

Module: International Business Management  
Class: 1st Year Master Business Management

## LECTURE SIX: INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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## 1- Introduction

Leadership in an international context means influencing diverse, multi-cultural groups across borders to achieve shared goals, requiring leaders to possess a *global mindset*, *cultural intelligence (CQ)*, *adaptability*, and the *ability to navigate complex geopolitical, technological, and cultural differences*, moving beyond national norms to foster collaboration and innovation in a globally interconnected world.

International leadership involves understanding varied histories, politics, and customs to build trust and drive positive change in highly complex environments.

## 1- Introduction

### CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AS LEADERSHIP

The field of **leadership** and **leadership** studies is almost exclusively dominated by **leadership** conceived of, and reflected upon as effective corporate management.

This does not mean that **leadership** as effective management does not have valuable lessons to offer, nor that the **leadership** skills and attitudes associated with effective management of corporations and large institutions are not transferable to other environments and activities. For instance, the effective manager/leader is often described as one who is able to think proactively, to be a situational leader (one who is more interested in finding solutions which flow from the needs of the situations rather than from the authority of the office), to strike a balance between task-orientation and people-orientation, to have a vision, to inspire commitment to work, to invest in trust, and to be an

effective communicator. These are valuable **leadership** skills and attitudes in any institution.

It may be useful to briefly review associate some of these **leadership** skills with their proponents in the field of **leadership**. Peter Drucker, arguably the leading figure in this dominant prescriptive literature on **leadership** as effective management, readily accepts the view that **leadership** skills can be transferred and made valuable in any environment and in any institution. He sums up his experiences in, and thinking about **leadership** activities by saying that all real leaders knew four things: The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers; popularity is not **leadership**, results are; leaders are visible and, therefore, they are role-models; and that **leadership** is not rank or title, it is responsibility. In his book *The Leader of the Future* Drucker rightly reminds us that whether we work in private or public organizations, we will always find opportunities to learn about **leadership**.

## 2- Definition of the international/global leadership

**Definition of leadership:** The ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a vision or set of goals. Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 368

*Denis Leclerc says:*

“Managing globally across cultures presents a complex set of challenges that arise due to differences in values, communication styles, norms, and expectations.”

“All of these are having an impact on how people lead across cultures.”

### What Does It Really Mean to Be a "Global" Leader? Global leadership?

Global leaders are usually portrayed as individuals who occupy senior positions within organizations, but such a definition excludes the increasing number of people who are engaged in global work further down the organizational hierarchy.

Global leadership is also usually a team effort, where multiple leaders emerge. Accordingly, the authors suggest that definitions of leadership should not be limited to position or authority.

**Global leadership refers to leading various employees and other stakeholders across multiple regions of the world.**

## 2- Definition of the international/global leadership

*International leadership* focuses on managing across national boundaries, often emphasizing diplomacy, cross-cultural negotiation, and coordination between countries.

*Global leadership* goes further, requiring leaders to inspire and influence diverse communities worldwide, adapt to complex global systems, and drive innovation across cultures and industries

If leadership – in a more general capacity – is influencing individuals to work towards shared objectives, **global leadership** is influencing a diverse group of individuals to work towards shared objectives within a global context.

*Global context* refers to a global community – of businesses, communities and individuals – who operate within international and multicultural dimensions.

Global leadership generally involves managing multiple stakeholders, cultures and resources, and establishing and maintaining the organizational structures, processes and relationships required to do so effectively. Where local leaders and managers must think and operate within domestic boundaries, global leaders and managers think and operate without boundaries.

### 3. Theories of global leadership:

Leadership theories have widely benefited from the development of intercultural communication and intercultural business studies.

