

Training Diplomats in Management, Leadership and Negotiations with Non-State Actors

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

My presentation draws on my twenty years of experience as trainer, expert, consultant and university professor with special focus on management and leadership training for private and public sector organizations in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America as well as for almost all of the UN organizations and specialized agencies.

I will also make use of my experience as founder and partner of a 20-year-old consulting firm called Organizational Consultants Ltd. (OC Ltd.) based in Hong Kong and Geneva. OC Ltd. has conducted training programmes for diplomatic academies, some being represented here at this meeting in Dubrovnik. I will also make use of my practical experience as co-founder and director of a fifteen year-old foundation based in Geneva called Centre for Socio-Eco/nomic Development (CSEND). CSEND has a successful track record in supporting governments to develop In-service training institutions for their own central

governments (e.g. in China, Russia, ex-Yugoslavia and Africa¹) and in comparative research of training within the public sector.²

To summarize, I will try to highlight what I think could be of relevance to your own institutions and to suggest how diplomatic academies could make use of knowledge developed in the fields of management science and management practice and to explore what could be of direct relevance for your curriculum and training practice.

CURRENT PRACTICE

Organizing training courses in Management and Leadership means adding a new topic to the curriculum of many diplomatic academies. Only few academies offer in depth courses on these two subject matters. For instance concerning Management Training, some diplomatic academies offer courses on information management³, or managing the bureaucracy, departments and diplomatic posts⁴, or team management and public speaking⁵. However, few diplomatic academies go deeper and actually offer courses on project management, managing of team work, or introduction to general management skills⁶. Regarding Leadership Training, the situation appears even less promising. I have not seen listings of courses on Leadership Training on any curricula of diplomatic academies. My assertion is based on reviewing course offerings of five major diplomatic academies. The actual situation could actually be different than my initial assessment.

¹ For more detailed information on CSEND's technical cooperation projects, see www.csend.org

² For information on benchmark data covering in-service training of 13 governments, see R. Saner, F. Strehl, L. Yiu; "In Service Training as an Instrument for Organizational Change in Public Administration", International Institute of Administrative Sciences, Brussels, 1997.

³ Diplomatic Index, Jovan Kurbalija, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, Malta, p.2, Feb. 1999.

⁴ A Short Guide to Diplomatic Training, Paul W. Meerts, Clingendael, The Hague, 1991 (p.19)

⁵ Diplomatische Akademie, Diploma Programme, Curriculum 1999, p.3, Vienna, 1999.

⁶ Education and Training at the National Foreign Affairs Training Centre, Washington DC, State Magazine, pp. 42, May 1999.

Often times, Foreign Service officials are also sent to MBA schools or private training institutions to take management and leadership courses. As a consequence, such outsourcing might not figure on the main course listings of diplomatic academies. Still, I would claim that training in management and leadership remains the exception and that it would be beneficial if these two topics would be more systematically represented on the curricula of diplomatic academies.

Staying with the assumption that my initial observation is correct and that most diplomatic academies indeed do not yet offer training courses in management and leadership, then one could wonder about the reasons for not listing these two topics in their curriculum. One might speculate that the absence of courses on Leadership Training is due to a perception that leadership is not part of the expected behavior of diplomats. Traditional definitions of diplomacy have often postulated a role for diplomats as being somebody who should support and execute decisions taken by his/her political leaders. Leadership by such a narrow role definition would equate leadership with holding of political office.

In light of the actual practice of modern diplomacy, such an understanding of leadership would be too restrictive. At this point, it might be useful to agree on what we mean by Management and Leadership and compare these definitions with the professional practice of a modern diplomat. For instance from a management science perspective, Management is often defined as “getting things done through other people” and Leadership as “providing vision and purpose for organizations and its staff”. Applying these definitions to the practice of modern diplomacy, one could agree that the activity of management and leadership are also part of a modern diplomat’s job. For instance, the ability to lead and manage seems quite an apparent necessity when one considers the tasks of leading a national

delegation at a WTO trade negotiation or when a diplomat is asked to manage a larger Embassy with 50-100 staff and annual budgets up to one million US\$. Or when a diplomat is asked to chair a special task force within the context of an UN conference.

