



Leadership Knowledge and International Education

Successful mainstreaming of internationalization throughout and across entire institutions in the United States will require an integration of knowledge about leadership, culture, and international education.

By Josef A. Mestenhauser and Brenda J. Ellingboe

EVERY DAY, INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS (IEPs) in the United States perform many leadership functions. Managing work and planning work. Writing strategic plans. Supervising staff and students. Representing their offices at conferences and organizations. And the list goes on and on. In some of these functions, IEPs are both leaders and followers; in many of them they perform different roles. This raises several questions: Where does the knowledge about these multiple leadership functions come from? What kind of prior preparation is required? Which functions are domestic and which are global? What leadership theories guide their performance?

Many international educators take leadership for granted and do not pay much attention to its conceptual foundations and its multidimensionality. Global trends moving toward a “knowledge and innovation society” seem to have found their way into international education in recent years. The direction to switch the focus of our work from *projects* that we *do* to concerns with what we *learn* and *know* is welcome. Because knowledge is constantly being upgraded and renewed, such a shift is essential in the field.

The success of international education depends not on a few projects and programs, but on its institutionalization and mainstreaming throughout and across entire institutions. And that is a function of leadership for which we are still searching, especially at the highest places.

Of the more than 10,000 “studies” of leadership published in the United States, most of them are written from a management perspective. But as cynics claim, we have more studies than knowledge. If we are to address the trends of a knowledge society, knowledge is what we need, including knowledge about leadership and organizations. If we are to apply that knowledge to international education, we must also seek knowledge

about the complex field of international education and the context in which it functions. To accomplish the task of internationalization also requires knowledge about change, for international education is about change and the future. That brings us to the question: Where is such knowledge?

Two Kinds of Knowledge

The first kind of knowledge is in several academic disciplines, ranging from history and religion to philosophy, political science, and others. Yet, an estimated 90 percent of the literature is overwhelmingly dominated by theories of management. As can be suspected, the literature is fragmented, contentious, and confusing to practitioners. The second type of knowledge is implicit knowledge that virtually everybody has because we all have experienced leadership and followership through acculturation and socialization. Such implicit knowledge is often subconscious and is not formally organized in neat categories in our mind; once it gets into the long-term memory, it forms a solid cognitive map that is difficult to change and that projects a prototype by which leadership is evaluated. These traditions assume that knowledge

SNAPSHOTS

Theories of Leadership

Trait Approach

The trait approach focuses on the person of the leader and on the personality traits needed to function effectively. The approach outlasted the twentieth century because it is straightforward and can be used in selection of leaders who have the right stuff. The traits that companies are seeking include intelligence, confidence, dominance and honesty; they can be measured through various instruments and questionnaires. Although initially almost discarded, the trait approach experienced resurgence and is now being used daily. Just consider the announcements of job vacancies to see how the trait approach is alive. It is also used to help develop leaders' personality traits through training. The cultural nature of this theory is obviously related to the "individualistic" cultures. Unresolved in this approach is the question of whether leaders are different people from followers (born leaders) or whether leadership traits are widely distributed and can be enhanced through appropriate training.

Skills Approach

The skills approach is also alive and well as demonstrated by the various descriptions of competencies needed for the performance of leaders to be effective. This approach is more descriptive and less theoretical and is used mostly in hiring people and training programs that enhance their skill development. The list of important skills has undergone changes under the impact of cognitive sciences to include such competencies as problem-solving and social judgment. An earlier articulation that identified three basic skills needed at different levels of leadership still influences the field. These skills were "technical," (needed mainly at the entry level), "relational" (needed on all levels), and "conceptual" (needed at the highest level). As people move on the ladder of organizational hierarchy they need fewer technical skills (for which they were hired) and more conceptual skills characterized by general and specific cognitive skills. Recently the trend has been to merge the trait and skill approaches in both recruiting and training and to add the element of knowledge into both. In international education, the competency approach is popular among cross-cultural communication scholars and practitioners, but it defines primarily interpersonal skills rather than organization functioning.

