Contextual Leadership and Culture in Education

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Abstract

Context, culture and leadership are features of educational organizations, yet the relationship between the three is poorly understood. Often leadership theories are propagated as though they will be applicable in all situations, yet research on successful school leaders has found that leadership is highly contextual in nature and that the success of educational leaders depends upon how leaders adapt their practices according to contextual factors. Contextual leadership transcends the rigid, and at times overlapping, boundaries of existing educational leadership theories and models and brings the context to the center stage of the practices of educational leaders. Culture can be considered as one of the context factors, but it is a complicated factor with many dimensions. Successful educational leaders are the ones who master the art of creating a balance between multiple cultural contexts acting upon their institutions and, through their contextual practices, learn the art of successfully leading their institutions by creating an inclusive, multicultural environment. Successful school leaders are those that are culturally sensitive, but not context constrained.

Introduction

During the 20th century, traditionally, educational leadership was predominantly focused upon a bureaucratic, hierarchical system, driven by the quest for a science of educational administration, what Callaghan (1962) called the cult of efficiency, and the belief of bureaucracy as the ideal type of organisations (Weber, 1948). While leadership has been a focus in educational research since the 1950s with the formation of organisations like the University Council for Educational Administration in 1959, and the publication of the first academic journals in the field, with *The Journal of Educational Administration* in 1963 and *Educational Administration Quarterly in 1965* , it has gained more significance at the turn of this century, to the point now where it is claimed that, of 'all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence led us to the conclusion that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction' (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 70). There is a substantial body of research on various aspects of leadership and theories and models abound in the literature to predict the success of an educational leader, and there is a degree of consensus that four dimensions provide a foundational view of educational: building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, and managine the teaching and learning program (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006). While these models have been found to be effective in certain contexts, there are studies that have questioned their universality since most of these

exclusively focus on the individual characteristics of leaders, disregarding the contextual aspects which are indispensable in leadership discourses but are largely ignored (Hallinger, 2018). By focusing excessively on the individuality of a leader, successful leaders in one context are portrayed as heroic individuals who would inadvertently be successful in a different context as well (Drysdale, Bennett, Murakami, Johansson & Gurr, 2014). There exists a long list of once-successful leaders who were not so successful in another setting with a different contextual environment! (Gurr, 2014). While theories, because of their nature, are being propagated as a one size fits all formula for leadership effectiveness, recent studies on successful school leaders have found that leadership is highly contextual in nature and the success of educational leaders depends upon how leaders adapt their practices according to the immediate contextual factors (see, for example, the chapters in Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016; Johnson & Dempster, 2016). Contextual leadership transcends the rigid, and at times overlapping, boundaries of existing educational leadership theories and models and brings the context at the center stage of the practices of educational leaders. Context becomes the key and the practices of an educational leader that are in response to the unique contextual realities of the environment in which the leader exists define the effectiveness and success. Contemporary school leaders need to have what Bennis and Thomas (2002) called adaptive capacity.

Contextual Leadership – What it is?

Bossert et al. (1982) can be credited for being one of the first to bring forth the significance of context into leadership discourses with the claim that context plays an important role in fashioning the behaviour and practices of educational leaders. However, it was not until 2001 that the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) spearheaded by Christopher Day at Nottingham University began publishing its findings of the context-based

practices of successful school principals from around the world that these discourses became mainstream in educational leadership dialogues (Jacobson, Day & Leithwood, 2005; Day & Gurr, 2014; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Gurr & Day, 2014; Moos, Johansson & Day, 2011; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011). With the recent emphasis on practices of educational leaders instead of their traits, behaviours and skills (Leithwood, 2017), the inadequacies of theoretical models that overlooked the variances in leadership practice across contextual situations have emerged (Dimmock, 2002; Hallinger, 2018, Schwarz & Brauckmann, 2015; Walker and Dimmock, 2002). Educational institutions are diverse with unique contexts in terms of geography, values, beliefs, practices, and human diversity. Reliance upon a borrowed, mostly western leadership model may not be applicable in many contexts (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016; Gurr, 2014; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hofstede, 2001; Johnson & Dempster, 2016; Walker & Dimmock, 2002).

