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# Developing Leaders While Sustaining Values: Learning from International University Partnerships

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# Chapter 11

## Developing Leaders While Sustaining Values

### Learning from International University Partnerships

Marco Tavanti

#### Introduction

On July 7, 2007 the most famous drop-out from Harvard University, Bill Gates, received his honorary degree. At the commencement ceremony he made a clear appeal to integrate quality education with the values and urgency of alleviating poverty worldwide. As a self-taught professional, Mr. Gates invited traditional academia to become more effective in solving world problems. He invited universities to be more pragmatic and value-centered in achieving a more creative capitalism with a human and sustainable face.

I left Harvard with no real awareness of the awful inequities in the world – the appalling disparities of health, and wealth, and opportunity that condemn millions of people to lives of despair. I learned a lot here at Harvard about new ideas in economics and politics. I got great exposure to the advances being made in the sciences. But humanity’s greatest advances are not in its discoveries – but in how those discoveries are applied to reduce inequity. Whether through democracy, strong public education, quality health care, or broad economic opportunity – reducing inequity is the highest human achievement. I left campus knowing little about the millions of young people cheated out of educational opportunities here in this country. And I knew nothing about the millions of people living in unspeakable poverty and disease in developing countries. It took me decades to find out (Gates, 2007).

Mr. Gates urged the university administrators to base their policies and decision-making on the idea of creating solutions to world problems. He urged people at one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the United States to look at the least privileged people and societies and dedicate their institutional and intellectual resources toward making a positive difference in the world.

Let me make a request of the deans and the professors – the intellectual leaders here at Harvard: As you hire new faculty, award tenure, review curriculum, and determine degree

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requirements, please ask yourselves: Should our best minds be dedicated to solving our biggest problems? Should Harvard encourage its faculty to take on the world's worst inequities? Should Harvard students learn about the depth of global poverty . . . the prevalence of world hunger . . . the scarcity of clean water . . . the girls kept out of school . . . the children who die from diseases we can cure? Should the world's most privileged people learn about the lives of the world's least privileged? These are not rhetorical questions – you will answer with your policies (Gates, 2007).

These remarks reflect the crisis and opportunities that adult education (AE) faces today. In the northern hemisphere, market oriented service economies demand more skilled and competent professionals. Traditional educational opportunities have largely failed in delivering value-centered and socially engaged quality formation. The Enron ethical debacle warns us that success cannot be achieved merely through corporate strategies and financial greed. In the southern hemisphere adult and value education is not considered a priority either. The urgent needs for culturally competent and indigenous pedagogies are overshadowed by the pressing demands of achieving primary universal education by 2015. South and East Asian developing countries such as India, Thailand and the Philippines, just to mention a few, contribute highly in the preparation of adults and professionals in the global economy. Indeed, the rapid growth of Asian private and public universities in the last 25 years is testimony to the demands and possibilities that higher education and adult education represents in the global economy (Altbach and Selvaratnam, 1989). Yet, as universities in developing countries achieved important goals in their independent and post-colonial era, they also fell short in recognizing the *functionalist* reduction that adult education in particular faced in the post-modern and global economies of the 1990s and current decade (Knowles, 1985).

Value-centered international adult education offers new opportunities in overcoming these limitations through cross-border and intersectoral partnerships. The case studies examined in this chapter show how exposing world poverty along side with the creation of institutional partnerships impact the personal and professional formation of adult students at DePaul University and other academic institutions worldwide. Drawing from the analysis of these successful cases, the author defines the essential dimensions to develop Sustainable Value Leadership Programs applied to international adult education. The Chiapas-Mexico Program, the Manila-Philippines Program, and the United Nations-New York Program are three successful examples of international adult education that the Management of International Public Service Graduate Program, at DePaul University has implemented during the past six years. The School of Public Service (SPS), under which these programs operate, is the largest graduate program in the country that educates professional and adult students to the values of international relations and effective cross-cultural management for non-governmental organizations and public service. About 20 percent of our 480 graduate students participate in one or more study abroad program. With more than 1,800 alumni, the SPS program distinguishes itself by being “International-by-Design.” Most students who join the Master of Science and other degree programs are women and men with several years of experience

working in non-governmental, nonprofit organizations or public administrations in the United States and abroad.

