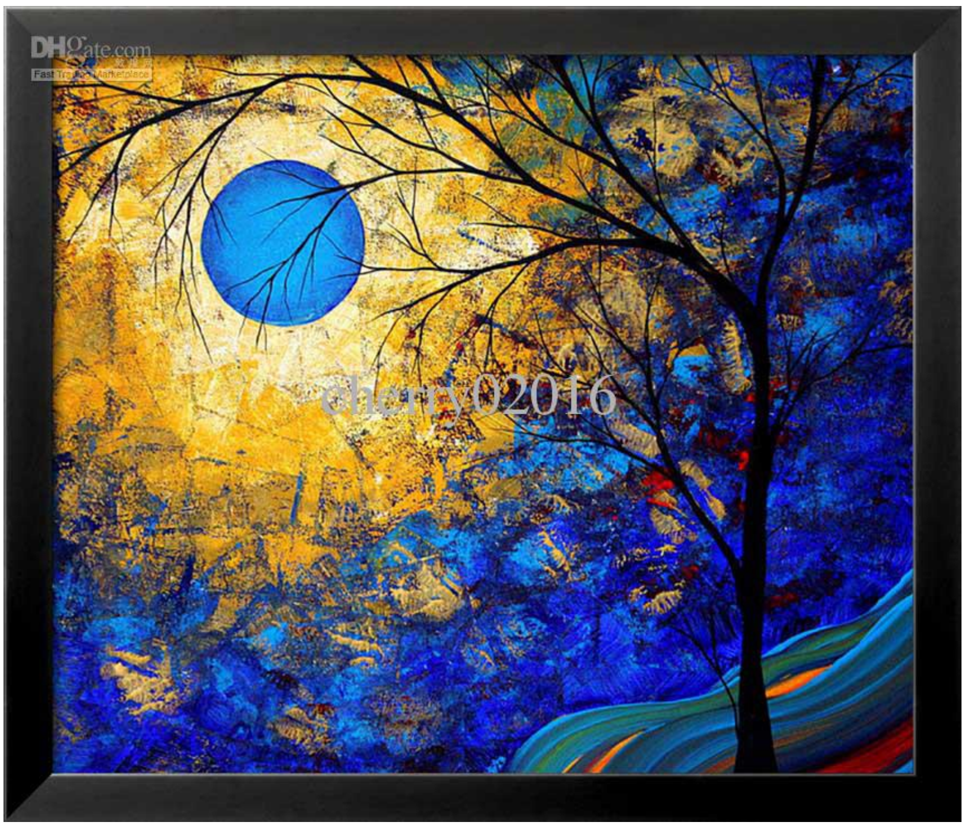
# Journal of Global Leadership

Volume V
December 2017
Editor: Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez
www.icglconferences.com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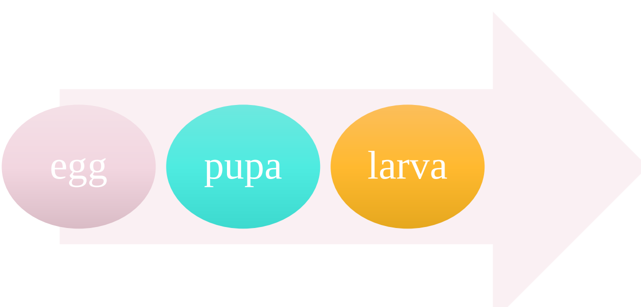
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**Refereed Journal Articles from the International Center for Global Leadership Conference in Belize**

July 20-24, 2017

Executive Editor: Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez

Pepperdine University

**ISBN 978-0-9904431-0-0**

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*The Journal of Global Leadership* is a refereed, peer-reviewed, journal with entries submitted and selected from the annual International Center for Global Leadership Conference held in Placencia, Belize in July of each year, (www.icglconferences.com). We invite submissions from all disciplines as long as the topic is related to global leadership in any field. We do not guarantee that all presenters at the conference will be published at the Journal of Global Leadership. However, all presentations are in the proceedings. We have had submissions related to law, higher education and health among other topics. For those who submit, registration in the annual conference is required. The registration fee is tax deductible as is the trip since the International Center for Global Leadership organization is non-profit. A tax ID number is available upon request.

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The Center for Global Leadership

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**Biography – Dr. June Schmieder -Ramirez**

Dr. Schmieder-Ramirez is currently Chair of the Leadership Studies at Pepperdine University. She oversees the Doctorates in Organizational Leadership, Educational Leadership Administration & Policy and the PhD in Global Leadership and Change. She has co-authored several texts on finance and is the editor of the Journal of Global Leadership. Dr. Schmieder has extensive experience in education and business consulting including serving as school business manager, associate superintendent for business services and superintendent of schools. She is the coauthor of several texts on law, finance and personnel. She teaches courses in legal and sociopolitical theory. Her research interests include cyber law and e-commerce. She founded the “Hermanas Escuelas” peogram which provides computers to indigenous Mexican youth as well as students in Los Angeles and Riverside counties.

She facilitates the International Center for Global Leadership Conference every July at the Roberts Grove Conference Center in Placencia, Belize. She is very interested in the topic of technology and how technology may help developing economies.

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# Global Mindset Scores of Entering Doctoral Students
# Of a Top 50 Private University

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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Kendall Hunt Global Inventory Site
Module 2 Global Competency Test
https://he/kendallhunt.com/product/module -2-assessment-global-competencies

**Abstract**

There have been many approaches to viewing leadership competencies including the trait approach, the behavioral approach, the power-influence approach and the situational approach. We live in a networked world where it is important for leaders to be comfortable with uncertainty, communication across cultural lines, and knowing important elements from both Western and Eastern leadership strategies. One way to find out what your Global leadership Scores is is to take the Kendall Hunt Global Leadership Inventory at the URL above.

**Purpose of the Study**: The purpose of this study was to determine the scores of incoming doctoral students in organizational leadership on the Global Mindset Inventory. This inventory determines the level of global sensitivity on a 50 point inventory. This is important because of the significance of possessing a global mindset as a CEO of a non-profit, NGO, or profit-making organization which has

international ties. The EdD in Organizational Leadership and the new PhD in Global Leadership and Change at Pepperdine University both have the themes of “global leadership” in the programs.

**Background/Importance of the Study**: We live in a networked world. It is important that leaders not only have skills in technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills but are able to deal with uncertainty and differences in cultures. The definition of “leadership” is preceded by the word “global” in this study. Global leadership is considered important in this time. Intercultural communication and competence are essential skills of today’s leader. Intercultural competence includes the ability to communicate effectively in many cultures and possess a global mindset which will enable one to operate in a “white water world.”

**Methodology**: Fifty-five incoming doctoral students took the Global Inventory.

Their scores were divided into:

1. Level 6: Realized State, ( 226 and up);
2. Level 5: High Level State (215-225)
3. Level 4: Medium State (209-214)
4. Level 3: Emerging mode: (206- 208)
5. Level 2 Growth Stage, (194- 205).
6. Level 1 Pre-Growth Stage (174-193)

The global inventory examines individuals in terms of such attributes as:

- Ability to cope with ambiguity
- Ability to lead in more than one culture
- Ability to develop and maintain a global mindset
- Ability to understand change and the pace of change in different cultures
- Ability to simultaneously develop and maintain a global and local perspective and understand how one can inform the other.
- Ability to develop and maintain networks in order to get things done.
- Ability to form effective teams in other countries

**Results**: The results have been tabulated. The inventory asks information regarding experiences in other countries, ability to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, and questions requiring both Western and Eastern ways of leading. The results are important because entering doctoral students in the field of leadership should have an idea where they stand on a spectrum which measures their intercultural competence.

## Introduction

We live in a white water world where it is necessary to deal with uncertainty and differences in cultures. World leaders of today need an agility of thought and the ability to nimbly move from the perspective of one culture to another. But what skills, knowledge and attitudes are necessary to be a global leader? Are there predispositions to be a global leader? What is a global mindset? Why is this important? What is a global mindset?

The purpose of this study was to present a thought piece on what is global leadership and why it is important, set forth some thoughts regarding whether a global mindset can be learned or whether there is a predisposition to such a skills, present thoughts on the best criteria for developing a global leadership themed doctoral program, and finally to present the findings of the Kendall Hunt Global Mindset Inventory which is taken by entering doctoral students at a West Coast University. The study emerged after an article was written by Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez in Scholar and Educator, (Schmieder-Ramirez, 2012). She wrote this article to provide data to inform the doctoral programs at Pepperdine University. She asked the following questions:

**Why is being a global leader important?**

There are many myths about the term "global leadership." Here are several found in the literature:

**Myth #1: All you have to do is know the competencies of being a global leader and then concentrate about developing these strengths**.

Competencies of a strong transcultural leader are important. The literature indicates that such items as the ability to deal with both ambiguity and linearity of thinking are important. However, according to Pankaj Ghemawat, 2012, these lists are just a starting point to becoming a global leader. He notes that one review of the literature indicates that there are three core competencies: self-awareness, engagement in personal transformation, and inquisitiveness; seven mental characteristics: (optimism, self-regulation, social judgment skills, empathy, motivation to work in an international environment, cognitive skills, and acceptance of complexity and its contradictions), and three behavioral competencies (social skills, networking skills, and knowledge).

Most researchers indicate that they feel that a "one size fits all" approach is less than helpful in trying to determine who has the skills of a global leader and what these skills are.

**Myth #2: Most people easily trust people who are in another country;**

According to Pankaj Ghemawat, (2012) trust declines sharply with the amount of distance between individuals. As one indication, he found over 85% of Facebook friends to be of the same country. Individuals get most of their news from domestic news organizations. His research indicates that many individuals may know two cultures very well but are not conversant with three or more cultures.

**Myth #3: We have many culturally agile individuals who can move easily between one culture and another;**

Caligiuri (2006) has indicated that we do not have a sufficient number of culturally agile leaders who can span the many groups which may be in one company.

**Myth#4: It is easy to set up an international trip. This will enable students to become a global leader**

It typically takes many years to become a true global leader. An immersion program can be useful in enabling global leadership characteristics. However, it does not take the place of study, continual immersion in other countries and personal relationships with others from different cultures.

**Definitions:**

**Globalization**: Lane and others (2004), stated that "globalization" indicates that there is increased complexity that may be unforeseen and may not be easily controlled or anticipated. (Mendenhall). There have been many definitions of "leadership," and it is important that having a global mindset is clearly defined. Clearly being global does not mean that local issues are marginalized.

**Cultural Agility**:

Who in history possessed a global mindset? Winston Churchill is widely regarded as possessing a global mindset.

Kets de Vries and Mead (1992) developed a set of qualities that they felt belonged to a global leader including:

1. Envisioning;

2. Strong operational codes;

3. Environmental sense making;

4. Ability to instill values;

5. Inspiring;

6. Empowering;

7. Building and maintaining organizational networks;

8. Interpersonal skills;

9. Pattern recognition;

10. Cognitive complexity;
11. Hardiness

**Historical Background/ Assessment of the Environment**

Leadership, as a study is related to many subjects. It is a multidisciplinary subject and is related to other fields such as ethics, sociology and psychology. Plato is commonly noted as one of the beginning thinkers of leadership as an academic discipline, (Annas, 2009). Plato envisioned a class society with warriors, governing and middle class.

Moving to the thinking of Machiavelli is important in the study of leadership. The academic themes behind *The Prince* showed how leaders maintained power when there are competing groups. The leader of today of course is much more "networked" and has power dependent on many forces and the internal and external forces.

Part of being a global leader is to be able to assess the environment before deciding on a course of action. The environment of a leader might involve social issues, political concerns, economic issues, legal, intercultural and technological. One might utilize an excellent assessment tool such as SPELIT (Schmieder, Mallette), to be able to assess the environment in a detailed way. Other ways that one might assess the environment include SWOT, and an analysis as has been done in "*Essence of Decision*" by Graham Allison, (1999).

**What is the problem which needs to be addressed?**

There is a lack of culturally agile business leaders in our ever-changing world, (Caliguri, 2006 ). Although we have programs which emphasize being a global leader, it is important to match the skills and potential of incoming doctoral students so that they will progress successfully through the program.

**Selected Literature Background**

The background literature relates to the major skills necessary for students who are attending a doctoral program with a major theme of global sensitivity. In addition, a new model was developed that formed the basis for the global leadership program at Pepperdine University. The major themes found by this study were utilized in the formation of the Kendall Hunt Global Mindset Inventory. This inventory is given to all incoming doctoral students.

In the article Developing the Global Leader, (Schmieder-Ramirez 2012), utilized the conceptual framework of Katz (1974). Katz stated that the ideal leader possessed three major areas of skills: the conceptual, the interpersonal and the technical. These skills are important but there are other character traits and skills which have assumed greater importance as we develop more global ties. The study was done in order to design and implement a global leadership doctoral program for the global leader.

Three research questions from a prior study informed this paper:

1) What key knowledge and concepts, interpersonal character dispositions, and technical skills are important in the formation of a global leadership program for doctoral students as determined by over 130 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 1990 and 2012?

2) What are the common themes of course content related to knowledge and concepts, interpersonal character dispositions, and philosophical statements of 18 well-considered Organizational Leadership Doctoral Programs with global themes?

3) Based upon the opinions of 25 Organizational Leadership professors, what are the most important themes that must be present in an Organizational Leadership Doctoral Program which must be in the curriculum?

(From Developing the Global Leader: The new EdD Organizational leadership Program model of the Future)

Table 1

Key Knowledge and Concepts Related to Global Leadership found in 130 Journal Articles 1990 to 2010

| Knowledge/Conceptual | Technical Skills | Interpersonal Skills |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Knowledge of change models | 1. Understand the technical issues related to strategic planning | 1. Ability to have and communicate a vision |
| 2. Understand different theories of leadership | 2. Ability to utilize appropriate technology | 2. Ability to engender trust |
| 3. Understand the role of context/environment in successful leadership | 3. Ability to know and understand organizational structure. | 3. Ability to inspire, empower and transform others. |
| 4. Understand how adults learn | 4. Understand the laws surrounding an organization | 4. Ability to be creative |
| 5. Recognize how leadership is contextual | 5. Understand fiscal requirements, both internal and external to the organization | 5. High level of self-esteem, and emotional intelligence |
| 6. Substantial knowledge of the field | 6. Know how to design and manage infrastructure | 6. Good speaker and writer |
| 7. Understand cultural and SPELIT* forces | 7. Know how to manage human resources | 7. Intellectually capable |
| 8. Understand how to design and implement strategic planning | 8. Know how to analyze data in order to support decisions | 8. Intrinsically motivated |
| 9. Understand the theory of power | 9. Know how to analyze the external environment from a technical, intercultural, legal, economic, political, and social point of view*(SPELIT) | 9. Ability to relate personally to others |
| 10. Understand goals/objectives/assessment | 10. Understand every technical aspect of the leader's "business". | 10. Ability to problem solve creatively |

Source: Schmieder-Ramirez, J (2012). Developing the global leader: The new EdD organizational leadership program model of the future. Scholar and Educator Vol XXXI, 2012

This table shows the common themes in the literature related to being a global leader. These are also the themes which should be incorporated into the program.

**Common Themes of Course Content from organizational leadership doctoral programs**

Eighteen doctoral level courses were studied which contained themes related to global leadership. It is interesting that the primary themes fell along conceptual/knowledge and technical themes rather than psychological/sociological themes.

Table 2

| Conceptual/Knowledge | Technical Themes |
|---|---|
| 1. Change Theory | 1. Instructional Technology |
| 2. Critical analysis and synthesis of information related to leadership | 2. Managing fiscal resources (macro and micro economics) |
| 3. Implementation of leadership plans | 3. Managing human resources |
| 4. Strategic planning knowledge | 4. Quantitative research |
| 5. Learning organizational theory | 5. Qualitative research |
| 6. Teaching and learning theory | 6. Action research |
| 7. Adult learning theory | 7. Adult learning theory |
| 8. Planning and envisioning for the future | 8. Implementing technology in educational organizations |
| 9. Theories of human development | 9. Socio-economic context of education |
| 10. Organizational behavior | 10. Managing human capital |

Source: Schmieder-Ramirez, J. (2012) Developing the global leader: The new EdD organizational leadership program model of the future. Scholar and Educator Vol XXXI, 2012

The eighteen doctoral level programs studied utilized phrases on their websites such as: "prepare students to become visionaries," "prepares students to become transformational leaders."

Table 3

Top Ten Qualities Necessary for an Effective Global Leader based on the Opinions of 25 Ed.D. Professors

| Concepts/Knowledge | Technical Knowledge | Interpersonal Knowledge |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Understand the concept of change | 1. Understand one's product and service | 1. Ability to establish a vision |
| 2. Understand adaptability to change | 2. Understand organizational processes | 2. Honesty |
| 3. Understand one's client/market | 3. Understand tools and technology | 3. Good communication skills |
| 4. Creativity | 4. Understand the infrastructure | 4. Listener |
| 5. Passion for discovery | 5. Understand virtualization, groupware, and cloud computing | 5. Ability to engender trust |
| 6. Understand the environment | 6. Database management/analytics | 6. Relationship Builder |
| 7. Understand leadership and organizational theory | 7. Ability to write well | 7. Ability to inspire |
| 8. Understand what's possible | 8. Ability to conduct research | 8. Transparency |
| 9. Understand data | 9. Ability to collect and synthesize data | 9. Follow through |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10. Ability to create a strategic plan | 10. Strong understanding of research methods | 10. Integrity |

**Source**: Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez, 2012

**Focus of this paper**

The focus of this paper was on the application of the Schmieder Global Mindset Inventory. This inventory is taken at the beginning of the doctoral in organizational leadership program during orientation and is taken a second time after the immersion trip to either Belize or China.

The inventory assesses the level of the students in terms of:

- Ability to cope with ambiguity
- Understanding of both Western and Eastern philosophies
- Ability to understand strategy and how to change strategy when needed
- Intercultural sensitivity
- Ability to envision a plan

**Findings of the Study**

1. The majority of students admitted to the doctorate in organizational leadership were at the "Growth and pre-Growth" stage of having a global mindset.
2. Out of fifty-five students, only one scored at the 226 point level.
3. The readings indicate that there are over 160 global leadership competencies
4. The readings indicate that many of the competencies fall into the categories of conceptual technical and interpersonal skills, (Katz, 1974).

**Areas for Future Study**

There are several areas which may prove important for future study emanating from this study:

1. It would be interesting to develop a study that reviews key points in a child's life where they develop a "plasticity of mind." If a global mindset can be defined as moving across boundaries easily, then it would be key to determine when this skill is acquired.
2. Another area of study might be to do an updated meta-analysis of literature from 2012 to 2017. A text which is recommended to address global leadership is Mendenhall's Global Leadership, 2nd edition (2013).

The next International Center for Global Leadership Conference is in Placencia, Belize July 19-23rd, 2018.

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# Enhancing Leadership in the Ecuadorian Military: Conversations on Leadership With members of the Anti-terrorism Special Forces and Intelligence Units and With members of the Peacebuilding School

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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**ABSTRACT**

Militaries around the world are studying leadership and consider this training is giving them an advantage both on and off the battlefield. The intent of the present study was to identify ways and means that current personnel recommend for learning more about topics to be included in leadership training for military personnel in Ecuador. Empirical data was collected from men in the Anti-terrorism Special Forces and Intelligence Units of the Ecuadorian Army and from the Peacekeeping School which has military personnel from all three arms of the military, army, navy and air force. In addition, action research in the form of an Interview Matrix Activity and World Café were conducted with the Anti-terrorism Special Forces Unit. Research results were identified. Eight recommendations emerged from these findings that may assist the Ecuadorian military in taking steps to implement foundational leadership training.

**Key words:**

Leadership, models, values, roles

## FRAMING

### Purpose

The purpose of this project was to begin dialogue around leadership with the personnel of a Special Forces Unit, Grupo Especial De Operaciones (GEO), of the Ecuadorian Military. The project delivered a week of workshop sessions on leadership topics for military personnel within the unit. Many of these topics are not included in the present curriculum at any level within the Ecuadorian military. An opportunity to discuss the additional topics with personnel may lead to their inclusion in a revised curriculum. The intent was to have the personnel think about the concept of leadership within the military and identify personal and institutional ways to increase leadership capacity.

**Project Deliverables**
The project deliverables are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Project Deliverables.*

| DELIVERABLE | SPECIFICS |
|---|---|
| **Creation of eight leadership posters** | • Display in public areas in GEO<br>• To generate thought and conversation |
| **Provision of four workshops sessions** | • To include an Interview Matrix<br>• Delivered at GEO |
| **Completion of a survey** | • Gathering soldiers' personal views on leadership |
| **Execution of a World Café** | • To create an atmosphere conducive to thought and dialogue around military leadership |
| **Completion of an exit survey** | • To gage interest in future workshops<br>• To gain feedback |

**Significance of the Inquiry**

This inquiry is of particular significance in that, to date, there have been no studies on leadership within the Ecuadorian military. Many militaries around the globe are teaching leadership within their organizations. According to General Carlos Obando, developed nations have a global obligation to support developing nations and this obligation extends to the military (personal communication, September 23, 2016). In 2012, "the Government of Canada declared engagement in the Americas a foreign policy priority,…with the Department of National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces having an important role to play" (ND/CAF, 2014).

The findings of this study are significant to the Special Forces Unit which seeks to update the educational offerings in the institution to meet the needs of a new generation:

> The missions and roles of the military have changed to meet the demands of more complex issues facing the military, of quickly advancing globalization and technology challenges. The military requires innovative ideas and an update to its definition of leadership to improve performance on the world stage. (Personal communication, Lt. Col. Varela May 9, 2016).

The information from the present study will have practical significance for shaping leadership education within GEO and perhaps the larger military.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review studied the role of leadership education within the context of the military in a developing nation and was restricted to literature written by Canadian or American military officers.

The literature review is organized in terms of the three areas listed in Table 2. First, values for military leadership are reviewed to help define the characteristics which education would seek to develop. Second, three leadership models that have potential for development within the Ecuadorian military are described and reviewed. Third, the changing role for soldiers within the twenty-first century that led to changes to the education of military personnel in North America are reviewed.

Table 2

*Literature Review Areas*

| AREA | SUBTOPIC |
|---|---|
| **Values for Military Leadership** | • Communication<br>• Competing values<br>• Changing values up chain of command |
| **Leadership Models** | • Values based leadership<br>• Intent based leadership<br>• Situational leadership |
| **Expanding Roles for Soldiers** | • Soldier as warrior<br>• Soldier as diplomat<br>• Soldier as scholar<br>• Cultural intelligence |

**Values for Military Leadership**

The Constitution of Ecuador (2008), Section Three, Article 159 states "obedience of orders from their superiors shall not exonerate those who carry them out from being held liable for them". While militaries are strong hierarchical institutions, here the foundational document, the country's constitution, lays out that everyone has direct liability for one's own actions, even in times of conflict.

The Department of National Defence [DND], (2003) states that "The military ethos comprises values, beliefs, and expectations that reflect core Canadian values, the imperatives of military professionalism and the requirements of operations". The constitutions of both countries give the reader a strong sense of the values of citizens which are reflected in the actions of the military within their country and on the world stage in both peacekeeping and wartime settings.

The DND (2005) acknowledges that there will be times where tensions will arise due to the need to find ways to address issues where two or more values cannot be equally honored. This is most obviously observed during times of combat when mission achievement and keeping one's troops out of harm's way are not both possible. Although there are risks in making choices, responsible decision-making is the domain of all leaders. The DND (2007) states that "developing and honing skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and moral decision making will help leaders to determine the right balance in any given situation." (p.23). Thus there is a need for the study of military leadership which embodies higher order thinking to bring resolution to today's complex global problems.

Waddell III speaks to the change in values as military personnel climb the chain of command (1994). Waddell indicates that while working at the operational level the values for servicemen are occupational and move toward institutional values as military persons moves up in rank. Consequently, within any military unit there will be both shared and divergent values. An implication for leadership curriculum and development in the military is that changes in leadership need to be addressed as soldiers move up the chain of command and for different military operations.

## Leadership Models

Authoritarian leadership was initially the predominant style within most armed forces around the globe but emergent research on followership points toward positive alternatives for these hierarchical institutions.

*Values based leadership model*. Values tell us what an organization regards as ethical for guiding activities and what characteristics it finds advantageous in its members. The DND (2007) states that "military leadership must be values based. This is particularly important in a security environment characterized by complexity, ambiguity, volatility, uncertainty and danger" (p.3). Military leaders must be able to accomplish their assigned missions while protecting their troops to the best of their ability while anticipating and acclimatising to change and simultaneously representing the military values.

*Intent based leadership model*. Marquette (2012) shows that leaders can be developed at all levels. Personnel can take responsibility and contribute towards an organization's goals so that an organization's success rests on everyone's shoulders. Marquette's intent based leadership philosophy concludes that leaders must create environments where everyone contributes and feels valued – where every person is a leader.

*Situational leadership model*. Waddell (1994) believes no one theory of leadership is totally correct for all contexts. Waddell developed the Situational leadership model which espouses using differing leadership models depending on the maturity of the followers. Leaders need to delegate tasks and "empowering subordinates to accomplish the mission" (p.7). The further up the ladder a leader is, the more mature or senior his followers are and the more work that can be delegated. Thus it becomes appropriate to change leadership styles. Leaders, as they rise in the ranks, need more vision and more long term planning as they strategize the implementation of "big" ides. Cognitive complexity, as a consequence, must increase so that the abilities of the leader match the needs of the organization. At the same time, the need to maintain communication becomes increasingly important. Waddell feels that the most effective leaders are those who maintain the highest levels of exposure to their troops.

## Expanding Roles for Soldiers

The Army Leadership document (AR, 2007) shows alignment with Clermont's (2015) in exploring the new thinking militaries require for the future. Clermont calls upon the Canadian Armed Forces to "pursue the ongoing transformation process" that "demonstrate(s) the necessity for the institution to further develop… more cognitive, intellectual, and communication skills … to reflect the nature of (current missions)" (p.25). Clement follows the literature which has documented the changing role for soldiers around the globe and the subsequent role for more far reaching knowledge, especially "communication and cognitive skills" (p.34). He acknowledges that these skills take time to develop which points to the need to have leadership training at all levels of a soldier's career.

Spencer and Balasevicius (2009), state that from a military perspective, cultural intelligence (CQ) "refers to the cognitive, motivational, and behavioral capacities to understand and effectively respond to the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and groups" (p.41). The fast pace of globalization: due to financial, economic, technological, political, ecological and sociological changes has caused an increasing clash of cultures around the world. Militaries need to expand their knowledge of other cultures and augment their theoretical understanding and their practical intercultural skills. Clark (2008) recognizes the slow acquisition of cultural intelligence and states that a continuous learning cycle must be started early and span a military person's career.

The consensus is that the role of military personnel is rapidly changing to include additional characteristics that should be developed under the umbrella of leadership.

## METHOD

### Project Participants

The participants for this study were military personnel from the GEO and Intelligence Units of the Ecuadorian military, and the Peacekeeping School which has personnel from the army, navy and air force. Informed consent was obtained for all data collection.

### Increasing Awareness of Leadership

The first activity was designed to create discussion. The researcher developed and displayed posters which contained a picture of a military action and a single word related to leadership. An example is provided in Figure 1.


Figure 1. Sample Poster

### Workshops

Four leadership workshops designed to provide military personnel with information and opportunities for discussion were given to approximately 30 men per session.

### Data Collection

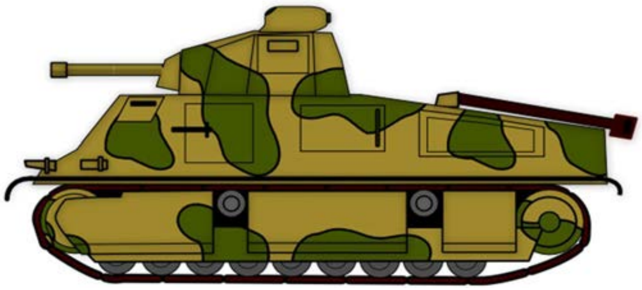
The data for the present study was collected in four stages.

1. The first data collection involved administering an anonymous survey to 50 personnel.
2. The second data collection was completed using the Interview Matrix with the intent to discuss military leadership. As shown in Figure 1, there were four questions presented. There were three Interview Matrices each involving four soldiers who were organized in pairs. Following six rounds, the men from each group who addressed the same question amalgamated their findings, which were then presented to the entire group.

What is the most difficult part of being a leader?

Who has modelled strong leadership in your life, both inside and outside the military?

How can you improve your leadership skills?



How do you measure the success of a leader?

Figure 2. Interview Matrix Questions

3. The World Café was conducted during the third stage of data collection. The intent was to create an atmosphere conducive to thought and dialogue around military leadership. Four soldiers were at each of four tables with a table host. Each table dealt with the following three questions:

GEO is an elite group. What makes GEO a strong leadership team?

Does leadership in the military differ in any way from leadership in civilian life?

If so, how?

How could the military help you become a stronger leader?

At the end of three twenty minute rounds the information was harvested and table hosts gave an overview of ideas coming from their table.

4. Finally, an Exit Survey was administered.

Using a variety of data collection procedures allowed for triangulation of the data, thereby contributing to a broad-based perspective.

**Analysis**

The responses to the two surveys were analyzed using standard formulas. For the questions that included “Other, please list”, the suggestions made were recorded.

The responses made during the Interview Matrix and the World Café were coded by the group leaders using instructions provided by the researcher. Comments were grouped together to form themes by the researcher which were used to develop the final recommendations

**RESULTS**

**Survey**

The survey results are presented in Table 3 and Table 4. The total number of respondents was 50.

As shown in Table 3, the soldiers identified leadership as an essential skill both now and in the future. Slightly more than three-quarters of the respondents indicated that fostering relationships with military leaders would further their own development as military leaders. The next three ways for developing leaders were providing more resources (books, websites), more training and work opportunities.

