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Teachers' Perceptions of Good and Bad Leaders in Seven Cultures

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Background and Review of Related Literature

The pioneering studies in leadership theory (e.g., Stogdill & Corms, 1951) tended to focus on traits and behaviors of leaders as universals; little mention was made of the possibility that leadership traits and behaviors might vary from nation to nation or from culture to culture. Subsequent authors realized that leadership styles vary from situation to situation (Hershey & Blanchard, 2008), and contingency theories (e.g., Fiedler, 1967) were developed, although these theories still paid little attention to cultural variables.

Meanwhile, in the field of business, international management practices came under scrutiny. Hofstede (1991) took the lead in categorizing cultures according to four variables: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and individualism. He argued that managers should take these variables into account in their management styles. For example, managers in a high uncertainty avoidance culture should make an extra effort to give clear instructions.

Educational practices are becoming increasingly globalized, and as a result, countries around the world are implementing reforms along the lines of American and European practices, although the cultural implications of these changes are not always being fully realized. Only recently have educational thinkers begun to address cultural issues in educational leadership. Important in this regard is the work of Dimmock and Walker (1998, 2000) who state:

Growing awareness of and interest in the phenomenon of globalisation of educational policy and practice is creating the need for the development of a comparative and international branch of educational leadership and management (Dimmock & Walker, 2000, P.143).

It would be easy simply to document differences among various cultures in their perceptions of leadership. However, in the absence of any conceptual framework, the simple observation of differences would not explain differences among cultures in general, and would have no value in predicting the leadership preferences of other cultures.
The above authors also bemoan the scarcity of research performed in the area of cross-cultural educational research:

While educational leadership and management has experienced impressive development over the last three decades the fact that a robust comparative branch of the field has failed to emerge is equally conspicuous. The development of conceptual frameworks and instrumentation are imperative if the field is to keep abreast of globalization of policy and practice (Dimmock & Walker, 2000, p.143).

It is natural to approach the theory of cross-cultural educational leadership from a theoretical framework similar to that of Hofstede. After all, quite a large body of research has emerged from studies of management styles in various countries, and a wide range of cultures have been measured and ranked according to the four Hofstede categories (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). It would therefore appear reasonable to study educational leadership in the light of the Hofstede four-factor paradigm, or at least

some appropriate modification thereof. For example, Dimmock and Walker (2000) proposed a six-factor approach, using the categories of

• Power concentrated/power dispersed (cf. Hofstede's power distance)
• Group oriented/self-oriented (cf. Hofstede's individualism)
• Aggression/consideration (cf. Hofstede's masculinity)
• Fatalistic/proactive
• Generative/replicative
• Limited relationship/holistic relationship formal-informal
•

One might argue that the large amount of research done on Hofstede categories as applied to business management should apply equally to educational administration and leadership. If this were the case, there would be little need for additional research into cross-cultural educational leadership, since the work has already been done in the field of business management.

Indeed, in the revised edition, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) included sections on leadership, and attempt to relate preference for leadership styles to the four cultural categories. They cite several anecdotal accounts of how, for example "U.S. leadership style was dysfunctional in Greece and the Greek leadership style in the United States" (Hofstede & Hofstede, p. 270). But these are speculative statements backed up by what seem to be reasonable outcomes rather than on quantitative research findings. Such quantitative findings are almost non-existent.

Painting management and leadership with the broad brush of the four categories may in fact be too general an approach. The research on leadership styles shows enormous variability among subcultures and subgroups. Situational and contingency theories of leadership have illustrated the differences in leadership styles among various groups. In a recent study in Cambodia, Zepp and Hong (2007) compared perceptions of leadership traits and behaviors among teachers, provincial politicians, and farmers, and identified large differences in the perceptions of these subcultures about what constitutes good or bad leadership. In this vein, Bray and Thomas (1995) claimed that "national or macro-comparative studies tend to suffer from over-generalisation, and therefore neglect local differences and disparities" (Bray & Thomas, P. 472).
Thus, if educational leadership represents a distinct subculture of management in general, and if different subcultures have been shown to display different perceptions of leadership, there is therefore a need for specific studies of the perceptions of educational leadership. This need will extend from an identification of differences among cultures to a theoretical framework for studying leadership in the future. For example, such a framework should provide predictive validity for implementing practices in cultures which display certain cultural characteristics. In fact, if perceptions vary among subcultures, it will be necessary to differentiate between the perceptions of teachers, principals, students, parents, and other subgroups in the educational process.