Seen from such a behavioral perspective, most practitioners would agree that training in Management and Leadership should be offered to diplomats. For instance, the results of a training needs analysis organized in 1984 by the New York based headquarters of UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research) for the diplomats assigned to the United Nations in New York already demonstrated that a significant number of UN assigned diplomats considered the mastery of management principles and techniques as an important requisite to do their job effectively and efficiently.

Such a behavioral view of management and leadership is in fact mostly what our governments and opinion leaders mean when they mention the need for better management and leadership skills of diplomats. This often heard call for better management and leadership skills of diplomats in fact means that diplomats should learn how to better manage their resources, time, staff etc. In addition, many of our governments expect that diplomats should understand how the business community thinks, how the global economy functions and how modern management practices can and should be used in daily diplomatic practice. On top of this, many of our governments have started to streamline their administrations based on concepts of Reengineering and New Public Management principles resulting in a replacement of traditional administrative thinking based on rules and regulations by more modern concepts of public management which emphasizes the application of modern management practices and philosophies. There is disagreement about the right size and function of government, but most experts in public administration agree on the need for

increased quality⁷ of services and that in turn demands application of management and leadership concepts and methods. In short, more and more governments and Ministries of Foreign Affairs expect diplomats to know and master management and leadership concepts and skills which in turn means that our diplomatic academies might do well in adding both topics to their curriculum.

Taking into account the limited time available for this presentation, I will highlight a few aspects of management and leadership as they apply to the world of diplomacy. This selection of highlights is based on my 20 years of experience as an expert consultant and trainer in the world of business and in the world of diplomacy. Other experts might consider other parts of management theory as being more relevant for inclusion in the curriculum of diplomatic academies. The field of management science is large; I see this as a first step towards a mutually beneficial interaction between both fields of knowledge. More needs to be done in the future to ensure an efficient transfer of management science to the field of diplomacy and vice versa.

TRANSFER OF MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS TO DIPLOMACY: A FEW STARTERS

While it is true that the field of diplomacy predates the field of management science by many centuries, it is also an established fact that management science has seen more rapid expansion in modern times in terms of theory and research than is the case for diplomacy.

To give an example, the annual meetings of the Academy of Management⁸, a US based

⁷ For reference regarding rethinking of quality in government, see R. Saner, L. Yiu, Ph. Levy, “Quality Assurance and Public Administrative Reform: New Developments in Switzerland”, paper presented at the annual meeting of IIAS at Sunningdale, London, July 1999.

⁸ For more information on the Academy of Management, see AoM’s website www.aom.pace.edu

professional association of MBA faculty with international membership attracts each year at its annual meetings an average 7000 MBA scholars and academics. Management science has grown very fast and become more and more specialized to such extent that leading MBA professors worry that too much departmentalization and specialization could seriously limit the relevance of MBA knowledge for the business community.

Some fields of management are more useful for diplomacy than others. Directly relevant might be the fields of organizational behavior, human resource management, conflict management, international management, organizational change, organizational communication, management development, managerial consulting. Other fields would be less directly useful such as research methods, operations management, organization theory, technology management, entrepreneurship, and business strategy. However, even the less relevant specializations could be of use to diplomats depending on the complexity of the problems, which need to be solved in daily practice.

What follows are brief introductions of a select number of management concepts which have direct bearing for diplomatic practice and which therefore could be included in the curriculum of diplomatic academies. They should be seen as a non-exhaustive illustration of how such a transfer from management science to diplomatic training could be envisaged. Many relevant contributions by management scholars are excluded such as Fiedler, Maslow, Herzberg, Hofstede, etc. just to name a few of the most influential thinkers in the management field.

A) CONTINGENCY LEADERSHIP

Key contributors to the field of leadership seen from a behavioral perspective are Tannenbaum, Schmidt and Blanchard among many others. Tannenbaum & Schmidt⁹ proposed a continuum of leadership behavior ranging from autocrat (boss dominated) to “abdicrat” (abdication of leadership). In between these two extremes, variations are proposed depending on the urgency of the situation at hand and the competence level of the subordinate staff. The assumption is that a competent leader knows how to change his/her leadership style according to the demands of the situation. Training in leadership would therefore imply that managers/diplomats are given the opportunities to analyze the needs of the situation and to accordingly adopt the appropriate and adequate leadership behavior.

