Faculty Publications in Educational Administration | Educational Administration, Department of

2012

# GLOBAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLANS: Engaging Students as Agents in Their Own Development

Elizabeth K. Niehaus
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, eniehaus@unl.edu

Megan A. O'Rourke
*University of Maryland*

Daniel T. Ostick
*University of Maryland*

# GLOBAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLANS

## Engaging Students as Agents in Their Own Development

ELIZABETH K. NIEHAUS, MEGAN A. O'ROURKE, AND
DANIEL T. OSTICK

## Introduction

Students need look no further than their immediate surroundings to see global connections to their daily lives. Their clothes are made across the world; their classmates, neighbors, and coworkers represent a wide range of nationalities; their friends are posted overseas in the Peace Corps, the military, and with humanitarian organizations; and issues of human rights at home and abroad are broadcast daily on their TVs and favorite blogs. From business and politics, to environmental activism and social change, issues are seldom contained within the borders of a nation state. They seep and soar across borders and across cultures to impact us in ways we may not even realize. It is within this global context that our students live, so it's vital that our students have competencies to flourish as the global leaders of tomorrow (or, for that matter, the global leaders of today).

Mendenhall (2008) defined *global leaders* as "individuals who effect significant positive change in organizations by building communities through the development of trust and the arrangement of organizational structures and processes in a context involving multiple cross-boundary stakeholders, multiple sources of external cross-boundary authority, and multiple cultures under conditions of temporal, geographical and cultural complexity" (p. 17). While there is no one agreed-upon list of competencies needed for effective global leadership, leadership scholars have identified a number of goals for global leadership development. These include the ability to recognize that people from different cultures have different ways of looking at the

world, identify culturally defined differences, identify with others who are different from oneself, be flexible and adaptable in different cultural contexts, communicate and build teams across difference, and be curious about and learn from other cultures (Cohen, 2007; Dalton, Ernst, Deal, & Leslie, 2002; Gerzon, 2006).

A number of scholars have pointed to the importance of international experience in fostering global leadership development (McDougall, 2009; Niehaus & Komives, 2009; Oddou & Mendenhall, 2008). In the context of university education, research on study abroad has found a number of positive outcomes that reflect the previous list of competencies. For example, compared with students who have not studied abroad, students who study abroad have greater knowledge and understanding of other cultures (Bates, 1997; Hutchins, 1996; Williams, 2005), are better able to identify with people from other cultures (Drews & Meyer, 1996), are more flexible and adaptable (Black & Duhon, 2006; Willard-Holt, 2001), are better able to recognize and appreciate cultural differences (Bates, 1997; Hutchins, 1996), are more emotionally resilient and independent (Black & Duhon, 2006), and are more interested in learning about other cultures (Carson & Widaman, 1988; Forgues, 2005; Hadis, 2005; Hutchins, 1996).

Despite the great potential for study abroad to lead to global leadership outcomes, very few university students in the United States study abroad each year. According to the Institute for International Education (IIE, 2011a), in the 2009–2010 academic year, only 270,604 US students studied abroad. Of those who did

View this article online at wileyonlinelibrary.com • DOI:10.1002/jls.21244

study abroad, the vast majority were women (63.5%) and White (78.7%) (IIE, 2011b). Students who do not study abroad often cite financial limitations, family obligations, strict academic requirements, or other significant barriers that will not soon be overcome (Dessoff, 2006; Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009; Van Der Meid, 2004). Clearly, international study cannot be the only way that universities foster global leadership development.

For students who do study abroad, increasingly that international experience is very short term. Over half (56.6%) of the university students in the United States who study abroad each year do so for fewer than 8 weeks (IIE, 2011a). Most of the research connecting study abroad to global leadership outcomes focuses on much longer programs, and evidence from shorter-term programs is mixed. While some studies have found student outcomes from short-term programs to be similar to longer programs (e.g., Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), other studies have found significant differences between short- and long-term programs (e.g., Casteen, 2006; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Smith, 2008). In order to reach more students and foster a deeper, more meaningful global leadership development experience, universities need to find ways to both enhance short-term study-abroad experiences and to create opportunities at home for students to develop the capacity to engage in global leadership.