## **The Chiapas-Mexico Program**

Every year the participation in the Chiapas Program, focused on the study of sustainable development and the role of non-governmental organizations, is very competitive. Unlike the floods of American college students who travel to Cancun and other Mexican tourist locations during spring break, our students choose to travel to Chiapas to learn about the effects of global economies and policies on the lives and organizations of Mayan indigenous people. The interest in the Chiapas program is also encouraged by the enthusiasm of returned students who formed ChiapanECHO, a 501(c)(3) organization fostering international solidarity, dialogue, and information about the ongoing social struggle of Chiapas. Students arrive in Chiapas open to listen and learn from indigenous, Mexican and international organizations who seek democratic participation, social justice, indigenous rights and cultural dignity. They return to Chicago completely transformed in their personal values, professional perspectives and commitment to global justice. Xochitl Espinosa, an International Public Service graduate student who participated in the March-April 2007 Chiapas program observed:

The Chiapas study-abroad program was simply one of those life-changing experiences. It allowed us to see from a different perspective and consequentially it intensified our sense of social responsibility as future global leaders. If one of the goals of the Public Service Program is “to inspire future global leaders to be more efficient and respectful of other cultures and political and economic systems, and willing to take a stand for the world’s welfare,” then the Chiapas Study-Abroad Program most definitely fulfills its commitment to international learning [...] This experience opened our eyes, our minds, and our hearts to the struggles and concerns of the people of Chiapas. But most importantly, it inspired all of us to take a stronger stand for the world’s welfare (Espinosa, 2007).

The success of the Chiapas-Mexico study abroad program is due, in large part, to the attentive preparation of Marina Patricia Jimenez, the DePaul Chiapas Coordinator. She is a very well known and respected human rights worker with more than 15 years of experience working among Zapatista autonomous organizations, government officials, international NGOs and indigenous communities. Formerly the Director of the Fray Bartolome de Las Casas Human Rights Center, a key institution for the promotion and protection of indigenous rights in Chiapas, Marina Patricia has a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities emerging from the Chiapas contexts. Unlike other Chiapas-based programs and delegations, the educational philosophy and pedagogy (better known in adult education as “andragogy”) behind our SPS Chiapas program focus on the importance of presenting students the full complexity of the situation. In a state where the aspirations for post-modern revolution, headed by the charismatic Subcomandante Marcos and the indigenous

leaders of the Autonomous Zapatista communities are often romanticized by foreigners who do not know very much about the diversity and complexity of the Chiapas resistance movements (Russell, 2005). Marina Patricia's in-depth knowledge of the political and organizational dynamics and the instructor's decade of research often engage opposing parts in the conflict. This does not offer our adult students easy ideological solutions, but rather complex questions requiring long-term solutions and multi-stakeholder participation.

Our students often evaluate the SPS Chiapas-Mexico Program as "a life changing experience." An nonprofit and non-governmental students are not simply interested in traveling to exotic place. Rather, they want to learn by meeting real people, real struggles, and concrete hopes. They choose to travel internationally to discover situations often unspoken or misrepresented in mainstream media. In addition, they want to see how these far-away realities are connected to local situations of migrant communities, Chicago-based organizations and national policies. Several alumni of the Chiapas program are currently working with NGOs and/or projects in line with indigenous rights, land rights, microfinance, poverty alleviation or other subjects they have encountered in their immersion experience in Mexico. Currently four students who participated in the 2007 program are working in Chiapas- and Oaxaca-based human rights organizations. Based on formal evaluations and in-depth feedback from our participants, the SPS Chiapas-Mexico Program is recognized as a best-practice in international adult education (IAE) because of its emphasis on indigenous knowledge, intercultural learning, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and exposure to impoverished contexts in the internal displacement camps of Acteal and other localities in the Highlands and Lacandon Forest of Chiapas.

