The Impact of Culture and Religion on Leadership and Management Training:
A Comparison of Three Continents

(Kesan Kebudayaan dan Agama terhadap Latihan Pengurusan dan Kepimpinan: Perbandingan antara Tiga Benua)

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ABSTRACT

The role of training and education in the development of senior management and leaders is critical to the long-term development of organisations. This paper seeks to explore and discuss the methods used for training and developing senior and executive managers across Africa, China, Europe and the Middle East. The paper outlines the methods used to identify training needs, selection of trainers and trainees, curriculum development and implementation of delivery. The paper further considers the evaluation criteria used to gauge the success of training in meeting training needs and provides an insight into the challenges faced by course designers and deliverers. The paper uses evidence collected over a five-year period between 2005-2009 on groups of senior managers and executives receiving training in the UK, sponsored by both British and other national governments. The paper has found little difference in the manner in which curriculum has been developed and how trainees are selected. However, the training needs and the identification of trainers have shown differences in approach and selection. Whilst there is evidence to suggest that training needs have been met, this is only in the short term and long-term needs are yet to be addressed. Furthermore, in support of long-term objectives, the ability to recognise and accommodate religion and culture remain areas necessitating further understanding.

ABSTRAK

Peranan yang dimainkan oleh latihan dan pendidikan dalam perkembangan pengurusan kanan dan pemimpin adalah kritikal bagi perkembangan jangka panjang organisasi. Kertas kajian ini bertujuan meneliti dan membincangkan kaedah yang digunakan untuk melatih dan membentuk para pengurus eksekutif dan kanan di Afrika, China, Eropah dan Timur Tengah. Kertas ini menggariskan kaedah yang digunakan bagi mengenal pasti keperluan latihan, pemilihan pelatih dan jurulatih, perkembangan kurikulum dan pelaksanaan penyampaian. Kertas ini juga meneliti kriteria penilaian yang digunakan bagi menilai kejayaan sesuatu latihan dalam memenuhi keperluan latihan dan seterusnya memberikan tanggapan tentang cabaran yang bakal dihadapi oleh pereka kursus dan para penyampai. Kertas ini menggunakan bukti yang dikumpul bagi tempoh lima tahun antara 2005-2009 bagi kumpulan-kumpulan pengurus kanan dan eksekutif yang menerima latihan di UK, yang ditaja oleh kedua-dua kerajaan British dan kerajaan-kerajaan lain. Kertas ini mendapati terdapatnya perbezaan yang kecil antara cara kurikulum dibentuk dan cara pelatih dipilih. Walau bagaimanapun, daripada segi keperluan latihan dan pengenalpastian jurulatih, terdapat perbezaan daripada sudut kaedah dan pemilihan. Walaupun terdapat bukti yang menunjukkan bahawa keperluan latihan sudah dipenuhi, namun ia hanya berbentuk jangka pendek dan keperluan jangka panjang masih belum dipenuhi. Selain itu, dalam menyokong objektif jangka panjang, keupayaan untuk menambil kira dan seterusnya memasukkan agama dan kebudayaan masih menjadi bidang yang memerlukan pemahaman lanjut.

INTRODUCTION

The role of training and education in the development of senior management and leaders is critical to the long-term development of organisations. The issue of leadership and the nature of training and development methods used to nurture desirable leadership qualities are well documented and debated across the academic and practitioner divide. Leadership has been the subject of numerous essays and debate for over six centuries; however it is only recently, in the twenty-first century, that it has become a topic for sustained formal analysis by scholars and researchers (Stadler 2009).

Leadership is viewed as a process of influencing people to act in particular manner in order to achieve specific goals. This process may be achieved in a variety of ways, which will affect leadership styles. The way a person exercises leadership can be identified as a series of actions, which are directed towards a particular objective. Furthermore, there are contrasting views on their importance (Nirenberg 2001). Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) simply described what leaders do, as opposed to what managers do. For example, 'leaders act with integrity and competence, interpret reality, explain the present and paint a picture of the future, innovate, build trust, are effective

advocates for followers and care about them.' As they say: 'a good manager does things right. A leader does the right things.' Northouse (2007) defined leadership as '… a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.' Rost (1993) described leadership as 'an influencing relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.' Leadership is therefore clearly seen as a widespread social function necessary for the achievement of collective objectives and not just a position in a hierarchy.