There is fairly common agreement throughout the literature as to the main desirable traits (e.g., vision, intelligence) and behaviors (e.g., sharing responsibility, creating clear expectations) of good leaders. But while many authors simply list the traits, few attempt to rank the traits in order of importance. For example, Leithwood and Riehl of the AERA Task Force (2003) demonstrated that the research literature in the United States sets out a core set of basic leadership practices, but they do not discuss the relative importance of these behaviors.

Meta-analysis by Marzano, McNulty, and Waters (2005) attempted to digest a number of studies and to calculate average correlations of 21 leadership traits and behaviors with success in Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) programmes. Alas, all 21 mean correlations fell into a narrow and low range between .19 affirmation and .33 situational awareness, thus indicating that all 21 traits are slightly related to success but no one trait or behavior is highly related to CSR success.

Indeed, even if leadership traits and behaviors could be ranked in one culture, the ranking might be quite different in another. One might identify situational awareness as a factor across cultures, but one culture might prize this trait much more highly than another culture.

Problem Statement

The present research was undertaken to answer two questions:

1. Do teachers' perceptions of the traits and behaviors of good and bad leaders vary across cultures?
2. If so, are differences in the perceptions of the relevant importance of various leadership traits and behaviors related to Hofstede's cultural categories?
In order to answer these questions, the following research plan was drawn up:

/> 1. Develop and pilot a questionnaire on the traits and behaviors of good and bad leaders
2. Give the questionnaire to 100 teachers in each of seven cultures
3. Analyse the results of the questionnaires for differences among cultures
4. Search for relationships between the questionnaire items and Hofstede's cultural classification scheme.

The questionnaire was developed by graduate students who piloted dozens of questions regarding traits and behaviors of good and bad leaders and came up with eight good traits, eight bad traits, eight good behaviors and eight bad behaviors of leaders. These 32 items were put into a single questionnaire, in which subjects were asked to rank in importance their top three choices for the most important items in each of the four groups of eight items. The survey items were as follows:

Traits of Good Leaders
01. He/she is very intelligent.
02. He/she is a good public speaker.
03. He/she is dependable and consistent.
04. He/she has a broad vision which he/she shares with us.
05. He/she has a very friendly personality.
06. He/she is honest and we can trust him/her.
07. He/she is very self-confident.
08. He/she shows persistence and determination in achieving goals.

Behaviors of Good Leaders
11. He/she attends to our well-being and human needs.
12. He/she appeals to our higher moral selves.
13. He/she works with us as a team.
14. He/she gives very clear instructions.
15. He/she treats us with respect.

16. He/she invites us to share in the decision-making.
17. He/she seeks to improve social relationships.
18. He/she challenges us to perform at our highest possible level.

Traits of Bad Leaders
21. He/she is stupid.
22. He/she cannot express himself/herself well.
23. He/she is not consistent between what he/she says and what he/she does.
24. He/she is narrow-minded.
25. He/she has an unfriendly personality.
26. He/she is dishonest and deceitful.
27. He/she is not confident about achieving our tasks.
28. He/she does not have a strong will to succeed.

Behaviors of Bad Leaders
31. He/she works only to improve his/her own ego and self-promotion.
32. He/she appeals to our selfishness.
33. He/she shows no sense of teamwork.
34. He/she doesn't make it clear what he/she wants us to do.
35. He/she treats us like naughty children.
36. He/she acts like a dictator.
37. He/she fears and discourages criticism and opposition.
38. He/she engages in corruption or nepotism.

