The final publication is available at

https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1566211

Additional Information

After Cultural Literacy: New models of intercultural competency for life and work in a VUCA world.

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Abstract

Globalisation has brought about change not only in the economic, social and technological order, but also in people's mentality and the ways they interact with the world around them. There has been a consensus that in our increasingly interconnected world, one of the essential tasks of educators and institutions at all levels is to develop, promote and enhance cultural literacy. In the wake of counter-globalisation forces and the rise of the national populist movement, the relevance of being culturally literate might be questioned. This paper reviews the literature on cultural literacy and clarifies some of the conceptual ideas surrounding the construct. It updates the elements of cultural literacy relevant to the 2020s and critically assesses the development of the concept of cultural literacy in the 20th and 21st centuries. An analysis and summary are made of common trends for a new set of skills and competencies necessary for success in the twenty-first century, studied by policy-making institutions like UNESCO, by education institutions like the British Council, by MNCs like IBM and Google, and by influencer organisations like LinkedIn and the World Economic Forum. The conclusion drawn is that there is a pressing need for an updated model of cultural literacy that can serve as a powerful instrument for living in a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) world.

Highlights of the article:

- Summarises the capabilities and competencies needed for success in the 21st century suggested by UNESCO, the British Council, IBM, Google, LinkedIn, World Economic Forum;

- Draws an updated model of cultural literacy;

- Clarifies conceptual ideas surrounding the construct;

- Defines the role of being a change agent leader (influencer) as one of the core elements of the updated cultural literacy model;

- Offers directions for further research: studying informal ways (e.g., social media, video games, virtual worlds, etc.) of acquiring cultural literacy.

Globalisation has given rise to a new discourse that calls for updated education solutions for the 2020s. Even a brief analysis of global tendencies —as increased international interconnectedness, the rapid rate of urbanisation, technological advances, increased migration, and the devastation of natural resources—makes it evident that labour markets are increasingly demanding workers with advanced skills. Lifelong and life-wide learning necessity comes from current socio-economic transformations. A key driver of modern education systems is preparing citizens for employment in today's VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) world.

Historically, literacy as an ontological phenomenon can be traced back hundreds of years. It is found in Mesopotamia, the Sumerian and Babylonian cultures, the Chinese Confucian movement, religious brotherhoods in ancient Greece, priest guilds in ancient India, Jewish communities, Islamic civilisation, and Christian Europe, to mention only some. '*In earliest times, literacy was highly restricted and a relatively unprestigious craft; it carried little of the association with wealth, power, status and knowledge that it later acquired. It was a tool, useful firstly to the needs of state and bureaucracy, church and trade*' (Graff, 1987, quoted in UNESCO, 2006, p. 190). For centuries, literacy was a privilege possessed only by a few and just for specific purposes like record keeping, legal disputes, religious teaching, and trade.

Literacy has been defined differently throughout history as a result of changes in societal demands. Traditionally, literacy has been considered the "three Rs": Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, industrialised European countries made some progress in reducing illiteracy and improving the general literacy level of the population, until the middle of the twentieth century, when literacy levels rose dramatically. According to data published by UNESCO (2017), since 1950 global adult literacy rate has increased by an average of five per cent per decade, from 55.7 per cent in 1950 to 86.2 per cent in 2015.

In the 1970s, definitions of literacy began to broaden. The educator Paulo Freire (1976) said, '*To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate those techniques in terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands: it is to communicate graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorising sentences, words or syllables – lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe – but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context*' (p. 36).

In the 1980s and 1990s, reflecting the challenges in social and economic life, the emergence of the economies of knowledge, and the impact of new technology and information media, "literacy" became a metaphor for many kinds of skills. Emphasis was placed on skills and practices that are relevant to the changing dynamics of modern life. Thus, literacy empowers one to develop one's knowledge and potential, to achieve one's goals, and to participate in society at large. As a result, the field of 'Literacy Studies' was born.

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries brought a fundamental change in the development of technologies such as the internet, gaming software, virtual and augmented reality, and telecommunication technologies. Owing to this, the emerging field of New Literacies Studies started a new era in the study of literacy. Whilst the definition of new literacy is fluid and evolving, it is commonly understood that it '*identifies questions, locates information, evaluates the information, synthesizes information to answer questions, and communicates the answers to others*' (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004, p. 1572, quoted in Hsu & Wang, 2010).

As a consequence, it is claimed that the spread of literacy in the world and the inclusion of the ability to create, consume and communicate different materials associated with various contexts in the modern understanding of literacy, inclines us to be cooperative and more tolerant to a different other. Harvard psychologist Pinker (2011) links widespread literacy to the reduction in people's '*taste for cruelty*' and the widening of the circle of tolerance towards others, thus empowering '*the empathy escalator*'.

Cultural literacy in the twentieth century

People meet one another having already been culturally programmed. Culture defines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, biases and prejudices, many of them unchecked and unrealised. Therefore, to meet the unique demands of global interconnectedness, we need to learn to be culturally literate. In the words of Hall (1977), *'... a massive cultural literacy movement'* started (p.7).

According to Oxford Dictionaries Online, the term cultural literacy has its origins in the 1940s and is *'the ability to analyse and understand a particular society or culture; familiarity with the customs and characteristics of a culture'*.

In his Cultural Literacy Laboratory, Wilson (1974) defined cultural literacy *'as insight into one's own culture, and it includes some understanding of one's frustration and tolerance levels, the ability to work effectively with people who are culturally different and to demonstrate the skills this requires' (p.86).* Possessing the skills of transcultural communication and awareness of one's ethnicity is what cultural literacy is all about (Wilson, 1974).

