Abstract—Globalization is creating the need for international transformative leaders who can envision and realize opportunities for expansion and collaboration. The specific skill set needed by these leaders and how to develop them have not been clear. This paper clarifies the skill set needed by transformative global leaders. It suggests that alternating exposures in the home and host countries can broaden mindsets on important dimensions, scaffolding the development of leaders. These alternating, complementary exposures help to develop a multi-polar view and an appreciation of theory-practice, vision-execution, sustainability, formal-informal savvy, and lifelong learning. This approach is illustrated for developing students into leaders in the international policy and business fields.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization presents diverse potential opportunities for expansion and collaboration between nations, but specific talents are necessary to envision, realize, and manage them.

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There is a need for international transformative leaders who are well grounded in their disciplines, who have a broader vision that transcends countries and cultures, and who have a desire and ability to bring about positive change. While there is a great need for transformative leaders to address fundamental, pressing global issues of poverty, health, the environment, and economic growth, it is unclear how to develop such leaders. Moreover, such leaders are not being developed soon enough (Treverton and Bikson, 2003).

Leaders have been exhorted to develop broad and narrow views of their organization and world in order to combine big-picture thinking with flawless execution (Kaipa and Radjou, 2013). However, subtle perceptual filters and restricted career exposures continue to channel and reinforce functional, tactical, or domestic thinking and impede the development of global leaders.

Building on the general conceptual foundation of the need to develop and combine narrow and broad views in leaders, this paper defines the skills needed by transformative leaders in the international context and specifies the developmental model for building them.

This article first clarifies the mindset and skills needed by international transformative leaders. Next, it articulates a pedagogical model based on alternating, complementary exposures in the home and host countries on multiple dimensions in order to broaden student mindsets, scaffolding their development into leaders. The model is then illustrated with two case studies of developing leaders in international policy and international business fields. The implications for the institution, faculty, and students are discussed. The conclusion outlines promising future avenues for leadership development.

MINDSET AND SKILLS NEEDED

What are the skills that are needed by the next generation of international transformative leaders? Future leaders need an appreciation of the following issues:

A multi-polar world — industrialized, emerging, and developing nations. Economic and political power is shifting from industrialized to emerging nations. An appreciation of their varying historical and institutional contexts is needed. They need to challenge domestic mental frames and adopt a transnational one through introspection and reflection.

The fundamental long term forces affecting the world. Globalization, urbanization, and digitization, and multi-speed economies are secular trends shaping the global economy.

Subject knowledge and its translation into practice. The basic academic disciplines provide an understanding of accumulated research-based findings and evidence, and a deep, external view. Leaders need an appreciation of practices found internationally — of how
things function in a different context. They will need to bridge theory and practice, and content (what needs to be done) with process (how to do it), in order to become transformative leaders who are capable of bringing about positive change.

Private, government, and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) parties. Leaders need to know the relative roles of these three basic types of organization and how they interplay with others.

Emotional Intelligence. Inter-personal skills are important to read a specific local context, develop enduring relationships which will help to open doors, and ‘get things done’ without formalization.

Sustainable Development. A broader outlook is needed to expand the future pie rather than seeking to capture a larger share of the existing pie. The United Nations (www.unglobalcompact.org) has urged leaders to move beyond the single bottom-line focusing on near term profit towards improving the triple bottom-line impacts on 1. people, 2. planet, and 3. sustainable profit. Sustainable profit generation involves more efficient investment, less debt, and greater sharing of the returns with multiple stakeholders.

The premise underlying scaffolding, similar to that of building construction, is that learning is supported through social interaction, or guidance of a teacher and peers, that enable the learner to bridge the distance between their current stage of knowledge and potential acquisition of new knowledge.

Ability to learn in a dynamic and diverse world. Leaders need research skills to continually learn in a rapidly changing world. They also need to know how to research international contexts when the needed information is often not codified, available in traditional media, or all in one place.

DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

A major challenge across disciplines striving to train students to succeed in global contexts and economies is finding the appropriate pedagogical techniques to facilitate that learning. The classroom, both physical and virtual, is limited in its ability to provide such exposure. We articulate a leader development approach based on the combination of two concepts—scaffolding and alternating exposure.

The concept of scaffolding is potentially useful in the development of international leaders. Students’ learning needs to be scaffolded through exposure to diverse settings to develop the mindsets needed for leadership. Scaffolding, a theory of learning, draws on social interactions as a way to acquire new knowledge dependent on previous learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding can provide a temporary, accumulating, supporting structure intended to develop a deeper learning of new concepts and mindsets. The premise underlying scaffolding, similar to that of building construction, is that learning is supported through social interaction, or guidance of a teacher and peers, that enable the learner to
bridge the distance between their current stage of knowledge and potential acquisition of new knowledge. Scaffolding techniques enable the learner to expand their knowledge from what they can learn independently to what they can learn with guidance. The “zone of proximal development” is the scaffold that is created by the teacher, and often peer group, that helps the learner advance their individual learning from what they can do unaided to what they could not do without help.

The concept of alternating exposures is also instrumental in developing international leaders. Nikola Tesla’s design of the alternating current system, which has become dominant in power generation and transmission, provides a useful analogy for leader development (Seifer, 2001). Just as switching magnetic polarity generates alternating electric current, exposing students to complementary, alternating experiences in both the home and host countries on various dimensions develops broader mindsets needed by leaders. Just as alternating current faces less resistance in transmission because of its two-way flow and ability to modulate the level of current, a broader leader mindset built on multiple perspectives will be able to better understand, adjust, and face less resistance in bringing about international change.

The suggested development approach is depicted in Figure 1. The bottom part of the figures shows the alternating, complementary exposures between the home country or country of residence and host country or country being visited along multiple dimensions. These complementary cycles, followed by reflection, discussion, and interaction, help to develop broader mindsets on various dimensions that are scaffolds for building leaders. This approach aims to build the following mindsets through targeted alternating, complementary exposures. By targeting the development of multiple, specific scaffolds in a short time period this approach seeks to provide an efficient and comprehensive learning approach relative to unplanned international study experiences.

**Figure 1. Model of Alternating Exposures Building Scaffolds for Leader Development**
host countries. Existing leadership development approaches are often domestically oriented (Morrison, 2000), while we need internationally applicable ones. Thus exposure is needed to more than the home country. Countries are developing with varying resources, through different paths, and at different speeds. It would be unrealistic to expect a cookie-cutter development approach that will be successful in all contexts found in a multi-polar world. Since national contexts vary substantially, these international exposures should be targeted to countries where the leader is interested in bringing about transformational change.

**Span Theory and Practice:** Academic exposure provides the broad view that has been proven through systematic research findings over time and that is reflected in parsimonious conceptual frameworks. It can also help to develop a richer understanding of complex problems by bringing to bear multiple academic disciplines. This theoretical exposure needs to be balanced with immersion in real world practice to develop an understanding of the institutional context. This immersion can occur through local site visits, direct observation and interaction, and field work.

**Vision and Execution:** A broad view is needed to see the larger picture and secular trends. This broad vision must be translated into the desired policy. Policy content refers to what policy should be adopted. An understanding of the host country environment, or policy context, is also needed in order to execute the policy. The policy needs to be enacted through a sequence of specific, supportive levers that need to be pulled, and that dovetail with one another. Specifically, within the local context what available resources can be reallocated to support the initiative; how can a supportive culture be built; how can the new skills needed be obtained through training or recruiting; how can new metrics be devised in the local context to monitor the change; and can the local rewards and recognition system be adjusted to support the strategic change. Unless these multiple steps, that adapt the policy content to the policy context, are taken and choreographed, a new strategy will not gain traction and come to fruition. Both vision and execution skills are important for bringing about the right type of change.