The questionnaire was administered to approximately 100 teachers in each of seven different countries: Cambodia, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Qatar, Taiwan, Uganda, and the United States of America. In each case, questionnaires were given to a wide variety of schools – rural, urban, private, public, primary and secondary. Care was taken to keep the ratio of primary to secondary teachers at around two to one in each country. School principals were not included in the sample, as they might display different perceptions of leadership from teachers.

Statistical analysis was done in three stages:

1. In order to check for significant differences among the seven cultural groups, a chi-square analysis was done on the frequencies of first choices, second choices, third choices, and blanks (not chosen). This non-parametric method was chosen because the distribution of choices (3s, 2s, 1s, and many 0s) is highly non-normal.

2. If significant differences should be discovered, the nature of those differences could then be investigated. The questionnaire was scored as follows: three points for each first choice, two for second choice, and one for third choice. The points were totaled for each of the 32 items, and the mean score calculated for each item. In this way, it was possible to compare mean scores among the seven cultural groups to determine which traits or behaviors were perceived as most important in each culture.

3. In order to place the differences in perceptions into a conceptual framework, the seven mean scores for each item were then compared with the countries' scores on the four

Hofstede categories, as listed in Hofstede and Hofstede (2005). Thus, 32 different Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each Hofstede's category, and while a sample of only seven countries might not prove conclusive and significant evidence, the results, when taken together, might provide clues to certain correspondences which could be investigated in greater detail in further research.

In any event, any significant differences among the perceptual items can suggest practical ways in which the practice of leadership should be implemented in differing cultural settings.

Results

The 4 x 7 chi-square analyses revealed highly significant differences among the countries on every one of the 32 items, ranging from a significance of 2 x 10-3 on variable 33 (no sense of teamwork) to 2 x 10-35 on variable 28 (no strong will to succeed). Thus, there can be no question but that the seven groups perceived leadership very differently.

An overall significant chi-square might hide the fact that one or two cultures might be reacting very differently from the others, while the remaining ones could still display uniform results. Therefore, pairwise chi-square results were calculated. Once again, at least some significant results were obtained between all pairs. Even on what would appear to be the most culturally similar pair – that of Hong Kong and Taiwan – significant chi-squares were observed on variables 01, 04, 05, 08, 21, 24, 25, 31, 37, and 38, that is, on 10 of the 32 variables.

The mean ratings were calculated and tabulated according to the tables shown below. Note that if every subject ranked an item as first choice, its mean score would be 3, while if no one chose that item at all, its mean score would be 0. Thus, a score above 1.0 represents a relatively high number of subjects selecting that item.

The results were as follows:

Mean Ratings for Traits of Good Leaders

Country/Variable	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
Taiwan	.77	.18	1.61	.67	.75	1.14	.23	.64
Qatar	.67	.30	.91	1.22	.63	.80	.44	1.03
Hong Kong	1.17	.10	1.38	1.27	.35	.98	.19	.65
Uganda	1.04	.89	.52	.93	.54	.79	.41	.85
Cambodia	1.76	.09	.27	.09	.10	1.63	.25	1.81
Pakistan	1.38	.61	.55	.67	.77	.79	.61	.62
USA	.32	.21	1.67	.57	.31	1.30	.50	1.11

Mean Ratings for Behaviors of Good Leaders

Country/Variable	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Taiwan	.79	.37	1.46	.62	1.38	.59	.15	.63
Qatar	.72	.48	1.12	.73	1.05	1.08	.26	.55
Hong Kong	.58	.29	1.38	.70	1.61	.56	.07	.88
Uganda	.69	.34	1.22	.41	1.16	1.16	.50	.52
Cambodia	1.21	1.68	.14	.56	.56	1.08	.48	.27
Pakistan	.83	.68	1.12	.51	1.14	.68	.39	.65
USA	.64	.22	.87	.47	1.37	.90	.22	1.30

