

Strategies for Enhancing Ib Leadership Skills in the Arkansas Delta Region – A Decision Science Approach

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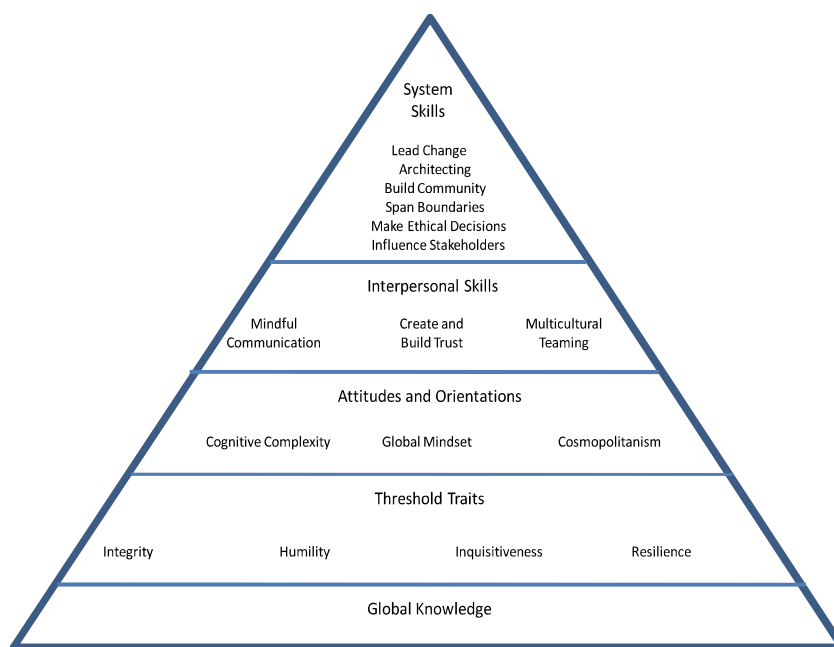
Modern business managers operate under intense performance pressures in a turbulent, globalized environment, while dealing with reduced workforces, and hyper-competition. Literature offers a preponderance of evidence to suggest that future global leadership would be founded on the tenets of sustainability and social responsibility. The Bird and Osland Pyramid Model of Global Leadership suggests a progression of knowledge and traits that are cumulative, advancing from bottom to top. At the base lies knowledge of how business is done across borders, basic concepts of international marketing, finance and human resource management. The IB program of the Arkansas State University could be developed to build global leadership capacity. A survey of students and faculty of ASU, and northeast Arkansas business professionals confirmed the need for curricula development to achieve learning in the leadership pyramid.

ASSESSING THE NEEDS

Today's business managers are under intense performance pressures in a turbulent, globalized environment. They work daily with increased earnings demands while dealing with reduced workforces, and hyper-competition. Add to these new demands for stakeholder accountability and transparency in a world where many governments have relaxed oversight of industries, the natural environment and, the safety of their citizenry. In such countries stakeholder groups such as Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch, as well as other NGOs, have stepped-in to fill the void. Consequently, stakeholder demands have now ratcheted-up as global communications allow for instantaneous knowledge of environmental transgressions, or ethical dilemmas such as suppliers using questionable labor practices. The result is a new reality of global business where managers are caught in a vise between optimizing wealth of owners and placating demands of various stakeholders. Current literature suggests that the corporate and policy worlds are coalescing around the idea that future global leadership would necessarily be founded on the tenets of sustainability and social responsibility. Hence, future business leaders will need to create corporate visions that can demonstrate a strong commitment to social compassion, cultural sensitivity and environmental stewardship. Global leaders desiring a sustainable business model will use a set of skills that exceed what traditionally has sufficed. They will require advanced interpersonal skills that allow them to influence people and the cross-cultural systems in which they work, both internal and external to