In 1987, the educator and academic literary critic E.D. Hirsh published his influential book "Cultural Literacy: What every American needs to know". Within this he developed his concept of cultural literacy that refers to the ability to engage fully in any given culture by understanding that culture's signs, symbols, language, stories, idioms, idiosyncrasies, references to past events, jokes, names, places, etc. (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 1988;2002). Hirsh's definition of cultural literacy is culture-specific. You are culturally literate when you know what an average member of the same culture is supposed to know. Hirsch et al. (1988;2002) compiled 23 sections covering, among others, the Bible, Business, Mathematics, Life Science, Earth Sciences, Technology, World History, and a list of dates which he *'intended to illustrate the character and range of the knowledge literate Americans tend to share' (p. 146).*

Owing to this, back in the twentieth-century, cultural literacy was used to define a monoculture to locate the parameters of nationalism (Johnson, 2014). This had the effect of causing cultural literacy to be used to indicate the parameters of national literacy:

N = CL (n1): nationalism = cultural literacy (Johnson, 2014).

Hirsch's work triggered a broad scholarly debate criticising the notion of core knowledge and the assumption that everyone has access to it (Johnson, 2014). For decades, a wide range of scholars and educators tried to redefine the concept of cultural literacy adding new meaning to the idea (Broudy, 1990; Christenbury, 1989; Cook, 2009; Mullican, 1991; Schweizer, 2009). Most agreed that there are far too many different cultures for one to be literate in all of them. In other words, people are culturally fluent in their native culture, as they have been learning their cultures unstated and often unrealised from childhood. But when one enters a new culture or interacts with members of that new culture, one needs to develop new cultural literacy. In addition to this, Ahmadi & Helms (1994) made the first mention of the use of cultural literacy in the business curriculum.

Cultural literacy in the twenty-first century

Information and communication technologies create opportunities for connecting and collaborating with people of different cultural background and languages. Owing to this, many disciplines—from history to science—have revisited the importance and role of cultural literacy in modern society, broadening its meaning. Furthermore, cultural literacy has begun to be seen as a *'modus operandi' (Ochoa, McDonald, & Monk, 2016)* that *'highlights communication, comparison and critique, bringing ideas together in an interdisciplinary and international collaboration' (Segal, Kancewicz-Hoffman, Landfester, 2013, p. 4).* Furthermore, Cultural Literacy is claimed to have the same implications as Opportunity Cost in economics and *"can be applied and verified through everyday experience, in any and every context" (Ochoa et al., 2016, p.1).* In agreement with this, Desmond, K. J., Stahl, S. A., & Graham (2011) give their definition of cultural literacy as *'the knowledge of history, contributions, and perspectives of*

different cultural groups, including one's own group, necessary for an understanding of reading, writing, and other media' (p. 4). To build communication, acceptance, and understanding, one needs to possess and to use a broad range of general knowledge. Cultural literacy requires interaction with and reflection on that culture (Desmond et al., 2011).

In the same way, several reputable institutions articulated their understanding of Cultural Literacy. The European Science Foundation, for example, acknowledges the ability of cultural literacy *'to recognise, reflect on, use and potentially modify the many interacting cultural artefacts, including texts and other media, which shape our cultural existence' (Segal et al., 2013, p. 4).* In agreement with this, the Cultural Literacy in Europe forum[1], working in the European context of cultural literacy, concludes that cultural literacy is an innovative and creative practice that employs *'communication, comparison and critique on a scale beyond that of one language or one nation-state, and avoiding abstraction'.*

Similarly, Rosen (2000) argues that management and technology alone will not give economies supremacy, but populations will also need to be culturally literate, *'Culture is no longer an obstacle to be overcome. Rather, it is a critical lever for competitive advantage' (p.2).* He postulates that tomorrow's leaders will strive to be culturally wise by appreciating similarities and differences between peoples, companies, and countries; and they will know that superficial understanding negatively impacts businesses (Rosen, 2000). His formula for success in the twenty-first century is: personal literacy + social literacy + business literacy + cultural literacy = global literacy = world-class excellence (Rosen, 2000).

The importance of cultural literacy, both to individuals and their societies, was theorised by various authors (Anning, 2010; Flavell, Thackrah, & Hoffman, 2013; Dudeney, Hockly & Pegrum, 2013). At the individual level, researchers say cultural literacy can improve one's communication with people from diverse backgrounds. Cultural literacy contributes to developing communication and self-reflection skills by building up:

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[1] http://cleurope.eu/about/

- cultural skills in general, by the exploration of different cultural perspectives and practices;

- communication, through self-reflection on communication style and behaviour, and by being open to it;

- self-reflection on cultural and racial identity which shapes one's cultural perspective as one of many;

- critical thinking that compares with and contrasts against a variety of cultures, and evaluates their relative strengths and limitations (Flavell et al., 2013).

In addition to this, cultural literacy values diversity and decreases prejudice and inequality based on culture, thus contributing positively to the society one lives in (Anning, 2010).

Moreover, cultural literacy is nowadays recognised as a crucial element of digital literacy. For Belshaw (2012), the cultural element of digital literacies is *'the need to understand the various digital contexts an individual may experience... Digital literacies are not solely about technical proficiency, but about the issues, norms and habits of mind surrounding technologies used for a particular purpose. The Cultural element of digital literacies is all about seeking ways to give people additional 'lenses' through which to see the world' (p. 207).*

This points to the conclusion that globalisation has brought a change not only in the economic and technological order but also in the mentalities and the ways people need to conceive the world. There is general agreement that living and working in culturally diverse settings presents educators and institutions at all levels with the essential task of promoting and enhancing cultural literacy.