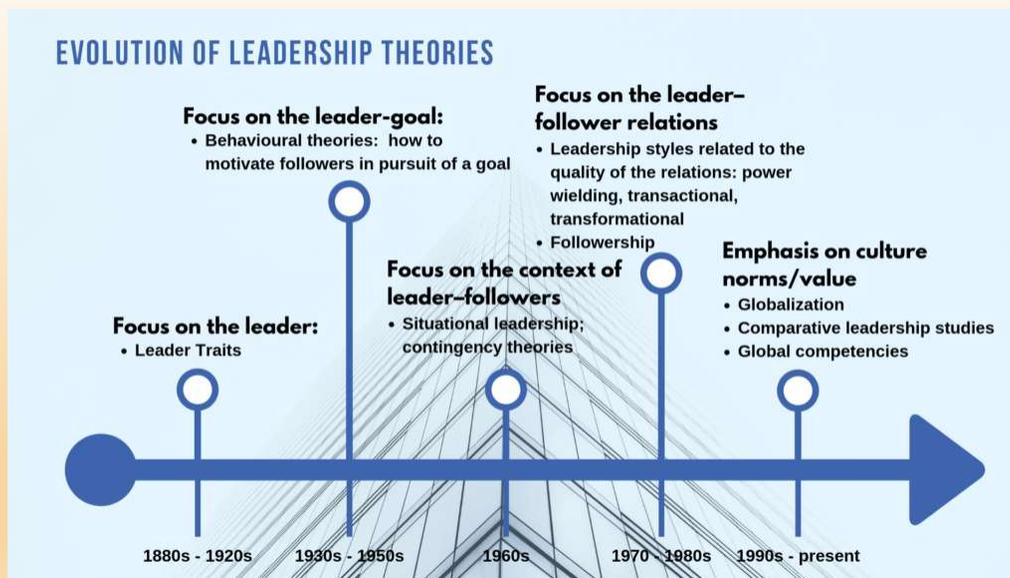
The approach to leadership has evolved from **leader-centric models** (trait and behavioural models) through the dynamics of **leader-followers relationships** (transactional and transformational leadership models) to one that takes into account the **context** to a greater degree (situational leadership, contingency leadership theories).

With the process of **globalization** there have been several new approaches to leadership:

- comparative leadership studies – national cluster models (GLOBE 2004, GLOBE 2014, R. Lewis LMR model);
- a greater focus on the **cultural context** of leader and followers with view of the increasingly culturally diverse teams;
- the leader-centric model has been revisited, taking into account all the complex factors of individual culture's shaping in a period of globalization, dynamic environment and dramatic changes (digitization, disruptive technological changes, global climate and political concerns), with view of identifying universal global leadership competences and metaskills.

The evolution of approaches to leadership and changes of emphasis has been summarized in the following figure.

### 3. Theories of global leadership:



<https://www.prominenceproject.eu/Index.php/prominence-Interactive/study-guide/study-module/Interactive-lessons-part-2/leadership-theories/>

### 3. Theories of global leadership:

Transactional Leader	Transformational Leader
Contingent Reward: Contracts exchange of rewards for effort, promises rewards for good performance, recognizes accomplishments	Idealized Influence: Provides vision and sense of mission, instils pride, gains respect and trust
Management by Exception (active): Watches and searches for deviations from rules and standards, takes correct action	Inspirational Motivation: Communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus efforts, expresses important purposes in simple ways
Management by Exception (passive): Intervenes only if standards are not met	Intellectual Stimulation: Promotes intelligence, rationality, and careful problem solving
Laissez-Faire: Abdicates responsibilities, avoids making decisions	Individualized Consideration: Gives personal attention, treats each employee individually, coaches, advises

<https://www.prominenceproject.eu/index.php/prominence-interactive/study-guide/study-module/Interactive-lessons-part-2/leadership-theories/>

### 4. Key Characteristics & Skills of global leaders:

- i. **Global Mindset:** Seeing the world as interconnected, open to learning, and adapting to diverse perspectives.
- ii. **Cultural Intelligence (CQ):** Understanding and adapting to different cultural norms, communication styles, and values.
- iii. **Adaptability & Flexibility:** Adjusting leadership style and strategy to suit different cultures, time zones, and unpredictable situations.
- iv. **Inclusiveness:** Valuing and integrating diverse ideas and approaches from global teams.
- v. **Curiosity & Learning Agility:** A strong drive to explore, learn, and understand new environments.
- vi. **Complex Problem-Solving:** Making sound decisions amidst high levels of uncertainty and varied stakeholder interests.