Current leadership rhetoric places high value on teamwork, empowerment, performance management, rationality, delegation, listening and learning (Ford & Fottler 1995). Therefore the definition of leadership has evolved on the basis of key components, through the current functionalist paradigm, to include the building of trust, reducing the need for supervision and control, teamwork, empowerment, performance management, rationality, delegation, listening and learning. The functionalist paradigm supports the notion that transformational leaders pay particular attention to the building of trust, which ensures reliability and predictability of employee responses and reduces the need for supervision and control. They also set the organisation's direction and shape employee behaviour by outlining a vision, which is sufficiently persuasive to inspire and energize others in its pursuit (Kotter 1990). This idea assumes that employees will take initiatives of their own once the broad goals have been set (Blunt & Jones 1997).

Over the last five decades, many theories of leadership have evolved as a result of debates and discussions. There are three key components that the definition of leadership concentrates on. Firstly, leadership is regarded as an interpersonal process in which individuals seek to shape and direct the behaviour of others. Secondly, leadership is set in a social context and seen as contextual in nature, whereby members of an organisation are influenced as subordinates or 'followers'. Thirdly, a criterion measure is used for identifying or valuing effective leadership in achieving goals and this is influenced by national or organisational culture.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2009) argue that the current thinking on leadership, which seeks to use culture as the framework within which leadership is primarily defined, should be asking how decisions are made to off-set dilemmas that leaders are faced with in a more general sense, rather than one that is limited to a particular set of rules and conditions. The manner by which leaders resolve dilemmas is influenced by the culture they come from and therefore offers a view of how things are done and not why they are done or the values that are instilled by other leaders. This is an interesting approach, as most culture experts will agree that a majority of publications have not approached the influence of culture in this manner. If Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner were correct, this would be a significant addition to the body of work on leadership and management.

As a result of research and debate, current thinking on leadership can be grouped into four fundamental leadership theories, which include:

Trait theory – which identifies the personality traits and other related attributes of the effective leader in order to facilitate the selection of leaders. This would also include the characteristics of the individual.

1. Behavioural theories – which characterize different leadership behaviour patterns in order to identify effective and ineffective leadership styles and to improve the training and development of leaders: University of Iowa (Styles: autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire), Continuum of Leader Behaviours, Ohio State University (initiating Structure / Consideration) and Managerial Grid.
2. Situational theories – which argue that the effectiveness of particular leadership behaviours is dependent on the organisational and cultural setting, which can also facilitate leadership awareness and training: Contingency Model, Situational Leadership Theory and House's path-goal model or the path-goal theory of leadership.
3. Modern leadership – offers three perspectives known as Transactional leader, Charisma leader and Transformational leader. This is where current thinking lies in the pursuit of understanding leadership with arguments for a Servant Leadership approach (Greenfield 1970) and a focus on how dilemmas are resolved (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2009).

LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT

At the heart of the debate of leadership is the issue of leadership verses management. At times these terms are used interchangeably and there is considerable column inches given to fuel the debate. The word 'leader' derives from words indicating that there is a person in the lead, at the head of a group of followers, guiding them on a long journey that he or she has determined. This process indicates that leaders need to have followers and to share common goals with them. People following are willing to accept guidance from their leader, favour the leader's ideas on this, by giving up their own ideas of the direction they should be going. By doing so, they expect a reward from the leaders. But leaders and managers play different roles and make different contributions within an organisation: leaders have followers and managers have subordinates. The manager is operator, technician and problem-solver, concerned 'with the here-and-now of goal attainment' (Bryman 2008); as Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) observed, managers do things right, while leaders do the right thing.

Kotter (1990) contrasts the functions of leaders and managers in a similar manner. The leader establishes vision and direction, influences others to sign up to that vision, motivates and inspires them to overcome obstacles, and

produces positive and sometimes radical change. The manager establishes plans and budgets, designs and staffs the organisation structure, monitors and controls performance, and produces order, consistency and predictability (Table 1). Leaders therefore influences others to 'want to do' whereas managers 'get others to do'. This is the clear distinction between the process of managing and the process of leading.

Leadership and management are both important to organisations. However there are differences. One of the major differences between the leader and the manager relates to their source of power, and power determines if a leader is able to command compliance from followers. Leadership power comes from personal sources that are not as invested in the organisation, such as personal interests, goals, and values. Leadership power promotes vision, creativity, and change in the organisation. Management power is derived from organisation structure, it is the person's position in an organisation that determines the extent of their power and it is argued that this promotes stability, order, and problem solving with the organisation's structure.