Style Approach

While the trait approach focuses on personality traits and the skill approach on capabilities of leaders, the style approach emphasizes behavior of leaders. This is why some taxonomies list this approach under the behaviorist theories. It had its intellectual homes in the Ohio State University and Michigan State University research centers that developed a categorization of leadership behavior based on two behaviors: task and relational oriented. These centers responded to the inadequacies of the trait and skills approaches and produced a new research tradition that introduced, among others, the well known leadership grid (Blake and Moulton, 1991) whose original version became a "bible" for the Agency for International Development in its leadership training of foreign participants during the 1960s.

The style approach is a broad framework for understanding actions of people in two dimensions, task and relationships, working interchangeably. The style approach is used in training to create self-awareness and awareness of other peoples' strengths and weaknesses. Several consulting and training companies offer specialized "grid" seminars designed to improve productivity, increase morale, gaining employees' commitment, and correcting ineffective behavior.

is universally valid, a notion reinforced by the egalitarian culture of the United States and by assumptions that leadership exists in all societies. The result is that most mainstream theories of leadership ignore the role and influence of culture.

The "new wave" approach to leadership changes the scene, but even then some of the cross-cultural studies tend to locate culture as only one of many other variables, which fails to integrate culture into the mainstream thinking. Additionally, these new theories treat culture as a variable only when there are some foreign people (from outside the culture being studied) involved in the work of groups. This neglects the role of our own culture as an "operating system" of the brain that determines what we know about leadership. This failure to integrate culture into leadership concepts is the same issue that faces our universities to internationalize themselves. Several "new wave" research studies focus on the "subjectivist" knowledge

orientation that draws heavily on the functions of the brain in information processing, and on such psychological concepts and theories as attributions, perceptions, and values.

Mainstream Management-Based Theories of Leadership

Leadership theories reflect the historical sequences of studies beginning with the "trait" approach, and continuing into the "skills" approach prevalent from the 1920s to the 1950s when the "style" and "behaviorist" approaches dominated the literature and research. (Not all writers use these categories to describe the development of the concept.) Next came the "situational" and "contingency" theories, path-goal theory, followed by a variety of single-focused approaches (e.g., "authentic" and "servant" leadership, until the "transformational" theory commanded major attention that continues to

Situational Approach

Unlike the preceding approach, the situational approach places the leader into a situation that becomes a variable of performance. It is based on the assumption that employees change over time back and forth on a developmental continuum that calls for the leader to use sophisticated diagnostic skills to assess these developmental changes, and match them with leadership style, ranging from directive to supportive. This scheme is widely used by industry because it is simple to conceptualize, because it can be used on various levels of organizational hierarchy and at various stages of new projects. The scheme also changed the focus from leader to subordinates and their situation.

Contingency Theory

Continuing the progressive development of leadership theory is the contingency theory that is based on a match between the leader and the situation. The situation is now defined by three variables: leader-member relations, task structure, and power position. This theory posits the relative favorableness or unfavorableness of the situation, depending on the relationships between leaders and followers, the task difficulty and the power of the leader. Like the situational approach, the contingency theory is widely used by industry because it is relatively easy to identify the effectiveness of individuals in different contingency situations, and allows predictions about effectiveness of people being transferred from one position (or one company) to another.

Upper management also gains insight about changes in these contingency situations to make lower level leaders more effective. Executive hire agencies use this scheme also to predict whether employees in one sector of the economy will be effective in another.

Path-Goal Theory

This theory was developed in the early 1970s and was based on the expectancy theory, a motivation theory that assumes that workers' performance will be enhanced if they think they are capable of performing well, if their efforts will lead to positive results, and if they are appropriately rewarded. Along with the previously mentioned approaches, this one is also based on the need to increase productivity, but unlike the others, it takes the need of the subordinates into account. This makes it more complex to use than others, and has not been as common in training programs.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

This theory differs from others in that it is based not on what leaders do to the subordinates, but on their mutual interactions that are hypothesized to go through several stages beginning with being strangers, then acquaintances and ending as partners. These relationships are dyadic because each individual in an organization is different and needs different stimuli to insure that they become an in-group. Thus, this unique theory recog-

nizes the possibility that there are both in-groups and out-groups in every organization and prescribes that the leader should establish a relationship of trust and support with each member. Such relationships can be established only if there is proper level of communication. Another unique feature of this theory is that it claims it can be used universally not only on all levels of structured formal organizations, but also in education and other nonprofit organizations.