Chiapas is probably one of the best educational contexts to value and appreciate the importance of indigenous knowledge. By visiting and dialoguing with indigenous leaders of Zapatista and civil society organizations such as Las Abejas (The Bees), program participants come to recognize that indigenous knowledge in Chiapas is about the creation of new identities and consciousnesses derived from the intersection of the past (cultural heritage), present (personal and collective skills and genius) and future (enduring values and passing them to future generations). These dimensions of indigenous knowledge are inherently connected to adult and professional education (Easton, 2004). Our graduate students in Chiapas learn that knowledge and expertise is not exclusive of professional institutions and trainees. They met and spoke with Maria V., a single mother who lost 9 members of her family in the 1997 Acteal massacre by paramilitary groups who wanted to "give a lesson" to indigenous people in resistance. In spite of the tragedy, Maria is an incredible example of a transformational leader who traveled to Geneva to give testimony at the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR). She has adopted seven orphans and has become a highly respected leader in *Maya Antsetik* a women's artisan cooperative. Maria did not give any lecture in women leadership or indigenous rights; she didn't need to. Her life experience and courageous testimony were a clear invitation for our students to commit their own lives of professional expertise to make a positive difference in the world.

## The Manila-Philippines Program

The program in Manila, Philippines emphasizes the role of academic research in poverty reduction, particularly through participatory action research (PAR) and Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA). The Manila program emerged from the 2004 collaborative dialogues between Fr. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., President of DePaul University, and Fr. Gregg Banaga, C.M., President of Adamson University in Manila. These Vincentian institutions, that share the values of St. Vincent de Paul in alleviating poverty, have been collaborating since that time to create service learning and participatory research that serves local impoverished communities and organizations working in the field of poverty reduction. Fr. Gregg Banaga's vision, leadership, and dedication have been a driving force behind the institutional partnerships and concrete collaborative projects.

At the August 30–31, 2007 Grand Academic Conference “Harnessing Advances in Science and Technology for Poverty reduction”, Adamson University clearly recognized the responsibility and potential that academia has in alleviating poverty. Collaborative partnerships between academic institutions, locally, nationally and internationally along with community and intersectoral partnerships are the inescapable paths for tackling the multidimensional and complex reality of poverty. Student participants in the Manila-Philippines program know that their presence and service will be part of a larger collaborative plan between a variety of institutions and organizations. DePaul University's students are working in teams with Adamson University's faculty and researchers, community leaders and other partnering Vincentian institutions in Manila.

The Manila-Philippines partnerships for poverty reduction have the objective to stimulate organizational and leadership capacity among popular organizations in impoverished areas in Metro Manila. Through participatory research and poverty assessments, community leaders are empowered in recognizing and using research as a tool for public policy change. The institutions and organizations involved in this partnership include: DePaul University, Adamson University, De La Salle University-Manila, the Homeless People Federation of the Philippines (HPFP), Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation (VMSDFI), and the Payatas Popular Organizations. Currently Adamson University is extending this effort to benefit other community areas in need, among them are the relocation sites of the slums dwellers originally living along the Northern Railroad in Manila.

One of the learning outcomes of this program is to recognize the Vincentian values embedded in our universities as the greatest asset for social change. The mission and service of these institutions are a driving force to make a concrete difference in the lives of many. The Vincentian mission facilitates collaborations among institutes, centers, colleges and departments within and across universities. Specifically, it promotes dialogue and best-practices exchange between DePaul University's Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning (CBSL), and Adamson University's Integrated Community Extension Services (ICES). The DePaul Institute for Business and Professional Ethics (IBPE) can enrich and benefit from Adamson's Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility (VCSR). The Social Development

Research Center at De La Salle University in Manila and its long experience in participatory action research and community empowerment assessments for poverty reduction is another institution involved in facilitating this project. Privileging the contextual knowledge and effective experience of a Manila-based university, rather than an American one, aims to give importance to indigenous cultures and expertise. The Women, Work, and Development (WWD) Project, a ground breaking experience in three partner urban poor communities in Manila has contributed tools, training materials, strategies and understanding to an educational package entitled *Enabling Women for Participatory Community Development*. Based on these successful experiences our inter-university teams aim to achieve lasting outcomes by enabling urban poor women to take an active role in community development (Arcinas et al., 2004).

Students participating in this program are immersed in the world of popular organizations and self-help groups. Since 1992 the Vincentian Ministries (also known as VMSDFI), has implemented some of the best practices in poverty alleviation among scavengers and those living in extreme marginalization in the Payatas areas of Metro Manila. Several people's organizations (POs) emerged from the micro-savings and community loans related activities in the Payatas community. The Lupang Pangako Urban Poor Association is the oldest popular association in relation to the HPFP and the VMSDFI. Most of its members are scavengers who earn their living collecting recyclable materials in the garbage dumps of Payatas, Quezon City, Metro Manila. The inhumane conditions of people working and living in a garbage dump represent only one side of the coin in Payatas. Our students will view the more positive side in the work popular organizations and in experiencing the role of collaborative research experience for increasing capacity, improving policies, and alleviating poverty.

As the Nobel Prize committee and hence the world recognized the innovative work of Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank in microfinance and poverty alleviation, our adult students are learning first hand from the people of Payatas that the first step in extreme poverty eradication are self-organized popular organizations. Fr. Norberto Carcellar, C.M., formerly the Pastor of Payatas, gave a testimony to the students and faculty of American Vincentian Universities saying, "What we have learned in our work among the poorest of Payatas is that, before we decide to do something *for* the poor, let's ask them how. They probably have a better and more cost-effective solution than us" (Carcellar, 2007). Participants in The Manila-Philippines Program learn to appreciate the leadership and community capacity that people living in economically poor contexts. Through this program they recognize "the poor" as equal partners and capable collaborators. By working in teams with Filipino faculty and community leaders, our adult-professional students experience the power of partnerships for changing the systemic causes of hunger, marginalization and poverty.

## **The United Nations–New York Program**

Since 1997, DePaul University has been giving its students the opportunity to meet ambassadors, participate in international conferences, and engage in

video-conference debates with top scholars and leaders at the United Nations in New York. Thanks to the leadership of SNL Professor Pat Szczerba, DePaul University has been the first Academic Institution with a consultative status at the Department of Public Information (DPI) at the United Nations. In addition to maintaining delicate relations with diplomats and gracefully navigating a network of opportunities among the 3,000 plus NGOs and UN agencies, Prof. Szczerba has been leading classrooms for adult students during the Annual NGO conferences at the UN headquarter in New York. Graduate students from the School of Public Service have been joining School for New Learning students in the New York experience since 2004. The value of this program is the organizational networking and the exposure to the value and practice of this complex intergovernmental organization.

In 2005, The School of Public Service (recognized as MPS at that time) began a collaboration with the Growing Sustainable Business Initiative of the United Nations Development Program (GSB/UNDP) to identify potential business and NGO partnerships for promoting the Millennium Development Goals for the benefit of poorer sectors of the global south. DePaul was invited because of its known history of collaboration and service at the United Nations and because of its pragmatic character. The GSB/UNDP was not interested in a light research report. Rather, they wanted our collaboration to identify and promote inter-sectoral partnerships for sustainable development and poverty reduction through business participation. The collaboration resulted in four feasibility studies emerging with some positive responses and collaborative invitations from various business partners, including FedEx, WM Wrigley Jr. Company, Aon Corporation and Abbott Laboratories.

International adult education, in this case, is represented by the students' exposure to international potentials for the application of the base of the pyramid model (BOP) for poverty reduction. The exposure to the growing movement for the creation of intersectoral partnership for sustainable development and the end of poverty is a priceless contribution to the value development and career formation of our students. They realize the potential and social responsibility that academia has (including them as graduate students) in making a difference. The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), which recently created the Academic Council, recognizes the potential benefits that academic institutions offer to poverty reduction and sustainable development. DePaul University, the only Vincentian institution represented in the UNGC Academic Council, is actively engaged in this process through the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics (IBPE) and its recently refocused mission of reducing poverty through business participation. Under the leadership of Prof. Patricia Werhane, a nationally recognized scholar in business ethics, DePaul is committed to: (1) Participating in a shared mission to educate responsible leaders to promote business engagement and the advancement of the human rights, labor rights, environmental rights, and anticorruption principles of the Global Compact; (2) Aligning the Global Compact mission with the range of activities undertaken by academic institutions though education on social responsibility, multidisciplinary research for societal change, dissemination of international values of corporate citizenship, technical support for new solutions, and by lending capacity for educational



infrastructures and local networks (Kell, 2006). The values that students acquire in participating in the United Nations/New York Programs begin by becoming more aware of the compelling global problems of development, human rights, and security to the realization that their own personal and professional contribution can truly make a difference.

