



FOSTERING TRANSFORMATIVE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP: AN UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL APPROACH

Amy Forbes

Hobart and William Smith Colleges, USA

In 2009, Joyce Osland wrote, “Given the impact and challenges of globalization, global warming and the current economic crisis, it is impossible to ignore the need for effective global leadership” (2009, p. 1). Once just a need within the international business community to train leaders who could “develop global strategies, expand into international markets and compete in the global marketplace” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 5), the need for global leadership has only intensified over the last two decades. Global leaders are now needed across the private, public and non-profit sectors. “Growth in ‘global work’, defined as situations in which workers collaborate across national boundaries, is unprecedented” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 5).

In 2003, a Rand Corporation study predicted a dearth of U.S. global leaders across the public, private and non-profit sectors (Osland, 2009). While colleges and universities have been urged to respond, higher education has always taken on the task of preparing young people to not only be productive, conscientious citizens, but also “to develop each new generation of leaders to better serve society” (Gehrke, 2008, p. 351). While the majority of global leadership development is coming from the business field (Osland, 2009), colleges and universities can be formidable agents in terms of growing a diverse pool of culturally competent leaders while simultaneously serving higher education’s broader mission: transforming young people. “An effective college education includes experiences that challenge unexamined assumptions, sustain more complex understandings of oneself and others, and enables students to form commitments in a relativized world” (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996, p. 46). This article will outline a holistic undergraduate approach designed to prompt transformative global leaders’ leadership learning for undergraduates.

A Global Leadership Framework

In 2009, Joyce Osland wrote, “Given the impact and challenges of globalization, global warming and the current economic crisis, it is impossible to ignore the need for effective global leadership” (2009, p. 1). Once just needed within the international business community to train

leaders who could “develop global strategies, expand into international markets and compete in the global marketplace” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird & Osland, 2012, p. 5), the need for global leadership has only intensified over the last two decades. Global leaders are now needed across the private, public and non-profit sectors. “Growth in ‘global work’, defined as situations in which workers collaborate across national boundaries, is unprecedented” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 5).

Although global leadership has emerged as a compelling field, “it continues to lack a specific, rigorous and widely accepted definition of the construct” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 3). Scholars have identified global leadership tasks, roles, behaviors and functions. Others have defined competencies, skills, assessment instruments and training programs. Most agree that there is a distinction between global leadership and global management as well as differences between global leadership and domestic leadership (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012). Several models have emerged such as Rhinesmith’s Global Mindset, Brake’s Global Leadership Triad, The Global Explorer Model and the Pyramid Model of Global Leadership. Still, efforts to define global leadership are largely ambiguous and consistently vague.

A process that is common to leadership studies also hinders global leadership. That is, in order to enhance empirical data gathering or methodological rigor, social scientists have dissected leadership down to narrowly defined components. “It is important to narrow one’s definition of the phenomenon under study so as to be able to have a target that is manageable in terms of measurement” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 8). These parts are still labeled leadership even though they only reflect one portion or a targeted aspect of research (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012). As a result, leadership is frequently articulated by way of singular traits, behaviors, relationships, tasks or qualities when, in fact, leadership is a complex, socially constructed phenomenon.

Leadership cannot be acquired by completing a checklist. Nor can one developmental model fully distill it. Leadership is viewed differently across cultures. Further, the meaning of leadership varies from one country to another. Perhaps most salient in terms of framing leadership today is an acknowledgement of a shift in paradigms. Where conventional research once focused on the individual leader, more recent studies have centered on the process. Where traditional theories of leadership lauded a charismatic, authoritative figure that stood atop a hierarchical structure, contemporary models emphasize multi-level leadership, leadership without position and relationships, which serve as the interconnected tissue within organizations as well as large-scale global systems. Leadership today is a highly relational process that encompasses continuous self-reflection, an understanding of difference and significant action that benefits others.

Much like with leadership, global leadership cannot rely on models from individualistic, managerial, hierarchical or authority-based theories of the past. As Ken Otter (2009) writes, “These theories employ models and maps from the industrial era, which tend to view organizations as discrete entities acting on a detached and independent environment” (p. 3). Global leadership requires adaptive, relational and process-oriented models specifically because the challenges that shape the work of leaders within a global context is characterized by multiplicity, interdependence, great ambiguity as well as a steady state of flux.

