

Leadership and Learning in a Bilingual Society

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of educational leadership within the global context by focusing on Latin America as the specific region targeted for the implementation of a program developed by faculty in the Bilingual Education and Educational Leadership/Higher Education Administration Programs, in the Adrian Dominican School of Education, at Barry University, Miami, Florida. The discussion centers on specific issues of concern to educators within a global-oriented framework and how these become relevant within Latin American societies. It is expected that this meta-analysis of the literature will serve to promote continuous dialogue across cultural as well as geographic boundaries for the training of future educational leaders.

Introduction

At the onset of this 21st Century, the leadership phenomenon must transcend geographic boundaries and, thus, be inclusive of a multicultural human capital. In the education terrain, the essence of effective leadership becomes especially salient. Teaching/learning practices and continuous dialogue, toward the development of social theory, should address a holistic context-one that will ensure progressive educational systems, through joint partnerships with cybernetic-oriented institutions and alignment with global objectives for civilization.

Background

Universities must serve as catalysts in the global context for reform and respond to the call for civic responsibility through collaborative ventures across cultures. In today's world, the word "university" still conjures up images of an intellectual center for discourse, vis-à-vis the genesis for a scientific research agenda. The challenge facing educational leaders to ensure quality and equitable access to bilingual education are ongoing as well as we move towards a diverse global society. Focusing on bilingual education as the means to foster greater understanding and social change

creates a pathway to prepare students for success in a globally interdependent and culturally diverse world.

Effective bilingual teaching practices for the 21st century must embrace human diversity and multiculturalism through collaborative vision of educational opportunities for all children. In this new informational age, driven by economical forces and technological advances, educational institutions face the challenge of preparing educational leaders and educating students who can solve problems, process and communicate complex systems, and work collaboratively.

Indeed, the American university of the present day is faced with several dilemmas that include, but are not necessarily limited to heavy declines in funding; unclear governance structures; changing student demographics; accountability, vis-à-vis assessment practices; articulation between the K-12 system and post-secondary institutions; identifying the balance between the scholarship of teaching and compliance with those objectives formulated by government and/or private industry-sponsored research; technology platforms; and uncertain job markets for graduate students (Zusman, 1999).

For the most part, Spanish Latin American universities were patterned after medieval institutions such as Salamanca that represented the epitome of intellectual discourse. The last four decades, however, have brought a series of reforms to educational systems in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Venezuela that amount to the following concerns: 1) the influence of politicized systems or power structures within the institutions themselves; 2) the over dependence on external resources for funding such as the World Bank; and 3) the training for faculty at low-quality institutions may diminish chances for viable partnerships with the more advanced institutions within the global community (Figueredo-Cowen, 2002).

Issues in the Global Education

The aforementioned context for the university as an international entity might serve to crystallize a series of issues that travel across nations and constitute the challenge for educational leadership in the global arena. These issues include "school-based management, teacher incentives, multicultural education, civic responsibilities, tracking, curriculum depth, individualized instruction, fair testing and assessment, special learning problems, and communications with the public" (Heyneman, 2003, p 42).

These "issues" serve to frame the following elements that must be addressed if the development of human capital is an international objective: (a) social and cultural context; (b) leadership skills and change in higher

education administration; (c) teaching and learning at the university level; and (d) cross-cultural communication. It is expected that through exposure to these elements, a cadre of global-oriented educational leaders will emerge and, thus, prepare the next generation of school- and college-level teachers and administrators.

Barry University, located in Miami-Dade County, Florida, has been identified as the largest minority serving, private institution in the southern region of the United States. As such, the University through its most recent Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation process (2002-2003) has undergone a comprehensive self-study that has served to highlight those academic programs that can meet the demands of an international agenda while effectively complying with some of the tenets that are inherent in its mission; namely, "to provide a quality education and engage in community service." Thus, the Adrian Dominican School of Education has designed its educational leadership curriculum to address the aforementioned elements in a proactive response to meet the challenge for continuous progress and intends to "pilot" a program for Latin American educators.

Social and Cultural Issues

It is no surprise that an objective view of the social, economic and political infrastructure will serve to identify the educational level of any country. To meet this challenge, change is needed. Global educational institutions must embark in cross-cultural discourse with college professors, school board members, principals, teachers, parents, students, community members, and policy makers to identify ways in which to transform educational systems into new centers of teaching and learning. Given worldwide changing demographics, now more than ever, we must encourage educators to take leadership roles that will ensure a cadre of well prepared, results oriented leaders.

In his landmark work, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2002) focuses on the term pedagogy, not as a teaching methodology, but as an open dialogue for the development of social theory and/or philosophy over time. Indeed, if the more developed nations are going to build bridges across the globe, educational leaders must be continuously involved in cross-cultural analysis toward the hermeneutics of interdependent and culturally diverse societies. However, caution must always be exerted to not violate the unique values and cultural expressions of any society (Moos, 2003). In the words of Moos, schools should not seek to become uniform...Schools

should become communities that can accommodate a pluralistic and wide range of different cultures and people. It is in the meeting, the discussions, the dialogues and the sharing that they learn and are educated (2003, p 31).

The Workshop (Symposium) in Global Leadership and Education/EDU 592 course has been developed and will focus on those topics that complement those "problems" in the global equation: access and accountability; liberal arts versus vocational tracking; diversity (gender, religion, special needs, sexual orientation, age, language, ethnicity and race); civic engagement and efficacy; and technology. The following paragraphs will present a *précis* of each of these issues, within the Latin American context as a basis for discussion and further research.

