Culture and Globalization in the Curriculum: Theory, Cases and Practice  
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Globalization has profound implications for and impacts on national and organizational cultures, on human resource practices and human resources management, on the organization of production and the social organization of labour. Globalization is also having profound repercussions for education in the broad field of business and management, including internationalization of education markets and of curricula. Internationalization of education necessitates the inclusion of cultural and cross-cultural issues and perspectives both in curricula and in management development programs. Reports in The Australian's Higher Education Supplement (September 15 2004) testify to concerns both among MBA and Executive Education directors in Australia and internationally, as well as among national and multinational business executives, about the importance of education and training in cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. However, much of the attention to culture in business curricula has been superficial, often focusing on culture in an instrumental mode, simply as adding economic value to corporations. There is a need for critical, research-grounded approaches to culture, yet, at the same time presented in ways that are accessible to students in business fields. This paper outlines theoretical issues and debates around culture in the business curriculum. It then draws upon Australian and international examples of approaches to and uses of culture in business education, and compares methods of instruction and management development focusing on culture, in order to illustrate innovative practices and new directions.

The implications of globalization for management development are significant in the new millennium. While the idea of globalization in the literature can be portrayed in a positive light, it is also viewed as problematic (cf. Henwood, 2003; Stiglitz, 2002). In the context of management development, globalization has implications for curriculum development. In an increasingly interdependent world of people and markets, the recognition and treatment of national culture in cross-cultural settings is a necessary ingredient in the curriculum of management development. Against a background of such complexity, critical, research-grounded approaches exploring the various relationships between culture and management development are highly appropriate.

Management Development and its Discontents

The increasing levels of complexity that now characterize business in a global environment have resulted in new pressures on managers to perform more efficiently and effectively. Internationally, management development has attempted to respond to this pressure but with only a limited degree of success. The dissatisfaction with current approaches in management development education emerges in surveys like the Global Capabilities Survey conducted recently by
the UK-based London Business School (LBS). The findings suggested that the corporate stakeholders of management development and business education were not entirely pleased with the outcomes of management development in general and business school products in particular. Dean Laura Tyson of LSB implied that the current approach to educating management would benefit from a more reflective approach within a curriculum that takes into account the current global context of business. In addition, she argues that management development should be creating managers who are more sensitive, flexible, and adaptable when compared with graduates of previous generations. The implicit theme message is the need to develop managers as “global executives” (Cooper, 2004a). The acknowledgement that much of management today has significant global dimensions to the tasks performed should be the springboard to a renewed curriculum for global management development. Clearly, one of those dimensions is culture.

The idea of a globalized economy entails closer integration of people and countries as a result of the continual removal of artificial barriers to trade (see, Stiglitz, 2002: 9-10). This level of integration across borders requires managers with the capacity and drive to frame issues and developments in ways that are in tune with a global outlook. In this respect, the content of management development should be conducive to understanding this worldview. This consideration requires a curriculum focus, with content aligned to the environment created by globalization. Teaching approaches that account for the cross-cultural context of globalization are also highly desirable. Furthermore, a screening process that identifies the personal attributes of those suited to operating as global managers is essential. Complex and rapidly changing business environments also demand that new and more appropriate skill sets be developed among today’s managers. Identifying potential managers with appropriate enabling attributes, developing sound skills sets, and combining this approach with less reliance on the typical North America case study approach to teaching would improve and enhance contemporary management development. More emphasis on cooperative team-based learning and a change in focus from purely technical knowledge to knowledge that serves people management and cultural sensitivity would also benefit management development. Following the lead of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2004), the necessary and desirable attributes for this new cadre of global managers include disseminating the values of entrepreneurship and innovation, which include the capacity to be adaptable, inventive, and circumspect.

The LBS survey revealed that business leaders are agitating for a management development curriculum that emphasizes the three important skills of leadership, managing across cultures, and integrity. For example, Gay Haskins of LBS asserted that most organizational stakeholders take it for granted that a business school education equips graduates with the broad range of business knowledge necessary for them to function as viable members of an organization (Cooper, 2004a). The value-added element of management education generally consists of identifying and developing additional attributes generally related to leadership, managing across diverse settings and complex circumstances, and promoting integrity. To be sure, the case of the Enron Corporation in the United States and the HIH debacle in Australia as well as other high-profile corporate collapses highlight the need for the further development of integrity, ethical behaviour, social responsibility, and honesty as major elements of the curriculum of management development.

In the Australian context, many people worry that management development generally and business schools in particular fails to produce graduates who are sufficiently prepared to commence their careers in business. For Steve Crane, the former ABN-Amro Chief Executive and currently Executive-in-Residence at the University of New South Wales, the current crop of business graduates are not “business ready”. While students certainly receive significant amounts of technical knowledge, the curriculum generally lacks
the knowledge and experience related to “the softer skills” of management (Cooper, 2004b). This view is supported by Caroline Hatcher of Queensland University of Technology, who points to a recent survey by her school that flagged the case for developing “soft skills” in communication, leadership, and entrepreneurship. While the foundation of effective management development should be the dissemination of technical knowledge, Hatcher suggests that exceptional managers who eventually emerge as CEOs in the longer term are those endowed in the “soft skills area” (Cooper 2004b).