Intercultural and transnational literacies, cultural intelligence and global dexterity

With the growing interest in New Literacies and following the acknowledgement of cultural literacy's importance, the terms intercultural literacy (Heyward, 2004; Honna, 2008; Dudeney, Hockly, & Pegrum, 2013), transnational literacy (Spivak, 1999), cultural intelligence (CQ) (Earley & Ang, 2003; Livermore, 2009), and global dexterity (Molinsky, 2013) have come

into use. In addition to this, Cultural competence 2.0 is looking for approaches, concepts and frameworks to offer to the intercultural field.

According to Heyward (2004), intercultural literacy is *"the understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation and identities which enable effective participation in a cross-cultural setting" (Heyward, 2004, p. 45).* Heyward (2004) states that an interculturally literate person has the background necessary for comprehending the second culture, *'to interpret its symbols and negotiate its meanings in a practical day-to-day context' (p. 51).* He points out, however, that intercultural literacy can emerge in societies that value cooperation over competition. Zhang (2012), in the context of computer-based learning, adds that the concept of intercultural literacy is a significant component in measuring various intercultural communication activities due to a pluralist and modular approach.

Similarly, Honna (2008) interprets intercultural literacy as *"an attitude, preparedness, and competence to transmit one's message and understand others' appropriately in a cross-cultural encounter" (p. 5).* She expresses the idea that intercultural literacy is the fourth kind of basic literacy, next to 3Rs literacy, media literacy, and information literacy. Moreover, she recognises intercultural literacy's ability to reconcile cross-cultural differences in a mutually beneficial manner (Honna, 2008).

In a later definition by Dudeney et al. (2013), intercultural literacy is placed within a broader framework of digital literacies in the "Focus on connections" category (cultural and intercultural literacy: working with others). Dudeney et al. (2013) define it as: *"the ability to interpret documents and artefacts from a range of cultural contexts, as well as to effectively communicate messages and interact constructively with interlocutors across different cultural contexts"* (p. 35). Linking intercultural literacy with digital illiteracies reminds us that its importance is growing and that its development can be supported within digital networks (Dudeney et al., 2013).

Another captivating concept is transnational literacy, elaborated by Spivak (1999), who suggested a new mode of critical and pedagogical methodology through which people grasp globalisation- and transnationalism-related phenomena. *"Trans" in transnational literacy does not signify "anti"-national or "beyond" the national, it rather focuses on the opposing dynamic and dialectical relationship between the national and the global, and 'a productive acknowledgement of complicity'"* (Spivak, 1999, (xii).

A concept that attained wide recognition in the business world is cultural intelligence (CQ), coined by Earley & Ang (2003), who examined CQ in the facets of cognition (the ability to develop and recognize cultural patterns), motivation (the need and the skill to engage others), and behaviour in agreement with cognition and motivation. Later, Livermore (2009) developed CQ as a four-step construct measurable on the scale model for becoming effective at managing across cultures.

The most recently developed concept is that of global dexterity, which is the capacity to adapt one's behaviour to different cultures, to fit into a new culture without giving up one's own personality (Molinsky, 2013).

As is clear by now, increased attention to cultural abilities that help to function effectively across different cultures at the beginning of the twenty-first century has brought various concepts with new modern-sounding names. Some constructs overlap; thus, the term "cultural literacy" is interchangeable with other terms, such as intercultural competence, intercultural literacy, CQ/cultural intelligence, or cultural mindfulness[2]. This paper concerns itself with a real-world non-semantic phenomenon, the real-world trends surrounding the interest, demand and effects of cultural literacy. Picture 1 shows interest in the terms over time.

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[2] for more see Kirmayer, L. J. (2015). Mindfulness in cultural context. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, *52*(4), 447–469. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461515598949

The term "cultural literacy" received the highest degree of attention after Hirsh (1988) published his first book, but at the beginning of the twentieth-century new terms started to gain attention.

Fig 1. The trends of the terms in books over time[3]
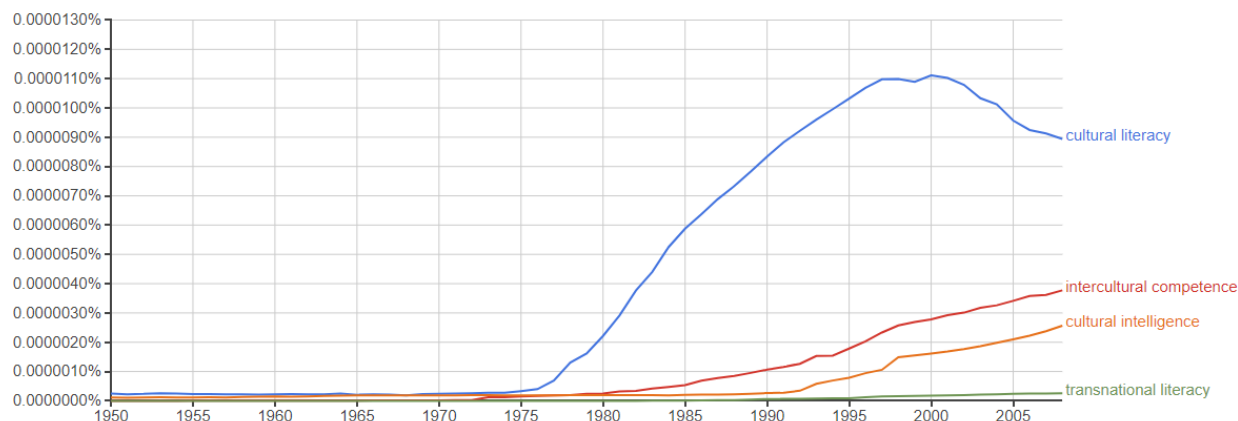
The attributes of cultural literacy

