GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN SELECTED ADULT EDUCATION GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND WESTERN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT: Researchers in the field of global leadership have reported a lack of qualified leadership candidates who are able to perform from a global perspective. Adult education graduate programs represent a unique pool of aspirants to help fill this gap. In 2014, the Commission of Professors of Adult Education (CPAE) published updated Standards for Graduate Programs in Adult Education, which included two standards addressing globalization and leadership. This study explored the context of competencies, identified by Bird's (2013) nested framework of global leadership competencies, in seven selected adult education graduate programs in the United States and Western Europe. This paper addressed which competencies were addressed in the selected adult education graduate programs and which ones were perceived to be most and less important from the perspective of the faculty participants. Findings indicated the competencies of (a) valuing people, (b) inquisitiveness, (c) leading change, and (d) vision and strategic thinking emerged as most important among the participants across all seven cases, as well as within the two geographical locations.

Keywords: Global leadership, leadership development, multiple case study, iterative analysis, global leadership competencies.

The field of global leadership developed as an offshoot of traditional leadership studies into a construct with its own scholarship and literature in response to the need for an increase in the quality and quantity of leaders in an emerging global context (Gupta & Van Wart, 2016; Steers, Sanchez-Runde, & Nardon, 2012). Whether in the field of education, training, business, government, or non-profit organizations, today's global economy requires an awareness of issues and trends from a global mindset to succeed in the current workforce (Goldsmith, Greenburg, Robertson, & Hu-Chan, 2003). Terms such as cultural competency, global mindset, and global citizen are commonplace in today's leadership development models (Livermore, 2010), and represent the shift from the need for competency only in one's particular area of expertise to a need for competence in a transnational, cross-cultural context.

As the globalized economy creates a more multifaceted and dynamic work environment, members of the new workforce must find ways to compete effectively while fostering an expanding worldview (O'Dell & Hwang, 2008). Educators in general—and adult educators in particular—are called upon to incorporate high quality global competency development initiatives into the training and curriculum of their student populations (Caligiuri, 2006). In fact, the *Standards for Adult Education Graduate Programs*—published by the Commission of Professors of Adult Education (CPAE)—include both "the study of leadership, including theories or organizational leadership, administration and change" (CPAE, 2014, p. 9) and the "analysis of globalization and international issues or perspectives in adult education" (CPAE, 2014, p. 10). This study examined the

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extent to which global leadership competencies, as defined by Bird's (2013) framework of nested global leadership competencies, are addressed in adult education graduate programs.

Merriam and Brockett (2007) discussed how graduate degrees in adult education are among the most practical—and adaptable—in all of higher education. Furthermore, Hoppe (2007) posited that adult learning theory may be a catalyst to boost global leadership competency development. Bolman and Deal (2008) discussed how graduate programs can provide a source for the new leaders required by these increasing challenges. Specifically, adult education graduate programs prepare students for careers in adult education fields such as business and industry trainers, higher education faculty, literacy education, independent training consultants, educational program writers and evaluators, individuals with special consulting skills and interests, or community or organizational leadership positions (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Until this study, there had been no empirical research that explored the extent to which global leadership competencies are addressed and developed in adult education graduate programs.

Conceptual Framework

By sorting and organizing the complex original list of over 160 competencies down to 15, and ordering them into three broad categories, Bird's (2013) framework of nested global leadership competencies incorporates multifaceted competencies spanning pre-dispositional, attitudinal, cognitive, behavioral, and knowledge aspects. See Table 1 for a visual representation of the conceptual model used in this study.

Bird's (2013) Framework of Nested Global Leadership Competencies

Central to this study was the concept of global leadership competencies. Bird's (2013) framework was used to explore the content domain of the research questions. In this model, Bird systematically evaluated the existing literature and consolidated the semantic differences, arriving at 15 competencies—five within each of three broad categories: (a) business and organizational acumen, (b) managing people and relationships, and (c) managing self.