their firm. This cadre of new leaders should embrace the notion of their firms becoming *global business citizens* – enterprises that responsibly exercise their rights and implement their duties to individuals, stakeholders, and societies within and across national and cultural borders (Wood, et al., 2006). Globalization results in increased complexity along three dimensions: multiplicity, interdependence and ambiguity (Lane et al., 2004). Multiplicity reflects the need of global leaders having to deal with manifold interests such as customers, governments, NGOs, stakeholders and competitors. Interdependence refers to the more complex systems of human and technological interaction than those encountered by domestic leaders. Finally, ambiguity deals with the lack of information clarity and multiple interpretations of the same facts due to cross-cultural differences that are increased in global settings. Given this concept of globalization, many scholars infer that global leadership differs significantly from traditional leadership to warrant studying it as a separate phenomenon (Osland, et al., 2006). Shown in Figure 1, the Bird and Osland Pyramid Model of Global Leadership suggests a progression of knowledge and traits that are cumulative, advancing from bottom to top. More fundamental concepts are at the base – knowledge of how business is done across borders, basic concepts of international marketing, finance and human resource management. The second level consists of personality traits that may be difficult for some people to learn but are suggested for international managers by the extant literature. The next level up deals with attitudes and orientations that influence the way global leaders perceive and interpret the world. For example, cognitive complexity is an indicator of a global leader’s ability to hold competing interpretations, balance contradictions and ambiguities (Mendelhall, et al., 2008). Cosmopolitanism reflects an orientation towards the external environment and a willingness to engage and learn from outsiders; while a global mindset allows leaders to see beyond the confines of their own culture.

**FIGURE 1
THE PYRAMID MODEL OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**



Source: Bird, A. and Osland, J. (2004)

The pyramid’s upper levels demonstrate advanced skill sets. The fourth level involves interpersonal skills that global leaders need to cross cultures and have been shown to be key components in facing leadership challenges. The top level involves skills that are really a combination of other skills which allow leaders to work with different functional areas, external organizations and stakeholders; and are

boundary-spanning. Future global leaders will be required to build a sense of community that includes not only employees and owners, but other stakeholders as well. They will lead change on a global level and be able to architect by designing and building an organization that complements change rather than blocks it. They should be able to make ethical decisions based on a global perspective for all parties concerned. The Pyramid Model's contribution is the identification of various building blocks of global leadership and the simplification of a complex array of competencies.

The development of the International Business Resource Center (IBRC) housed in Arkansas State University's (ASU) College of Business provided the leadership to revamp the IB program at the undergraduate and MBA level. Undergraduate IB majors increased significantly. After an extensive review process including site visitation, ASU was approved for full membership into the Consortium for Undergraduate International Business Education (CUIBE).

The IB program supports the college's undergraduate and graduate learning goals of leadership development. With regards to the Pyramid Model of Global Leadership, the program has a solid base with coursework and experiences covering all of the first three levels and into the fourth level with multicultural teamwork. However, the IB program could be further developed to move significantly into the fourth and top level of building global leadership capacity. In order to measure the extent of this need the IBRC surveyed students and faculty of ASU, as well as, northeast Arkansas business professionals. These results validated the suspicions and will be discussed shortly. After confirming the need for further curricula development, the IBRC researched how to best achieve learning in the upper levels of the pyramid. A global business citizenship (GBC) approach appears to compliment leadership development for today's world.

The need for language training is well documented in the international business literature and will not be reviewed here. An *Academy of Sciences* review of the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays International Education Programs states, "Language skills and cultural expertise are also urgently needed to address economic challenges and the strength of American businesses in an increasingly global marketplace." (O'Connell and Norwood, 2007).

In addition to curriculum needs, businesses in the Arkansas Delta Region (ADR) need export capacity development. While Arkansas has a wealth of natural resources and a strong agricultural base, the latest trade figures place it 37th in the value of export shipments from the United States (WISER, 2007). Of the forty-two counties designated as the ADR, thirty-six have a median household income that is below the state average (Fish, et al., 2005). The per capita income for the US is \$21,587, for the state of Arkansas it is \$16,904, for the ADR it is \$14,612, with one county as low as \$10,983. The percent of persons living below poverty for the US is 12.4%, for the state of Arkansas it is 15.8%, for the ADR it is 20.1%, with counties ranging from 20.5% to 29.9% (<http://www.bls.gov/>, <http://www.bea.gov/>, 2008).