Table 3

*Summary of Survey Responses: Questions 1 to 6 and 8 to 9*

| Item | Yes | | No | | Uncertain | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *f* | % | *f* | % | *f* | % |
| **1. Do you see your leadership responsibilities within the military increasing over the next 5 – 10 year?** | 28 | 56.0 | 11 | 22.0 | 11 | 22.0 |
| **2. Does working with the military motivate you to learn and develop your leadership skills?** | 47 | 94.0 | 2 | 4.0 | 1 | 2.0 |
| **3. Does working in the military provide opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills?** | 46 | 92.0 | 4 | 8.0 | | |
| **4. At work, do you initiate leadership?** | 49 | 98.0 | 1 | 2.0 | | |
| **5. In what ways could the military foster leadership?** | | | | | | |
| **more training opportunities** | 16 | 32.0 | | | | |
| **more work opportunities** | 8 | 16.0 | | | | |
| **fostering relationships with others in leadership roles** | 39 | 78.0 | | | | |
| **providing more leadership resources (books, websites, etc.)** | 21 | 42.0 | | | | |
| **other, please list** | 9 | 18.0 | | | | |
| **6. What leadership subjects would you like to explore more?** | | | | | | |
| **Leadership theories and styles** | 28 | 56.0 | | | | |
| **Leadership characteristics** | 18 | 36.0 | | | | |
| **Critical thinking** | 18 | 36.0 | | | | |
| **Personal and positional power** | 9 | 18.0 | | | | |
| **Conflict management skills** | 29 | 58.0 | | | | |
| **Time management** | 8 | 16.0 | | | | |
| **Cultural intelligence** | 18 | 36.0 | | | | |
| **Awareness of Indigenous issues** | 5 | 10.0 | | | | |
| **Gender issues** | 22 | 44.0 | | | | |
| **E-leadership** | 4 | 8.0 | | | | |
| **English language skills** | 17 | 34.0 | | | | |
| **Other, please list** | | | | | | |
| **8. Where do you think that leadership should be taught in the Ecuadorian military?** | | | | | | |
| **Military High School** | 17 | 34.0 | | | | |
| **Cadet School** | 29 | 58.0 | | | | |
| **War College** | 8 | 16.0 | | | | |
| **Military Academy** | 14 | 28.0 | | | | |
| **Commando training** | 15 | 30.0 | | | | |
| **Individual Units** | 37 | 74.0 | | | | |

The sixth question asked the respondents to select one or more of 11 leadership topics that each respondent would like to explore. The eighth survey question asked what type of unit each respondent thought leadership should be taught. The two most popular locations were the respondents own individual units and at the Cadet School.

All but two of the respondents indicated that they would like to know more about the North American military mentorship programs.

The seventh question required the respondents to rank 10 values from most important (1) to least important (10) for leaders in the Ecuadorian military. The values are listed from most important to least important in Table 4 together with their mean ranks. While the respondents were asked to rank the values, it should not be construed that the lower ranked values are not important. It may well be that all of the values are needed and the ranked list provides an indication of the order is which they should be treated in the new curriculum.

Table 4

*Summary of Survey Responses: Question 7*

| Item | Mean Rank |
|---|---|
| **What values are most important to leaders in the Ecuadorian military?** | |
| **Honesty** | 2.4 |
| **Commitment** | 3.5 |
| **Respectfulness** | 4.9 |
| **Dependability** | 5.2 |
| **Decisiveness** | 5.5 |
| **Intelligence** | 5.6 |
| **Courage** | 5.9 |
| **Flexibility** | 6.7 |
| **Resourcefulness** | 7.8 |
| **Enthusiasm** | 8.8 |

**Interview Matrix**

The themes derived from the responses of the 12 soldiers who participated in the Interview Matrix are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

*Themes Derived from the Responses during the Interview Matrix*

| *What is the most difficult part of being a leader?* | *How do you measure the success of a leader?* |
|---|---|
| **Soldiers Lack Confidence in Leader** | **Personal Characteristics of a Successful Leader** |
| **Undesirable Characteristics of Leader** | **Military Characteristics of a Successful Leader** |

| *Who has modelled strong leadership in your life both inside and outside of the military?* | *How can you improve your leadership skills?* |
|---|---|
| **Model for Leadership outside of the Military** | **Personal Military Learning to Improve Leadership** |
| **Model for Leadership within the Military** | **Soldiers Influence to Improve Leaderships** |

**World Café**

The themes derived from the responses of the 16 soldiers who participated in the World Cafe are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

*Themes Derived from the Responses during the World Café*

| *GEO is an elite group. What makes GEO a strong leadership team?* | *How could the military help you to become a stronger leader?* |
|---|---|
| **Values Adhered to by the Leadership** | **Individual Actions to become a Strong Leader** |
| **Leadership Involvement** | **Strong Leaders develop Strong Leadership Teams** |
| **Uniqueness of GEO** | **A Strong Leader is Concerned about his Officers and Non-officers** |
| | **Selection of Leaders** |

| *Does leadership in the military differ in any way from leadership in civilian life? If so, how?* | |
|---|---|
| **Characteristics Different between Military and in Civilian Life** | **Respect Differs between Military and Civilian Life** |
| **Discipline and Risk Differ between Military and Civilian Life** | |

**Exit Survey**

The results for exit survey are presented in Table 7. The total number of respondents was only 18 so care must be taken in using the results.

Table 7

*Summary of Exit Survey*

| Item | *f* | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Which sessions did you attend? Please check all that apply.** | | |
| **Values Based Leadership on Monday** | 7 | 38.8 |
| **Conflict Resolution on Tuesday** | 11 | 61.1 |
| **Interview Matrix on Wednesday** | 9 | 50.0 |
| **World Café on Thursday** | 13 | 72.2 |
| **Foundational Leadership/Windup Activities** | 17 | 94.4 |
| **Please check the statement which BEST describes how much of the presentations you understood.** | | |
| **I understood all of the presentation points** | 14 | 77.8 |
| **I understood most points but missed some details** | 4 | 22.2 |
| **I understood half of the presentation** | 0 | 0 |
| **I didn’t understand the information presented** | 0 | 0 |
| **What did you enjoy about the presentations? Please check ALL the statements which apply** | | |
| **I learned a lot over the course of the week about leadership** | 10 | 55.6 |
| **I learned a lot over the course of the week about Canada** | 6 | 33.3 |
| **The information has made me think more about my personal leadership** | 14 | 77.8 |
| **I felt comfortable sharing my opinions with the group** | 14 | 77.8 |
| **The format of the sessions was enjoyable** | 12 | 66.7 |
| **What would you change to make the presentations better? Please check ALL that apply.** | | |
| **Smaller group size** | 0 | 0 |
| **Better translation services** | 1 | 6.6 |
| **Increased confidentiality of opinions** | 3 | 16.6 |
| **More time for discussion** | 14 | 77.8 |
| **Different topics** | 7 | 38.9 |

As shown in Table 7, the 18 soldiers who completed the exit survey had attended varying numbers of workshops as this was dependent on their work schedules for the week.

Question 2 asked the men to rate how well they understood the presentations, given that the presenter was English speaking with a Spanish translator. All of the respondents indicated a high degree of understanding.

Question 3 asked what the men enjoyed about the sessions and asked them to check all statements which applied. Slightly more than three quarters, 78%, indicated the information made them think more about their personal leadership and the same percentage indicated they felt comfortable sharing their opinions with the group.

The final question asked what the respondents would change to make the sessions better. Again, 78% indicated they would like more time for discussion.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the present project was to improve leadership within a Special Forces Unit, GEO.

### Recommendations

The recommendations based on a synthesis of the literature review and the results are listed in Table 8. Further analysis is required to assess organization change readiness.

Table 8

*Recommendations*

| INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|
| **1. Establish a Leadership Center pilot project within GEO** |
| **2. Repeat the present study with same and other units** |
| **3. Create a database of resources** |
| **4. Begin formal meetings with higher levels within the Ecuadorian military** |
| **5. Collaborate with other international militaries** |
| **6. Explore opportunities internationally for key personnel to further their training** |
| **7. Set up workshops with both Ecuadorian and international experts** |
| **8. Explore the mentorship model of leadership** |

### Leadership Implications

During the week at GEO, the enthusiastic participation, animated conversations, insightful questions and positive body language all indicated a high level of interest and engagement in foundational leadership. There was an abundance of ideas generated to support leadership curriculum development within the military. Acceptance of new learning opportunities was openly embraced.

### Implications for Future Inquiry

This is the first research into leadership within the Ecuadorian military so there are many avenues for future study. Replicating the action research at other units could be easily achieved and outcomes compared to this study. The inquiry methods are easily transferrable to other units and other arms of the Ecuadorian military. This rich data could be used to successfully implement leadership curriculum across the educational institutions of the Ecuadorian military.

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# An Ethical Leaders' Guide to Social Media:
# Prelude to a Framework for Leader Ethical Digital Identity

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of ethical leadership and social media behavior as a platform for shaping leader identity in digital environments. Leader ethical digital identity traits begin to emerge from the analysis and synthesis of previous recommendations for general ethical leadership, social media for social change, and virtual leadership competencies. The first three traits of a developing framework are introduced – digital authenticity, digital magnetism and digital righteousness. Global leadership implications for professional comportment and global team development are considered.

## An Ethical Leaders' Guide to Social Media:
## Prelude to a Framework for Leader Ethical, Digital Identity

The melding of leadership, ethics, and social media forms a captivating platform from which global audiences observe. Social media allows leaders to create, share, and exchange information in a massive, virtual community. The personal nature of social media allows leaders to craft and exhibit highly customized identities. These identities can be expanded or refined with deliberate frequency to reflect the leader's authentic or engineered persona.

Researchers have investigated the impact of social media on opinion leadership (Change & Kim, 2011; Hwang, 2015; Park, 2013; Winter & Neubaum, 2016), consumer leadership perceptions (Hwang, 2012) and leader communication (Porter, Anderson, & Nhotsavang, 2015). Additionally researchers have questioned the ethical underpinnings of social media behavior in a myriad of contexts including linguistics (D'Arcy & Young, 2012) corporate responsibility (Stohl, Etter, Banghart, & Woo, 2017) nursing (Milton, 2014), education (Demers & Sullivan, 2016), and public health (Chiu, Menacho, & Young, 2016). Proposing a framework for leader ethical digital identity emerges from the juxtaposition of moral responsibility (i.e., ethics) and social behavior (i.e., social media). A framework such as this supports the evolution of discourse surrounding leadership and social media. It extends our collective understanding of leader personal social media behaviors for promotion (Hwang, 2012), engagement (Ingerson & Bruce, 2013) and identity management (Cho & Jimerson, 2016).

## Background

### Social Media Behavior and Ethics

Social media behavior can create an illusion that a leader is disconnected from reality, yet still support endless information access (Stoller, 2013). It is no longer a legitimate variable in our understanding of leadership behavior. While leader social media behavior has benefits, there are challenge areas that must be considered and mitigated. Operating as an ethical leader would requires consideration for potential consequences of social media activity. Confidentiality, boundaries, respect and dignity are key areas of which leaders must be cognizant across social media environments (Demers & Sullivan, 2016). The complexity of social media, including both real-time and asynchronous interactions as well as long-term digital footprint, predicates considering these from an ethical perspective.

Ethical leaders are expected to demonstration unwavering consistency in actions and interactions. Ethical conduct is independent of situational and external variables; it is non-negotiable (Johnson, 2015). This standard still applies for leaders who engage in social media activity. Leaders who operate ethically develop reputations that reflect this consistency. Leader reputation is important as it allows followers to predict leader behavior based upon previous interaction (Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy, & Pitt, 2012). Leader ethical social media behavior is a conscious decision and personal responsibility (Greenbaum, Quade, & Bonner, 2015).

## Momentum for Leader Ethical Digital Identity

The proposed framework for leader ethical, digital identity considers previous scholarship on ethical leadership, social media for social change, and virtual leadership competencies.

### Ethical Leadership

A framework for leader ethical digital identity must consider the continuum of personal ethics and personal behavior (Ciulla, 2004) as a cornerstone of the leadership persona. As the demonstration of appropriate conduct through personal actions, interpersonal relations, two-way communication, and decision-making (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005), ethical leadership is an appropriate lens for evaluating leader digital identity. The framework for leader ethical, digital identity pairs ethical leadership's consideration for such traits as fairness, power sharing, role clarification, people orientation, integrity, ethical guidance and concern for sustainability (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011) with an understanding of leader social media behaviors (Cho & Jimerson, 2016; Hwang, 2012; Ingerson & Bruce, 2013).

**Social Media for Social Change**

Consideration for leader ethical, digital identity integrates social change advocacy. Previously developed frameworks for digital behavior included competencies related to social-emotional skills (Ng, 2012) and security (Ribble, Bailey, & Ross, 2004). Alquist (2014) combined the seemingly isolated concerns for digital literacy, digital citizenship, and social change with a recognition for responsible social media behavior. The resulting guidelines for digital leadership and social media called for array of competencies with a distinct focus on critical analysis of digital content (e.g., deciphering accuracy, quality and interpretation), conflict resolution (e.g., unraveling societal conflicts), and concern for social good. The proposed framework for leader ethical, digital identity builds upon this work.

**Virtual Leadership Competencies**

One component of a digital leadership identity is leadership presence in a virtual environment. Previous research identified six core leadership competencies for virtual environments – trust, relationships, empowerment, coaching & mentoring, inclusion and communication (Morris, Morse, & Jones, 2017). The core competencies emerged through scrutiny of behaviors in virtual work and virtual learning environments. The researchers identified that although some theorists associated virtual success with particular leadership styles such as servant leadership (Molnar, 2010), shared leadership (Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014) and a combination of transactional and transformational behaviors (Ruggieri, 2009), success in a virtual space required a more comprehensive and perhaps novel approach (Antes & Schuelke, 2011). As a result, Morris et al. (2017) challenged leaders to better meet the needs of virtual environments. The proposed framework for leader ethical, digital identity considers these core competencies as part of a larger solution of infusing ethics into virtual and digital environments.

## A Prelude to a Framework for Leader Ethical Digital Identity

In this paper, three traits critical for leader ethical digital identity are introduced: digital authenticity, digital magnetism and digital righteousness. Together they represent an ethical foundation for leader social media engagement, but do not yet reflect the totality of an ethical digital identity. Hence these three areas are introduced as a prelude to a complete framework.

**Digital Authenticity**

Digital authenticity is critical to leader ethical, digital identity. It connects the ideas of integrity from ethical leadership (Kalshoven et al., 2011), reflection, self-awareness and personal branding from social change digital leadership (Ahlquist, 2014) and trust from virtual leadership (Morris et al., 2017). Branding in social media has the potential to be permanent. Impressions from social media activity are lasting. Ethical leadership suggests that there must be consistency between all domains of a leader's life. Ethical leaders understand influence extends beyond the written word;

| *Digital Trait* | *Description* |
|---|---|
| *Digital Authenticity* | A trustworthiness that emerges from long-term display of self-awareness that brands the leader and is assumed of individuals and organizations with whom the leader interacts |
| *Digital Magnetism* | Leader's inclusive, digital community of mutually valuable exchanges |
| *Digital Righteousness* | Affirming, wise digital presence |

*Figure 1: Three Components of Leader Ethical Digital Identity*

it transcends behavior. Aligning personal social media content and activity with personal behavior is a cornerstone of ethical leadership because ethical leaders set examples with their actions (Greenbaum et al., 2015). There is a direct correlation between personal social media content and personal identity (Kietzmann et al., 2012). The self-awareness attributes of digital authenticity in leader ethical, digital identity allows leaders to achieve a level of vulnerability by sharing successes and failures through social media (Stoller, 2013). Although it is very possible to invent an online persona that is a departure from reality, that is inconsistent with the integrity of ethical leadership and thus contradictory to establishing leader ethical, digital identity.

## Digital Magnetism

Digital magnetism is undergirded by the relational nature of social media communication. It combines leader affinity for people orientation (Kalshoven et al., 2011) and building personal networks (Ahlquist, 2014) with an intentional inclusion communication approach (Morris et al., 2017). Social media relationships significantly impact the leader network (Kiezmann et al., 2012) and identity. Ethical leaders spend a considerable amount of time establishing and maintaining relationships as a catalyst for meeting objectives. Social media exchanges enhance communication between the leader and the digital community. Leader social media interaction supplements face-to-face contact (Ayres, 2013). In the global context of social media, it may also replace it at times. Reciprocal communication is a foundational element of ethical leadership in general. Leader ethical, digital identity must account for differences in expectations (Arbaugh, 2000) and participation (Ladyshewsky, Geoghegan, Jones, & Oliver, 2008) for technology-driven environments.

## Digital Righteousness

Establishing leader ethical, digital identity is rooted in positive digital experiences framed by established personal boundaries. Leaders must demonstrate affirming behaviors similar to that of a mentor or coach (Kerfoot, 2010; Morris et al., 2017). They must also demonstrate practical wisdom regarding digital content (Ahlquist, 2014) and digital associations (Demers & Sullivan, 2016). Righteousness as a manifestation of building these things help elicit a level of ethical guidance (Kalshoven et al., 2011) in the leader digital identity.

# Implications for Global Leadership

## Global Lens for Professional Comportment

Ethical digital identity is a glimpse into leader emotional intelligence. It is nondestructive, social interaction (Stein & Book, 2011) that generates positive affect (Bar-On, Maree, & Elias, 2007). Researchers found the core tenets of emotional intelligence – self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationships (Goleman, 2000) are associated with integrity, assertiveness, trust and communication (Stein & Book, 2011) and can influence organizational culture as well as policies and procedures (Namie & Namie, 2009). The framework for leader ethical digital identity captures emotional intelligent comportment because social media mimics all the processes people expect in a face to face environment (Couldry, 2012). Authenticity, magnetism, righteousness, consciousness and poise are important leadership traits for digital and static environments.

## Global Team Development

As leaders use social media to engage internal and external stakeholders, an ethical, digital identify can positively affect perceptions of the leader's immediate team and organization as a whole (Hwang, 2012). Social media communication can become value-added activity that allows leaders to curate information for and disseminate information to teams in real-time. Digital authenticity on the part of the leader contributes to digital magnetism which strengthens team cohesiveness (Hamersly & Land, 2015; Hertel, Konradt, & Orlikowski, 2004). Leader ethical, digital identity reflects behaviors that help instill a climate of trust through behaviors and actions that demonstrate a sense of fairness and equity when goal setting, collaborating, and supporting team members (Brahm & Kunze, 2012; Gilson et al., 2015; Hambley, O'Neill, & Kline, 2007). The nature of social media interaction is long term and asynchronous. Behaviors that reflect the totality of an ethical, digital identity give team members ongoing access to appropriately modeled leadership behavior that research has shown can positively shape their personal leadership (Mayer et al., 2009) and digital identity.

# Conclusion

Social media activity can be a global lens for leadership behavior. As it relates to ethics, it is important that leader social media behavior is consistent with personal leadership presence. The face-to-face expectations for leaders to demonstrate trust, self-awareness and wisdom apply in social media as well. To demonstrate consistent ethical leadership, leader digital identity must mirror real life behavior. Leaders can leverage social media as a relationship building tool if the digital identity reflects the tenets of this developing framework - authenticity, magnetism and righteousness. Together these traits can shape relationships to positively impact interpersonal, team and organizational dynamics. Leader ethical digital identity adds value to the global leadership persona.

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# Using massive open online social learning structures to increase post-secondary enrollments

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

This session explores a digital cohort academy model designed to increase representation of low socioeconomic status (Title I) students at highly ranked academic institutions. A school within a school model aims to increase connectivity of students through digital cohorts using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) platform. This paper also explores future implications of Massive Open Online Social Learning Structures (MOOSLs) as a nexus between the social and academic aspects of learning. In conclusion, this paper opens the door of future inquiry and sets a path of change and hope to utilize open online learning as a tool to democratize education. Finally, the impact of mobile technologies on the MOOC and MOOSL environments should be investigated.

## KEYWORDS

MOOC, MOOSL, secondary education, digital cohort, transformational leadership, connectivist pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION

Horace Mann recognized education as one of the greatest equalizers between social classes. The new challenge of secondary educational leadership is to design experiences that are learner-centered, engaging, and relevant to future workforce skill development. The work and activities in high school must include scaffolding for in preparation for attending college, including the use of technology and e-learning expectations. Educational leaders must rely on teams of dedicated professionals that have a shared vision and purpose in order to make this happen (Growe & Montgomery, 2003). This paper examines the challenges of creating a shared vision and purpose to create learning environments using e-learning platforms that motivate students to seek ongoing education after high school.

### *The Current State of Admissions and Enrollments*

There are vast disparities between minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students' enrollments to highly selective and moderately selective four year postsecondary institutions (Bozick & Lauff, 2007). Data in a longitudinal study by Bozick and Lauff showed less African American and Hispanic students, 4 % and 4.6%, attend highly selective universities, compared to white students (16.7%). Other recent research also shows increasing minority enrollment, however Latino/a students, are more likely to attend public two year schools (Pew, 2016). The median family income was the greatest predictor of attendance at selective universities, with families making less than $20,000 annually representing only 3.2% of students at four year institutions. High income demographic groups not only generally expect pursuit of postsecondary education, but also provide the resources along the way to give students an extra edge in the admissions process.

### *Leadership and Technology*

Leadership in schools must assist disadvantaged and minority students that lack the resources and support structures to see college as a possibility for the future. Research supports that curriculum structure and student-educator bonds have stronger effects on disadvantaged children. In light of the circumstances and findings, an effective transformational leader must systematically alter the approach to preparing minority and disadvantaged students for admission to elite universities. One way of addressing the disadvantaged is through the implementation of a specialized school within a school model (Dewees, 1999) that groups grade level students into digital cohorts. Each digital cohort shares access to a Massive Online Open Social Learning (MOOSL) platform specifically designed to create a community of practice and provide enrichment in areas of interest and passion to help promote admission into selective universities. The MOOSL platform is an extension of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) that incorporates dimensions of social learning. The MOOSL format will offer extensions to curriculum through open online courses, connection to experts in fields of study, and connections and support between cohort members and faculty to support the academic goals of each participant. This paper outlines the leadership, learning considerations and guiding theories relevant to the project undertaking. Additionally, this paper discusses the implementation challenges and obstacles. The final section will explore areas of future study, including challenges and potential for replication.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the development and expansions of MOOCs into new learning environments, and the pedagogy of connectivist approaches in the form of cMOOCs and MOOSLs serves as the guiding body of literature that informed this project. In 2008, the first connectivist open online courses and OpenCourseWare were launched by MIT (Saadatmand & Kumpulainen, 2014). The early adopters of this technology platform were elite universities and corporate models such as Udemy and Coursera that catered to adult learners. Some experts cite the rise of MOOCs aligned with criticism of the scope and methods of traditional learning environments (Saadatmand & Kumpulainen, 2014). Other research points to the early adoption as a trend to improve traditional instruction methods, increase connectivity, and increase equity and access to content (Cobo, 2015; Kassabian, 2014). The creation of MOOCs and online learning environments in higher education in the United States is rapidly growing. In a study by the Babson Survey Research Group online enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment in U.S. degree granting institutions rose from 9.6% in 2002 to 32% in 2011 (Allen & Seaman, 2013). MOOCs have also expanded into community college settings and are emerging in secondary education institutions (Najafi, Evans, & Federico; 2014, Stein, 2016). The emergence in secondary education is limited and there is a general lack of literature in this area.

### *Expanding MOOCs into Secondary Environments*

There are a limited number of studies however that show success when MOOCs are integrated into secondary school environments. The results indicate that increased student engagement and learning are the outcomes of this work. (Najafi, Evans, & Federico; 2014, Stein, 2016). The Cambridge Rutherford Schools Physics Project, which explicitly borrows selected methods from Coursera MOOCs to deliver pre-University content to 16 to 18 year old students is utilized to support physics instruction so students will meet the prerequisite standards of University entrance levels (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, United Kingdom, 2013). One study showed that incoming college freshman at the University of Helsinki that participated in a prerequisite MOOC course prior to their first year studies were less likely to drop out during their first year (Vihavainen, Luukkainen, & Kurhila, 2013).

*Connectivist MOOCs*

Since the advent of the first MOOCs, the delivery and pedagogy of MOOCs evolved into xMOOCs and cMOOCs (Daniel, 2012). xMOOCs rely on the more common university delivery model that provides information and resources for the participant to read and absorb with little to no interaction with other MOOC participants or the instructor; the structure of cMOOCs emphasizes connectivism (Downes, 2012; Siemens 2005). Connectivist approaches facilitate instruction and application of knowledge through social networking and connection between participants and the instructor. Siemens views the connectivist approach as critical in terms of creating innovation and the modern learning process (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, United Kingdom, 2013). Creating networks and developing professional connections through networking technologies are advantages of participating in cMOOCs (Saadatmand and Kumpulainen, 2014). According to Hill (2015) participants in connectivist MOOCs reported increased closeness with other participants and a richer learning experience. Additionally, students in this study completed the content at a faster pace and demonstrated better mastery of the learning objectives than students that were not engaged in synchronous online learning activities.

The improvements in student learning and the increased motivation make cMOOCs viable in secondary education (Williams et al., 2013). The cMOOC has given rise to a new MOOC terminology, the Massive Open Online Social Learning Structures (MOOSLs). A MOOSL relies on the participants forming a learning network based on personal learning goals and collaborative work to create a learning experience tailored to the learner (Christenson, 2015). This structure still relies on a teacher as facilitator to manage the learning environment. Participants also engage in social media communications, as well as, synchronous and asynchronous learning. There is great potential for cMOOC and MOOSL models to build a bridge for students to adapt to learning at highly selective universities and to create social support and learning networks during secondary education.

*Guiding Leadership Theory*

The project originated through a series of conversations among the leadership at the site level. The evaluation of data demonstrated that over the past ten years there were students that had gone on to elite universities, but several other qualified students (SAT/ACT/AP scores, GPA) had deselected themselves from the applications to highly competitive schools. The discussion and follow-up research identified challenges for the school site to meet the needs of all students in the college admissions process (Fox, 2016). It was clear that students preparing for admission to highly competitive schools need additional supports throughout high school to be successful in the admissions process. This project requires system wide structural change that depends upon transformational leadership, visionary technology, and social entrepreneurship. There are many leadership challenges and obstacles; including communicating and sharing the vision, developing followership, embedding the vision in the day to day activities, then building the first public secondary school MOOSL environment, and creating a model that would be adaptable to other secondary institutions.

Transformational leadership theory is a component of successful management practices by school leadership that are undergoing school wide change (Berkovich, 2016). Past studies have shown that elements of transformational leadership have increased performance, improved school staff buy-in and adoption, and improved attitudes and feelings of satisfaction with administration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The goals of the project require significant commitment by teachers and counselors. Specific qualities of transformational leaders include :the ability set high expectations, inspire and support people to reach challenging goals, and motivate the team to determine a shared goal for the good of the organization (Bass, 1985). A project of this scope tasks the personal leadership of the project manager to create a vision, plan, and action steps that are uplifting, pragmatic, and focused on achieving the shared goal. Transformational leadership creates a framework where innovation and creativity are the norm. (Sagnak et al., 2015).

In the context of education today, transformational leadership must also be complemented by the capacity to be a technology visionary. In the world of education, a technology visionary must imagine the application of technology as innovator and first adopter. There is a significant amount of risk involved in the first adopter approach that requires creative problem solving to deal with unforeseen issues. In the case with the Los Angeles Unified School District, the top down roll out of iPads ended up having significant problems with the platform and internet connectivity. While ambitious, the project lacked proper planning and was directed with a one size fits all approach that did not fit all schools and communities. There is a clear need for schools and districts to move forward with technology, but there is substantial burden on school leadership to balance feasibility, budgets, culture, and delivery. According to the U.S. Department of Education, (2010), the use of technology has the potential to increase the percentage of individuals completing two-year and four-year college degrees by 20% by 2020. It is not enough for educational leaders to be technology visionaries; leadership requires pragmatic approaches to managing the vision and exercising fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers.

*Guiding Learning Theory*

The guiding learning theories related to the development of the project focus on concepts of student-centered learning and Situated Peripheral learning (Jonassen & Land, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Student-centered learning environments (SCLEs) are fundamentally learning methods and spaces in which the participant takes the driver's seat in the learning process by interacting with content in authentic ways. The framework of student-centered learner models evolved simultaneously with advances in technology. The cMOOC or MOOSL models represent a technologically driven student-centered learning environment. In SCLEs participants engage in a richer learning experiences by accessing knowledge and learning by participant-participant or teacher-participant interactions in order to extend understanding through the expertise and perspectives of other learners (Jonassen & Land, 2012). One of the primary objectives of the MOOSL project is designed to create a community of learners that engage in meaningful interaction to complement the traditional learning experience of a secondary school. Cohort learning will promote engagement with each other to support the pursuit of individual areas of interest and build on each other's' knowledge. The participants will create a shared set of goals, objectives, areas of interest, and commitment to a domain (Calhoun et al., 2017; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In addition, the participants will build relationships and co-create a supportive community through continued synchronous and asynchronous interactions in the MOOSL and in the traditional school setting. The process of interaction through the MOOSL will equip the cohort with a unique set of skills that participants learned both intentionally and unintentionally, around not only the use of the open online courses, but through the pursuit of various areas of interest. This process based learning is the most significant facet to make the cohort adaptable to highly competitive university environments. The MOOSL provides direct skill instruction in areas generally not accessible to low income students, but the real meaning of the skill set is defined by the community of learners engaged in the student-center learning network.

*Challenges and Obstacles*

There are challenges and obstacles to the adoption and implementation of MOOCs in secondary public school environments. One of the traditional challenges of connectivist MOOC environments is the prerequisite for learners to have a degree of information and communications technologies (ICTs) proficiency (Kop, 2011). This poses a smaller, more attainable goal for individuals that have utilized learning technologies and social media most of their lives. The presence of social media components, discussion forums, and the requirement to carry out tasks autonomously, can be overwhelming to new MOOC users (Saadatmand & Kumpulainen, 2014). The National Research Council of Canada is exploring new learning platforms that use appropriate scaffolding to create an online place where participants can utilize social networking to navigate the complexities of a MOOC and reach a greater level of comfort.

Another primary challenge is the implementation and design of a system that offers the appropriate coursework, connections, and networking to support advancement to highly selective universities. The system must be constructed to fill in the gaps for socioeconomically disadvantaged students in the form of writing support, access to advanced coursework in areas of interest, projects and competitions, networking with students in other regions and countries with shared interests, and the opportunity to engage in a culminating research or practicum project. Each facet of the design of the face-to-face and MOOC environment must align to the goal of supporting the cohort to gain access to elite universities by leveling the playing field.

## ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper also brings to light some of the ethical issues related to the pedagogy and expansion of MOOCs. Adult learners must consider the issues of integrity and fidelity of content (Eynon & Schroeder, 2016; Marshall, 2014) in MOOCs. The providers of MOOCs have an ethical burden to uphold the expectations of content and provide curricular materials that are on par with textbooks and in seat courses of the same level. This project must not only consider the content selections of courses, but also the cultural and age appropriate nature of the content. According to Literati, (2015) one of the most critical ethical considerations in MOOCs is the cultural pedagogy of the MOOC. The nature of the MOOC as a massive open course includes participants of varied cultural backgrounds and education levels and requires MOOC designers to consider design methods and add features to reach a broader audience (Melles, 2012.) The project also connects to the ethical objective of utilizing MOOCs as an equalizer in the educational environment. The idea that MOOCs can democratize education is contested and is a rich area of future exploration (Patru & Balaji, 2016; Cobo 2015).

## FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

This paper highlights several areas of research related to MOOCs and prompts a need for future inquiry into the study of MOOCs and MOOSLs in settings outside of higher education and adult learning. Specifically, further research will be conducted on the implementation and impacts of a MOOSL course on a digital cohort of secondary learners. Using longitudinal data, this research should include further investigation into the success of these models in terms of preparing and the potential of MOOC and MOOSL environments to promote access to underrepresented students to highly selective universities. This also highlights the need for further consideration of the democratizing effects of MOOCs and MOOSL environments on various learner groups and communities of practice.

Finally, the impact of mobile technologies on the MOOC and MOOSL environments should be investigated. The growth of mobile technologies presents another tool to help promote learning and access outside the traditional face-to-face education environment and should be further explored in the context of online social learning. This paper also opens the door to the expansion and explorations of ICTs and MOOCs to other public sector agencies outside of the educational setting (Panganiban, Fraizer, & Garcia, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The role of education in combating poverty and providing an equal playing field is unquestioned. Significant obstacles exist for socioeconomically disadvantaged students to attend higher education, and even greater hurdles to attend highly selective universities. This paper explores the pertinent literature on the expansion of open online learning environments on various learner groups, as well as the guiding leadership and pedagogical research on implementation of social learning structures as a tool to develop supports and enrich the traditional learning environments through the creation of digital cohort models. The discussion of guiding leadership theory highlights a nexus between transformational leadership and technological visionary as a key component of early adoption of disruptive change in secondary school environments. Additionally, the discussion of communities of practice and connectivist pedagogy provide a foundation and build on previous success of models implemented on a small scale. The role of social learning and abundant scaffolding and supports are stressed as key components of successful implementation plans. In conclusion, this paper opens the door of future inquiry and sets a path of change and hope to utilize open online learning as a tool to democratize education.

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# Exploring Cuba's Minimum Wage Standard Reforms

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

Cuba's workforce earns approximately $20 USD per month (Rapoza, 2016)—which is much lower than surrounding countries such as the Dominican Republic at $124 USD per month (Dominican Republic Labor Stats, 2017), the Bahamas at $840 USD per month ("The Bahamas Minimum Wage Rate", 2017) or Jamaica at $191 USD per month (MLSS Public Relations Unit, 2016). With Cuba's low wages, some may struggle to survive and may need to subsidize their income with funds from family members or money earned from the black market (Thale & Boggs, 2013). Furthermore, with basic housing costs, many Cuban residents share their homes with family members or close friends ("Cost of Living in Havana", 2017). In effort to increase the quality of life for Cuban citizens, this body of work will explore a variety of opportunities such as increasing the country's average wage, reforming the nation's labor unions, and creating opportunities for citizens to obtain employment through private sector opportunities.

## KEYWORDS

Privatization, The US Embargo

## BACKGROUND

In May 2017, *the author* traveled to Cuba on a *scholarly* delegat*ion, a* study abroad trip for *Ph.D.* course work. The primary focus of this opportunity was to learn more about the Cuban economy and culture. This reflection provides context for the experience, the resulting literature review and recommendations for future research on policies that may aim to raise Cuba's national wage.

*Upon arriving to the country, my colleagues and I were immediately greeted by Cuban citizens who went out of their way to immerse us in their culture, including to learn more about culinary and recreational venues.*

*While having dinner at a local restaurant, I met a guy named Bola, who shared his story of what life what like as a Cuban citizen. He discussed how he earned 20 CUCs a month, (which is the equivalent to $20 USD) and that he could not afford to live in a place by himself, so he lives with his mother, father, little brother, two sisters and a brother in law. He discussed this is a very common way of life and very few people can afford living expenses without the help of family members or roommates. It was disheartening to learn this information, one can only imagine how difficult it must be to live comfortably and purchase various life style essentials.*

*I also had a similar conversation with my cab driver, during my ride back to the hotel. The cab driver, whose name I did not get, told me about his son who had graduated from college and was now a math teacher at a local high school. The cab driver said his son decided to quit his job as a schoolteacher, and become a cab driver like his dad. His son wants to be a cab driver, because they make more money than teachers. The combination of monthly wages and tips earned by cab drivers is more than a teacher's monthly salary.*

*The cab driver continued to explain to me that Cuba has a great educational system and many people who live there have advanced degrees. The problem is, that although a great majority of the population is quite educated, these individuals cannot afford to work in the industry they went to school for because the salaries are not enough to live on. As a result of not being able to work in the profession these citizens have obtained degrees for, many residents obtain service related jobs, such as cab drivers, food servers, or jobs in tourism, so they can earn extra money through tips and overtime.*

*Based on these conversations with both Bola and the cab driver, triggered my interest in exploring Cuba's workforce and researching the various methods that could improve the Cuban economy and the quality of life for Cuban citizens.*

## INTRODUCTION

The establishment of United States embargo solidified the beginning of many challenges for the Cuban economy (Smith, 1998). Enacted in 1962 by John F. Kennedy, the US embargo was a response to diplomatic tensions between the United States and Cuba (Smith, 1998). These tensions were the result of Cuba's President Fidel Castro, who "nationalized all American properties without compensation" (Smith, 1998, p. 1). In addition to seizing American properties, Castro also made a declaration to spread a… "Revolution to the rest of Latin America, and made an intentional effort to enter into an alliance with the Soviet Union" (Smith, 1998, p. 1).

The intention of the embargo was to "deny money and supplies to Cuba, decrease monetary and real wages, bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the [Castro] government" (Jourdane, 2015). The embargo listed sanctions that prohibited trade between the US and Cuba, and prohibited American citizens from traveling to Cuba. This separation in commerce created a need for Cuba to depend on the Soviet Union's intervention to step in and become Cuba's primary source for imported goods.

Cuba's partnership with the Soviet Union not only established a successful trading relationship, it also contributed to the launch of the Cuban health and educational system (Jourdane, 2015). However, after nearly three decades of providing subsidies to the Cuban economy, the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and the support to Cuba ended (Jourdane, 2015). The fall of the Soviet Union and the still very active US embargo, devastated the Cuban economy and led the country into a what is referred to as "The Special Period" which began in the 1990's, describes an extended period of time of which Cuba experienced extreme poverty and an economic crisis (Jourdane, 2015).

The results of the special period not only created a calamity of famine and loss of essential resources provided by imported goods, it also had a negative impact on the country's labor force (Henken, 2008). "The Cuban government was forced to contract out more lucrative economic and tourism deals with various Western European and South American nations in an attempt to earn the foreign currency necessary to replace the lost Soviet petroleum via the international markets. Additionally faced with a near-elimination of imported steel and other ore-based supplies, Cuba closed refineries and factories across the country, eliminating the country's industrial arm and millions of jobs. The government then proceeded to replace these lost jobs with employment in industrial agriculture and other homegrown initiatives, but these jobs often did not pay as well, and Cubans on the whole became economically poorer." (Henken, 2008). According to Henken (2008), factory closings, production declines, and transportation difficulties led to the displacement of nearly 20 percent of individuals in the nation's workforce.

Since the 1990's, Cuba has made progress in improving the nation's economy and developing strategies to provide quality employment opportunities for its inhabitants. Although much of the employment is provided by the Cuban government, According to Thale & Boggs (2013, p.5), "It is very difficult to survive on public sector wages alone, and Cubans who do not have access to hard currency (most commonly through tips in tourist sector jobs or through remittances) frequently resort to pilfering or selling items on the black market. The average wage for a Cuban worker is approximately 20USD per month (Rapoza, 2016), and the cost to rent a standard place to live is about 80 USD per month (Cost of Living in Havana, 2017). Based on these average wages, the average Cuban worker cannot afford to live alone and must share their home with roommates or family members in order to maintain a place to live (Cost of Living in Havana, 2017).

*National wages*

Inhabitants in the Cuban workforce earn an average of five times less than working citizens who reside in surrounding countries. For instance, Jamaica, which is located within 380 kilometers from Cuba, has a national average wage of 191USD per month (MLSS Public Relations Unit, 2016). The national average wage for the Dominican Republic is $124 USD per month (Dominican Republic Labor Stats, 2017), and the Bahamas has an average wage of $840 USD per month (The Bahamas Minimum Wage Rate, 2017). Each of these surrounding countries offer a living wage that is approximately half of the cost of renting a home. Compared to Cuba's average wage, these wages are four times less than the cost to rent a standard size apartment (Cost of Living in Havana, 2017). Not only is the Cuban average wage far less than what is needed to cover the cost of rent, Cuban workers depend more on remittances, as well as sales from the black market to living expenses such as food, transportation, and clothing (Rapoza, 2016).

According to literacy, Cuba's average working wage is therefore not sufficient to keep Cuban families out of poverty; in fact, workers in the country's workforce have historically been considered among "the most exploited and manipulated labor forces in the world" (Leiva, 2000, p. 1). The current wage minimizes economic freedom and may force individuals to seek additional resources in order to survive (Bernie Sanders on Minimum Wage, 2017). Inadequate wages not only hinder the progress of individuals in the workforce, it also cripples their families.

*Generational families and quality of life*

"The effects of low wages can be viewed as a ripple effect throughout the economic and social spheres and as people struggle to take care of their families, they risk the chance of adequately caring for their children" (Bernie Sanders on Minimum Wage, 2017, p. 3). Another consequence of low wages is a cyclical effect among generations, and children who are born in poverty are more likely to continue the cycle of being poor (Bernie Sanders on Minimum Wage, 2017).

In effort to increase the quality of life for Cuban citizens and stimulate the nation's developing economy, a reform of the nation's average minimum wage is desperately needed. The country's standard wage should be comparable to the standards of neighboring countries and increased to $40 USD. An increase in wages will benefit workers and the nation's economy because it would provide individuals in the workforce purchasing power and lessen the gap of working for inadequate wages (Bernie Sanders Living Wage, 2017).

*Private sector employment*

Another avenue to increase the quality of life for Cuban workers is the availability of private sector employment. Since Raul Castro became Cuba's President in 2008, the country has taken "modest but significant steps to move from an entirely state-run economy to a more mixed model" (Thale & Boggs, 2013, p. 2). In 2011, for instance, critical changes were approved for the country's economic model, and since then, the Cuban government has cut close to 500,000 public sector jobs "closing in on its goal to slash 20 percent or nearly a million jobs from its bloated payrolls, by 2016 (Frank, 2012, p.1). According to Cuba's current President, Raul Castro, the country is in desperate need of an economic overhaul, and the process has to begin with the country's labor force (Malkin, 2010).

According to Castro, "The government is supporting a bloated bureaucracy that has sapped motivation and long sheltered a huge swath of the nation's workers" (Malkin, 2010, p. 1). President Castro's commitments to improve the economy began with his pledge to make the country's Soviet-themed, centralized economy, more efficient and create more opportunities for the Cuban people (Malkin, 2010). As a result, of Castro's mission to reform Cuba's economy, the government has provided several thousands of acres of state owned farmland to private farmers and began the process of opening up the Cuban marketplace for supplies needed for agriculture (Malkin, 2010).

In addition to creating more jobs in the agriculture industry, millions of people in the country's workforce had the chance to transition out of the country's public sector employment and "entered the private sector as self-employed entrepreneurs or as employees in small businesses (Thale & Boggs, 2013). For example, government regulations on cellular devices and other electronic items were less restricted thus creating an open space for privately owned businesses…" (Malkin, 2010).

The economic reform of increasing employment opportunities via the private sector is not a new idea. The focus of private sector employment was fully detailed in The Communist Party Guidelines for Economic Reform over five years ago. (Thale & Boggs, 2013). Although the Cuban government responded to this reform by "legalizing home and car sales, offering loans to small businesses, providing farmers the use of idle land, allowing barber's shops to become cooperatives and giving more licenses to private cab drivers" (Malkin, 2010, p. 1), these initiatives have been modest and very slow. The country's sluggish launch of various privatization efforts are a result of the Cuban government pushing back labor related projects and deadlines (Thale & Boggs, 2013).

Privatization in other countries

Cuba is among several other countries that have turned to privation to boost their economy. For instance, Argentina's government established a major privatization project that focused on the sale of its "telephone monopoly, national airline, and petrochemical company for more than $2.1 billion (Goodman & Loveman, 2014, p. 2). Mexico has also benefited from an economic overhaul, as privatization efforts have resulted in the reduction of operating cost and size of their of the public sector, and increased the country's revenue by $2 billion dollars (Goodman & Loveman, 2014). Furthermore, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland are also relying on privatization "and are in the process of working out additional legal agreements" (Goodman & Loveman, 2014, p. 1). Lastly, the German government has also benefited from the results of privatization and is noted has having the most extensive reform to date.

During the 1990's, the country authorized the Treuhandanstalt, a public trust agency, with arranging the sale of close to 400 companies for approximately $1.5 billion. The agency still has additional companies for purchase, and entertaining buyers (Goodman & Loveman, 2014).

The use of Privatization is likely to continue to be utilized by governments all over the world. Countries, such as, "Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland are all committed to privatization and are in the process of working out the legal details" (Goodman & Loveman, 2014, p. 2) Since the 1990's governments worldwide handed private managers control over a variety of services ranging from electrical utilities, managing prisons, building railroads to providing education (Goodman & Loveman, 2014).

Although privatization is considered an effective method in combating inefficiency of a country's government, critics of argue that efficiency is not necessarily guaranteed (Goodman & Loveman, 2014). Opponents also state that, "private sector managers may have no compunction about adopting profit-making strategies or corporate practices that make essential services unaffordable or unavailable to large segments of the population. A profit-seeking operation may not, for example, choose to provide healthcare to the indigent or extend education to poor or learning-disabled children" (Goodman & Loveman, 2014, p. 3). These instances would require a country's government to intervene, which would likely make the services less desirable than if the government had provided the services originally (Goodman & Loveman, 2014).

Proponents for privatization, simply state that privatization decreases the size of government. "Fewer government workers and fewer people supporting a larger role for government means less of a drain on the nation's budget and overall economic efficiency" (Goodman & Loveman, 2014, p. 6). In addition, the competition of private sector organizations could create incentives for public leaders to be more effective in the services they provide. In the United States, public sector street-paving crews were motivated to improve their performance when city governments decided to hire private contractors to pave the streets in an adjacent neighborhood. US city officials noted that both the private and government street paving crews began to compete to see which team would win the title of being faster and better (Goodman & Loveman, 2014).

At the end of the day, neither public nor private leaders will always act in the best interests of the people. Privatization will be effective if private organizations have opportunities and incentives to act in the best interest of the public (Goodman & Loveman, 2014).

*Cuban Worker's Federation*

The Cuban economy and workforce can also benefit from a reform of the unions that represent the working class. Although there is a small amount of unorthodox unions, the majority of individuals in the workforce are members of the "Cuban Workers' Federation (Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC)" (Thale & Boggs, 2013, p. 6). The CTC has a strong political agenda and its main role consists of "transmitting the government's message to workers and transmitting workers' concerns to the government." (Thale & Boggs, 2013, p. 6). In addition to maintaining communication between the labor force and government, the CTC also engages in matters related to workplace disputes. The CTC provides assistance in matters related to proper working conditions, maternity leave, disability, and pension, and while these issues are of great importance, the CTC surprisingly refrains from issues related to wages, employment terms, and work hours (Thale & Boggs, 2013).

Comparing the CTC to unions in the United States, US unions do have an interest in politics, however their primary function is to represent the interests of employees and to create a platform for negotiation between workers and managers (IBEW - Who We Are, 2017). US unions have a strong commitment in bargaining collectively with "… employers over wages, benefits, and rights" (IBEW - Who We Are, 2017, p. 1).

The CTC is also very different from European unions "in which multiple unions with strong links to political parties represent workers' interests in the political arena as much as at the bargaining table." (Thale & Boggs, 2013, p. 7). The European workforce offers a variety of unions that represent workers in wide spectrum of industries, however in Cuba, the country is narrowed down to one confederate union that officially represents the interests of Cuban workers (Thale & Boggs, 2013).

The lack of union involvement in employment issues, wages, and hours of employment leave Cuban workers at an extreme disadvantage. The CTC's role in these areas could be effective in mediating and resolving labor related issues between employees and employers. One of the contributing factors that prevents the CTC in engaging in wage and hour negotiation is "Cuba sets wages and hours at the national level through a set of labor laws, regulations, and centralized planning mechanisms, rather than at the enterprise level." (Thale & Boggs, 2013, p. 7). Due to the fact of labor laws being enforced at the national level, Cuban workers miss out on critical union representation that could focus on employee advocacy, ensuring employers are meeting minimum employment standards and investigating breaches of workplace laws, discrimination and workplace safety (Welcome to the Fair Work Ombudsman website, 2017).

## FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As privatization increasingly becomes Cuba's method of improving government efficiency, further research could focus on the results of privatization. Such research could address the following questions:

What areas of privatization is beneficial to the Cuban economy?

How should the Cuban government respond if Cuban entrepreneurs become wealthy as a result of privatization opportunities?

## CONCLUSION

The country of Cuba is one of the most fascinating places in the world. The region is rich with culture, beauty and an inviting diverse population. Its economy, along with other nations, has faced many challenges, however the country's resilient history will be its aid in improving the quality of opportunities for its citizens.

The next immediate initiative should be for the Cuban government to increase the average wage for its working population. Cuban workers can no longer receive a salary that keeps them stricken in poverty and distant from vital resources needed for adequate living. The Cuban government is at capacity and can no longer be the sole provider for the needs of its inhabitants. Furthermore, privatization methods must be re-energized and pushed forward to move the nation's economy forward and generate additional revenue.

As the nation reforms its national average wage, it must also examine its labor laws, and authorize unions to represent, mediate, and negotiate matters that include pay,work hours, and working terms. Union representation should not only be available for government employees, but for all employees across all industries. Reforming the functions of labor unions would add an extra layer of protection for all Cuban workers. It is understood, that these economical changes can't and won't happen overnight, it is my hope that these above stated ideas will receive serious consideration and immediate action will follow. It is also my hope that the new reconciliation between the United States and Cuba, will also be an effective aid in improving Cuba's economy and securing the welfare of its people.

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# Managing Trust and Planning Communication Before, During, and After a Merger

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## Abstract

In a time when mega mergers have become commonplace due to hypercompetitive global marketplaces, companies must gain advantages over their formidable rivals. Large multinational corporations continue to pursue mergers and acquisitions as a means to reduce costs, build *synergies*, sharpen their expertise, diversify, grow, and ultimately reduce or eliminate their competition. These are the driving forces behind a merger, but what does that mean for managers and employees? How are they affected? **During a merger, natural feelings of anxiety exist along with insecurity, uncertainty, ambiguity, and a lack of motivation.** Rightfully so, employees can be unsure about future changes when a merger is announced.

An effective business leader with a global mindset is typically resilient, inspiring and tenacious, but **can they continue to build internal trust amidst a complicated merger?** Will investors realize their projected ROI? Will the *synergies* that were discussed during the due diligence phase meet forecasts? Building trust within the organization may be the most important mechanism standing between profits or failure. This is the question I will discuss along with recommended change processes and developmental plans using the change models inspired by the Six Sigma methods.

I have suggested the Six Sigma change models as a means for building trust because of its structured frameworks, systematic nature, credible philosophies, and capacity to address multifaceted issues that require data-driven decisions, a detail-oriented approach, and a rapid feedback loop. I will also be discussing the driving forces that occur during a merger with reference to the SPELIT Power Matrix: social, political, economic, legal, intercultural, and technological.

## Background

Most seasoned business professionals have been involved in a merger or acquisition in some form. Mega mergers have influenced oligopolistic industries due to hypercompetitive global marketplaces. Companies are searching everywhere to gain advantages over their formidable rivals. Large multinational corporations continue to pursue mergers and acquisitions as a means to reduce costs, build synergies, sharpen their expertise, diversify, grow, and ultimately reduce or eliminate their competition. These are the driving forces behind a merger, but what does that mean for managers and employees? How are they affected? Some natural feelings of anxiety generally exist along with insecurity, uncertainty, ambiguity, and a lack of motivation. Rightfully so, employees can be unsure about future changes when a merger is announced.

An effective business leader with a global mindset is typically resilient, inspiring and tenacious, but can they continue to build internal stakeholder trust amidst a complicated merger? Will investors realize their projected ROI? Will the *synergies* that were discussed during the due diligence phase meet forecasts? Trust within the organization may be the most important thing standing between profits and failure. This is the question I will provide answers to along with recommended change processes and developmental plans using the Six Sigma change model.

## Pre-merger Scenario

Let's start to examine this topic by talking about what happens before the merger. Often times, or always, transaction details must not be discussed outside the Board and Executive teams. Disclosure issues, leaks, and rumors can dismantle a carefully calculated arrangement. So what can the leaders of a company do before the announcement to help build trust at the time of announcement? Plan, plan, plan. That is, build a communication plan, of course. In the exhibit section, you can see how carefully these plans must be made in order to meet the needs of a different people within the organization. You can start to build trust early by talking openly and honestly about the merger. The success of the integration relies heavily on internal buy-in and trust needed immediately after the merger announcement. Hence, why this topic is so important. The communication plan must contain details about who, when, why, and how messages will be stated and received. Don't be afraid to repeat messages, as it may take some repetition to comprehend this time filled with change. Build milestones and schedule accordingly. Discuss how rumors will be curtailed. Build a separate plan for different levels of the organization. Managers are the most trusted advisors in an organization; make sure they are armed with as much information as possible so they can answer questions daily from their teams (Auer, 2015). Other items to include in the communication plan: training, preparing for a cultural shift, motivation, employees and staffing, new opportunities, timing, milestones, why this is a win-win, perhaps a new slogan (“better together”, “let’s win our future”), discuss any deadlines or time pressures, tell employees how and where they can gain further information or ask questions, and again, just be honest (Madsen, 2015).

**Announcement of the Merger**

First things first; build and hone your message. Leadership teams must be able to connect on an emotional level. Tell a quick, memorable, and relevant story (Auer, 2015). An example might be about the CEO’s vision of the future when they started their career, then when they started with this company, and finally how that path has led everyone together to this proud moment. People will visualize themselves going through their own professional lives to this very point as well. It draws a picture of past, present, and future. Then, transition the statement into why the merger is taking place. Explain the benefits to the customers. Briefly explain the financial advantages. Make sure everyone knows they can engage trusted managers (Auer, 2015).

**Support and Collaboration Require Trust**

Since managers are going to field the most questions about the merger on a daily basis, it’s important that executives and leaders prepare managers with a few ways to build trust. First, it’s important to demonstrate competence. Competence builds trust (Carleton, 2016). Remind them to demonstrate their confidence from excellence. Remind them to be reliable now more than ever. Keep the focus on the work at hand and produce results on current projects (Madsen, 2015). Equally important, don’t overpromise or create an overly optimistic environment because changes are coming and managers need to be open and honest first. Managers must listen and focus on building connections, spending time in the field, and providing full attention. Be deliberate with your communications (Madsen, 2015).

**SPELIT Power Matrix**

SPELIT and awareness of internal driving forces will help leadership hone in on appropriate messaging and change management plan that will encourage trust and support from all stakeholders. The Social Environmental Analysis will assess norms, constructs, networks, habits, motivations, and places (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). How will the manager to peer communication take place and where? What motivates middle managers? These are the types of questions to ask in order to assess the social environment. These must be built into the communication plan (see slides). The Political Environmental Analysis will determine how the business will handle power, challenges and opposition (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). This area is especially important during a merger because there will be clashing from two legacy perspectives. These should not be communicated in the communication plan, but could instead be addressed in the Stakeholder Management Plan. I have combined both the Communication Plan and Stakeholder Management Plan for ease of use. Economic Environmental Analysis will demystify the company’s financial and human capital (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). I’m going to skip over this one and the next one because it is not as relevant for this discussion. Legal Environmental Analysis addresses governance and regulation (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). Intercultural Environmental Analysis aims at improving an organization’s capacity for resolving, integrating and managing cultural issues, sensitivities, and differences (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). Here lies the most important section. The culture of both legacies firms will have inherent differences. One thing is certain, the messages must be consistent across all fronts. Tell the staff that a new name will be developed and that you want their feedback on the final options. Take a company-wide survey. Even if the results aren’t used, at least everyone feels that they have a voice. Install all new equipment with the new logos quickly. Let the new spirit and culture thrive. Implement a new uniform program and encourage employees to wear their new shirts with pride. Host more frequent company lunches to boost morale. Offer a Wellness Program where there are prizes in the form of new company apparel. These are just a few ways to create a sense of assimilation to a whole new culture. Technological Environmental Analysis scores the infrastructure and efficient use of machines and resources being used to the firm’s advantage (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). The Communication Plan must address the communication medium and frequency of messaging. IT department managers should discuss any capacity issues with releasing messages all at once for consistency. All of these examples demonstrate how the SPELIT tool can be used to help formulate a Stakeholder and Communication Plan, which are part of the Six Sigma Change Model.

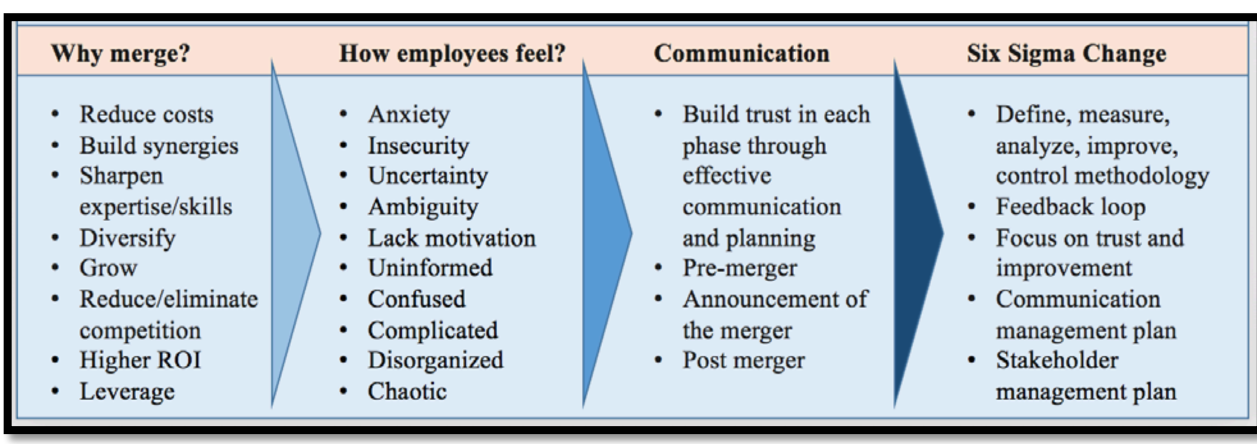
## Six Sigma Change Model

I have suggested the Six Sigma change model as a means for building trust because of its structured frameworks, systematic philosophies, and capacity to address multifaceted issues that require data-driven decisions, a detail-oriented approach, and a rapid feedback loop. I have also discussed the driving forces that occur during a merger with reference to the SPELIT Power Matrix: social, political, economic, legal, intercultural, and technological. The slides attached to my presentation tell a story of how the Six Sigma Change Model will contribute to higher levels of trust within the organization before, during, and after a merger. I have built a detailed Stakeholder Management and Communication Plan and made important notes to focus on during the process. Six Sigma Change models have much to offer, but this summary presentation will help leaders understand its importance.

## Conclusion

Large multinational corporations continue to pursue mergers and acquisitions as a means to reduce costs, build *synergies*, sharpen their expertise, diversify, grow, and ultimately reduce or eliminate their competition. For this reason, leaders must understand how they can build stakeholder buy-in and trust before, during, and after a merger. It's imperative for the success of the integration. I have discussed a recommended change process, Six Sigma, and created draft examples of developmental plans using the Six Sigma change model. I believe my models will help executives and managers to build trust because of its structured frameworks, systematic philosophies, and capacity to address multifaceted issues that require data-driven decisions, a detail-oriented approach, and a rapid feedback loop.

## Exhibits



## Stakeholder/Communication Plan

- Stakeholders will either help or hinder the merger integration
- Communication will either improve or reduce trust
- With help and from stakeholders and trust within the organization, the positive effects of the merger will be realized
- Prioritize level of effort on the HIGH impact items and process-owners

| Stakeholder | Influence | Likelihood to use Influence | Concerns | Current Commitment | Desired Commitment | Action Plan | Responsible Person | Date | Status | Messages | Medium | Timing | Effectiveness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Executive and Management | High | Medium | Limited resources | Medium | High | Present vision, weekly | Brian | Week 1 | Working | Vision, benefits, status | Face to face, email | Initial meeting, weekly emails | Post meeting survey |
| Process-owners | High | High | Wants results | High | High | Manage expectations | Tom | Week 1 | Done | Weekly discussion F2F, email | Face to face, email | Initial meeting, weekly emails | 1 on 1, Q&A |
| Administrators | Medium | High | Job Security, stress | Low | High | Communicate daily, listen | Dana | Week 2 | Working | Weekly discussions F2F | Face to face, email | Initial meeting, weekly emails | 1 on 1, Q&A |
| Customers | Medium | Low | Faster delivery | Low | Medium | Inform of changes | Tom | Week 8 | Planned | Email | Email | Inform as needed | Survey |

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# iPads and Technology

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## Abstract

Education and technology in today's era is a fundamental part of our lives. Academic institutions are incorporating advanced technology into their curricula. This study will investigate how an iPad will change the course of education and improve academic achievement. A qualitative research approach conducted this study with open-ended interviews and observation. The participants consisted of a selected group of 15 Montessori teachers who have been working with the iPad for one academic year. The study will seek to investigate and discuss the changes that have taken place in the classroom with incorporating the iPad. The following are the research questions that directed the study: (a) According to Montessori 1 through 3 grade-level teachers, what influence do iPads have in aiding students in reaching their academic goals?; (b) Does the interactive mobile technology of the iPad increase student engagement in the classroom?; (c) What are the top 5 leadership techniques utilized by the head administrator of the Montessori to encourage the use of iPads?; finally, (d) What is a new instructional design model for introducing new technologies such as the iPad in an academic setting based upon the interview with the head administrator and teacher interviews? The study is seeking to find why the iPad is making a global domination in education. The findings indicated the following: (a) iPads have significantly improved engagement and motivation in the classroom; (b) teachers expressed certain obstacles, but they agreed the positive outcomes outweigh the barriers; (c) teachers perceived the iPad would make a significant change in the classroom learning experience.

## Introduction

Technology refers to the assortment of tools that make life more convenient. Since the beginning of time, human beings developed tools in order to be effective with their time. As human beings evolved, technology progressed. Technology has advanced swiftly that human development is dependent on the amount of technology consumed. In today's society, life without technology is unmanageable. Humanity's role in our world is influenced by how we operate technology. The development of technology has significantly changed the lives of people around the world; it has bridged the communication gap. In addition, it has overcome communication difficulties. Technology is a result of an ideas, imagination, and determination. It is human nature to compete against each other, and this gave rise to a rapid advancement in technology. This foundation is used to this day and it has made a significant influence on our everyday existence. The spear, the wheel, the bulb, and now the Internet resulted from human innovation.