A wide range of researchers (Rosen, 2000; Muller, 2006; Polistina, 2009; Anning, 2010; Henson, 2016) has proven the thesis about the essential role of equipping people with the ability to deal with cultural differences and cultural change in an increasingly borderless world. Cultural literacy is developed through the identification of the intra-relationships between the self and the *"generalised other"*, through the phenomenological self and the phenomenological field (Wilson, 1974). *"When in Rome, do as the Romans do"* is a well-known statement, but to be successful in the modern world, people need to ask, 'Why do Romans behave in this way? How do I differ from them?' (García Ochoa et al., 2016).

In agreement with the above, Rosen (2000) states that with cultural literacy one can comprehend and leverage differences, enabling one to perform the key roles of:

1. The proud ancestor who values one's cultural heritage, its shortcomings, its strengths;

2. The inquisitive internationalist who looks beyond one's own culture for business possibilities;

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[3] The graph is extracted from www.culturomics.org, a tool that investigates cultural trends quantitatively using digitized texts containing about 4% of all books ever printed. The most accurate data is shown between 1800 and 2000. The terms included in the search show the trends till 2008. Terms that appeared after 2008 are not displayed.

3. The respectful moderniser who retains the best of one's culture and uses the knowledge and the resources of others;

4. The cultural bridger who forms alliances and coalitions across cultures;

5. The global capitalist who brings global resources to local problems and local resources to global opportunities (Rosen, 2000).

Similarly, Muller (2006), discussing the contribution of cultural literacy to the *'globally engaged curriculum'* and the *'globally engaged citizen'*, outlines the attributes of a culturally literate global citizen. Muller's framework includes elements of membership that reflect public discourse, traditional anthropological notions of culture, and notions of relativity and multiplicity. Thus, a culturally literate global person:

- comprehends the complexity of culture (internal (values-based) and external (lifestyle) components);

- analyses the attributes of their own culture;

- moves toward cultural relativism rather than toward cultural fundamentalism (Miller, 2006).

In line with Rosen and Muller, Polistina (2009) discusses cultural aspects of sustainability and considers that cultural literacy includes cultural competence, critical reflection, and the analysis of the behaviours of dominant cultures. She brings into focus four critical cultural-literacy skills.

1. Cross-cultural awareness. 'Paralleling' different cultural traditions, beliefs and social systems; "parallels" rather than comparisons increase cultural literacy.

2. Local cultural awareness. Accepting and respecting the knowledge within local cultures is the pre-requisite in the development of cultural literacy.

3. Critical reflection and thinking. The need for self-critique, self-reflection, or reflection on the trajectory that society is taking.

4. Personal skills for acting as a change agent (survival skills to lead those who prefer the status quo) (Polistina, 2009).

Additionally, Anning (2010) outlines the key competencies one needs to cultivate to become culturally literate:

- appreciation and comprehension of cultural diversity;

- effective communication with people from other cultures;

- treating everyone without with no pre-expectations or stereotypes;

- assessment of each situation and adjusting one's behaviour (Anning, 2010).

To summarise, it could be argued that a wide range of authors acknowledges the importance of cultural literacy. They have been elaborating the core properties of cultural literacy, agreeing that cultural literacy requires awareness of the complexity of culture, critical reflection, acknowledgement of cultural diversity, and the ability to be an effective communicator.

Call for a culturally literate global citizen

Workplace changes, the transnational movement of refugees, economic migrants, professional and expert service providers, and student exchange programmes created a strong and urgent need for people to learning to live together in this diverse world. Consequently, cultural literacy has come into sharper focus.

However, UNESCO documents from as far back as the 1940s and 1950s illustrate the importance of international understanding and mutual appreciation. Subsection 4f of the 1955 UNESCO Director-General's Report speaks on "Culture and International Understanding", and subsection 6A of the 1957 reports on the "Major Project on a mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values". Also, surprisingly, the now familiar slogan *'unity – in – diversity'* first appeared in the UNESCO Director-General's 1947 Report (UNESCO, 1947, p. 13).

In 1995 UNESCO, considering changing social patterns, globalisation, integration and interdependence, as well as the subsequent displacement of populations and urbanisation, proclaimed a "Declaration of Tolerance":

'Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human…is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism) ….' ("Declaration of Principles on Tolerance," 1995, p. 9).

During the next several years, much was said about *'citizens beyond borders', 'citizens beyond the nation-state', 'planetary citizenship', 'cosmopolitanism'.* The calls for new forms of cultural literacy and *'new common ground around shared values'* sound louder (UNESCO/Dov Lynch, 2011). *'Agreeing to differ—or agreeing to disagree—does not imply a passive form of tolerance for the views of others—it means active engagement… on the basis of respect, equal dignity and compassion' (Financial Tribune, 2015).*

Launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in September 2012, the Global Education First Initiative aims to accelerate progress towards Education for All. The guiding priority of the Initiative is to foster global citizenship.

