Cultural Appropriateness of American Based MBA Leadership Topics, Service Learning and Instruction Style in Kuwait

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Agenda

• AUM and Kuwait information
• American adult learning concepts
• Kuwait vs. American culture-Hofstede
• Four questions-basis of study
• Results
• Updated: Service Learning in Kuwait
• Conclusions
AUM

Majors Offered in Academic year (2009-2010):

• Master of Business Administration: (5 concentrations)
  - Islamic Finance
  - Accounting
  - Org. Behavior/ HR
  - Entrepreneurship
  - General Management

• Bachelor of Science: (6 Majors)
  - B.S. in Accounting
  - B.S. in Finance
  - B.S. in Business Administration - concentration in Management Information Systems
  - B.S. in Business Administration - concentration in Marketing
  - B.S. in Business Administration - concentration in Human Resources Management
  - B.S. Industrial Engineering

• Total MBA Students: 149
• Total Undergraduate Students: 230
• English Preparatory Program: 133
Kuwait Facts

-Kuwait: desert with two seasons, summer and winter

-Total population: 2,213,403
  1,310,067 - males 59.2%
  903,336 - females 40.8%

-Kuwaiti population: 880,774

Kuwaitis Employed: 212,570
Non-Kuwaitis employed: 903,892

-Kuwait: 20,000 square km

-5th richest country in the world

GDP growth rate of 5.7%, Kuwait one of the fastest growing economies in the region

Kuwaiti dinar (KD): highest valued currency unit in the world

-Official language: Arabic and Religion: Islam

-Average temperature: 33°C  -Highest temperature: 52°  -Lowest temperature: -3°
Kuwait City
Sadu Weaving
Kuwaiti Mosques
Question

• What is the best way to teach adults?
  – American perspective
Power Distance
Degree that people accept an unequal distribution of power in society

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<th>USA</th>
<th>Arab World</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>80</td>
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Power Distance

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

USA
Arab World

Power Distance
Individualism vs. Collectivism

- Degree that people value independence and personal uniqueness

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<th>USA</th>
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<td>100 Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>38</td>
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![Individualism Chart]

- USA: 91
- Arab World: 38
Achievement vs. Nurturance

- People value assertiveness, materialism vs. well being of others

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<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
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Achievement

- USA: 62
- Arab World: 52
Uncertainty Avoidance

- Degree of tolerance for ambiguity or threatened by uncertainty

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<td>100 Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>68</td>
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![Uncertainty Avoidance Diagram]

- USA: 46
- Arab World: 68
Would you adapt an American style of teaching to accommodate culture difference in Kuwait? How?
Four Questions

• 1. Material covered in class worthwhile?

• 2. Consider application of the concepts and change behavior at the workplace?
Four Questions contd.

• 3. Material presented in a much different format (student centered learning) --- a deterrence to learning?

• 4. Majority of students work in public organizations, versus work in more innovative private industry:
  – appreciate and accept “newer” forms of leadership?
  – or, negative value because would not work?
Study

- **Process:** In class survey with topics from class and 8 possible responses:
  - Important
  - Highly important
  - Thought about application to work
  - Attempted to use
  - Using successfully
  - Not very important
  - Not applicable to Kuwaiti business culture
  - Not applicable to my organization
Topics

• Personal Characteristics of Leaders
• Theory X Theory Y
• “Defining Leadership Code”-Dave Ulrich, Smallwood, Sweetman-(HBR)
• Autocratic vs. Democratic Leadership
• Emotional Intelligence
• “Seasoned Executive’s Decision Making Style” –Ken Brousseau (HBR) and in class inventory
• Leadership Grid
• Love/Fear Based Leadership
• “Moments of Greatness”-Robert E. Quinn(HBR)
• Situational Leadership-Hersey Blanchard model
• Active Listening-- in class exercise
• “Level 5 Leadership”-Jim Collins
• Decision Making-Vroom model
• Transactional vs. transformational Leadership
• “Social Intelligence”-Daniel Goleman & Boyatzis
Study Results

• **Most Important Topics**
  – Emotional Intelligence
  – Social Intelligence
  – Personal Characteristics of Leaders

• **Least Important Topics**
  – Level 5 Leadership
  – Love versus Fear Based Leadership
  – Vroom Decision Making.

• **Overall Responses of Important and Highly Important**
  – 15 topics and articles overall marked as “Important and “Highly Important.”
Study Results contd.

• **Cultural Applicability**
  – There were minimal responses of “Not being Applicable to Kuwaiti Business Culture”

• **Application to Work**
  – Relatively high degree of positive responses in application of the material to their workplace.
    • “Had thought about applying the material covered in the topics”
    • “Were attempting to use the concepts”
    • “Were using the leadership concepts successfully”
Surprises

• Topics that are the most recent and somewhat “out of the box” thinking on Leadership; Social Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence were rated so highly by the students.

