

A Proposed Framework for Global Leadership Education: Learning Objectives and Curricula

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Abstract

Many traditional leadership education paradigms are challenged by the transformational nature of globalization and are limited in application in diverse and complex contexts. In order to address these issues, a new framework must be adopted within higher education leadership programs to educate the next generation of global leaders. This paper introduces a potential framework of learning objectives, reviews strengths and weaknesses of the proposed model, provides sample curricular and co-curricular programs, and discusses recommendations for additional research.

Introduction and Background

The emergence of globalization has caused a paradigm shift for organizational and civic leaders throughout the world. Due to the complexities of this rapid change, these leaders lack the ability to lead in complex political, economic, and civil society (Pisano & Skih, 2009). To respond to this lack of global leadership competencies, higher education must respond by adapting curriculum and pedagogical approaches to meet the ever-increasing demands of our interdependent world.

Leadership educators have a responsibility to provide curricula that prepare students to succeed as leaders regardless of the particular context or situation that they may be thrust into following graduation (Brungardt, 1997). According to Moore, Boyd, Rosser, and Elbert (2009), “Undergraduate leadership students still lack knowledge of global issues and are essentially globally illiterate” (p. 119). As educators, we must adopt new approaches to leadership education that use the principles of global leadership. This paper argues for the need to address the lack of global competency and leadership deficiency by adopting a new set of learning outcomes in global leadership education. In addition to the proposed learning outcomes, curricular and co-curricular programming will be discussed as well as opportunities for additional research.

Global Leadership Theory

One potential response to the challenges that traditional leadership education faces can be found in an emerging sub-field of leadership studies: global leadership. According to Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, and House (2006), “The essence of Global Leadership is the ability to influence people who are not like the leader and come from different cultural backgrounds” (p. 85). To understand followers from different cultural backgrounds, one must also understand the context in which global leadership takes place. This new area of leadership study expands upon existing literature and understanding of leadership process in light of the increasing demands on leaders to be globally competent. Javidan et al. (2006) writes that, “To succeed, global leaders need to have a global mind-set, tolerate high levels of ambiguity, and show cultural adaptability and flexibility” (p. 85).

The global leadership sub-field within the broader academic area of leadership studies originates from multiple fields and disciplines including but not limited to leadership studies, international business, expatriation, intercultural communications, global human resources management, global studies, and social entrepreneurship (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, & Maznevski, 2008). This new area within the field has limited theoretical development or empirical testing

at this time. According to Mendenhall et al., global leadership is more complex than leadership due to the cultural elements and global contexts involved in the situational leadership process. This analysis supports the conclusion that global leadership is in fact a sub-field of the larger body of knowledge of leadership, and not a distinct field of study.

Given this increased complexity and demand on individuals working in global leadership situations, leadership educators should accept the responsibility to holistically develop global leaders through cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal modes of learning (Vella, 2000). According to Stech (2008), a leadership program should incorporate the following elements--providing students with a “knowledge base,” (p. 43) giving the students the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills, and assisting the students to develop insight into their values and how they affect others. In order to embrace this responsibility of educating global leaders, leadership educators should adopt a mind-set or attitudinal shift and examine current educational methods in order to develop the next generation of global leaders.

Proposed Framework of Global Leadership Education

Based upon our review of global leadership theory, the following framework and learning objectives are proposed for consideration in leadership education. We define global leadership education as the development of individuals who possess the knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes to lead positive change in the larger global context. These leaders will possess the skill set to facilitate change within their local civic and organizational surroundings and act in accordance to global social responsibility.

Through examination of the multidisciplinary sub-field of global leadership, various cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal elements emerge as key learning outcomes in global leadership education. These elements materialize from disciplines or fields including international relations, leadership theory, organizational behavior, social entrepreneurship, international business, intercultural communications, and global studies.

The following learning outcomes have been identified in the proposed framework to prepare leadership students for a global society and marketplace and its significance in global leadership education and developing the next generation of global leaders.