All aspects of life use technology and it have developed a blended world. Technology, if used in the correct way and implemented, it can be a powerful tool. In general, most companies, educational institutions, and organizations use technology to flourish and develop. According to Barrow and Orwig (1997), "The successful implementation of a new technology requires planning and research" (p. 39). One of the main functions of education is to teach students to understand and develop a thought process. For an example, University accreditation boards, National Association of Industrial Technology and the International Technology Education Association, recognize competencies such as problem solving, communication, and teamwork in their accreditation criteria (Scott, 2008). Technology can be used to bridge and interconnect communication, problem solving, and critical thinking. Technology has immersed into the pathways of academic institutions.

**Statement of the Problem**

How can the iPad change education? How can iPads improve teaching methods and advance student's academic performance? This study will determine if adapting the iPad in education versus traditional pen and paper has a significant role in teaching and learning. The main question is why an iPad? Past research indicates iPads improve literacy, mobility, ease of use, security, and sharing demonstrations.

**Research Questions**

1. According to Montessori one through three grade-level teachers, what influence do iPads have in aiding students in reaching their academic goals?
2. Does the interactive mobile technology of the iPad increase student engagement in the classroom?
3. What are the top five leadership techniques utilized by the head administrator of the Montessori to encourage the use of iPads?
4. What is a new instructional design model for introducing new technologies such as the iPad in an academic setting of first through third Montessori grades based upon the interview with the head administrator and teacher interviews?

The subject for this study is a Montessori institution that has adapted the iPad technology into the teaching curriculum. What the students learn in Montessori will have a significant impact in their academic future. This will be their educational foundation for the rest of their life. Students should have a place to create and express their abilities and the iPad will allow them to process their creative thoughts into a practical knowledge base.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how iPads improve education, increase academic performance, develop motivation, strengthen leadership characteristics, and measure instructional flexibility and adaptability. The research expands our knowledge about iPads and how other technologies impact students’ and teachers’ success. This valuable information will be available as a guide to indicate how iPads can improve academic performance in all sectors of education.

With new developments in technology, it is crucial to integrate technology to facilitate new methods of learning and pave the way for prosperous academic future. iPads will change the methods teacher’s use to instruct in their classrooms. The benefits will be an indication in the students’ academic performance. Johnson (2012) stated, “It is time for the role of the teachers to change, students with iPads have just as much access to knowledge as the teacher, and maybe more” (p. 2).

**Research Methodology**

The research study is a basic qualitative research method. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to the make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

The past literature opens many doors to former educators’ experiences on what is best for their classrooms. These previous findings allow researchers to understand how important teachers’ input is on what is best for their students. In addition, these findings should be applied into the future classrooms in order to make them a successful setting for future students.

As previously stated, one-on-one interviews with the teachers took place in order to understand their perspectives on the iPads. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), “there are distinct advantages in using a questionnaire vs. an interview methodology: questionnaires are less expensive and easier to administer than personal interviews; they lend themselves to group administration; and, they allow confidentiality to be assured” (p. 520). The study focused on the benefits and the potential advantages of having an iPad in the classroom. This was the primary focus point of the interview process.

**Target Population**

The population consisted of Montessori teachers who have been teaching in the Montessori sector for 5 years and have been using the iPads for teaching purposes in the past academic year. This current study elaborated the teachers’ experiences using the iPad as a teaching tool and how it has improved students’ academic performance. The researcher informed the teachers that all information is confidential and the information will be stored in the researcher’s password protected computer. It is important to build trust with the participants in order to understand truly the nature of their environment. Farber (2006) wrote,

> Establishing an honest, forthright working relationship with this person is the key to getting your study off the ground. If you are honest with people about what it is you are doing and why, they will be less hesitant to let you in. (p. 369)

In addition, “It does help, however, to request that you have a space that will assure privacy and confidentiality so that your subject feels free to share with you” (p. 369). Private rooms in the institution were used to conduct the interviews; it allowed the teachers and administrator to speak freely about their experiences about the iPad in the classroom.

**Sampling Method**

Creswell (2007) stated, “The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). Criterion sampling is the following, “selects all cases that meet some criterion” (Creswell 2007, p. 125). A purposeful sampling method was used to conduct the study. The criteria for the participants included Montessori teachers, working in the Montessori sector for 5 years, and used the iPad for a teaching tool in the past academic year.

**Conclusion**

During the course of the study, both teachers and administrator shared a vision and inspired others to guide students to advance grades, improve attention, increase involvement, and give them an outstanding experience in the classroom. They have observed reliable and consistent results with students’ assignments and their willingness to learn has increased. This was a challenging process for both teachers and administrator to bring the iPad into their curricula. However, with the challenges, they decided to encourage each other and give the students the best education possible.

Throughout the study, several themes surfaced from the interviews and observations. Several of the themes aligned with the current research on the subject matter. The study contributed to the current body of literature on the subject. This study offers new insight to the education sector. Many of the themes aligned with the literature review and other scholars can use the findings for their research.

The first emergent theme was the teachers’ positive perspectives on the iPad. They confirmed it has been a beneficial addition to education. They informed the researcher it was time for a change and joining in with the current times. They wanted to adapt new technology and advance into new methods of teaching. The recurring themes were engagement and increased motivation. The teachers felt they witnessed a positive change among students in engagement and motivation. During participation hours, the students’ willingness to share answers and opinions increased. The iPad played an important role increasing student activity in the classroom. There is always room to grow and create innovation. The iPad is an abundant toolbox that teachers can use to benefit the classroom. The teachers noted even if there are technical problems and troubleshooting obstacles, they believe the benefits definitely outweigh the obstacles. Additionally, the teachers in the study emphasized how the iPad served as a platform for the students to have constant access to their schoolwork.

The second theme was increasing engagement in the classroom. The valuable learning activities using the iPad have increased collaboration and opened paths to students expressing their own thoughts.

In addition to increasing engagement, the iPad has significantly made an impact in active learning. The teachers' desire to impart knowledge has been successful with the use of the iPad. The use of instructional videos has provided a means of giving students alternative methods of learning. The traditional classroom does not deliver much variety as the technological classroom provides for students. The iPad has increased engagement by facilitating learning and making students prepared for the future. The students' attentiveness has increased because of involvement with the iPad. This factor will align with grades rising and students' behavior in the classroom improving. Active learning elements help students learn more rapidly than basic pen and paper. Activities such as watching educational videos, listening to instructions, reading, visual conceptions, and completing online exercises are aiding students. During the interviews, the teachers often acknowledged the application *Alma*, which has been a great tool for them to organize their classrooms. When their classrooms are organized, students have a great environment to learn, which will increase engagement.

The final emerging theme was the overall positive experience in the classroom. The teachers noted the classrooms have become more student-centered and students are communicating their ideas. There has been a significant change; students are constantly being present in the classroom and actively partaking in all activities. The iPad allows the teachers a digital platform to make class policies clear. Applications such as *Alma* have allowed grading criteria, policies on submissions of assignments, and immediate feedback to be clear. These applications will help students avoid confusion about classroom standards. This has increased the overall classroom experience and made it more engaging. The iPads allow proper responses to students posting about assignments and their ability to retrieve past assignments if they have any questions. This type of guidance will prepare the students for real-world situations. This will contribute to their strategic planning of accomplishing any goals. When the classroom experience is positive, the students will have higher order of thinking. The content of the instruction is being absorbed and retained. The teachers felt the students were making meaningful connections in class because of the new technological developments

This study presented a synopsis of the findings on how iPad tablets can improve education. The journal has provided an overview of teacher's viewpoints on the iPad tablet. Additionally, there is an increasing presence of iPad technology in the classroom and there is a growing need for advanced research for classroom technology. The findings were aligned and reexamined with the theories and literature review. This study's main focus was to examine the changes that have taken place since the integration of the iPad and evaluate how iPads can improve education. Even though the results from the research participants indicated the iPad has made a significant impact in the classroom, other similar tablets have the same capabilities. It is not a magical device; it is the affordance of the device that has been significant. The software capabilities, interface, and sensory characteristics will guide students and teachers to take the necessary steps to enhance education. The suggestions for future research, implications, and limitations were discussed in this journal.

The data was collected through a basic qualitative research method. The sample population was a small group of Montessori teachers. Data was gathered through one-on-one interviews and observations. Once the data was gathered, the information was transcribed and coded. Once coding was completed, the emerging themes were engagement, motivation, collaboration, communication, and increasing academic performance. The teachers' perspectives concluded the iPad tablet provides significant benefits for improving education. As stated in the statement of problem, past research indicated iPads tablets improve literacy, mobility, ease of use, and sharing demonstrations. However, from this study, additional benefits have been found that can be included in the current body of literature.

This study's findings are essential for the current body of research on technology in education and it can be beneficial for research on iPads in education. The findings indicated the iPad tablet and sensory characteristics has made a powerful impact on the sample population. However, the iPad can be a valuable tool to any student at any education level. As Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world".

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# Storytelling: Connecting Students and Educators with an Ancient Tradition

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

Storytelling is an ancient art form dating back to the earliest discoveries of communication (van Gils, 2005). This paper explores how storytelling promotes courageous conversations between the teller and the receiver that encourage the expression of identity and voice of authentic self, especially in the K-12 education industry (Machera, 2016; Machera & Fraizer, 2017). Education depends on narration to pass information from teacher to student (Kuyvenhoven, 2009). The narratives between the listener and the audience are as important as the story itself (Benjamin, 2006). Literature suggests that it has not changed drastically since its origin (Denning, 2005), it is still as relevant today as it was in ancient times. Literature findings suggest that storytelling can change history and culture in the most powerful and personal ways (Gottschall, 2012). Searching for a personal truth, path and passion can unveil the most powerful of life lessons (Machera, 2016). Storytelling is what truly changes a person, a nation, people, and mold ethics and our beliefs (Gottschall, 2012). With more research and more investigation in the role of digital technologies, storytelling could be a vehicle used by educators to give voice to the search of our authentic self.

## KEYWORDS

Storytelling, voice, youth, courageous conversations, trust

## WHY STORYTELLING: AUTHOR'S NOTE

*We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories."*

*Jonathan Gottschall*

"Shared experiences have shaped my life as a learner from childhood to current day. I remember conversations in the car with my father centered on life lessons handed down through the generations - "your grandmother always said without common sense, you have no sense at all." Bedtime stories with family referenced a distant past of waxing unfinished wood floors with brothers, sisters and cousins to earn enough "change" to ride a bus to the movies.

Dinner tables were filled with food, laughter and courageous conversations between adults who spoke openly about life being the master teacher for us all. These stories consisted of many firsts: first in the family to finish high school early, first woman in the family to graduate from college, first black medical doctor in town, first black woman to run for political office as an educator.

The storytellers in my childhood home were the doers; those who knocked on closed doors, left the country for an education and broke free of abusive situations to live life fully. They all asked, always asked, what my stories were. The tellers were teaching this young one to listen, learn, grow and tell my story.

These tales I heard of experience, lessons and passing the torch were all part of why I chose to become an educator. One who is pursuing the noble path of transferring my knowledge to generations following. My story, my life and now, my research.

This paper explores how storytelling supports the passing of knowledge from educators to students, the concept of courage in the telling of an individual perspective and empowerment gained with a deeper knowledge of self is achieved."

*Joelina Machera Robinson*

**ANCIENT PRACTICES IN MODERN TIMES**

*"I grew up in a society with a very ancient and strong oral storytelling tradition. I was told stories, as a child, by my grandmother and my father as well."*

*Khaled Hosseini*

Telling stories is a legacy specific to humankind (Spaulding 2011). Storytelling is an art form which has been a central cornerstone of communication for humans dating back to the first discoveries of interaction. It has potential to reach, teach and change both community and culture (Bonds, 2016). It has remained relatively unchanged from its inception (Denning, 2005).

Tales of human life began with chronological accounts of daily activities expressed through basic drawings (Davies, 2007). Illustrations such as hieroglyphics became more intricate, and a common use of symbols was developed, the stories became more detailed (Coulmas 2003). It is believed that as forms of traveling evolved, so did oral communications (MacDonald, 1993). Movement, migration and travel expanded and so did the communication of humans; the growth of each mirroring one another (Wilkin, 2014).

Soon it became important to traders and intellects to document forms of communication, making a more permanent record. As different populations of humans began to co-exist with one another, there developed a need to both understand and exchange beliefs, values, norms and resources (Solinger, Fox, & Irani, 2010).

Through the sharing of belief and value systems - oral histories, shared experiences and common bonds became part of the stories passed along. When each story was told, a bit of the storyteller was revealed

(Benjamin, 2006). Storytelling evolved into communicating with others both the common experiences shared as well as the unique aspects of culture and the individual (Bishop & Kimball, 2006).

Over time, storytelling became not only a way to pass on shared experiences, it also developed into a vehicle used to educate people, communities and cultures (Crawford, 2012). Individual scholars could write down histories and lessons; however, it was a long and tedious process that was shared with the few who could afford it (Davies, 2007).

The art of sharing narratives was molded and shaped to address the needs of the audience (Simmons, 2006). Religious teachings, language development, math, science and history were all taught through stories - mostly to young, identified leaders of communities (MacDonald, 1993). As storytelling evolved into lessons and travel expanded (Wilkin, 2014), it was paramount that stories were shared with more than a few people.

It was also important to document and record the stories for accuracy and future reference. Eventually the telling of tales returned to the original form of written books (Davies, 2007). This time, however, books and stories were taught simultaneously, in classroom settings with groups of students learning together (Solinzer et al., 2010).

**EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, STORIES**

*"Those who tell us the story, rule society."*

*Plato*

Humankind has evolved from community gatherings to physical classrooms and online chat rooms. Past arenas for storytelling in small, intimate community gatherings are becoming scarce; however, stories shared in community centers, classrooms, libraries churches and hospitals are thriving (MacDonald, 2013).

Education, both traditional and otherwise, depends on narration as a form of passing information to students (Kuyvenhoven, 2009). Storytelling transforms the classrooms into lessons of knowledge as well as oral illustrations of society, culture and humanity. Once a narrative is told, the storyteller is committing to the listener as a recipient of knowledge and understanding.

The true power of the story is in the essence of the storyteller and the willingness of the listener to partake in the story. Storytelling is most powerful when the teller and the listener can interact with each other (Denning, 2005).

From a young age, children connect to storytelling, using it both to describe their life and define their experiences (Mottley, 1998). The tales that are first heard and remembered can come in the form of narratives, literature, nursery rhymes, movies and music. Children begin listening to narrations with a purpose of ingesting lessons (Roney, 1996). As the child listeners of the stories develop and mature into expressive learners, they too began to share personal moments that evolve into explanations of life from a unique perspective.

The telling of a story is a brave undertaking; it exposes self, culture and beliefs as part of the process (Crawford, 2012). The teacher as a teller is a person that is both courageous and trusting. An educator who is intrinsically the storyteller creates a connection of traditional knowledge and personal perspective for the students to process. Students, as receivers, witness storytelling modeled and shared by educators, the tellers. In the sharing of narratives, students and educators continue in the tradition of exchanging both the common and unique experiences of each person and of cultures.

Educators can initiate this powerful journey of revealing the personal narrative by sharing their own stories with students in the classroom. As youth listen to educators speak about personal journeys and paths, a bond begins to form and trust begins to develop. This interaction gives youth the confidence, through example, to empower themselves and to share their stories (Iyamba et al., 2016).

## COURAGE TO TELL THE STORIES

*"Tell me the facts and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in heart forever."*

*Native American Proverb*

It takes courage to speak your personal truth and it takes compassion to receive the story, truly digest it in a way that can change both people. The listener or receiver is as important as the storyteller in the process (Benjamin, 2006). We as an educational community can learn how to listen, actively listen to others as they reveal their truths, passions and epiphanies.

Teaching while simultaneously using the art of storytelling creates purpose and meaning (Simmons, 2006). A person telling their own story is both powerful and courageous, educators need to acknowledge this to embrace the process. Storytelling is also a risk for the students, there must be a safe and trusting environment to partake in the process (Banaszewski 2002).

When actively using storytelling, educators as tellers illustrate and demonstrate a willingness to take risks by telling their own stories before asking students to do the same. Once a student views the process and engages in the telling as a listener, safety is initiated and trust is established. As students become versed in storytelling, they start to create a story of themselves that is new and empowering.

Learners who can access and utilize their own voice can share their personal experience openly. Humans are not taught this skill directly and learn it through experience, interaction and mirroring those who tell stories (Bond, 2016).

As students become more comfortable in finding their authentic voice, and leaders take the risk of sharing their personal journeys, relationships will begin to develop. These relationships will encourage risk taking, exploration and lifelong learning. When students see themselves in their leaders, they will see themselves as leaders (Iyamba et al., 2016).

When the listener becomes the teller, the tradition of storytelling continues. Students are then empowered to be the creator of their own story. Previously, most time spent in a classroom is that of the educator partaking in the delivery of knowledge to the student. Once students can participate in the delivery of knowledge, particularly that of a personal nature, they began to discover their own identity and an individual voice can evolve. It is only when the learner becomes the creator of the story that a sense of a growing identity and a glance at the true self can occur. (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009)

As students and educators participate in storytelling together, the stories become authentic. In Bonds (2016), for instance, a study of educators and their use of storytelling in education suggests that hearing stories about teachers encouraged students to become more willing to share their experiences. As the story of self becomes more detailed and better defined, it starts to resemble the true self of the storyteller. We as humans tell stories of ourselves that further influence our developing sense of self as we view ourselves and others view us (Hull & Katz, 2009).

Storytelling also creates a platform for educators to connect with the traditionally unheard and unseen students in the classroom. By infusing narratives in the courageous conversations of storytelling between educators and students, the classroom environment encourages all students to share with peers and leaders. (Bonds, 2016).

This ancient practice as a new approach can give students who struggle to learn a newly found confidence to share personal and authentic stories with others. Traditionally structured classrooms of question and answer seminars inhibit the introverted students from learning and contributing (Harrison, 2016). The discovered path of sharing often empowers students who struggle as readers, writers and speakers. For students who fall outside of the traditional academic model, storytelling provides a voice (Bonds, 2016).

**HOLDING BACK OUR STORIES**

*"The shortest distance between a human being and truth is a story."*

- *Anthony De Mello*

In conclusion, our truth and our understanding as humanity are based on both our individual and collective experiences in the world (Singleton, 2012). It is only when the identity of a storyteller is revealed that the lesson to be learned is uncovered and understood. Today, a complete education is centered on inclusion and community (Solinger et al., 2010). A nurturing educational environment welcomes the voice of the individual and the power of the story. Storytelling is more powerful than almost any other form of communication to embrace a person's own identity and share in the journey of others (Bonds, 2016).

Looking ahead, we as a community must learn how to actively listen, to others as they reveal their truths, passions and epiphanies. Storytelling can support this process. With personal narratives, we can learn to find our own voice, in conjunction with our unique identity and the perspective that it brings.

Searching for a personal truth, path and passion can unveil the most powerful of life lessons. It is what truly changes a person, a nation and a people. Storytelling molds our ethics and our beliefs (Gottschall, 2012).

**FOR FUTURE STUDY**

With more research and more investigation in the role of digital technologies, storytelling could be a vehicle used by educators to give voice to the search of our authentic self. In addition, with greater emphasis on multiculturalism, inclusion and identity; research could give more explicit avenues of working with storytelling and authentic self. With the right focus and attention, storytelling can change history and culture in the most powerful and personal ways (Gottschall, 2012).

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# Framing the Path Goal Leadership Theory with the Relationship of Academic Validation on Student Experiences in Online Courses

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## INTRODUCTION

Online instructors continue to be a vital resource to the nation's community colleges. Allen and Seaman (2014) conducted a survey with U.S. institutions and found that online enrollment and program growth is considered a priority at over 80 percent of major colleges and universities. With more online courses and programs being offered, the need for more online instructors will also be an integral factor for institutions. Because of the flexibility of how online instructors teach from semester to semester, online instructors help institutions respond to rapid enrollment trends while also integrating a wealth of expertise and experience into the community college classroom (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). In 2007, an estimated 68 percent of all faculty members were employed on a part-time basis, many teaching online courses (American Federation of Teachers, 2009). While many institutions provide webinars on navigating the course management system and common technological tools for online instructors, there is limited research on the training of academic validation in online courses. This research contends academic validation can be used as a teaching tool by online instructors and can enhance their leadership skills for a growing and shifting nontraditional student population.

Nontraditional students are a diverse student population on community college campuses nationwide and they are increasingly enrolling in online courses. The NCES defines nontraditional students as those who are enrolled part-time, over the age of 24, female, first generation, low-income and students of color (2013). Overall, in 2015, the number of students enrolling in at least one online course increased to six million (Digital Learning Company, 2017). Nontraditional students enroll in online courses because of the convenience of online learning or because of limited face-to-face enrollment access. In California, over half of the community colleges offer online instruction for at least one degree or certificate (Johnson and Mejia, 2014). As more nontraditional students enroll in online courses to complete degree requirements, research indicates persistence rates continue to lag and that half of nontraditional students either fail or withdraw (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, Zamani-Gallaher, 2007). As the number of students swell in online courses, more online instructors are needed and are being required to teach in this growing instructional modality. This qualitative research was motivated by what nontraditional students feel when they are validated by an online instructor. What specific areas can online instructors focus their attention to integrate academic validation? And, what leadership role do online instructor command when initiating academic validation? Research which combines academic validation and the path goal leadership theory as a lens for online instructors is very limited. This article identifies academic validation as a correlate to positive experiences for online students and further frames the path goal leadership theory as a tool for online instructors as they expand their teaching role to instruct nontraditional students enrolled in online courses.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Validation Theory

Research indicates that students who successfully complete their first online course are more likely to complete subsequent courses (King, 2001). Students who complete online courses are in a better position to excel toward graduation and lessen their time to degree. The Validation Theory, used as an institutional tool and initiated by faculty, can make a difference in online students' experiences. Jaggars and Xu (2013) found that most community college students drop out of their online courses within the first two weeks of the course. Utilizing the validation theory as a precursor to communicate with nontraditional students within this crucial time sequence is one way to help students overcome barriers to course completion. Rendon (1994) interviewed 132 first year students in all higher education sectors (i.e., a community college, a liberal arts college, historically black college and a state university and a research university). Her research findings included that many students are equipped to contend with collegiate academics and the social scene but that many nontraditional students need active intervention from significant others to help them negotiate institutional life (Rendon, 1994). Rendon's (1994) formulated Validation Theory was conceived to be used as an institutional leverage and defined as interactions with students, initiated by faculty and others in the campus community, which engenders feelings of self-worth, and a belief in the students' ability to succeed in the college environment (Rendon, 1994, p. 12). The participants in her study talked about feeling capable of learning and the impact of validation from faculty which helped to transform them into powerful, learning students. This was a trend in the qualitative output of the interviews, particularly with community college students, first generation students, returning student as well as with Hispanic and African American students (Rendon, 1994). Manifestations of academic validation include faculty who demonstrate a genuine concern for teaching students, faculty who structure learning experiences that allow students to experience themselves capable of learning and faculty who provide meaningful feedback to students (Rendon, 1994). The validation theory takes into consideration Asti and Tinto's social integration because it is the student who initiates contact with the institution and its agents (faculty, staff) and integrates within the social fabric of the institution. The validation theory rests with the faculty being the first one to initiate contact with the student and subsequently communicates with encouragement, meaningful feedback and additional resources. This research was conducted mostly at four-year universities and with participants who enrolled in courses held in a traditional classroom.

Barnett (2007) studied community college students' integration and their intent to persist using the validation theory. She surveyed 333 students from 22 English courses at a select college with the College Experience Survey (CES). Barnett's (2007) findings indicated that the validation theory predicted integration ($R = .559$; $p < .01$) and persistence ($R = .246$; $p < .01$). Her findings supported her hypothesis that for all racial/ethnic groups, faculty validation moderately predicted a strong intent to persist in college. Further, her findings suggested that while all students could benefit from faculty validation, Hispanics and women were most likely to respond favorably to faculty validation. This research was conducted at a community college using validation in a traditional classroom.

Davis (2016) studied community college students and the degree of their academic validation in online courses. Davis (2016) surveyed 48 online students at two community colleges in California and interviewed a subset of nine surveyed participants by telephone. The findings from this study indicated that the validation theory had a significant and strong linear relationship to students' online experiences ($r$ = 533; $p < .01$). This study expanded the narrative of the pedagogical value of validation theory on student experiences in distance education and its impact on online course persistence.

The findings from these research studies suggest that when faculty integrate the validation theory as a teaching tool, students respond favorably. For students enrolled in an online course in their first year, the challenges can be great and potentially discourage students from persisting. While all faculty may not want to use the validation theory or actively validate students, there are some faculty who are willing to positively impact their students' college experience. Evelyn (2005) surveyed U.S. faculty and 83% of respondents indicated that they were interested in students' academic problems and 85% were interested in their personal problems. Nontraditional students arrive at college with various forms of learning skills, academic preparation and social capital. How online instructors interpret, acknowledge and capitalize on these skills could determine how successful online students will be in completing their courses.

**Path-Goal Leadership Theory**

The Path-Goal Leadership Theory is built on the paradigm of an organizational nature, carving a pathway for how leaders can motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals (House, 1971). The path goal leadership theory has four different types of leadership styles: participative, supportive, directive and achievement-oriented leadership. A directive leader explains to the subordinates what is expected from them, provides guidance and ensures procedures and rules implementation. The supportive leader pays high attention to the subordinates' needs and well-being. The participative leader encourages the subordinate's participation in the process of decision making whereas achievement-oriented leader attempts to enhance the performance, defines the standards and ensures achievement of these standards by the subordinates (Prasad, 1990). Overall, a leader is someone who guides, motivates and influences others towards a particular goal or desired outcome (Drotter, 2003; Drucker, 1997; Maxwell, 1998). With the path goal leadership, leaders are interested in the relationships with their subordinates and supports the morale to increase to completion of tasks for the betterment of the organization. By this definition, an online instructor is a leader – one who encourages online students to complete their assignments, comments on good discussion group participation and boosts students' confidence to lead a group presentation. Online instructors can utilize path goal leadership theory by showing students that they care by building authentic and valued teacher-student relationships.

Dewan and Dewan (2010) investigated the connection of House's goal leadership theory in the context of distance education. The theoretical paper utilized teaching, learning, leadership and distance education as a model for online instructors as leaders. The researchers contend that the role of the teacher as leader in classroom is same whether face-to-face or online. Rather, the teacher exercises leadership when adapting new strategies toward goals and providing a supportive environment.

**Conclusions and Purpose**

What these findings confirm is that the validation theory is a tool that can be used by online instructors in online courses. A question that has not been explored extensively is how the validation theory can influence students' online experience. A deeper understanding of how the value of these online experiences are impacted by online instructors was the aim of the research presented in this paper. The purpose of the study was to answer the following research questions:

1. What do nontraditional students feel when they are validated by an online instructor?
2. What specific areas can online instructors focus their attention to integrate academic validation?
3. What leadership role do online instructor command when initiating academic validation?

## METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, specifically the sequential explanatory design, to answer the research questions. Data collected was conducted via survey administered online to community college students enrolled in credit-bearing English courses at two community colleges in California.

**Instrument**

Barnett's (2007) 32 question College Experience Survey (CES) was administered online via Qualtrics. In Barnett's (2007) study, the content and construct validity and reliability of the CES was pilot tested. The CES consisted of twenty-seven Likert scale items with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The independent variable was validation with predictors being Instructor Cares, Instructor Shows, Instructor Willing, Instructor Help and Instructor Feedback. The dependent variable was Student Experiences with predictors being Student feels Accepted, Student feels Encouraged, Student feels Acknowledged, Student feels Capable and Student feels Valued.

**Analysis**

For purposes of this study, the researcher used the mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to first collect and analyze the quantitative data through an online survey and then secondly, collect qualitative data with follow-up interviews from a subset of participants who completed the online survey. Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006) explained that integration is the state or stages in the research process where the mixing of the quantitative and qualitative data methods occur (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The researcher determined the point of connection or mixing at the intermediate phase of the research study. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed using correlations. Responses from interview questions were transcribed and coded for themes.

# RESULTS

A total of 48 nontraditional online students completed the survey. Based on the demographic data collected, there were slightly more male participants than females ($m$ = 28, $f$ = 20). The study consisted of mostly Latinx participants ($n$ = 27). African American participants were the next largest group ($n$ = 15) followed by White ($n$ = 3) and Asian/Pacific Islanders ($n$ = 2).

## Predictors of Validation

Findings from this study indicated that the Validation Theory had a significant and strong linear relationship to students' online experiences. Instructor Shows was the dominant independent variable of Validation; Student feels Capable was the most significant dependent predictor for Student Experiences. There was a strong relationship between Instructor Shows and Student feels Encouraged for all age groups. There was a moderate relationship between students of different ethnic backgrounds and their validation experiences in online courses. The research question asked what do nontraditional students feel when they are validated by an online instructor. When online instructors implement academic validation in online courses, nontraditional students feel accepted as a capable student by their instructors. In one interview response, Participant #3 (African American female, aged 55 – 6t4) provided an overall capstone of the power of validation and its effect on Student feels Capable:

| | |
|---|---|
| Researcher | How has your online instructor shown you that they accept you as a capable student? |
| Participant #3 | She does all the time. She encourages me that I can do it. Encouraging me not to drop the class and that I can do it. |
| Researcher | Has any of your online instructions shown you that they care whether you are learning? |
| Participant #3 | Yes, because she will ask me when I am talking with her, is there anything else she can help me with. Is there any additional information that she can refer to me. With her help, I know I can do it. |
| Researcher | Do what? |
| Participant #3 | Do the work so I can pass the class. |

The second research question was "What specific areas can online instructors focus their attention to integrate academic validation?" One particular area that the researcher that would be strong was in the area of instructor feedback. There was a positive yet slightly moderate relationship with Instructor Feedback and Student feels Encouraged ($r$ = 0.312, $p$ < .01). Overall, feedback was shown to have relevancy given a comment from Participant #2 (African American male, 25 - 34) which echoed responses from other participants:

> Well, it would be like I go to Blackboard and can tell whether or not it has been graded and if it is graded, there might be a little teardrop icon and maybe there may be a “nicely done.” I would have like to have seen more substantive examples or statements like “I gave you 20 extra points for such and such.”