Transformational Leadership

This theory is the most recent and presently most popular among researchers and practitioners. As the name indicates, the theory aims to transform individuals by exercising an exceptional influence so that they perform beyond expectations. The core concepts are charisma and vision and the main strategies are long-term goals, ethics, high standards, values, emotions, and high levels of stimulation. Unlike other theories, transformation theory assumes that the leaders touch the motivational buttons of the followers so that they will better accomplish the goals of the leaders as well as their own. This concept is very popular and some consider it applicable to international education. The concept's theory differentiates transformational from "transactional" leadership that resembles the difference between leaders and managers. Although there is a substantial difference between these roles, they can overlap. People could be both leaders and at other times managers.

this date). Notice that the formation of categories often depends on the intellectual orientation and the culture of the researcher—just like in internationalization efforts (see sidebar).

Implications for International Education

So what are the implications of the study of leadership to international education? Most research, including the "new wave scholarship," posits leadership as a general feature of all cultures that can be applied equally to various forms of organizations, public and private, formal and informal, for-profit and voluntary, manufacturing and services, and education. Most research addresses the lower half of leadership levels and studied leadership in person-to-person relationships. In fact, most early research considered leadership to be what we do to the followers, with the objectives of increasing production for the benefit of the organization. If one

wants to work on a higher level of functioning, conceptual skills are more important than technical competence. One of the most important reasons why international education professionals are not given more importance on their campuses is precisely because they are perceived—and remain—at the technical level of functioning. While technical skills are very important, they don't prove to be very helpful on a higher level.

In terms of leadership, there are both similarities and differences between the corporate and educational world. It is clear that there is a major difference between them in goals, products, governance, structure, role in society, and other issues. At the same time, certain segments of higher education resemble the business world; for example, "divergence" and "convergence" works in international education as well as in business. However, the root of the major difference is in the organizational priorities, which

influence how work is valued and how progress is measured. If learning is the major objective in a learning organization, then everything points to learning, stems from learning, and leads to learning. Goals and objectives relate to learning, and people are hired for their passion for and commitment to the teaching and learning process.

The corporate business model of leadership tends to be more function-specific, instrumental, focused on staying in business, on making a profit, and on pleasing stakeholders. In recent years, more corporations have created positions of chief knowledge officers and have set up learning campuses and corporate universities to focus on learning, training, sharing ideas, and developing leaders. Those entities are to be applauded, even if they are oriented primarily to teaching knowledge relevant to their business and keeping their intellectual property to themselves.

The dominance of the business and management theories appear to have already influenced international education, as judged by the use of such terms as “marketing,” “strategic planning,” “packaging programs,” and titles such as “chief international education officer.” Emerging research indicates clearly that the nature of the institution is a major variable; these findings should give us pause to differentiate higher education from business; they have little in common except the resemblance of similarity. The popular concept of transformational leadership holds great promise for international education, but it also presents a danger in that it may turn its emphasis on charisma back to the “born leader/trait-and-elitism” theory. In addition, that theory is crafted to focus on relationships within an organization and neglects an institutional perspective.

Leadership in Higher Education Institutions

Some leadership theories make the assumption that studying leadership within a given organization will explain how the organization functions. But organizational development research indicates institutions have their own dynamics that form a powerful “context” for leadership, functioning on some seven levels of organizational complexity. Educational institutions are highly structured vertically, and each layer represents a different degree of complexity and a separate internal logic. To institutionalize international education, it may be necessary to look into this issue of separate layers, each with its own logic, because it appears that IEPs may need to become familiar with each of these differentiated logics in order to reach every level of the institution.