Hersey and Blanchard¹⁰ further developed the Tannenbaum & Schmidt model and included other contributions from the field of contingency leadership studies (figure 3). According to the Hershey and Blanchard model of situational leadership, a competent leader should not only know how to vary his/her style of leadership depending on the tasks at hand and the urgency of the situation, but he/she should also take into consideration the readiness and competence of their followers. If the subordinates are not ready due to motivational issues or are unable to accomplish the task at hand, the leader should then take more control and hold back delegation until the situations permits and/or until the subordinates are sufficiently motivated and capable of executing the task delegated to them.

Applying *situational leadership* to diplomatic practice, for instance, in regard to running the business of an entire Embassy or of a consulate, one should put these leadership models into a historical-developmental continuum. The task at hand of opening a new consulate with few staff is different than for instance succeeding as Ambassador to an

⁹ R. Tannenbaum, W. H. Schmidt, “How to choose a Leadership Pattern”, Harvard Business Review, March-April, 1958, p.96

¹⁰ Paul Hersey, K.H. Blanchard, “Management of Organizational Behavior”, Prentice Hall, 1988, p.171

Embassy in the capital of a major country. In addition, current situation might change if an embassy has to rapidly increase staff levels due to an external emergency. Leadership then, according to Greiner¹¹, should be consistent with the size -- an evolutionary level -- of an organization which could for instance mean that a diplomat might be a good leader of a small Embassy but cannot cope with a large Embassy since the leadership requisites would be different.

Moving from conceptual level to application, one should bear in mind that management theory and practice is embedded in a larger socio-cultural field which influences theory building and management practice. There are no universal or generic concepts, which are true across our varied cultures and countries. There is no universally valid approach to management and leadership. All of these concepts need to be seen as they relate to our country's prevalent norms and values. The view that leadership and management practices differ from country to country has become an established fact, thanks particularly to the empirical research done by Geert Hofstede¹² and others. Thus, what would be a culturally appropriate leadership model to adopt in teaching and training of diplomats requires careful analysis of one's own national cultural presuppositions about other cultures.

Many diplomatic academies also offer courses for trainees coming from other continents and cultures. Content and form of management training need to acknowledge and appreciate the cultural differences between the host country offering training courses for foreign diplomats as well as a careful monitoring of possible conflicts or misunderstanding between the course participants coming from at times very different cultural background.

¹¹ Larry Greiner, "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow", Harvard Business Review, July-August, 1972, pp.37-46

¹² For more information on the cultural relativity of management theory and concepts, see Geert Hofstede, "Culture's Consequence: International Differences in Work related Values", Sage Publ., 1980.

Seen from a pluralistic view, one should also be aware that the process of teaching and training differs depending on the cultural preferences and, often unconscious, expectations prevalent in our countries. To give an example, the expectation regarding the appropriate role of teacher and student differs and so does the expectation of what is the “right or wrong” approach to teaching management. An example being the use of the case method which can be taught according to an American, European or Asian model¹³.

Effective training of leadership and management would hence have to be put into the context of our respective countries in order to be seen as appropriate and realistic. Cultural relativism does not mean that teaching methods and content always have to be adjusted to local norms and expectations.

Sometimes it might actually be beneficial to try new approaches and to demonstrate to trainees “how the Americans, French, Germans, Chinese, etc.” practice leadership and how they differ in terms of teaching and training these topics. The key is transparency in terms of where management concepts have been developed, where they can and should be used and what does not work where and why. Discussion of these “contingency conditionalities” can help the diplomats to become cogent about potential choices from a range of leadership and management behavioral repertoires.

B) MANAGING STRESS AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Modern diplomacy means managing increasing complex relationships and subject matters which were not necessarily part of the list of responsibilities of traditional diplomacy (e.g. media, trade, technology, budgets, etc.). How to manage more with often fewer resources means knowing how to deal with one’s own limitations and inevitable stress at

¹³ See R. Saner and L. Yiu, “European and Asian resistance to the use of the American case method in management training: possible cultural and systematic incongruencies”, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 5:4, December 1994. pp. 953-974.

times of extreme challenges or long lasting demands for top performance. It is amazing if not shocking to see that our diplomats are basically left to their own wits when it comes to stress management.