'…interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings. It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life… Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century' (United Nations Secretary-General, 2012, p. 20)

Similarly, UNESCO Global Citizenship Education (2014) and the UNESCO "The Education 2030. Incheon Declaration Framework for Action" (2016) underline the importance of

citizenship education and the empowerment of citizens to resolve global challenges and to contribute to a peaceful, inclusive and tolerant world. Furthermore, it supports promoting the appreciation of cultural diversity. For example, goal number 4 of Education 2030 (2016) proclaims, *'4.4. Relevant skills for decent work. By 2030… beyond work-specific skills, emphasis must be placed on developing high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution' (p. 20),* and sub-clause 4.7 suggests, *'to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote… a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development... Global citizenship education (GCED), which includes peace and human rights education, as well as intercultural education and education for international understanding' (p. 20).*

In the same way, UNESCO's "The Hangzhou Declaration Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies" (2013) emphasises that cultural literacy is an integral part of quality education and plays a vital role in the promotion of inclusive and unbiased societies.

In line with leading policy-making institutions, the book "Bringing Schools into the 21st Century" by Kay & Greenhill (2011) outlines that all citizens need a twenty-first-century skill set that contributes to their employability and global citizenship. Among the major skills needed for the twenty-first century, the authors mentioned *'Communicating and collaborating with teams of people across cultural, geographic, and language boundaries—a necessity in diverse and multinational workplaces and communities. Mutually beneficial relationships are a central undercurrent to accomplishments in businesses—and it is not only top managers who represent companies anymore. All Americans must be skilled at interacting competently and respectfully with others' (Kay & Greenhill, 2011, p. 45).*

A year later, Binkley et al. (2012) publish the book "Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills" in which they indicate, among ten crucial skills for the twenty-first-century:

Skill number 4. Communication (speaking additional language/s; sensitivity to cultural differences; resistance to stereotyping).

Skill number 5. Collaboration (respecting the differences of people from varied social and cultural backgrounds).

Skill number 8. Citizenship—local and global (an appreciation of the differences between the value systems).

Skill number 10. Personal and social responsibility—including cultural awareness and competence (acting conducting respectably, working effectively with people from varied backgrounds, and responding open-mindedly to different ideas and values) (Binkley et al., 2012).

All of the above suggests that nowadays culture is seen as a driver (together with science, technology and innovation) for promoting peace, security and a socially, culturally and economically inclusive environment. Policy-making institutions and leading experts in education demonstrate the importance of culture through their numerous recommendations and guidelines for the 2020s.

Demand for a culturally literate leader

Over the past twenty years, a number of researchers (Rosen, 2000; Tucker, Bonial, Vanhove, & Kedharnath, 2014; Manning, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002) have tested theories and models of global leadership across cultures, identifying the essential capabilities for successful global leadership in the increasingly interdependent and interconnected world of business.

Back in 1994, Miller, in his article "Diversity and its management: Training managers for cultural competence within the organisation", theorised the idea that managers must develop cultural competence and cultural literacy if they intend to be successful in the 1990s (Miller, 1994).

The early work of Kuhlmann and Stahl (1998) identified core competencies leaders need to have. With the help of expatriates who determined the skills that might enhance their effectiveness, they identified seven competencies global leaders need to be successful. Most of them relate to cultural literacy:

- tolerance for ambiguity;

- behavioural flexibility;

- empathy;

- nonjudgmentalness;

- goal orientation;

- sociability;

- meta-communication skills (Kuhlmann and Stahl, 1998, retrieved from Tucker et al., 2014).

In line with this, Rosen et al. (2000), in their book "Global Literacies: Lessons on Business Leadership and National Cultures", emphasised that the more economically integrated the world becomes, the more important cultural differences become. Rosen's team conducted face-to-face interviews with CEOs of more than 75 companies in 28 countries and surveyed 1,000 senior executives around the world. They concluded that cultural literacy (valuing and leveraging cultural differences) is one of four global literacies critical in making effective global leaders (Rosen, 2000). Similarly, McCall & Hollenbeck (2002) found support for the idea of leaders learning to be global after conducting a wide-ranging study of veteran global executives across 36 countries. Their list of seven global competencies includes cultural sensitivity and the ability to deal with complexity (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). These two competencies are undoubtedly critical elements of cultural literacy. Additionally, Brooks & Normore (2010), speaking about a rethinking of twenty-first-century educational-leadership schools, suggested that modern educational leaders should enhance global literacy in nine specific knowledge domains, one of these domains being cultural literacy.

In 2003, Manning (2003) expressed an immediate and widespread need for effective cross-cultural leadership, pointing out that twin pre-conditions for effective global leadership are an openness to new perspectives and an ability to manage increasing cultural diversity. Moodian (2008) went further, suggesting in his book "Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence: Exploring the Cross-Cultural Dynamics Within Organizations" that modern leaders must not only demonstrate communication competence but also train others in their organisations to be interculturally competent.

Additionally, the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century was marked by several major studies. The Right Management and the Chally Group (2011) found that 80 percent of HR professionals highlighted cultural assimilation as the foremost challenge facing leaders working abroad (Caver, Haid & Jason, 2011). Similarly Hassell (2017), in her article about global leadership, concluded that cultural intelligence is an integral part of a global leader's success. Only a person with cultural intelligence can manage all aspects of leadership in different cultures. Referring to the study done by the professors from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business, she points to overseas experience and sensitivity to cultural diversity as valuable additions to global leadership skills and traits (Hassell, 2017).