Developing Future Change Agents

Global leaders are not simply individuals that hold global positions. Rather, they are change agents who are engaged in the process of influencing global communities to work towards shared visions and common goals (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, & Maznevski, 2008). Global leaders are individuals who “effect significant positive change in global organizations by building communities through the development of trust and the arrangement of organizational structures and processes in a context involving multiple stakeholders, multiple sources of external authority, and multiple cultures under conditions of temporal, geographical and cultural complexity” (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, & Maznevski, 2008, p. 17). Global leadership is “conceptualized to be a process that reflects how an individual engages in and fulfills global roles and responsibilities, and includes sense-making, the nature and quality of relationships that the leader holds with the people around them in a global context, and the mechanisms through which a leader exerts influence” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012).

While global leaders require techniques and skills, they are best served by a commitment to on-going self-examination, intercultural differences and the various contexts of leadership within international communities. Otter (2009) offers an inward and an outward orientation. The inward “recognizes the multiple dimensions of the human experience and capacities, embedded within a dynamic environment” (p. 3). This requires a steady examination of the individual, identities as well as cultures. The inward orientation is attentive to one’s own inner development so that as a leader, one can respond to needs in a culturally relevant manner within rapidly changing environments. The outward is “animated by the purposefulness of the enterprise, which seeks to change its environment to improve its conditions” (Otter, 2009, p. 3). Prompted by leadership concepts that promote action, the outward orientation is the discovery process where inner passions manifest into purpose. Together, the interaction between the inward and the outward begets reflective learning that can produce compelling global change initiatives.

In 2003, a Rand Corporation study predicted a dearth of U.S. global leaders across the public, private and non-profit sectors (Osland, 2009). While colleges and universities have been urged to respond, higher education has always taken on the task of preparing young people to not only be productive, conscientious citizens, but also “to develop each new generation of leaders to better serve society” (Gehrke, 2008, p. 351). While the majority of global leadership development is coming from the business field (Osland, 2009), colleges and universities can be formidable agents in terms of growing a diverse pool of culturally competent leaders while simultaneously serving higher education’s broader mission: transforming young people. “An effective college education includes experiences that challenge unexamined assumptions, sustain more complex understandings of oneself and others, and enables students to form commitments in a relativized world” (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996, p 46).

It is easy to extrapolate that study abroad programs or international internships lead to intensive growth as “personal transformational is more likely when developmental activities have a high degree of experiential rigor and a large number and valence of feedback sources” (Osland, 2009, p. 4). Global education programs have grown rapidly under this premise. Yet, preparing college students to be future global leaders must be done in an intentional as well as holistic manner that supports cognitive, developmental, and emotional growth. An understanding of intercultural competencies is essential as leaders across all sectors must be

trained for international environments where change is rapid, unpredictable and discontinuous. Global leadership techniques should be framed with culturally relevant leadership concepts that shape a philosophy, used to guide leaders in ethical, inclusive and value-based decision-making, rather than a prescriptive set of skills or behaviors. Finally, service or significant action for the betterment of an international community can shift inner passion outwardly into purpose. Such development takes time, is best done through experiential learning and should be multi-method in design (Osland, 2009).

A Transformative Approach

To account for an ambiguity inherent to the field, global leadership development for college students must be grounded in practical and action-oriented techniques as well as data-driven, theoretical models. Still, as Harry R. Lewis (2006) writes, “Universities have forgotten their larger educational role for college students. They succeed, better than ever, as creators and repositories of knowledge. But they have forgotten that the fundamental job of undergraduate education is to turn eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds into twenty-one- and twenty-two-year-olds, to help them grow up, to learn who they are, to search for a larger purpose for their lives, and to leave college as better human beings” (p. xiv). Global leadership programs that embed cognitive development, intercultural competency, global leadership knowledge, and civic engagement as a means of developing ‘the whole person’ are important, necessary, and have the capacity to be transformative.

Although research continues to evolve, leadership models remain somewhat steadfast in their linear forms or highly structured in order. Today’s leaders must adapt, innovate, and change. Consequently, one model will not suffice. Though the struggle for precision is inherent to the study of leadership, leadership educators do a great disservice when they wield one theory, one model, or one singular definition. Contemporary environments demand multiple tools. This article offers an approach with four distinct but integrated processes. While all components are theoretically-based for assessment purposes, they are designed for a comprehensive development experience that evolves over the course of four years.

Undergraduate Development Approach

Meaning-making & self-authorship. A fusion of both psychosocial and cognitive-structural theories, Robert Kegan’s Theory of Meaning-Making and Self-Authorship states that individuals organize their understanding of themselves, others, and the world in an increasingly complex fashion over the life span. Though this proposal favors meaning-making, which “differs from traditional cognitive processes in that it is an attempt to find connections and meaning across all dimensions of the human experience” (Gehrke, 2008, pp. 351-352), Kegan’s five distinct orders of consciousness fails, at times, to appreciate the non-linear nature of developmental processes. Thus, self-authorship is a necessary and complimentary concept.