**Sustainability:** Traditionally many decisions have been made by focusing on the near term profit goal of shareholders. This narrow mindset has often reflected a win-lose approach and assumed that the pie is fixed. In the future, leaders will increasingly be called to generate a more sustainable profit that satisfies multiple stakeholders, including people and planet needs, instead of only shareholders. The challenge will also be how to expand the future pie, instead of dividing the existing pie. This broader mindset can help to reduce resistance to change by the stakeholders affected.

**Formal/Informal Savvy:** There is usually a formal structure and informal mechanism for conducting activities. While the formal structure is codified and can be studied from the home country, there may be a difference between prescription and practice. In order to get things done on the ground, informal relationships are pivotal. These informal relationships require a long horizon because they are time-consuming to cultivate, but can cut through red tape and be enduring. Understanding the roles and limits of formal and informal mechanisms are instrumental for becoming an effective leader.

**Life-long Learning:** Leaders need research skills to stay abreast of a rapidly changing world where the data is not available in one place. To reduce management bias, decisions
should be evidence-based and supported by research. In the home country, secondary data is usually accessible cost-effectively and should be researched before going abroad. Primary data gathering can then be collected in the host country to confirm and balance the view generated at home. Secondary data may be aggregated, while primary data tends to be micro-level, complementing each other. The complementary home and host country exposures help to develop an appreciation of primary and secondary research in an international context.

We have created a series of innovations that expose students to the foundational knowledge of the field coupled with immersion in the international setting to which they professionally aspire. This model of professional development is similar to medical training, where central to a physician’s training is medical residency to practice patient care across a variety of clinic and hospital-based settings. The innovation is in the adaptation of the medical training model to the challenges of global leadership in policy and business across diverse, relevant contexts in low and middle income countries. Next, we demonstrate the development approach in two disciplines, international policy and business, illustrating the opportunities and advantages for multiple stakeholders.

**Developing International Policy Leaders**

With respect to policy development, the pedagogical model seeks to train students interested in careers in international policy, diplomatic corps, and public service. The chasm between the worlds of policy makers and scholars is wide and deep. Several theories have been put forth to explain this divide. One posits that scholars generate data based on criteria of validity and reliability, whereas policy makers require data on the basis of utility (Huston, 2008). Another suggests that the end goal of science is to create knowledge, whereas the end goal of policy makers is to apply knowledge (Shonkoff, 2000). A deeper examination of the chasm, however, reveals that it can be crossed, provided that the appropriate bridges are created. Both constituencies do not accept the status quo (knowledge for scholars and state of affairs for policy makers) and both constituencies require information for change. To that end, the agents of knowledge and information, academics and scholars, need to develop the skills and capacity to translate knowledge for policy utility, such that policy makers can apply it for their purposes (Britto, Engle, & Super, 2013).
The translation of knowledge for policy is more than a simple matter of converting the language or the format of a presentation. Translation calls for understanding the policy development process and knowing how to extract the relevant and valid “information” from the vast body of evidence, so that informed decisions ensue. As we know, in addition to information, there are several competing influences on policy, namely, Ideology, Institutional Emphasis, and Infrastructure for Implementation (Weiss, 1995). Ideology typically refers to the political persuasion and values of the decision makers that influence policy. Often ideology has strong historical underpinnings. Institutional emphasis refers to the manner in which policies are translated and the prioritization of policy actions. Infrastructure for implementation draws on the human and resource capacity to develop and apply policies. Often information is not incorporated into policies because the technical capacity for implementation is weak. Therefore, policy studies programs need to train students about the influence of these four main vectors on policy development and implementation. In addition, they must give credence to the role students need to play as they move into their professional lives, most particularly for careers in development, international relations, public service, and the diplomatic corps.

In addition to understanding these various influences, students need an appreciation of the governance of a country and the relationship between national governments and international development partners (Britto, Yoshikawa, van Ravens, Ponguta, et. al., in press). The key functions of governance are development, coordination, monitoring, training, and finance. These functions, central to the effective implementation of a system, require multiple actors or stakeholders to take on responsibilities linked with creating the system, coordinating the activities of it, monitoring it for results, training the service providers, and finally ensuring sustainability through effective finance. Characteristics of the policy process are hard to capture in a classroom setting, even with the most ingenious instructional methods because of the contextual influences on policy-making. Therefore, creative instructional methods are required for students to learn about national level policy development and implementation in various socio-political contexts.