Understand Global Issues Affecting Our Current and Future World

Engaging in leadership in this new context will require individuals to make informed and proactive decisions both personally and professionally, and it is essential that they have an understanding of current and future world issues. Although the specific issues are constantly changing, these issues will always exist within the larger global context of the identified global environments. Elements of population growth and change, resource scarcity, technology advancement and diffusion, and the challenges that these trends place on governments and individuals to cope are tremendous (Peterson, 2006). These issues are likely to evolve and change in the future, and global leaders must possess the understanding and the skill set to address these complex and interconnected global issues and trends (Mehaffy, 2010).

Understand and Have a Commitment to Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusion

Cultural sensitivity and inclusion is the foundation of interpersonal relationships as it relates to diversity. The world's inhabitants come from many faiths, world perspectives, socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities, and experiences. It requires one to reflect and become aware of his/her cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions.

To develop one's understanding of cultural diversity in our changing society, individuals must examine the diverse values and characteristics of our world's cultures and how these values influence society, politics, economics, and relations. As leaders, cultural sensitivity will assist in developing authentic relationships with others from a diverse background (Earley, Ang, & Tan, 2006). Due to a subconscious sense of cultural superiority exhibited in the United States (Pisano & Skih, 2009), we must become aware of our attitudes fostering our beliefs and actions as it relates to others who are different from ourselves.

Possess the Knowledge and Skills to Successfully Work in the Complex Political, Economic, and Civil Society Global Environments

Beyond single issues like technology or conflict, there are more complex global environments that impact all issues around the world. Unlike single issues that come and go on a regular basis, global environments represent the playing field that all issues are immersed within. The three identified global context environments that impact all issues are the political, economic, and civil society contexts (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2010). Students must be able to understand the evolution of globalization and its impact on these various contexts including international players, such as the United Nations or World Bank, and understand the nation state system and its impact on modern day society. By understanding

the complexities and players in these contexts, students will be more equipped to navigate these areas to create change for the common good.

Exhibit the Knowledge and Skills to Practice Leadership and Create Positive Change in the Global Environment

Developing the next generation of leaders is imperative to address global issues by leading change for the collective good of humanity. Our global society needs leaders in industry, government, health care, education among other areas who have the ability to collaborate cross-culturally to create change to benefit mankind.

The need to develop leaders is greater than ever before, especially as globalization becomes a norm. As civic and organizational leaders, one must examine our Western philosophies of leadership and develop additional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be change agents in our global society (Javidan et al, 2006). Global leaders understand the theory and practice of leadership and have the ability to lead others regardless of cultural differences or location.

Possess a Commitment to Social Responsibility and Leadership for the Common Good Worldwide

According to Fernandez (2009), many Americans, regardless of location, underestimate their role in the global resources crisis. Due to the exponential growth of the world's population, as well as the development of countries such as China and India, resources such as food, water, and energy are becoming extremely limited (Peterson, 2006).

As an educator of leadership, one cannot teach this subject without addressing the role of social responsibility (Ricketts & Bruce, 2008). Social responsibility involves more than just addressing the good of one's organization or community (Falk, Moss, & Shapiro, 2010). It must also include a commitment to understand and respond to global issues regardless of one's location. Educators in the United States have a great challenge in shifting the mindset of its citizens and creating opportunities to understand and experience global issues first-hand.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Programming

In order to meet these learning objectives in our leadership education programs, our university developed the Global Leadership Project which offers both curricular and co-curricular programming to address the proposed model of global leadership education objectives. This is an example of one approach that an institution of higher education has implemented to address these learning

outcomes; however, other colleges and universities may pursue these learning outcomes through other programming based upon their institutional circumstances. The following section outlines programs offered by the Global Leadership Project:

Curricular

Certificate in Global Leadership: This 12-credit hour certificate program is designed to develop leaders who will possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes to lead change in complex global environments. This certificate is a great add-on to any degree or can be taken as an individual certificate via on-campus or through online courses. Courses were selected based upon learning objectives and their connections to the proposed framework. The courses included in the certificate include the following:

- **LDRS 300: Introduction to Leadership Concepts:** This course actively engages students in the acquisition of information about historical and contemporary theories, concepts, and issues associated with leadership. Students are exposed to the nature of leadership through presentation of objective material, through group activities, and through laboratory exercises.
- **IDS 111: Sustainability and the Future: The 7 Revolutions:** The purpose of this course is to educate and encourage the development of globally competent citizens and leaders. The course is designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be engaged, responsible and effective members of a globally interdependent society by examining future global trends, current issues, its impact on their local area, and our personal responsibility as global citizens.
- **SOC 460: Comparative Cultures and Societies or an Approved Study Abroad Experience:** The purpose of this course is to expose students to cultural similarities and differences around the world. Ideally, students will participate in an approved study abroad experience with the university to meet this credit requirement; however, students who are unable to travel abroad, can take the SOC 460 course: Comparative Cultures and Societies. This course examines social structures, social processes, and social life of people coming from different parts of the world by focusing on a number of institutions such as family, education, economics, politics, religion, and healthcare.
- **LDRS 600: Global Leadership – Serving as the capstone of the Certificate in Global Leadership,** this interdisciplinary course introduces students to the emerging field of global leadership. Students gain an understanding of

the history and origins of global leadership and the theoretical approaches to global leadership in the political, civic, and economic contexts. Students also develop global leadership competencies and learn how to apply these competencies in various global regions and cultures.

- Revised Curriculum: The Department of Leadership Studies reexamined its current curriculum to incorporate the learning objectives in the undergraduate degree courses. The curriculum now includes more content on global leadership theories and practices, diversity, and cultural sensitivity, in addition to offering more electives related to global competency, international business, and social responsibility.
- Study Abroad: The Department of Leadership Studies offers study abroad opportunities to allow students to experience leadership in other cultural settings. One study abroad experience studied leadership by studying the Holocaust in Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic. This allows students to make connections by incorporating leadership theory in diverse and cultural contexts.

Co-Curricular

The Global Leadership Project offers co-curricular programming that is open to all students and community members in the local area. The following describes various programs to address at least one of the learning outcomes. Note that not all learning outcomes will be addressed by one event; however, it is imperative to offer programming throughout the year that encompasses all elements of the learning outcomes.

- Speakers: Speakers discuss various topics including how students can change the world, human trafficking, religious conflict, world hunger, diversity, leadership, and such matters.
- Service Opportunities: Various service opportunities are offered throughout the academic year to put global leadership skills into action. For example, one program was a food packaging event for the Horn of Africa. We are also seeking funding to offer international service-learning opportunities for our students by traveling abroad.
- Leadership Workshops: We also offer leadership workshops for various minority groups on campus such as an international student leadership symposium and a Hispanic/Latino student leadership symposium.

- Global Issues Discussion via Facebook, blogs, and other similar sources: Utilizing social media outlets, students can engage in discussions on various global issues regardless of whether they are on-campus or online students.

These co-curricular and curricular programming offerings are examples to generate curricular ideas for leadership educators. By offering both curricular and co-curricular programming, students can have more opportunities to be exposed to the proposed five learning outcomes of global leadership education.

Opportunities for Research

Because the sub-field of global leadership is so young, there are ample opportunities not only for curricular ideas, but also for further research that will enlighten and validate elements of the literature. The field of global leadership itself has areas of further inquiry, as well as research related to education and higher education in global leadership.

In addition to exploring global leadership theory, empirical testing should also be conducted on the proposed learning outcomes, in particular on students in a higher education leadership studies program. These outcomes are a proposed framework for educating globally competent leaders, but additional research needs to be conducted to verify and validate their relevancy. Given the complex nature of a topic like global leadership, it is likely that a longitudinal study would be valuable to determine the effectiveness of the learning outcomes. Certainly, as with all elements of higher education, there needs to be some assurance that these outcomes are actually what needs to be taught to students before they are incorporated as an educational framework.

Finally, it will be critical for future researchers to engage in experimental and empirical testing of the basic tenets of global leadership. Much of the literature and understanding in this area is based solely on theoretical models, and there is a true disconnect between the understanding of academics and the experience of practitioners. In much the same way as the larger field of leadership studies has progressed, global leadership needs to be tested.

Conclusion

Global leadership holds promise both in educational environments and for research within the scholarly community. The world is changing at a pace never seen before in human history, and our ability to adapt to this new environment and educate students in ways that are transformative and preparatory for this new future are central to our success. The most successful students in the future are not

going to be those that are experts of their day, but rather experts of what is yet to come. The charge to educators, in particular leadership educators, is to develop those global leaders who will be masters of their challenging new environment.

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