Business and organizational acumen. The five competencies associated with this grouping include (a) vision and strategic thinking, (b) leading change, (c) business savvy, (d) organizational savvy, and (e) managing communities. *Vision and strategic thinking* includes the ability to understand and act in complex and strategic settings, intellectual intelligence, short- and long-term thinking, and see the interdependent aspects of strategic thinking. It also includes the development of a global vision for an organization and the development and implementation of strategic plans. *Business savvy* encompasses two types of knowledge—general business savvy and technically-oriented knowledge—as well as the attitude of incorporating entrepreneurialism and creativity into the organization. *Managing communities* centers on global leaders' ability to succeed within the vast network of relationships developed through interactions of a global workforce, and includes the skills of spanning boundaries, influencing stakeholders, and

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accomplishing strategic objectives. *Organizational savvy* includes the ability to design organizational structures and processes, as well as function effectively within the organization. Finally, *leading change* indicates a results-oriented competency derived from the application of all previous competencies.

Table 1
Categories and Competencies of Bird's (2013) Framework of Nested Global Leadership Competency Development

Business and Organizational Acumen	Managing People and Relationships	Managing Self
Vision and strategic thinking	Valuing people	Inquisitiveness
Leading change	Cross-cultural communication	Global mindset
Business savvy	Interpersonal skills	Flexibility
Organizational savvy	Teaming skills	Character
Managing communities	Empowering others	Resilience

Managing people and relationships. The five competencies associated with this grouping include (a) valuing people, (b) cross-cultural communication, (c) interpersonal skills, (d) teaming skills, and (e) empowering others. *Valuing people* is a foundational competency describing the respect shown for people and their differences, a deep-level understanding of the emotions and motivations of others, and the creation and maintaining of trusting relationships. *Interpersonal skills* consist of both emotional intelligence (sensitivity, engagement, and self-awareness) and relationship management (influencing, listening, goal setting). *Cross-cultural communication* is a broad competency which includes the mindfulness of a general cultural awareness and specific cognitive and behavioral skills in an intercultural context—including foreign language skills, negotiating, and communication skills. *Empowering others* addresses talents such as increasing self-efficacy within the relationship of direct reports, colleagues, and superiors, as well as the skills related to coaching, instructing, personal and professional development, and delegation of authority. Finally, *teaming skills* refer to effectively working in multicultural and global teams, as well as being able to both lead and take subordinate roles in global teams.

Managing self. The five competencies associated with this grouping include (a) resilience, (b) character, (c) inquisitiveness, (d) global mindset, and (e) flexibility. *Resilience* is characterized by the pre-dispositional dimensions of optimism, hardiness, and stress-reduction; the attitudinal dimensions of resourcefulness and self-confidence; and the behavioral skills that include healthy lifestyle choices (exercise, medication,

proper rest, nutrition) and work-life balance. The competency of *character* contains the greatest number of possible dimensions in the literature, but includes such traits as honesty, maturity, and diligence. *Inquisitiveness* refers to a willingness to be open to new ideas, experiences, and people. Additionally, humility can be added here, as it refers to the trait of not letting pride or self-consciousness interfere with the learning process; in short, allowing oneself to be taught by others. A *global mindset* is a cognitive competency that reflects the complex melding of new perspectives, attitudes, and knowledge within a global context. It includes cognitive complexity and cosmopolitanism, including interest in and knowledge of the greater world. And finally, the competency of *flexibility* refers to both intellectual flexibility (a tolerance for ambiguity) and behavioral flexibility (a willingness to adapt behaviors to fit the demand of the situation).