In contrast, practically all business schools offer courses on stress management as part of the personal efficacy component of their learning. Executive training programs on stress are standard practice and appreciated by business people and some professions have taken their own initiative in writing their own job related stress management manuals¹⁴ and identified symptoms of stress -- how they manifest themselves physiologically, behaviorally, cognitively and what one can do to decrease stress or better prevent stress altogether. Unfortunately, to my knowledge, none of this is true for diplomats who have to rely on their own resources and luck to survive the multitude of stressful situations, which are part and parcel of a diplomatic career.

Scholars and practitioners in the field of diplomacy have tried to define what makes a successful diplomat. Practitioners like De Callière provided eloquent and insightful views on the make-up of a successful diplomat. British diplomat Harold Nicholson added his own requirements by defining the qualities of a diplomat as consisting of: truth, accuracy, calm, patience, good temper, modesty, loyalty, intelligence, knowledge, discernment, prudence, hospitality, charm, industry, courage and tact.

So far, I have not yet encountered a diplomat fitting all these qualities but even more amazingly, I always wondered how a human being could bring a diplomatic career to such noble heights without having had the chance to survive multiple forms and intensities of stress.

¹⁴ A good example of this is the manual on "Job Stress and the Police officer" published by the US Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Health Service, Washington, 1975.

In comparison, managers do not have to aspire to such noble accomplishment of character as postulated by Harold Nicholson but nevertheless are offered training in stress management. This does not seem to be the case for diplomats. Looking at the growing demands put on the modern diplomats; I would suggest that diplomatic academies offer training courses on how to manage personal and organizational stress as part of the requisites for professional development.

In addition, diplomats are exposed to cross-cultural shock every time they change country posting and hence need to know how to cope with the inevitable misunderstanding due to cross-cultural differences. A more subtle but even more dangerous form of cross-cultural stress might occur over the life time of a diplomat's career especially for those assigned to postings involving the horrors of war or the distress of humanitarian emergencies and crises.

Facing situations of human rights abuses, torture, POW camps, refugees, internally displaced persons, etc. can also trigger an internal distress due to prolonged exposure to cognitive dissonance. Confronted with such extreme situations of human despair, diplomats might be in a similar situation like a humanitarian worker who sees his/her personal belief and value system seriously challenged¹⁵.

Knowing how to cope with this rather existential moment and even more importantly knowing how to offer support to younger diplomats requires skills in terms of coaching, counseling, and mentoring. Armed conflict and displacement of people have increased; hence the likelihood of stress in a diplomat's career seems assured. It might be most useful

¹⁵ For more information, see R. Saner; "Manifestations of Stress and its Impact on the Humanitarian Work of the ICRC Delegate", *Journal of Political Psychology*, Vol. 11, No 4, 1990.

for Diplomatic Academies to organize courses, which offer help in dealing with extreme stress and prolonged cognitive dissonance.

COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT IN MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP FOR DIPLOMACY: MAKE OR BUY?

The purpose of having diplomatic academies is to train and retrain diplomats in competencies that are considered vital to guarantee continued successful performance of our diplomats. However, competency development can either be developed in-house of existing staff or purchased in the labor market.

In many of our countries, companies have cut back or even suspended their in-house training in favor of employing (buying-in) people whenever the company needs specific skills or know-how. This “buy” versus “make” strategy is often explained as being less costly than investing in people who are feared to leave companies as soon as they get better job offers elsewhere or as soon as the competition has identified them as being valuable high performers.

The saying often heard these days in the business community is: why invest in people when they leave us anyway? The counter saying often heard by managers these days is “Why be loyal to this company when they could fire us anyhow anytime – better leave while you can”. While this description of labor relations fits more with business than with diplomatic service, the underlying question is increasingly put on the table by many governments – “Should we invest in training diplomats? If yes, for which levels? Should we consider “buying-hiring” in top people from outside the Foreign Service establishment?