#### 4. Key Characteristics & Skills of global leaders:

Also,

In order to be effective in a multinational environment, a leader should acquire a **multicultural mindset**. Such a mindset can be cultivated by employing the **universal principles** of effective leadership, including:

- Vision, mobilizing people toward change;
- Serving, by building emotional bonds;
- Leading others to greatness, by developing people for future responsibility.

The steps to achieving effective leadership in a multinational environment requires:

- Serving the organization by adapting to the host culture;
- Establishing a corporate vision, but not abandoning your national culture;
- Leading people to greatness, with humility and patience.

If leaders who work within a multinational environment view these principles as an integral part of the process, they will no doubt have a positive impact upon the organization.

#### 5. Effective management approaches for global teams

Effective global leadership involves leveraging strategies that promote inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability to create a cohesive and high-performing team. Here are key strategies for navigating the complexities of leading teams across different cultural contexts:

1. Invest in cultural intelligence (CQ)
2. Adapt leadership styles to fit the cultural context
3. Encourage open dialogue about cultural differences
4. Provide cross-cultural training
5. Focus on shared goals and vision
6. Embrace flexibility and a growth mindset

## 6. Main Challenges of International leadership

**Managing Diversity:** Bridging significant differences in backgrounds, motivations, and viewpoints.

**Communication Across Borders/Communication barriers:** Overcoming language barriers, time zone differences, and technological complexities.

**Differing leadership expectations:** Some cultures expect hierarchical structures, where the leader's authority is rarely questioned. Others value flat structures where employees are encouraged to speak up.

**Diverse motivational drivers:** In individualistic cultures, people are often motivated by personal achievements, career growth, or recognition. In collectivist cultures, people may prioritize group harmony, team success, or social responsibilities.

**Navigating Geopolitics & Culture:** Understanding local history, politics, and social dynamics to avoid missteps.

**Technological Disruption:** Keeping pace with digital transformation and cybersecurity issues globally.

**Time perception and work practices:** Western cultures often view time linearly, valuing punctuality and strict deadlines, while other cultures have a more flexible view.

**Building trust across cultures:** In some cultures, trust is built primarily through competence and results (task-based trust), while others prioritize long-term relationship-building.

**Balancing cultural adaptation and core values:** Striking this balance can be complex but is essential for creating a cohesive, respectful, and effective team environment—*glocalization*.

## 7. Case study example of Global leadership:

### Satya Nadella - Leading Microsoft's Comeback with Empathy

When Satya Nadella became CEO, Microsoft had the talent and the technology, but the culture wasn't working. Teams were disconnected, innovation was slowing, and many employees felt unheard. Nadella decided to change that by doing something unusual for a tech giant: he led with empathy.

Drawing from the idea that "empathy sparks innovation" (as highlighted in Microsoft's own stories about his leadership), Nadella encouraged people to stay curious and embrace a "learn-it-all" mindset. This shift brought teams together, rebuilt trust, and opened the door to new global partnerships and cloud growth.

#### Key Leadership Lessons

**Empathy**, which is mainly thought of as a "*soft skill*", actually helps the organization's performance and is the main factor in **leadership development**.

An open and curious attitude towards learning is more effective than being an expert with a closed mind.

Working together with others makes new ideas come and it also helps to be a better

## 8. Conclusion:

As *companies grow across borders*, the expectations from leaders grow too. Globalization created the need for informed and effective global leadership. Leaders now operate in increasingly multicultural workplaces where assumptions based on a single cultural framework may lead to misunderstanding or ineffectiveness.

Today's leaders must understand cultures; be culturally intelligent, make ethical decisions, and think globally.

Structured leadership development programs help professionals build these capabilities with clarity and confidence. Learning global leadership skills is primordial. Due to the challenges that leaders face nowadays, there are many institutes and schools that offer training to get a certificate of leadership excellence which strengthens a leader's global mindset and strategic capability.

These recognized credentials enhance credibility, support international career opportunities, and prepare leaders to take on broader global responsibilities with greater readiness.



## Thank you

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