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# Global leadership

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# Global Leadership

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The spread of globalization has expanded the nature of leadership in global jobs. “The term ‘global’ encompasses more than simple *geographic reach* in terms of business operations. It also includes the notion of *cultural reach* in terms of people and *intellectual reach* in the development of a global mindset” (Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland, 2006: 197) and global skills. The global context or crucible that shapes and challenges this type of leader is characterized by:

- *multiplicity* across a range of dimensions;
- *interdependence* among a host of stakeholders, sociocultural, political, economic and environmental systems;
- *ambiguity* in terms of understanding causal relationships, interpreting cues and signals, identifying appropriate actions and pursuing plausible goals; and
- *flux* in terms of quickly transitioning systems, shifting values and emergent patterns of organizational structure and behavior.

(Lane, Maznevski, Mendenhall & McNett, 2004)

In some ways, global leadership (GL) appears to be qualitatively different from domestic leadership. In a related example, a direct comparison of domestic and expatriate work found that expatriates reported significantly higher demands for social and perceptual skills, reasoning ability, and adjustment- and achievement-orientation personality requirements in their work (Shin, Morgeson and Campion, 2007). Scholars have yet to directly compare and contrast the demands and competencies of domestic and global leadership. Early findings indicate both shared similarities and differences of degree and kind with domestic leader-

ship, due to contextual factors (Mendenhall, 2008). Thus, in addition to leadership theory, GL has multidisciplinary intellectual roots in intercultural communication competence, expatriation, global management and comparative leadership (Osland, 2008).

As yet, there is no accepted definition of the global leadership construct or well-developed and tested theories. A brief definition, drawn from Adler (2001) and Festing (2001), is the *process* of influencing the thinking, attitudes, and behaviors of a global community to work together synergistically toward a common vision and common goals (Osland et al, 2006: 204). An expanded definition captures Kotter’s (1990) distinction between managers and leaders: “individuals who effect significant positive change in 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” (Osland, Bird, Osland & Oddou, 2007: 2). The second definition assumes that not all global managers are global leaders.

There are several GL literature reviews (Hollenbeck, 2001; Suutari, 2002; Jokinen, 2004; Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland, 2006; Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou & Maznevski, 2008; Osland, 2008) and ten empirical studies to date. Most scholars have sought to answer one or both of these questions: “What capabilities do global leaders need to acquire in order to be effective?” and “How is global leadership developed?” The resultant lists of competencies (Black, Morrison & Gregersen, 1999; Goldsmith, Greenberg, Robertson & Hu-Chan, 2003;

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Kets De Vries, Vrignaud & Florent-Treacy, 2004; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; Rosen, Digh, Singer, & Phillips, 2000; Yeung & Ready, 1995) are overlapping and separated at times only by semantic differences (Jokinen, 2005).

Three frameworks attempt to organize the lengthy list of, at last count, 62 GL competencies. First, Mendenhall and Osland (2002) concluded that GL is a multi-dimensional construct with at least six core categories of competencies: 1) cross-cultural relationship skills, 2) traits and values, 3) cognitive orientation, 4) global business expertise, 5) global organizing expertise, and 6) visioning. Second, Jokinen (2005) identified three main types of GL competencies: 1) fundamental competencies (personal transformation, self awareness, inquisitiveness), 2) desired mental characteristics (e.g., empathy, self-regulation), and 3) desired behavioral competencies (e.g., social networking, knowledge). Third, the pyramid model<sup>1</sup> consists of knowledge, traits, attitudes & orientations (global mindset), interpersonal skills, and system skills (Osland, 2008).

Two studies focus more directly on tasks and effectiveness than competencies. Caligiuri (2006) identified ten global leader tasks and worked backwards to determine the knowledge, skills, ability and other personal characteristics (KSAOs) that lead to their effective performance and make recommendations about training and development. To measure more directly how global leaders think and behave, Osland, Bird, Osland and Oddou (2007) studied expert cognition in highly effective global leaders using cognitive task analysis (Crandall, Hoffman & Klein, 2006). In addition to the high-level problem solving and strategic thinking that one would expect in such a population, their cues and strategies evidence well-developed schemas for boundary spanning and stakeholder management, reading cultural and emotional cues, and seeking clarity. They deal with the extreme ambiguity of challenging situations by relying on a learned problem solving process, choosing the right

people for their teams, and developing a high level of trust among both teams and stakeholders (Osland et al., 2007).

As with all nascent fields, a great deal of foundational research remains to be done (Osland et al., 2006). While firms and universities have instituted GL training programs, their theoretical underpinnings require strengthening, and there is no work to date on the efficacy of training methods. The main lessons learned to date are summarized below:

- There seems to be a positive relationship between MNC financial success and their ability to successfully develop GL competencies (Stroh & Caligiuri, 1998).
- Businesses have reported an inadequate number of global leaders (Gregersen, Morrison & Black, 1998), and a future global leadership gap is predicted in for-profit, public, and non-profit sectors (Bikson, Treverton, Moini, & Lindstrom, 2003).
- A comparison of effective and ineffective global leaders found that the former group: had significantly higher conscientiousness scores and significantly lower neuroticism scores on the “Big Five” Personality test; came from diverse families; participated in more geographically distributed teams; had long-term international assignments; and were mentored by people from a different culture (Caligiuri, 2004).
- There is growing consensus that global leadership consists of core characteristics, context-specific abilities, and universal leadership skills (Osland, 2008).
- GL training and development is based on the assumption that this form of leadership requires different types of knowledge, cognitive and behavioral skills.
- Many aspects of GL development involve personal transformation (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; Osland et al., 2006; Osland & Bird, 2008), which

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1 This model was originally developed by ION scholars for global managers (Bird & Osland, 2004) and subsequently adapted by those authors based on the findings of empirical GL studies.

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makes GL development less linear and predictable (Mendenhall, 2006; Osland et al., 2006).

- Several instruments have been designed to assess aspects of global leadership. Bird (2008) reviews their

strengths, weaknesses, and recommended applications.

Global leadership, like global mindset, seems destined to be an important source of competitive advantage for transnational corporations.

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