## Global Leadership Development Plans

In an effort to do just this, the authors of the current article, who also serve as instructors in an academic leadership program at a large research university, worked through two academic courses to develop an approach that could be used to both foster global leadership development at home *and* deepen students' engagement in a short-term study-abroad experience. This approach was the Global Leadership Development Plan (GLDP).

### CONTEXT

The two courses in which the GLDP approach was implemented both focused on the topic of global leadership and were part of a broader curricular leadership program. The first course was part of a yearlong experiential education program in which students enrolled in a six-credit leadership course spanning two semesters, interned with a community agency that addresses global issues, and participated in a 10-day international service-learning experience in Uganda. Most students in this program were sophomores and were selected through a competitive application process. The second course was a one-semester course, Leadership in a Global Context, exploring the basic foundations of global leadership theory. The course took place entirely on campus and was open to any student at the university.

The idea of engaging students in their own global leadership development through Global Leadership Development Plans was first conceptualized within the context of the yearlong program, which originally involved a weeklong study-abroad experience in the Czech Republic. During the first year of the program, the time in the Czech Republic was spent attending lectures and participating in organized tours of cultural and historic sites. While students learned much from their time abroad, they were often bored and disengaged from the experience and failed to see how what they were learning about the people, history, and culture of the Czech Republic related to leadership. As instructors of the course, we felt that a more hands-on, experiential approach would help students make the most of such a short period of time abroad, and that we could enhance their leadership learning by involving them more specifically and intentionally in connecting their experiences abroad to their leadership development. The next year we created the Global Leadership Development Plan (GLDP) assignment, the focus of this article. At that time we also began exploring alternatives for the international immersion experience, ultimately switching from the Czech Republic to a service-learning focused study-abroad trip to Uganda. After experiencing success with the GLDP assignment in the yearlong program, the assignment was adapted for Leadership in a Global Context, a one-semester course created for students interested in global leadership who were not part of the program.

### PURPOSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The purpose of the GLDP assignment was to engage students in their own global leadership development,

on campus and/or abroad. We wanted to create a framework through which students could develop their global leadership capacity without leaving the country, while at the same time enhancing the learning from a short-term study-abroad opportunity. The GLDP approach reflects our three core assumptions about teaching global leadership. First, we recognized that students all came to our classrooms with different strengths, weaknesses, and life experiences. As such, the global leadership competencies that needed to be developed would vary from person to person. We wanted to create a way to individualize the learning outcomes for each individual student. Second, we believed that experiential learning was necessary for leadership development in general, and particularly important in global leadership development. Finally, we believed that what students learn from an educational opportunity is directly related to the extent to which they are invested in that opportunity (Astin, 1999). Therefore, we felt that allowing students to create their own leadership development plans would increase that investment and thus increase their learning and development.

### IMPLEMENTING GLDPs

The GLDP assignment took place in four parts. First, if students were to create their own development plans, it was necessary for them to have a framework with which to judge their current strengths and areas for growth. Second, students had to actually create a plan and execute it. Third, following best practices in experiential learning, students reported and reflected on what they were learning from executing their plan. Finally, it was important that students think of global leadership development as a lifelong process, so they were asked to do a concluding, forward-thinking Future Leadership Development Plan. Each of these steps is detailed in the following sections.

#### Self-Assessment

The first step in the Global Leadership Development Plan process was for students to complete a self-assessment to help them identify strengths and areas for growth. Over the past few years we have used a number of different assessments with students, including the Global Mindset Inventory, the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale, and the Global Competence

Aptitude Assessment. There are a number of other useful assessment tools that could be used, including the Intercultural Development Inventory, the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory, the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire, the Intercultural Readiness Check, and the Global Competencies Inventory, just to name a few. These assessments can be used alone or combined with other traditional leadership assessments, such as the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS), the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), or StrengthsQuest. Each of these assessment tools differs in terms of the specific content of what is assessed, the intended respondent population, and of course the cost and mode of assessment. For a good review of the various global leadership assessments available, please refer to Bird (2008) and Stuart (2009).