The model for international policy leadership development entails in-class learning with international field experience. (Home study versus local immersion in Figure 1). The focus of the in-class teaching is on policy development and implementation. (i.e., the Policy Content cycle in Figure 1) Students are exposed to the relationship between international agencies and international development frameworks, human rights instruments in policy-making and the social and economic development of countries. Thereafter students participate in a policy development experience in a country. (i.e., the Policy Context cycle in Figure 1) Thus policy experience is typically set up in partnership with a country working on developing a national social policy. Students observe and participate in meetings with high-level policy makers and international development partners. This experience is qualitatively different from an internship or individual study abroad on two levels. First, in an internship, the student travels or works alone without the benefit of having the group learning that is important to reflection and debriefing on the policy development process. The onus on extracting the learning from the experience rests solely on the student’s ability to extract meaning from the experience. In this model, however, the learning and meaning from the experience
is scaffolded by the faculty through having the student reflect upon his or her observations and the faculty helping the student interpret those observations within the context and theoretical paradigms of international policy. Furthermore, when these discussions occur in a group with other students, the process is further scaffolded by students who help one another interpret and analyze their observations and experiences. This group learning has proven to be very beneficial for understanding policy development. Second, in a traditional study abroad program, while students are exposed to living in another country, it is rarely outside of academic boundaries. Though students live abroad and learn about new cultures and systems of government, the experience does not allow for the applied learning opportunities of policy training. Traditional study abroad often occurs within a classroom setting away from real policy-making and implementation.

The goal of combining the classroom instruction/discussion of evidence-based policy planning with hands-on policy development work in a country is to enhance policy planning knowledge and policy skills development. The combination of policy content and practical skills is vital for successful development of international diplomatic and public service leaders.

This model is part of the curriculum of a course offered by the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs of the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University. The course, Critical Issues in Development Policy, was offered in the spring semester in its initial years, providing in-country travel during spring break. Traditionally this course attracted students from multiple departments and professional schools at Yale, including international relations, international development economics, public health, nursing, forestry and environmental studies, divinity, and law. The course was divided into three sections: 1. introduction and orientation to conceptual paradigms and country context; 2. in-country visit; and 3. analyses and policy report. Each of these sections is described briefly below.

The first section of the course occurred prior to spring break. The students learned about early childhood development, which was the focus of the national policy, including effective approaches and services to address issues of child survival, health, education, protection, care and well-being. The students also learned about national social policies and their characteristics (Britto, Cerezo & Ogubunfor, 2008). They became exposed
to different models and processes for policy-making. In addition to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, the students spent time learning about the socio-economic and political context of the country for which the policy was being developed. Through a reading of national reports on the country and a systematic analysis of national guiding documents (e.g., poverty reduction strategies, health and education national plans) the students became familiar with the critical issues facing young children and families and the laws and national strategies required to address these issues. By the end of this section of the course, students were prepared to work in a country with a solid knowledge of the content area, country context and policy development process. (i.e., the Home Study and Academic Theory cycles in Figure 1).

The second part of the course was the in-country visit, which occurred during spring break. The students and faculty traveled for a week, supported by several departments at the university, primarily those whose students were engaged in the policy work. Past travel has included visits to Lao PDR and Angola. The in-country work was in the form of policy development workshops that last for five days. The workshops were attended by key stakeholders and actors in policy development in the country—and include representatives from government, at national and sub-national levels, the international development community, NGOs, private sector and sometimes community leaders. The government representation was traditionally the strongest, given that these were national policies, adopted by the country’s government. The holistic nature of Early Childhood Development (ECD) requires multi-sectoral representation—from the several different ministries and offices of national executive offices. This experience was unique for students because they had the opportunity to observe and learn how evidence and information is understood and used by policy makers. They listened to and analyzed how policy makers select the evidence they need and the degree to which they have access to knowledge and the latest research. Given the interactive nature of these workshops and the designed small group discussions, the students were also able to see the interface between policy, politics, and science. It represented a truly unique experience to study national leadership (i.e., the Local Immersion and Institutional Practice cycles in Figure 1).