Even though some ADR businesses are now interested in exporting, they lack IB skills, and in the absence of IBRC personnel, they are likely to lose interest. They need in-depth export training along with the confidence that comes with it. The identification of these needs is assessed via primary research on ASU students, faculty and ADR businesses.

MEASURING THE EXTENT OF NEED

In order to determine the extent of need regarding curriculum development and export assistance to ADR businesses, over 400 people were surveyed out of our three major constituencies – ASU business students, ASU business faculty and ADR businesses. These efforts resulted in 382 usable surveys on which this analysis is based.

Student Survey

TABLE 1
STUDENT SURVEY SUMMARY RESULTS

Item	Likert Statement	Undergrad student N=234	MBA students N=46
1.	Cross-cultural familiarity helps develop global business citizenship.	4.04 (.8944)	4.34 (.6799)
2.	Travel to foreign markets is the most powerful way to be trained in global culture and environment.	3.87 (.7106)	4.19 (.5227)
3.	I understand the concept of “global business citizenship.”	3.43 (.7979)	4.06 (.7146)
4.	Global citizenship is important to be successful in business.	3.79 (.6731)	4.02 (.5036)
5.	Training in the culture and environment of global markets is essential to global citizenship.	4.14 (.8688)	4.54 (.7780)
6.	I know how provide leadership across different functional areas of a global business.	2.90 (.8766)	3.34 (.8224)
7.	I know how to be a catalyst for strategic change of a global firm.	2.75 (.8747)	3.34 (.8748)
8.	I know how to design an organizational structure for a global firm that integrates change.	2.71 (.8304)	3.10 (.9244)
9.	I know how to influence various stakeholders (i.e., employees, locals, non-governmental organizations, governmental organizations) in a foreign business setting.	2.87 (.9141)	3.19 (.9097)
10.	I know how to make ethical decisions with regards to those same stakeholders.	3.54 (1.003)	4.10 (.7064)
11.	I know how to build a sense of community composed of those same stakeholders.	3.27 (.9776)	3.65 (.7949)
12.	I know how to create and build trust with those same stakeholders.	3.52 (.9235)	3.89 (.7372)
13.	I know how to function as a member of a multi-cultural team.	3.67 (.9417)	4.08 (.6936)
14.	I know how to communicate mindfully with active listening and cultural sensitivity in a multi-cultural meeting.	3.72 (.8536)	4.07 (.7250)

A total of 280 ASU College of Business students were surveyed (234 undergraduate and 46 graduate students) to determine their self-assessment of some IB skills that would fit in the lower levels of the Bird and Osland Pyramid Model of Global Leadership, as well as, those that would fall in the upper levels of the model. The students were asked to respond to fourteen Likert statements. The results, presented in Table 1, are based on a Likert Scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. This survey provides a direct measure of the needs outlines in Title VI, Part B, Sec. 611 (a), (1) and (2). It also relates to the purpose of Sec (b) (1) and (2).

Items 1 and 2 deal with cross-cultural familiarity and foreign travel, which are more fundamental competencies of IB that would be found in the lower levels of the pyramid. Both undergraduate and graduate students show agreement here, the MBA students more so, which is a trend throughout the survey and is expected because they have had more exposure to IB in their coursework. Items three through five deal with “global citizenship,” a construct that they have had exposure through via coursework; so it is not surprising that they display confidence in their knowledge here as well. However, their confidence dips involving direct measures of the upper-level competencies in the pyramid, items six through fourteen. There is a noticeable slippage of confidence in those skills for all students surveyed, with the undergraduates turning negative on items six through nine, while the MBAs turn more neutral. Items ten through fourteen reflect a combination of skills and the students show more confidence here, probably because they have had previous coursework in ethics and communication. Standard deviations for the items are shown in parenthesis under each item average. It is worth noting that these can be considered a measure of agreement among the various respondents (*i.e.*, a larger the standard deviation can be inferred as less agreement among respondents as evidenced by the greater dispersion of agreement). While a smaller standard deviation represents more agreement among respondents. In general the MBA students are in greater agreement than the undergrads about their answers and IB skill sets. However, when measuring the upper-level competencies of the pyramid there is a noticeable jump in disagreement (items six through nine especially). The undergraduate business students are in more agreement regarding the lower level skills and global citizenship, but like the MBA students, are in greater disagreement involving their upper-level skills. Unlike the MBA students, their highest level of disagreement involves items ten through fourteen.