As Marcia B. Baxter Magolda (2003) writes, “Educators know that college students need to develop an internal compass to achieve complex learning. Critical thinking, the most agreed-upon goal of higher education, requires the ability to define one’s own beliefs in the context of existing knowledge” (pp. 232-33). Equally important are enriching, meaningful experiences that beget personal development. Baxter Magolda identified three dimensions which answer three questions that are epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal. These questions are: *how do*

I know, who am I, and how do I want to construct relationships with others. These dimensions are intertwined, differ due to experience, and reoccur throughout one's life. Self-authorship is vital towards leadership development and supports psychosocial and cognitive learning.

Intercultural competency. Fullan (1999) explains why intercultural development is essential for college students who will move into professional environments. "Intensive human interaction involving people different than ourselves (diversity) provides us with an evolutionary advantage because, (a) interaction is essential to solving problems, and (b) diversity of interaction is most suited to discovering moral and effective solutions to problems presented by turbulent environments" (Fullan, 1999, p. 12). Specifically, global leaders must engage in important intercultural work that constitutes intensive examination of self, social identities and culture, which are then framed around leadership concepts so as to guide future leaders towards culturally-relevant choices, decisions and processes. Global leaders must gain an appreciation of working within and across difference, particularly within international communities. Global leaders understand that "homogeneous cultures may have little disagreement but they are also less interesting. Heterogeneous cultures risk greater conflict, but they also contain stronger seeds of breakthrough" (Fullan, 1999, p. 22).

This article would recommend utilizing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) for assessment. The IDI is a statistically reliable, cross-culturally valid measure of intercultural competence adapted from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Hammer, 2010a). This is a 50-item, theory-based instrument that is easy to complete (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Competencies will include an understanding of the ability to communicate across and a commitment to fostering inclusion amongst various identities which includes, but is not limited to, gender, race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality, age, ability, and religion. It is designed to measure and develop intercultural sensitivity, which refers to "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" along with intercultural competency, which is described as "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003, p. 422). The IDI can be used individually or in a group. The assessment must be integrated within cognitive and psychosocial development as well as leadership training as "the concept of culture has both an ideological component and a sociological one" (Heck, 2004, p. 82).

Global leadership development. Osland (2009) writes that "global leaders demonstrate some additional or expanded skills, such as boundary spanning, and have 'unlearned' some traditional leadership lessons that do not work outside culture" (p. 3). As research on global leadership evolves, simultaneously incorporating, as well as replacing a number of the prominent training models from the business world, scholars have emphasized global leadership techniques along with a global mindset as leadership in an international context is often characterized as "sailing into uncharted waters" and conceptualized as "extreme leadership" (Osland, 2009). This proposal would offer that there are both transactional as well as transformational elements required for comprehensive global leadership training.

As intercultural competencies improve, transactional global leadership techniques would be introduced. These transactional techniques are tangible, practical, and skill-based, and would include collaborating (identifying stakeholders), architecting (synchronizing organizations), entrepreneurship (innovative problem-solving) and systems-thinking (change for complex systems). Equally important are transformational global leadership development concepts, such as complexity, which is consistently used to characterize global leadership work. "Four dimensions or conditions continuously mutually interact in a nonlinear process that produces

ongoing multiplier effects which in turn produces, preserves and continually transforms complexity across the globe. These four conditions are: multiplicity, interdependence, ambiguity, and flux” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 13). Transformational global leadership understandings combined with transactional techniques can offer comprehensive development for college students.

Civic engagement. Jim Clawson writes that being a leader is not about a position or title, but about a point of view. “The leadership point of view has three elements: 1) seeing what needs to be done; 2) understanding all the underlying forces at play in a situation; and 3) having the courage to initiate action to make things better (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, & Maznevski, 2008, p. 131). Colleges and universities have a responsibility to prepare the next generation of leaders. These leaders are needed to tackle complex social challenges, economic uncertainty, educational needs, environmental issues and political conflicts. The tasks ahead are enormous, indeed. But as Braskamp, Trautvetter, and Ward (2006) write, “Just being busy is not enough for an authentic and purposeful life. Rather, an authentic and purposeful life involves connecting commitments and behaviors; a student selects activities that reflect a sense of self and purpose” (p. 19). Civic engagement is a critical component of developing student leaders for global work as it prompts social responsibility, fosters personal growth and provides a sense of purpose.