The last research question was “What leadership role do online instructor command when initiating academic validation?” The online instructor plays the role of facilitator, teacher, organizer, assessor, mentor, role model, counselor, coach, supervisor, problem solver, and liaison (Liu, Bonk, Magjuka, Lee and Su, 2005; Riffee, 2003). As a leader within the organization (the institution), the online instructor can enhance their leadership role by utilizing the path-goal leadership theory, particularly in the supportive leadership style. As online students navigate how to maneuver on the institutions’ course management system and find their footing within the online course, online instructors can initiate contact with students via direct interaction with personal email or via a repost on the discussion board. Participant #8 (Latinx female, 25 – 34) spoke of her online instructor who was constantly initiating the lines of communication in this manner:

> “They want to make sure you are reading your assignments, your materials. They also put a lot into the discussion questions and they want us to do peer reviews, they want us to write a lot otherwise we are not going to be helpful to the other students and we are not going to learn ourselves what we need to work on.”

Results of the correlation analysis indicated that Student feels Capable had very strong, positive relationships with both independent variables Instructor Shows and Instructor Cares. The consistency of the presence of Instructor Shows indicates that online students want their online instructors to believe in their abilities to do the coursework and to be successful online course completers. The path goal theory can be used by online instructors to provide supportive interactions with students while utilizing the validation theory. Online instructors who initiate the validation theory enhance their leadership skills by expanding their facilitative teaching roles.

## DISCUSSION

This study expands the narrative of the teaching value of the Validation Theory on student experiences in online courses and its potential impact on persistence and successful course completion. Online instructors who implement the Path-Goal Leadership Theory as an effective, social student-faculty relationship builder, enhances their traditional role as facilitator and ‘guide on the side.’ An important element of the Path-Goal Leadership Theory is to help subordinates (in this case online students) overcome academic obstacles. The expanded role of leadership for online instructors initiates a nurturing social bond that helps them create a pathway for students to reach their academic goals, encourage students to push past barriers and to motivate students with support and helpful feedback.

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# Untapped Treasure: Tapping into the Learning Potential of Aging through Technology

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

Although older adults living in nursing and assisted living homes are exposed to a variety of resources that offer strategies for improving quality of life, these resources are dependent on the guidance of an expert or caregiver and are not readily available. This paper reevaluates the learning potential of the aging through the integration of technology by exploring how technology can promote critical thinking skills, quality interactions, and self-efficacy to sustain or improve cognitive ability in older adults. Thus, integrating technology as a resource could improve cognitive and communicative skills for the aging. Furthermore, projecting awareness of the social issue that needs to be resolved is one important element to ensure future policy advancements affecting older adults.

## KEYWORDS

aging, engagement, intervention, connections, communication, technology, self-efficacy, learning

## INTRODUCTION

People are living longer (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2013). In view of this fact, there is a sense of urgency for government agencies to care for an increased number of older people in nursing and assisted living homes. Many of these seniors suffer from various degrees of dementia, such as Alzheimer. This reality prompts researchers to search for ways to lessen and/or halt the cognitive and communicative decline in older adults (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2013). The process of obtaining knowledge as well as seeking support and making connections is not limited to children and young adults (Collins, 2004). The growing number of the aging population could benefit from these attributes as well.

The same effective teaching practices—e.g. making connections, participating in engaging activities, working in a positive environment—apply to everyone regardless of age (Collins, 2004). According to Bastable (2014), the chronological age of individuals is just a relative indicator of their cognitive, physical, and psychological stage of development. Considering these observations, it could be wise to rethink the learning potential of older adults and explore innovative ways of integrating technology as an available resource, thereby improving quality of life for the aging.  Thus, older adults would have more opportunity to make connections and improve cognitive as well as communicative ability through engagement in meaningful activities.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (2013), the 65+ population will have doubled by the year 2050 increasing to approximately 89 million people. As this population continues to grow, long-term care options are impacted requiring that someone care for seniors in nursing and assisted living homes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008; 2013). Furthermore, it is estimated by the Alzheimer's Association (2009), that nearly 10 million baby boomers—older adults born between 1946 and 1964—may develop Alzheimer's disease within their lifespan. This mental crisis needs to be addressed in order to make a difference in the cognitive decline of individuals.

Sustaining or improving cognitive development has been correlated with language development to improve quality of life (Lubinski, 1995; 1997; Seifert, 2006; Werstch, 2008) which is defined in this article as exerting self-efficacy, stimulating thinking, and establishing friendships (Lubinski, 1995; 1997). In an attempt to accomplish these tasks, individuals need to be engaged in meaningful and engaging activities.

A variety of learning resources have been produced that address cognitive engagement and meaningful interactions (Dowling, 1995; Goodwin, 2013; Crockett, 2013; & Calhoun, 2013. The majority of these resources, however, were designed to be used with the guidance of an expert and is dependent on the instruction and availability of caregivers. Although helpful, these resources would have a greater impact on learning and engagement if they were more accessible. To receive maximum benefit from participating in engaging activities and making connections, frequency as well as practice should be added into the equation (Calhoun, 2016). According to Lave & Wenger (1991) practice is a key to increasing one's learning potential, thus integrating technology as a resource could be a solution to allow older adults the freedom and accessibility to have more practice in participating in meaningful activities.

In addition, according to Anderson, Moffatt, & Shapiro (2006), what people learn and how much they learn depend less on innate characteristics and more on whom they interact with. In other words, socio-cultural and socio-emotional interactions are very influential in determining cognitive development. Anderson et al. (2006) also noted that the kinds and amount of talk children hear and participate in are crucial variables in improving cognitive ability. Thus, the quality of talk individuals receive could also be advantageous to improving their ability to think (2006). In considering this observation, integrating technology may also provide older adults with increased opportunities to interact and make meaningful connections through quality talk in addition to accessibility. Learning through technology could happen anywhere, anytime, and anyplace ("Remake Learning Playbook", n.d*.)*. Thus, promoting critical thinking, quality interaction and self-efficacy through the integration of technology in resource design may help improve quality of life for the aging.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Vygotsky's theory aligns with traditional schools that support conventional explanations of learning. This technique is a process in which learners internalize knowledge, whether discovered or transmitted from the experience of engagement with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Vygotsky focused on language and cultural influences that grow thoughts in individuals. Language is viewed as a powerful tool for thinking (Wertsch, 2008). In other words, Thomas' (2005) review of Vygotsky emphasizes how individuals adopt the thought structures represented in the language and cultures that surrounds them.

According to Werstch (1985), there are three factors that form the core of Vygotsky's theoretical framework. The first, relies on genetics. The second factor suggests that the origin of higher mental functions originates in social contexts. And finally, there is the claim that mental functions are only understood if one understands the instruments and signs that mediate them. Tapping into the origin of higher mental functions by providing more social participation through networking via technology could be the key to promoting quality interaction and connections.

Besides tapping into higher mental functions to increase cognitive ability in individuals, other learning theories could be significantly helpful in designing a technology program to help improve quality of life for the aging. In the initial stages of implementation, for example, an expert may be needed to guide the learning process. According to McLaren (2013), Vygotsky's theory on the *zone of proximal development*, individuals understand new concepts with the guidance of an expert. Learning according to this theory takes place when an individual learns ideas or tasks, which can only be acquired with the guidance or assistance of an adult or expert (Werstch, 1985). Through more encouragement and creative ways of teaching, especially with struggling students, excellent mentors can create emotionally supportive learning experiences that can rebuild the brain (Johnson & Taylor, 2006).

Johnson & Taylor (2006), state that the brain grows best in the context of interactive discovery as well as through joint creation of stories that shape and support memories of what is being learned. For instance, Bandura (2007) emphasized that cognitive processes are connected to environment and behavior. In studies where rats are raised in challenging and intricate environments, findings suggest that the cortex, the length of neurons, and the level of neurotransmitters as well as growth hormones, all increased in the brains (Diamond, Krech, & Rosenzweigberg, 1964; Guzowski et al., 2001). Johnson & Taylor (2006) then posit that humans may have similar results in plasticity, where there is constant capacity of the brain to channel neural pathways based on acquired experiences. Awareness of these factors could make a difference on how one copes with the aging process as well as help individuals prepare for life in later years.

Anxiety in learning environments, negative experiences from the past or problems in life can hamper an adult's learning ability (Johnson & Taylor, 2006). As with any experience, early or later stages of development; portraying a positive outlook on events could have a huge effect on improving one's learning potential (Murray, 1989). Furthermore, increasing one's cognitive and language development could extend the time that one is independent which may have a significant effect on reducing the financial responsibility of caring for adults who have been affected by deficiencies in language and cognition. Alzheimer's disease is estimated to triple the health cost of Americans over 65 years or age (Alzheimer's Association, 2009). In an attempt to search for alternative ways to sustain cognitive and communicative ability in the aging, the following section focuses on how language impacts cognition, the importance of providing quality talk, and how individuals learn from their environment, all of which are significant factors for integrating technology into a learning community of practice for the aging.

*Learning Resource Design Considerations*

The impact of language on cognition is best illustrated in a quote by Karl Marx. “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Marx, 1959, p. 389). According to Marx (1959), thoughts do not create action. Conversely, action creates thoughts. Cognitive development is the process of individuals internalizing the results of their interactions with their environment. Thomas (2005) takes note that this school of thought is not only a strong conviction of Vygotsky’s work, but is in line with Piaget’s beliefs, as well. Both theorists promote the idea that children benefit from actively engaging in activities and from this engagement, develop cognitive skills. This notion could very well apply to older adults, as well. In addition, literature suggests that neither theorist cares about correct responses to answers but is more interested in problem solving skills (Thomas, 2005). In other words, what process do individuals go through to arrive at their responses and how do they explain their answers? These variables are worth considering when designing a program that integrates technology.

According to Thomas, Vygotsky believes that children’s informal (everyday activities) and formal (classroom activities) education have a profound effect on what they can learn. Furthermore, Thomas (2005), states that children who grow up in a simplistic language climate will grow up dominated by simplistic or “primitive” language, thus the children will think only simplistically or primitively. But if the language environment contains varied and complex concepts, then the children will learn to think in varied and complex ways, so long as their initial biological equipment—sense organs, central nervous systems—is not impaired.

Similarly, for seniors, failure to thrive in nursing homes could be attributed to lack of quality communication as well as stimulating and/or engaging interactions. Kaakinen (1992) indicates a decrease in talking for cognitively sharp residents once they are admitted into a nursing home. In view of this dismal fact, it is necessary to examine other ways to promote language and engaging activities in nursing and assisted living homes.

Lave & Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory suggests that learning is not just the consumption of information and facts; it is a process where individuals participate in a legitimate peripheral situation, but later increases gradually into engaging experiences and complexity. According to Clancey (1995), this approach follows the work of Dewey, Vygotsky, and others who claim that individuals are more inclined to learn by actively participating in a learning experience. Situated learning, therefore, is a phenomenon which creates meaning from real activities of daily living where learning occurs in connection to the environment (Stein, 1992). In other words, through practice in a learning environment, knowledge acquisition becomes part of the learning activity and its success relies on social interaction and kinesthetic activity (Oregon Technology in Education Council, 2007).

Furthermore, according to the Oregon Technology in Education Council, situated learning challenges the traditional concepts of learning from abstract, and out of context experiences retrieved from books and lectures. Our older population could benefit from moving away from this traditional format of learning which may be too taxing and unrelatable, especially for those suffering with the onset of dementia. Instead of asking what kinds of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved, Lave &

Wenger (1991) ask what kinds of social activities provide the appropriate context for learning to take place. Learning in other words occurs primarily through participation. Learning is not a one-person act.

According to Johnson & Taylor (2006), the brain thrives best within the context of social engagement. Through situated learning, older adults would have the opportunity to learn in a social community through collaboration, sharing, and participation (Oregon Technology in Education Council, 2007). In the initial stage of participation, the concept, legitimate peripheral participation provides an opportunity to speak about the association between new people and veterans in a program. It also provides an opportunity to discuss activities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Through this concept one's intention to grasp knowledge is engaging and the meaning of learning is accomplished by becoming a full participant in a social and cultural practice—e.g. this social process subsumes the learning of knowledgeable skills (Lave & Wenger). Learning becomes the core of procreating social habits in one's daily life (Lave & Wenger, 1991; "Situational Learning", n.d.). Through this generative social practice, apprentices are formed.

Forming apprentices is a necessary element in helping to make this project sustainable. In this context, the objective is to encourage residents to help each other, once they have become experts. Lave & Wenger's (1991) view of apprenticeship is different from the historical concept of learning from a master. Their mention of the Yucatec study (conducted in Yucatan, Mexico from 1977-1980) addresses the puzzle of how learning can occur without teaching and without a formal apprenticeship program. In this study, specialized knowledge and practice is passed down within families. There are no master guiding apprentices, they on the other hand learn from observation and through participation. This concept could be beneficial to helping older adults learn as well. In this program the residents in nursing and assisted living homes would be the apprentices. It needs to be noted, however, that participation cannot happen without language. In setting up a technology program to help sustain cognitive ability in the aging, language, as pointed out earlier is the key.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This section will explore the possibility of building a platform where participants help each other in a community of technology and become experts in the process of participating. Before a community of practice and participation can be set up, there are certain basic technology skills that need to be acquired. It would be advantageous to develop focus groups to discuss the types of technology that might be of interest as well as determining the skill-set level of potential candidates for the program. Once the level of technology for candidates is revealed, the plan of action would be to recruit volunteers as experts to lead computer technology classes in individual senior communities. This training would teach basic technology skills necessary for navigating through online courses and/or programs.

The next step would be to train staff and administrators on how to communicate effectively to older adults. Lave and Wenger (1991) illustrate how language use entails multiple participatory skills and how language is one of the most basic modes of access to interaction in social life. Knowledge of effective communication skills would help staff become experts in teaching the activities considered for technology integration. Once a foundation is built, seniors would have the necessary skills to become legitimate peripheral participants in the program. Additionally, since it has been established that communication influences cognition, the core of the program would be based on improving communication skills.

Communication involves how residents are spoken to; the number of times individuals have quality interaction with family or staff--e.g. in depth discussion, even at a very simple level as long as it incorporates feedback loops that add complexity, thus creating meaningful discussions; the kinds of interaction such as telephones, letters, visits, as well as social networking; and the types of activities offered (Calhoun, 2013). Activities included in the program, therefore, will be those that encourage meaningful communication skills such as promoting discussions—e.g. politics, world issues, sports, family values & experiences, personal accomplishments, etc. Other activities would involve encouraging residents to interact with one another as well as interacting with invited guest speakers (2013).

The next challenge for implementing this project involves programming. The primary source of coding would be engineered through the creation of a website. The website would include a mission statement, the goals of the program, the various activities offered, common questions and answers (Q&A), a help desk, links to apps and/or technology windows explored, and contact information. The types of technology explored would involve gamification, e-learning, discussion boards, blogs, skype and other messenger services. Discussion boards and skype would allow individuals to interact with family and friends as well as connect with guest speakers. Blogs would give participants a platform to express their ideas and share artifacts. Gamification would serve as a motivator to get residents involved with the activities. And finally, e-learning would give participants an opportunity to earn certificates of achievement. All of these various entities of the program could be explored separately or taken as a whole. In either case, the goal of the curriculum is to reinforce learning and understanding through participation. Participation would imply a community of practice where learning becomes an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge (Lave & Wenger 1995). In this respect, the program would become sustainable through sharing knowledge as well as understanding what participants are doing and what it means in their lives and for the community.

Implementation would also require marketing, networking and recognition in order to create funding opportunities. The possibility of forming a partnership with major technology companies such as Microsoft, Apple, and Google could be approached by inviting them to be advocators to help promote the cause. Additionally, their partnership could mean more revenue for their products, depending on the technological needs of individual communities. Given the innovative nature of the program and the integration of technology, the program has the potential for national and global awareness. Thus, resulting in a domino effect, which could result in further opportunities through champions or backers offering grants and/or services to support the program. The ultimate goal, however, in spreading the word would be to give the aging a voice to champion this cause and share their success stories.

*Implications*

Through the sharing of success stories, networking, and building a platform, the implementation of this project could result in social, political, and economic changes in our culture (Fox, 2016). Socially, it would give the voiceless—seniors—a platform to inform the public of their plight, concerns, and misconceptions of the aging (Harrison, 2016). Through the immersion of technology, this program could also have the potential to improve communication skills in the elderly which influences their critical thinking and analytical ability (Rajabbeigi, 2016). Finally, economically, by promoting independence and self-efficacy, this program could have the potential of allowing seniors to remain independent longer, thereby reducing the cost for the care of seniors.

*The Vision: What would this program look like in an organization?*

The organizational structure for implementing a project of this magnitude would be dependent on promoting effective communication skills within as well as outside an organization (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Depending on how it is used, communication can either create success in an organization or damage a company's image. Strategies for communicating effectively would include educating and communicating simultaneously, participation in group meetings and/or conferences; developing positive relationships as well as developing trust (Robbins & Judge, 2016). All of these attributes apply to residents, family members, as well as donors and/or supporting partners.

Once transparency is established, organizations should use their communication skills to advertise the program through networking, via Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, etc. The technology program could also be included in their web page as well as in their mission statement. Updates and successes could be incorporated in a weekly newsletter, bulletin or on a calendar board. Promoting informational fairs where residents could be a voice and share their projects would also be advantageous. In addition, promoting educational fairs would be an effective way to get the community involved.

Finally, even though face to face communication is considered the most effective by Robbins & Judge (2016), in this scenario written communication could be just as powerful. The types of written communication that would have power to transmit diplomacy and goodwill would be letters of praise as well as recognition of achievements or just a simple message highlighting updates on the progress of individuals participating in the program. These rudimentary ploys would have a dynamic effect on elevating morale as well as creating a positive environment.

## FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future investigations might include incorporating *Adaptive Online Learning.* This mode of technology would have the capability to adapt to one's individual learning style as well as to provide instructional approaches and content that caters to a learner's knowledge and motivation (McLaren 2013). Another possible tool to consider would be the implementation of MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) into the program (Fox, 2016; Fox & Fraizer, 2016; Fox, Fraizer, Miramontes, Madjidi & Deckers, 2016). MOOCs are an innovative movement in digital, online technology that has the potential to increase access to quality higher education (Patru & Balagi, 2016). Besides increasing participation in lifelong learning, it would give seniors an opportunity to earn college degrees.

In an attempt to make a difference in the learning potential of older adults, ethical implications need to be considered as well. For instance, learning design for seniors need to consider sustainable solutions. Publicizing this program through technology and networking, for instance, can give family members and the general public more knowledge of the many aspects that contribute to effective communication and how it influences the cognitive ability in older adults. Understanding these effects, could be beneficial to recruiting interested parties to make a change in how older population is treated and cared for. Furthermore, projecting awareness of the social issue that needs to be resolved is one important element to ensure future policy advancements affecting older adults.

Lastly, the HIPAA privacy rule of the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act addresses the storing, retrieving and sharing of an individual’s personal and medical information by healthcare entities and covered entities. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). Convalescent, nursing and senior living homes fall into the category of “covered associate” and are required per HIPAA to protect the security and privacy of client health information (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). Thus, security procedures to protect an individual’s medical information will need to be developed and taught to the persons utilizing the technology to assure the protection of their health information, and avoid inadvertently sharing information with others while using the technology devices (Kibbe, 2005).

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, as stated earlier, the same effective teaching practices apply to all individuals, regardless of age. In addition, it is important to note that the process through which people interact with their environment has a significant impact on their learning potential. Interaction in this program depends on the nature and attitude of family members, staff, and administration (Calhoun, 2013). Furthermore, according to Johnson & Taylor (2006), current trends in neuroscience are unveiling more evidence that leans toward the discovery that human brains need social interaction to promote neural plasticity. Therefore, by including carefully constructed experiences and activities through technology, the intent of this project is to promote critical thinking, quality interaction and self-efficacy in the aging. As stated earlier, integrating technology into resources would provide accessibility as well as practice, two very important elements in improving cognitive and communicative skills. Thus, this integration process of including technology in the daily lives of seniors could be the beginning stage to changing society’s view on the aging. Perhaps by connecting with seniors through technology, the world will begin to value their wisdom and contributions to society.

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# Public Sector eLearning Nationwide: Enhancing Professional Development

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores today's public sector environment, leadership and technology's influence on its ecosystems, learning challenges.  Learning technologies specific to e-learning is also explored as well as future investigation of online learning portals accessible to all governmental agencies nationwide incorporating real life applications, connections and innovation and future considerations.

Keywords: public sector, eLearning technologies, professional development, leadership, management

## INTRODUCTION

The demographics of the public sector workforce continuously change as college graduates enter, mid-career employees promote to management roles and experienced administrators retire, calling for ongoing professional development (Brown, 2016; Little, Fraizer, Madjidi & Miramontes, 2016; Monaco, 2012). Technology changed the way public sector employees perform their duties individually and organizationally, along with allowing organizations to interact with citizens (Cronin et. al., 2006; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Gartner, 2016; Hennessy & Sawchuk, 2003).

With technological advancements and the increasing scope of responsibilities public employees face, core competences such as the ability to lead, engage, analyze information and understand organizational legal processes require continuous learning opportunities (Lazenby, as cited in Morgan & Cook, 2014; Sims, 1993; Sims, 1994).

The business structures and practices of the public sector change and modernize due to national economic and political demands (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Gustavsson, 2009). The shifting demographics of experienced employees and downsizing of individual departments force employees to work even harder and face unfamiliar tasks, calls for administrators to develop creative ways to provide employees with ongoing professional development (Langford & Seaborne, 2003; Monaco, 2012; Parna & von Tunzelmann, 2007; Sims, 1993; Sims 1994).

Technology positively impacted public sector ecosystems allowing organizations and individuals to perform daily tasks with greater ease and efficiency (Cronin et. al., 2006; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Gartner, 2016; Hennessy & Sawchuk, 2003; Parnaa & von Tunzelmann, 2007). Educational technologies (e-learning) are an efficient means to offer organizations and employees learning opportunities and professional development (Langford & Seaborne, 2003). Technologies used to access educational curriculum such as Udemy ("Udemy", n.d), DesignJot ("DesignJot", n.d.) and the Knowledge Guru ("Knowledge Guru", n.d.) can be utilized in public organizations to further train employees.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

With the changing demographics of college graduates coming on board and veteran administrators retiring in the public sector, administrators must find innovative ways to attain organizational objectives while promoting professional development (Little, Fraizer, Madjidi & Miramontes, 2016; Monaco, 2012). Administrators face questions such as: How can government condense more services from decreasing revenue?; How can government use market-style practices to increase efficiency? How can government make programs and services more responsive to public needs?

Leadership development in the public sector is vital as administrators and employees face multifaceted tasks (Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004). Organizations confront concerns of accountability to the public, improving performance, reorganizing agencies, redefining missions, streamlining procedures and decentralizing decision making (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011). Denhardt and Denhardt (2011) state administrators now refer to contemporary ideas and practices such as the use of business approaches and are challenged with discovering alternative service-delivery methods. In addition to their everyday responsibilities, employees now work with principles of serving as catalysts within their communities and recharging their dedication to meet public goals (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011).

### *Technology and the Public Sector*

Information and communication technology changed the way people relate to one another, the way government connects with citizens and the way employees do their work individually and organizationally (Cronin et. al., 2006; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Gartner, 2016; Hennessy & Sawchuk, 2003). Newly developed technological processes of service delivery created new opportunities for civic engagement. For instance, social media engages younger citizens as displayed in the city of San Jose's Wikiplanning project which allows citizens to provide input on the city's future (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011). New systems of citizen engagement also bud through social networking. For example, citizens posting comments to blogs and Facebook pages demonstrate interactions and discussions between governmental agencies and citizens.

Online forums created to discuss local issues in a productive manner became more regular in government. For example, LocalCracy.org, local pressing issues posted by citizens or city officials are viewed by the public (Denhardt & Denhardt 2011). Peak Democracy's Open City Hall helps local governments with current issues for citizen response and lists summaries for local residents and governments ("Peak Democracy", n.d.). Open City Hall offers information, the chance for input, and provides access for residents to read and consider the ideas of others.

### *Learning Challenge*

Now more than ever, learning as a day-to-day custom in the workplace is given growing significance today (Gustavsson, 2009; Philip, 1998; Sims, 1993). As public organization move to embrace private sector business approaches, they must seek to transform to what Senge (1990) describes as a learning organization. According to Senge, essential to the success of a learning organization, is the mastery of five dimensions: (a) Systems Thinking, (b) Personal Mastery, (c) Mental Models, (d) Building a Shared Vision, and (e) Team Building. Mastering these five dimensions positions an organization for success by cultivating a culture of collaboration, idea sharing, and common goal pursuit. Public sector workplace learning is key to meet economic and political changes such as globalization, privatization, deregulation, and organizational and technological change (Gustavsson, 2009). Organizations realize the difficulty in handling these changes, but also realize the need to employ new professional development strategies (Rainbird & Munro, 2003; Sims, 1993; Sims, 1994).

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe learning as participation in everyday work through the model called legitimate peripheral participation, and symbolizes newcomers' gradual learning progressions into communities of practice. This means newcomers set up and uphold associations among knowledgeable and skilled members in the community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue the capacity for learning requires access to activities, relations, and places. Creating membership and an identity in the community of practice is vital in learning communities (Gustavsson, 2009; Taherizadeh, 2016).

Learning as a day-to-day custom in the workplace is given growing significance today. As public organization move to embrace private sector business approaches, they must seek to transform to what Senge (1990) describes as a learning organization. According to Senge, essential to the success of a learning organization, is the mastery of five dimensions: (a) Systems Thinking, (b) Personal Mastery, (c) Mental Models, (d) Building a Shared Vision, and (e) Team Building. Mastering these five dimensions positions an organization for success by cultivating a culture of collaboration, idea sharing, and common goal pursuit.

The public sector contains a wide range of activities along with a varied workforce (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Monaco, 2012). Some services and tasks transitioned to the private sector while local governments focus on the quality of services. Although organizations undergo a period of vivid change, debates on technology have rarely focused on employees' skills and development in this sector (Munro & Rainbird, 2002; Pokharel & Hult, 2010).

According to Munro and Rainbird (2002), the regress from national pay and grading structures permitted organizations to set up a new variety of jobs. Debates continue regarding differing interpretations of generalized trends in the labor market towards reskilling. Technology is the prime mover for this change (Munro & Rainbird, 2002). New technologies revamp the character of day-to-day work by upskilling the workforce and task at hand.

*Educational Technologies (E-Learning)*

E-learning tools can promote professional and leadership development in public sector ecosystems. Learning organizations emphasize on the improvement of management, supervisory and operational abilities pertinent to the goals of the organization and the professional development of its workforce (Rainbird & Munro, 2003; Sims, 1993; Sims, 1994). An increase of learning opportunities is available through internet technology. Untraditional and informal training methods flourished in workplace settings (Kim, Bonk & Oh, 2008).

According to Langford and Seaborne (2003), e-learning extends beyond coursework, instruction, disseminating information, and supporting performance, but also provides the capability to contribute directly to learning settings. E-learning enables individuals to benefit instantly from information, procedures, and problems and is linked to an elemental rethinking of the correlation between learning and success in many organizations (Cross, 2004; Docebo, 2014; Langford & Seaborne, 2003; Slotte & Herbert, 2008). E-learning is more effective in providing continuing education promises to candidates they want to hire and retain (Langford & Seaborne, 2003).

Advocates of e-learning argue aligning formal e-learning activities with the priorities of the organization in a means that is not achievable with traditional face-to-face instruction or coursework (Harrison, 2016; Langford & Seaborne, 2003). The major principles of e-learning include universality, speed, and consistency. For example, if an organization wants to embark on a new service for the public, an e-learning platform would allow the entire workforce to receive general training quickly despite their location.

*Leadership in the Public Sector*

The most important aspect guiding public employee commitment, performance and satisfaction is leadership (Bennis, 2009; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004; Philip 1998). A quick-thinking workforce that can work across boundaries and work in partnership to resolve issues is essential (Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004; Monaco, 2012). Employees cannot meet such demands while facing tasks in reimagining operations, functioning with tight budgets, and finding innovative ways to handle complex challenges (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011).

The ongoing development of public leaders is crucial, as particularly more senior administrators become eligible to retire (Brown, 2016; Little, Fraizer, Madjidi & Miramontes, 2016; Monaco, 2012). Strengthening leadership skills at all levels results in an enriched government culture, enables leaders to empower their workforce, measure progress towards their objectives, hold people accountable for their decisions and deliver results to its citizens (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004).

Government leaders demand skills to endure and perform their jobs under unceasing scrutiny (Sims, 1993). Top concerns for leader development in the public sector include leading employees and change, developing efficient management skills (Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004; Lawler, 2008; Sims 1993; Sims 1994). Denhardt and Denhardt (2011) argue public sector managers skilled in areas such as resourcefulness, building relationships and decisiveness, lack in confronting problem employees, putting people at ease, and career management of staff members.

*Future Investigation Public Sector Portal*

Administrators in public agencies constantly look for ways to make organizations more innovative and are under pressure to provide efficient services (Sims, 1993). Sims (1993) states professional training and development serves as an important medium for attaining goals, increasing efficiency, and promoting the ability to change. Today's most successful and effective agencies are characterized by their proficiency in adjusting to and conquering the demands of their jobs which often change and shift, and by their ability to learn (Sims, 1993).

The tools available to leaders in changing public organizational cultures are limited. Public sector leaders face ongoing political hindrance and work toward goals that frequently shift (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Sims, 1993). The suggested online portal incorporates real life applications through simulations, connections through networking and interaction, and innovation through interdepartmental collaboration.

Real life applications are crucial in public sector learning. According to Slotte and Herbert (2007), simulations offer the chance to solve real-life problems in workplace settings. Using simulations can mesh learners in experimental learning that provides an opportunity to reflect the way they utilize the knowledge and skills they have attained (Berragan, 2013; Slotte & Herbert, 2007). For instance, human resources departments often handle situations where employees are injured on the job and obtain legal representation. Utilizing simulations in training help employees discover different scenarios and which response abides with government employee policies.

Simulations allow participants to discern the impact of their choices without the immediate actual outcomes in the operation of the organizations (Slotte & Herbert, 2007). These intended benefits provided the basis for designing a simulation-based e-learning portal for improving organizational skills and practicing reactions and decisions to real life scenarios in the public sector.

Current theories of learning emphasize on the social attribute of learning (Slotte & Herbert, 2007). The public sector portal incorporates a social networking aspect to promote collaboration among administrators, managers and staff from all departments. Research highlights that workplace learning involves sharing and connecting with individuals, and is crucial in the problem-solving process (Cross, 2004; Slotte & Herbert 2007; Social Networking in Cyberschooling: Helping to Make Online Learning Less Isolating, 2009). According to Slotte and Herbert (2007), learning is placed in the social context through its use and application.