Whilst, as indicated above, Leithwood et. al. (2006) posited that successful school leaders draw from the same basic repertoire of core practices, they also suggested that success is determined by the way these practices are enacted. Successful leaders adjust their practices according to their unique requirements based upon their own unique contexts. Hallinger (2018, p.7) claims that "fiscal, physical and human resources, parental involvement (or lack of), teacher qualification, district goals and policies, and unions, among other things, all must be considered by principals attempting to lead their schools forward." Effective leaders need to respond to these contexts and align their practices to both respond to and influence the contexts (Brauckmann & Schwarz, 2014; Fullan, 2004; Gurr, 2014; Newmann et al., 2001). The contextual environment under which leadership is practiced may constrain the type of behaviours that otherwise are considered effective leadership behaviours (Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001). Contextual leadership demands leaders to enact their practices in response to their own unique contextual requirements (Goldring et al., 2008; Grint, 2005).

What is 'Context' in Contextual Leadership?

Contexts of an educational institution refer to its organizational and environmental setting (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016; Goldring et al., 2008). While schools from the outside look similar, functioning in a similar fashion and providing similar services, they are in fact extremely diverse in terms of student population, size, resources, demography, geographical location, employee diversity, governance, culture and other factors. The findings of ISSPP studies carried out in more than 25 countries around the world so far, clearly demonstrate that while educational leaders possess a repertoire of a set of core practices, these practices alone do not guarantee success. Instead, the success depends upon the enactment of these practices by individual leaders which are in direct response to their own unique contexts (Day, 2005; Drysdale, 2011; Gurr, 2014, 2015). The ISSPP has suggested that successful principals are able to adapt, use and influence context to foster success, whilst still being culturally responsive. For example, in considering the initial cases of the ISSPP, Day (2005. p. 68) noted that successful principals had the ability to

> …not be confined by the contexts in which they work. They do not comply,
> subvert, or overtly oppose. Rather they actively mediate and moderate within a set
> of core values and practices which transcend narrowly conceived improvement
> agendas.

Similarly, when exploring a more recent collection of cases from the ISSPP, Drysdale (2011) found that across different country contexts and cultures, successful principals were adaptive and reflective, and able to learn from their practice and experience to ensure school success, whilst Gurr (2014: 86-87), in a review of ISSPP research, claimed that

Context and culture can influence leadership practice, but not as much as some might think…Successful school leaders not only develop a range of core practices we know are associated with school success, but they fine-tune their responses to the context and culture in which they lead.

In a summary book of illustrative cases from the first 14 years of the ISSPP (Day & Gurr, 2014), whilst core features of successful school leadership that work across varied cultures and contexts were articulated (Gurr & Day, 2014), the variety of cases provided evidence of the nuanced responses of successful leaders to culture and context. We report below on further findings from the ISSPP in terms of culture and context.

Using data from four case studies, Braun et al. (2013) conceptualised four distinct contextual factors - situated, professional, material and external - that influence the practices of educational leaders. Situated contexts are related to the location of the institution and are reflected by the socio-economic status, demography and diversity of the student population. Institutional history and its reputation also form a part of the situated context. Professional contexts refer to the attitude, experience, qualification, values and commitment of the teachers and management personnel of the institution. They argue that there are strong interdependencies between the professional context of an institution and its policy-creation mechanism. Material contexts comprise the physical aspects of the institution in terms of infrastructure, resources, technology, space and also budget and the amount of manpower. External contexts are mostly related to government policies, regulations, requirements of the local education authorities, parental expectation and other external agencies that are related to the school.

Hallinger's (2018) articulated a model of leadership that utilises instructional leadership ideas but which accounts for the influence of multiple contexts, with many of these aspects of school

culture. The model conceptualises school leadership that is focused on improving student learning through influencing school climate and the teaching and learning program. Three contexts have a general influence on the school (economic, political and socio-cultural), three contexts have direct influence on school leadership (community, personal and institutional), and school leadership is viewed as directly influencing instructional organisational and school climate, with these last two aspects influencing student learning. According to Hallinger (2018, p. 16), this model "broadens the lens of context for leadership to include economic, political and socio-cultural contexts" and "also takes cognizance of leadership beyond the position of the principal, as well as the fact that interpretations of school leadership are shaped by the context" (Hallinger, 2018).

There are other studies that have explored different contextual factors affecting educational institutions (e.g. Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016; Goldring et. al, 2008; Noman, Hashim & Sarimah, 2018), however all these have addressed context in a broader dimension giving little regard to the context of culture. Recently, culture is being mentioned as an important context under which a school leader operates, however these discussions are emergent, too few and sketchy at best.

What is Culture?

