LEADERSHIP
and
GOVERNANCE

The Importance of Leadership Development Across Borders.

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Abstract

Purpose: Globalization is the reality of our day and age. Globalization connotes the increasing economic, social, technical, cultural, and political interdependence between nations. People are more inter-connected now than ever. The availability of worldwide communication systems through rapid improvements in communication technology and the internet has led to more international trade and cultural exchange.

Methodology: A qualitative study and research was carried out to consider the dynamics and diverse ways globalization has affected our lives and with its own attendant challenges, including the need to design effective multinational organizations, and to identify and select appropriate leaders to manage those organizations with their culturally diverse employees (Northouse,2013).

Findings: The research discovered that it is now incumbent on organizational leaders to understand how cultural differences affect their leadership performance and their leadership development systems. Adler and Bartholomew (1992) assert that organizational leaders need to understand various business, political, and cultural environments globally, learn the perspectives, tastes, trends, and technologies of many other cultures, learn how to work with people from many cultures simultaneously, adapt to living and communicating in other cultures, and learn to relate with people from diverse cultural origins from a position of equality rather than cultural superiority.

Unique Contribution to theory, practice and policy (Recommendation): Every Successful leaders across borders in the globalized world are expected to embrace diversity by rising above cultural issues such as perceptual bias, discrimination, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and prejudice. This white paper explores the basic concepts of global leadership, the development of cultural agility, and the process of leadership development across borders.

Keywords: *Globalization, Technology, Organizational Leaders, Diversity, Discrimination, Stereotyping, Ethnocentrism, and Prejudice.*

Introduction

Globalization is real, and we live in a world that is more interconnected than ever. Leadership development remains an important subject for those who want to make the world a better place. Van Velsor et al., (2010) define leadership development as the expansion of a collective's ability to produce direction, alignment and commitment (DAC). Organizations need to groom effective leaders continually by setting up various processes, practices and activities to develop leaders through the crafting of leader development systems (VanVelsor et al., 2010). The four perspectives that define these leader development systems are purposes served by the system, methods of development, leader segments, and the climate for development.

Organizations need to grow more intentional about the systems they use to develop leaders. Despite all the changes in governments, business practices and technology, one thing that remains certain is the ongoing demand for people to take on leadership roles and responsibilities (VanVelsor et al., 2010). A mature leadership development system is characterized by initiatives customized to the needs of different leader segments, the intentional use of multiple methods of leader development, and an organizational climate for development (VanVelsor, et al., 2010). The climate for development is created through challenging assignments, developmental relationships across cultures, personal experiences that create memories of how values are shaped through cultures and sub-cultures, adverse situations, and course work and training (Van Velsor et al., 2010).

A broader view of leadership development provides insights into why some initiatives are more successful than others at generating change in individual behavior. To make meaningful impact, the capabilities being developed in the individual leader need to mesh with the leadership cultures in which the leaders are embedded (Van Velsor et al., 2010, p. 25). The challenges and opportunities for leaders, and those in charge of developing them have never been greater in our increasingly complex world. Diagnosing leadership development needs requires an assessment of the entire leadership culture.

This paper explores ways for establishing leadership development systems across cultures, because the urgent issues of our time are global. Cabrera and Unruh (2012) assert that global leaders are not born, but made. Leadership development across borders requires leadership development at the organizational level and at the individual level. We need to develop individuals and organizations to operate and lead in a way that produces positive financial, social, and environmental results around the world (Van Velsor et al., 2010).

Global Leadership

Global leaders cultivate particular ways of looking at the world and interpreting phenomena,of thinking about problems and opportunities, of building relationships, and of acting with integrity of heart to pursue solutions (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012). The individuals, who best master the challenges that are associated with globalization, have invested time and efforts to develop the three global leadership competencies of global mindset, global entrepreneurship and global citizenship (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012). Global leaders are not defined just by their mind-sets or by the entrepreneurial opportunities they seek out and create, but by how much they contribute to the improvement of the context in which they operate (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012).

Global leaders craft solutions by bringing together people and resources across organizational, national, and cultural boundaries. They build relationship bridges that allow effective cooperation across sectors, cultures, languages and institutions. Some of the key components

or differentiation of cultures that global leaders keep in mind during globalization are cultural diversity, language difference, ethnic background and belief, and value systems. Global leaders understand the cultural, social and political differences that keep contributors apart and find ways to build, cultivate and connect them despite and sometimes because of those differences. Global leaders also act as bridge builders, connectors of global resources and talent, dedicated to finding ways to create value (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012).

