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AUTHOR   Slater, Charles L.; Boone, Mike; Price, Larry; Martinez,
                Dyanna; Alvarez, Isaias; Topete, Carlos; Olea, Elia
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ABSTRACT
                This study reports the administration of the Leadership
Practices Inventory (LPI) (J. Kouzes and B. Posner, 1995) to 28 graduate
students in educational administration at a university in the Southwest of
the United States and 28 students at a university in Mexico. The limitations
of this quantitative measure are examined, and comparisons of leadership
across cultures are made. The U.S. educators scored significantly higher than
did Mexican educators on all five of the inventory's leadership practice
measures. The rank order of the practices was also quite different. The
extensive study of cross-cultural differences made by G. Hofstede (1980)
helped explain some of the differences. Findings raise questions about the
universality of the theory of the leadership challenge posited by Kouzes and
Posner. (Contains 14 references.) (Author/SLD)

A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Leadership in the

United States and Mexico

Dr. Charles L. Slater, Assistant Professor, Educational Administration
Southwest Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666-4616
210/245-3755   cs26@swt.edu

Dr. Mike Boone, Associate Professor, Educational Administration
Southwest Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666-4616
210/245-3759   Mb01@swt.edu

Dr. Larry Price, Assistant Professor, Educational Administration
Southwest Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666-4616

Dyanna Martinez, Graduate Assistant
Southwest Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666-4616

Dr. Isaias Alvarez, Coordinator
Maestria en Administracion y Desarrollo de la Educacion
Instituto Politecnico Nacional
Unidad Santo Tomas
Carpio No. 471
11340 Mexico, D.F.
525-729-6000 Ex 61555   isaiasciac@hotmail.com

Dr. Carlos Topete, Jefe de la Seccion de Estudios de Posgrado e Investigacion
Instituto Politecnico Nacional
Unidad Santo Tomas
Carpio No. 471
11340 Mexico, D.F.

Dr. Elia Olea
Instituto Politecnico Nacional
Unidad Santo Tomas
Carpio No. 471
11340 Mexico, D.F.

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Abstract

The study reports the administration of Kouzes and Posner's (1995) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) to 28 graduate students in educational administration at a university in the Southwest of the United States and 28 students at a university in Mexico. The limitations of this quantitative measure are examined, and then, comparisons of leadership across cultures are made. The US educators scored significantly higher than Mexican educators on all five of Kouzes and Posner's leadership practices. The rank order of the practices was quite different. Hofstede's (1980) extensive study of cross-cultural differences helped to explain some of the differences.

A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Leadership in the

United States and Mexico

The purpose of this study is to examine the similarities and differences between

educational administration students in the United States and Mexico. Hofstede's (1980)

extensive study of cross-cultural differences serves as a basis to examine differences. The

hypothesis is that US educators will score higher than Mexican educators on Kouzes and

Posner's (1995) leadership practices. Then, differences in rank order of leadership practices are

explored.

Theoretical Framework

There is great risk that the field of Educational Administration is looking inward, rather

than developing a broad vision. The internationalization of educational administration offers an

opportunity to move beyond mental and geographical borders. Chapman, Sackney, and Aspin

(1999) call for "educational borrowing" of policy and practice, and a response to economic

globalization that includes training in intercultural and second language skills. Paige and

Mestenhauser (1999) call for in-depth understanding and an "international mindset."

Citing the need to keep abreast of the expanding forces of globalization in policy and

practice, Dimmock and Walker (2000) call for the expansion of inquiry into comparative and

international educational leadership and management. Noting that educational research and

theory in this area have fallen behind developments in other fields, the authors urge a renewed

focus on exploring educational leadership across national boundaries and cultures. To that end,

they propose a model for the comparative study of educational leadership that takes into account

the pervasive influence of societal cultures. Dimmock and Walker write:

Since culture is reflected in all aspects of school life, and people, organizations and societies share differences and similarities in terms of their cultures, it appears a particularly useful concept with universal application, one appropriate for comparing influences and practices endemic to educational leadership and management. (p. 146)

Culture exists at multiple levels. Thus, the concept provides researchers a tool with which to explore educational leadership in settings that, although they appear similar, more often than not hide subtle differences in values, relationships and processes.

Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) call for increased studies of cross cultural leadership, "The emergence of the global era has raised the ante on cross-cultural understanding...There are potential benefits to theory as well as to practice in widening the cultural and intellectual lenses being used in the field" (pp 126-127). They borrow Kluckhorn and Kroeberg's (1952) definition of culture, which we will use here as well. Culture includes

> patterns of behaviors that are acquired and transmitted by symbols over time, which become generally shared within a group and are communicated to new members of the group in order to serve as a cognitive guide or blueprint for future actions.