Also, complexity in organizations begins to function at the level that is often higher than where most IEPs are located in the hierarchy of their institutions. Yet, they are the only people who understand the complexity of international education; but if our assumption is accurate, they do not have the opportunity to represent their case. Top-level administrators may function at high levels of complexity domestically, but they do so relatively simplistically internationally and cross-culturally (Mestenhauser, 2000).

International Education and Change

Although most leadership mainstream theories are too static and “management” oriented, several of them can be applied to international education if the global setting is added to the context, such as to the path-goal, situational, contingency, and transformational theories. The enormity of changes and their revolutionary scope have made a greater impact on the corporate world that understood the changing nature of knowledge production and utilization. Universities, on the other hand, change only slowly and thus stand to lose out to for-profit consulting agencies that have sprung up everywhere at the expense of universities. However, for universities, the change involves a way of thinking, organizing, teaching and researching, not just restructuring. This requires another kind of knowledge about change, future orientation, and the introduction of new ideas for a global setting. Change may also require that we abandon the some traditional way of thinking, such as ethnocentrism and inward-looking. The “new wave” scholarship is systems-oriented and outward-focused because the changes affect entire systems and because the problems are usually systemic rather than localized. IEPs should develop new schemes that include more sophisticated knowledge of international education as a sub-system of higher education.

We have introduced a perspective on international education (Mestenhauser, 2002) that was designed to conceptualize it as a system in need of integration of fragmented parts residing in many vertical structures and stuck in cumbersome division of labor. A systems approach is needed because of the following: (1) the complexity of the field (the two major characteristics of complex systems are differentiation and integration); (2) the need to explain itself (translate itself) to higher level educators and other officials who have shown lack of its understanding; (3) the need to explain it to students who need to know what the whole is to know and what (very small) part of it they learn during their studies; and (4) the few incentives for change from within the institutions. While change may be coming anyway, higher education is at risk in missing the opportunities that it offers if it waits until it comes. Knowledge about change is complex and often contradictory. It is also a cultural variable that gives both international education and leadership a different dimension. This leads us to the most important implication, the role of “culture” as variable of leadership (the most appropriate way to handle this topic is by referring to cross-cultural management programs and textbooks).

Culture, Leadership, and Higher Education

Integrating culture into knowledge of a single discipline, whether it is specifically management or leadership, can be difficult. Culture can be simply juxtaposed (often very briefly) as the last chapter of a traditional text; or it can be one of many other variables of the subject-matter; or it can be the context in which the discipline operates as is; it can also be the “operating system” of the brain of that discipline. The management literature that deals with leadership contains all of these and possibly more solutions, but the largest majority either pay lip service to an interna-

Of Interest

Articles

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tional and intercultural dimension or ignores culture altogether.

Confronting “culture” confronts the real character of universities as “global” or “national” organizations, or as many would like to claim, “world-class” institutions. The very name of “international education” suggests that claiming universities to be global institutions is a myth (Scott, 2000). The paradox is that all “domestic” organizations operate in the global context and will need to have the same skills, concepts and practices of other global institutions. To put it another way, the skills, concepts, and practices of globally functioning institutions are the same that are needed by all domestic organizations (Tung, 1997) If this is understood, it will have major implications for our understanding of why changes are needed.

Examples of Business Programs Intersecting Leadership, Management and Culture

While many units, courses, certificates, and degree programs that focus on management of people and organizations, the majority make no reference to an international or intercultural dimension principles in their learning objectives. How to include and integrate such content and methods into a discipline is at the heart of curricula reform aiming to internationalize a single course or an entire discipline. Other programs have attempted to intersect management and culture but focus primarily on management principles as the dominant subject matter while selected culture-specific units remain marginalized. Activities, case studies, panelists, guest speakers, readings, and other teaching methods may introduce one or more cultures to a management-dominated course in specified units in an attempt to educate students about some aspects of cultural diversity. The key is that these cultural units are additives to a management-focused program that lacks cross-cultural diversity and integration.