Mean Ratings for Traits of Bad Leaders

Country/Variable	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Taiwan	.12	.46	1.47	.73	.97	1.68	.31	.13
Qatar	.45	.37	1.08	.95	.62	.86	.64	.94
Hong Kong	.39	.32	1.28	1.18	.51	1.65	.22	.22
Uganda	.38	.81	.94	.74	.98	1.03	.70	.35
Cambodia	1.08	.27	.63	.65	.27	.96	.90	1.15
Pakistan	1.31	.73	.7	.92	.32	.94	.40	.51
USA	.06	.31	1.77	1.01	.45	1.08	.27	.83

Mean Ratings for Behaviors of Bad Leaders

Country/Variable	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
Taiwan	1.13	.40	.76	1.04	1.21	.49	.28	.45
Qatar	1.23	.41	.86	.72	.31	1.14	.76	.49
Hong Kong	.48	.32	.70	1.01	1.16	.54	.54	.96
Uganda	.94	.25	.85	.34	.63	1.18	.90	.85
Cambodia	1.37	1.06	.22	.28	.56	.58	.44	1.39
Pakistan	1.21	.70	.97	.35	.51	1.03	.53	.58
USA	.96	.10	.60	.93	.51	1.17	.78	.66

In order to organize the above results in a meaningful array, we list the top three choices for each country with their mean ratings as follows:

Country/Traits of Good Leaders	Highest	Mean Rating	Second	Mean Rating	Third	Mean Rating
Taiwan	Dependable	1.60	Honest	1.14	Intelligent	.77
Qatar	Vision	1.22	Persistent	1.03	Dependable	.91
Hong Kong	Dependable	1.38	Vision	1.27	Intelligent	1.17
Uganda	Intelligent	1.04	Vision	.93	Speaking	.89
Cambodia	Persistent	1.81	Intelligent	1.76	Honest	1.63
Pakistan	Intelligent	1.38	Honest	.79	Friendly	.77
USA	Dependable	1.67	Honest	1.30	Persistent	1.11

Country/ Behaviors of Good Leaders	Highest	Mean Rating	Second	Mean Rating	Third	Mean Rating
Taiwan	Teamwork	1.46	Respect	1.38	Well-being	.79
Qatar	Teamwork	1.12	Shared Resp.	1.08	Respect	1.05
Hong Kong	Respect	1.61	Teamwork	1.38	Performance	.88
Uganda	Teamwork	1.22	Respect	1.16	Shared Resp.	1.16
Cambodia	Morals	1.68	Well-being	1.21	Shared Resp.	1.08
Pakistan	Respect	1.14	Teamwork	1.12	Well-being	.83
USA	Respect	1.37	Performance	1.30	Shared Resp.	.90

Country/Traits of Bad Leaders	Highest	Mean Rating	Second	Mean Rating	Third	Mean Rating
Taiwan	Dishonest	1.68	Inconsistent	1.47	Unfriendly	.97
Qatar	Inconsistent	1.08	Narrow-minded	.95	No Willpower	.94
Hong Kong	Dishonest	1.65	Inconsistent	1.28	Narrow-minded	1.18
Uganda	Dishonest	1.03	Unfriendly	.98	Inconsistent	.94
Cambodia	No Willpower	1.15	Intelligent	1.08	Dishonest	.96
Pakistan	Stupid	1.31	Dishonest	.94	Narrow-minded	.92
USA	Inconsistent	1.77	Dishonest	1.08	Narrow-minded	1.01

Country/Behaviors of Bad Leaders	Highest	Mean Rating	Second	Mean Rating	Third	Mean Rating
Taiwan	As Children	1.21	Ego	1.13	Not Clear	1.04
Qatar	Ego	1.23	Dictator	1.14	No team	.86
Hong Kong	As Children	1.16	Not Clear	1.01	Corrupt	.96
Uganda	Dictator	1.18	Ego	.94	No criticism	.90
Cambodia	Corrupt	1.39	Ego	1.37	Selfish	1.06
Pakistan	Ego	1.21	Dictator	1.03	No team	.97
USA	Dictator	1.17	Ego	.96	Not Clear	.93

Correlations with Hofstede ratings

Pairwise Pearson coefficients were calculated between mean ratings on each of the 32 variables and each of the four Hofstede ratings. Qatar was considered as part of Hofstede's Arab culture, while Uganda was considered as part of 'East Africa'. Cambodia was not on Hofstede's list, so figures for Thailand were used, especially since the teachers interviewed came from Western Cambodia near the Thai border. However, this equivalence might be questioned. In addition, Hofstede ratings on a fifth variable, long-term outlook, were available for six of the seven countries (all except Arabic culture). Thus, the correlations were calculated for a sample size of only seven countries in most cases, and only six in the last case. With such small sample sizes, it would take quite a high Pearson coefficient to achieve significance.

