Chapter 1
Multicultural Orientations for 21st Century Global Leadership

Sulaiman Olusegun Atiku
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Ziska Fields
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Multicultural orientation is an important focus area in developing managers for international assignments. This chapter extends the frontier of knowledge on the benefits of developing multicultural orientations in line with business and stakeholders' needs in the global economy. A brief literature review was conducted on multicultural orientations and global leadership effectiveness in the 21st century. It was found that multicultural learning experiences and communication skills, deep self-awareness, multiple intelligences and sensitivity to cultural diversity, humility, cautious honesty, global strategic thinking and good negotiating skills are necessary in the 21st century. The managerial relevance of this chapter centres on further research and development of global psychological capital, vertical development of bigger minds and multiple intelligences to navigate in the midst of volatilities, uncertainties, complexities and ambiguities in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century digitally led economy is faced with unprecedented digital change and requires business leaders to navigate businesses successfully through an ever-changing global business environment. Business leaders need to question the business they are in, become forward- and creative thinkers and pinpoint their company's strengths even as their customers, sectors and markets change continuously. Michael Dell, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Dell Inc. (cited in PricewaterhouseCoopers [PWC], 2015) says that leaders should no longer just attach new technological developments to the old way of doing things to deliver some incremental improvement. Leaders should rather rethink the problem and say, "Now that we have all these new tools and new techniques, how can we solve the problem in a fundamentally different way?" (PwC, 2015, p. 18). Leroy Eimes, an author and leadership expert, con-

tends that "a leader is one who sees more than others see, who sees farther than others see and who sees before others see" (Eimes, cited in Businessnews Daily, 2015). This sounds like a superhuman challenge.

This chapter examines the concept of multicultural orientations (global mind-set, cross-cultural competencies, intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence) or cross-cultural values required of business leaders in the digitally led global economy. The business environment in the 21st century is referred to as a digitally led global economy (Salas & Gelfand, 2013). This type of economy is dynamic, and interminably changing as a result of technological innovation. The use of information and communication technology has been a major platform integrating the global economy (Helbing, 2013). It seems that no sector of the world economy can thrive without information and communication technology; teaching and learning as well as management education are inclusive. Issues of convergence and divergent orientations could be a set of challenges facing global leaders. One of the reasons for expatriates' failure on their global/international assignments has been attributed to culture shock (Chew, 2004) rather than a lack of adequate competencies (Jokinen, 2005).

Developed multicultural orientations could be used to remedy the failure rate of global leaders. For example, developing multicultural orientations of the global leaders (Ahamer, 2011; Caligiuri, 2006) will be valuable in addressing issues of divergent orientations without any form of conflict of interest. Global leaders require a cosmopolitan perspective to succeed in the 21st century. Developing a curriculum for management education in the knowledge-based global economy requires additional knowledge of multicultural communication, and cultural intelligence (DuBrin, 2013). This is important because management education is facing a unique crisis of relevance and imparting quality education across the globe (Balaji, 2013; Kumar & Jha 2012). For instance, multicultural experience could be useful in enhancing the levels of creativity among global leaders.

The inculcation of multicultural values by educational institutions across the globe will assist in preparing future leaders for global assignments. Such an approach would enable graduates of higher educational institutions to compete favourably in the international business environment. Developing multicultural orientations could be used to remedy the failure rate of global leaders, because global leaders will have a global mind-set, cross-cultural competence, intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence (Cohen, 2010).

Developing a curriculum for management education in the knowledge-based and digitally-led global economy requires knowledge of multicultural communication and education. Management educationists in the 21st century need to prepare learners or business leaders to meet both local and global requirements and standards (Ahamer, 2011). These standards could be adequately adhered to whilst developing learners or leaders. Educating the trainers or facilitators to gain best insights on cosmopolitan perspective and multicultural orientations will go a long way in preparing learners to be successful as global leaders.

Management education in the 21st century also requires strategic alignment by communicating cross-cultural values in the global market through strategic human resource development. Therefore, apart from the core competencies (Jokinen, 2005) required to be successful as a multinational business leader, over-sea experience, deep self-awareness and sensitivity to cultural diversity, humility, cautious honesty, global strategic thinking and good negotiating skills are also necessary in the 21st century (Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou, 2010). The next section in this chapter addresses the background of multinational business leadership by evaluating the transition of management education from the 20th to the 21st century.

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