Literature Review

Global Leadership

The literature for the construct of leadership is vast and evolving, and today's global leaders represent the increasingly complex, ambiguous, multicultural environment of the everyday global economy (Osland, 2013). Mendenhall et al., (2012) argued "the lack of a precise, rigorous and commonly accepted definition of global leadership limits the field's conceptual and empirical progress" (p. 493). Mendenhall and his colleagues found only one agreement among all the definitions their study collected: "Global leadership is significantly different from domestic leadership due to the salience of the context—characteristics of the global context appear to exert greater influence than is the case for domestic contexts" (p. 494). The authors further classified the list of definitions into descriptions of global leadership as either a *state*, centering on specific tasks, scope, roles, and responsibilities; or as a *process*, reaching beyond the goals of the individual leader and focusing on the broader global responsibilities embedded in the construct itself.

There is a presumption among scholars that research in global leadership represents a complementary, though alternative line of leadership research (Osland, Bird, & Oddou, 2012). Osland and colleagues in *Advances in Global Leadership* reported the following list of expectations faced by global leaders:

> a greater need for broad knowledge that spans functional and national boundaries; strong requirement for wider and more frequent boundary spanning both within and across organizational and national boundaries; pressure to understand a wider range of stakeholders when making decisions; heightened need for cultural understanding within a setting characterized by wider ranging diversity; more challenging and expanded list of competing tensions both on and off the job; heightened ambiguity surrounding decisions and related outcomes/effects; and more challenging ethical dilemmas relating to globalization. (Osland et al., 2012, p. 109).

Global Leadership Competency Literature

The identification of a core set of global leadership competencies has proven to be a difficult task, and researchers and practitioners alike have struggled not only with coming up with a comprehensive set, but also with organizing them into a useable framework (Bird & Osland, 2004). Twenty-seven publications were reviewed for this study, and eight were highlighted as attempts to provide an organizing framework or model for the 160+ global leadership competencies delineated throughout the literature. These include two literature reviews— Mendenhall and Osland's (2002) global leadership dimensions and Jokinen's (2005) integrated framework of global leadership competencies—as well as six models— Brake's (1997) global leadership triad, Rosen, Digh, Singer, & Philips' (2000) global literacies, Bird and Osland's (2004) pyramid model of global leadership, Peters and Gitsham's (2010) the global leader of tomorrow, Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou's (2010) content domain of intercultural competence in global leadership, and ultimately, Bird's (2013) framework of nested global leadership competencies.

Altogether, over 160 competencies have been described by the literature reviewed for this study, "a list too large to be useful" (Osland, 2013). Overlapping concepts, semantic differences, and categories which are qualitatively different fill the literature (Bird, 2013; Jokinen, 2005). Though global leadership research is advancing with a body of literature all its own, it is still reminiscent of the kind of literature which explores traits and lists found in the early stages of the field of domestic leadership (Osland, 2013). Gaps exist in global leadership process, development, and theory (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, & Maznevski, 2008; Mendenhall et al., 2013). This study sought to add to this body of knowledge by expanding the application of these ideas and competencies into the field of adult education.

Adult Education Graduate Programs and Global Leadership

Adult education as a field of graduate study is characterized with a "distinctive body of knowledge that embraces theory, research, and practice relating to adult learners, adult educators, adult education and learning process programs, and organizations" (CPAE, 2014, p. 3). In 2012, the American Management Association (AMA) stated that in addition to academic careers in continuing education, postsecondary environments, cooperative extension, and adult basic education, among others; graduate students in adult education are also entering the global workforce in the areas of program development, workplace learning, nonprofit organizations, corporate training, and human resource development (AMA, 2012).

In 2014, the Commission of Professors of Adult Education (CPAE) published updated *Standards for Graduate Programs in Adult Education*, suggesting "guidelines and standards for high quality planning, administration, and evaluation of adult education" (p. 3). These *Standards* describe four distinct sections: (a) administration, (b) organization of graduate study, (c) curriculum, and (d) faculty members. CPAE (2014) acknowledged, "Adult Education programs of study encompass a wide range of specialty areas and institutional contexts" (p. 4). For the purpose of this study, two of the nine standards were

directly related: including (a) the study of leadership, including theories or organizational leadership, administration and change; and (b) an analysis of globalization and international issues or perspectives in adult education.

