Global Leadership: A Perspective in Progress
By Ken Otter, Director, Leadership Studies Programs, School of Liberal Arts, Saint Mary’s College of California

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In this paper I present a perspective of global leadership and some ideas of how to develop it. To begin I provide some background on how this perspective took shape.

In early 2002, I was asked to teach a course titled: *Global Context for 21st Century Leadership* to a group of students who entered a newly formed master’s program in leadership for working professionals from public, private and not-for-profit sectors at Saint Mary’s College of California (SMC).

At the time I was given a very short course description from which to design this course. The first sentence of the description read as follows: “The practice of leadership in the 21st century will require a consciousness that recognizes that we do not live in isolation, but rather are part of a global community.” I saw my task as to design the course so students could see the life and work in a broader context, and for this perspective to influence their practice of leadership positively. At the conclusion of the course, I recall students reporting that they indeed experienced changes in how they thought and felt about their life in leadership. Also at the conclusion of the course, I recall feeling quite enthusiastic to continue to explore the implications of the global world for the understanding and practice of leadership.

And this exploration continues. Seven years since the first course, I have now taught it 21 times to over 300 students. And each time it has been a little bit different. The experience and input of students from each course and the changing nature of the world in this century, provides input into the next and continues to inform my own understanding of leadership in today’s global world and what is required to enact it. But it is not the experience of this course alone upon which I base my understanding of global leadership and how to develop it. It is also my experience as a faculty member and manager in the program as well.

The Master of Arts in Leadership program was born from a need for working professionals to develop their leadership competency and capacity in the dynamic, complex and ambiguous times and circumstances of today’s world. Along with other influences, we were inspired by Joseph Rost’s description of post-industrial paradigm of leadership, and his assertion that the today’s world required a radical revision of how we understand and practice leadership. We were also animated by his call for academics to offer leadership education as a way “to meet the wants and needs of people, organizations and societies in the twenty-first century” (Rost, 1991, p. 185). But what this leadership
education and practice should look like in the context of our students, our college, and our times was not entirely clear to us.

Perhaps by default initially, for we got started without a fully developed curriculum, the program took an experimental approach. Moreover, unlike other disciplines, leadership is a bit “undisciplined” and has not arrived at a consensus around core concepts, theories, units of analysis, research methodologies, and the like, and this gave us some additional permission to innovate and experiment. To varying degrees of intentionality we embraced an action inquiry orientation to explore what kind of leadership program we want to be, and what a post-industrial paradigm of leadership practice should look like.

While the program offered students a definite sequence of courses and definite educational design, after all we had responsibilities to enroll, retain and graduate students, we kept certain questions alive. We posed questions such as: What does a post-industrial paradigm of leadership look like for our students at SMC? What are the skills, capacities, and knowledge required for this leadership? And how shall we develop them in the context of graduate and professional education? Informed by these questions, we paid attention to the experience of the students and faculty alike to help us not only find new ways of understanding the practice of leadership but also to find the kinds of learning outcomes and learning activities we should have “to meet the wants and needs of people, organizations and societies in the twenty-first century” (Rost, 1991, p. 185).

With this in mind, how to understand the practice of leadership commensurate with the global reality of the twenty-first century has become as much an inquiry for the faculty as it has for the students. And it is the fruits of this ongoing inquiry that provides much of the foundation for this perspective on global leadership I present here. But I would be remiss to not credit the conversations and collaborations with others leadership scholars and practitioners over the years as important in developing this perspective as well. My colleagues at SMC: Dr. Shyam Kamath of the Trans-Global Executive MBA (T-GEMBA); Dr. Dean Elias, faculty in both the Master of Arts in Leadership and Doctorate in Educational Leadership; Dr. Yongming Tang of the Global Leadership Network in China; and Dr. Chris Seeley and colleagues at the Center for Action Research previously at the University of Bath and now at Ashridge University Business School in England; all have contributed to this emerging perspective of global leadership development.

In presenting my perspective of global leadership, this paper responds to the question, what should be the focus of global leadership in the Twenty-first Century, and how should we develop it? I begin by describing organizational life and leadership commensurate with today’s global context.

**Organizational Life and Leadership in the Twenty-First Century**

In the global context, organizational life can be described as social networks of multiple stakeholders encompassing relationships, emerging needs and interests, which transcend traditional organizational boundaries. Contemporary systems thinking teaches us that these diverse, dynamically complex, and purposeful networks are themselves embedded
in equally dynamic and complex environments, in a dance of mutually informing interactions and developments (Capra, 2002).