Culture plays an important role in determining the practices of an educational leader. Cultures vary in terms of the values, attitudes and behaviours of the leader and have significant impact on the institution (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Alves et al., 2006). Practices of leaders are interpreted based upon the cultural environment of the institution, cultural background of the leader, cultural background of the people evaluating the practices of the leader (Jung & Avolio,

1999; Yamaguchi, 1999; Jogulu & Wood, 2008) and means different thing for people from different cultures (Wood & Jogulu, 2006; Dorfman, 2004; Jung & Avolio, 1999).

Culture is hard to define, and, for example, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), while critically reviewing and conceptualizing culture, came across 164 distinct definitions of culture. The definitional conundrum was also espoused by Apte (1994, p. 2001) when he claims that '[d]espite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature.' Culture can be simplistically defined as shared symbols, norms, and values of an organization (Walsham, 2002). From among several other definitions, Hofstede (1991), Trompenaars (1993), and Czinkota & Ron Kanen (1993) conclude that culture depends upon "languages, economy, religion, policies, social institutions, class, values, status, attitudes, manners, customs, material items, and education which subsequently influences managerial values" (Kanungo, 2006, p. 25). Hofstede (2011), through his 'shorthand definition' claims that "Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (p. 3).

Culture can be manifested in many forms and, according to Schein (1990), consists of three fundamental levels, which are (a) observable artefacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions. Artefacts in an organization are everything that is visible, observable and can be felt. It includes the physical layout, the dress code, interpersonal interaction between people, the smell, look and feel of the premises, and similar other phenomena, along with materialistic manifestations in the form of records, products, stated philosophy, vision mission and goals, etc. Artefacts are easily visible but hard to interpret since the underlying logic of why things are visible the way they are in not easily understood. The second level of cultural manifestation, values, are difficult to observe and can only be understood by interacting with the key members of the institution and after a thorough analysis of various artefacts that are visible outwardly. However, the values only represent the manifested or proclaimed values of a particular culture

while the core motive for their manifested conduct remains obscure or insentient. Thus, the third level of cultural manifestation – basic underlining assumptions – enables us to actually comprehend a culture and to determine more accurately the values and behaviours. Underlining assumptions are typically dormant in nature; however they are the key determinant of the thought, perception and feeling of the people in the organisation.

For school culture, the view of Petersen and Deal (2009) provides some clarity. They describe the core elements of school culture as: a shared sense of purpose and vision; norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions; rituals, traditions, and ceremonies; history and stories; people and relationships; and, architecture, artefacts, and symbols. Culture defined in this way overlaps considerably with context and the leadership characteristics and practices. Educational institutions are not only diverse in terms of geographical location, size, policies, governance and objectives, but also consists of a large number of individuals in the form of teachers, students, parents and leaders which bring in their own individual culture to add immensely to the mix of its context. The cultural context of educational institutions is affected by the interaction between these people. The effectiveness of its leaders, faculty, teaching and learning activities, beliefs and practices of the members of the institution, working environment and the collegiality among people are few of the elementary factors shaping the cultural context of institutions (Pawlas, 1997; Celep, 2002; Ekinci, 2012; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). Thus people in an educational institution become the central elements of institutional culture.

Hofstede has contributed immensely to the field of the study of culture through development of the Hofstede Cultural Orientation Model. Hofstede (2011, p.3) describes the complexity of understanding culture:

> Most commonly the term culture is used for tribes or ethnic groups (in anthropology), for nations (in political science, sociology and management), and for organizations (in sociology and management). … The term can also be applied

to the genders, to generations, or to social classes. However, changing the level of aggregation studied changes the nature of the concept of 'culture'. Societal, national and gender cultures, which children acquire from their earliest youth onwards, are much deeper rooted in the human mind than occupational cultures acquired at school, or than organizational cultures acquired on the job.

Thus it is evident that culture has many connotations and effects an organisation at several layers. While people within the institution influence and manifest its cultural context, there are other factors at different levels which exercise its influence as well.

Culture as a Context

Schools are different from each other; even those that are situated in close proximity with the other (Schwarz & Brauckman, 2015). They operate within their own and local contexts, and culture of an educational institution can be termed as "situationally unique" (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989). The context within which educational institutions operate consists of features that may or may not be subject to school influence such as geographical location, demographics, political environment, physical infrastructure and organizational culture, beliefs and practices (Noman, Hashim & Abdullah, 2018). From a leader's perspective, the first four of the above are relatively fixed, and only subject to school influence with considerable effort or favourable circumstances (Drysdale, 2007). However, the cultural context is a complex aspect of an institution and is more dynamic in nature as a result of being heavily influenced by the cultural beliefs and practices of the people associated with the institution.