Method

A qualitative, multiple case, phenomenological study was designed. Seven cases—four in the United States and three in Western Europe—were purposively selected to increase an understanding of how the phenomenon of global leadership competency development is perceived and developed among different graduate programs and in different geographic settings. Two current faculty members from each institution were interviewed, for a total of 14 participants. An interview protocol was developed and vetted through a multi-level panel process incorporating peers and professionals in the fields of adult education, leadership development, and research and measurement. The interview protocol was also developed with the framework of appreciative inquiry (AI) in mind.

The following research questions were addressed: (a) Which global leadership competencies are addressed in the selected adult education graduate programs in the United States and Western Europe? and (b) Which global leadership competencies are perceived to be the most important and less important by faculty and administration?

The data collected were from multiple sources, including semi-structured interviews, researcher field notes, reflective journals, and supporting documentation. The interviews were conducted over a three-month timeframe in 2015. Twelve of the 14 interviews were conducted in the academic setting of the selected adult education graduate programs. Two of the interviews were conducted via Skype. Prior to the interviews, the researcher conducted an examination of available syllabi, mission statements, program descriptions, and other supporting documents which led to additional probing questions and deepened the researcher's familiarity with the selected adult education programs.

The data were mined for meaning in a detailed line-by-line analysis of the information (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tracy, 2013). Both within-case analysis and between-case analysis were conducted to answer the research questions. The emergent themes within each a priori category were a direct reflection of the interview questions and the research questions, and the labeling of the themes were modified and relabeled as the research progressed through the process of constant comparison. Rich, thick description of notes and all data were documented to strengthen all coding decisions. All data was validated utilizing triangulation, member checks, audit trails, and multi-layered peer reviews.

Findings

Research Question 1: Global Leadership Competencies

The first research question was designed to determine which of the 15 global leadership competencies associated with Bird's (2013) framework of nested global leadership

competencies were addressed in the selected adult education graduate programs. An a priori coding analysis of the global leadership competencies within each case was combined with an emergent thematic analysis of descriptive codes arising from the data. Table 2 presents an overview of the data collected for research question 1.

Managing self. The competencies from this broad category were described by most of the participants in this study as important and solid components that permeate throughout the curriculum of the adult education graduate programs. Admittedly, though The programs were not designed around a framework that focused on these kinds of competencies, the development of these competencies were integrated into every aspect of the student experience. While there may not be particular courses or modules associated with them specifically, they are an important part of the interaction that takes place between the professors and the students. These competencies are often a reflection of the teaching practices and expectations of the students themselves. As one participant from Germany stated, "We don't really talk so much about the personality in terms of managing yourself. It is more something that we do *between the lines* [emphasis added]; for instance, it is more something that you get from the professors when you talk to them face-to-face." The participants in this study were keenly aware of the value these competencies played in the success of their students.

Managing people and relationships. Findings from this broad category identified more specific teaching practices among these five competencies and, in general, the most energetic moments of the conversations occurred during this phase of the interviews [Researcher's reflective journal, June 2015].

Business and organizational acumen. The competencies associated with this broad category were described by most of the participants in this study as important, but there were some very specific caveats and reservations regarding the application of business vocabulary to the field of adult education. On one hand, none of the participants denied the value of possessing competencies related to this category as their students move into their individual career paths. However, there was also hesitancy towards bringing the world of adult education into a discourse of this nature. As a participant from Ireland described, "This process brings some very good ideas into the service of a particular way of looking at the world." Frederic, also from Ireland, said there was a real danger in mistranslating the vocabulary associated with this category into the fundamental aspects of adult education, and that precision regarding the definitions of these terms and what are behind the terms are paramount. Also, a few of the participants noted that faculty are often just not set up to teach at this broader level. One participant commented on the organizational restrictions: "We're not allowed to teach them the stuff that would cross over to the MBA program. That's interesting". Another said, "This is a really big thing you are asking me, because I don't think we are working enough in this area."

