Bringing "Worldmindedness" to Students of Leadership

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Summary

The present commentary is a call for the inclusion of international education (IE) as part of any leadership studies degree program. A review of the reasons supporting this position is provided, along with a discussion of issues to consider in including IE in the curriculum, particularly as they impact adult students.

Introduction

Our world is increasingly networked and interdependent. It is a world where international interactions are more frequent and intense, thus increasing the need for us to understand the ramifications of our actions throughout the world system. Action in one part of the world system or organizational system or community system *will* impact other parts of the system (Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Avery, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Gayle Avery (2004) from Australia, in his new book, *Understanding Leadership* argues that the context for leadership today is one in which the world is becoming "more differentiated and yet more similar globally, and more intricately connected both internally and externally. We exist in a globalizing world of multicultural and multinational workforces" (p. 6).

In fact, the expanded interaction of national cultures also takes place locally, as globalization and unrest spur the increase of immigration. Simultaneously, we see leadership knowledge being generated around the globe, and many people expressing renewed interest in the phenomenon of leadership for a variety of reasons. Knowledge about and the exercise of cutting-edge leadership, then, must be informed by an appreciation of growing internationalization, both locally and abroad.

Further, if the study and practice of leadership is to be "for the greater good of individuals and communities worldwide" as the International Leadership Association (ILA) in its 2004 conference call, among others, promotes, then understanding internationalization and other cultures is essential. And, there are still other arguments for inclusion of international study in a leadership curriculum.

Rationales

Historically, international education has been promoted for its potential to increase innovation, critical challenges to the status quo, international goodwill, individual understanding of the challenges in relating self to other, appreciation of diverse value systems, and personal adaptability or flexibility (Hurtado, 1999). Each of these outcomes is also desirable in leadership studies programs. Indeed, most are identified in our summer, 2004, survey of the ILA membership as preferred outcomes from leadership study programs (Robinson & Philbrick, 2004).

International education increases:
- Innovation
- Critical challenges to the status quo
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- Personal adaptability or flexibility

Incorporating international education into the study of leadership also increases our resources through partnerships developed with international collaborators, as well as our ability to promote global recognition that "leadership is knowable as a discipline (and) learnable as a set of skills" (ILA 2004, conference call). An example from a recent experience is provided below.

"Global governance" today demands that those of us concerned with leadership, in particular, work to build and activate cross-national social capital (Koehn & Rosenau, 2002). The expansion of international "reciprocal relationships" involving a real willingness to work together toward common goals is needed if we are to move in the direction of a more peaceful world (Putnam, 2000). International education is a key path to this end. International conflict resolution skills and the ability to relate across international divisions of any sort are crucial leadership skills that will be increasingly in demand. Some go so far as to claim that as nation states experience diminished capacity to influence world events (economic, social, etc.), the activity of transnational citizen movements built from global social capital will be more essential (Grunzweig & Rinehart, 2002).

Grunzweig and Rinehart (2002) argue that the "original ideals (of international education) are in fact nothing less than the requirements for the survival of humanity on earth: an understanding of the fundamental commonalities and of the genuine differences between people of different cultures combined with a willingness to expand the areas of agreement and learn from the most valuable aspects of each culture" (p. 10).

U.S. commentators on foreign relations echo this view. For example, Judith Kipper (7-14-03) has suggested that the "need for exchange in both directions, in my view, is a crucial, critical, vital interest of the US….[If we really understood]…that other

cultures are as good as ours…not better, not worse, we're simply different….How that would change us. How that would enlighten us. How that would get rid of our fear." The former Secretary of Defense, William Perry (2003), when welcoming international students that "such openness has long been a bulwark of U.S. foreign policy and is a proven means to fight against the uninformed stereotypes, fear, and ignorance that are at the heart of the crisis we face today." Senator Kit Bond (2001) gave is view when he said, "one of the best foreign relation tools we have is to share education with the future leaders of other countries.

And, the National Association for Study Abroad's 2003 task force report entitled *Securing America's Future: Global Education in a Global Age* underlines the importance of what I call "worldmindedness" to future leaders around the globe. The report goes as far as to label ignorance in this area a "national liability" of the United States.

Yet another rationale for IE in leadership studies is that with technological development, the availability of the amount of *information* about other nations and cultures is increasing drastically. Unfortunately, there is not a corresponding rate of increase in the *understanding* of that information or in the "intellectual and personal qualities" that will determine how well individual students or our country generally will incorporate all this information. Grunzwig and Rinehart (2002) offer an excellent list of outcomes for a college education that produces what they call "executive intelligence." These outcomes include:

- knowing how to relate new knowledge to what is already known;
- being able to read the signals of an unfamiliar situation, interpret its elements and relate them to each other;
- making appropriate and informed use of technology;
- understanding the process of cultural interaction and being able to discern differences and similarities between cultures, including differences within similarities and vice versa;
- being able to communicate with diverse groups;
- knowing when to act on information available and when to seek more information; and,
- being able to adjust to an environment without losing one's identity and compromising one's values.

These outcomes are precisely those which should characterize what I call "worldminded" education at its best and certainly make up a key part of the necessary outcomes of leadership education. Grunzqig and Rinehart call it "executive intelligence" for a reason.