In the third part of the semester back at Yale, students analyzed the workshop and group discussions through written reports and presentations of what they learned. These analyses were developed into a set of recommendations and outline for national policy. In doing so, the students had to balance evidence on best practices, policy implementation capacity, resources of the country, and the national vision/goals for ECD. Drafting integrative recommendations that were both evidence-based and suitable for the country context was a learning experience for students on the application of knowledge for policy.

This innovative pedagogical model was rated by an overwhelming majority of the students in the course evaluations over a three-year period as one of the best learning experiences in policy development. They attribute their steep learning trajectory to the opportunity to participate in the policy meetings with guided practice and ability for reflection. The combination of studying policy issues in the classroom at home, becoming well-versed and applying them to a real policy process abroad that needs to be participatory and
nationally relevant, is what brings together the content and process of policy development. This unique combination has left a lasting and formative impact on students.

**Developing International Business Leaders**

CEOs of international firms typically wrestle with multiple challenges—developing growth avenues, raising productivity, competing for talent, managing diverse risks, tightening corporate governance, creating new innovation models, improving sustainability, and building out new infrastructures (Mascarenhas, 2009). At the Rutgers School of Business, an emphasis is placed on the development of international business leaders through a combination of classroom instruction at home and field visits to business organizations abroad to provide a richer picture of these issues. This aim is pursued through the following methods.

Before the trip, students develop a deep knowledge by reading discipline-based academic material. They also research a leader who has transformed the host country in any field—the arts, politics, sciences, or business. This exposure provides personal inspiration from a proven entrepreneur role model that has made positive change in the host country. For example, for the international field study in Brazil in 2012 and 2013, students studied transformative leaders such as Santos Dumont (aviator), Oscar Niemeyer (architect), Dilma Rousseff (first female President), Carmen Miranda (singer and dancer), and Sergio DeMello (humanitarian diplomat).

In planning the international field study, the instructor reads about and selects sites to visit, including economic, political, social, and cultural institutions that all reflect points of interest in that context. The instructor selects the industries and companies to visit—a mix of transnational firms with operations in that country and local companies. Students begin conducting research about the host country and its organizations utilizing secondary data sources at home (see the Secondary Research cycle in Figure 1). They choose a particular institution on the itinerary to research in order to uncover its history and significance. They develop a research brief and make a presentation to the class. Each presentation is followed by a discussion, which clarifies remaining questions that they will seek to resolve during the overseas visit, utilizing primary research methods. (See the Primary Research cycle in Figure 1.)

This protocol exposes students to discipline-based learning at home and practice-based information abroad. It also encourages research on their part to encourage continuous learning. Further, it demonstrates the relative roles of primary and secondary data research and how their combination is useful for researching international contexts cost-effectively.

Because of this preparation, students have a deeper, broader foundation to interpret what they encounter during the visit, (see the Academic Theory cycle in Figure 1). They are also eager to resolve on-site the questions that emerged during their preparation at home. The research briefs are compiled into a guide that students use to direct their overseas trip.

During company visits abroad, students meet and interface with executives who give them a strategic overview of the firm. The overview covers the most important
issues from that national context which affect the firm’s strategy and operations. This presentation is followed by a question, answer, and discussion session in which students probe deeper. Students are also taken for a tour of the firms’ facilities and operations (i.e., the Institutional Practice cycle in Figure 1).

The business school has offered international field studies to promote learning by immersion for over a decade in targeted African, Asian countries, European, and Latin American countries. They have proven to be a valuable method for building camaraderie and enduring relationships among institutions, students and instructors. Students have been encouraged to reflect, share, and discuss how their experiences provided new insights on how to conduct business locally, between the host and home countries, and for their career-development plans. These field trips are so unique and successful that they have become signature attractions in the business school.

