

Effectiveness of a Global Leadership Development Program by Focusing on Global Leadership Competencies Development: Evidence from Empirical Research

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Abstract. Despite the theoretical advancements in Global Leadership literature, there needs to be more empirical understanding of how organizations develop and execute Global Leadership Development Programs (GLDP). In this article, we show that despite theoretical advances in Global Leadership Research, organizations implementing GLDP lack an overarching framework to identify how to measure the effectiveness of their programs. To address this gap, our research is based on a comprehensive qualitative analysis of 90 Global Human Resource Leaders, providing a cohesive understanding of the heterogeneity in the perception and implementation of a GLDP. Our findings highlight the challenges and offer practical and effective steps for organizations operating in different geographical settings to strengthen their Global Leadership Development initiatives, empowering them to take action.

Keywords: Global Leadership Development Program (GLDP), global leadership competencies development, global leadership, global leadership effectiveness, global mindset.

1. Introduction

Today's organizations are in a critical need for Global Leaders. These leaders play a pivotal role in navigating the complexities of our rapidly changing world (Oliver *et al.* 2009). Mendenhall (2013, p. 2) defines a Global leader as an "Individual who effects significant positive change in organizations by building communities through the development of trust and the arrangement of organizational structures and processes in a context involving multiple cross-boundary stakeholders, multiple sources of external cross-boundary authority and multiple cultures under temporal, geographical, and cultural complexity" (Mendenhall 2013, p. 2). This definition underscores these leaders' pivotal role in today's organizations, making the need for effective Global Leadership Development Programs even more critical and urgent.

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Therefore, a Global Leadership Development Program (GLDP) is specifically designed for executives known as Global Leaders. These are individuals in jobs with some international scope who must effectively manage through the complex, changing, and often ambiguous global environment. The urgent need for these unique talents is underscored by the current shortage, making influential global business leaders highly sought-after and creating a pressing need to train and develop effective Global Leaders (e.g., PwC 2017; Bird & Mendenhall 2016; DDI *et al.* Forecast 2014-2015). This shortage not only underscores the need for immediate action in Global Leadership Development but also highlights the significance of our research in addressing this critical issue.

According to Hruby *et al.* (2022), a GLDP can focus on a mix of methods, including international service-learning programs such as cultural immersion experiences, language training, and community service projects (Caligiuri & Thoroughgood 2015), development programs that are set up company-wide (White & Rosamilia 2010), and programs that include action learning and experiential learning in multicultural teams (Grundling *et al.* 2014).

One of the critical gaps in the current literature is the absence of process models for developing Global Leadership Competencies (e.g., Jokinen 2005; Osland & Bird 2018; Mendenhall *et al.* 2017). This lack of clarity in evaluating the effectiveness of a GLDP and Global Leadership Competency Development underscores the need for further research and development in this area (e.g., Hruby *et al.* (2022).

Most GLDPs focus on the participants' mindset and competency transformation and on providing international high-quality developmental cross-cultural experiences. Importantly, there is a difference in variations due to the conceptualization and design of GLDPs (Hruby *et al.*, 2022); depending upon the geographic location, organizations may vary in deciding how to implement and evaluate the GLDP effectiveness (e.g., Lacerenza *et al.* 2017; Avolio *et al.* 2009).

Theoretically, Global Leadership Development research must focus on what influences, moderates, and impacts participants' learning outcomes in an effective GLDP. Vice versa, companies must also be aware of how they can effectively design a GLDP (e.g., Hruby *et al.* 2022) for return-on-investment reasons. This practical implication of our research underscores the need for companies to invest in designing effective GLDPs, not just for the development of their employees but also for the potential returns it can bring to the organization.

Research Question: "How do organizations evaluate the effectiveness of their conducted Global Leadership Development Programs by focusing on Global Leadership Competencies Development from a Program Designers' Perspective?"

Our research enriches the theoretical landscape by supplementing existing knowledge with grounded insights into individual antecedents, interventions, and learning outcome factors gleaned from 90-panel interviews with Global Human

Resources Leaders in German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland). Therefore, our empirical pilot study cannot be generalized because our sample only focuses on highly internationalized German-speaking countries.

Our study is structured as follows: We focus on a current literature review, then provide a grounded theory methodology section and a findings section that offers practical implications for designing and evaluating GLDPs. In the final section, we underscore the practical implications of our research, followed by a discussion of its contributions, limitations, and future research agenda.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Global Leader, Learning Mindset, and Learning in the Organization

In the multifaceted and complex environment of global leadership, a Learning Mindset is beneficial and essential (e.g., Fey 2020; Terrell 2013a; Terrell 2013b). As Van Velsor and Guthrie (1998) point out, “most managers are not active and continuous learners. Most people learn quickly within their comfort zone but find it much more difficult when operating under new challenges” (p. 242). This underscores the importance of continuous learning, as merely having international experience does not guarantee learning from that experience (Fey 2020; Fiedler 1970). The need for a Learning Mindset in Global Leadership is about acquiring new knowledge, adapting to new challenges, and growing as a leader.

Learning from experience is one of the most critical Global Leadership Competencies for effective (Global) Leadership (Fey 2020; Argyris 1991; Dechant 1989). Lombardo and Eichinger (2002) define successful learning as positing an effective learning environment. The 70-20-10 model, a widely accepted model in the field of leadership development, describes the most effective learning and development guideline. According to this model, 70% of the significant learning occurs during overseas assignments and on the job, 20% through training and feedback through a mentor, and 10% through formal education, such as at a business school.

Table 1 depicts the state-of-the-art of Global Leadership Competency Development Models. By analyzing and comparing the models, we can see that the studies focus on the individual or organizational levels of Global Leadership. Whereas individual attributes and personality traits are crucial, organizational alignment in selecting individuals and giving them opportunities to grow is also essential. In summary, organizations should develop instruments aligned with the strategy, organizational culture, and learning culture.