Finally, the integration of intellectual with experiential learning and the use of a highly interactive pedagogy, both between international students and faculty and among their peers contribute to knowledge-aggregation, expansion of social capital, and increased capacity for collaboration across significant differences (Koehn and Rosenau, 2002).

Within this context, anyone who wants to study or to exercise leadership successfully must become more educated about the world, about diverse cultures and interests, and about different ways of working with others to influence an increasingly complex, connected, and conflicted system. The knowledge gained from such study and experience can be used on both the micro, as well as the macro social levels – that is, both within the context of an organization, institution, or community, **and** within the context of national and international interactions – because often, the adaptive challenges have similarities.

Considerations

How then should educators in leadership studies most effectively incorporate world awareness into the study of leadership? Ngai (2003) identifies three "educational strategies" that are applicable: inclusion of international perspectives in curricula, promotion of face-to-face international interaction, and the use of distance education technologies to promote "virtual" international interaction or experience. I would only add "*and* the use of technology for international joint study of multicultural and multinational material."

In Ngai's (2003) scheme, she examines four dimensions of multicultural competence: analytic, emotional, behavioral, and functional (project/task). And, she argues that the "educational strategies" such as studying international perspectives to in-person international exchange, facilitate student advancement incrementally as one gets closer to full emersion in the culture and place of the "other" (2003). While Ngai (2003) uses the moniker of "multicultural competence." Her identified competencies are closely akin to those advocating "international education" as cited above.

We must be cautious as the validation of international education in some sectors shifts from "understanding" other cultures and nations and questioning our own to "global competence." In other words, the idea that our students must learn to maneuver in some "globalized" culture claimed to be a by-product of "globalization" or the erasing of cultural differences (Otten, 2003).

Key components identified by authors writing in both the multicultural and international education traditions include the opportunities to go beyond knowledge of other cultures or nations into actual and meaningful interaction with diverse others combined with Schon's (1987) "reflection-in-action" type of learning. "Intercultural learning needs reflection of individual and collective social experiences with people from other cultures rather than the mere contact as such" (Otten, 2003).

Obviously, there are some barriers. In a survey by the Institute of International Education in August 2003, the biggest challenge to international study through travel is financial (40.5 % of respondents). Other key factors identified included those most likely to affect non-traditional students (many of which are entering our leadership programs). These are students who work and have families and are generally place-bound. Added to the problems of limited time and money, as well as other

responsibilities they face is the lack of familiarity with the concept of study abroad or perceptions that "it is an impossibility for me."

Non-traditional students are one of the fastest growing sectors within U.S. higher education and a vital part of the nation's workforce. Further, analysts agree that having a study abroad experience helps a student get a job or a better job (NAFSA, 2003; Ngai, 2003). So, we cannot afford for the sake of our workforce, and perhaps especially for our students of leadership, to leave this educational experience aside as unattainable.

Options and Examples

While there are a number of short-term intensive study abroad opportunities in existence, most share the following shortfalls:
- Limited multinational, multicultural exposure in a highly controlled environment;
- high cost; and,
- few chances for students to benefit from the opportunity to form sustained relationships with those in other countries.

There is often little time to learn from negotiating shared problem solving or differences with international peers – that is, we provide "exchange without encounters" (Otten, 2003).

And, the research tells us that the diversity of college peer group experience is one of the most important impacts on educational outcomes including aspirations, intellectual self-confidence, cultural awareness, and "commitment to civic or political engagement, which is often a precursor to participation in a democracy" (Hurtado, 1999). Each of these is arguably a leadership issue.

So, how do we move toward "worldminded" education for the non-traditional student with limited resources? How do we provide the learning opportunities found in sustained international interaction with maximized chance for rich, experiential interaction and reflection?

One proposal is the partnering of institutions or of academic programs within institutions cross-nationally for the express purpose of developing high quality responses to the challenge of providing international education for *all* students. The methodology that our program is pursuing is to look for partners in other countries to join with us in developing shared distance-based courses offered simultaneously to the students in both countries augmented by short, intensive international visits by student/faculty delegations to each other's university.

Our present goal is for professors from each institution to team-teach a course on leadership using a highly interactive pedagogy which includes international student teamwork within the curriculum. Additionally, ambassadorial "delegations" of students from within the class will be identified at each partner institution to undertake actual transnational travel for a short, intensive residency in the other

country. The formal residency will, in most instances, consist of no more than two weeks and, to the extent possible, students will be housed in the homes of their hosts or hosts' faculty or other community members. Ideally, the international visits will take place at two different times with delegations traveling to both institutions during the course, so that even those students who cannot travel might have the experience of hosting international colleagues.

Using web-based communication, supplemented by IP video-conferencing, and actual travel, students and faculty will jointly study the same materials. Those materials will contain a variety of international perspectives. Participants will be invited to add to the perspectives presented. They will also be divided into transnational study groups for applied projects involving service learning. Students within the teams will be encouraged to communicate directly "off-line" as much as possible. Everyone will be required to participate in raising funds to support student travel from both institutions.