The Hofstede ratings of the seven countries of this study, followed in parentheses by their rank among 74 countries, were as follows:

Country/ Hofstede rating and rank	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity	Individualism
Taiwan	58 (43)	69 (39)	45 (44)	17 (64)
Qatar	80 (13)	68 (40)	53 (31)	38 (39)
Hong Kong	68 (28)	29 (70)	57 (26)	25 (53)
Uganda	64 (35)	52 (54)	41 (54)	27 (50)
Cambodia	64 (35)	64 (44)	34 (64)	20 (58)
Pakistan	55 (48)	70 (36)	50 (35)	14 (68)
USA	40 (58)	46 (62)	62 (19)	91 (1)

Correlations of 0.7 and above were found in the following cases:

Power Distance
No Correlations above 0.7 were found with any of the 32 variables

Individualism		
Correlation value, R =	Variable	p ≤
-.724	01 Intelligent	.066
.797	18 Performance	.032
.703	23 Inconsistency	.078

Masculinity		
Correlation value, R =	Variable	p ≤
-.729	01 Intelligent	.063
.678	02 Dependable	.094
- .866	11 Well-being	.012
-.802	12 Morality	.030
.765	15 Respect	.045
.893	18 Performance	.007
.708	23 Inconsistent	.075
.871	24 Narrow-minded	.011
-.753	27 Not Confident	.051
-.793	32 Selfish appeal	.033

Uncertainty avoidance		
Correlation value, R =	Variable	p ≤
.918	31 Egotism	.004

In their revised edition, Hofstede and Hofstede added a fifth variable, that of long-term versus short-term thinking. Far Eastern countries like China and Hong Kong head the list of long-term cultures. Six of the seven countries from the present study appear on this list (using Thailand as similar to Cambodia and Zimbabwe as similar to Uganda), and their ratings (and ranks out of 39 countries) are:

Country	Rating and Rank
Hong Kong	96 (2)
Taiwan	87 (3)
Cambodia	56 (9)
USA	29 (31)
Uganda	25 (32)
Pakistan	0 (39)

Correlations can again be computed. In fact, six of the 32 variables achieved significant or nearly significant correlations with the Long-term ratings:

Correlation value, R =	Variable	p ≤
-.696	02 Public speaking	.125
-.943	07 Self confidence	.005
.846	14 Clear instruction	.034
-.674	17 Social	.142
.875	26 Dishonest	.022
.884	35 Treats like children	.019
-.862	36 Dictator	.027

In summary, the cultural attribute of masculinity correlated significantly or nearly significantly with 10 of the 32 variables, while long-term thought correlated significantly or nearly significantly with 7 of the 32 variables.

Discussion

It is clear from the results that there are very large differences among cultures in perceptions of what constitutes good or bad leadership. Intelligence, for example, rated very highly among Cambodians, with a mean ranking of 1.76, while in the United States intelligence ranked very low with a mean ranking of only 0.32. On the other hand, broad vision is important for American educators (mean ranking 1.37), but not so important for Cambodians (mean ranking 0.27).
(The word intelligence may have different meanings from culture to culture. This notion bears further investigation.)