While the beliefs and practices of leaders and other people associated with an institution contribute to the cultural context of an institution, there are many other factors influencing it as well. Livermore (2010) claims that culture comprises five basic tangible levels and several intangible sublevels. The five basic levels are 1) National culture 2) Regional Culture 3)

Organizational culture 4) Team culture and 5) individual culture. In order to understand how cultural context manifests itself upon and educational institution, it is important to elaborate upon each of these five levels.

1. National Culture

National culture is a collection of common ways of thinking and acting in a country, distinct from other countries (Marquardt, Berger & Loan, 2004). The combination of individual characteristic of citizens has been identified as a dependable, valid, and valuable method to measure the cultural values of a country (Schwartz, 1999). It is also the values that are largely unconscious and is nurtured since birth and espoused by a majority of the citizens of a country. Within a country, values are mostly seen as constant over time; however they may vary somewhat from generation to generation. Professor Geert Hofstede, along with his research team, carried out comprehensive studies of cultural influence on workplace, including educational institutions. Based upon the findings of his landmark research, he proposed six dimensions of national culture (Hofstede, 2001). The six cultural dimensions characterise independent preferences of ways and methods of citizens of one country over the other to distinguish countries, rather than people, from each other. The following dimensions form the part of his model.

a) Power Distance Index (PDI). This dimension conveys the degree to which the subordinates not only accept the unequal distribution of power between the leader and the subordinates but also expect it to be unequal. According to the model proposed by Sagie and Aycan (2003), in countries where there is low power distance between individuals, mostly individualistic countries, there is more likelihood of face to face discussions among the leaders and the subordinates. However, individualistic societies where there is higher power distance, there would still be face-to-face discussion but would be mostly symbolic giving the impression of

pseudo participation in decision-making. On the other hand in collectivist cultures which are generally characterised as a high power distance countries, 'paternalistic participation in decision making' takes place while low power distance collective culture societies regularly participate in discussions and collective decision making.

b) Individualism versus Collectivism (IVC). Individualism refers to a preference of self and immediate family members over other members of the society while collectivism refers to a preference for a tightly-knit society in a larger group consisting of family members, relative and friends look after all the members of the group. The individualistic societies are usually referred to as 'I' society while the collectivist group is called 'We' society.

c) Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS). Masculinity refers to a highly competitive society which prefers achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. In sharp contrast to Masculine cultures, Femininity refers to a more consensus oriented culture preferring cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life.

d) Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI). This dimension conveys the extent of discomfort felt by the members of a community with uncertainty and ambiguity. The basic idea is to see whether a society deals with the future events with an attempt to control them or just leave it to take its own course. The nations which are high on UAI are rigid, intolerant, orthodox and harsh while the ones scoring low are more open, relaxed and flexible.

e) Long term orientation Versus Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO). Cultures that are low on this dimension are more traditional, hold on to the traditions and are always suspicious with changes. On the other hand, the ones with higher score on this dimension constantly improve and value modern education as a means to be better prepared for the future.

f) Indulgence Versus Restraint (IND). Indulgence refers to a society that believes in having fun, free gratification and easy going life while the one high on restraint believe in strict societal norms, frugality and suppresses gratification of needs.

For an educational leader, the context of the national culture of the educational institution plays an important role in defining the practices that are in line with is demands. While the national context of most of the schools remains uniform – leaders, teachers and students come from the same national culture, it is more diverse in international school and most of the institutions of higher education. Thus it becomes even more paramount for educational leaders to respond appropriately to the national cultural context of their institutions.

2. Regional Culture

Among all the national cultures around the world, there is a distinct subset of region specific culture that distinguishes the culture of one group of people from the other group within a country. Malaysia is very high on power distance, scores extremely high on Hofstede's scale and is collectivist in culture. However, within Malaysia, there are several subsets of cultures, for example the ethnic Chinese, Malays and Indians are all distinct in their practices and appearances based upon their cultural orientation. However, while being distinct as a subgroup, they still are a typical example of wider national culture of a collectivist, high power distance cultural society. In Thailand, it is easy to differentiate between people of northern region of Chiangmai from the native Isan people of the northeast or the people of the south who have strong cultural links with people of Malays origin in Malaysia. While educational leaders operate under the national cultural umbrella, they still need to be aware of the regional cultural dimensions which are different from other regions of the country.