The travel component of international field studies at the Rutgers School of Business occurs during the mid-term break or between-terms’ break. They have proven popular and draw students from multiple fields including business, law, and nursing. The academic component involving preparation and debriefing is conducted before and after the trip over a few weeks’ time.

**For the university or home institution, these courses generate a great enthusiasm for education and learning. Participating students have found it to be a deep, personal learning experience and highly recommend it to others.**

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**IMPLICATIONS**

Expanding the walls of the classroom to train the next generation of policy and business leaders has been a successful pedagogical experiment and learning experience for students. It also supports the university’s mission to be globally relevant and innovative. In this section, we discuss the potential advantages of this approach and also the challenges that need to be addressed in future years.

For the university or home institution, these courses generate a great enthusiasm for education and learning. Participating students have found it to be a deep, personal learning experience and highly recommend it to others. Students who have enrolled in subsequent years cited that they heard about this course from graduated cohorts, spreading the feedback through student networks, and publicizing it to potential incoming students. As a result, enrollment in these courses has increased every year. For institutions, this model can help to attract additional students to the program and encourage alumni involvement in participating in or designing the international field studies.

For the faculty who adopt this approach, it enables teaching critical issues to the students in a realistic manner. No simulation exercise, however sophisticated, compares to an actual country visit and immersion in its policy and business contexts. Such experiences also increase the faculty’s teaching repertoire and skills for other courses.
For the students, of course, the benefits are tremendous. It helps develop the mindset and skills needed by international transformative leaders. Students obtain a strong grounding in relevant academic disciplines. They expand their domestic mindset to encompass a global, nuanced view. They interact with and gain an appreciation for the different players abroad that they will have to work through to bring about positive change. They also develop secondary and primary research skills to become lifelong learners and chart international waters.

**CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

Developing international leaders is a pressing challenge. Leaders need to develop multiple contrasting skills spanning the science and art of execution, researching secondary and primary data sources, understanding theory and practice, appreciating content and process. We have illustrated the pedagogical model in two different fields that develops these complementary skills to prepare students for international leadership roles.

Leadership development is an ongoing journey. The programs that we have outlined are continuously improving with experience and feedback. Future challenges are to encourage more faculty to lead such courses as prior faculty become too familiar with a particular host country reducing the sense of a new adventure.

Such a course is not, however, without its challenges. It’s a very time-consuming and labor-intensive course for the faculty, coordinating the schedule for the visit and making travel arrangements for the entire group. Ensuring that the agenda goes as planned is also critically important. There is a need to support the faculty member, and provide for continuity across years and faculty members. To defray these support costs, there is a program cost that must be paid for by the students and/or the department.

Another great responsibility is traveling abroad with a group of students and ensuring their safety and well-being at all times. Given this is a university sponsored trip and an educational activity, ensuring the students are well taken care off is a great imperative and often a large responsibility. Risk management is an important consideration in designing the program and the curriculum.

Another challenge of this approach is the potential that it may not be offered to students on a regular basis. Students enroll in the course with the expectation that it will include an experience in the host country. If that component is missing from the course it tends to have a negative impact on the students’ motivation to learn. Such opportunities need to be built into the course structure on a consistent basis.

The programs can be continuously improved to have a larger impact. One opportunity is to expand the window of learning from a short trip within a term to year-round learning. This may be achieved by developing extended collaborations with international partners and having students working on larger, longer-term projects, year after year.

Another opportunity is to move the learning from passive observation to more active international service-learning. This may be achieved by developing longer-term implementation projects, such as technical, feasibility, and/or marketing plans, on which
There is potential here to develop a multi-disciplinary perspective by unifying students from diverse academic fields who participate in these field study projects together, in teams, to cultivate an even richer understanding as they develop workable solutions to any problem presented to them.

We have argued that alternating, complementary exposures in the home and host countries has been an efficient model to expand mindsets, building scaffolds for global leadership development. Several dimensions have been included, but as the world changes and new issues become important, the model should be expanded to incorporate them.

– Daniel Tam-Claiborne served as Lead Editor for this article.

REFERENCES