TABLE 1. A comparison between leadership and management

Leadership functions		Management functions
Establishes direction: vision of the future, evelops strategies for hange to achieve goals	Creating an agenda	Plans and budgets: decides actions and and timetables, allocates resources
Aligning people: communicates vision and strategy, influences creation of teams which accept validity of goals	Developing people	Organising and stuffing: decides structure and allocates staff, develops policies, procedures and monitoring
Motivating and inspiring: energises people to overcome obstacles, satisfies human needs	Execution	Controlling, problem solving: monitors results against plan and takes corrective action
Produces positive and sometimes dramatic change	Outcomes Outcomes	Produces order, consistency and predictability

LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND TRAINING

There is generally a consensus that the quality of the human resource in an organisation is a critical factor in the success of that organisation (Mendenhall et al. 2003). Many authors argue (Mintzberg & Gosling 2002; Cooke & Budhwar 2008) that management training and education are important means of improving the managerial capability of organisation personnel. However before any meaningful debate can be conducted, it is important to highlight the difference between 'Western' managerial learning styles against 'Traditional or Developing' approaches.

Western research considers the organisation, as a useful unit of study. In the West, it is the individual manager who writes complex contracts, who seeks contractual enforcement and represents an organisation as the contracting party (Leiblein 2003). However in China, managers represent their network by combining two nationally common features, cultural values and guanxi. Guanxi consist of connections defined by reciprocity and mutual obligation and is supported by goodwill and personal affection (Renqing). It is grounded in trust, mutual obligation and shared experience (Mianzi) (Schlevogt 1999). Domestically within China, guanxi becomes a defensive mechanism for transactional relationships against contractual obligations (Luo 1997). Any study that uses organisations as a unit of study needs to take into account of the national culture influence. Most training programmes do not place great emphasis on this (Chen 2001).

Furthermore, studies looking at the development of leaders in the Middle East and South East Asia have suggested that culture plays a major role in their development (Fontaine 2007; Holden 2002). They argue that the notion of working in different culture settings means that leaders are no longer simply experts in their own culture but become knowledge-management facilitators in the West, the debate has been on how management development is viewed. Mullins (2002) argues that there is no single definition, whilst Mumford (2004) is critical of definitions that are restrictive in their coverage. Thomson et al. (2001) suggest that the concept should be more embracing and attempt to improve the managerial effectiveness through the learning process. They argue that the concept should be viewed as a multi-faceted process, which includes both formal as well as informal learning. Research by Mabey and Thomson (2000) support the argument and suggest that managers do not just learn from formal training but also from experiences that they encounter. Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) further points out that good managers are not created in classrooms alone. Allen (2008) advocates that there is a need to balance formal and informal approaches as the environmental changes are fast changing the landscape that managers transact in.

The debate has extended to the notion that terms like 'training' and 'development' are often used interchangeably and this has cause further confusion as to what is needed to progress development (Mullins 2002). Thursfield (2008) argues that the process and content of any programme if unclear will lead to ineffective learning and this is made worse if the training is divorced from reality. It is therefore important that training providers and architects of curriculum be clear as to what objectives are to be met in the pursuit using management as an intervention for learning. Many authors argue that a frequent problem is the lack of clarity as to operational and strategic requirements for the programme and the absences of incorporating the learning styles of individual learners in the design of the programmes. A further

complication that is found today, is the lack of clarity as to the difference between 'leadership' and 'management'.

PAPER METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

This paper seeks to explore and discuss the methods used for training and developing senior and executive managers across different continents. The data used to formulate the paper has been collected over five years, commencing in 2005 and ending in 2009. Data was collected by the use of a questionnaire administered after each training session for each component that was taught for each project. Selected participants, the official delegation leaders were interviewed for further comments. The projects were funded by the British government and its counter-parts, and were co-sponsored by governmental and non-government organisations like the World Bank. All training was conducted in the UK. A total of 718 senior managers were surveyed with the course delivered by British experts in the UK. A total of 435 Chinese, 130 African, 80 Middle East and 73 European participants responded to the survey. Group leaders interviewed included 8 Chinese, 9 African, 6 Middle East and 2 European managers. European participants were included to act as a control sample. UK experts designed all courses but overall aims were articulated by the funding organisation.