3. Organisational Culture

Every organisation is distinct and unique in its own way, in terms of the way they do things within their organization. Organizational culture "refers to a set of common values, attitudes, beliefs and norms, some of which are explicit and some of which are not" (Brown, 2004, p. 4). Some of the major components of organisational culture are its expectations, practices, rituals, philosophy, values, self-image, method of conducting itself within and outside the organisation and its vision and goals which are based upon a set of shared attitudes, customs, and regulation that govern it. There might be two schools next to each other yet they might be hugely different in terms of school culture and the way things are done within the schools.

4. Team Culture

Just like the organisational culture, teams within an organisation develop their own values, beliefs, and norms of culture over a period of time which directs the overall performance of the team. Cultural norms in teams guide members in their dress and appearance, their language, how they relate to one another, and how they get along. Teams within an organization have their own unique set of values although they work in the same building and in the same organization.

5. Individual Culture

Individual culture refers to the personal experiences from the family, friends, educational institutions, faith, and peers, among other similar aspects. While the national and regional cultures have significant effect on an individual's cultural orientation, it the above mentioned factors that distinguish individual culture of one human being from the other. For example, a person born in a catholic family, living in a rural area of Malaysia with a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood, being educated in a convent school in Kualalumpur would be distinctly different from an individual born in another faith and another geographic location of Malaysia with different educational experiences. Personal traits and cultural values and beliefs of

educational leaders play an important role in influencing the cultural identity of an educational institution (Noman, Hashim & Sarimah, 2017)

Effects of Cultural Context on Leadership Practices

From the discussion so far, it is clear that successful leaders enact their practices based upon their contextual demands, context can take many forms like geography, size, values, beliefs, practices, human diversity among others and that culture plays an important part in forming the contextual environment of the school in more than one ways. While culture had been used along with the concept of context whenever contextual leadership practices are described, they have been kept apart so far, as if they were two different entities. However, a closer look at culture and how it affects the leadership practices strongly point towards culture being a part of an educational institution's contextual environment.

Hallinger (2018, p. 7), based on ideas by Leithwood (2017) distinguishes between 'person-specific' and 'widely-shared' contexts and explains the person-specific context as consisting of

> ….the job knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience a leader brings to the job. The leader's life experience and personal resources act as a prism through which information, problems, opportunities and situations are filtered and interpreted…

Leaders' individual culture is shaped in the mould of their national and regional cultures as well as their personal experiences. They are directly responsible for shaping the organisational and team culture within their institution through their practices. Leaders lay the foundation of an institutional culture based upon well-articulated and well publicised vision and mission for the institution. Thus an educational leader belonging to a collectivist society with significant power distance, like in Thailand, would be more likely to be a top down leader and would be

easily accepted by the teachers and staff members who not only 'accept' the power distance but also 'expect' it. On the other hand, a leader belonging to an individualistic society like in the USA would be more collaborative, would make decisions after consulting with teachers and staff members and would be open to suggestions, even criticism. In a study conducted by (Noman et. al, 2018) on the practices of a successful school principal in Malaysia, it was found that since the school principal loved sports and had a rich experience in sports through one of his previous jobs, his current school culture reflected athleticism and orientation towards sporting activities.

On the other hand, Hallinger (2018, p. 7) defines 'widely shared context' as "features of the broader organizational and environmental setting within which the school and the principal are located" (p. 3). While a majority of widely shared context are related contexts like geographical location of the institution, socio-economic status of the parents, resources, rules and regulation, there is also an element of cultural aspects as well. For example, a leader of an institution located in an individualistic society would enact his practices differently than the leader of an institution located in a collective society. Moreover, the regulations of local authorities, boards and provinces would greatly influence the practices of educational leaders. In conclusion, the practices of educational leaders are influenced and guided by the individual cultural orientation of the leaders themselves and also the external cultural factors which are derived from national, regional and governmental beliefs, values and assumptions.

Gurr (2014) explored leadership, cultural and context based on research from the ISSPP and reported on how successful school principals responded to context and culture. Some, had such clarity in their educational philosophy, and had developed a range of exemplary leadership behaviours, that they could move to leading in very different contexts with different cultures and change little about how they lead (see also Gurr, 2007). Considering broad educational contexts, such as that of a large system, when comparing principals it can be seen that core