In North America, management guru Henry Mintzberg proffers that the MBA program in particular and management development by implication may ultimately be a poor provider of the skills necessary for global managers to function in a global environment. For Mintzberg, significant changes are required in the curriculum and consequently, he takes some delight in exposing high profile MBA graduates whose management track records have been less than successful (Gottliebsen, 2004; Mintzberg, 2004). Mintzberg views the principal weakness of management development as its lack of providing a solid and authentic foundation in business principles and practices. While graduates of the MBA style of education in North America may be well trained in traditional business functions, the environment in which this training occurs is mostly devoid of any specific experience of the management process. The prevailing method of teaching in management development and MBA type programs also comes under Mintzberg’s close scrutiny (Gottliebsen, 2004; Mintzberg, 2004). Other critics have suggested that while case studies, for example, help simulate business environments, it is difficult to disseminate deeper understandings about culture’s influence on these business processes (cf. Berrell and Wright, 1999; Berrell, Wrathall, and Wright, 2001). At the core, while management development has the potential to deliver knowledge about business, it fails to adequately prepare students to manage people in diverse global settings, a skill that is now at the heart of any successful enterprise.

Culture and Management Development
In the face of globalization, any number of powerful and compelling frameworks is available to integrate understandings about culture’s influence into management development. The need to prepare business students for organizations that increasingly operate across borders is now evident. Preparing students today to become global managers tomorrow requires a curriculum that provides the skills and learning experiences suited to working in diverse, cross cultural settings. Significant learning experiences, which impart knowledge about cultural diversity in its broader socio-political context, is often lacking in much of contemporary management development.

However, while considerable enthusiasm exists for a new approach to management development, which includes opportunities to reflective on culture’s influence, this eagerness must be tempered with caution. There is the risk that culture per se becomes a philosopher’s touchstone. Because culture can be seen as a set of common practices that develop over time and can be observed externally, it masks explanations of behaviour that may be more mundane. Counter-arguments exist about the extent of culture’s influence and just because the new setting requires a focus on culture as well as the opportunity to acquire softer skills, a degree of critical reflection is required in order to produce a balanced and informed curriculum for management education and development. For example, many popular approaches to analysing the cultural contexts of management development derive their rationale from several well-trodden paths into the area. The work of Gert Hofstede (1994), for example, is highly influential from a macro-perspective while the work of Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (2004) tackles culture’s influence in the context of the human resource management function in organizations. The latter approach seems more grounded in practice. Granted, works and studies of
this type help fill the gap in our knowledge about the cultural contexts of management. However, it is also prudent to acknowledge that there are some levels of exaggeration and misrepresentation concerning the notion of cultural homogeneity. In China, for example, new studies have identified heterogeneity in Chinese management values and there may well be as many differences within management sub-cultures in China as between other national management cultures (cf. Ralston et al., 1999). Therefore, while some approaches to management development fail to sufficiently recognize the influence of culture, others fail to account for internal cultural diversity (cf. Berrell, Gloet & Wrathall, 2001; Berrell, Gloet, & Wright, 2002; Teal, 1992). However, what is a common in a global environment is the need to develop an ecology of management development that accounts for cultural diversity by recognizing the influence of culture on ways of knowing, doing, and learning.

On the one hand, educating and developing future managers capable of managing cultural diversity both nationally and internationally is a significant challenge for management development. On the other hand, organizations have a responsibility to evolve and transform their structures and practices in ways that foster innovation, integrate cultural diversity, and encourage plurality. Educating managers as transformational agents within internationalized and multicultural environments is now a principal goal of management development, which requires more than simply training in cultural competencies. Multicultural, holistic approaches to international and intercultural competence, and cross-cultural communication emerge as significant in a global environment, where managers who can manage multi-level and multi-dimensional relationships are highly regarded. Management development that fosters commitment to equity oriented organizational strategies, practices, and structures require the internationalization of the management development curriculum.

At this stage, a cursory review of the literature on culture's influence will help frame curriculum in the context of management development. To date, the canon of literature indicates that the principles and practices associated with defining and analysing culture's influence on management development is now at a post-theory stage. That is, as a field of study, it is so well established in the literature that its principles and practices hardly need in-depth explanations or defence (cf. Adler, 2002; Hall, 1976; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). For the sake of brevity, a brief summary is offered below concerning the generic influences of national culture and its implications for management development. However, this succinct overview should not diminish the intellectual complexity of forty years of scholarship in the field.