Another study by Tucker et al. (2014) of 1,867 CEO's, general managers, and function heads of 13 nationalities investigated the relationship between intercultural competencies and high-performance criteria. The authors identified a set of intercultural skills and criteria for global leadership success. Thus, successful global leaders are:

- comfortable socialising with people in unknown social situations, and communicate empathetically;
- not frustrated with uncertainty and eager to figure out how things function in different cultures; and
- respectful of the political and spiritual beliefs of people of different backgrounds (Tucker et al., 2014).

In agreement with this, the top essential competencies for effective global leaders detected by the UNC/HCI Global Competence survey (2017) include:

- multi-cultural sensitivity,

- respect for differences, and

- adaptability to new environments (McCormick, 2017).

Furthermore, Lisak & Erez (2015) found out that cultural intelligence (CQ), global identity, and openness to cultural diversity are three global characteristics that help MBA students to emerge as leaders in multicultural teams.

In summary, the studies by IBM of 1,500 CEOs and Development Dimensions International (DDI) of 14,320 HR professionals and business leaders showed that many companies do not possess the leadership competencies necessary to deal with the future's business challenges (IBM, 2011; Boatman & Wellins, 2011). Culture-related challenges, such as communication, negotiation, decision-making, and team-building, are likely to continue; therefore, the strong demand for globally minded culturally literate leaders is here to stay. No manager or leader can afford to ignore cultural differences. Modern global leaders, therefore, must cultivate respect for differences, empathy, multi-cultural sensitivity, and tolerance for ambiguity. These attributes help to adapt, adjust to and operate in the culturally diverse environments of the twenty-first century.

Demand for a culturally literate workforce

Due to businesses and industries progressing toward rapid globalisation, intercultural contact is increasingly possible and increasingly likely. Employees have to deal with unfamiliar cultural contexts and culturally diverse workforces almost on a daily basis. Effective interaction with colleagues from different cultures is required to navigate complex international working environments successfully.

Over the last decade, reputable institutions (Oxford Economics, 2012; British Council, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2016) have been analysing the skill set required for a successful

specialist in the twenty-first century, concluding that intercultural skills are in high demand. For example, Hanover Research (2011) identified critical twenty-first--century skills that included global and cultural awareness (understanding global issues, other nations, and other cultures). A year later, Oxford Economics (2012) surveyed over 350 HR professionals around the world, finding that the following skills would be in high demand over the next decade:

1. agile thinking skills (confidence with complexity, managing paradoxes, problem-solving);

2. interpersonal and communication skills (co-creativity, relationship and team building, collaboration);

3. global operating skills (management of a diverse workforce, understanding global markets, the ability to work internationally, language skills, cultural sensitivity) (Oxford Economics, 2012).

Another study by the British Council, Booz Allen Hamilton and Ipsos Public Affairs (2013) of HR managers of 367 large employers in Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Jordan, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States found that respect for others and effective work in diverse teams are highly valued skills (British Council, 2013).

Furthermore, the World Economic Forum report "New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning Through Technology" (2016) pointed out 16 skills that students would need in the twenty-first century. In Foundational Literacies, cluster skill number 6 is cultural literacy (World Economic Forum, 2016).

In addition to this, the latest LinkedIn Workplace Learning Trends Report indicates that soft skills make up the essential skill set that should be cultivated through talent-development programs. Ninety-two percent of executives name soft skills as equally or more important than technical skills, with 64 percent of responders highlighting the importance of communication skills and 55 percent collaboration skills, confirming that effective communication with others (in its broad meaning) is key to success in the twenty-first century (LinkedIn, 2018).

P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning amongst education, business, community, and government leaders developed P21's Framework for 21st Century Learning (2016) to define and summarise the skills and knowledge students required at work, for life and citizenship in the 2020s. The Life and Career Skills category includes Social and Cross-Cultural Skills as required for navigating complicated life and work environments (P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning, 2016).

Multinational companies like IBM and Google have also analysed the skills needed to work effectively nowadays. As an example of this, IBM has described global roles and the competencies required for each employee (Fig. 2). This model shows that cross-cultural awareness is an essential skill all IBM employees should possess, while global leaders in client-facing roles are expected to have the ability to collaborate and to inspire across cultures (Henson, 2016).

Fig.2. Global roles and cultural requirements for IBM employees (adapted from Henson, 2016)
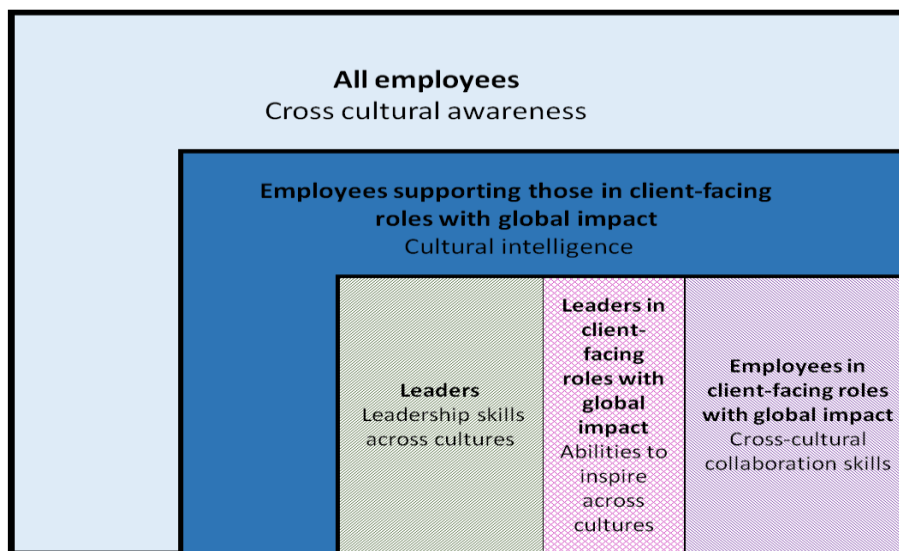
However, an article in the Washington Post written by Valerie Strauss, "The surprising thing Google learned about its employees—and what it means for today's students", caught many people by surprise. The author revealed that STEM expertise ranks last among the eight most essential qualities of Google's top employees. The seven top characteristics of success that

Google learned about its employees through in-company research on hiring, firing, and promotion are all soft skills, some of them standing at the core of cultural literacy:

- communication and listening skills;

- possessing insights into others (including others' different values and points of view);

- having empathy (Strauss, 2017).