There is not much in the results to indicate that the undergraduate students feel that they have the global leadership skills in the upper levels of the survey, with the exception of multi-cultural communication. The MBA students have a greater body of IB coursework and their results show it, however, they still tend to be neutral on the global leadership skills with the exception of multi-cultural communication and ethics, both of which are a part of the current MBA curriculum. Additionally, there is greater disagreement among the students involving the upper-level pyramid skills, as opposed to more rudimentary IB competencies. It appears that the students, both MBA and undergraduate, do not have a great deal of confidence in their global leadership abilities.

Faculty Survey

Twenty-three of the ASU College of Business’ sixty-two faculty members responded to a survey. The first part of the survey (items one through five) dealt with the concepts of global leadership and citizenship, while items six through fourteen dealt with teaching in upper level competencies of the Bird and Osland Pyramid Model of Global Leadership. In total the faculty members were asked to respond to fourteen Likert statements. The results presented in Table 2, are based on a Likert Scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. This survey provides a direct measure of the needs outlines in Title VI, Part B, Sec. 611 (a), (1) and (2). It also relates to the purpose of Sec (b) (1) and (2).

TABLE 2
FACULTY SURVEY SUMMARY RESULTS

Item	Likert Statement	Faculty Response <i>N</i> =22
1.	I am familiar with the concept of “global business leadership.”	4.13 (.9197)
2.	Global business leadership is important to the future of US business.	4.61 (.7827)
3.	ASU business students are taught global business leadership.	3.52 (1.238)
4.	I understand the concept of “global business citizenship.”	3.74 (1.096)
5.	Cross-cultural familiarity helps develop global business citizenship.	4.61 (.5830)
6.	Our students are taught how provide leadership across different functional areas of a global business.	2.95 (1.362)
7.	Our students are taught how to be a catalyst for strategic change of a global firm.	2.96 (1.364)
8.	Our students are taught how to design an organizational structure for a global firm that integrates change.	2.87 (1.424)
9.	Our students are taught how to influence various stakeholders (i.e., employees, locals, non-governmental organizations, governmental organizations) in a foreign business setting.	3.00 (1.414)
10.	Our students are taught how to make ethical decisions with regards to those same stakeholders.	3.61 (1.076)
11.	Our students are taught how to build a sense of community composed of those same stakeholders.	3.09 (1.164)
12.	Our students are taught how to create and build trust with those same stakeholders.	3.087 (1.203)
13.	Our students are taught how to function as a member of a multi-cultural team.	3.52 (1.082)
14.	Our students are taught how to communicate mindfully with active listening and cultural sensitivity in a multi-cultural meeting.	3.22 (1.166)

It is interesting to observe that while the faculty are familiar with the concept of “global business leadership” and feel that it is important to the future of US business, they do not agree that ASU students are taught it. The faculty appear not as familiar with the concept of “global business citizenship,” but they are in strong agreement that cross-cultural familiarity helps to develop it. Items six through fourteen deal with the upper-levels of the Bird and Osland pyramid and here the faculty are fairly neutral as whether or not the skills are being taught to students. There is a slight movement towards agreement on ethics and multi-cultural communication, which is understandable since these are presently part of the curriculum. With most of these items there is also less agreement among the faculty as shown by higher standard deviations. It appears that even though faculty feel that global leadership is important, there is no support to conclude that they agree it is being taught to ASU students. The faculty were also asked to rate the

future importance of five world regions in regards to their importance on a Likert like scale (1=very unimportant, 2=unimportant, 3=neither unimportant nor important, 4=important, 5=very important). The results are shown in Table 3:

TABLE 3
FACULTY RATING OF REGIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR TRADE

Region	Importance
Africa	3.26
Asia	4.96
Europe	4.34
Latin America	4.17
Middle East	4.31

These results indicate that any curriculum changes should consider the belief that during our students careers Asia will become a major economic force. Given the influence that China is predicted to have, training faculty and students in the economics and market nuances of it and other Asian countries, augurs well for a regional institution like ASU.