Hallinger and Leithwood point out several benefits to cross cultural research, chief among them is the need to see other values and other ways of doing things. For example, the emphasis on the assessment of student achievement as an explicit educational goal is taken for granted in the United States, while in Canada and other industrialized nations, it is not nearly so common. They recommend how research should be carried out, "The early stages of research into cross-cultural conceptions of leadership should try to explore the meaning of leadership from the perspective of the people within a given culture. This will require in-depth research drawing more on anthropological than on survey methods." (p. 146)

Stevenson and Stigler (1986) demonstrate the value of cross-cultural studies in comparisons of mathematics achievement in the US, China, and Japan. US students do not score as well on achievement tests but their parents are more satisfied. They identify cultural differences in the emphasis placed on hard work, effort, and the value of knowledge. Dimmock and Walker (2000) say that Asian schools look back to the US to promote creativity and problem solving when they worry abut too much rote learning in their own system. The benefits of cross-cultural comparison can go in two directions.

Dimmock and Walker also warn against ethnocentricity in examination of educational issues. Anglo-American scholars may represent less than 8% of the world's population, but propose theories and research that purports to represent everyone. In a similar way, Heck (1998) raises philosophical and methodological issues in cross-cultural research. It is especially important to determine whether a concept has the same meaning in different settings. Language differences present special problems and the need for careful and thorough translation.

Leithwood and Duke (1998) suggest that both a grounded approach and a framework-dependent approach have value in cross-cultural research. They outline five leadership models: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, and contingent leadership.

This study will take a framework-dependent approach and look at Kouzes and Posner's (1995) theory, which can be classified as transformational. In their book, The leadership challenge, Kouzes and Posner describe five exemplary leadership practices. These are: challenging the process, which indicates the leader s propensity to look for opportunities to change the status quo; inspiring a shared vision, which is the leader s passionate belief in being able to make a difference; enabling others to act, which is the leader's skill in fostering

collaboration and building effective teams; modeling the way, which reveals the manner in which the leader treats others and demonstrates how goals should be pursued; and encouraging the heart, which describes how the leader recognizes the contributions of others to the overall success of the organization. Kouzes and Posner identified these practices from extensive interviews with leaders and managers both nationally and internationally. Their research led to the development of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI.) Researchers have used the LPI to measure performance and to make comparisons of practice in the five leadership dimensions across organizational types (business, governmental, educational), functional disciplines, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures. (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

In educational settings, the LPI has been used to asses the effectiveness and credibility of high school principals in the United States, to study the principals of effective and ineffective schools in Canada, to describe the leadership practices of principals of high performing site-based decision making elementary schools in the United States, and to examine the ethical philosophy of American middle school administrators (Kouzes & Posner, 1995.) Berumen (1992) used the LPI to examine leadership practices of Mexican managers. The scores of Mexican managers on the LPI were generally lower than the scores of comparable American managers, but there was no difference between the groups in the rank order assigned to the leadership practices. To date the LPI has not been used to compare leadership practices of American and Mexican school administrators.

We hypothesize that US educational administrators will score higher than their Mexican counterparts on all of the leadership practices, just as Berumen found with business managers. These practices include: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act,

modeling the way and encouraging the heart. We suspect this to be true because Mexicans have different values and these values will be reflected in their practices.

Hofstede (1980) reports on a worldwide study of corporate managers that included subjects in the US and Mexico. Hofstede (1980) defines a value as "a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (p. 19), and he says, 'Values are the building blocks of culture" (p. 25). Then, he defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (p. 25).

Comparisons among groups of managers were made across four variables of national culture. They are: power distance, which measures the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally; individualism-collectivism, which measures the extent to which people within a given society are either integrated into strong, cohesive groups or conversely in which ties between persons are lose; femininity-masculinity, which is the degree to which gender roles in a society are either clearly defined or overlapping; and uncertainty avoidance, which assesses the degree to which members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.

Managers in Mexico score higher than managers in the US on the cultural variables of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, while US managers score higher than Mexican managers on the variable of individualism. This may indicate that Mexicans tend to hold more traditional views of authority. These views may make Mexicans less likely to value challenges to authority while the tendency to avoid uncertainty may mean that Mexican managers are less likely to try innovative ideas and practices. The value US managers place on individualism would imply a much different view of how an organization ought to be managed. Thus

representatives of each national culture might view the management of any organization from much different perspectives.