Given this revision of organizational life, leadership can no longer be solely modeled on individualistic, managerial, hierarchical, and authority-based leadership theories. These theories employ models and maps from the industrial era, which tend to view organizations as discrete entities acting upon a detached and independent environment to bring about rationally deduced goals and objectives. Rather, what are required are more adaptive, relational and process-oriented theories of leadership, employing multi-dimensional and complex models and maps of the world, toward what Rost (1991) calls a “post-industrial paradigm of leadership” (p. 181). In this way leadership in the twenty-first century must go beyond the visionary, strategic, motivational dimensions of organizational life, on the part of those in roles of authority, and must now incorporate attention to the complex process by which these global multi-stakeholder networks emerge and develop in relationship to their environment (Marion, Uhl-Bien, & McKelvey, 2007).

Leadership in this global context has both an inward and outward orientation. It recognizes the multiple dimensions of human experience and capacities, embedded within a dynamic environment. The inward orientation of leadership attends to the developmental process of the emerging system or network so it can better reflect and respond to this environment. As a living system, networks interact with their particular environment commensurate with their level of development. Therefore, attention to this development is key. The outward orientation is animated by the purposefulness of the enterprise, which seeks to change its environment to improve its conditions. This interaction and engagement in turn generates new information relevant to the inner development of the network, which when attended, comes to know and engage the environment in new and different ways. This again is reflective of its new emergent developmental state. These inner and outer arcs of attention are always in service of the larger purposes in play, which themselves emerges over time and through engagement with its world.

To reiterate, an understanding and practice of leadership must be reflective and responsive to the new realities of a highly complex, dynamic and interdependent world in a reciprocally related inward and outward orientation. It must be responsive to the global reality in which organizations are embedded, thus requiring an expansion of consciousness, which can handle greater complexity, multidimensionality, and ambiguity.

**Expansion of Consciousness**

Authors from a variety of disciplines identify the need for an expansion of consciousness to meet the leadership challenges of the twenty-first century. Consciousness can be understood in a variety of ways depending on the disciplinary lens and the particular world-view employed. For my purposes here, the term consciousness is used to represent the various dimensions of human experience involved in apprehending and comprehending the world. It goes beyond merely the waking state, more than
the product of the neural activity of the brain, and has both individual and social dimensions. It is a multifaceted, embodied and embedded phenomenon, which involves various capacities or intelligences, not merely the cognitive dimension of human experience but also the affective, imaginal, kinesthetic, and social.

The term “intelligence” is derived from the Latin word “intellegere” (legere meaning gather or bring together, and inter meaning between or within). So it could be said that intelligence is “to choose among what has been brought or gathered together” (Partridge, 1983, p. 346). In other words, intelligence has to do with perception and discernment of the world brought before us, toward what is meaningful. Intelligence is related to consciousness in that it is the means by which we apprehend and comprehend the world brought before us. We make meaning from what we notice, but we notice what is meaningful to us. This interplay of perception and meaning making is predicated on an engagement with the world involving multiple dimensions of the human experience (Thompson, 2008). In this way intelligence has many dimensions or expressions and, involves the whole person in relationship to his or her own world. Therefore, to expand consciousness is to expand the range of intelligences or capacities in people.

Constructive developmental psychologists, such as Robert Kegan (1994), describe the developmental trajectory of people in terms of acquiring more complex orders of consciousness, which emerge in response to the challenges presented by one’s life context. According to Kegan, the "socialized mind" is the order of consciousness necessary to be a functional part of a coherent, cohesive and stable social organization. However, the "ever-proliferating pluralism, multiplicity, and competition for our loyalty to a given way of living... requires that we be more than well socialized..." (p. 68.). Kegan goes on to say that the challenges of the "postmodern" world asks us to question the premises of our internal authorities so that we are not completely captive of our own theories, and so that we can recognize their incompleteness...even to embrace contradictory systems simultaneously" (p. 68). Kegan describes the challenge well. As educators we need to ask, “what are the skills and capacities necessary to navigate "contradictory systems simultaneously," which are prevalent in today's highly interdependent world?