The implications for practice in each country are obvious. For example, in selecting an educational leader to work in a Cambodian school, intelligence should play a large role in the choice compared to broad vision, while in the United States, the choice should take into account vision over intelligence. In the field of leadership behavior, a school principal sent to work in Cambodia should place a high value on moral leadership, while someone sent to Taiwan should emphasize team spirit.
Placing the results within a theoretical framework is a much more daunting task. The generally low and insignificant correlations with most of the Hofstede cultural categories show that the Hofstede paradigm is not adequate to explain differences among educational leaders. Of the Hofstede categories, only masculinity appears able to predict some of the perceptions of good and bad leaders, displaying significant or nearly significant correlations with 10 out of the 32 variables tested. Of the 74 countries listed by Hofstede's augmented 2005 tables, Slovakia, Japan, Hungary, and Austria are the most masculine countries, while the Scandinavian countries are the most feminine.

In practice, this means that the choice of leadership traits and behaviors in high masculinity cultures should tend towards leaders who are dependable, consistent, and broad-minded, while the traits of intelligence and confidence (with negative correlations with the masculinity factor) are less important than in more feminine cultures. As for behaviors, a leader in a highly masculine culture should focus on showing respect to subordinates and pushing them to higher performance, while in a feminine culture, the leader should emphasize morality and the well-being of the subordinates. Hofstede himself makes a similar claim: "Cooperation is a more important value in feminine than in masculine cultures" (Hofstede &Hofstede, p. 270).

An isolated result is the highest observed correlation (.918) between uncertainty avoidance and egotism. Thus, an especially egotistical leader will be viewed in the most negative light in high uncertainty-avoidance cultures, of which Greece, Portugal, Guatemala, and Uruguay head the list, while Singapore, Jamaica, Denmark, Sweden, and Hong Kong lie at the bottom of that list.

Lest there be any confusion over the interpretation of negative correlations, one should note, for example, that the highly negative correlation of -.729 between intelligence and masculine cultures in no way suggests that masculine cultures value stupid educational leaders. Rather, it means that intelligence, while perhaps still of value, is of relatively lower importance than other traits.

Perhaps surprising is the lack of correlation between certain variables. One might expect, for example, that acting like a dictator would be viewed more negatively in egalitarian, low power-distance cultures, while a high power-distance culture would be more tolerant of dictatorial behavior. This did not appear to be the case among the seven cultures observed in this study. Similarly, one might expect the giving

of clear instructions to be a more important element of leadership in high uncertainty-avoidance cultures, but again, this did not prove to be the case.

If a theoretical context is to be found for the study of educational leadership (viewed as distinct from business management), other cultural categories will have to be investigated. In other words, the field of education is a culture in itself and needs its own set of cultural categories. Masculinity and Confucian Dynamism are a start in this direction, but it appears that Power Distance and Individualism are not good predictors of perceptions of good or bad leadership.

Dimmock and Walker (2000) have suggested possible categories for consideration, as stated above. While their first three categories appear to reflect those of Hofstede, their last three – Fatalistic/proactive, Generative/replicative, and Limited relationship/holistic relationship – could prove useful. What is needed is to construct quantitative instruments and to measure various cultures on the basis of these categories, and then to see which leadership traits and behaviors relate to which of these cultural categories.

Another way to approach this problem might be to perform a statistical factor analysis on a number of leadership traits and behaviors. The factors identified in this way could be taken as cultural categories, especially if those same factors appeared across studies of many cultures.

Summary

The study showed that perceptions of the traits and behaviors of good and bad leaders among teachers vary widely among cultures. No single set of traits or behaviors can be taken as universally important. As Hofstede and Hofstede put it:

Beliefs about leadership reflect the dominant culture of a country. Asking people to describe the qualities of a good leader is a way of asking them to describe their culture. The leader is a culture hero, in the sense of acting as a model for behavior. (p. 268)

While the study examined only seven cultures, it is more difficult to predict results in other cultures. At present, perhaps the only theoretical context currently available for assessing the global situation is the paradigm of the categories of Hofstede, which, according to this study, appears to be inadequate. Educational leadership is not the same subculture as business management, and needs its own paradigm of categories if any predictive validity can be achieved.

Still, Hofstede's Masculinity index, and to a lesser extent Long-term outlook, can be taken as a starting point for identifying cultural variables that contribute to perceptions of good and bad leadership. Thus, it may be possible to predict the success of educational leaders with certain traits or behaviors in highly masculine or feminine cultures.

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