Methods

Setting

Two universities participated in this study. One is in the Southwest of the United States and has a large undergraduate enrollment with a graduate program in educational administration that prepares teachers to be principals and superintendents. The other university in Mexico has a comparable enrollment and educates students more broadly for administrative positions in public education, higher education, and other organizations.

Participants

A convenience sample was selected from the two universities. Twenty-eight students preparing for the superintendent's certificate and taking classes in the doctoral program at the US University participated. They were teachers or administrators in mid-career between the ages of 35-52. The U. S. group was predominantly male and Anglo. Twenty-eight students from the Mexican university were completing a certification or Master's program with the intent of taking a position in educational administration. Their ages and career status were similar to those in the US, and there were more males than females.

Instruments

Kouzes and Posner (1995) identified five leadership practices from intensive interviews with leaders and managers both nationally and internationally. Their research led to the development of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Researchers have used the LPI to measure performance and to make comparisons across organizational types, functional disciplines, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures. Subjects first complete the LPI-Self and then ask

five people to complete the LPI-Observer. Reliability coefficients (alpha) for the LPI-Self range between .71 and .85 (N= 6,651) and for the LPI-Observer between .82 and .92 (N= 37,248). Test-Retest reliability is reported to be .93. The LPI-Self and Observer instruments are available in both Spanish and English.

The LPI has several limitations. It was developed in the United States with no participation from Mexicans or other cultural groups. The items may reflect a cultural bias that neglects aspects of leadership that would be important in Mexico but not the US. The initial work to examine the reliability of the LPI-Self and Observer was conducted using a five-point Likert scale, but the instruments have since been revised to form a ten-point scale. Respondents may have had difficulty with making distinctions among ten categories. The goal of the revision of the LPI to a ten-point scale was to provide more information and greater internal consistency. However, the greater number of categorical options on the scale may contribute to increased indecision by the person using the instrument..

Students were administered the self-assessment instruments in their graduate classes at each university. The students then gave the observer form of the LPI to five supervisors, co-workers or subordinates. It is hypothesized that US educators will have a different distribution than Mexican educators on each of the five categories. Specifically, the US educators are hypothesized to have higher median scores on each of the five categories than their Mexican counterparts. After statistically testing this hypothesis, a descriptive comparison of the rank order of the categories between the two groups will be conducted.

Data Analysis

After the instruments were scored, data were screened for normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance. The data for each group were found to be non-normal (z- statistics

greater than <u>or less than</u> 1.96). Levene s test of homogeneity of variance was also found to be significant (α < .01) indicating sharply unequal variances <u>between groups</u>. Therefore, the Man-Whitney U test was used as a nonparametric alternative to the independent t-test for the comparison of between group differences on the LPI Observer scores.

<div align="center">Results</div>

For each of the five leadership categories, the mean rank for the US group was higher than the mean rank for the Mexican group. Table 1 provides the mean rank scores ~~and the results of the Man-Whitney U test~~ <u>on each of the five LPI categories</u> for the Mexican and US participants.

<div align="center">INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE</div>

Next, a comparison of rank scores between the groups was performed. The results of the Man-Whitney U test are provided in Table 2. For all categories, significant differences (p < .001) were detected between the two groups.

<div align="center">INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE</div>

To further explore the nature of the differences between the Mexican and US groups on their respective rank scores, a descriptive comparison was made between the order of the rankings for each group. Table 3 provides a comparison of the preferred rank order for each category for the two groups.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Encouraging the heart was the top ranked practice for Mexican participants but the last for US participants. Enabling others was the top US practice, but it was last among Mexican educators.

Discussion

The first purpose of the study was to test the hypothesis that scores of Mexican educators on the LPI would be lower than the scores of comparable US educators. The results comfirm the hypothesis. Why would Mexicans rate their colleagues lower? Do they sense that they are less accomplished in these areas, do they just have a tendency to be more modest, or do they rate others lower because they do not value these leadership practices as highly as the US participants? Each of these questions can be examined.

Are Mexican Educators Less Accomplished in Leadership?

The Mexicans turned out to be lower on the leadership practices inventory, but how valid would it be to conclude that they are less effective or that they do not exhibit these characteristics on the job? An examination of the items on the questionnaire could lead one to say that it does

not include those areas in which the Mexican culture might excel. For example, the items that measure shared vision look toward the future with little reference to the past. Yet, a Mexican might call upon history to bring people together and motivate them to work hard. An appeal to traditional symbols, especially in religion or from ancient civilizations could create depth and urgency to the task at hand. But, this motivation would probably not be expressed as agreement with this item on the questionnaire, "Is contagiously enthusiastic and positive about future possibilities (Kouzes and Posner, 1997). The results that paint a picture of the Mexicans as lower on these measures of leadership were developed in the US with little consultation with people from other cultures. Could these theories and their applications run the risk of being ethnocentric?