An example of a potential topic to study internationally both for insights about leadership globally and locally is the concept of multi-lateralism (perhaps known in local contexts as collaboration). We could look at European attitudes and actions, where we see much more support for multi-lateralism than in the U.S. (or at least in the U.S. government), around issues such as the Kyoto Accord (for the environment) or the International Court. U.S. policy and state leadership right now are arguably very much based on a "go-it-alone" perspective, while in Europe, through the E.U., we see ever increasing integration – to promote economic success, yes – but also to promote security and reduce conflict among European countries. Just at the end of April, 2004, the EU went from 15 to 25 countries encompassing 440 million people! To what extent can the African Union (AU) be seen as representative of a similar trend in Africa? Which approach to multi-lateralism will be more successful in the type of world context we have described? And how can this rich topic be studied for lessons in leadership that can be applied at any level of analysis, depending on the context?

We are still at the development stages of our experiment in alternative IE for leadership study students. However, we have a budding institutional partnership with the University of Botswana (UB) after a summer visit by a group of leadership faculty and students in 2004. As a follow up to this visit, throughout the fall of 2004, students and faculty began e-mail exchanges along with exchanging course syllabi and some readings. After some initial technological and bureaucratic challenges, UB students and faculty were able to join the leadership history and theory course on Blackboard where communication continues. Currently, UB colleagues are reviewing a proposed memorandum of understanding and considering a number of both practical as well as pedagogical questions that must be addressed in order to go forward – particularly since we wish to seek external funding to initiate the full partnership. The students in the fall semester class participated fully in developing the draft MOU which necessitated their careful consideration of what we wanted to communicate across such a physical and cultural distance, a learning experience in itself. (See appendix)

A grassroots partnership is also developing between our students and those at the University of KwaZulu Natal, particularly on their Westville campus. Student organizations at each of the institutions are exchanging leadership development resources and information as well as planning joint activities for the future. After much e-mail and several phone conversations, they concluded that an additional "live" international visit is critical to moving forward together. Students at both universities are exploring ways to accomplish this objective, possibly by having a delegation from each campus visit the other early this summer (2005).

Partnerships such as these do not develop overnight, especially between universities (and faculties) with limited resources in areas of both countries that are historically underserved. We each face the challenges of communicating through our cultural differences at a distance and operating through our respective university bureaucracies. Students in all three universities have limited resources and time and do not come to us with the expectation of international travel as part of their education or even as an option in their lives. Still, they have chosen to study leadership, and we owe them the best educational experience available. This experience must include learning opportunities within international education so as to facilitate the development of future leaders who are "worldminded" enough to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

*Presented at the November, 2004 ILA Meetings, Washington, DC.

Appendix

Values and Vision Statement DRAFT

The partnership between the University of _____ and University of Southern Maine will promote the mutual exchange of thought, cultural perspective and educational discourse. The purpose of these exchanges will be to develop and expand mutual understanding and to broaden contextual thought about multi-national leadership issues. Intellectual discussion and the interaction of thoughtful debate will move us toward shared understandings of the challenges of leadership today as well as respectful understandings of our differences in context, culture, or perspective.

Each institution and group of students will be responsible to contribute in the exchange of material as it pertains to any joint project, lecture, or activity to enhance the experience between the students and staff involved. The affiliation between the universities will significantly facilitate forward movement by our academic programs in curricular development and cross national understandings. We recognize that in the present time of
- world conflict,
- globalization,
- internationalism,
- rapid technological development, and
- expansion of information

promotion of international understanding and exchange, as well as *leadership development* are essential to the improvement of life for all people.

Proposed Memorandum of Understanding

The University of _____ and the University of Southern Maine wish to establish an inter-institutional relationship between the Masters in Leadership Studies and Masters of _____ Programs. The relationship will exist for the purpose of studying leadership and its development. It is understood that the partnership will seek external resources for institutional support in proportion to the institutional need and that each program will allocate some set portion of staff time to the project. The partnership will explore the mutual understanding of leadership and will be co-developed to fit the needs of both institutions

The USM/L-A group offers the following curriculum thoughts for your consideration. Please <u>check items</u> you would like to see included. Also, please offer additional thoughts you would like incorporated.

___Work to develop a shared definition of leadership through readings on leadership issues with informal discussion between the students and instructors via Blackboard Learning System or other web software.

___Discuss international events portrayed in the world media that are important to each region, with dialogue pertaining to how the event impacts or reflects world leadership.

___*Partial* semester class work utilizing web courseware and/or video conferencing communications. Course syllabus to be set up by the professors of both programs and may include shared readings, written and/or verbal exchange on leadership failures, and what we learn from them, and peer-review of written work.

___*Full* semester class work utilizing web courseware and/or video conferencing communications. Course syllabus to be set up by the professors of both programs and may include shared readings, written and/or verbal exchange on leadership failures, and what we learn from them, and peer-review of written work.

___Educational exchange of students for <u>part</u> of a semester.

___Educational exchange of students for a <u>full</u> semester. (This would be very challenging for our students.)

___Develop community/business partners from each region to facilitate and participate in the educational process.

___Other_____

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