The paper outlines and discusses the methods used to identify training needs, selection of trainers and trainees, curriculum development and implementation of delivery. The paper further considers the evaluation criteria used to gauge the success of training in meeting training needs and provides an insight into the challenges faced by designers and course deliverers using the 'Guiding Principals Model'.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS MODEL

The 'Guiding Principals Model' (Liu & Mackinnon 2002), was developed to identify and simplify the needs of those working in cross-cultural settings in globalised economies. The model identifies the three pillars of managerial development that are needed to empower an individual to operate in cross-culture organisations. The three pillars include: (1) sense of belonging; (2) culture and religion; and (3) management analysis and language. The model advocates that there is a need to shift mono-cultural mindsets of managers and leaders towards cross-cultural settings to fully exploit the benefits of multiculturalism.

Using the model, there is little evidence to suggest that the pillar of 'developing a sense of belonging' nor 'culture and religion' is taken into account when developing and delivering training programmes. Furthermore, whilst the pillar of 'management analysis and language' has evidence of support, quite often the language of delivery is in English. There is however some evidence that delivery in the participants' national

language has been sometimes used, but where English is used, translators are deployed to close the language gap. This of course questions the appropriateness of terms used when conducting translations, as any deliverer will testify that they are not sure of the terms used by the translator, as they do not speak the language.

APPROACH TO IDENTIFICATION OF TRAINEES AND TRAINING NEEDS

The survey found little difference in the manner in which curriculum has been developed and how trainees are selected. However, training needs and identification of trainers has shown some differences in approach and selection. As a corollary, Humphrey's (1996) analysis of Egyptian and UK senior managers in education, suggests that systems from the Western world 'may need to be modified and adapted in order to fit the value, culture, expectations and practices of other, particularly developing countries.' There is further evidence to suggest that little regard has been paid to the national culture requirements when considering course design and pedagogical approach despite arguments by Trommsdorf and Dasen (2001), Lattuca (2002) Selvarajah (2006) and Charlesworth (2008), that learning cannot be separated from the contexts in which it occurs and re-constituted as an example in another.

Gratton (2000) asserts that Chinese managers presently in senior roles have limited education and limited experience in Western business practices and it therefore stands to reason that training in a Western setting will enable better engagement and understanding of the context of what is being taught. There is evidence to support the use of case material as a way forward for managers but there was little evidence that training programmes were making extensive use of such case material.

MEASURING COURSE BENEFITS AND EVALUATING THE COURSE

Whilst there is evidence to suggest that training needs have been met, this is only in the short run and long-term needs are yet to be address. Mumford (1997), Kirkpatrick (1994) and Mabey and Thomoson (2001) argue that there is a need for the training to be effective if it is to be useful and there is evidence to suggest that post-training evaluation is still in its infancy. The programmes reviewed were well designed in a Western context but no formal evaluation of whether the skills covered in training are appropriate for the countries that participants were from. Most courses administered simple after course reviews, which may be too early to use as a measure of successful course completion. Follow-ups are appropriate but in the discussion with group leaders, they indicated that they were to write course evaluation reports but were unsure

as to who would receive them. More importantly, little similarities were found with regard to the structure of such reports and issues that were measured during the training delivery.

The area of course evaluation is an area of great debate with fund providers and deliverers. Part of the difficulty lies in deciding who should conduct the review, and partly as to how the costs of doing so can be absorbed or by whom. European fund providers may have a solution here as post-training evaluations are written into the agreements between training providers and fund providers. However, this does not address the issue of effectiveness of the training as the evaluation comes within three months of training. If we are training leaders, then perhaps a longer time horizon needs to be taken into account.

LEARNING IN CONTEXT

The survey found that course participants found difficulties in aligning the theories taught with the realities of what was happening in their home countries. Quite often this was heavily debated between delivers and participants in and after the training session. Participants have argued that some of the rhetoric offered has little bearing on the situation in their countries but deliverers argue that the intent was to expose the participant to such theories rather than offer definite solutions to problems and challenges.