Still other programs focus entirely on cultural differences in culture-specific units (i.e., Mexico, South Africa, and Poland). Others introduce a “sandwich” or “additive-infusion” approach by inserting a unit on basic cultural patterns in the middle of the course but without integration of how these principles relate to other aspects of the course. Only a few deal with both culture specific and culture general theory from multiple disciplines such as social psychology, anthropology, communication studies, or linguistics. The learning objectives, teaching methods, readings, and assignments all focus on learning about other cultures in a well-integrated course that may have “management” in its title but prioritizes culture as the core.

Still Unfinished Business: International Ethos and Culture

Recent literature about organizational behavior makes a great deal out of a concept of “institutional culture.” One meaning of that concept is related to the internal cohesion of the organization centered on the goals of the corporation and secondly on the goals of its employees. In many instances, it means also a multi-cultural environment that is usually equated with an international culture. There are subtle but important differences between them that we do not have space to explore. Whether or not there is an international and intercultural culture and a campus ethos (Harari, 1992), depends on a number of factors that comprise an intercultural learning environment (Ellingboe, 1999):

- Intercultural and international learning take place; internationally oriented knowledge is shared, and interactions take place;
- Intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and inclusivity thrive;
- Multiple components of an internationalized campus are found; and
- A positive campus ethos for internationalization exists and “outsiders” are welcomed as “insiders.”

An intercultural learning environment focuses on being friendly to all types of diversity in an organization, and leaders co-create this by

When leaders create an intercultural learning environment, there is a noticeable change an entity that values and appreciates the intercultural

partnering and collaborating to create an inclusive environment that welcomes, appreciates, and respects diversity. On college campuses, it means that both academic affairs and student affairs units co-create a climate that welcomes faculty, students, staff, alumni, guests, prospective students and faculty, and community members. It embraces collaboration and focuses on bridging domestic and international diversity on a campus or in a workplace.

When leaders create an intercultural learning environment, there is a noticeable change on campus. The components of an intercultural learning environment take shape to form an entity that values and appreciates the intercultural dimension of learning, teaching, working, and thriving. The components that we refer to are the six most frequently addressed during full campus-wide internationalization audits (Ellingboe, 1996, 1999): leadership and administration of an internationalized campus, an internationalized curriculum, faculty interest and experience in international education, study abroad opportunities for students, the presence of international students and scholars, and internationalized student affairs units. Leaders

need to pay attention to all six components on their campuses to begin prioritizing and planning international education initiatives. This requires leadership knowledge and skills, internationalization knowledge and skills, and culture learning knowledge and skills.


Other Unfinished Business: Evaluation and Assessment

Three types of indicators can assess whether international education takes place, how much of it is relevant, and how we know the goals have been reached. One is by assessing performance and knowledge of individual students as they leave the institutions. The other is by assessing the opportunity and educational programs institutions have available for these students. A third point is addressing what role leadership plays in the internationalization effort of the institution.

What evidence do we look for when we visit campuses and evaluate their internationalization initiatives? We look for an intercultural learning environment, and at least six of the major components of an internationalized campus mentioned above. We also look for the following:

- Declaration of internationalization as a priority for the institution;
- Commitment to internationalization by deans and associate deans, vice presidents of academic affairs and student affairs, and the president;
- Discussion of internationalization by college-wide governance committees;
- Evidence of a future vision for the college/university that includes prioritizing international education and specifically the components of an internationalized campus;
- A mission statement emphasizing the importance of international education;
- Documents and budgets that include making internationalization a priority in planning processes;
- Resources (financial, operational, human) and commitments from leaders on campus for internationalization goals, projects, and efforts;
- Integration of international education in degree programs, core coursework, and electives;
- Availability, affordability, and transferability of study and research abroad opportunities for students;
- Initiatives to hire faculty with international interests and/or international experiences;
- Provisions in the promotion and tenure codes that value international experiences;
- Opportunities for faculty to do research, teach, and study at partner universities to maintain international linkages;
- Encouragement from deans and department chairs for faculty members' efforts to internationalize the curriculum;
- Commitment to do evaluations of international education initiatives and associated efforts to keep and maintain adequate records related to these initiatives; and
- Student affairs units that are welcomed as co-creators in the process of campus-wide internationalization.