Psychologist Brian Hall (1994) has built a developmental framework based on values that articulate the skills and capacities needed to participate skillfully in the postmodern world. Hall describes four phases of consciousness in human development each more complex than the previous ones. They are as follows: Phase I--Surviving, Phase II--Belonging, Phase III--Self-initiating and Phase IV--Interdependent. Each phase encompasses different values, capacities, and skills. According to Hall, to function well in the industrial era one needs to be steeped in Phase II consciousness, which allows people to function well in the hierarchical, authoritarian and problem-solving world of bureaucratic organizations and institutions. Like Kegan, Hall believes that the global post-industrial era requires a shift in consciousness, from a less complex variation to more complex ones. The shift from Phase II to Phase III requires a corresponding shift in capacities like creativity, collaboration, adaptability/flexibility, ethics, social justice,
empathy and other emotional and social intelligences, so as to respond to increasingly dynamic and complex circumstances.

To reiterate, the term consciousness is used to represent the various dimensions of human experience involved in apprehending and comprehending the world. To enact leadership in today’s globalized world, a wider repertoire of capacities or intelligences are needed. This wider range of capacities or intelligences is the means by which consciousness expands and becomes more complex. If we are to educate people capable of enacting global leadership then attention to widening the range of intelligences and expanding consciousness is essential. A question then becomes, how do we foster and support such development in the context of formal leadership education?

**Key Ingredients in Global Leadership Education**

Presently, in the Master of Arts in Leadership program we are designing a prototypical global leadership program, informed by the seven-year odyssey of our program, and the collaboration with the people and programs mentioned earlier. It is intended to either be an added concentration in our existing program or a stand-alone certificate program. Central to the design is attention to the development of different capacities and intelligences toward a more complex consciousness, which I have described as being essential to enact global leadership in international settings.

Below is a preliminary sketch of this proposed program, which includes prospective student profiles, a basic educational design, program goals and learning outcomes. It is offered to suggest ways leadership educators can incorporate the expansion of consciousness as a core component of in global leadership development. Before I present this sketch, I share some core assumptions arrived at from the experience of the last seven years, and upon which inform the design of the program.

*Assumption #1—Awareness of self and other and self and world are mutually enhancing.*

If leadership has both inner and outer orientations, it would follow that developing the capacity to be aware of one’s inner experience and outer reality would be key. We believe that expanding consciousness means increasing our capacity for being aware in each of these domains and their interrelationship (Kasl, & Elias, 2000).

There are many ways in which to cultivate this awareness through intentional activities found through various spiritual and psychological practices. One path is self-oriented and another is other-oriented. Self-oriented practices focus on inner experience becoming the object of one’s attention and cultivating capacities for choosing where attention goes and how we act. Other-oriented practices focus on attending to other people’s behavior and actions, through cultivating emotional and social awareness, and the facility to respond constructively (Goleman, 2006). For example, when personality and cultural differences arise, in order to empathically and skillfully navigate these differences toward shared meaning and purposes, a high degree of self-awareness and emotional intelligence is key.
Assumptions #2—Multicultural learning groups provide analogues for complex social life in the everyday world.

Learning groups in educational programs should reflect the complex and multicultural social milieus in which one practices leadership. These real world analogues become learning laboratories and practice fields, in which higher order values and more complex orders of consciousness can be called forth.

Assumption #3—Educational designs should intentionally foster transformative learning leading to the development of higher order values and consciousness.

One aspect of consciousness is awareness of how we make meaning. We make meaning by perceiving the world through a particular paradigm or worldview. A paradigm includes a framework of values. Based on the research of Brian Hall (1994), we assume that all human systems develop along a continuum of values. Values at the early end of the spectrum fit environments that are comparatively simple. As cultures become more complex, values organically evolve. However, we cannot afford to wait for the slow and organic process of change in values. Therefore, we believe that we need to consciously and intentionally evoke those values within people through offering learning experiences, which present what Heifetz and Linsky (2002) call “adaptive challenges.” Learning communities, experiential activities, and real world projects are some examples.

Assumption #4—Education should provide experiences of possibilities over probabilities.

Many leadership development programs offer theoretical frameworks and problem-solving skills based on “technical challenges” already known. To recognize and respond to the more “adaptive challenges” of the future, students must learn to engage the unknown and emergent (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). To do so requires capacities for creativity, innovation and imagination. By evoking one’s aspirations of what is possible, students are more likely to engage the unknown and realized aspired futures.