Table 2

Overview of Broad Categories, a priori categories, and thematic codings from the data.

Broad Category	A priori Category	Coding
Managing Self	Inquisitiveness	• Student experience
		• Role of professor
	Global Mindset	• Encouragement of new perspectives
		• Resistance
		• Global applied to local issues
	Flexibility	• Benefits for student success
		• By-product of neo-liberal economics
		• Influence of professors
	Character	• Expectations of the students
		• Developmental practices
	Resilience	• Disorienting dilemma
		• Student agency
Managing People and Relationships	Valuing People	• Conditional positive regard
		• Importance of student voice
		• Capacity for collaboration
	Cross-cultural communications	• Student demographics
		• Program support
	Interpersonal skills	• Building affective capital
	Teaming skills	• Working in teams necessary

	Empowering others	• Structured support • Student-claimed power
Business and organizational acumen	Vision and Strategic Thinking	• Pragmatic for career in adult education • Teaching of theory only • Neo-liberal economic perspective • Programmatic visioning
	Leading change	• Fundamental human capacity • Continuous reflection
	Business savvy	• Criticism of using a business model • Issues in the adult education program
	Organizational savvy	• Knowledge of adult education institutions • Student knowledge requirements
	Managing Communities	• Building communities • Management in education

Research Question 2: Perceived Importance

The second research question addressed which global leadership competencies were perceived to be the most important, or less important, by the participants selected for this study. A ranking analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted and compared to the rank order each participant provided during the course of the interviews. The participants were asked to rank order the competencies within the three broad categories detailed in Bird's (2013) framework. Table 3 provides an overview of the rank order for each participant for each of the three categories. A rank of "1" indicates that competency was perceived to be the most important. A rank of "5" indicates that competency was perceived to be less important.
- For the category of managing self, inquisitiveness and global mindset were perceived to be most important across all seven cases, while flexibility and resilience were ranked as less important.

- For the category of managing people and relationships, valuing people was ranked as the most important across all seven cases, while cross-cultural communications and empowering others ranked as less important.
- Finally, for the category business and organizational acumen, vision and strategic thinking and leading change ranked as most important across all seven cases, while business savvy ranked as less important.

Table 4 provides a frequency distribution of how many times each competency was ranked at each interval. Combining the competencies with the highest combined rank of numbers one and two across all three categories and all seven cases, the following competencies can be said to be perceived as the most important according to the findings in this study:
- Valuing people
- Inquisitiveness
- Vision and strategic thinking
- Leading change.

With respect to the lower ranking competencies across all three categories and all seven cases, the following competencies can be said to be perceived as less important according to the findings in this study.
- Business savvy
- Resilience
- Cross-cultural communication
- Organizational savvy
- Empowering others.

Discussion

This study sought to expand discussion about the connection between two specific *Standards* (CPAE, 2014) related to globalization and leadership, and to illustrate the gap in the literature through an examination of the phenomenon of global leadership competencies in selected adult education graduate programs in the United States and Western Europe. All of the competencies associated with Bird's (2013) framework were addressed to some extent across all seven cases. However, the participants did not define the construct of global leadership as the researcher expected. During the course of the discussion of each competency, a gap emerged between the participants' focus on the global angle of the study, and the leadership aspect. Most of the participants agreed that the unique nature of the field of adult education, which includes program planning, non-profit organization administration, corporate training, and human resource development, would be enhanced with more of an emphasis on leadership development. Yet, the conclusion across the study indicated there was little emphasis on any specific global leadership competency within the adult education programs.