Leaders with a global mind-set can work with and influence people, organizations and institutions that are different from their own. They are sensitive to those differences and understand how culture shapes people's behaviour. So they are able to suspend any premature and selfish judgement by building bridges across cultural boundaries and to nurture trust with others (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012).Global leaders are sometimes not necessarily proficient in all the cultures they interact with, but they always find ways to transcend cultural barriers by building productive relationships.

Developing Cultural Agility

Fitness experts describe agility as the ability to change the position of one's body rapidly and accurately without losing balance. Most global professionals often lack the cultural agility needed to excel. Organizations need to acquire, develop and retain professionals who can operate effectively around the world, irrespective of country or culture, to succeed in today's global economy. More than ever before, organizations need a pipeline of global professionals who possess cultural agility: the ability to quickly, comfortably and successfully work in cross-cultural and international environments (Caligiuri, 2012).

Developing cultural agility in multi-cultural and cross-cultural situations entails acquiring competencies that include cultural adaptation, cultural minimization, and cultural integration. Factors that can hamper cultural agility and leader development across borders include cultural barriers, conflicting regulatory requirements, unexpected costs, stakeholder opposition, and inadequate supply of talents. For cultural agility to be cultivated, professionals need to interact with people from different cultures where they must learn how to be effective in cross-cultural situations through experience and structured learning systems (Caligiuri, 2012).

Effective global business leaders who value cultural agility must be authentic, and must lead by example through cultural humility, engaging in developmental cultural experiences (Caligiuri, 2012). Culturally agile professionals must be able to accurately scan the environments where they operate to fully understand the nuances of their host cultures and to respond as needed (Caligiuri, 2012). They must be sensitive to subtle differences between the cultures they are accustomed to and the new ones they encounter in the course of their work.

Global leaders must replace their cultural bravado with cultural humility, which is a valuable competency for them to possess. Developing cultural agility by successful global leaders is a continuous process, because they gain those competencies through an ongoing learning system that includes that of cross-cultural training and experiential developmental opportunities (Caligiuri, 2012).

Leading In Other Cultures

Culture is the mental software consisting of unwritten rules of the social game, and it is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from one another (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 5). Culture is learned; it is not innate. Schein (2010) defines culture as a set of shared basic assumptions learned by a group to solve the problems of internal integration and external adaptation.

Northouse (2013) explains that globalization has created the need for leaders to understand how cultural differences affect leadership performance. As leaders, we need to become competent in our cross-cultural awareness and practice. We must avoid the two factors that can inhibit our cultural awareness, which are ethnocentrism and prejudice.

Global leaders need to understand business, political and cultural environments worldwide; be able to adapt to living and communicating in other cultures; learn the perspectives, tastes, trends and technologies of other cultures; be able to work simultaneously with people from many cultures; and need to learn how to relate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds from a position of equality rather than from a position of superiority by overcoming cultural bias (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992).

Moving towards a globalized culture is very critical as culture is present in the design and quality of many products and in the presentation of many services through learning, exposure and awareness (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012).The GLOBE studies reveal how different cultures view leadership behaviors in others. Northouse (2013, p. 395) listed the six global leadership behaviors as charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, participative, human-oriented, autonomous and self-protective. Culture can be analyzed through:

Structure: Culture manifests itself at the level of visible artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions through structural stability, depth, breadth and integration (Schein, 2010).

Environment: Cultural assumptions and analysis revolve around internal integration and external adaptation. Culture reflects the group's effort to cope and learn because it is the residue for the learning process (Schein, 2010).

Dimensions: Hofstede (2010) analyses culture through the nine major dimensions in the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) studies. The nine cultural dimensions are uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation and humane orientation (Northouse, 2013).

A cultural perspective that acknowledges the existence of national, occupational, and macro-cultures, functional sub-cultures and sub-cultures based on rank and common experience is therefore an essential component of organizational leadership. Organizational leaders should not get too involved with the content of the culture until they have experienced it at the visible artifact level. Culture can be analyzed through the following steps: Visit and observe; Ask insiders why things are done that way by asking questions; Identify the espoused values, norms, beliefs that appeal to them and ask how they are implementing them within their organization; Identify artifacts and processes that will excite or puzzle people; Look for any inconsistencies and ask about them; Figure out from all you have heard about what deeper assumptions actually determine the behavior you observe (Schein, 2010).

Leadership Development Across Borders

The challenges and opportunities for leaders and those in charge of developing them have never been greater in our increasingly complex world. Diagnosing leadership development needs requires an assessment of the entire leadership culture. For example, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), in the GLOBE studies, describe countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa cluster as scoring high in power distance and in-group collectivism, but scoring low in performance orientation. Leaders do whatever it takes to produce results in such a leadership culture, and usually position themselves and their cronies above the law. Most of the citizens have leadership potentials, but

several factors inhibit their leadership development such as issues of bad governance, poverty, corruption, and religious bias. Most African youths are hungry to learn and to realize their potentials, they look around for respected mentors and resources to help them navigate the complex life challenges they face, however, "there is a dearth of curricula and tools for developing young leaders" (Van Velsor et al., 2010, p. 236).

A broader view of leadership development provides insights into why some initiatives are more successful than others at generating change in individual behavior. To make meaningful impact, the capabilities being developed in the individual leader need to mesh with the leadership cultures in which the leader is embedded (Van Velsor et al., 2010, p. 25). Most of the leadership development curriculum developed in Western countries may not particularly address the peculiar situations of people, especially youth in developing parts of the world, who have little education as a foundation, and who are distracted by the struggle for survival occasioned by rampant poverty.

According to the GLOBE studies, emerging leaders in some developing countries are in no rush to get things done as they approach foreigners with speculation and take a cautious approach (Hofstede& Minkov, 2010). In fact, they care less about visionaries but prefer bold, assertive styles of leadership, which they are accustomed to, where they exhibit hierarchical organizational structure. The notion of fear is high in such cultures due to the conservativeness in the culture, because most of them are not independent thinkers that are willing to step outside their position unless directed by leadership. They also have developed a learned state of helplessness, with the overwhelming feeling that they cannot change their circumstances. Such a culture has high institutional collectivism and assertiveness, and also has low gender egalitarianism (Northouse, 2009).

Several factors inhibit the approach to leadership development process in the cultures prevalent in the developing countries described above. Some of them are cultural bias, poor communication and language barrier with a high level of fear. Such cultures, such as in Confucian Asia, possess higher dimensions of power distance and assertiveness (Northouse, 2009). Other factors such as gender inequality, status and tribal prejudice pose a greater threat to the leadership development process. Van Velsor et al., (2010) explain that the need to develop young people derives in larger part from the fact that both the population and the workforce are relatively younger than those in many developed economies. So, leadership development remains an ongoing process that is not only about individual development but one that is embedded in experience over time.

The large population of youth in such countries, however, presents a great opportunity to influence the emergence of a new generation of leaders. The reality is that the elite class in such countries appropriate the existing curriculum for leader development in expensive business schools. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) posit that the major difference between developed and developing nations is their political evolution. Developed countries have inclusive political and economic institutions where most citizens have a say in the political process and have opportunities to create wealth. Most developing nations on the other hand have extractive political and economic structures, where few have control of political power and use it to channel economic resources to benefit themselves and those close to them. Van Velsor et al., (2010) propose "the democratization of leader development" in the developing part of the world (p. 223). This will make formal leader development an inclusive process that will reach people at all strata of the society.

The developing parts of the world need cultural change agents that will leverage both business and non-profit platforms to offer leader development training to a large proportion of the population. Such agents must have experienced a change in their own mind-sets.

Conclusion

Leader and leadership development especially across borders is imperative for individuals and organizations in the age of globalization, and it is a lifelong journey (Hackman & Johnson, 1999). There is the need for the creation for a pipeline of global leaders with cultural agility and the ability to perceive the needs in the cultures they create with, and to create solutions with compassion. Ting-Toomey (1999) asserts that global leaders need to be skilled in creating trans-cultural visions.

Recommendation

In view of all these, the following recommendation will become expedient.

♦ The development of leadership culture should include and often requires the ongoing development of individual leaders. While leader development promotes individual growth, leadership development promotes organizational growth.

♦ There should be strategy for developing global leadership across borders which will enhance the expansion of leaders globally.

♦ Leaders must be willing to build organizational cultures that are committed to learning and decoding cultural cues well. Such organizational leadership must be globally responsible addressing financial, social, and environmental issues. They should respect diversity, learn from mistakes through continuous learning, seek to understand the global, social, environmental, and financial impacts of work, question business as usual, take a strategic view, deal with conflicting priorities and perspectives, develop cross-cultural competencies, and understand the core elements of global leadership (VanVelsor et al., 2010).

The ever-increasing connection among individuals, cultures, organizations, communities, and society as a whole define the significance of leadership development across borders. Truly global leaders must recognize and respond to cultural differences, adapt their behaviors to meet cultural expectations, and embrace cultural awareness and synergy (Hackman & Johnson, 1999).

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