• Cultural difference between the Arab World and US culture:
  – A basis for the Arab students’ ability to appreciate the importance of these topics which are often viewed as “soft” leadership topics in US industry experience,
Verbatim Responses

• “Emotional intelligence is one of the most important skills leaders should have.”

• “I think personal characteristics, social intelligence and emotional intelligence are very important to build my personality and to guide my attitude officially and socially.”
Verbatim Responses

• “Overall all these topics improved our knowledge in leadership and help us upgrade ourselves and change our behavior to be more effective leaders.”

• “A man/woman in leaders’ position are not ROBOTS they need to know, learn and teach each other how to be up and down (leader role) according to the situation.”

• “Not material to study, it’s a way of thinking, living and a target a person should clearly think about….the role of you as a leader is more than you expect-it’s about changing people and shaping the society.”
Verbatim Responses

• “Usually in Kuwaiti government sectors all the theories are not applicable because the change is IMPOSSIBLE.”

• “I really enjoyed the class of emotional intelligence and the class of love/fear based leadership because I think these two facts are very important in any organization, using your emotions and love with fear will make you realize the difference between other cases you face in any organization.”
Shaheen Al-Khudhari
MBA Student
IT Manager in British Link Kuwait Group

“Thank you for all what I’ve learned… it really increased my knowledge and skills, and it had improved my current position and my projects. I was managing small size projects but now am managing some projects with the value of 10 million USD in different fields.”

-email sent to Dr. Terry ; Sept. 2009
Monira Al-Maraghei
MBA Student
Manager at NBK (National Bank of Kuwait)
Four Questions with Study Results

1. Material covered in class worthwhile?
   - Responses were positive

2. Consider application of the concepts and change behavior at the workplace?
   - Sizable portion did consider application to their workplace of several of the topics
Four Questions contd.

3. Material presented in a much different format (student centered learning) --- a deterrence to learning?
   – Instruction style differences did not deter students from valuing the material

4. Majority of students work in public organizations, versus work in more innovative private industry:
   – Appreciate and accept “newer” forms of leadership?
   – Or, negative value because “would not work”? 
     • Several said would not work in their organizations, but also rated subject material as important
     • Some said when in a different organization, or in a higher level in their organization, would then use
Continuing Challenges

• Using student centered, critical thinking discussion format:
  – “Students are not encouraged to read books, school libraries are not utilized well or let us say almost abandoned. Reading is a skill; it could be enhanced and sharpened through a course of guidance … Our education system lacks such an issue.”
  – “We remember when we were students in secondary school we heard about research, but no teacher or subject explained that for us or at least gave us an introduction about how to do research and that case is still valid today!”
    - Excerpt from MBA report: “Creativity Barriers in Kuwaiti Schools” -3/25/2010
      Salem Al-Abdulrazzaq             Mohammad Al-Wahaida             Khalid Al-Haqqan

• Change from passive learning to active learning community:
  – Expectation that students will:
    • Come to class prepared
    • Actively involved in discussion
    • Value learning about selves through experiential learning
    • Interested in sharing and learning from classmates
Service Learning

A teaching method that engages students to learn by providing a service:

- Strengthens communities
- Teaches responsibility
- Encourages life long civic engagement
Goals

- Instill the meaning of service learning

- Use leadership skills learned during the course to lead children

- Have fun and make it an enjoyable experience
Process Used

- Permission from the University to bring children along on the trip
- Incorporate the launching event for the fictional company from Management class
- Passed out safety tips and maps
- Warned students of safety procedures in case a grenade was found
Student Reaction

“Just looking at the before and after pictures of the beach makes anyone who was part of the beach cleanup feel proud of their accomplishments.”
Student Reaction

“We contributed to helping clean our environment, and personally I felt self satisfied!”
Student Reaction

“I think that this trip gave us a chance for both students and children to work together and show how important it is to be a leader wherever you are.”
Professor Reaction

• **Successes:**
  • Well organized and students highly involved in planning
    – Collected debris
    – Provided opportunity to experience service learning
    – Students and children enjoyed themselves

• **Challenges**
  – Students only participated for a portion of clean up
    • complaints of “too tired” and “back hurt”
  – Service and trash pick up are primarily done by migrant servants and workers
  – Littering and debris are common and within days beach was filled with litter again!
Conclusion

• Worthwhile to continue teaching using American based education processes and values supporting service in leadership

• Keep in Mind! Cultural differences when planning curricula and leading classes in Kuwait:
  – Potential difficulties for Kuwaiti students:
    • Service learning – impact of high power distance culture and ubiquitous service personnel
    • Prevalent concepts and practice of “servant leadership” in American leadership and management texts