Research indicates social contact is an important factor for learner satisfaction, sense of achievement, engagement, and outlook toward e-learning (Allan & Lewis, 2006; Baber et. al., 2015; Cross, 2004; Harrison, 2016; Slotte & Herbert, 2007). Additionally, learning together with others offers opportunities for providing and obtaining assistance thus boosting the confidence of individuals (Harrison, 2016; Slotte & Herbert, 2007). Online learning for organizations should include and facilitate social interactions indicative with situations in which individuals need to learn in order to be effective. The suggested public sector portal enables public employees to engage and take part in social interactions which would enhance their learning while bringing multiple leaders together to meet goals and objectives.

Sarirete, Chikh and Noble (2011) argue communities of practice are dependent on technology and offers learners the ability to easily maintain contact. The computer-generated nature of groups that interact through internet and computer technology exists because of its accessibility (Sarirete, Chikh & Noble, 2011). The undertakings of such virtual groups bring about the building of knowledge and improving of practices, and skills (Social Networking in Cyberschooling: Helping to Make Online Learning Less Isolating, 2009).

Public organizations benefit from having access to colleagues to collaborate and create effective processes. Members of the community are able to share their knowledge about the topic to acquire greater knowledge and construct common understandings and best practices. The recommended public sector portal integrates live discussions and forums in which members are able to converse about agency concerns and needs such as leadership and management techniques, the implementation of new policies and adopting new technologies to improve organizational day-to-day tasks.

## FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

The implementation of a national public sector portal requires a large amount of funding, faces bureaucratic challenges and ethical implications. Decreasing budgets make it difficult to allocate resources to new projects with competing views on where funds should be placed (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011). The application of a nationwide portal faces large scrutiny from government officials on whether it would be effective and whether employees would utilize the platform. Government officials may ask how will employees make use of the portal when they already face increased day-to-day responsibilities due to a shortage of manpower?

### *Ethical implications*

Ethical implications of privacy is another barrier to a public portal. Large software companies are key in easing the apprehension. Companies such as Oracle (“Oracle”, n.d.) and Symantec (“Symantec”, n.d.) may collaborate to create and sell such software to the public sector while ensuring an effective and safe online presence for governmental agencies.

The collaboration of large technology companies and government face business ethics concepts of rights and obligations. Basic rights do not just apply to life, justice, honesty, privacy, and freedom, but they also apply to business (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2007). In this case, both parties have the right to expect contracts and agreements will be carried out honestly and legitimately, the right of software companies to try to get the public sector to implement and utilize their product, and the right for the public sector to choose which software they wish to purchase and put into service (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2007). Thiroux and Krasemann (2007) state participants in joint business efforts are obligated to be fair and just in their transactions, to be truthful and honorable in executing agreements, and be loyal to stakeholders within ethical and logical limits.

## CONCLUSION

The public sector is continuously evolving. Modern public administrators face challenges in maintaining effectiveness with pressing economic and political demands (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011). This calls for continuous and innovative professional development to prepare organizations and individuals to respond efficiently (Little, Fraizer, Madjidi, & Miramontes, 2016; Monaco, 2012). Government has positively changed and improved with the emergence of new technologies (Cronin et. al., 2006; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Gartner, 2016).

Technology assisted agencies in moving to paperless operations and improving service delivery for the public, and is an enhancement and foundation for the ongoing professional development of employees. Many private companies have utilized e-learning platforms to further develop employees, and the public sector has yet to experience a platform exclusive to governmental agencies nationwide. The development of a public sector e-learning portal incorporating real life applications training coursework and simulations, connections through social networking and innovation through discussions and forums could be beneficial to today’s modern public sector workplace.

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# Integrating app-based Technology in a Learning Community

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

Learning has evolved significantly during the past 20 years. The education system has to adapt itself accordingly in order to meet the needs of its learners, thus this paper explores the following: (a) how learning theory combined with technology can expand possibilities, such as integrated app-based technologies designed specifically for even more interconnectedness in higher education (Taherizadeh, 2016), (b) how related business strategies focused on strategic connections and how data-mining may benefit communities of higher learning, and (c) proposed future possibilities of e-learning like gamification, as well as ethical issues that might arise from social networking.

*Keywords:* app-based technology, technology, education, learning, e-learning, social networking, online platform, participation, communities, learning management system, strategic connections, information, data mining, higher learning, higher education

## INTRODUCTION

Online platforms can convene a community of learners to catalyze a source of data maintained by its users, and/or spark social networking among engaged members of the same community to encourage more constructive learning. For example, i-connect is an app-based technology system designed to promote social networking combined with collaborative information sharing to enhance learning in higher education (Taherizadeh, 2016). Panganiban (2016) argues that online learning for groups, such as i-connect, should facilitate social interactions illustrative of situations in which individuals need to learn in order to be effective.

For the past 20 years, learning and learning technologies continues to be influenced by theories such as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998), learning communities (Lave & Wenger, 2011; Hill, 2012), student-centered learning environment (Land, Hannafin, & Oliver, 2012) and activity theory (DeVane & Squire, 2012). Learning theories have continued to evolve from an educator-to-student model to self-learning-teaching environments model as a process of social learning. These learning environments provide a space where learners with shared goals or interests can increase their knowledge or participate in meaningful learning ("2020 Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning" n.d.; Land, Hannafin, Oliver, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 2011; McLaren, 2013). According to Land, Hannafin, and Oliver (2012), such situated learners are central to the constructive learning process.

McLaren (2013) argues that learning is being adapted to and reshaped by learners to create rich and valuable knowledge rather than a competitive learning environment that creates stress and frustration. For instance, a study in mathematics in Nigerian senior secondary schools demonstrated students learn better in a collaborative environment over environments that promoted competitiveness and individualism (Oloyede, Adebowale, & Ojo, 2012). To offer an appealing and efficient learning environment, social participation through technology can become an essential tool for collaboration, as meaningful learning happens when learners of a community can contribute towards knowledge and sharing of information (Fraizer, 2011; Lave & Wenger, 2011; Land et al, 2012; McLaren, 2013).

The collaboration between members of a community creates a valuable flow of information and when used on a common online platform adapts the community to a student-centered learning environment (McLaren, 2013; Borek, Parlikad, Webb, Woodall, 2013). Moreover, Hannafin et al. (1999) argue that there are three types of tools used in the learning process: processing tools; manipulation tools; and communications tools (as cited in Land, Hannafin, and Oliver, 2012). The use of these technology-enhanced interactive tools could maximize the participation and learning process within social networks by promoting more collaboration and information sharing ("2020 Forecast" n.d.; Docebo, 2014).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Student-centered learning environments "reflect several key assumptions about the nature of learning, the structure of the environment, and the role of the learner" (Land, Hannafin, and Oliver, 2012, p. 8). Lave and Wenger (2011) argue that learning is an evolving "process of participation in communities of practice" (p. 1). These communities bring together a group of learners who share common interests and practices, towards a common goal.

Participation in learning within a community becomes more constructive and enhances learning which makes both practices and its member advance (Lave & Wenger, 2011; Barab & Duffy, 2012). In addition, Zull (2006) argues that meaningful learning happens when the brain has ample memories to reflect and analyze on. In fact, Zull further argues that the more regions of the cortex are used, the more change and learning can happen. Analyzing how the brain functions in these learning environments where technologies and social interactions are integrated have leveraged cultural-historical activity theory (Engström, 2000) for better understanding of how learning can occur (Zull, 2006).

DeVane and Squire describe how such results socially impact learners as they directly experience the practice and expand their knowledge, as well as their social network. They also explain that technology as "a tool that structures and mediates the learning accomplished through activity" (DeVame & Squire, 2012, p. 262) rather than a tool that transmits knowledge.

Accordingly, by adding technology components to learning environment and its community of practice, studies suggest education can be innovative and flexible which can lead to a more fruitful, efficient and effective learning outcome (Microsoft Education Transformation Framework Overview, 2014). For example, Microsoft continues to explore the application and use of technology in teaching. Another example of technology in teaching is the use of its application in the healthcare field. As such applications of technology in teaching are becoming common practice in medical education. For example, simulation based medical education uses technological components to create a simulated medical environment that provide medical students with a safe clinical space to practice and err in technical surgical skills as well as non-technical skills, such as decision making and leadership skills (Akaike et al., 2012). Leadership skills and an orientation towards accomplishing goals empowers both students and professors. Thus, education or organizations cannot avoid implementing and using technology in and out of the classrooms or workplace. However, Lynch (2016) argues that the challenges remain in the design of online platforms to attract members and keep them engaged. Taherizadeh (2016) further argues that technology design need to be re-visited so that the outcome is truly an interconnected one for learners.

Trends show that e-learning, such as mobile apps and cloud-based e-learning systems, are increasingly popular; e-learning continues to maximize participation, time-management, and self-regulation ("8 Sensational eLearning Trends", 2016; Docebo, 2014; The Future of Higher Education, 2008). For instance, app-based products such as i-connect (Taherizadeh, 2016) invites members of a private community of practice in higher learning to share their knowledge in order to improve information sharing, to learn, and to network via a single online platform (as opposed to multiple account management) with a learning management system such as Blackboard or Sakai (Bradford, Porciello, Balkon, & Backus, 2007; FinancesOnline, n.d.). Consequently, if global access to members of a community can enhance knowledge through social interactions, then it is even more important to explore how member quality is essential to establish a strategic connection—understanding the type of people who make up the community.

*Strategic Connection*

Not only can app-based technologies facilitate global access and the learning process, they can also facilitate access to communication and connection between learners, practitioners, and scholars (Taherizadeh, 2016). For example, i-connect is an application designed specifically for members of the same community designed for higher learning who have paid to be part of it (Taherizadeh, 2016). Using this app, students, professors, and alumni could have access to the platform by creating a profile like in Facebook, which would only be accessible by the members of this community rather than publicly accessible like Facebook (Taherizadeh, 2016) to create even more value for the network (Baber, Waymon, Alphonso, Wylde, 2015).

Establishing an environment which promotes learning using such strategic connections through social networking is described as learning communities by Hill (2012). Hill argues that it is still a challenge to form a learning community and explains how the community "help facilitates and support learning" (p. 268). However, social networking tools are known to facilitate an instant connection between members who grow and evolve through stronger social presence on online platforms (2020 Forecasts, n.d.). For instance, the growth of Web 2.0/social networking technologies has enabled beneficial connections among informal learning communities which increased effective collaboration and learning for its users (Hill, 2012).

Cozolino and Sprokay (2006) identify the brain as "a social organ innately designed to learn through shared experiences" (p. 11). Therefore, building connections between members of a community can help grow informal learning communities because social interaction positively enhances participation, positive feelings and creates a foundation for learning (Greyling & Wentzel, 2007, as cited in Hill, 2012). By developing a network, Baber *et al.* (2015) argue how collaboration can impact strategy execution, innovation, engagement, and competitiveness within a community, and therefore app-based technologies such as i-connect would be beneficial to the community's growth and collaborative knowledge expansion.

Members who define its community's identity, makes it easier for them to create a strategic connection and keep the network alive by regularly engaging the members (Taherizadeh, 2016). However, Hill (2012) argues that technology requires on-going strategy and evolution to enable the "creation of effective virtual spaces for learning" (p. 281). Such strategy can be used to create a sense of belonging. Being part of an exclusive private community influences the mind of the learner by being emotionally attracted to becoming a member of a community in the context of the informal learning experiences (Taherizadeh, 2016). Therefore, loyalty can be engendered during the creation of the community (Hill, 2012).

Allan and Lewis (2006) demonstrate how virtual learning community (VLC) membership positively influences and significantly impacts individuals. The study explores how membership impacts and supports individual lifelong learning, and individual careers and identity. It enhanced their learning careers, their professional life, and improved level of flexibility and adaptation in the topics being learned. Their membership led participants to an increased sense of innovation and ameliorated their level of expertise (Allan & Lewis, 2006). Consequently, establishing a social network within a private community of learners can yield strategic resources of quality information and data thus becoming valuable assets to the organization (Taherizadeh, 2016).

*Mining for Strategic Resources*

As aforementioned, once a community of learners interacts through digital social networks by sharing information, knowledge, and common interests, a flow of quality information and data can be generated (Taherizadeh & Fraizer, 2016; McLaren, 2013). As a result, online learning platforms become a valuable asset to any organization that needs to strategically use their resources for data mining or to maximize the value of data and information assets or to adapt learning methods (Taherizadeh, 2016; Borek, Parlikad, Webb, Woodall, 2013; Chye, Gervais, Kiu, 2006).

Data mining is the process of gathering, exploring and observing large amounts of information, enabling one to explore and identify unknown patterns, trends, and relationships between data sets to inform better decision-making or more sophisticated understanding of given situations (Chye et al., 2006). Therefore, app-based technologies, such as i-connect, are a potential source of data collection that could facilitate higher education's choices and offered programs. It gathers information and background about students, professors, administrators and alumni through a social network profile that connects the members, the information they share, the courses they are enrolled in, and their professional background (Taherizadeh, 2016).

Career data can also be collected to examine the choices made by the members, social behaviors, and how e-learning affects students for future studies (Chye et al., 2006). This application can enable users to upload papers, assignments, and dissertations that can be shared within the community (Taherizadeh, 2016). Knowing the trends, desires, choices, habits, sources shared, and preferred study subjects of the students, can help the community adapt itself and become more flexible to meet the expectations of the members (Chye et al., 2006). Chye et al. (2006) demonstrated with two case studies how data mining is useful in higher education; both produced information about classification and estimation that could help improve the focus areas. As a result, a single online platform can help provide data about choices and preferences of the members of a community to adapt the learning community as opposed to multiple accounts where the data would be spread.

Furthermore, a single online platform can be a strategic resource and provide a business advantage for organizations to maximize cost-savings, learning efficiency, improved time-management, information sharing, and organizational training (Docebo, 2014). Moreover, implementing technology with a single account as opposed to multiple account management, empowers users to have more control over online access, increases the speed of information shared by users, and achieves quality results which are ideal for business strategy (Docebo, 2014; Taherizadeh, 2016).

These gathered resources can also become a valuable asset. The quality information and data management available on a private online learning platform, for instance, can be communicated and coordinated by a private community of scholars, learners, and practitioners (Taherizadeh, 2016). This community can connect-the-dots towards a common goal to impact an interconnected and competitive world ( Baber, Waymon, Alphonso, 2015; Borek, Parlikad, Webb, Woodall, 2013; Docebo, 2014; Yunus, 2011). Borek et al. (2013) suggests the use various tools for organizations to analyze how the quality of information can be better used to achieve the organization's goals and to detect what areas need to be improved to be more competitive.

## FOR FUTURE INVESTIGATION

Historically, learning continues to evolve and studies suggests that it will continue to do so (Docebo, 2014). This section proposes areas for future investigation of app-based technology integration in higher education. It also proposes areas for future study.

### *Gamification*

For the future development of app-based technologies, and to improve learning quality and efficiency among the learning community, a gaming feature can be further explored and how it can be added to enhance learning and collaboration in the community. For example, Land et al. (2012) proposes a game which requires game participants to play in context of historical development and nation building. In the very detailed Civilization III, for instance, learners are immersed in the environment to participate, engage virtually and enjoy learning ("Civilization III," n.d.). In this manner, applications could be designed in such a way that each member of the community would create an avatar that can move in a virtual world similar to their own real-world community. Gamification can make learning fun, improves decision-making skills and learning quality ("8 Sensational eLearning trends", 2016).

### *Technoethics*

The growing presence of technology is inevitable. However, Freedman (2006) argues the importance of understanding how to ethically use online platforms, which he refers to as *technoethics*. Identifying what is right and wrong can become ethically difficult for some people (Maravilla, 2015), and according to Freedman (2006), even for those who create online platforms. Overcoming barriers to technoethics, remains a challenge. Users have a first amendment right to free speech that include online posts. Laws that pertain to controlling shared content online may be in conflict with freedom of speech protection . Another ethical issue can occur when using a single online platforms; Facebook uses all the published information about its users like a laboratory to examine patterns and provide each user information they want to see. However, some users might not agree to having their behaviors collected and examined (Jayson, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Social networking can reshape the learning environment by using app-based technologies as a primary tool to shift learning into a self-learning-teaching environment where everyone becomes "educitizens" ("2020 Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning" n.d.; McLaren, 2013; The Economist, 2008). Community members who participate in e-learning process are as valuable as the information shared (Taherizadeh, 2016). Thus, there is a need to consider leveraging data mining practices and creating even more strategic connections through private online social networking to generate leverage (Baber, Waymon, & Alphonso, 2015) for creating a truly interconnected community.

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# Multicultural Education: Sparking Lifelong Learning Opportunities in an International World

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

Learning about other cultures and backgrounds allow people to have a better understanding of cultural differences and enable them to live harmoniously in this global world. While living in a diverse society, multicultural education helps people think broadly, have a finer understanding and become a global leader (Iwai, 2015). When students attend schools with a diverse population, they can develop more understanding of different cultures and backgrounds. Linaazzan (2009) suggests that learning how to communicate and interact in a diverse environment should be taught at schools. This paper examines multicultural education as a lifelong learning opportunity, and how it could lead to improved perspectives of diverse cultures and enable people to live harmoniously. The various types of multicultural education curriculum include literature, music, and foreign language. The final section of the paper proposes areas for learning consideration and further research.

## KEYWORDS

cultural diversity, multicultural education, learning opportunities, multiculturalism, language acquisition

## INTRODUCTION

Culture includes shared language, values, beliefs, norms, behaviors, and material objects that shape people's identity and influences their behavior. A racially diverse nation with groups of people with different ethnicities, languages, nationalities, and religions create a rich and cultural variety of networks (Tolle, 2012). Per a Census Bureau (2016) report, California has become one of the most ethnically diverse states in America. The state has more whites, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans than any other state, and 61.6% of 39 million Californians are nonwhite population (Walters, 2015). In higher education, the University of California noted that 38% of new California freshman and transfer students were underrepresented minorities (Watanabe & Times, 2016). The expression of "racial majority" in the United States is becoming vague since white Americans will no longer embrace an ethnic majority in the United States by 2044 per a Census Bureau report (2016). "No majority" America is already here and thriving in 2017 among children who are younger than five years old and all students in the country's public schools as well (Watanabe & Times, 2016).

The country, workplaces, and schools consist of various cultural, racial and ethnic groups and cultural diversity is very important because people can learn from one another. Groups of people with different ethnicities, languages, nationalities, and religions create a rich and cultural variety of networks. Such cultural diversity enables people to learn from each other and share their alternative viewpoints (Phillips,2016). Learning about other cultures helps people understand distinct aspects, and help eliminate negative stereotypes and personal biases about groups from different backgrounds (Tolle, 2012). As people communicate and interact with others, they can shape bonds to trust, respect, and understand across cultures. Furthermore, people from diverse cultures allow others to have language skills, new ways of thinking, new intelligence, and divergent experiences (Garcia, 2009).

Although diversity has benefits, living in multicultural environment can also bring about conflicts such as miscommunication and discrimination between people, especially when there is a lack of understanding regarding cultural norms and differences (Tobak, 2013). Today, media seems to depict more conflicts rather than peace and harmony (Woods, Partner, & Woods, 2010). For example, in a diverse society, people identify others as being “one of us” or “one of them,” and many people are experiencing disrespect, unfair treatment, and even insult (Woods, Partner, & Woods, 2010).

Learning from differences is not always easy especially when people tend to view the world through the lens of their own cultural norms. This can create challenges where the greater the diversity of the workplace and school, the greater the potential for misunderstanding and conflict. Literature suggests that lack of awareness of multicultural education in part contributes to this issue (Özturgut, 2011). For instance, as classrooms become more diverse, using multicultural literature in the curriculum has increasingly become a focus in recent years (Colby & Lyon, 2005).

# An Exploration of Possibilities for English Language Learners and TOEFL Scores

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

Learning methods are changing rapidly and new technologies improve the conditions for learners every day. The purpose of this session is to explore application of e-learning in English language learning. Different theories and technologies are reviewed and explained to clarify the situation of e-learning in the community of English learners. Special attention is paid to learners in which their primary language is not English and want to enter English higher education institutions by learning English as a Foreign Language. This session also discusses some of the many online possibilities which prepare these individuals for standard tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language.

## KEYWORDS

TOEFL, ETS, EFL learners, E-learning, learning styles, MOOC

## INTRODUCTION

Language as an instrument for communication is one of the most important factors helping people to develop individual and social skills. Learning English as an international language is becoming a challenge for most of the people around the world who are seeking higher levels of occupation and education (Anderson, 2008; Aparicio, Bacao, & Oliveira, 2016; Garrison, 2011). According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS, 2016), there are more than nine thousand educational institutes around the world, which provide the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Universities in the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom will typically review TOEFL scores of international applicants before admitting them. Preparing for TOEFL exams require practice in four skills: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking (Blake, 2008; Haythornthwaite & Andrews, 2011; Krausz, Schiff, Schiff, & Van Hise, 2005).

Various e-learning technologies help learners to prepare for the TOEFL and the Internet is the most common technology being used by learners around the world (Ashiyan & Salehi, 2016). There are also many websites, blogs, social media, and chat applications on the Internet, which provide an online learning environment for learners to shape communities of practice (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2015). Learners also utilize Massive Open Online Courses (Fox, 2016; Fox, Fraizer, & Easterling Williams, 2017) to enhance their skills and knowledge in various areas associated with the TOEFL.

*From traditional learning to online learning*

Literature suggests that e-learning is explained with varying perspectives (Aparicio, Bacao, & Oliveira, 2016; Coryell & Chlup, 2007; Mayes & De Freitas, 2004;). As it is different from traditional learning, new theories are emerging to explain e-learning (Haythornthwaite & Andrews, 2011). Researchers have concentrated on the "electronic" aspect of e-learning and explained different technologies improving learning in modern societies. Other theorists concentrated on "learning", explained e-learning through psychological and learning theories (Garrison, 2011; Goodfellow & Lea, 2007).

Gredler (2005) posits that the association between stimulus and response occurs in the presence of a particular stimulus. This association in online learning could be determined by the amount of time spent by learners in a particular website to gain information for their final exam.

Schank (2004) emphasizes on curriculum for online courses and identified curriculum as an important factor in e-learning and introduced story-centered curriculum (SCC). SCC aims to design curriculum where students role play in a given story (Schank, n.d.). This method has been useful in designing online courses (Schank, 2007). There are also several processes associated with learning such as: memorizing, gaining understanding, having an insight, behavioral change, skill development, and maturation (Johnson & Taylor, 2011). When people learn a foreign language, changes emerge in their behavior as they speak and write in a language different from their own. Emergence of new technologies has facilitated the learning process.

There are many Opportunities for English learners to communicate online and develop or participate in online communities of practice (Marques, Loureiro, & Marques, 2016). Utilizing online forums, websites, chat rooms, and MOOCs provides a collaborative environment for e-learners to improve their skills in communication. Although there are some criticisms about e-learning and its efficiency, many learners, especially in developing countries, rely on e-learning to develop their knowledge and skills (Anderson, 2008). There are teachers who prefer traditional learning methods as they believe face-to-face communication increases attention of students.

Learning a foreign language is a complicated process including practice, communication, and time. Online environments equip learners with instruments to communicate with people around the world. If a student from a developing country wants to learn English, it is convenient to utilize online technologies, as face-to-face communication could take more time and has higher costs (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2015; Marques, Loureiro & Marques, 2016; Mayes & De Freitas, 2004).

In the area of second language learning, individuals in developing countries are interested in new technologies such as the Internet, MOOCs, social media, and other electronic technologies. E-learning can be beneficial to learners anywhere in the world and it has become an essential tool to effectively learn in a community of practice. Online platforms make it possible for e-learners to continue anytime and anywhere with learning (Ross, Lowther, & Morrison, 2001).

English language learners can manage their time, share experiences, learn by collaborating, and communicate through technology. New technologies provide for English learners to develop communities of practice. Sharing information and communication through online tools (e.g. social media, chat rooms) have facilitated the process of learning through online communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2011; Taherizadeh & Fraizer, 2016).

Many young individuals from developing countries seek career or higher quality of life opportunities developed countries and admission into their higher education systems where courses are taught primarily in English (Henderson, Finger, & Selwyn, 2016). TOEFL is a standard test that can assesses the proficiency of these individuals where their mother tongue is not English. It requires hard work and preparation to take TOEFL.  Individuals use various methods to obtain higher scores for this test and thus e-learning for English learners is an important factor that should be considered. As of today, more than 9,000 institutions of higher education, government agencies, and organizations worldwide accept TOEFL scores for making important decisions (edX, 2016).

# Organizational Growth: Managing Creative Organizational Culture

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

This article outlines how leveraging company culture allows organizations to succeed. Over the last couple of decades, organizations have made huge strides to remain relevant and keep pace with changing consumer preferences. In today's fast paced market, consumers now seek the latest products, solutions, and answers within the same business day. There was a time when the development of new goods and services took years of effort to come to market. Recently, functional leaders have pushed organizations to remain aware of the need to innovate and grow while meeting an extremely understated drive to recognize how the organization's culture needs to transform to retain and attract the right people. The focus of this session is to explore how the leaders of these growing organizations face challenges in creating sustainable models of creative organizational culture that ultimately aim to align business objectives and the organization's talent continuously in regards to today's modern workspace. This article further explores adaptive leadership as the most compelling match for strategic alignment of high performers and creative cultures.

## KEYWORDS

communication, culture, leadership, managing change, organizational growth

## Introduction

As organizations transform and grow, there is a need for leaders to see their people as a social force. The people within these organizations amount to more than any strategy or goal, and make our organizations stronger. Executives find that approximately 70% of efforts to change an organization ends up in failure (Kotter 1996). Ignoring the internal environment and social structure happens to be in the top three reasons why all organizations fail. Improving the organization's ability to meet the needs of its people can help to retain and attract top talent and therefore manage the culture required to be successful. High performing organizations act as the catalyst to positive attitudes and high performance in employees while also providing the modern workspace which, the workforce of today seeks. Vroom (1964) asserts that in the application and recruiting process, people seek out different organizations based on what they desire personally from that company and if what they find important can be fulfilled (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Those organizations that provide a culture with a substantial degree of freedom and responsibility in any phase of growth to its employees will meet the levels of innovation and performance required (Bersin, 2015) to succeed. Also, organizations with creative cultures remain attractive as a good fit for high-performing individuals (Goffee & Jones, 2013).

Once leaders actually recognize the importance of building a sustainable model for its culture they must begin to frame the adaptive challenges ahead. The adaptive problems, more often than not, are typically found buried in the beliefs, values, and loyalties of individuals (Grashow, Heifetz, & Linsky, 2009). Organizations have been wrong to think it simply costs less to implement a technical fix that offers short-term resolution: in reality it often results in long-term failure. According to John Kotter (2012), shared values are the absolute foundation of workplace culture, and they are less apparent and much harder to change. The common values of individuals in these organizations align tightly to group norms and behavior. If an organization continues to operate under the assumption that people can change, their logic is wrong. The talented and hardworking people in these organizations deserve the benefit of the doubt, it cannot be assumed that people will change. As previously mentioned, leaders must look to design effective interventions (Kotter, 2012). These responses shed light on adaptive challenges for the individuals, and they may come to the realization that personal sacrifices will need to be made in the way things once were. It is crucial for change agents to understand that these interventions will cause fundamental conflict that will give way to new and diverse perspectives. As newly espoused values are created the organization must realign itself with the mechanisms and components that help operate and drive favorable organizational impact. A prime example of how an organization can manage these underlying efforts is eliminating those not culturally fit for the new change and redesigning the criteria for the recruiting process with the help of Human Resources.

**Literature Review**

Organizing and implementing change at the organizational level is a challenging and complex task (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Too often, senior leaders fail to recognize change will take place; by the time there is a known issue, they often fall short in implementing and managing the change. Experienced and effective leaders should know they must continually develop themselves to lead the transformation. Unfortunately, many leaders already established within the company directly overlook that they too must change. An effective way to manage these gaps and focus on building cultural awareness is to bring in an outside senior executive (Lorsch, 1987). An individual with a fresh look brings new perspective and objectivity. Often, outdated leaders in senior positions within the company become comfortable with the status quo (Llopis,2014), the organization in this case ends up keeping the approach to what has always worked in the past therefore creating a gap between individuals and the environment required to get the work done with the right talent and atmosphere. Ultimately, this attributes to the difficulty leaders have in creating and sustaining direction in their work. Rather than leaders finding alternative solutions, they end up coasting through the transition, afraid to create a little turbulence in the environment. This unproductive nature translates to a workforce of people who inherit a culture of simply ignoring the wave of change that is outside the company door.

As these companies look to change and take on a new perspective, the necessary steps in encouraging flexibility. Organizations often focus too heavily on increasing funding and generating business growth without actually considering what a team can do that believes in the mission and not the concept of just having money in the bank. Today, much of the focus is on Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), Mergers and Acquisitions (M&As), and increasing ad revenue. Companies are often taught to focus on these methods with similar ideas, but ideas do not build growth strategies, the people that are in these organizations will help grow the company. As the transformation brings more customers, advisors, and number of employees, the leaders have to look at how to scale ahead of time. This is where you start talking to people who will help you scale, start with interviewing people internally. Find out what the best practices were that worked for others to find the right talent. Top-level management needs to take a pragmatic approach in the ways people apply and operate with their people skill-set in scaling the organization.

**Why Managing Creative Organizational Culture is Important**

This article proposes that it is not always about the fun things in the office that develop culture – building a company of creative culture is about building a team of people that are committed to the same purpose and goals to enjoy it. Organizations that rank the highest in company culture have found ways to encourage company growth by implementing a system that is more customer and employee centric (Colvin, 2015). These customer and employee focused companies bring a broadened view of new strategy that adds to the organization’s development and potential value. In addition, building upon the current workforce's ability to transform, reshape, and align themselves to ask important questions and challenge the existing model as they take on real return on investment without having to hire and retrain a new set of people. The simple idea of ignoring people and just implementing new processes and techniques causes a company’s culture to take a default position rather than fall to a better design (Veale, 2016). As leaders look to manage a growing organization using this strategic design they can continue to reshape it through adaptable values and communication that stem both from the top and bottom. This approach avoids the company culture from defaulting to the most vocal voice and the status quo and brings about new perspectives as individuals face different challenges in the business by ultimately designing a sustainable company culture.

Organizations that offer trust and learning development create a flexible work environment that empowers employees to maintain free office hours enabling them to meet their performance goals and objectives in more creative and efficient ways. These companies should also continue to offer fun and unorthodox employee perks, creative workspaces, employee lounges with beer on tap, table tennis, social events and relaxed dress codes. There will always be ways to increase the level of thinking and responsibility as these creative organizations grow in scale. These businesses can find improved ways to operate leaner structure with more collaboration and transparency it the work environment and maintain the high level of expectation without facing high costs of redundancy or long processes in reporting in a social hierarchy.