Access and accountability. The responsibilities of educational leaders has become far more complex than at any time in our history. With recent developments in education, including standards and accountability movement and site-based and shared decision making, we must build leadership capacity for bilingual education at the school, site principal, and district or community leadership levels to meet these challenges. In Argentina, for example, "access of entering students" is followed by three different categories according to "socioeconomic level, type of education, or modality of education" (Ledesma, 2002, p 471). In Chile, the creation of a national testing agenda and collection of data have served to "justify increasing the emphasis on communication in building language skills and reducing the teaching of grammar and orthography (Castillo, 1999 as cited in Schiefelbein & Schiefelbein, 2003, p 150).

Diversity. Albeit this is an all-encompassing topic, a notable for educational leaders is the issue of ethnicity and race within the Latin American context as these two factors occupy the forefront of demographic trends for the United States. Perhaps, by the year 2050, "Hispanics will make up one-quarter of the population or nearly ninety-six million persons" (Jeria, 1999, p 51).

Civic engagement and efficacy. This issue is situated at the core of competitiveness in a world-market economy, especially within the neo-liberalism context whereby institutions are dependent on entities such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and others for resources. According to Armengol (2002) Latin American universities must enter into symbiotic relationships with these international organizations and direct their activities to those community ventures aimed at expanding the knowledge base in the areas of technology, human resource training, and information management.

Technology. The word technology becomes the independent variable in

the conceptual framework of globalization. The quality of educational programs delivered via distance education depends on the technological infrastructure available and whether faculty support the technology. Therefore, the technology used by educational leaders must include training in educational applications of technology.

Leadership Skills and Change in Higher Education

The previous discussion on Social and Cultural Issues provides the rationale for the context of educational leadership program. In other words, the present world order, vis-à-vis the education platform, requires a constructivist approach to leadership—one framed by a plethora of theories that have emerged based on a global and salient mandate for change. It [this era] calls for continuous reflection toward a re-culturing process, namely, the capacity to assess new ideas critically and implement the appropriate ones within the organization, vis-à-vis the pervasive infrastructure (Fullan, 2001, as cited in Brown & McCrink, 2003, p 3).

Thus, these theories present a hybrid of leadership and change such as, Senge's (1990) Systems Thinking toward development of the "learning organization," Kotter's (1996) sequential steps for change; and Greenleaf's (1998) servant leadership. These become relevant within the context of a project such as the Citizen's School Project in Brazil. Fischman and Gvirtz (2001) report:

In this programme educators, students, parents, community organizations and individuals have had the opportunity to express their opinions about the role that schools should play in the larger society and to reflect upon the type of social, political and educational practices they would like to see in operation in the municipality's schools. (p. 503)

Toward addressing the essence of educational leadership in the global context, a second course entitled, Leadership Skills and Change in Higher Education Administration will focus on the application of the various leadership theories as well as management and organizational transformation for schools and universities, vis-à-vis the participants' own geographic locations.

Teaching and Learning at the University Level

Armengol (2002) maintains that traditional modes of learning in the Latin American context have become obsolete and must be replaced by educational reforms that emphasize "interactivity, cooperative learning, and new learning theories such as constructivism, student-focused orientation,

learning with out limits of time and space, as well as the intensive use of the new educational technologies as a means to improve education" (p 195). Toward this premise, the Teaching and Learning at the University Level/HED 713 course will introduce participants to a global context of innovative teaching methodology, vis-à-vis the ethos and pathos of present-day Latin America. Specific topics include, but are not limited to the following: critical thinking; course design and objectives; assessment; technology/online courses; adult learning theories; and disciplinary differences.

Cross-cultural Communication

The global equation for educational leadership cannot be effective without emphasis on the issue of "language ecology." Haugen (as cited in Creese & Martin, 2003) defines the language ecology construct as "the study of interactions between any given language and its environment" (p. 161). It is imperative that facilitators of global-oriented programs become aware of the "geographical, socio-economic and cultural conditions in which the speakers of a given language exist" (Creese and Martin). Thus, this language ecology phenomenon becomes a pre-requisite for educational leaders who aim to successfully administer bilingual programs as well as promote research-based competencies that include strategic training in three areas: (a) managing diversity, change, and program evaluation; (b) influencing school, university, and community politics for the support and protection of bilingual education; and (c) the fostering of public/community relations as a mantra for progress in the global community.

A Closing Thought

The global equation for education is one that calls for fluid leadership that will allow the open dialogue of social and cultural issues and subsequent praxis; adopt innovative teaching methodology; and promote cross-cultural communication through bilingualism. It is hoped that the presentation of this global curriculum will be thought provoking and serve to develop an international agenda for learning across boundaries toward the holistic progress of civilization.

These competencies depict the relationship between globally-centered effective pedagogical practices, leadership for learning and the interconnectedness of bilingual teaching and learning communities. Educational Leadership in a global society should empower all participants in the educational process to embrace bilingual education as a means of leveling the global playing field. Essential to this process is the advancement

of bilingual educational leaders committed to education as the means to foster greater global understanding, social change, and equitable access to educational opportunities for all children. If the development of human capital is an international objective of global-oriented societies, the context for educational leadership must be constructivist in nature.

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