Lattuca (2002) argued that, "learning cannot be separated from the contexts in which it occurs, and to re-conceptualise cognition and learning as activities that occur through social interaction". He argued that learning is fundamentally a social and culture activity and not an activity as behavioural and cognitive models suggest where learning can be conceptualised and treated as an artefact that can easily be separated from the contexts in which it takes place. Yet there is little evidence that this is taken into account when developing training objectives.

Lee and Li (2008) found that the learning environment in Asia and China is authoritarian and expository, using mainly didactic methods and with a focus on cooperative learning and by rote. This in contrast to what is found in a Western setting where participants are often encouraged to challenge concepts and ideas. In addition, they argue that learning styles are significantly different to impact on the manner in which information is processed in the learning experience.

Charlesworth (2008) further argues that business sector practitioners involved in on-the-job and management training need also to take culture and its influences on one's practice seriously. It is suggested that on-the-job training, particularly appreciated by the activist, learners be supplemented with handouts and theory for the more reflective and theorist learners. Alternatively, leadership and training courses at a more senior level, and possibly having a more theoretical base, need to be broadened with case studies or actual issues in order to address those individuals with more activist styles.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT LEARNING AND THE IMPACT OF CULTURE

When examining the learning experiences of delegates on leadership programmes, culture appears to play a formative role. Furthermore, the way in which culture impacts on leadership training, across nationalities, appears to differ. In support of this Charlesworth (2008) asserts the following:

"If one accepts that culture is 'a certain commonality of meaning, customs and rules (not a homogeneous entity) shared by a certain group of people and setting a complex framework for learning and development' (Trommsdorf & Dasen 2001) then one cannot deny the connection between culture and learning... ...Furthermore systematic differences found in the way in which classrooms function in different parts of the world can be largely linked to cultural differences (Crahay 1996)".
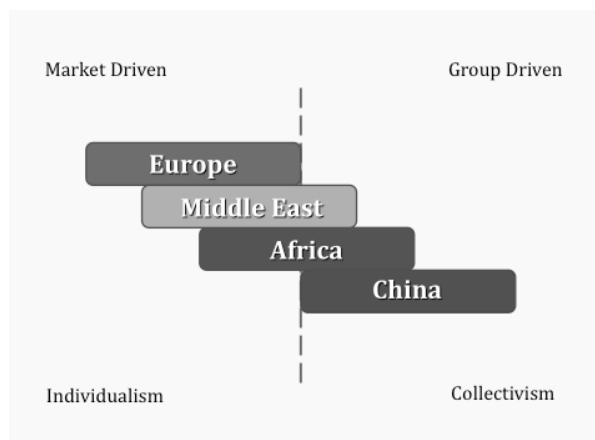

FIGURE 1. Cultural impact and positioning

Certainly, culture is often restricted in its definition within business to being a management component; which both assumes and encourages participants to create a universally tenable working environment. This being the case, culture and more specifically national identity seems to only become of significance if either problem arises; or it presents a commercial gain. From this paradigm it could be argued that any explicitly derived knowledge and understanding may tend towards being superficial, sporadic, or at it worst exploitative.

Further to this, the most incisive and meaningful components of culture appear to be rooted in largely implicit drivers; which can lead to complications. The utilisation of these truly valuable cultural traits, also in turn hinge on the successful acquisition of tacit knowledge. Therefore a critical success factor rests in managing the transfer of this knowledge. Nonaka (1991), when looking at how tacit knowledge can be converted into the explicit, suggested that it is a process of 'finding a way to express the inexpressible.' He concludes that "Unfortunately, one of the most powerful management tools for doing so is frequently overlooked: the store of figurative language and symbolism that managers can draw from to articulate their intuitions and insight."

Holden (2002) reviewed existing cross-cultural management and anthropological frameworks and a result suggested that managing across cultures is:

'... the art of combining varieties of common knowledge through interactive translation. In order to develop this modified concept of cross-cultural management, it will be necessary to come to an understanding of translation both as a process and as an analogy'.

Within this he appraised the role of language, concluding that it can be seen metaphorically with 'its symbolic powers serving to unite people with a sense of common purpose. Seen in this way, language is a very potent expression of company wisdom, lore and vision'.

Sun and Ross (2009) identified nine key factors and eight less influential factors that affect learning in their study of Chinese managers. The key factors they found include; language ability, cultural impact, objectives and needs, programme design, quality of delivery, communication skills, individual characteristics, living conditions, and assessment criteria for learning outcomes. Eight less influential factors include; pre-training preparation, practice and company visits, concept, management of training activity, group, context, and academic facilitation and accommodation.