**Leading Change with Adaptable Leadership**

Adaptive leadership is a compelling match for strategic alignment of high performers and creative cultures (Grashow, Heifetz, & Linsky, 2009). This leadership is also most suitable in its approach to managing change because of its ability to substitute decision-making and influential approaches that are only seen as top down management. Leaders looking to achieve these changes in their organizations must have the capacity to manage the underlying efforts to sustain creative culture without compromising the mechanisms that help operate and drive successful business. Overall, the adaptable leader is best categorized by their focus on the internal and external environment using flexibility and change to meet employee and customer needs (Daft, 2012). The necessity for this type of leadership is appropriate for any company that represents characteristics of a creative environment (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) facing positive growth in business and personnel. The majority of organizations today that are operating in high performance and fast-changing business environments require organizational adaptability to scale appropriately and manage and continue to grow the culture that attributed to their successes (Bhide, 2014).

## FOR FUTURE STUDY

Information and communication management in these fast-paced organizations is recommended for future study and how these resources is critical to organizational success. It is vital that the organization develops methods to deal with complex levels of information and knowledge as they seek to transform and scale. Different ways of managing communication with the use of technological tools should be adopted to increase shared knowledge, create transparency, and encourage higher levels of performance and autonomy (Herschel & Jones, 2005). Often overlooked is the amount of information required to make informed policy decisions in organizational change. Information management requires that leaders and managers create an unobstructed flow of information and knowledge throughout the organization as to avoid leaving out critical instruction and people that attribute to the organization's development and growth during times of change (Yolles, 2006).

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Yolles, M. (2006). *Organizations as complex systems: An introduction to knowledge cybernetics*. Greenwich, CT: IAP - Information Age Pub.

# A Glimpse into a Psychopathic Leadership

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

The subject of corporate psychopathy continues to gain traction in both academia and the general media alike. Psychopathic success can be achieved by deceiving and manipulating the individuals that work among corporate psychopaths (Adrian Raine, 2010). Lying, manipulation, deceit, egocentricity, and callousness are some characteristics used to describe psychopathic behaviors (Babiak & Hare, 2006). While such characteristics enable a psychopath to achieve success and climb the corporate ladder—results are short-term and borrowed at the expense of long-term gains for the organization (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Reynolds, 2016). Business, as a whole, suffers as psychopaths put self-interest and self-enrichment before corporate longevity and corporate success (Boddy, 2005). Furthermore, psychopathic leaders can have detrimental effects on employee performance and well-being (Faillace, 2016), and especially the organizational environment (Madjidi, Fraizer, & Miramontes, 2015; Boddy 2005). The purpose of this paper is to explore and discuss patterns of behavior: how psychopaths create short-term success, which leads to long-term failure, and ultimately to long-term destruction for the organization.

## KEY TERMS

Psychopathology, psychopathy, corporate psychopaths, organizational leadership, psychopathic leaders

## INTRODUCTION

Prior to recent advances in research, the more common perceptions of what a "psychopath" is centered on serial killers and the more criminal, or "insane," members of the population (Reynolds, 2016). The work of psychologists such as Paul Babiak, Ph.D., and Robert D. Hare, Ph.D, however, brought attention to the fact that there is another type of psychopath who is able to achieve great career success by "snaking" his or her way to executive-level leadership positions (Babiak & Hare, 2006). It is often the psychopathic personality traits that render these individuals attractive, even more qualified, for positions of high power (Babiak & Hare, 2006). Babiak & Hare (2006) attribute the following characteristics: Taking charge, making decisions, and getting others to do what you want them to do, as examples of behaviors that psychopaths use and mask as ideal leadership skills. . Boddy (2015) explains that corporate psychopaths are therefore simply those psychopaths who exist successfully in society, and work within corporate organizations as highly career-oriented, yet ruthless and unethical individuals who exploit employees.

In the examination of the psychopathology of leadership, researchers have focused on elements such as the Dark Triad and the role of the amygdala to account for the occupational success of psychopaths (Jonason, Strosser, Kroll, Duineveld, & Baruffi, 2014; Boddy, 2015). The Dark Triad consists of traits that fall into the categories of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Jonason et al., 2014). Narcissism is characterized by vanity and self-centeredness, while Machiavellianism refers to manipulation and cynicism (Jonason et al., 2014). Research has found that psychopathic traits are related to dysfunction in the amygdala, which is the part of the brain that regulates emotions, and therefore results in the callous social attitudes and impulsive behaviors that are characteristic of psychopaths (Boddy, 2015). Jonason et al. (2014) explain that although the above traits are interpersonally aversive, they are personally useful to the individual by creating value systems that serve the interest of the individual over the group. In further support of this argument, Majidi, Fraizer, & Miramontes (2015) found that, “strong willed, autocratic, commanding, manipulative and perhaps abusive leaders are able to create some success in leading within their organizational constructs and driving their agendas” (p. 1). Therein lies the foundation for the purpose of this paper, to explore how psychopaths create short-term success, which leads to long-term failure, and ultimately leads to long-term destruction for the organization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The behaviors of the corporate psychopath have detrimental effects that extend to employee performance and well-being (Faillace, 2016), as well as the overall organizational environment (Madjidi, Fraizer, & Miramontes, 2015; Boddy 2005). The literature by Boddy (2005), reports that resource-based views of organizational development attribute a critical issue in firm success to the building of effective human organization, and that psychopathic leaders hinder such organizational development through their disruptive behaviors. Furthermore, these individuals pose a threat to corporate social responsibility, which leads to a detrimental impact on the longevity and success of the organization (Boddy, 2005). The following sections will explore the negative consequences of psychopathic leadership on employee performance, wellbeing, and the organizational environment in greater detail.

### Impact on Employee Wellbeing and Performance

Employee wellbeing and work performance can be correlated with the way in which corporate leadership is being conducted, specifically those employing psychopathic leadership. Psychopathic corporate leaders, although successful, have been known to be selfish leaders, who belittle and intimidate employees, managing on behalf of their own needs and incapable of working collaboratively with a team (Wellons, 2012). Wellons has also concluded that psychopaths in the workplace have a reputation of being bullies and practice poor management skills, which will negatively affect the wellbeing and performance of any group of employees.

It is difficult at times, to discern a psychopathic leader because at first sight they appear to merely be authoritative leaders. Although there are many successful and powerful leaders that hold authoritative leadership style traits, psychopathic leaders have been known to be authoritative yet exert a deviant and negative leadership approach (Dutton, Lilienfeld, Latzman, Smith, & Watts, 2014). When individuals hold this type of leadership approach, these individuals have been defined as narcissistic leaders who can be very successful and beneficial employees in the workplace (Maccoby, 2004). Psychopathic leaders may be deviant and approach situations in the workplace with a negative outlook. They can be great communicators and hold strong crisis management skills (Dutton, Lilienfeld, Latzman, Smith, & Watts, 2014) which gives them the appearance of having a positive impact on their work environment, which in the short term can actually be the case.

One of the components of being successful in the workplace is to have persistence. Studies have shown that psychopaths are very persistent individuals (Patrick, 2010). What hinders their ultimate success is their inability to control their anger and hostile mannerisms. Psychopathic leaders are capable of leading a team however their work ethic does not include teamwork and strong communication skills. Their strong skills are reflected in their ability to take risks and are bold in their decision-making (Dutton, Lilienfeld, Latzman, Smith, & Watts, 2014). In order for psychopathic leaders to be productive, intellectual, and strong leaders they must also be emotionally intelligent. Understanding an individual’s personal responsibility for the greater good of a workplace and a team is the first step in maintaining and growing one’s emotional intelligence in the workplace (Boyatzis, R. & Osten, E.V., 2002). As a leader, knowing your own responsibility and the role you play in your workplace, thus understanding your role in the bigger picture can result in the greatest impact to a work environment. When one fails to see the bigger picture, growth and success is less likely.

**Impact on Organizational Environment**

In order for an organization to survive in a chaotic business environment filled with uncertainty, constant change, and increasing regulation, it is important to understand how and why psychopathic leaders are able to manipulate employees and the organizational environment as a whole (Babiak & Hare, 2006). Psychopathic leaders possess several psychopathic traits that are often mistaken for ideal leadership skills, which answers the question as to why these individuals are able to manipulate employees and organizations (Babiak & Hare, 2006). The pitfall to the organization becomes evident, however, when examining how psychopathic leaders institute manipulation. A common method is by creating conflict and tension between other employees, and in so doing create opportunities to benefit from, creating conflicts of interest (Boddy, 2005). Benefits include diverting attention away from his or her nefarious activities, and manipulating events to their own agenda (Boddy, 2005).

The risks associated with placing individuals who lack ethical values and consciousness in leadership positions are extensive (Boddy, 2005; Wellons, 2012). For one, those individuals are given the power to make decisions that can have a serious impact on the lives of others within their organization (Boddy, 2005). When a leader puts self-interest and self-enrichment before corporate longevity and success, and makes important decisions without consideration of empathy or social fairness, it limits the sense of corporate social responsibility, which in turn can have a negative impact on shareholders of the organization (Boddy, 2005). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as, “Business’s commitment to behave ethically and contribute to economic growth, quality of life for workforce and families, and improve quality of the local community and larger society” (Wellons, 2012, p. 44). CSR is considered a vital aspect to business success, with 81% of professional investors labeling it as “central” and “important,” with the expectation that the company will emphasize and enhance their CSR (Wellons, 2012). A corporate psychopath, however, does not operate according to such standards, and will not pass up the opportunity for profit in order to fulfill social responsibility or fairness (Wellons, 2012). Examples of such situations include banning child labor, failure to abide by fair labor laws, or even meeting environmental standards.

In further support of the argument that psychopathic leadership ultimately leads to the long-term destruction of an organization, Clive Boddy offers The Corporate Psychopaths Theory of the Financial Crisis (2011). Boddy explains the theory as follows, “Corporate Psychopaths, rising to key senior positions within modern financial corporations, where they are able to influence the moral climate of the whole organisation and yield considerable power, have largely caused the crisis” (Boddy, 2011, p. 258). Boddy (2011) expands on the theory by noting that changes in the way employees are hired have facilitated the rise of corporate psychopaths to senior positions, and it is the psychopath’s self-serving pursuit of their own enrichment over the value of corporate social responsibility that has created the crisis.

Gaining more understanding about the impact of psychopathic leadership on employee wellbeing, performance, and corporate social responsibility is important because of the detrimental consequences of large corporations being destroyed by the actions of senior directors (Boddy, 2011). Employees, shareholders, and the community surrounding the organization all run the risk of falling victim to the psychopathic leader’s self-serving agenda (Boddy, 2011). Not only does employee wellbeing and performance suffer, but employees also run the risk of losing their jobs (Boddy, 2011; Faillace, 2016). Shareholders lose their investments, sometimes even their life savings, through the internal destruction caused by corporate psychopaths (Boddy 2011). When a leader fails to uphold the organization’s Corporate Social Responsibility and the relationship with shareholders becomes damaged, the society as a whole feels the impact in that it loses key parts of its economic infrastructure (Boddy, 2011). This review of the existing literature on the long-term destruction caused under psychopathic leadership raises fundamental concerns, and highlights areas that can be explored in future research.

## CONCLUSION

As previously noted, research suggests that psychopathic leadership occurs at an incidence of approximately 3.5% at senior organizational levels (Boddy, 2015). Additionally, one in five corporate bosses are potential psychopaths (Agerholm, 2016; Boddy, 2015). The reiteration of these statistics warrants further discussion due to the fact that such leadership has detrimental effects on employees well being and productivity (Faillace, 2016), and the organization as a whole (Boddy 2005; Madjidi, Fraizer, & Miramontes, 2015).

Further research would benefit in examining the role of emotional intelligence and how it can be taught within the population of corporate psychopaths. Additionally, as human resource management and hiring practices are often credited with enabling corporate psychopaths to infiltrate organizations, future research should focus on identifying effective assessments for HR personnel to use in screening individuals for their personality constructs, rather than simply their skills, in order to vet out corporate psychopaths from the hiring process and promotion pools (Agerholm, 2016; Wellons, 2012).

Finally, while the negative implications of psychopathic leadership have been made evident, there are cases to be made for individuals who appear to have a greater capacity for success resulting from psychopathic tendencies compared to those who don't exhibit such tendencies (Alton, 2016). In an article by Sarah Knapton (2016), successful leaders such as Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and even Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher, were found to score high for psychopathic personality traits. The article explains, "Both great and terrible leaders score higher than the general population for psychopathic traits, but it is the mix of those traits that determines success" (Knapton, 2016). Additional research in this area should be considered in attempt to learn how individuals can utilize the more adaptive traits and skills to get ahead in business, rather than mimicking the toxic ones, and ultimately to facilitate the growth of a more positive organizational environment (Alton, 2016).

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# Enhancing China's Education Policy and Developing an Entrepreneurial Economy

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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## ABSTRACT

*According to the World Bank, in 2008 over 40 million Chinese people or 4.5% live below the national poverty level (para. 3). The lack of resources to develop sustainable economic ecosystems present an opportunity for indigenous innovative approaches to increase both prosperity and the efficacy of compulsory education in underserved areas across the country (World Bank, 2010). China is at a juncture and poised to extend its global economic influence. This paper examines social entrepreneurship (Yunus, 2010) that can be integrated into China's educational system curricula to raise the quality of education and better prepare graduates to prosper economically in local, rural communities. Furthermore, this paper explores if existing social entrepreneurship structures support China's 13th Five-Year Plan (Koleski, 2017), specifically to expand educational opportunities in the form of new programs to increase economic prosperity for the people of China.*

## Introduction

China is at a crossroads. The country faces political, economic, educational, and social challenges. On the political front, several members of the Politburo Standing Committee could retire which may cause a reshuffling of the top leadership. Traditionally, the leader serving in the role of President and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary serve a two-term limit, of which each term is five years in length. This informal rule has been in place since the death of Chairman Mao Zedong in 1976.

According to Wang (2017), President and CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has launched an anti-corruption campaign which has destabilized political networks in the Chinese Party. Wong (2017) writes that President Xi Jinping is emplacing key allies in top leadership positions. These actions are a sign that China's president is consolidating power and may extend his term in office.

According to Ong (2017), President Xi serves as the "core" of the Chinese government leadership, a sign he could change the rule, extending his power beyond the end of his second term in 2022. The term "core leader" has been bestowed on three leaders besides President Xi: Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin (Wang, 2017).

When Xi Jinping came to power at the Eighteenth Party Congress in 2012, he continued the actions of his predecessor, President Hu Jintao, to roll back the political reforms instituted by the Chinese government from 1998 to 2008. The reforms were aimed at making the government all-encompassing and accepting. In 2009, senior government leaders officially began to view the reforms as threatening the power of the Chinese Communist Party and initiated actions to sweep away the gains made through political reform efforts in the previous 10 years (Shambaugh, 2016a). The government has focused its efforts on restricting social activists, intellectuals, and foreign and domestic non-government organizations (NGOs), and publications (Shambaugh, 2016b). The new restrictions have a potential to stunt the developing economy and intellectual growth as well as become a barrier to the prosperity of the Chinese people.

## Call to Action

The current economic, social, educational, and political challenges facing China at national and local levels are potential barriers to the growth and prosperity of the Chinese people. Over its history, the Chinese government's policies have swung between repression and reform. But, the government has a choice to continue on the present course of hard authoritarian policies, and the current social and economic problems will persist. Or, they can choose the soft authoritarian option, essentially returning to the policies of the time period 1998-2008 (Shambaugh, 2016a).

As China looks to expand its influence, it has the opportunity to lead the world community in creating an environment where everyone can prosper. This aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in which "No Poverty" is the first goal (United Nations, 2015). To create a prosperous environment for everyone, the government can look to the Chinese entrepreneurial population to provide leadership. Furthermore, entrepreneurship in China has been on the rise since Deng Xiaoping initiated the

Four Modernizations in 1978. Furthermore, Chinese entrepreneurs have developed more than six million private businesses over the last 35 years that have contributed approximately 70% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). These businesses have had a positive impact on prosperity, raising approximately 200 million Chinese out of poverty (Shambaugh, 2016a). The current generation of Chinese entrepreneurs has an average age of 31 of whom nearly 44% are in the 25-34 age group, and 32% have a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 80% have prior work experience (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014), which presents an opportunity for the government to leverage their experiences to develop businesses in less than prosperous communities to support current government policies.

As identified in the 13th Five-Year Plan, one of the goals of the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) policy is to facilitate economic development in the Western provinces (Koleski, 2017). Migrant entrepreneurs often maintain relationships with their home communities and transfer skills and business knowledge (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). As part of the migration policy from rural to urban environments, the government could support reverse migration of workers and entrepreneurs back to their home communities. Therefore, less prosperous provinces in China can take advantage of returning workers and entrepreneurs by leveraging their experience and business know-how to create an entrepreneurial environment in their home communities (Su, Zhai, Landstrom, 2015; Wu et al., 2016). Furthermore, the government can lower the entry barriers for entrepreneurs and enact policies that facilitate entrepreneurship (Yu, Yin, Zheng, & Li, 2017). Although the skillsets developed by these migrant workers can be brought back to rural communities through a process of government supported reverse migration, there remains a vacuum in introducing those skillsets to the students in rural communities.

A challenge exists in that, while some higher education systems in China have integrated social entrepreneurship into their curricula (Jacob & Wanhua, 2013), the numbers show a high percentage of those in rural provinces never reach that level of education thereby limiting their exposure to this potential innovative economic solution.

Social entrepreneurship (SE) is a concept that has the potential to raise prosperity within the OBOR region. In practice, SE innovates through creative solutions manifested to solve economic challenges. Social entrepreneurs envision the large-scale transformational benefits that occur from partnering with underserved and disadvantaged populations (Martin & Osberg, 2007), and are ideally positioned to dovetail with the 13th Five-Year Plan's innovation-driven development as the "cornerstone of China's development strategy" (Koleski, 2017, p. 6). Moreover, these partnerships have the potential to establish a new equilibrium and a better future for underserved segments of society (Martin & Osberg, 2007). One of the tenets of the 13th Five-Year Plan is inclusive growth. Using SE as a practice can bring about a more expansive reach thereby increasing inclusive growth by reducing poverty and raising the Chinese citizens' standard of living (Koleski, 2017). By endorsing the concept of SE within the OBOR region, a new equilibrium can be achieved to develop a sustainable system that raises the economic prosperity throughout the less prosperous Western provinces in China (Martin & Osberg, 2015).

## Literature Review

The restrictions on connecting the citizens of China and the academic community to the outside world has an impact on the Chinese people's ability to be truly innovative and participate fully in the global economy (Shambaugh, 2016b). However, China innovates in other ways with government investment in top-down research and development which is an industrial policy.

To transition to an innovative economy, restrictions need to be lifted on connectivity to the outside world so the creativity of the Chinese people can be leveraged to create truly innovative new product lines which will create a new wave of entrepreneurs. The Chinese have a history of entrepreneurship, with Chinese entrepreneurialism being one of three drivers of China's growth over the last thirty years (Shambaugh, 2016a). Over the past decade, domestic entrepreneurs have shifted from necessity based entrepreneurship to opportunity based entrepreneurship (Huang, Liu, & Li, 2016). Nevertheless, entrepreneurship and innovation are different. Innovation is a process where new ideas are developed into new product lines while entrepreneurship is developing new ways to bring products and services to market. China has a history of imitating products from other companies and making incremental innovations to existing products (Shambaugh, 2016a). Although, in recent years, China has started to move away from being an imitative economy to being an innovative economy as evidenced by the host of new science and technology programs instigated by the Chinese government ( Fu, Woo, & Hou, 2016). China continues to strive toward being an innovative economy as demonstrated in their current 13th Five-Year Plan.

### The 13th Five-Year Plan

China's historic Five-Year Plan has transitioned through five distinct stages in its evolution: in the first stage, the first and second plans used an "internal collective decision-making" model; the second stage was that of an authoritarian model of decision-making encompassing the second through the fourth plans; the third stage revived the internal collective model during the fifth and sixth plan; in the fourth stage, China used a "consultation-based" model for the seventh through the ninth plans; and, the fifth stage encompasses a brainstorming mode of decision-making (Angang, 2013, p. 633). All of these plans have allowed China to move through their different stages of the Communist Party's vision for China, as well as shape the economic trajectories.

China's current Five-Year Plan, in effect from 2016 through 2020, is the 13th plan since the Communist Party came into power. As the plans have transitioned over the years, they no longer contain a singular economic focus. Historically plans were strictly implemented based on economics and quotas, ultimately creating disastrous effects on much of the country. These challenges led to more attention being given to environmental protection and social programs in future plans (R, 2015). The 13th Five-Year Plan covers the themes of Innovation-Driven Development, Coordinated Development, Green Growth, Openness, and Inclusive Growth (Koleski, 2017). It is this latest plan that informs much of the framework of this paper and research. In it, the themes of Innovation-Driven Development, Openness, and Inclusive Growth will be examined.

## Innovation-Driven Development

China's 13th Five-Year Plan stresses the umbrella of innovation and technology as an accelerator in becoming an international leader in innovation by 2030. Within this theme, China anticipates two elements to enhance their innovation capacity, one of which is Internet penetration that has the capacity to improve connectivity throughout China (Koleski, 2017). Thus, increasing connectivity between the East and West opening additional opportunities.

## Openness

One Belt One Road (OBOR) was initially revealed in 2013 as the anchor of the 13th Five-Year Plan. The goal of this initiative is to open access to natural resources as well as to foster economic growth in China's underserved Western provinces along OBOR. Although this initiative opens the region to support, China has prioritized its own economic interests and limited access for non-Chinese firms to engage (Koleski, 2017). Using indigenous innovations, such as social entrepreneurship, allow support to manifest organically within China's OBOR region sans reliance on foreign support.

## Inclusive Growth

The 13th Five-Year Plan's theme of inclusive growth aims to pursue elements that help reduce poverty, increase the standard of living, and promote education. This theme also supports the United Nations' primary goal of "no poverty" (United Nations, 2015). One of the tenets of this theme is to raise the standard of living throughout China. There are more than 70 million people in impoverished regions mostly concentrated in rural areas of China (Koleski, 2017). To raise these rural regions out of economic poverty, there must be innovative and creative solutions. The expansion of quality education, a subset of this theme, within the poor and rural areas of China is to mitigate the equity gap between urban-rural and rich-poor (Koleski, 2017) and dovetail into the theme of innovation-driven development, by giving Internet access to rural regions, manifesting local capacity building as well as potentially fostering innovation. Although these initiatives within the 13th Five-Year Plan work to develop China's role as a competitive global economy, the One Belt, One Road initiative is touted as the cornerstone of the current five-year plan.

## One Belt One Road: Emerging Economic Opportunities

China's One Belt, One Road initiative is China's roadmap toward primary economic influence status in the Eurasia region (Koleski, 2017). The OBOR aims to boost economic development in China's less prosperous provinces (Koleski, 2017). As a case in point, according to Koleski, the 13$^{th}$ Five-Year Plan identifies the Western provinces as economically disadvantaged. These provinces lack resources to develop economic ecosystems, that open the door for social innovations. Moreover, as China looks to the future and its goals to increase its economic influence on the world stage, it must make the needed political reforms so its society and the economy can reach new levels of prosperity (Shambaugh, 2016b). Actively embracing the concept of social entrepreneurship is one approach to address some of the economic, financial, educational, and political tensions facing the national and local governments in this country. Education could potentially serve as a mechanism to raise the level of prosperity within the OBOR region in China.

**The Chinese Educational System Confucianism and Beyond**

As far as the 16th century BC, Chinese scholars surmise is when education in China started to take shape. However, during that time, the Chinese educational system was geared to the elite and the teachings of ‘Confucianism’ were preeminent (Website, China Education Center Ltd, n.d.). Notwithstanding, the common man was not a consideration during this period as it related to education. Yet, during the Han Dynasty, the educational system was reformulated to include the entire populous in China; not just those of the higher echelon. Correspondingly, in 1986, the National People's Congress reinforced the "Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China," thus legalizing basic education as the standard in China. This law commenced the 9-year compulsory education system. Today, China boasts the largest educational system in the world. Moreover, in 2011, roughly 9.3 million students took the National College Entrance Exam of which 6.75 million were admitted to college with an admission rate of 72.3% (Hanaway, 2011), ten times higher than 30 years ago. Both in terms of enrollment rate and the number of students, higher education in China has successfully transformed from serving the elite to serving the masses. The decentralization and marketization reforms have

been undoubtedly successful to enlarge the capacity of higher education for increased number of students (Zhao & Qui, 2012).

Education in China’s inland is governed at three levels: national, provincial, and local.

- National: The Ministry of Education serves as the clearinghouse and sanctioning body for standardizing education.
- Provincial: Educational leaders at the local level implement and manage policy under the regulations and guidelines instituted by the state.
- Local: Education officials lead and supervise elementary education curricula and services (Michael, 2016).

**Challenges.** Economic prosperity has enabled the government to increase funding in an effort to achieve equality of education and access to rural China. Although China is still comparable to middle-income nations within the global arena, it is challenged with positively impacting the percentage of marginalized migrant workers and their children that reside in the Western provinces. To further illustrate, grave inequities permeate ethnic minorities and girls in rural areas (Inter-American Development Bank, 2016). As such, social enterprises and social entrepreneurship ‘best practices’ can positively affect systemic change and create sustainable pathways to local, rural areas.

To name one example of effective social entrepreneurship, the Leping Group founded by two renown Chinese economists, Mao Yushi and Tang Ming, began a micro-credit trial program for Shanxi province’s rural villagers, to much success. Among the Leping Group’s entrepreneurial and social ‘investment impact’ pursuits, including early childhood education, they made a pivotal decision to play a key role in building a helpful environment for social enterprises and social innovation in China (ICSF, 2014). As the Leping Group experienced exponential growth, its leaders realized in order to offer scalability and replicability of their operations, the social enterprise sector as a whole needed to engender systemic change. Furthermore, there was a shortfall of individuals with expertise and skills in social innovation (ICSF, 2014). To address this shortage, Leping Group launched an E-MBA program for social innovation leaders, in partnership with Peking University, the Non-profit Incubator (NPI, a social entrepreneur incubator), and Shan Shui Conservation Center (ICSF, 2014). Intuitively, in 2013, the Leping Group imported the Social Venture Partners (SVP) model from the U.S. to build a network of middle-class professionals to support social entrepreneurs in China (Inter-American Development Bank, 2016).

**9-Year Compulsory Education.** Over 170 countries use compulsory education for a minimum timeframe to protect children's education rights (Law, 2007). In 1986, China began providing nine years of compulsory education through the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China policy. The educational system includes the mandatory nine-year schooling, primary through junior secondary education, and senior secondary education, which lasts three years and requires parental financial support. However, in 2006, the policy was significantly revised which expanded the policy from 18 articles to 63 articles. The original policy primarily focused on quantity where the revision addresses the quality and equality of basic education. Article 11 in the revised law, revisits equal opportunity to reiterate that children over 6 years of age, or over 7 years of age in less developed areas, receive 9 years of compulsory education (Law, 2007).

The revised policy now clearly states students are to be exempt from tuition and miscellaneous fees in compulsory education; and in 2015, the policy was updated to stipulate textbooks can be priced only at marginal profit and free in rural areas (OECD, 2016). Although compulsory education is no-tuition/no-fee, financial factors remain a significant role in determining the dropout decision (Yi et al., 2012). Researchers recommend, "one possibility for the school system is to provide positive cash incentives for schooling among at-risk populations. This could come in the form of a conditional cash transfer, as has been used with general success in many Latin American countries" (Yi et al., 2012, p. 561).

In 2005, the State Council issued an official notice on Deepening the Reform of Funds for Rural Compulsory Education. The law was groundbreaking due to how it brought together a new financial structure for compulsory education specifically in rural areas (OECD, 2016). By the year 2010, 97% of rural compulsory education funding was being appropriated by the government and the Transformation Plan for Underdeveloped Rural Compulsory Education Schools was implemented (Ministry of Finance, 2014; OECD, 2016).

Since the compulsory education policy was implemented, there have been differing views on its success regarding the dropout rate (Yi et al., 2012). As such, the Chinese government reports conflicting statistics to other studies. In 2007, the government reported a decreased dropout rate from 8% pre-policy to less than 2% (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). Although none of the conflicting statistics offer random sampling, one of many studies found the cumulative dropout rate reaching 40% (Moxley, 2010). Furthermore, poverty, which predominantly exists in the Western regions of China, is favorably correlated with dropout rates. Studies have proven this correlation between poverty and dropout occurs in China (Brown & Park, 2002; Connelly & Zheng, 2003; Yang & Han, 1991; Yi et al., 2012). In addition to poverty, the competitive academic environment students' face plays a large role in dropout (Yi et al., 2012).

The secondary education gross enrollment in 2014 was 94% and 64% in 2006 (UNESCO-UIS, 2016). Furthermore, in 2012, about 10% of students who completed compulsory education terminated their secondary education thereafter (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2014). Additionally, vocational fields in secondary schooling are offered for free to students living in rural areas (OECD, 2016). In addition, national grants averaging 500 CNY annually are offered to senior high school students in economically disadvantaged families. Approximately 20% of senior high school students in China benefit from this grant option (OECD, 2016). Other options for students needing financial assistance for higher education come in the form of fellowships, national scholarships, and national student loans.

For example, a young Chinese man with a younger brother and sister grew up in rural Heyuan where his family ran a small business. Although offered a free education in his hometown, better schools with a more promising future are in Guangzhou. Hukou and school fees prevented him from receiving a better education, so he completed high school in Heyuan and moved to Guangzhou for college (H. Huang, personal communication, June 11, 2017). The young man explained that students who move for better opportunity are able to apply for scholarships, but it is hard to obtain (H. Huang, personal communication, June 11, 2017). When asked what he suggests the Chinese government does to improve the compulsory education policy, he stated:

> *Most Chinese are stuck in the same class as their parents. We can see the lack of social mobility in China. Colleges can make it possible for poor people with motivation to succeed. Unfortunately, many of my childhood friends go to work after 9-year compulsory education because they can't afford the senior secondary education. Therefore, they don't get the chance to take the Higher Education Entrance Examination. To improve the 9-year compulsory education policy, the government should provide more funding for students to finish secondary education, so that the students may get the chance to go to college. It is important for poor children to move from the bottom quartile to the higher level in their lifetimes (*H. Huang, *personal communication, June 11, 2017).*

**Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship is a concept that has been practiced for hundreds of years, albeit under different names (Fraizer, 2009; Fraizer & Madjidi, 2011; Dees, 2001). The focus of these ventures is engaging market-based systems to resolve social challenges (Grimes, McMullen, Vogus, & Miller, 2012). Although this descriptor encompasses the foundation of SE, there remain discrepancies over how to fully capture the essence of this business model. Mair and Martí (2006) state social entrepreneurship is "a process that catalyzes social change and addresses important social needs in a way that is not dominated by direct financial benefits for the entrepreneurs" (p. 36). While both contexts address the social benefit, the latter emphasizes the foundational tenet that monetary gain is not the primary driver.