The literature suggests that cultures outwardly vary across several dimensions and constructs. For example, low-context Australian organizations contrast with high-context Chinese organizations (Adler, 2002; Hall, 1976). In high-context cultures, the expansive external environment subtly influences management development, where the specifics of situations, long-term relationships, the influence of insiders, and implicit knowledge are important cues for participants. In contrast, low context cultures engender universal principles that influence cognition. The influences of short-term relationships, people external to the group, and explicit forms of knowledge tend to shape behaviour (Hall, 1976). People's basic orientation to aspects of their environment can also be outwardly observed in the realms of interpersonal and environmental relationships, modes of activity, and temporal matters as well as ideas about causality, space, and cosmology (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; cf. Adler, 2002). Further, these different orientations can also be observed, rather than measured with any precision, along dimensions of social life such as how people deal with the desirability or undesirability of a hierarchical distribution of power or the relationship between individuals (cf. Hofstede, 1994). In condensing the major themes from Western scholarship, it is possible to
The characteristics of management development, as delineated in Table 1.

### Table 1 Characteristics of High and Low-Context Cultural Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low-context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Environmental dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-personal</td>
<td>individualistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of Activity</td>
<td>doing-action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporality</td>
<td>present- immediate future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causality</td>
<td>systematic analysis of cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with little forbearance of ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmology</td>
<td>linear and finite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: from Adler, 2002

In the context of management development as well as in other areas pertinent to the study of organizations (cf. Berrell, Gloet & Wrathall, 2001), the Western notion that value differences between low and high-context cultures can be reconciled as organizational behaviour converges across the globe is problematic because sufficient differences still remain for curriculum developers to overcome in the context of divergence.

From the view of organizational studies, differences among national cultures manifest themselves in quite distinctive styles of communicating, diverse methods of decision-making, and wide ranging views regarding accountability, responsibility, and authority. In turn, these ideas will influence how participants respond to management development (cf. Foucault, 1980; Friedland & Alford, 1991). However, as most participants in management development are habitually unsuspecting of culture’s influence on either their own behaviour or on the behaviour of others, culture’s influence generally registers as unconscious motivation. Like an “invisible jet stream”, it taps deeper understandings about what is or what should be (Adler, 2002, Hall, 1976; Triandis, 1983). In addition, the routine aspects of management development also mask the influence of one’s culture, creating a significant challenge for curriculum developers in management development. In the spheres of teaching and learning, culture’s influence is significant. Such a statement may appear obvious, yet just as organisations are severely challenged in effectively accounting for culture, so too are business schools and management development programs.
Management Development in China

An investigation into an ongoing management development program for executives of a Sino-Foreign joint venture offers some insights into developing a curriculum for management development in a global setting. The Chinese clients who sponsored the program had specifically requested that current Western theories of management and case studies be included in the curriculum. However, the curriculum developers and teaching staff had reservations about the utility of disseminating Western knowledge in a typical management development approach, especially one that relied on using case studies and the like. The précis below is taken directly from the experiences reported by Berrell, Wrathall, and Wright (2001) and Berrell and Wright (1999) in conducting management development in high-context cultures.

- Cases were developed from fieldwork in China
- Cases used deal with real issues in Chinese industries and organizations
- Cases move from specifics of a situation to generalizations
- Industry and organisation material was developed specifically for target groups
- Industry specific visits and related workplace activities
- Presenters who have worked and lived in China
- Pre-conference workshops with inputs from industries and organisations involved
- Process of selecting and developing content took account of cultural diversity, values and orientations
- Teaching delivery took account of “Western” management also being culturally embedded, albeit in different ways
- Adapted case studies to international executive education
- Using cases as a syndicate enrichment activity

As a result of the combination of culturally appropriate materials as well as teaching methods, as outlined above, one outcome was the effective development of self-reflexivity among the participants: syndicate members analysed their contributions to the development of organizational culture using a matrix containing functions, activities and levels, derived from Mintzberg’s matrix model. A second outcome resulting from this approach was increased sensitivity of participants to implications of their managerial work on organizational culture. While the specifics of this approach were developed and applied in the context of delivery of management development education in China, its general principles can be usefully adapted to and in other contexts.

Conclusion

From the testimonies discussed at the beginning of this paper, the dissatisfactions both of business school leaders as well as business leaders, with management education and management development programs, there is a critical importance of substantive internationalization of curriculum and integration of cultural approaches in management education. Internationalization can go beyond simple adding of units, attracting international students and having offshore courses, which have been the dominant responses by business schools to the challenges of internationalization.

In terms of curriculum, and delivery, education in cultural issues of organizations and management can go beyond functionalist and essentialist approaches. To do so may involve, among other strategies, educators actively engaged in research on organizations in different cultural contexts, as well as teaching methods that foster self-reflexivity and cultural sharing among participants.

At the same time, management education and development programs need to be cognizant of the fact that new forms of management and organization, while responding to and responsive to distinct cultures, may transcend distinct cultures and participate in emergence of new, hybrid organizational forms and management practice. Such a recognition goes a considerable way towards developing managers who are aware of the cultural dynamics of their own and other cultures as they impinge upon
organisations, while also accounting for cultural diversity and heterogeneity, rather than simply assuming a polar duality between Western and non-Western modes of organisation and management.

References