These results confirmed the finding of The Hamilton Project, an economic think tank that justified the opinion that the labour market is increasingly rewarding noncognitive 'soft skills' that include communication skills and dealing well with others (Schanzenbach, Nunn, Bauer, Mumford, & Breitwieser, 2016).

Research shows that diversity in the workplace is a source of creativity and innovation (Bouncken, Brem, & Kraus, 2016; Gassmann, 2008). Consequently, employers are under increasing pressure to employ not only technically knowledgeable but also culturally literate workers that can face challenges in the global work environment. This is especially relevant when modern technology excludes low-skilled workers that perform routine tasks, favouring highly skilled workers and engaging them to boost so-called "soft skills" such as effective communication and listening skills, collaboration and team-building skills, and the ability to work interculturally and reconcile cultural differences.

The updated model of cultural literacy

In the wake of discussions about the new de-globalising world, the era of "post-globalisation", Brexit, the external and internal policies of Trump and Putin, and the rise of nationalist parties in Europe, the question *'does culture still matter?'* may arise. However, as the trends and literature reviewed in this article explicitly show, culturally literate citizens, leaders and workers are still in high demand. The leading policy-making institutions are developing programs that help people to strengthen skills and competencies aimed at building up cultural literacy, and these programs are seen as a valuable investment in the future. '*Cultural values,*

assets and practices, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples, should be integrated into education and communication programs, and they should be safeguarded and given adequate recognition' (UNESCO, 2013, p. 3). Cultural literacy plays an essential role in building social inclusion, promoting economic development, coping with the opportunities and challenges surrounding globalisation and innovation, and fostering sustainability.

It is worth noting that cultural literacy is a broad concept, but as the well-known saying teaches us, *'Eat the elephant one bite at a time'*. Thus, based on the literature reviewed, in order to meet the unique demands of global interconnectedness in a culturally mindful way, the following competencies and skills of the updated cultural literacy model should be cultivated (Fig.3):

1. cultural mindfulness (cultural self-awareness + local cultural awareness + intercultural sensitivity + empathy),

2. critical thinking,

3. curiosity,

4. being a Change Agent Leader (Influencer) (includes patience).

Fig.3. The updated cultural literacy model
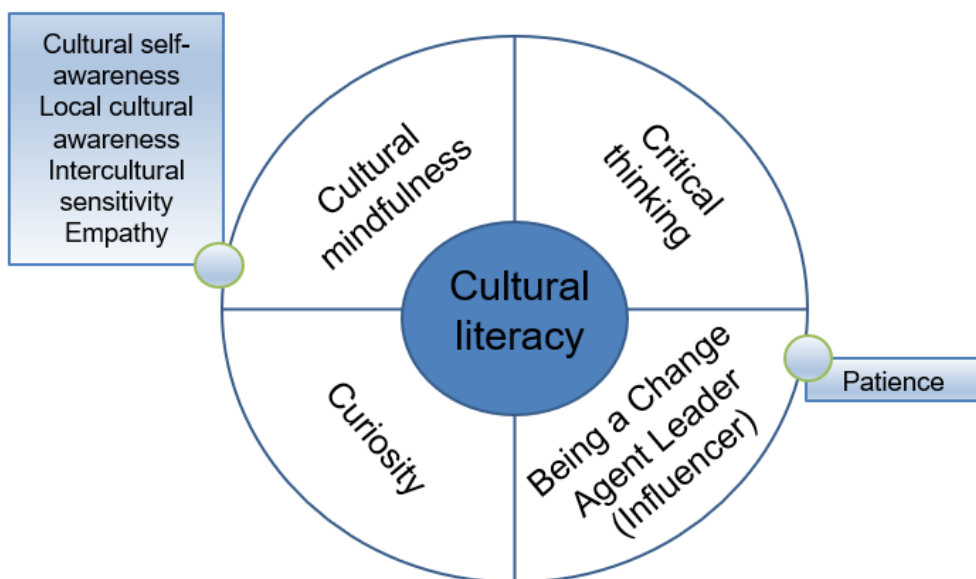
Cultural mindfulness is a state of being "present", attuned, and effective in one's immediate cross-cultural surroundings. This requires a heightened awareness of one's own

culturally constructed nature, understanding the cultural constructs of others, and responding to the culturally different without interference of cultural biases and judgments at the moment of interacting.

Cultural self-awareness. Being aware of the critical features and biases of one's own culture. Self-awareness is an essential predictor of a global mindset (Levy, 2006). Confidence in oneself starts with the recognition that everyone wears our cultural "glasses". A component of self-awareness is cultural self-awareness; looking inwards is as helpful as looking outwards. No one leaves the house without the values, beliefs and assumptions that shape the perception of and reactions to the surroundings. As Muller (2006) argues, '*the globally, culturally literate citizen may come to a position of empathy and 'informed tentativeness' regarding cultural identity and cross-cultural understanding where "to know the other, one must other the known*' (p. 15).