Faced with an increasingly globalized world economy and rapid technological change, most of our governments have felt the need to quickly identify and utilise competencies where ever available in order to meet the increasing political and economic

challenges. Business know-how is for instance “imported” into diplomacy and government by nominating academics and business leaders to high office and Ambassadorial positions. On the other hand, multinational companies increasingly hire retired diplomats or high-ranking government officials to company boards or deanship positions of universities.¹⁶

It has been the practice in France, the United Kingdom and the US to facilitate cross-fertilization between business, government, foreign service and academics and to make sure that knowledge acquired in any of these different fields of expertise are diffused across professional boundaries as depicted in figure 1 below. The arrows indicate possible trajectory of rotation between business, high office in government, diplomacy, and partnership at law or consulting firms and university appointments.

To illustrate this cross-fertilization, a few examples from US practice. George Schultz moved from a top management position at Bechtel Company and teaching assignment at Stanford University to become Secretary of Labor, then Secretary of the Treasury, then Secretary of State and back to Bechtel and Stanford University. A similar example is Jim Baker who moved from a business position to the Republican Party Committee on to become Secretary of State and now back in business. Henry Kissinger moved from being a professor at Harvard to National Security Adviser, to Secretary of State and on to academic assignments and advisory roles while the opposite also occurred, e.g. Jeffery Garten moving from being Under Secretary at the Department of Commerce, to Under Secretary of Trade and on to being Dean of the Yale School of Management.

A different route leads from the Foreign Service to business appointments for instance by former Ambassadors who get appointed as VP for International Relations of

¹⁶ For more details regarding the transfer from diplomacy to business see R. Saner, L. Yiu, M. Sondergaard “Business Diplomacy: Essential Know-How for Global Companies”, (in press), July 1999.

global companies. Another variant is the move by former Ambassadors to become partners of law firms, investment firms, consulting companies or policy advisory agencies. While the reverse move is also well known of US presidents nominating well-known businessmen and owners of companies to the role of Ambassador. The different variants are also being practiced by continental European countries as well as many other countries.

Continued transfer across professional boundaries can offer quick solutions to urgent leadership and management competency requirement. However, in the long run, adequate management and leadership competencies should also be developed from within a diplomatic service which in turn means that our diplomatic academies should help diplomats acquire the necessary business related know-how. Should this not be the case, the temptation of our governments to “parachute”¹⁷ business people and academics into top jobs within the diplomatic service will further increase resulting in more competition between the career diplomats and their “imported” colleagues from business and academia.

To offer courses on management and leadership would be a sensible step by the diplomatic academies to enable career diplomats to “speak the business language” and to be able to demonstrate business acumen. Such an investment would be good for the diplomat’s performance in a world of changing professional roles, good for business because it makes it easier for business to communicate with foreign service personnel, good for the respective country since diplomats, businessmen and leaders of civil society organization can more easily communicate with each other and finally good for the international community at large faced with the challenges of global compact initiative, public-private partnership projects and growing intersectoral challenges due to deepening globalization, internationalization of

¹⁷ Term often used in France to indicate the nominating of elite cadres to top ranking positions in government and large French companies. These elite are mostly pooled from key school such as the Ecole Nationale d’Administration. Similar practices of elite recruitment can also be observed in many other countries.

economic, political, environmental and social issues and much greater interdependencies between different different actors and countries.

ENDNOTES

Diplomatic Academies have common concerns with MBA schools in that both types of educational institutions offer new knowledge and skills through training courses and lectures to their respective constituencies. The content of the educational inputs is simultaneously similar and different due to the different requirements of both professional disciplines. The focus of this article was to discuss the possible transfer of some concepts and practices of management science to the field of diplomacy and how these management competencies could be integrated into the curriculum of diplomat schools.

The knowledge base regarding leadership and management has increased tremendously over the last thirty years. Management scholars have conducted research, reported findings and developed new theories, which in turn have filled many textbooks, and management related articles. Some borrowing of the management and leadership theories could help strengthen the organizational aspect of the diplomatic service. Most MBA schools offer courses at elementary and advanced levels lasting whole semesters. It would therefore be useful to scan the field and to incorporate into the curriculum of diplomatic schools those elements, which are most relevant and directly useful. A culturally sensitive approach, both at national and organizational level, would make such cross fertilisation productive and sustainable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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