

How Cultural Factors Affect Leadership

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SUBJECT(S): Communication, Entrepreneurship, International Business

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

Students will begin this lesson by reading the article, “How Cultural Factors Affect Leadership.” They will discuss key differences in leadership traits among different countries as well as which traits are universally accepted. Next they will get a lesson in cultural sensitivity by learning and practicing the basic phrases and/or gestures to greet someone, say goodbye, exchange a business card and other important cultural differences to note when doing business in another country.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Communication, II. Societal Communication
- International Business, II. The Global Business Environment
- Entrepreneurship, VII. Global Markets

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Ten Ways to Judge a President: Leadership Lessons from History”](#)
- [“Mountain Guides Teach Us About Leadership”](#)
- [“MLK Day Tribute: Student Lessons in Leadership”](#)
- [“Educator Toolkit: The Chief Executive Officer”](#)

Common Core Standard(s): Key Ideas and Details

Objectives/Purposes: In this lesson students will learn that different leadership traits may be valued in different countries, while others seem to be universally valued in all.

Knowledge@Wharton Article: [“How Cultural Factors Affect Leadership”](#)

Other Resources/Materials:

- Index Cards
- Information on cultural etiquette in other countries:
<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html>

Activity:

1. (5 mins) Give each student an index card. On the blank white side of the index card have students make a business card for themselves. Make sure students business cards include the following:

- Their name
- Their address (can be made up)
- Their phone number (including work and cell)
- Their email
- Their logo (some symbol that they like)

2. (20 mins) Have students read the article, “How Cultural Factors Affect Leadership.” As students read, have them take notes on how leadership may be different in various countries and some of the specific differences that the article mentions. Some of the differences are found in areas such as:

- Communication
- Non-verbal cues
- Vision
- Personality attributes

Also have students take note of which attributes in leadership seem to be universally endorsed.

These attributes include:

- Foresight
- A willingness to encourage colleagues and staff
- Trustworthiness
- A dynamic presence
- A positive attitude
- Being seen as a confidence builder
- Having enthusiasm
- Risk-taking
- Ambition
- Humility
- Sincerity
- Sensitivity
- Compassion

After students are done reading the article, discuss as a class what attributes students listed for each category. Go over each one and why they are important.

2. (25 mins) As the article suggests, sensitivity to the unique culture within which the executive works is one of the most important attributes. To give students a jump start on this they are going to learn, practice and then present and demonstrate meeting and business etiquette to the class in another country and culture. Begin this part of the activity by grouping students in pairs. Then have each pair stand in different parts of the classroom spread out from other pairs. Now you are going to have the pairs practice standard greetings in their own culture in the following scenarios:

- Have the pair of students greet each other like they are greeting their friend in an informal and fun manner.
 - Have a few groups share and demonstrate for the class their greeting. See if any groups had an interesting or unusual way of doing this.
- Next have students introduce each other in a formal way as if they were meeting for the first time and one student was going to interview the other for a job.
- For the next greeting have students exchange their business card with each other.
- Have students see if they can create a fun greeting.

For each greeting, have a few groups demonstrate what they did and discuss subtle norms that each group did. Examples may be making eye contact, shaking hands or offering business cards

with one hand. Now have students sit back down next to their same partner. Assign each pair a different country and give them information about a different country that you accessed from the link above. Have the pairs research the following about their assigned country from the packet of information:

- Meeting Etiquette
- Business etiquette
- How to give business cards
- One interesting fact
- Something to demonstrate for the class. (May be a greeting or saying)

After students are done researching this information about their assigned country, have them prepare a short presentation to share this information with the class. Students will then present to the class and complete a short demonstration.

Tying It All Together: The point of the exercise is to expose students to the norms of business and greeting etiquette in their own country as well as a few others. When students are presenting, they should take on the role of experts who are telling the class important cultural notes to keep in mind when traveling and doing business in that country.

Practice Outside of the Classroom:

Encourage students to learn more about other countries and cultures by telling them to watch the news or television programming from another country. Also, have students think of their favorite products or future career plans and what countries those might lead them to. Have them learn more about those countries, including the language.

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently: This lesson was a great introduction to the concept of culture and difference. Students were very interested to learn how different and how much more formal other countries are in their greetings and business etiquette. Since some of the countries you choose may have very strict and specific cultural differences that surround issues of gender and also class or organizational hierarchy, you may want to lead a class discussion on students reactions to that if you have the time after presentations are complete. It is important that during this lesson students are respectful of the culture they are presenting and learning about. Watching for disrespectful behavior or sentiments will be key to keeping a positive and exploratory tone throughout the duration of the lesson and especially during the presentations. I found that with my students, some of them were uncomfortable with doing a bow, especially in front of the class, so you may also want to watch for that as you assign

countries to different pairs. It is also good to choose a wide variety of countries whose culture may range from only being slightly different to being very different.

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