. Based on a correlative cross-sectional design, the study collects data from 202 participants. The results show a positive correlation between duration and cognitive, motivational and behavioural intercultural competence. In addition, it shows that a person's behavioural patterns affect intercultural competence, whilst the type of stay abroad and social competence act as moderators.

The sixth and last contribution to this special issue, written by Danuta Babińska, with the title 'Applying action learning in the development of business students' intercultural competences' proposes the application of an action-oriented method focused on solving problems in a small group of multicultural learners while developing their intercultural competences.

References

Alon, I., Boulanger, M., Elston, J.A., Galanaki, E., de Ibarreta, C.M., Meyers, J., Muiz-Ferrer, M. and Velez-Calle, A. (2016) 'Business cultural intelligence quotient: a five-country study', *Thunderbird International Business Review* [online] https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21826.

Ang, S. and Inkpen, A.C. (2008) 'Cultural intelligence and offshore outsourcing success: a framework of firm-level intercultural capability', *Decision Sciences*, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp.337–358 [online] http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5915.2008.00195.x.

Ang, S., Van Dyne, L. and Koh, C. (2006) 'Personality correlates of the four-factor model of cultural intelligence', *Group & Organization Management*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp.100–123 [online] http://doi.org/10.1177/1059601105275267.

Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., Koh, C., Ng, K.Y. Templer, K.J., Tay, C. and Chandrasekar, N.A. (2007) 'Cultural intelligence? Its measurement and effects on cultural judgment and decision making, cultural adaptation and task performance', *Management and Organization Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.335–371 [online] http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1740-8784.2007.00082.x.

Bird, A., Mendenhall, M., Stevens, M.J. and Oddou, G. (2010) 'Defining the content domain of intercultural competence for global leaders', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 25, No. 8, pp.810–828 [online] http://doi.org/10.1108/02683941011089107.

Erez, M., Lisak, A., Harush, R., Glikson, E., Nouri, R. and Shokef, E. (2013) 'Going global: developing management students' cultural intelligence and global identity in culturally diverse virtual teams', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp.330–355 [online] https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2012.0200.

Johansen, B. and Voto, A. (2014) 'Leadership skills to thrive in the future', *People & Strategy*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp.4–6.

Tarique, I. and Takeuchi, R. (2008) 'Developing cultural intelligence: the roles of international nonwork experiences', in Ang, S. and van Dyne, L. (Eds.): *Handbook of Cultural Intelligence: Theory, Measurement, and Applications*, pp.56–70, Routledge, London, New York.

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., Ng, K.Y., Rockstuhl, T., Tan, M.L. and Koh, C. (2012) 'Sub-dimensions of the four factor model of cultural intelligence: expanding the conceptualization and measurement of cultural intelligence', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp.295–313 [online] https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2012.00429.x.

Vedadi, A., Kheiri, B. and Abbasalizadeh, M. (2010) 'The relationship between cultural intelligence and achievement: a case study in an Iranian company', *Iranian Journal of Management Studies (IJMS)*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.25–40.