Table 3

Overview of Rank Order of Each Participant by Category

Category	1a L F	1b B U	2a R W	2b J K	3a G H	3b R M	4a J S	4b M F	5a K E	5b C N	6a J T	6b F C	7a J C	7b E C
Cat 1: Managing self														
Inquisitiveness	2	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	2	1	4	1
Global mindset	3	5	3	1	3	2	5	1	4	1	3	2	5	2
Flexibility	1	3	2	4	4	1	4	3	5	5	5	5	3	5
Character	5	4	4	3	1	5	3	4	1	2	1	4	2	3
Resilience	4	1	5	5	5	4	2	5	3	4	4	3	1	4
Cat 2: Managing people and relationships														
Valuing people	1	1	1	2	1	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	3
Cross-cultural Communication	5	4	2	1	4	3	5	1	4	4	5	2	5	4
Interpersonal skills	2	2	3	5	2	1	2	5	3	1	2	4	2	5
Teaming skills	4	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	5	3	4	5	1	1
Empowering others	3	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	2	2	3	3	4	2
Cat 3: Business and organizational acumen														
Vision and strategic Thinking	2	1	5	2	1	5	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	3
Leading change	1	2	2	5	2	4	2	2	2	4	2	2	1	1
Business savvy	5	4	3	1	4	1	4	4	5	5	4	3	5	5
Organizational savvy	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	5	4	1	5	4	4	4
Managing communities	3	5	1	3	5	2	5	3	3	3	3	5	2	2

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Ranking of All 15 Competencies by Category

Category	1	2	3	4	5
	n	*n*	*n*	*n*	*N*
Managing Self					
- Inquisitiveness	4	7	2	1	0
- Global mindset	3	3	4	1	3
- Flexibility	2	1	3	3	5

- Character	3	2	3	4	2
- Resilience	2	1	2	5	4
Managing people and relationships					
- Valuing people	9	2	2	1	0
- Cross-cultural communication	2	2	1	5	4
- Interpersonal skills	2	6	2	1	3
- Teaming skills	2	1	6	3	2
- Empowering others	0	3	3	4	4
Business and organizational acumen					
- Vision and strategic thinking	7	3	2	0	2
- Leading change	3	8	0	2	1
- Business savvy	2	0	2	5	5
- Organizational savvy	1	0	4	7	2
- Managing communities	1	3	6	0	4

The four global leadership competencies perceived to be most important across all seven cases—(a) valuing people, (b) inquisitiveness, (c) vision and strategic thinking, and (d) leading change—indicate an emphasis on student experience and development. The five global leadership competencies perceived to be less important were (a) business savvy, (b) resilience, (c) cross-cultural communication, (d) organizational savvy, and (e) empowering others. The participants either believed they exercised the least amount of control over the students with regards to these competencies (resilience, empowering others) or they were simply not the focus of the adult education program (business savvy, cross-cultural communication, organizational savvy).

The findings of this study indicated the 2014 CPAE *Standards* were not being universally addressed in adult education graduate programs. Many of the participants of this study were only cursorily aware of the *Standards*—or not aware of them at all, especially the participants from Western Europe—while others were extremely familiar with them and were utilizing them in departmental organizational change. The Commission should revitalize their efforts to develop creative ways to market the *Standards* for adult education graduate programs and determine measures for instigating standardized approaches toward implementing the *Standards*, not only across the United States, but throughout the broad international expanse of graduate programs existing in the world.

A central assumption of this study was the desire for all adult education graduate students to obtain fulfilling employment in the global workforce upon graduation. To this end, adult education graduate students could seek out opportunities in support of this goal. Finally, adult education graduates have a broad range of backgrounds compared to many other degree offerings. They represent a unique population for global leadership competencies to manifest itself at the graduate school level. Students could establish a global research agenda during their programs, attend and present at international conferences, collaborate with international scholars on globally-focused research projects. Furthermore, they could actively participate in discussions, assignments, and global teams to facilitate a more global perspective and learning experience during their progression through graduate programs.

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