Most recently, we have begun using the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment (GCAA) because it most specifically addresses the competencies that we are interested in developing with our students. The GCAA asks specific historical, geographical, and situational/hypothetical questions, rather than relying on students' self-report of their own competencies, which we have found to provide a more accurate assessment of students' strengths and weaknesses (e.g., when using other instruments that relied more on self-report, some students would end up with incredibly high scores because they lacked self-awareness but did not lack self-confidence!). The GCAA has both an adult and a youth version, while many other assessments are focused on the business world. Ultimately, though, the most important part is to do some sort of self-assessment in order to provide a foundation from which students can build a plan for their own development.

#### The Plan

Building from the completed assessments, students were asked to create a plan for increasing their capacity to engage in global leadership. The assignment began with a narrative in which students reflected on the outcomes of their global leadership assessment and evaluated what they would identify as their own strengths and weaknesses. Next, students outlined three to four goals for the semester or year and listed specific strategies for accomplishing each goal; we encouraged students to

develop goals that were specific and measurable, and to think about how they would know if they had accomplished their goals. In both courses students were asked to submit multiple drafts of the plan in order to encourage them to think of these plans as living documents, rather than static assignments that they could turn in and forget about. Students employed a number of strategies to achieve their global leadership development goals, including consuming news from international outlets such as BBC or Al Jazeera, listening to National Public Radio podcasts while walking to class, joining new student organizations, spending time with international students, attending cultural fairs, exploring study abroad opportunities, attending different religious ceremonies, and volunteering as conversation partners with non-native English-speaking students.

### Execution and Reflection

The development plan for students did not stop when it was written; that was only the beginning of the experience. After writing their plans, students were expected to execute them and to reflect on their experiences. As students worked through their plans, they discovered new ideas, encountered complicated problems, were faced with conflicting opinions, and saw new avenues of growth for themselves. Throughout the courses, students were asked to report back with "development plan progress reports" or journals that tracked not only their accomplishment of goals and objectives, but also encouraged students to make meaning of what they experienced and think about what that might mean for further learning. This classic "what/so what/now what" approach required students to critically reflect on how they could push their learning further. If specific objectives were not working, they could adapt them to better fit their goals. If they discovered an interesting area to explore further, they could develop new goals. If they struggled with an idea, they could look for more information. And if they identified a new area that they did not know anything about, they had the freedom to explore.

While students were working independently on their development plans, it was also important to bring that experience into the group setting. In our classes, students shared their plan updates with other students to find common themes, learn from each other, and

discover new resources. Students could also ask each other questions, giving them an opportunity to share and communicate what they were learning. In the year-long program, at the end of the first semester, students also developed storyboards that shared graphically what they had done and learned. In a gallery-type setting, students displayed their storyboards and shared stories of learning and engagement with each other.

As instructors we followed this process through each stage, from plan development and progress reports, to group sharing and storyboard presentations. Our feedback to students was critical in the process, asking students to dig deeper, helping them find connections between ideas, offering additional resources that help them achieve their goals, and encouraging their progress throughout. Sometimes students did not know what they did not know, and the instructors played a critical role in guiding students toward greater global leadership competency.