“Appreciative inquiry is the study of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best” (Whitney, Tronsten-Bloom, 2010, p. 1). This approach is built on the premise that when strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams are drawn out, the personal or organizational change can be transformational (Whitney, Tronsten-Bloom, 2010, p. 2). By combining a process of appreciation, value, and recognition with a series of questions or inquiry that fosters exploration, discovery, and learning, appreciative inquiry can serve as an effective change instrument. Instead of focusing on deficiencies or dialing into weaknesses, appreciative inquiry specialists leverage assets. “Hierarchies all too often exclude those people most significantly impacted. Appreciative Inquiry turns those hierarchies into knowledge-rich, relationally-inclusive, self-organizing enterprises” as it creates “a context for people to be included and heard throughout the difficult and challenging time” (Whitney, Tronsten-Bloom, 2010, p. 4). The 4-D Cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny) can be used to guide a conversation, a meeting or large-scale system change. It has been used by the public, private, and non-profit sectors to initiate change. Appreciative inquiry is an effective technique for student leaders who are invested in becoming global change agents.

Conclusion

Leadership is socially constructed, culturally influenced, and defined within historical, social, and environmental contexts. Today’s leaders must navigate rapidly changing markets, collaborate across compelling differences, and solve complex problems on a global scale. Widespread interconnectedness has called for academic, interdisciplinary, and applied understandings of leadership theory and intercultural concepts. In order to develop the next generation of social innovators, global citizens, and future leaders, this article outlines an innovative approach that infuses self-authorship, cultural competency, global leadership development, and appreciative inquiry techniques. This approach is designed to prepare leaders who will tackle significant social challenges, foster intercultural partnerships, build inclusive organizations, and work within various global communities with a cross-cultural skill set.

Ultimately, global leaders are change agents engaged in influencing international communities towards shared visions and common goals. Global leadership emphasizes an understanding of the relationships between leaders, followers, and the context of their environments, which are characterized by interdependence, ambiguity, and steady flux. Although developing such global agents at the undergraduate level can be challenging, a mainstay of any approach must be an on-going practice of examining beliefs and values, embracing work within and across differences, and aligning passion with thoughtful purpose, which begets authentic, culturally-relevant leaders who have the capacity to solve significant challenges. “The single most visible factor that distinguishes major cultural changes that succeed from those that fail is competent leadership” (Burke, 2008, p. 226). At the undergraduate level, such learning could lead to a natural reserve of leadership talent while transforming the agent during an essential development period.

Amy Forbes is the associate director of the Centennial Center for Leadership at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY. She is an educator and scholar in leadership studies. She designs content for leadership coursework and programming for a vibrant center that is committed to the academic learning and applied experiences. Her expertise is in educational leadership, leadership development, college student development and leadership theory. Her research interest include authentic leadership, entrepreneurial leadership, community leadership and global leadership.

Email: aforbes@hws.edu

References

- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2003). Identity and learning: Student affairs' role in transforming higher education, *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(1), 232-233.
- Braskamp, L. A., Trautvetter, L. C., & Ward, K. (2006) *Putting students first: How colleges develop students purposefully*. Bolton, Massachusetts: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
- Burke, W. W. (2008). *Organization change: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Fullan, M. (1999). *Change forces: The sequel*. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.
- Gehrke, S. (2008). Leadership through meaning-making: An empirical exploration of spirituality and leadership in college students. *Research in Brief*, 49(4), 351.
- Hammer, M. R. (2010a). Intercultural development inventory. Retrieved from the Official Intercultural Development Inventory website: <http://www.idiinventory.com>
- Hammer, M. R. (2010b). IDI validity. *Intercultural Development Inventory*. Retrieved from: http://www.idiinventory.com/pdf/idi_validity.pdf
- Hammer, M. R., Bennett, M. J., & Wiseman, R., (2003). The intercultural development inventory: A measure of intercultural sensitivity. In M. Paige (Ed.). *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 421-443.
- Heck, R. H. (2004). *Studying educational and social policy*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Lewis, H. R. (2006). *Excellence without soul: Does liberal education have a future?* New York:

- Public Affairs, xiv.
- Mendenhall, M. E., Osland, J. S., Bird, A., Oddou, G. R., & Maznevski, M. L. (2008). *Global leadership: Research, practice, and development*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mendenhall, M. E., Reiche, B. S., Bird, A., & Osland, J. (2012). Defining the 'global' in global leadership. *Journal of World Business*.
- Osland, J. (2009). The challenge of developing global leadership. *Concepts & Connections: A Publication for Leadership Educators* 16(2).
- Otter, K. (2009, July). *Global leadership: A perspective in progress*. Presented at the International Conference in the Advancement of Management. Colorado Springs, CO.
- Parks Daloz, L. A., Keen, C. H., Keen, J. P., & Parks, S. D. (1996). *Common fire*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Whitney, D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2010). *The power of appreciative inquiry*, 2nd Ed. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc.