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Book Review: *Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment*

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Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment

Leadership in a diverse and multicultural environment (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) discusses the journey to multicultural awareness and its importance in leadership. The book is organized in nine chapters that help leaders understand the tools necessary to interact with individuals from different races, ethnicities, religions, and genders. This paper begins by providing the reader with a summary and review of important themes of the book. Next, the author of this paper tells why the book is relevant for her research. Then, the paper discusses final considerations and addresses one important missing element in the book with regards to multicultural leadership: cultural intelligence.

Cultural Understanding and Multicultural Awareness

The book starts by discussing the need for multicultural skills, the impact of global and domestic demographic changes on the workforce, the importance of focusing on leaders, and the similarities and differences between diversity and multiculturalism.

Connerley and Pedersen (2005) state that there is a need to understand both similarities and differences when it comes to culture. The authors also affirm that there is a need to accept cultural complexity. The authors state that “multiculturalism presents us with a paradox because it requires us to look at how we are the same and how we are different at the very same time” (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005, p. 22). This author agrees with Connerley and Pedersen (2005) regarding culture complexity. The authors explain that culture balance is dynamic, and they provide the reader with ten examples of essential aspects of leading in a multicultural context. Three of the most important aspects, in this author’s opinion, are: 1) identifying positive implications in a negative experience; 2) avoiding simplistic solutions to complex problems; 3) avoiding stereotyping of others. Multicultural perspectives are dynamic for each person, place, and time.

Leadership in a diverse and multicultural environment (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) discusses the importance of understanding cultural frameworks. Hofstede (as cited in Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) conducted a large- scale study of IBM, which employed people from different cultures. Through the use of extensive amounts of questionnaire data, Hofstede was able to rank the cultures along 6 dimensions: individualism- collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity- femininity, long-term vs. short- term orientation. Cross- cultural researches on leadership were influenced by the early studies of Hofstede, but since then several patterns of cultural values have been suggested. One of the most recent studies was carried out by GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) researchers who collected data from managers representing 951 organizations in 62 national cultures. The author of this paper agrees with Connerley and Pedersen (2005) with regards to understanding cultural dimensions to create cultural awareness. Additionally, this author appreciates the findings of Ferraro and Briody (2013) who summarized in a clearer way the dimensions of Hofstede. The first dimension to understand cross-cultural interactions is the individual- collective dimension. Some cultures focus on the individual over the group, others focus on the interests of the group above their own. Understanding how individualism-collectivism play out in different cultures is important to understand cross-cultural leadership performance. Individual- oriented cultures value task completion, autonomy and independence, success as an own ability and they perceive individuals as major units of social perception. Collective- oriented cultures value relationships, interdependence, group achievements and strong connections to a few groups. They perceive groups as units of social perception (Ferraro & Briody, 2013).

The second dimension to understand how cross-cultural interactions work is the equality-hierarchy dimension. Ferraro and Briody (2013) divide this dimension in two

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categories: egalitarian cultures and hierarchical cultures. The authors note that this dimension helps businesspeople understand about power, formality, delegation of authority, among others. The decision-making process, for instance, takes longer in egalitarian cultures where all levels are asked for feedback. The authors also note that gender egalitarianism is also an important aspect of cultural dimensions. Sweden, for instance, is considered to be one of the most gender-egalitarian countries where women and men share power and influence equally. A leader who belongs to a gender-egalitarian culture and is leading a cross-cultural setting with the presence of hierarchical cultures should understand how power and influence are perceived differently. The third dimension in cross-cultural interactions is the change orientation dimension. Hofstede and GLOBE researchers used the phrase *uncertainty avoidance* to “refer to the lack of tolerance for ambiguity and the need for formal rules and high-level organizational structure” (Ferraro & Briody, 2013, p. 41); this dimension focuses on change-embracing cultures and change-fearing cultures or low to high uncertainty avoidance. Characteristics of change-embracing cultures include: differences are tolerated, more risk taking, hope for success and willingness to change employer. Characteristics of change-fearing cultures include: differences are considered dangerous and initiative of subordinates is discouraged, less risk taking, loyalty to employer and fear of failure. As stated previously, globalization has created the need for cross-cultural awareness for leaders who have accepted the challenge of leading cross-cultural diversity. For instance, leaders at specific occasions will have to learn how to make decisions in a setting with risks and uncertainty (Ferraro & Briody, 2013).

The last dimension explained by Ferraro and Briody (2013) is the time orientation dimension. Different cultures deal with time in different ways. Some cultures value punctuality and rigid schedules. Others value social relationships and flexibility. Different cultures perceive

benefits based on time orientation: “people from future oriented societies believe that is far more important to trade off short-term gains in the present for more long-term benefits in the future” (Ferraro & Briody, 2013, p. 34). In addition to Hofstede’s research, Connerley and Pedersen (2005) provide the reader with other studies about cultural dimensions. Trompenaars and Hampden- Turner (as cited in Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) for instance, cite the dimension *neutral versus affective*. Individuals in a neutral culture hide their feelings while maintaining a cool self- control. In an affective culture, individuals express their thoughts openly while using gestures and dramatic expressions. This author agrees with the findings of Ferraro and Briody (2013) who state that managers or leaders should avoid overreliance on cultural generalizations. The dimensions should be analyzed, studied and considered. But other variables such as education, biology or experience might affect behaviors as well.

Sue (as cited in Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) identifies important components of multicultural competence through a multidimensional model for developing cultural competence. The first dimension is race-and- culture-specific attributes of competence. This dimension considers universal, group, and individual levels. The second dimension refers to components of cultural competence. This dimension helps individuals acquire awareness competencies (awareness, knowledge, skills). Sue’s findings (as cited in Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) are relevant because they emphasize the need of understanding own cultural values and biases before understanding other cultures. The third dimension refers to the foci of cultural competence. Sue (as cited in Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) examines how the culture of an organization can impact and influence employees. In order for employees to acquire multicultural competencies, the organizational system should support them.

Multicultural Trainings

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Connerley and Pedersen (2005) discuss issues related to multicultural and diversity trainings. The authors state the main objective of training is to improve the performance of both the individual and the organization. They also state that before a training begins, it is important to ensure that organizational support exists so the effort can be taken seriously. The book also discusses the importance of assessment as a way for trainers to get a sense of the relationship between employees and their organizations. “A culture survey can help determine where problem areas may exist” (p. 91). An assessment should consist of organizational analysis, task analysis, and individual analysis. Connerley and Pedersen (2005) argue that “training that does not transfer is wasted” (p. 105). It is important that participants can apply what they learned in training. Multicultural and diversity trainings should consider trainee characteristics, training design, and the work environment. These elements will not ensure the desired training results, but will help trainings be more effective (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005).

Connerley and Pedersen (2005) state that training designs should be “comprehensive enough to include both culture-general and culture-specific perspectives” (p. 126). The authors provide the reader with relevant design techniques to stimulate awareness such as: role plays, role reversals, field trips to other cultures in the community, etc. Some techniques to communicate knowledge include: panel discussion, lecture, guided self-study with reading list, etc. Techniques to develop skills include: modeling and demonstration of effective leadership skills, supervising and/or being supervised by someone from another culture, practicing a new behavior pattern to target intentional change, etc.

According to Connerley and Pedersen (2005), leaders are trained to increase their awareness so they can 1) compare their own cultural perspective with that of a person from the other culture; 2) appropriately estimate constraints of time, setting, and resources in the other

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culture; 3) sensitively articulate their own professional role in relation to the other culture, etc.

Leaders are trained to increase their knowledge so they can 1) identify similarities and differences of their own home culture and the other cultures; 2) identify referral resources in the other culture; 3) select key individuals from the other culture for more information, etc. Leaders are trained to increase their skills so they can 1) efficiently plan, conduct, and evaluate training about the other culture; 2) assess the needs of people from different cultural backgrounds; 3) interact, advise, and manage their assigned task in the setting of the other culture, etc.

The Importance of the Book for This Author's Research

This author aims to investigate how the acquisition of cultural awareness has assisted local teachers facilitate the learning process of students from other cultural backgrounds. The book deals with multicultural awareness and multicultural trainings. Both aspects are important for the educational context as well. Connerley and Pedersen (2005) state that knowing thyself is crucial in order to develop multicultural awareness. According to Livermore (2010), it is imperative to understand what is going on internally and apply that same type of awareness to others and to the environment. The process of acquiring multicultural awareness involves self-awareness, developing skills, understanding cultural similarities and differences, and studying cultural dimensions (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005).

The author of this paper agrees with the findings of Livermore (2010) who states that in the past three decades, many studies have focused on identifying dimensions of culture such as the GLOBE studies and the studies of Hofstede. The GLOBE studies offer a strong body of findings as they help leaders understand how cultures around the world view leadership and how the dimensions help leaders to change their behavior when leading cross-culturally. Although cross-cultural studies have criticisms, they mainly offer valuable information about the unique

ways culture influences the leadership process. Cross-cultural leadership studies are relevant to understand how different cultures present different leadership styles. Understanding, for instance, how one's own culture works in order to understand others, is an exercise to enhance cross-cultural competency. There are, however, some important considerations to make when learning other cultures: leaders should avoid overreliance on cultural generalizations, leaders should learn about other cultures and live with them from a position of equality, leaders should be aware of different possible behaviors within the same culture.

The book provides the reader with great tools to work with multicultural trainings. This author wants to apply the techniques to stimulate awareness, impart knowledge, and develop skills in future ESL (English as a second language) teachers' trainings. Additionally, this author wants to investigate teachers' perception on multicultural trainings to assess their efficiency. This author agrees with Connerley and Pedersen (2005) when they state that the main objective of training is to improve the performance of both the individual and the organization. By acquiring multicultural awareness and self-awareness, this author believes one can improve his or her leadership performance while helping others develop multicultural competencies.

Final Considerations

Despite the recognition of the importance of the book in question for a multicultural research and future trainings, this author believes that there is one important missing element: cultural intelligence. Many approaches to cross-cultural leadership are either too simplistic or far too extreme. One does not cover the aspects of cross-cultural leadership by simply being nice or avoiding certain taboos but one does not have to become a cross-cultural expert to become a cross-cultural leader. Livermore (2010) defines cultural intelligence as "the capability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures" (p. 4). Cultural intelligence is needed in different situations; it helps leaders, for instance, address the challenge of recruiting

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and retaining cross-cultural talent. The author also states that other intercultural approaches are significant to address the theme cross-cultural leadership but cultural intelligence presents several advantages over them, such as: 1) CQ is a meta-framework rooted in strong research and it has been tested across multiple cultures, samples and times; 2) the concept is aligned to the study of multiple intelligences research; 3) the approach also considers a leader's personal interests, strategic thinking that aligned with sociological differences in cultural behaviors and values from other approaches can successfully address cultural interactions; 4) the approach emphasizes that any leader can enhance his or her cultural dimensions through training and experience and 5) the approach focuses on developing an overall repertoire of cultural understanding. The ability to adapt effectively to cross-cultural settings can be optimized by following a four-step cycle of CQ (cultural intelligence) suggested by Livermore (2010): CQ Drive- the motivation for the assignment; CQ Knowledge- cultural information needed to fulfill the assignment; CQ Strategy- what the plan is for the initiative and CQ Action- behaviors and competencies needed to adapt to the initiative effectively.

“Leaders with high CQ drive are motivated to learn and adapt to new and diverse cultural settings” (Livermore, 2010, p. 41); the confidence in the adaptive abilities can influence the way leaders behave in multicultural situations. Leaders can develop CQ drive by 1) being honest with themselves; 2) examining their confidence level; 3) hanging out with people; 4) counting benefits and 5) working for bigger causes such as fiscal, humanitarian and environmental causes. Some leaders might not be honest with their biases. Livermore (2010) states that everyone has biases and one should not pretend they do not exist; instead, leaders should understand why there are biases and understand different perspectives in order to make deliberate choices to remove prejudices. Examining the confidence level is another step to develop CQ drive. When leaders believe that they will be successful at a task, they are more

likely to be successful in cross-cultural contexts. Setbacks exist and leaders who demonstrate self-efficacy will face challenges in a stronger way. Sense of confidence for particular tasks varies according to different situations and context. Therefore, leaders should grow their confidence and analyze it periodically to enhance CQ drive. The third aspect of CQ drive is hanging out with people. Leaders from more industrialized and developed countries should understand that for some cultures, eating together has a great meaning, for instance. Socializing and eating with people from different cultures demonstrate willingness to get to know their culture better. The fourth aspect to enhance CQ drive is about counting the perks or benefits. Livermore (2010) explains that “the fatigue, fears, and anxieties that accompany cross-cultural work can be overwhelming” (p. 53) but leaders should be encouraged by the fact that there are payoffs such as career advancement, creativity and innovation, expansion of global networks and profits. Increased wages for those leaders who have to deal with the fallout from a cross-cultural venture, for instance, are rewarding perks that are well worth the investment. The last aspect of CQ drive is about living for something bigger. “Cultural intelligence offers a way of making the world a better place” (Livermore, 2010, p. 60) and CQ cannot exist apart from true love for people and for the world. Once leaders understand cross-cultural differences, they activate their motivation that goes beyond selfish interests.

Livermore (2010) explains that leaders with high CQ knowledge understand better how cultures shapes behavior. In order to activate that understanding, the author illustrates four aspects of CQ knowledge: 1) leaders should see culture’s role in themselves and others; 2) leaders should review the basic cultural systems; 3) leaders should learn the core cultural values and 4) leaders should understand different languages. Leaders can gain cultural awareness by understanding the differences and similarities of cross-cultural organizations and how their cultures impact their behaviors. Practices to gain CQ knowledge include: studying a foreign

language, reading novels and watching movies about other cultures, being globally informed and learning a topic from different cultural perspective.

“Leaders with high CQ strategy develop ways to use cultural understanding to develop a plan for new cross-cultural situations” (Livermore, 2010, p. 113). In order to develop CQ strategy, it is important to develop self-awareness and plan cross-cultural interactions. It is imperative to understand what is going on internally and apply that same type of awareness to others and to the environment. Livermore (2010) says leaders should constantly ask themselves “why?” to get to the deeper levels of an issue. Planning cross-cultural interactions help leaders to develop CQ strategy as they understand a task they usually do with people from the same culture might need alterations with cross-cultural interactions. Other practices to develop CQ strategy include: keeping a journal of cross-cultural reflections to discuss with coworkers or friends; engaging in active planning to define a better approach of a task and finding someone with a good measure of multicultural awareness that will serve as cultural mentor.

“Leaders with high CQ action can draw other three dimensions of CQ to translate their enhanced motivation, understanding and planning into action” (Livermore, 2010, p. 133). In order to develop CQ action, Livermore (2010) explains several practices that help leaders in their cross-cultural journey: leaders can learn practices and taboos that are most important for key regions; leaders should look for an honest assessment of their work consistently; leaders should develop a zero-tolerance policy for cultural jokes and inappropriate language. Several benefits are experienced when leaders enhance their such as enhanced performance, better decision-making process, flexibility and personal satisfaction are some of the benefits. When leaders activate their CQ, they are able to better understand their own culture and other cultures. Leaders become more adaptive as they use different strategies in different cultural situations. Livermore (2010) explains that cross-culture leadership studies, cross-cultural experiences,

educational level and the willingness of understanding a subject from different perspectives are some of the ways one can start developing cultural intelligence. Through the four steps presented above, leaders can grow in the journey toward becoming more effective in a cross-cultural context. Cultural intelligence can be learned; when leaders activate their CQ, they are able to better understand their own culture and other cultures. Leaders become more adaptive as they use different strategies in different cultural situations. Understanding one's own culture, cross-culture dimensions, cross-culture competencies and activating culture intelligence through different aspects (reading, planning, engaging, learning, experiencing) can help leaders develop cross-cultural awareness- an important characteristic in a globalized context. The integration of different aspects of cultural awareness is the key to an effective leadership in a globalized context.

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