### Moving Forward

While the GLDP assignment guided students through goals and strategies for enhancing their capacity to engage in global leadership over the course of a semester or year, we also recognized that global leadership development is a life-long process. In order to convey this to students, at the end of each course students were asked to create a Future Development Plan, which paralleled the initial assignment. This was meant to be a culminating reflective activity—students were asked to first write a narrative reflecting on where they started at the beginning of the semester/year, how they had developed over the course of the semester/year, and what they now considered to be their most significant global leadership strengths and areas for growth. Finally, students again listed three or four goals for their global leadership development and strategies that they would employ to achieve these goals. Unlike the initial GLDP assignment, however, these goals and strategies were expected to reach well into the future. For example, students have written about plans to study abroad (either before they graduate or in graduate school), intern or work for an international nonprofit organization, learn a new language, engage with an internationally focused student organization, explore job opportunities abroad, or take additional courses with a global focus.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

In implementing the GLDP assignment multiple times in the yearlong course and once in the semester-long course, we have learned a number of lessons about the challenges inherent in this approach. First, students are very busy people, yet their goals were often quite ambitious. It was difficult for most students to achieve the grand goals that were originally laid out in their plans. For example, most students do not have the time to read the *New York Times* every day. To help students overcome this challenge, we used the class check-ins and written updates to provide a forum for instructors and peers to help students think of alternatives, such as listening to podcasts while walking between classes or following the *New York Times* international news website twice a week.

A second major inhibition was the students' own imagination. As stated earlier, students do not know what they do not know. Several students struggled with creative and fun ways to learn more about global issues and engage in the multicultural community on campus and in the local area. The self-assessment helped with this challenge, as it provided a basic framework for students to think about their strengths and weaknesses. In order to inspire new ideas, we also provided lists of possible activities and encouraged students to discuss their plans in class so that they could learn from one another. In doing so, however, we always walked a fine line between providing support and limiting students' thinking to the suggestions provided.

Finally, we also learned that our own global leadership capacities can influence how well we are able to foster global leadership development with our students. Students often struggle with what they are learning about war, genocide, poverty, and other forms of suffering around the world—we must also wrestle with these issues in order to help our students grow and develop. Likewise, we have to be able to carry on intelligent conversations with our students about any number of global current events, be familiar with various news sources where our students are seeking information, and be willing and able to model positive global leadership development behaviors to our students. Ultimately, we have to be willing to learn from our students as they teach us what they are learning.

## Conclusion

As leadership educators we have seen the power of engaging students in their own leadership development through Global Leadership Development Plans. Students in these courses have grown from curious, but relatively uninformed spectators, to fully participatory agents in their own global leadership development. This growth is particularly noteworthy considering that students in one course substantially improved their global leadership capacity without any international experience, while students in the other course did so with only 1 week abroad. Our experience shows the potential for GLDP to both facilitate global leadership development at home and to enhance short-term experiences abroad. Although our experience is limited to a higher education context, these plans could be easily implemented in the corporate, government, or nonprofit sector.

As colleges and universities look for strategies to engage students in the world around them and to involve them in experiential learning, they should consider GLDPs personally designed to connect self-assessment, global competencies, and long-term goal setting. For students to thrive in an increasingly global world, we must provide opportunities to learn, analyze, and apply core competencies for global leadership.

**References**

Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40,* 518–529.

Bates, J. T. (1997). *The effects of study abroad on undergraduates in an honors international program* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of South Carolina.

Bird, A. (2008). Assessing global leadership competencies. In M. E. Mendenhall, J. S. Osland, A. Bird, G. R. Oddou, & M. L. Maznevski (Eds.), *Global leadership: Research, practice and development* (pp. 64–80). New York, NY: Routledge.

Black, H. T., & Duhon, D. L. (2006, January/February). Assessing the impact of business study abroad programs on cultural awareness and personal development. *Journal of Education for Business, 81*(3), 140–144.

Carson, J. S., & Widaman, K. F. (1988). The effects of study abroad during college on attitudes toward other cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 12*, 1–17.

Casteen, L. D. (2006). *Immersion and reentry: The undergraduate experience of foreign study* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Virginia.

Chieffo, L., & Griffiths, L. (2004). Large-scale assessment of student attitudes after a short-term study abroad program. *Frontiers: The International Journal of Study Abroad, 10,* 165–177.

Cohen, E. (2007). *Leadership without borders: Successful strategies from world-class leaders.* Singapore: Wiley.