Business Survey

A total of eighty usable surveys were completed by professionals from businesses located in the ADR. They were surveyed to obtain an indication of their awareness of international business opportunities, their attitudes towards developing international business in the region and lastly, their attitudes towards ASU in a leadership role in this development. With some items they were surveyed about their perceived ability to conduct international business along the domains of the NASBITE Certified Global Business professional training/testing modules. The results presented in Table 4, are based on a Likert Scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Additionally, they were surveyed to measure their view of importance of the five world regions contained in the faculty survey. This survey provides a direct measure of the needs outlined in Title VI, Part B, Sec.611 (a), (1), (2), (3), and (4). It also relates to the purpose of Sec.611 (b) (1) and (2). The first two items gauge how the business professional views exporting and what his or her competency might be in getting started with an export program. The results indicate general agreement that it is a proven method to grow a business but a lack of expertise in finding a market. The next four items (3 through 6) represent the four modules in the NASBITE Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) training program and it is here where the respondents score the lowest in the entire survey. These business professionals do not appear to have much in the way of international business skills. The last items on the survey indicate an awareness of the importance in cross-cultural sensitivity and general agreement that export training is needed in the ADR, that the ASU College of Business is the appropriate institution to provide the training and that such training would be an appropriate link between ASU and ADR businesses.

TABLE 4
BUSINESS SURVEY SUMMARY RESULTS

Item	Likert Statement	ADR Business Response N=80
1.	Exporting is a proven method to grow a business.	3.88 (1.011)
2.	I know how to find international markets for exporting a product.	2.18 (1.016)
3.	I know how to market a product in another country.	2.03 (1.006)
4.	I know how to manage strategic and operational planning of an international venture.	1.88 (.9329)
5.	I know how to evaluate the quantity and source of finance necessary to implement global activities of a business.	2.08 (1.065)
6.	I know how to evaluate all supply-chain options for exporting.	1.95 (1.005)
7.	Cross-cultural sensitivity is important to market a product in another country.	4.43 (.6708)
8.	There is a need for export training in northeast Arkansas.	4.28 (.9401)
9.	The ASU College of Business is an appropriate institution to provide export training.	4.33 (.8233)
10.	Export training would be an appropriate link between ASU and northeast Arkansas businesses.	4.33 (.6320)

The business professionals were also asked to rate the future importance of five world regions in regards to their importance on a Likert like scale (1=very unimportant, 2=unimportant, 3=neither unimportant nor important, 4=important, 5=very important). The results are shown in Table 5. The results here indicate an attitude that Asia is the most important region for world business followed closely by Latin America and Europe. The business professionals did not view the Middle East as important as the business faculty.

TABLE 5
BUSINESS RATING OF REGIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR TRADE

Region	Importance
Africa	3.33
Asia	4.40
Europe	4.16
Latin America	4.21
Middle East	3.88

CONCLUSIONS

The IB curriculum needs revamping with a focus on new courses that can give students the competencies that they will need as they begin their IB careers. Businesses appreciate the importance of cross-cultural sensitivity and need first-hand exposure to a particular culture before entering its market. There is also a need in the business community for export training. Table 6 below presents a plan to address the needs.

**TABLE 6
PLAN TO ADDRESS CURRICULAR NEEDS**

Goals	Strategies	Desired Outcomes
Provide an adequate IB education where students are taught the requisite skills to develop into global leaders.	Establish a course to understand globalization. Establish a hands-on, international CSR project.	An institutionalized IB curriculum that provides skills and first-hand experiences in global leadership.
Language program needs immersion opportunities to increase linguistic skills.	Establish language course containing a country immersion component.	Advanced linguistic skills for business with in-depth understanding of the culture.
Provide an opportunity to apply learning in a more long-term global setting	Establish internships abroad.	Enhanced international cultural awareness.
Business professionals need more global insight.	Organize trade delegations	Businesses feel empowered to benefit from opportunities
Business professionals need to develop export skills.	Export seminars Establish CGBP testing center	Successful exporting efforts

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