Are Mexican Educators More Modest?

Hofstede (1980) reports that Mexico is a much more collectivist culture while the US is an individualistic culture. In a collectivist culture one might be reluctant to stand out and brag either for oneself or others. This reluctance could show itself in a tendency to rate all items lower that have to do with individual accomplishments or success. In other words, there could be lower ratings across the board that did not necessarily reflect less incidence of these practices, just more modesty.

Do Mexicans Place Less Value on the Leadership Practices?

Hofstede (1991) speaks about the differences between practices and values when he says: contrary to national cultures, corporate cultures are not a matter of shared values....They are rooted in the values of the founders and significant leaders, but their values have been converted into the practices, the rules of the game for all other members of the corporation. And this explains what would otherwise be a riddle: how multinationals can

function productively, if the national cultures of their personnel in different countries are as different as they are. Effective multinationals have created practices that bridge the national value differences....Common practices, not common values are what solve practical problems. The differences in values should be understood, the differences in practices, should be resolved (p. xiii).

Hofstede's distinction between culture and practices does not really solve the riddle as he claims because there must be some relationship between the practices and the culture, between what we do and what we value. It would seem to cause a great strain on people if their work required them to practice activities, which were contrary to their values. The riddle becomes: how do people manage the strain? Do they compartmentalize their lives into work and non-work?

The distinction between values and practices can be a fine line to walk when looking at items on questionnaires. In Hofstede's survey of culture, he asked participants whether they agreed with statements such as the following: "Company rules should not be broken-even when the employee thinks it's in the company's best interest" (Hofstede, 1980, p.164). Agreement would reflect a tendency to value uncertainty avoidance. Contrast this expression of a cultural value with a leadership practice from Kouzes and Posner's (1997) inventory, "Searches outside the formal boundaries of his or her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do." This item looks at the extent to which a person is ready to challenge the process. Hofstede's items include the word "should"; Kouzes and Posner's items do not. Yet, we could ask, what would be the difference to the person completing the questionnaire? It would seem a small step to turn Hofstede's value into a practice. We could say, "Does not break company rules..." Or we could rephrase Kouzes and Posner's item to say, "An employee should search outside the formal

boundaries..."

Mexican managers probably share common business practices with their colleagues in the US and other countries. They come from multi-national corporations in which management success has a common definition. We suspect that the internal runnings of these companies are more like each other than they are like the values expressed in the particular culture. Managers may even develop two ways of being: one for home and one for the office.

This same commonality is probably not present among educational administrators in each country. Schools are not connected across borders, and there are few international networks of school administrators. Education is a more local endeavor highly embedded in the culture of the host country. Educators are more likely to be affected by the cultural differences found by Hofstede (1980).

The second purpose of the study was to explore differences in the rank order of leadership practices between US and Mexican participants. The rankings of each group are exactly the reverse (See Table 3). Encouraging the heart was rated first by Mexican participants but last by US participants. The reasons may be cultural. Some aspects of encouraging the heart may be highly prized in Mexico. Parties and festivals are a way of life, and times of celebration appear more intense in Mexico then in the US. Paz (1961) describes the passions of fellow Mexicans in this way, "In the hubbub of a fiesta night our voices explode into brilliant lights and life and death mingle together " (p. 23). In the US people are more business like and task oriented. Work and play are separate, and time spent working has increased over the years, so that the US now outranks all other countries in hours worked per year.

The US participants ranked enabling others to act at the top of the list of leadership practices while the Mexican participants put it last. Hofstede's (1980) data describe Mexico as a

high power distance culture and the US as low. Enabling others to act would appear to require a close relationship between managers and subordinates. The managers have to risk their positions of power , set aside some of heir prerogatives and give subordinates real authority to act and take charge. A manager high on the scale of enabling others to act would give priority to inspiring self-confidence within subordinates more than requiring loyalty to authority.

These results raise questions about the universality of Kouzes and Posner's theory of the leadership challenge. Effective leadership practices may vary in different cultures. To understand these differences, we must go beyond questionnaire results and look at the experiences of leaders within each culture. What values do they express and what types of leadership practices succeed in each context? How do they understand leadership? Further research should look at the leadership stories of the participants themselves.

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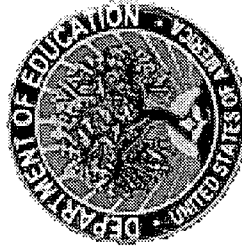
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Signature: *Mike Boone*	Printed Name/Position/Title: *Associate Professor, Ed. Admin*
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