

2011

Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence: Exploring the Cross-Cultural Dynamics Within Organizations [review] / Moodian Michael A. ed.

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Recommended Citation

Adomako, Michael (2011) "Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence: Exploring the Cross-Cultural Dynamics Within Organizations [review] / Moodian Michael A. ed.," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 5: No. 1, 104-106.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol5/iss1/14>

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which cultural intelligence is critical: (1) it provides understanding of culturally varied customers, which is a common reality for most corporate or nonprofit organizations in the new global context; (2) it offers the tools needed to manage diversified teams locally and internationally; (3) it helps in the recruiting, developing and retaining of cross-cultural talent for local and international responsibilities in a world that has become global; (4) it helps with adapting leadership style; (5) it signifies respect for cultures that are different from our own.

Fortunately for readers, Livermore also gives advice for how to develop cultural intelligence. He proposes that readers be sincere with themselves, evaluate their self-confidence, eat and socialize with people of different cultures, count the benefits of cultural intelligence (such as career advancement, expansion of global network, profit and salary, creativity and innovations), focus on human welfare and environmental friendliness, take a taxi ride, stroll to the grocery store, go to a movie, visit a place of worship, learn a new language, go to a museum, role-play, and travel.

In order to effectively communicate and associate with people of a culture different from ours, we need knowledge of the cultural systems and the cultural norms and values of the culture in question. However, the reader is cautioned that “there are situations where the best option is not to adapt at all” (p. 155). This catches the reader by surprise, given Livermore’s strong passion for cultural intelligence and its adaptive nature. In addition, while he dwells heavily on the value and advantages of cultural intelligence, Livermore is honest to observe that acquiring cultural intelligence can be challenging in some situations. He does assure the readers, though, that

despite the challenges, the benefits always prevail and serve as motivation for engaging in cross-cultural endeavors (p. 59).

In conclusion, suffice it to say that *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* is logically coherent and Livermore remains focused on the purpose of the book throughout. He addresses the fundamental issues of cultural intelligence by providing a concise understanding of it and of why it is crucial. He offers some practical examples of how it functions. His basic framework (the four-dimensional model) for developing and understanding cultural intelligence is strikingly simple, comprehensive and practical. Livermore is persuaded that, if followed, these steps can improve one’s ability to function in any cross-cultural setting. And it is consistent to say that in this book, Livermore accomplished his goal, namely, “to show you how to lead with cultural intelligence” (p. xiii-xiv). I strongly recommend this book to anyone (professional, leader or academician) who is involved or will be involved in any form of cross-cultural leadership, especially in today’s multicultural world.

CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: EXPLORING THE CROSS-CULTURAL DYNAMICS WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

*By Michael A. Moodian (Ed.)
Thousand Oaks; CA: Sage (2011)
Paperback, 312 pages
Reviewed by MICHAEL ADOMAKO*

This book deals with two principal aspects of leadership and cross-cultural competence. The book focuses first on the understanding of the role of cultural diversity and intercultural issues in the modern workplace; secondly, the text demonstrates how cultural diversity can be used as a tool to build successful organizations. Though too often diversity is viewed as a liability within organizations, according to the writers the ability to embrace and adapt to diversity will pay dividends for the leaders of the 21st century.

Since organizations have shifted to a global context, learning about cultural differences, and embracing them and adapting to them, is imperative for international leaders or managers. The writers posit that any behavioral mistakes and misattribution can lead to dysfunctional relationships and can be a cause of poor organizational performance. The behavioral friction arises as organizations expand globally and embrace new cultures, hence, diversity. Diversity when managed well provides benefits that increase success. However, when ignored, it brings challenges and obstacles that can hinder the organization's ability to succeed (pp. 35-36).