Dalton, M., Ernst, C., Deal, J., & Leslie, J. (2002). *Success for the new global manager: How to work across distances, countries and cultures.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dessoff, A. (2006, March–April). Who's not going abroad? *International Educator,* 20–27.

Drews, D. R., & Meyer, L. L. (1996). Effects of study abroad on conceptualizations of national groups. *College Student Journal, 30*(4), 452.

Forgues, D. M. (2005). *A study of the relationship of study abroad and students' attitudes toward diversity and culture* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. State University of New York at Buffalo.

Gerzon, M. (2006). Developing an integral vision: How leaders can learn to hold the whole. In W. Link, T. Corral, & M. Gerzon (Eds.), *Leadership is global: Co-creating a more humane and sustainable world.* Global Leadership Network.

Hadis, B. F. (2005). Gauging the impact of study abroad: How to overcome the limitations of a single-cell design. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 30*(1), 3–19.

Hutchins, M. M. (1996). *International education study tours abroad: Students' professional growth and personal development in relation to international, global, and intercultural perspectives* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The Ohio State University.

Institute for International Education. (2011a). Open doors 2011 fast facts. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/~/media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Fast-Facts/Fast-Facts-2011.ashx

Institute for International Education. (2011b). Profile of U.S. study abroad students, 1998/99-2009/10. Retrieved from: http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/US-Study-Abroad/Student-Profile/2000-10

Kehl, K., & Morris, J. (2007). Differences in global-mindedness between short-term and semester-long study abroad participants at selected private universities. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 15,* 67–79.

McDougall, H. (2009). Cultivating cross-cultural leaders: New ways to think about study abroad courses. *Concepts & Connections, 16*(2), 7–8.

Mendenhall, M. E. (2008). Leadership and the birth of global leadership. In M. E. Mendenhall, J. S. Osland, A. Bird, G. R. Oddou, & M. L. Maznevski (Eds.), *Global leadership: Research, practice and development* (pp. 1–17). New York, NY: Routledge.

Niehaus, E., & Komives, S. R. (2009). Exploring study abroad as a pedagogy for global leadership outcomes. *Concepts & Connections, 16*(2), 13–16.

Oddou, G. R., & Mendenhall, M. E. (2008) Global leadership development. In M. E. Mendenhall, J. S. Osland, A. Bird, G. R. Oddou, & M. L. Maznevski, (Eds.), *Global leadership: Research, practice and development* (pp. 160–174). New York, NY: Routledge.

Salisbury, M. H., Umbach, P. D., Paulsen, M. B., & Pascarella, E. T. (2009). Going global: Understanding the choice process of intent to study abroad. *Research in Higher Education, 50*, 119–143.

Smith, D. B. (2008). *The impact of international experience on the global mindedness of extension agents employed by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill.

Stuart, D. (2009). Assessment instruments for the global workforce. In M. A. Moodian (Ed.), *Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Exploring cross-cultural dynamics within organizations* (pp. 175–189). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Van Der Meid, J. S. (2004). Asian Americans: Factors influencing the decision to study abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 9*, 71–110.

Willard-Holt, C. (2001). The impact of a short-term international experience for preservice teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*, 505–517.

Williams, T. R. (2005). Exploring the impact of study abroad on students' intercultural communication skills: Adaptability and sensitivity. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 9*(4), 356–371.

*Elizabeth K. Niehaus is a research associate in the Department of Counseling, Higher Education & Special Education at the University of Maryland. She earned a PhD in College Student Personnel from the University of Maryland.*

*Megan A. O'Rourke currently works as the manager of employer relations at the University Career Center & The President's Promise at the University of Maryland. She holds an MEd in college student affairs from The Pennsylvania State University.*

*Daniel T. Ostick serves as the coordinator for leadership curriculum development and academic partnerships in the Adele H. Stamp Student Union–Center for Campus Life at the University of Maryland. He earned a PhD in college student personnel from the University of Maryland.*