Local cultural awareness. Familiarity with the cultural values, norms, and traditions of a country that is not one's own (e.g., a country where one studies, migrates to or is sent for work). It could be a step towards developing an appreciation of diversity and a means to avoiding prejudice and xenophobia (Kurian, 2013). Moreover, local cultural literacy helps to participate in a more extensive range of conversations, both locally and generally.

Intercultural sensitivity. This means being aware that people are not the same, being aware of the cultural differences and similarities between people while at the same time not assigning them a value, like good or bad, right or wrong, or whether these values should be changed. Bennett (1986) constructed a still up-to-date model of intercultural sensitivity development that illustrates the transformation from ethnocentric valuations of the world towards ethnorelativism, where one understands that an experienced cultural worldview is only one possibility among many others.

Empathy towards different others refers to the ability to put oneself in the other person's shoes, to switch the perspective and to see the world from another point of view. It involves understanding what others might think of, believe in and care about. Empathy is necessary for

cultural understanding and requires self-awareness, communication skills, and awareness of cultures other than one's own.

Thus, through the process of cultural self-awareness and being open and empathetic to other people's experiences, cultural lenses and conditioning, one becomes culturally mindful.

Critical thinking. Critical thinking encapsulates the ability to think for oneself; apply reasoning, logic and analysis of new or unfamiliar ideas; make inferences; and problem solve (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2010). Hirsch et al. (1988;2002) believe that manipulating and relating memory complexes (approximately 50,000 schemata) to each other enables a culturally literate person to think critically. Therefore, the more extensive the schemata, the higher the potential for critical thinking (Hirsch et al., 1988;2002). Also, in his book "The Global Achievement Gap". Wagner identifies critical thinking as one of the seven core competencies every child needs in order to survive and thrive in the 2020s. Wagner (2008) also states that companies seeking a competitive advantage in a world full of ambiguity and nuance need a workforce that can ask the right questions to identify the causes of a problem, to connect and interpret different concepts, and to come up with creative and effective solutions. Moreover, the context has now ascended the throne, so simply knowing cultural concepts and frameworks is not enough. Critical analysis of what to apply and when to apply it is what is needed.

Also, two traits have been overlooked which certainly help build bridges across cultures, traits that should be added to the updated model of cultural literacy: curiosity and being a change agent leader (influencer). **Curiosity** is a willingness to explore, learn, try and add to one's repertoire new ways of doing things. '*This is not just passive 'tolerance' but actively valuing and seeking out diversity which is seen as an asset. It is an openness to different cultural experiences and a willingness to explore, learn and change' (Lane, Maznevski, Dietz & DiStefano, 2010, p. 15).* Being proactive stimulates learning about cultural diversity. Wagner (2008) puts curiosity among seven core skills every child need to develop, expressing the idea that curiosity drives innovation and is one of the keys to problem-solving. In addition, Albert Einstein engages us in a

deeper quest of how to relate to others with his well-known phrase, '*I have no special talents, I am only passionately curious.*'

Being a Change Agent Leader (Influencer) (includes patience). Cultural literacy is an active practice: it is incomplete without the skills for achieving goals in the real world. Consequently, the demand for people who are willing to take on the role of change agent (influencer) is at an all-time high. Gay (2010) believes that in order to be culturally responsive, one should be more than just respectful, empathetic, or sensitive. Thus, Henson (2016) proposes a model for gaining a better understanding of global leadership, pointing to specific antecedents that impact the development of global leaders. The model consists of foundational requirements that include global mindset dispositions (flexibility, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy) and competencies (intercultural communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and learning agility). These antecedents are:

1. cultural intelligence (CQ)[4];

2. certain personality traits;

3. cross-cultural contacts and experiences;

4. self-awareness (Henson, 2016).

It is clear now that being a change agent leader (influencer) is an essential part of the updated cultural-literacy model. However, a change agent leader (influencer) will face a variety of mental, psychological and emotional battles with those looking to preserve the status quo (Polestina, 2009). As this could be a tiresome and frustrating affair, being a change agent leader (influencer) also involves being patient with oneself and others. As Aristotle pointed out in his Nicomachean Ethics, '*Achieving any kind of practical wisdom requires practice*'.

As we can see, many of these soft skills are interconnected and interdependent, building upon each other.

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[4] The term has gained particular acceptance by the business community

Conclusions

As long as societies and organisations continue to experience both the opportunities and challenges surrounding today's global social and economic climate, cultural literacy—and the citizens, leaders and employees who possess it—is of vital importance.

A Chinese proverb states, '*I see, and I forget, I hear, and I remember, I do, and I understand*'. Thus, developing cultural literacy is a cumulative process. Small steps at the educational, organizational, and governmental levels will lead to significant breakthroughs and a positive effect on pluralism, the personal employability of individuals, diversity of creative expressions, sustainable development, a culture of peace and non-violence, and an ability in people to view, critically analyze and effectively contribute to the societies and economies of the 2020s.

Educators, governments and business leaders are being proactive in theorising and conceptualising ways of up-skilling people to the level required by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Still, there is a need for research into how people in general (Millennials and Gen Z, in particular) make sense of different cultures. In-depth explorations of the levels of success and failure of specific programs seeking to inculcate cultural literacy should receive equal attention. Multiple investigations are also essential for generating an understanding of the role and impact of informal education in its broadest sense, including the role of the Internet, social and digital media, video-game environments, virtual worlds and augmented reality in the development of cultural knowledge and cultural literacy.

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