While many leaders are making efforts to become culturally aware culture is not a static phenomenon. Culture changes as people from other areas come into contact with different norms, beliefs and values. It contributes to personal belief systems and worldviews, which help foster values, create common bonds, and influence perceptions of and behavior toward others. By becoming aware, leaders can have foreknowledge of what to or not do in a particular culture. A complicating factor is that "today, only 10% of the countries in the world are racially and ethnically

homogeneous" (p. 4). This means that cross-cultural dynamics are an increasing phenomenon also in the same country.

Intercultural communication competence is vital in order for organizations to survive in multicultural environments. Perhaps the greatest attribute of intercultural communication competence is that it makes it possible for employees who are culturally different to work together effectively (p.139). Diversity affects people differently. One individual will be energized with positive feelings when they encounter diversity, while another will have negative feelings of overstimulation, unpredictability, helplessness, uncertainty, lack of situational control, or a threat of self-esteem. Only leaders who are competent in cultural communication can only foresee these signs of someone being under stress. Organizations would do well to consider all aspects of diversity, including methods to reduce stress (p.144), as part of cultural communication competence.

The writers also caution leaders about religious and spiritual diversity in the workplace. "Individuals bring their religion and spirituality, or lack thereof, with them to work" (p. 46). How the organization chooses to manage this aspect of diversity is vital. The authors speak against faith-based organizations which honor one religious or spiritual perspective and leave little room for other's beliefs; rather, faith-friendly organizations should be commended for having the ability to manage and utilize a fuller array of religious and spiritual workplace traditions for the strategic benefit of their organization.

Finally, the writers gave their candid opinion on legal implications of cross-cultural leadership and trade. For them, "those who function across cultural milieu must be mindful of the

cultural perspective of all players. When focusing on transcultural legal activities, from contract to litigation, that mindfulness becomes obligatory” (p. 61). Though organizational leaders face hazards of operating across differing legal and cultural systems, I agree with the writers that their only safety is to choose the domain of rule of law nations. The writers posit that operating within the rule of law nations will differ markedly from those in non-rule of law nations; hence, operating in the rule law nations is more predictable and reliable.

As much as I agree with the writers in their candid stance on diversity, I sensed some bias. Though some authors hailed from other countries, most if not all are living in the United States or have lived here before. As a result, their writings emerge from an American perspective. The following assertion was made in the book, which I believe is not wholly true as far as Africa is concerned:

Difference between Western, Asian, African and Arab leadership: Western leadership theories place a high value on empowerment, coaching, performance management, rationality, delegation, vision and strategic direction. In contrast, Asian, Arab and African countries place more emphasis on directive and authoritarian leadership styles. Respect and obedience are expected from subordinates and harmony is a key value of leadership in Asian, Arab and African leaders (p.117).

As an African myself (I’m from Ghana), I think this strong assertion lacks credibility. If they had talked about some Asian, Arab and African countries, they would have been accurate enough. But this broad statement is as inaccurate as it is unfortunate.

One of the key issues in integrating cultural awareness into a leadership curriculum design is that the leadership curricula is built on Western leadership models, based on Western research and examples, and focuses primarily on Western leaders (p. 117). This creates the impression that the indigenous values of non-Westerners render them unsuitable for leadership. This conveys to international students that the West is best, and, if they conform to the Western paradigms, they will be successful leaders (p. 117). This mentality is faulty. The author stated that “there is a heavy reliance on US leadership literature due to lack of material published by non-US sources” (p. 117). Could not the authors have searched more carefully for more information from places other than the United States alone?

In conclusion, despite my reservations, I believe *Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence* is logically coherent and that the contributors remained fully focused on the purpose of the book which was to explore “the role of diversity and intercultural issues in the modern workplace and how diversity can be used to build successful organizations” (p. 3). They appear to have done justice to the fundamental issues of cultural diversity and cultural competence by providing a concise and pragmatic analysis to support their work.

RESOLVING EVERYDAY CONFLICT

Ken Sande & Kevin Johnson
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books (2011)
Paperback, 220 pages
Reviewed by NATAL GARDINO

Resolving Everyday Conflict, by Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson, deals