In terms of leadership, perhaps the most telling role for an internationalized campus



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on campus. The components of an intercultural learning environment take shape to form dimension of learning, teaching, working, and thriving.

is the academic dean, who can make or break the internationalization initiatives and support or squelch goals and objectives. Because internationalization is an organizational change process, international education leaders need to be able to access all levels up and down the institutional hierarchy but also up and down the vertical silos in which many units are located, such as academic departments, student service units, and colleges that share commitments to international education as a super ordinate goal that benefits the entire institution. International education professionals who are armed with leadership knowledge and the commitment to creating an intercultural learning environment on their campuses will always be valued by internationalization consultants like us because we will recognize their courage to lead with conscience, by example, and for the future.

The Key Is Integration

There are many implications to practice that our approach is suggesting. The first is a call for more discussion and discourse of these topics because they are at the heart of our profession and the concepts involved are often contentious, imprecise, and involve understanding of future trends that our educational system does not prepare us well to handle. Secondly, knowledge of educational change suggests that change without simultaneous training fails; consequently, we need to develop training tools, including methods of explaining our highly complex field of international education and the rationale for the need to internationalize. Such tools will have to take into account the level of organizational complexity because each level of complexity has its own “logic” for understanding it. Underestimating complexity—of both individual leaders and institutions—is also a typical cause of failure of educational reforms. In other words, international education is not just “one thing” that can be “marketed” but an on-going process that is determined by

both external factors and local conditions. The style and type of leadership should be a suitable fit of knowledge with the present situation directed toward the future, with the creation of an intercultural learning environment as the goal. The key word is integration of knowledge about leadership, culture, and international education.

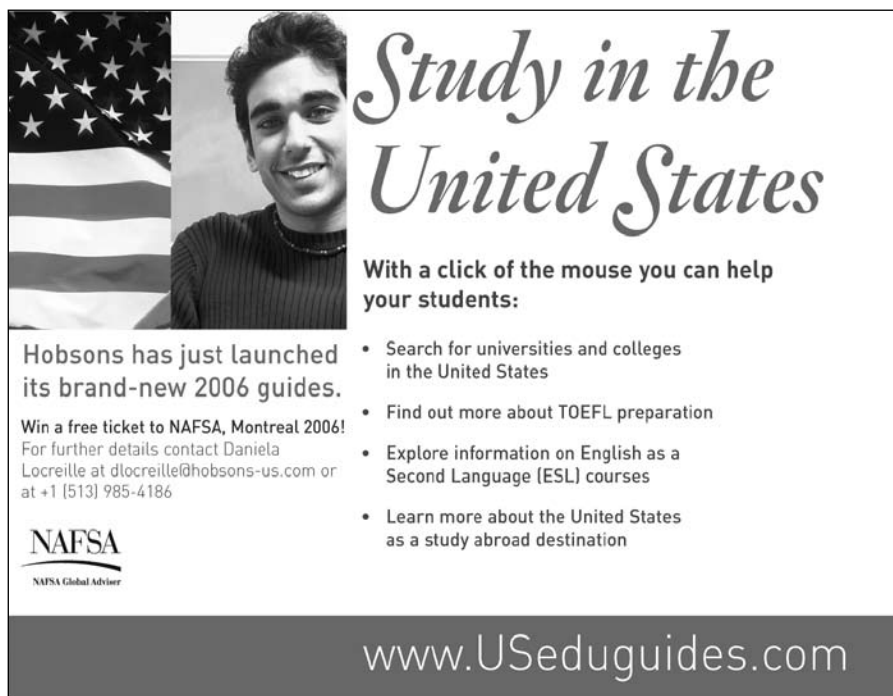
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