Traditional entrepreneurship has been set in the business arena with a profit motive, while social entrepreneurship has the connotation of altruism (Mair & Martí, 2006; Lan et al., 2014). It is a combination of these two elements, business skills, and an altruistic mission, that are critical to success as a social entrepreneur (Lan et al., 2014). By achieving financial sustainability as well as benefiting marginalized segments of society, social ventures can serve both business and social goals, while transforming economic systems (Osberg & Martin, 2015). Martin and Osberg (2007) argue social entrepreneurs recognize unjust equilibriums that affect underserved and disadvantaged populations in society and take actions to manifest value as a benefit that establishes a new, sustainable equilibrium and better future for the marginalized segment of society. This duality of motivations, monetary benefits, and being a commercially viable market solution, is the primary factor in defining this business model (Lan, Zhu, Ness, Xing, & Schneider, 2014).

For this paper, SE refers to the role of a social change agent encompassing specific characteristics. Social entrepreneurs focus on a vision to develop and maintain social value, identify and engage in opportunities that move that goal forward, continually innovate, adapt, and grow while maximizing limited resources and exhibit increased accountability to the stakeholders they serve (Dees, 2001). Although these are the ultimate qualities of a SE, it is prudent to note not all characteristics will be used in the same way, simultaneously, or to the same degree of effectiveness (Dees, 2001).

**China Entrepreneurship**

Throughout China’s history, entrepreneurship has prevailed. Largely found in rural areas, where the control of the totalitarian state was not as strictly enforced, family businesses, family plots, and trade bazaars functioned similarly to underground markets (Iacob, 2015). Although the concept of entrepreneurship has permeated China throughout its history (Li & Matlay, 2004), entrepreneurship was not identified academically in China until the late 1970s (Iacob & Nedelea, 2014). Due to the socialist climate of China, up to that time, entrepreneurship was not supported by the government as virtually anything relating to enterprise had to be approved (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). Moreover, the entrepreneurial for-profit industry was seen as a capitalistic symbol and was officially forbidden; acceptance of this model and industry was a long and difficult process (Zhao, 2012). Conversely, in the last 35 years, this climate has shifted dramatically. Funding for research in the arena of entrepreneurship has grown exponentially since identified as a priority field of study by the National Natural Science Foundation of China. With increased funding from 130,000 CNY in 2000 to 15,060,000 CNY in 2012, entrepreneurship is one of the most active areas of research in China (Zhai, Su, & Ye, 2014).

In China, research has shown that the entrepreneurial spirit is made up of “two attributes: familism on the one hand and, on the other hand, relational capital is known as ‘GuanXi" (Iacob & Nedelea, 2014, p. 81; Su, Zhai, & Landstrom, 2015). *Guanxi*, or personal network relationships, is known as one of the most important and powerful forces within Chinese culture and without it, it would be difficult for businesses to expand (Li & Matlay, 2004). As stated by Su, Zhai, and Landstrom (2015), “… *guanxi* operates in concentric circles. Close family members are at the centre; distant relatives, classmates, friends, and acquaintances are at the periphery” (p. 54). These networks developed, due to the challenges found in an inconsistent and weak legal institutional landscape, created a deeply ingrained cultural structure of support (Iacob & Nedelea, 2014; Li & Matlay, 2004). These foundational components, largely derived from a Confucian culture, are heterogeneous to those of other countries that rely on contexts without a framework of family or strong hierarchical structures (Su et al., 2015). Although entrepreneurship has been an area of academic study for three decades in China, the exploration of social entrepreneurship within this context is, comparatively, in a nascent stage.

**China Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship, as a business model with philanthropic goals, was not published in academia in China until 2004, when Peking University Professor Liu Jitong's article on social enterprises appeared in *China Social Work* (Zhao, 2012). In 2006, the first book in China on social entrepreneurship, *How to Change the World*, was published (Zhou et al., 2013). Even with entrepreneurship as a cultural mainstay in China, the concept of SE is much newer, getting its foothold as an economic model through the nonprofit sector (ICSF, 2014; Lee, 2012). The term, social entrepreneurship, was coined in the academic world during the 1990s in the United States (Bacq & Janssen, 2011), but has only more recently infiltrated regions such as China. Due to the inception of this concept originating outside of China, the lexicon needs to be translated to be fully understood. As stated in the *ICSF Study of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystems in South-East and East Asian Countries* (2016), "social entrepreneurship in China is most commonly referred to as 'the start up for public-interest ventures" (p. 5). To translate the definition, the term 'public interest' is the equivalent of 'social' and is understood with the same connotation as philanthropy. Moreover, in July of 2004, the Global Links Initiative, a membership organization founded in the United Kingdom, was the first organization to promote SE in China (Zhao, 2012). The United Kingdom was a key partner in disseminating the concept of social enterprise within China (Zhao, 2012).

Social Enterprise within the rural communities has increased significantly due to the shifting political climate as well as the economic growth, fueling inequalities between rural and urban China (Lee, 2012). As public policy opens to allow entrepreneurial efforts (Lee, 2012), those in rural areas have collaborated to advance their communities. Village leaders within these rural areas have clear social agendas for the good of their communities and many do so through forming "cooperatives as collectively owned enterprises" (Lan, Zhu, Ness, Xing, & Schneider, 2014, p. 380). It is within these enterprises, entrepreneurs are able to obtain and gain knowledge that allows them to apply innovation, creativity, and self-learning to grow their business (Lan et al., 2014; Frazier, 2009). Expanded education supporting entrepreneurship would aid these up and coming leaders to create successful social partnerships. Although this concept benefits the communities, there are still challenges encountered. Shifting from a socialistic environment to one of creation and innovation requires the social entrepreneur to rely on self-determination, adaptive thinking, flexible action, and persistence (Lan et al., 2014).

In 2007, Wang Ping founded the China Social Entrepreneur Foundation with a group of business entrepreneurs and state officials. This institution works to combine philanthropic and investment models to support the public good. As a new way of doing business focusing on poverty relief with substantial government investment and support, the foundation has been able to expand significantly (Lan et al., 2014). As the term social entrepreneur begins to take root in Chinese culture, there are businesses that have flourished. Shokay is one of China's first social-enterprises formed by two Harvard graduates with the goal to combine philanthropy and business (Zhou et al., 2013). This social innovation, partnered with economically underserved yak herders in Western China to supply yak down to create woven retail goods. The goal was to alleviate poverty in the region and create luxury yak down clothing and products for global distribution (Wong, 2006; Shokay, 2017). Using a vertical business model, Shokay sources, processes, and finishes their products procuring the services of people from underserved and economically disadvantaged regions (Wong, 2006). As SE continues to expand in China, it is reasonable to think this new wave will be fueled by the up and coming middle and upper classes of China. These younger generations have a greater depth of understanding of this concept and “a strong interest in social enterprises” (Zhao, 2012, p. 35). Although much of the expansion of SE is dependent on the political climate, those focusing on philanthropic efforts might find more relaxed bureaucratic red tape (Zhao, 2012).

**Innovation and Technology**

While China continues to move forward as a global economy, education and innovation must play a significant role in its development. As stated in the World Economic Forum (2016), “To be truly innovative, a country should … provide a networked, connected environment that promotes creativity and entrepreneurship, fosters collaboration, and rewards individuals who are open-minded and embrace new ways to perform tasks” (p. 54). Within this same environment, the advancement of and innovation in the educational structure are critical factors (Schwab, 2016). In the past, the government of China has tightly managed the Chinese private sector and educational systems dampening innovation and creativity, hindering “academic freedom, market competition, and the free flow of ideas, the key foundation and driver of innovation” (Koleski, 2017, p. 9). Allowing access to higher-quality education within these underserved Western regions significantly accelerates knowledge absorption and diffusion. As stated by Wu et al. (2016), “Rural economic growth is associated with the adoption of new technology…” (p. 10). China’s support of a national innovation system reaching into these rural areas would aid in mitigating the inequities found between regions as well as promote economic development by bridging the current information gap (Wu et al., 2016).

The Internet Plus plan first announced in the 2015 Government Work Report was also highlighted in the 13th Five-Year Plan. The Internet Plus Plan is meant to transform and upgrade existing industries using technology, specifically the Internet. This conduit is expected to exponentially expand connectivity throughout all major industries in China aiming to promote innovation through “...Mobile Internet, Cloud Computing, Big Data, and the Internet of Things...” (Xu, 2015, p. 1). As these rural regions gain more technology through the Internet Plus Plan, the opportunities for information and access to quality education also rises. All of these result in added innovation as well as more creative business solutions that increase economic prosperity within the Western provinces of China.

The objective of the paper is to provide a recommendation to the Chinese government to enhance its educational policy as it relates to the 9-year compulsory education, which is one area of focus in the 13$^{th}$ Five Year Plan. The following is considered:

- Evaluating the Nine-year Compulsory Education Policy as it supports economic prosperity through creative business solutions in the Western rural provinces, aligning with the 13th Five-Year Plan and OBOR.

## Recommended Policy Change

With the limited access of quality education in the rural Western provinces of China and only 10% of students moving beyond the 9-year compulsory education structure in these regions (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2014), developing innovative programs within the 9-year compulsory system encouraging innovative and creative thinking, such as social entrepreneurship, develops outcomes of local capacity building and economic transformation (Lan et al., 2014). Realizing China has inherent cultural roots in entrepreneurship (Li & Matlay, 2004), exposing students in the compulsory education system to these concepts would allow them to further develop indigenous innovative and creative solutions that raise the economic levels of their communities.

Innovation requires an educational system founded on critical thinking and freedom to explore openly as demonstrated in the growing influence of *Maker Movements* globally. Students should be incentivized to explore intellectually, challenge the way things are done, and make and learn from mistakes. China currently does not have an educational system that supports innovation (Shambaugh, 2016b). Therefore, China is exploring using makerspaces in its higher education system. Maker education is based on the constructivist theory, where a student works on a problem and transfers his or her ideas into solutions through the process of making. China has one of the world's largest makerspaces at Tsinghua University in Beijing (Tan,Yang, & Yu, 2016). The ideas and experiences from the university makerspaces can be accessed by educators and students throughout China and utilized in the 9-year compulsory education.

The recommended change is piloting a constructivist, experiential-based educational system with a focus on SE within the 9-year compulsory structure. This SE structure would help equip students with the foundation necessary to be critical and creative thinkers. Moreover, students graduating from these programs will be better able to contribute to their local communities. This would-be policy change is in the best interest of the Chinese government and offers students a new path. Staying on the current path leads to continued social unrest, lack of economic progress, political system challenges, and overall legitimacy.

## Alternatives to an Innovative Approach to Education and Social Entrepreneurship

Aligned with the goals of the 13$^{th}$ Five-Year Plan, there is an opportunity to improve the efficacy of education for the rural areas and move these geographical areas up the value-added succession through self-reliant innovation (Koleski, 2017). Expanding education to encourage innovation, such as through social entrepreneurship solutions within these regions, manifests outcomes of local capacity building and economic transformation (Lan et al., 2014).

With the interconnectivity mentioned above through online initiatives and incentivized reverse migration policies, students will be more prepared to contribute ideas and solutions that will increase economic prosperity in rural areas. An approach to creating an educational system that supports innovation could have these components:

- Expand educational policies (Koleski, 2017) to include that upon completion of the educational program, participants would go to a rural area, designated by the government and teach for three years in a rural community, aligned with the current Ministry of Education policies, and at the end of that term, their loans would be forgiven (personal communication, June 11, 2017).

- Increase connectivity and flow of ideas and information from the economically prosperous areas in the Eastern region of the country to the rural and Western provinces. This would include connecting existing makerspaces in cities like Beijing with rural schools. This is supported by the Internet Plus concept in the 13th Five-Year Plan (Koleski, 2017). Additionally, this can be done through online learning forums, such as ‘communities of practice’ and other Internet-based initiatives which may help bridge the digital divide. Enabling best practices to be shared in this interconnected digital landscape, increases the flow of information (Brodie, 2016) which could generate new ideas that have the potential to turn into new educational opportunities. Also, existing platforms such as ‘We Chat’ can be leveraged. In 2016, 58% of Chinese citizens owned a smartphone and an additional 38%  have cell phones. Furthermore, there are over 600 million of the Chinese population using this mobile platform in their daily lives (Poushter, 2016). The transfer of knowledge that will occur with increased, meaningful interaction between residents in the economically prosperous areas and  rural Western provinces, will enable receivers of the knowledge to make sense of it, adapt it, and apply it in an approach that works locally (Silk, 2012). Yunus (2010, p. 164) gives an example of the *One Village, One Portal* program in Bangladesh where villages are connected to information systems where they can access and collect information to facilitate creative thinking and solutions to local problems. This is a model that could be replicated in China by leveraging the high connectivity which currently exists in Chinese society and connecting villages with existing information and resources that can be applied locally in a creative way, to solve problems.
- Through business oriented incentives, encourage reverse-migration for residents of rural areas that moved East and were successful as workers or entrepreneurs. Their experiences can be leveraged in the local economies through entrepreneurship and educational programs in a practitioner model, such as those seen in “village cooperatives” (Lan et al., 2014, p. 397).

## Conclusion

The significance of this research is to inform the Chinese government of possible actions that can be taken to increase the quality of education in rural areas of the country and promote economic growth and prosperity for less prosperous areas. This study looks to influence decision-makers and stakeholders in organizations that are entrusted with educational and domestic economic policies. Through this research, decision-makers in organizations will be informed as to how social entrepreneurship combined with innovative approaches to education can support the objectives of the Chinese government as laid out in the 13$^{th}$ Five-Year plan and OBOR initiative.

This paper reflects the scholarly lenses of the researchers’ in-country experiences and academic research. The researchers conclude that China is standing at a crossroads as the meeting of the 19$^{th}$ National Party Congress is anticipated in Fall 2017. The decisions made at the meeting may impact both legitimacy and the survival of the Chinese government. The government has a choice of two paths.

One path is stay on the same course the government has charted since President Jinping came to power. Although, this path restricts access to information, increased government involvement in the economy and financial system, increased political repression, increased suppression of free speech, and an educational system that is stagnant. Not equipping the Chinese people and economy with the means to be truly innovative and become an economic powerhouse to improve the quality of life for all Chinese, would only be just for a select portion of the populous.

The second path is the pathway of change, putting into place real social, economic, educational, and political reforms to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the Chinese people. Reforming the 9-year compulsory education policy to include innovative social business solutions can be the catalyst for meaningful change in Chinese society. By increasing connectivity in rural areas to urban, economically prosperous areas, the flow of information and ideas can be leveraged in the classroom empowering rural Chinese students to apply this education to challenges they face in their local communities. Additionally, making use of experienced entrepreneurs and integrating them into the educational system in public-private partnerships can enhance compulsory education for students. Furthermore, introducing students in rural regions to the principles of social entrepreneurship will set a foundation for them to build from and create solutions that will lead to increased economic prosperity in their local communities.

The Chinese government has several critical decisions to consider regarding the future of China. If the leadership of China focuses with an eye to the future and a prosperous vision for all its people, they will increase their legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese people so they may collectively move forward to develop an increasingly innovative economy.

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# A New Approach to Understanding and Strengthening an Organization's Social Context

Presented at the International Center
for Global Leadership Conference
July 2017 – Placencia, Belize

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Abstract

Leaders set the conditions for an organization's culture, which can be a competitive advantage when it is a common, consensual, integrated set of values and definitions. If leaders do not take steps to shape the culture, the culture shapes itself. Before launching a values-based organizational change initiative, leaders need to understand the social context of the organization, the purpose of the authors' research. The framework referenced below has been designed and tested by the researchers using a qualitative method within two different organizational contexts: a graduate student cohort and a firm creating a values-based culture. Used in conjunction with the SPELIT leadership tool and other organizational values assessment frameworks, leaders can gain clarity about the values of personnel and the types of environments they thrive in professionally in order to support organizational change initiatives. This framework focuses on individual core values and personal stories, utilizing both to discover the organization's central values by asking individuals to share core personal values, a story of their best team experience and what actions the leader was taking. Future research may include applying the framework to cross-functional teams and international organizations.

A New Approach to Understanding and Strengthening an Organization's Social Context

The researchers believe that understanding the social context of an organization will help leaders influence the culture in a way that is aligned with the organization's stated mission and purpose. The present paper proposes a qualitative framework to help them move forward in their understanding of the relationship between individual and group values, and a positive organizational culture.

## Literature Review

In the United States of America, people spend the majority of their waking hours at work with their peers, direct reports, supervisors, students, etc. Experience is the primary medium through which adults learn and develop professionally (Kolb, 1984). The experiences people have at work are educational as individuals see how members of the organization treat each other, the behaviors they exhibit, and how they go about accomplishing the organization's mission. Members learn the organizational culture from what they observe in the day-to-day activities at work.

What is culture? Edgar Schein writes, "The culture of a group can now be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2010, p.18).

Culture is created by interactions between leaders and other members of the organization. Leaders influence others and set the conditions for the organization's culture. Rhoades and Shepherdson write, “When you are a leader of a company, division, or department, every one of your actions matters, but particularly those that display your true values. Your people talk about everything you do and it becomes part of your company’s DNA” (Rhoades & Shepherdson, 2011, p.13). The strength of the culture depends on the length of time the organization has been together and the stability of the organization.

Once a culture is established, leaders pass on elements of the culture to new generations of leaders (Schein, 2010). Culture can be a competitive advantage when it is a common, consensual, integrated set of perceptions, memories, values, attitudes, and definitions (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). There are formal and informal methods to reinforce culture. Formal ways include training and leader development programs, internal communications, policy letters, and formal organizational events. Informal methods include leaders modeling desired behavior, informal meetings, and strong leader-subordinate connections (Katzenbach, Steffen & Kronley, 2012).

To be effective, organizational leaders have to understand the organization they are leading. An organization can be assessed by observing its environment. One approach to assessing an organization's environment is to utilize the Social, Political, Economic, Legal, Intercultural, and Technological (SPELIT) leadership tool. This is an adaptable model and depending on the organization, all six environments may not need to be assessed, and may not have equal importance (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). For example, if a new leader wants to focus on the social environment they will use the SPELIT tool to gain awareness (self, others, situation, context), understand existing relationships, and understand the service orientation of leaders and the overall organizational purpose. This model is practical and captures critical dimensions of the social context in organizations that can be useful to assess the current state and to identify gaps between the desired future state.

Another framework available to organizational leaders is the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) which is based on Cameron and Quinn's competing values framework. There are two main dimensions of the model that are organized into four main clusters. One dimension distinguishes organizational effectiveness criteria that emphasize flexibility, discretion, and dynamism from criteria that emphasize stability, order, and control. The second dimension distinguishes effectiveness criteria that highlight an internal orientation, integration, and unity from criteria that emphasize an external orientation, differentiation, and rivalry (see Figure 1). These two dimensions form the four quadrants, each representing a different set of organizational effectiveness indicators. These markers indicate what the members of an organization value about their organization's performance (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

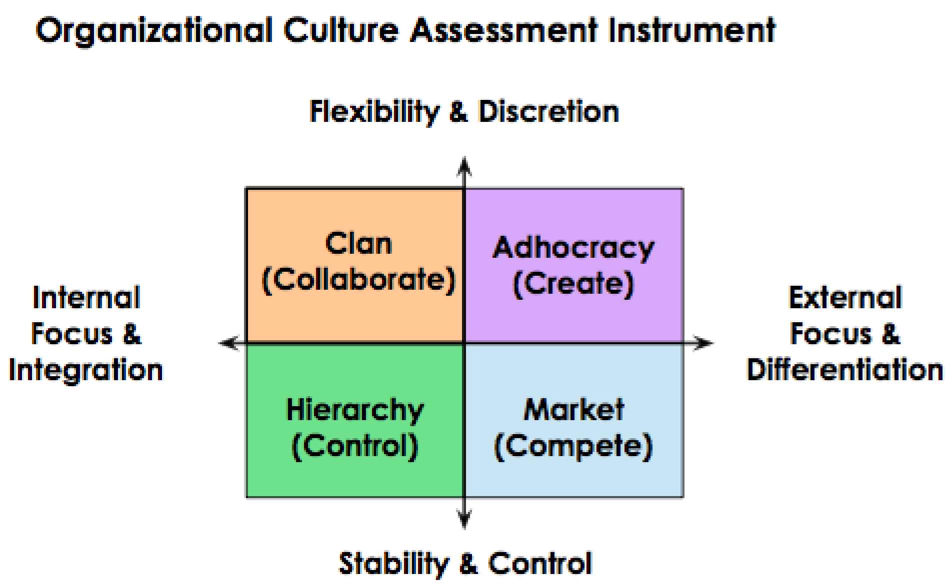


Figure 1. Competing Values Framework, adapted from Cameron, Kim S., & Quinn, Robert E., p. 39, 2011. *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the competing values framework.*

Over time, organizations develop values, beliefs, and customs. The stories members of an organization share reflect what the company believes in, what the values are, and it is a way to share knowledge and experiences across the boundaries of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). A story told well contains, expression, conflict, and resolution (Johnson & Taylor, 2006). A story has the richness of details, has a point, provides insight, and has an emotional impact. Listening to the stories of organization members can be a discovery tool, as the listener will extract values, behaviors, and characteristics of leaders and organizational members. Through stories, they will learn about what the organization does well and what it does not. Stories can share what is the best about an organizational life. The accounts shared represent a snapshot of the current state of the organizational culture. The knowledge of the culture is equivalent to the experiences members have faced. Personal experiential stories are based on events the storyteller has experienced (Schank, 1995). As Williams and Sosland write, "Leaders drive values, not by creating a list for others to follow, but rather by creating an environment that allows each member of the organization to live their values" (2016, p.85). The stories members share offer a window into the values guided environment created by organizational leaders.

Asking members of the organizations to recall memories of resonant leaders and experiences associated with those leaders can put them in a positive state of mind that can lead to the benefits of individuals having higher levels of creativity and being open to new ideas (Boyatzis, Rochford, & Taylor, 2015). The inquiry is an assessment of culture and first steps to change.

Positive emotions can be described as discrete emotions that people use to describe or express a response to a pleasant event or occurrence (Boyatzis, Rochford, & Taylor, 2015). Emotions are contagious and can be shared among workgroups. The more cohesive the group, the stronger the distribution of feelings among the members (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013).

In their supervisory duties, leaders will naturally inquire about how things are going in the organization. They have a choice in how they inquire and the questions they ask. Inquiring in a positive way can put the individual who is being asked the question in a positive mindset and open their mind to more possibilities in conversations about what the organization does well and what the future holds (Boyatzis, Rochford, & Taylor, 2015). When exchanging stories of change, courage, strengths, serving others, organizational members can experience mutual self-appreciation. As the stories of members best, positive experiences in an organization are shared, leaders can use that information to pursue an inquiry into those practices as part of the appreciative inquiry process. Appreciative inquiry is a process of search and discovery, designed to discover the positive core of an organization. The four steps of discovery, dream, design, and destiny can help nurture positive organizational change (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

## Silk-Phillips Framework

The process of discovery can take many forms. Taking the mindset that organizations are human systems full of strengths waiting to be further developed, the questions asked during inquiry lead humans to think in the direction they are asked (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2012). The researchers developed a process, coined the Silk-Phillips Framework that identifies the core values of individuals and to the groups they belong. They summarize it here. In their framework, they ask individuals to name their top five core values. For the purpose of this paper, core values are defined as the uncompromising beliefs and assumptions an individual holds to be true (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Schein, 2010). Then, the researchers ask the individuals to share a story of the best team, group, organization they ever belonged to and what made it great. They then compare the individual core values with the values that are evident from the stories shared and make reasonable assumptions about the organizational values, such as, group two similar values together. The next step is to list all the values on a whiteboard for the group to see and facilitate a discussion around grouping them into like categories, labeling and narrowing them down to three-five values that represent the values of the group. Capturing values and stories brings the positive experiences to light, captures the different team, units, and organization's values, and works to help employees align their values with organizational values if there is a gap. The framework is based on their research and life experiences working in corporate, nonprofit, and military environments. The researchers have experience with storytelling and leading culture change initiatives in organizations.

The Silk-Phillips Framework has been used in practice twice to date. The first time was with the researcher's doctoral cohort at Pepperdine University and was quite successful. From the 13 students, derived a list of 38 core values and stories about their best team, group, or organization experience. The majority of the core values aligned with the values extracted from the stories with fun, trust, commitment, cohesive collaboration, and humility being the most common. Following the framework's suggestion, after listing all of the values on a whiteboard, the cohort collectively determined the apparent categories. After a broad discussion, the doctoral students agreed upon the top four values that represent their cohort: teamwork/collaboration, excellence, growth, respect. The values not only correlated with the individual student's core values and their story but also with the established cohort values. The next step taken was to send out a survey where the cohort defined the values so there was a common definition which would create a shared understanding. Steps are currently being taken to define the behaviors associated with each value, so cohort members understand acceptable behaviors when it comes to discussion, personal interaction, and resolving a conflict.

The second time was when one of the researchers applied the framework in a client engagement in his role as the Executive Director of the University of North Texas Health Science Center Leadership Institute in Fort Worth, Texas. The client was a small IT recruiting firm. The CEO was interested in determining the values of his organization as he launched an organizational change initiative to establish a values-based organization. Following the model listed above, they asked the members of the organization to declare their top three to five values that represented the firm. The group then looked at the commonalities and grouped the values into categories and finally settled on four values that represented them in the firm: winning, accountability, drive, family. They were then asked to share the stories of the greatest teams or groups they had been part of and what made them great. The researcher also asked them to share what the leader was doing and how it made them feel during the experience they were describing. The participants were broken up into small groups in which they shared their stories. Every few minutes the groups were rotated until every member of the organization had heard every other member's story. The next step was to compare the declared values to the values extracted from the stories. There were numerous similarities, and this gave the CEO a clear picture of his organizational values as well as the organizational values and leadership characteristics of the teams and groups the participants had thrived in previously based on their “Best Team” stories.  Next, a round of inquiry focused on the discovery stage of appreciative inquiry occurred where the members of the organization answered the question "what is going well here?" The qualitative data extracted from the stories in response to the inquiry helped provide insight into the direction he needed to take to build a high performing culture, which was one of his stated goals. Lastly, one of the researchers led the firm through the exercise of identifying the behaviors associated with each of the company's values.

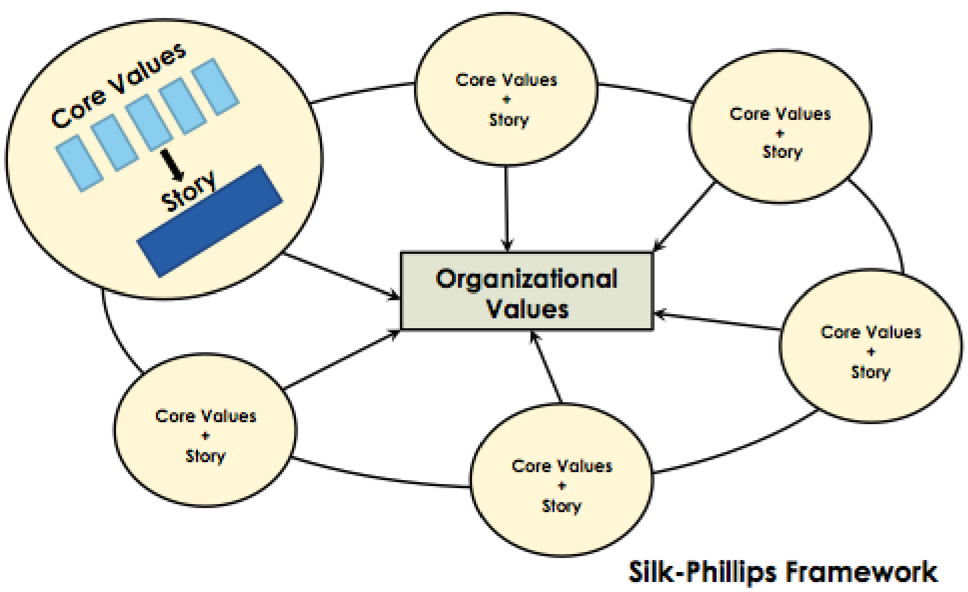


Figure 2.

The researchers believe this framework integrates with the SPELIT leadership tool in assessing the social environment of an organization. Besides values, the relationships (peer-to-peer, supervisor-to-direct report), awareness, situation, context, and service orientation of the organization will become evident. Once the values have been identified, they can be overlapped with the competing values framework to compare different units and departments to gain a better understanding of the organization. The knowledge of the values profile of the organization will help leaders understand where to place emphasis as they move forward with culture change initiatives (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The core values each stated and the values extracted from the stories of what is going well will give organizational leaders a good indication of the strengths of the organization and the direction to proceed.

Once an organization's leadership understands the social context of the organization, they can choose to build upon the culture or take it in another direction. This framework will integrate with organizations launching change initiatives based on positive organizational scholarship (POS), with the data from the stories informing the discovery, dream, and design stages of the appreciative inquiry process.

As an organization starts initiating change to a more positive organization, they will continue their practices of hiring new employees. There are several ways to ensure the right people are hired, for example, in behavioral-style interviewing and values-based hiring. The interview process is where a prospective employee first comes into contact with the organization's culture and will have either a positive or negative affect on the potential new employee. Organization members conducting the interview process using techniques referenced prior will be able to assess the prospective employee's values and fit for the organization. New employee orientation is another opportunity for organizations to reinforce organizational values. This program should be linked to the overall strategy of the organization and is a unique opportunity to design and develop the experience to reflect the unique culture of the organization. This program should not primarily be the responsibility of HR to develop and design, but should also include input from leaders from across the organization (Srimannarayana, 2016).

As the organization continues its positive change journey, it will have to deal with challenges along the way. Through organizational coaching and leader development programs the organization can reinforce its values and develop the culture, it strives for by developing leaders to lead following the organization's strengths. It can use methods such as design thinking and continuous process improvement to take a positive approach to finding solutions that will be inclusive and work for the organization as a whole. For future research, the researchers will continue to improve the Silk-Phillips Framework by testing it on larger organizations, across multiple departments and organizational contexts.

## Conclusion and Future Study

Leaders are responsible for setting the social context in an organization. If they do not take steps to shape the culture, the culture will shape itself. Before launching change initiatives to establish culture, it is important to understand the social context of the organization. Important to note, the Silk-Phillips Framework was tested on two organizations that were in different contexts of the length of time together, size, operating environment, orientation, mission, and purpose. The research will continue to be tested and refined. The Silk-Phillips Framework used in conjunction with the Competing Values Framework, SPELIT leadership tool, and other frameworks can give clarity to leaders about the values of their employees and the types of environments they thrive in (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007).

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