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Culture, influence and (school) leader development

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Purpose
to stimulate discussion of the influence of culture on
school leader development

Outline

- Assumptions
- Cultural influence: why bother?
- PD: What we're starting to know
- Initial questions: how do they travel?
- Leader development
- More questions: some drivers
- Some 'research' perils




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Basic assumptions – influence of culture

- Leaders make a difference
- Multiple contexts influence how leaders lead
- Leadership is the enactment of values - culture an important influence

Question: Is it really worth thinking about and researching?




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Should we bother?

- Literature dominated by Anglo-American theory, values. Knowledge should be more broadly based
- Simple import of theories and knowledge can be meaningless or even detrimental
- If school leaders are to grow, regardless of where they operate, they need to be aware of how their cultural values underpin how they see the world, interact with others, view learning & construct community.
- Leaders often operate as cultural outsiders – separated by values, understandings and aspirations from their students, communities and even their teachers
- Awareness of different cultures and cultural influence supports sensible responses to the simultaneously homogenizing and diversifying pressures of globalization
- If programs are to make a difference to what leaders do in specific contexts and cultures, the design, and indeed content, must hold legitimacy and currency within that context

Are these valid?



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Basic assumptions

- Leaders make a difference
- Multiple contexts influence how leaders lead
- Leadership is the enactment of values, culture an important influence
- Leader development cannot be separated from leadership
- Leader development should make a difference.



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Things we're starting to know

- linkage to leadership reality & school life,
- opportunities for reflection,
- involvement of experienced practitioners as mentors/coaches,
- formal and informal grouping and networking
- intentional design
- student focus
- Long term




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How well do they travel?


- Are the models and practices of leader development being used by context-specific organizations and development programs applicable across cultural contexts?
- What adjustments need to be made in methods, practices, assessment and philosophies so that they will work in or across cultures?
- What can be done to successfully transfer western (or other) leadership development models and practice?
- Should western (or other) leader development models and practices be transferred? And if so, how?

(Hoppe, 2004, p. 331)




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Leader Development Programs (LDPs)

Content	LDPs	Process (Community-based)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theory-wrapped knowledge Pre-packaged programs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Feedback Challenge


- How do different cultures respond to uncertainties/ambiguities which accompany challenge?
- What does challenge look like in collectivist cultures where the group not the individual is the focus?
- How will leader development react to this?



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DRIVERS?


- Can LDPs be usefully transported across cultures in ways that move beyond surface concepts and too-neatly attached content to focus more on the processes which place these in context?
- How can cross-fertilization become just that, rather than the largely one-way flow we've got now that often holds insufficient respect for local traditions? Is cross-fertilization necessary?
- Can programs travel across cultural boundaries without their associated beliefs and knowledge being seen, or said, as holding up 'one best' or 'one better' way?
- Can we study leader development (across cultures) without studying leadership itself across cultures? Should the two agendas be amalgamated?
- How can leaders themselves be involved in finding ways to make development worthwhile and meld into lifelong habits. What problems do we face researching the influence of culture on leadership?
- How can scholars from different cultures work together to attain better understanding and outcomes?



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Some of the perils of researching cultural influence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of culture Divergence or Convergence Specificity of Definition Cultural Baselines Stereotyping Cultures Individuals and Culture Cultural Hybridity The timing of 'culture' Methodology (measurement) 	}	<p>How can /are these being managed?</p> <p>Again, is it worth the effort?</p>
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How can scholars from different cultures work together to attain better understanding and outcomes?