leadership behaviours remain important (e.g. setting direction, developing people, and improving teaching and learning) but there can be differences in other aspects, such as attitude to change. Within the one system, there are examples of principals who have operated in the same policy environment, yet their change interventions/practices are very different with some embracing continuous and often rapid change, and others more circumspect (see also: Drysdale, Goode & Gurr, 2009, 2011; Goode, 2017; Gurr, Drysdale, Longmuir & McCrohan, 2018a,b; Longmuir, 2017). Country comparisons, also showed that core leadership behaviours were evident, but also that there are nuanced differences that are responses to context and culture. Compared to an Australian model of successful school leadership that emphasised capacity building, a Singapore model (Wang, 2010; Wang, Gurr & Drysdale, 2014) highlighted knowing oneself, building on the legacy of past principals, and explicitly engaging with and influencing the context, whilst an Indonesian model (Raihani, 2007, 2008) emphasised developing a broad range of student and school outcomes, and upholding and promoting values important to the Indonesian community (as captured in the values of amanah and IMTAQ). There was also evidence of how success in one context did not automatically guarantee success in another. There are cases of principals who have been successful principals in the past, finding themselves struggling to make the impact they would like when they have taken on the challenge of improving a struggling school in challenging circumstances (see also Gurr, Drysdale, Clarke & Wildy, 2014; Gurr, Drysdale, Longmuir & McCrohan, 2018a,b). The context and cultural circumstances can mean that leadership for success is a long and difficult path. Whilst some schools to not improve as quickly as some expect, all the schools in the ISSPP were better after these principals' efforts than they were before, and in these instances success might better be described as a commitment to a long-term, sustainable improvement agenda

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to illuminate the importance of culture on leadership practice as a part of the wider context under which leaders operate. While discussion included various framework of institutional cultural contexts, Hofstede's cultural framework was called upon as a reference for most of the arguments since it is one of the most widely used standard in cultural studies. It was evident from the discussion that the contextual practices of educational leaders is highly dependent, and in response to their cultural context which was largely driven by the wider national culture and the individual cultural beliefs of the leaders themselves. While Hofstede's country ranking based upon collectivist-individualistic societies continuum are still valued and widely accepted, it might also be relevant to point out that the artificial country borders might not always be appropriate for assigning culture to a nation. Malaysia, for example is a multicultural society but is ranked among the top of power-distance nations from within the collectivist nations. However, its two immediate neighbours, Singapore and Thailand have huge differences in all the six dimensions of Hofstede model although both these nations fall under collectivist societies.

Effects of globalisation are rapidly shrinking the vast differences between the cultural values, beliefs and assumptions of people. Social media, cable TV and Internet have brought diverse ideas literally into the palm of our hands. Movement of people from one region to the other, for work, business or immigration has reached the scale like never before. Human interactions and easy and open discussions over media have affected the cultural values and norms of people significantly. School and colleges are more diverse in comparison to the ones a couple of decades ago. Educators travel more these days which is evident from the rapid increase in the number of International schools, colleges and universities around the world. Therefore the cultural aspect of the context under which educational leaders operate these days is much more diverse and challenging than before (Kaur & Noman, 2015). Successful educational leaders in

the present time and in the future would be the ones who master the art of creating a balance between multiple cultural contexts acting upon their institutions and, through their contextual practices, learn the art of successfully leading their institutions by creating an inclusive, multicultural environment within their institutions (Kaur, Awang-Hashim & Noman, 2017).

With contextual leadership coming at the forefront of educational leadership discourses and cultural context gradually emerging from the shadows, there are numerous avenues for further studies in this area. Major international projects, like the ISSPP, do not have major representation in Asia for example. For the ISSPP, there are no national coordinators from Asia, and only three single studies representing China (Wong, 2007), Indonesia (Raihani, 2007)and Singapore (Wang, 2010). Greater focus on Africa, Asia, the Middle East, South America, and Southern Europe are needed. The research of people such as Clarke and O'Donoghue (2016), Hallinger (2018), Johnson and Dempster, (2016), and Walker and Dimmock (2002) point the way in terms of culturally diverse research findings on school leadership.

Another area worth exploring is the role of culture as an important context of an educational institution, especially where there is cultural diversity in terms of teachers and students. There is not much information available on the practices of leaders who lead a team of multicultural teachers, or students, or work in a foreign country or a combination of any of these factors. Raihani, Gurr and Drysdale (2014) reported on an Indonesian principal who was successful in being a cultural outsider, leading a school with several different potentially antagonistic cultural groups represented in the teachers and students; that this principal was successful was due to the culturally responsive leadership the prinicpal adopted. With rapid globalisation, we have already seen educational institutions around the world becoming culturally diverse. Cross-cultural comparative researchers may find it exciting, and challenging, to study the role of culture as a context and its relationship with the practices of contextual educational leaders.

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