There are many ways to define culture, but they emphasize on contextual, situation and environment have been strongly stressed upon. Culture is 'beliefs and values', 'the way things are done and shared' and 'accepted perceptions' as put forward by learned authors. Derr and Laurent (1989) argue that cultures are developed within countries as product of national patterns of early childhood and formative experiences and education, language, religion and geography. Moreover, culture according to Winfield (1999) can be differentiated into five contextual levels: International, National, Regional, Industrial or Professional and Organisational level. Hsieh and Tsai (2009) argued that considerable cultural insight into local conditions is needed to understand the processes and philosophies of national models. National differences can have the single greatest impact upon cultural value orientations and represent the highest level of culture aggregation (Hofstede 1997).

Cultural differences have become central to cross-national studies but yet little is used in the design of training programmes when bringing together different nationalities and cultures. This is despite our understanding that culture manifests itself in the interaction between different organisations and in the interaction among people within an organisation. The social system is a support system having strong impact on people's behaviour and if this is ignored then it is likely that when solutions are offered, they either do not materialize or are difficult to implement. Figure 1 depicts the pull of four drivers of market verses group norms and if we are right to position the different cultures as a drift between the four norms then how are these norms inputted into the design of learning perspectives?

The perspectives on the triangular model formed from African, Chinese and European examples of leadership are somewhat fluid, but generally conform to the key components of leadership outlined above. For example, the Western press sees Chinese investment in Africa as a cover for exploitation – gaining ready access to natural resources for a fraction of what they are actually worth in monetary value re-enacting the process of colonisation that the West itself practiced on the continent. (BBC News report, 8/11/2009). The Chinese, both its government and the private organisations that are leading the way in investing in the continent naturally see things very differently. They see themselves as taking the initiative in realizing its huge potential – in other words, acting as leaders as a role model for an emergent culture of leadership within Africa itself. It is a question of how leadership is interpreted within the context of culture. The Western press, reflecting general public opinion in Europe (especially Britain, being the one-time major colonial power in Africa) perceive the principles of leadership in terms of the example of European colonisation, whereas the Chinese conceive of the relationship with Africa as a form of guanxi on a larger scale, applied outside the normal cultural parameters within which they normally operate, but with the same intention behind an overall business strategy.

Yet how can a specifically African style of leadership assert itself in the context of a nominally post-colonial environment and define the direction that the continent should take in order for it to prosper? Do they simply trade one role of leadership for another? From what we imagine to be an African perspective, the Chinese model is more useful because it does not disguise any hidden agenda – the assuaging of European guilt. It may simply be the case of the lesser of two evils. In the half century or so since most African nations became independent, the role models that they had for leadership – at least in the political sphere – were the discredited European ones, which were exploitative and naturally left a legacy of corruption and unresolved tribal issues (part of the 'divide-and-rule' policy of the Europeans). Within the framework of the widespread programmes of investment that the Chinese government is sponsoring, hitherto separate nation-states are operating towards achieving of unity that the European model of leadership would deny them. (Financial Times report, 9/11/2009)

CONCLUSION

The paper has found little difference in the manner in which curriculum has been developed and how trainees are selected. However, training needs and identification of trainers has shown differences in approach and selection. As a corollary, Humphrey's (1996) analysis of Egyptian and UK senior managers in education, suggests that systems from the Western world 'may need to be modified and adapted in order to fit the value, culture, expectations and practices of other, particularly developing countries.' There is further evidence to suggest that little regard has

been paid to the national culture requirements when considering course design and pedagogical approach despite arguments by Charlesworth (2008), Selvarajah (2006), Trommsdorf and Dasen (2001) and Lattuca (2002) that learning cannot be separated from the contexts in which it occurs and re-constituted as an example in another.

What has been found suggest that further research needs to be conducted to establish how culture impacts on the training agenda and purpose of training taking into account that the process of development needs to be considered in a longer time frame than training evaluations are currently conducted in. The paper advocates that there is a need to distinguish between 'leadership' from 'management' as examination of training content and curriculum suggest that they are treated as synonymous. The starting place for this may lie in the establishing the real purpose of training, and separating the hard output measures that can be achieved such as skills as oppose to more tacit knowledge development and mindsets which are process-orientated.

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