Student Profile

This program would serve individuals who practice leadership in multi-national corporations or in NGO’s, which have a multi-national reach, and public servants who serve in international organizations such as the UN or in government agencies that work internationally. The program would seek participants in who not only have experience in international settings and are also actively engaged as learners, and with some foundations in:

- Exercising influence whether she is in a role with positional authority or not
- Engagement in diverse cultures
- Critical reflection on one’s own assumptions and biases
- A willingness to engage in constructive conversations
- Capacity for empathy and authenticity
• A willingness to participate in one’s own personal development

*Educational Design*

The curriculum design is a hybrid design of residential intensive seminars taking place in Europe, the United States and China, and online learning in between seminars. The curriculum would weave together case studies and simulations with examples from participants’ direct work experience in various settings, and have application projects between residential meetings, supported by case consultation seminars through the web and telephone coaching.

*Purpose, Goals, and Outcomes*

The program would serve two primary purposes. First, we intend to cultivate capacity among key people in the international community to practice leadership in a way that matches the complexity in the world. This practice would not only serve the larger overarching purposes of the enterprise in which they belong, but would also serve values of the common good, global sustainability and responsibility. Second, we intend to develop Communities of Practice among participating students and faculty, which will deepen and sustain ongoing learning regarding leadership for the twenty-first century.

The primary goals of the program would be to:

1. Evoke and develop progressively higher values and orders of consciousness
2. Exercise imaginal and systems thinking
3. Cultivate competence to work in multicultural and international environments
4. Engage diversity through ongoing synergic inquiry
5. Promote learning that is ongoing and transformative
6. Practice Action Research in each person’s domain of practice.

And at the conclusion of the program students would have an expanded range of capacities, to include:

1. Increased capacity for critical subjectivity, as demonstrated by the ability, in the midst of a stressful situation, to
   a. Become her own “witness consciousness”
   b. Identify her own framework of assumptions, values and beliefs that shape how she perceives, chooses, and acts
   c. Become her own “coaching self,” and thus able to engage her values, beliefs and emotions in a creative manner
   d. Reframe situations in terms of possibilities
2. Embodiment of a personal practice of meditation, prayer, or other means of achieving inner alignment, that promises to support ongoing learning and expansion of consciousness
3. Capacity to identify and engage differences in cultural values and practices within a team or organization in ways that lead to collaboration among colleagues in support of the core purposes of the organization

4. Ability to recognize a hierarchy of values and, within this hierarchy, to develop paths of values development within a Leadership Development Plan that, in turn, produces demonstrable changes in leadership practices

5. Capacity to develop and use a meta-theoretical model that relates different models of leadership to different points on a spectrum of increasing complexity in human systems

6. Capacity to practice contextual leadership: capacity to analyze complex human systems in terms of the whole array of cultural and structural forces at play – the forces contributing to the system’s capacity to realize its purpose, and the forces resisting the system’s movement to realize its purpose -- and to frame system breakdowns in terms of opportunities and challenges

7. Capacity to practice synergic leadership — to design and implement interventions in human systems that promise to a) liberate potential for growth and b) to ensure that successful interventions become sustainable

8. Capacity to design and deliver processes that lead to cultural alignment within individuals, teams and organizations – specifically,
   a. To coach individuals leading to the design and application of a Leadership Development Plan that supports leadership development
   b. To coach teams leading to alignment of values and practices within the team that serves the core purposes of the larger system
   c. To participate in processes leading to alignment of values and practices within social networks as a whole

9. Capacity to design and carry out action learning projects that generate ongoing cycles of learning for the individual and her team, and through this experience, make action learning integral to her leadership practice

Again, this sketch of a program design in global leadership is intended to offer suggestions on how to think about educating people in an understanding and practice of leadership, commensurate with the new global reality. The ideas presented in this paper are based on a question posed decades ago by Joseph Rost, when he asked what kind of leadership was needed in the twenty-first century, for a world as dynamic, complex and interdependent as we now have. What began as an invitation to teach one course, titled *Global Contexts for 21st Century Leadership* eight years ago, catalyzed an inquiry for me into what should be the focus of an education in leadership in a global context which continues until today. This experience has not only involved over 300 students but has involved experiences and conversations with a variety of colleagues as well. While the inquiry continues, I believe that the inherent complexity and dynamic nature of the global and international context requires the cultivation of a wider range of intelligences or capacities toward the expansion of consciousness.

References


