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Comparing current and future global leaders based upon known leadership dimensions and cultural indicators

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Abstract

This paper presents the preliminary findings from a cross sectional, trend design study over three years (2007-2009). The sample (n=187) includes cohorts of international Master of Business Administration (MBA) students enrolled each year in a 'leadership' subject. The study aims to measure human dimensions known to be significant to leadership effectiveness including behaviour, personality, cultural and emotional dimensions. The research raises questions in reference to the future challenges for leadership development by comparing data from this cohort of students studying leadership with current global leaders. This paper reports the initial data for several self diagnostic instruments including: the MBTI; measures for emotional intelligence and; personality style. The results of these assessments are to be compared with similar assessments on known effective global leaders. The ultimate aim of the research is to discover similarities and discrepancies between the two groups in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the behavioural and cultural backgrounds and experiences that future leaders will need to lead successfully. The study will provide useful information to those responsible for developing future leaders.

Keywords

Leadership development, Master of Business Administration, leadership and personality, cross-cultural leadership, emotional intelligence

Introduction

The research objectives of this research are to:

RO1: understand the behavioural, cultural and emotional expectations and biases of future global leaders who are undertaking a formal leadership development program

RO2: compare and contrast this data with the behavioural, cultural and emotional expectations and biases of known 'successful' global leaders

RO3: evaluate how relevant a current leadership development program is to future business and management challenges

RO4: make recommendations concerning the usefulness and relevance of well recognised diagnostic instruments to future leaders

RO5: align the current leadership development program to validated findings

The past 20 years has seen an explosion of self diagnostic instruments designed to assist leaders to compare themselves against a variety of personality, competency and cultural dimensions (Dalglish and Miller, 2010). Many of these instruments are utilised in professional development programs for leaders. The researchers in this study wanted to investigate the usefulness and impact of several well validated instruments in terms of assisting leaders to become more self aware and to gauge the usefulness of these instruments in being predictors for those who are responsible for leadership development. Therefore, three cohorts of elite senior business students from Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Asia and other countries volunteered to participate and complete a battery of self diagnostic leadership instruments.

This paper presents the preliminary findings from the study in the form of descriptive statistics on a range of demographic responses and results from a cluster of the diagnostic instruments. Similar data is currently being collected from a variety of sources that describe known 'successful' global leaders. The full analysis of all three cohorts will involve cross tabulations, factor analysis, correlations and comparisons with the 'successful' leaders group.

Literature review

Global and worldly leadership

Mendenhall (2008) explores how the heritage of the field of leadership has influenced the current and emerging field of global leadership. The levels of complexity and the number of challenges brought about by globalisation has spawned this new field of inquiry. It has also set challenges for those who are in the business of educating the leaders of the future to find out what are the personality, competency and cultural dimensions that influences global leadership.

Oddou and Mendenhall (2008) refer to a tripartite dimensionality that is needed when designing global leadership development programs. They identify a range of personal competencies (e.g., tolerance for ambiguity, integrity etc) all of which need to focus on the effective development and management of relationships. Underlying all of these is business experience and acumen.

The Leadership Trust has also been at the forefront of calling for a re-conceptualisation of the notion of global leadership towards the notion of worldly leadership. Turnbull (2008, p. 1) claims the '...term "global leadership" is too often used as a shorthand for exporting western managers overseas'. The Leadership Trust has been developing the notion of worldly leadership by building on from the work of Henry Mintzberg and his ideas around worldliness as opposed to the discourses surrounding globalisation. Worldly leadership in action encompasses: interconnectedness; boundary spanning; shared leadership; ethical stewardship; common good; sustainability and; shared reflective sense making (Turnbull 2008, p. 2).

Personality indicators

There is a rich literature containing personality indicators. Certainly the most well know indicator is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The MBTI is an

established and world renowned instrument used globally in business and education and human resource management. The MBTI is utilised by professionals in psychology, career counselling, education (schools through to higher education) and human resource management. Research on the instrument over the last decade has demonstrated high levels of reliability and validity both within and across cultures (Bathurst and Cash 2001; Hoha 2001; Russinova & Pencheva 2001; Shen 2003). The Centre for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT) maintains a database of the international literature and research which utilizes the MBTI. Several studies have been conducted around cross cultural leadership and personality type and have been brought together in Ginn (2001). The research outlined in this study will further extend the existing research by focusing on a diverse post graduate student population studying leadership.

Dimensions of culture

The seminal work of Geert Hofstede (1991; 2001) on the dimensions of culture over the past 30 years forms a large section on the survey administered for this research. Hofstede first found four, and later five dimensions of culture: power distance; individualism; masculinity; uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation. Since the original work of Hofstede other similar studies have been developed: Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) and House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta (2004). A majority of this work builds on Hofstede's original research and is not without its critics. Critical engagement with the literature with respect to this will take place during the writing of the full study and after the full data analysis of the three cohorts has been completed.

Other leadership indicators

In addition to the widely used global leadership competencies, personality indicators and cultural dimensions, there are many other leadership related self diagnostic instruments drawn from the literature (Daft and Pirola-Merlo, 2009; Dubrin, Dalglis and Miller, 2006 and Dalglis and Miller, 2010) that are significant to leadership effectiveness including instruments to measure:

- Assertiveness
- Self awareness
- Cognitive style
- Interpersonal orientation
- Behavioural style
- Leadership style
- Locus of control
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Emotional intelligence
- Personality style

Word limitations preclude a full listing of each of the instruments and the relevant validations studies.

Research design and methodology

The research design adopted for the study was a cross sectional, trend design over three years (2007-2009). The sample (n=186) included Master of Business Administration (MBA) students enrolled each year in a 'leadership' subject within this postgraduate program. The study included domestic Australian students,

international students studying in Australia from approximately 10 different countries and international students studying in their own countries.

Students were administered the *Myers-Briggs Self Scorable Form M* and a series of other self diagnostic instruments at the commencement of the course. The former was funded by an Internal Research Grant, administered by a qualified MBTI administrator and offered to the students free of charge. Students were also asked a series of questions based on Hofstede's work in dimensions of culture. Twenty questions from Hofstede's *Values Survey Module 1994 Questionnaire (VSM 94)* were included. Students completed the assessments using both a manual survey instrument and an online facility using Survey Monkey.

Scores for each of the instruments were analysed and feedback provided to students to assist them to become more self aware, ascertain initial personality types and other leadership attributes. The ethical aspects of the study were approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Results

A total sample of one hundred and eighty seven (187) students participated in the research. There was approximate gender balance with 53.5% male responses and 46.5% female. Ages of the respondents ranged from 20 years to 60 years with the majority of students aged from 25-29 years (20.9%) and 40-44 years (19.3%). Students participating in the research were residents of the following countries:

- Australia
- New Zealand
- Melanesia
- Polynesia
- United Kingdom
- Western Europe
- Southern Europe
- Mainland South-East Asia
- Maritime South-East Asia
- Chinese Asia (includes Mongolia)
- Japan and the Koreas

It is a requirement of the MBA program that students have some professional experience before entering the program. Many of students also had leadership experience with the majority (65.6%) having over 3 years experience leading other people. It may be said then that this sample are mostly experienced managers and leaders.

Due to the word limitations of this paper not all results can be reported. The results from Hofstede's, *Values Survey Module Questionnaire* are particularly too lengthy to report and the quantity of other instruments utilised in the research also precludes our ability to fully report all results here. As a result we have decided to report on the

frequencies for a small cluster of the personality instruments only. Descriptive findings from the following instruments are reported here:

- Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
- Emotional Intelligence
- Personality Style

Myers Briggs Type Indicator

Students were asked to undertake the Myers-Briggs Self Scorable Form M and then to complete the web-based survey and enter their assessed MBTI personality type. The categories of the MBTI personality types and the percentage of students in each category are recorded in Table 1 below.

Table 1: MBTI personality types

MBTI type	Percent
ISTJ	13.9
ISTP	4.3
ISFJ	4.3
ISFP	0.5
INFJ	3.7
INFP	3.7
INTJ	7.5
INTP	6.4
ESTP	2.1
ESTJ	16.0
ESFP	1.1
ESFJ	2.7
ENFP	7.0
ENFJ	5.3
ENTP	10.7
ENTJ	10.7

As will be noted from the table, 16% of students fell into the ESTJ type. The next largest type was ISTJ with 13.9%. These results will be compared to known distributions from other studies that have investigated personality types for leaders.

Emotional intelligence

Daniel Goleman (2004) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and a number of recent studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between the ability to manage emotions and the quality of social interactions and therefore leadership potential. Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to deal effectively with one's own and others emotions. When applied to the workplace, emotional intelligence is about thinking intelligently with emotions; perceiving, expressing, understanding and managing emotions in a professional and effective manner at work. The emotional

intelligence scale was adopted from an instrument adapted from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) and consisted of 68 items measuring 7 dimensions. Table 2 depicts the results for this instrument.

Table 2: Emotional intelligence scores

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Positive Expressivity	18.00	45.00	33.4371
Negative Expressivity	10.00	45.00	31.5210
Attending to Emotions	18.00	50.00	37.9162
Emotion Based Decision Making	9.00	44.00	26.0000
Responsive Joy	13.00	50.00	38.9162
Responsive Distress	13.00	48.00	31.4072
Empathic Concern	11.00	50.00	33.4790

The results should be compared against normative benchmarks as follows:

Positive Expressivity	36 + indicates high levels of emotional intelligence.
Negative Expressivity	40 + indicates high levels of emotional intelligence.
Attending to Emotions	40 + indicates high levels of emotional intelligence.
Emotion Based Decision Making	36 + indicates high levels of emotional intelligence.
Responsive Joy	40 + indicates high levels of emotional intelligence.
Responsive Distress	40 + indicates high levels of emotional intelligence.
Empathic Concern	40 + indicates high levels of emotional intelligence.

The preliminary findings indicate that this cohort has generally lower averages to the normative data for each of the dimensions. It will be of interest to investigate whether the different cultural groups have significantly different averages on the Emotional Intelligence scale.

Personality style

For the personality style assessment, a four quadrant behavioural model based on the work of William Moulton Marston (1893 - 1947) to examine the behaviour of individuals in their environment or within a specific situation in order to determine behavioural styles and behavioural preferences was utilised. The instrument consists of 28 items and results in categorizing the leader in one of four styles: Choleric; Sanguine; Phlegmatic; Melancholy. The categories of personality styles and the percentage of students in each category are recorded in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Personality style types

Personality style type	Percent
Melancholy	19.3
Choleric	33.7
Phlegmatic	16.9
Sanguine	30.1
Total	100.0

The most frequently reported personality style reported is the Choleric at 33.7%, followed by Sanguine at 30.1%. The Melancholy style represents 19.3% of the cohort whilst Phlegmatic is 16.9% of the cohort. These results will be compared to international benchmarks for this instrument.

Discussion and preliminary conclusions

These preliminary findings demonstrate, for this elite group of future global leaders that, perhaps the dimensions of culture developed by Hofstede may have lost its relevancy. The research also raises questions about how to effectively evaluate leadership in action and within global contexts. This may require a significant reframing to approaches in evaluating leadership development programs.

The full analysis of all three cohorts is planned and will involve cross tabulations, factor analysis and correlations of the data enabling the results to be compared with the key literature in the areas of global and worldly leadership, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, dimensions of culture and a cluster of other diagnostics. The findings from this study will make a significant contribution to the study of leadership within global contexts and add to the literature on leadership education and development. This will also add to a small but growing body of research concerning personality type and cross cultural differences which is particularly relevant to the provision of leadership education internationally.

Concluding remarks

Comparative analysis is planned with similar data on known ‘successful’ leaders and is being cross tabulated by gender, nationality, age and other demographic variables that were collected from this study of future leaders. The data will then be compared utilising a variety of statistical methods. The possible emergence of both significant differences and congruence will be of interest to the researchers and others by providing information for discussion as to what aspects of leadership are predictive, significant and important to effective leadership. This exploratory research will begin what hopefully will assist with the development of a new way of understanding future leaders. The research result will allow us to discuss the usefulness of these scales in determining leadership effectiveness.

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