### Sustainable Values Leadership Development

The Chiapas, Manila and United Nations Programs convey some important lessons learned in international adult education. In spite of the diversity of contexts, all three of these programs speak about the importance of linking adult education with values, and the exposure to real life and poverty situations. They also create community and collaboration while fostering partnerships across diverse organizations, sectors, and stakeholders. Professional adult students who participate in these programs become conscious of the social responsibilities connected to their professional education and career. In line with the base principles of adult education, our students need to know the WHY, WHAT and HOW of the learning experience while recognizing how the content, process and results relate to their colleagues, peers and their own values (Fig. 11.1 ) (Knowles, 1985).

Our experience in these international programs teaches us that international value adult education (IVAE) must respond to students' need for motivation (WHY), service (WHAT), practicality (HOW), and collaboration (WHO). In value leadership development terms, the andragogy for educating engaged and socially responsible leaders, must be balanced between orienting students toward mission (value and

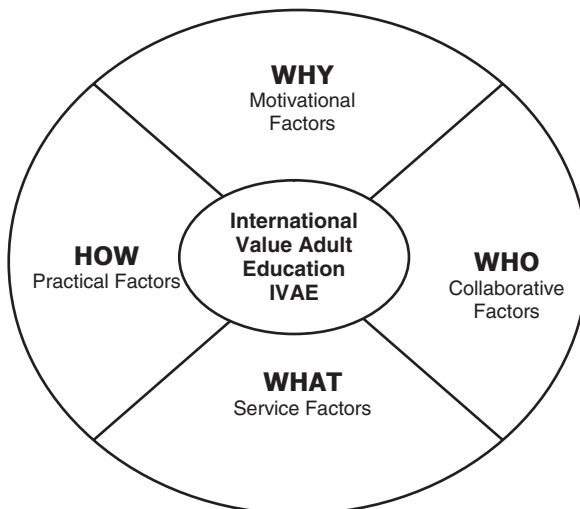


Fig. 11.1 International Value Adult Education IVAE

ethics), service (exposure and empowerment), task (practicality and pragmatism) and international relations (collaboration and partnership).

These programs are centered around the recognition of the learners as resources. Students and adult students in particular are not just learning recipients. They have a lot to offer and they expect to be valued in their potentials. The role of the instructor is to synchronize their leadership skills while promoting self-development of their own potentials. The self-realization of adult learners participating in this program emerges from the recognition that they are part of a larger organizational and societal complex picture in which their personal values and professional qualifications can contribute significantly (Schein, 1985). Stephen R. Covey, in the best selling book *Principle-Centered Leadership*, suggests that the first step in value leadership development is the recognition of the responsibility and opportunities that emerge from aligning personal and organizational mission and values (Covey, 1991). The Chiapas, Manila, and United Nations Program present our adult learners the right opportunities for aligning values while developing their skills as leaders and managers. The personal and institutional engagements of DePaul faculty and administrator are key factors for making this development possible. In line with the basic principles of andragogy, the adult learners participating in our program are not satisfied to simply consume a product (Knowles, 1970; 1980). They want to take part in the process. They want to recognize the practical implications of learning into their own professional practices. They want to learn about the complexity of situations and the variety of positions. They want to be involved, or at least be aware, of the networks involved in the preparation. They want to be given the possibility to remain actively involved in follow-up activities that allow them to be subjects, resources, and socially responsible leaders. The Chiapas, Manila, and United Nations Program attempt to be a concrete and effective opportunity for international adult education.

In summary, our international programs reflect four characteristics that, in our opinion and experience, should be present in successful international adult education programs:

1. Valuable: *What are the values represented in this program?* Students should be able to identify with the values explicitly and implicitly represented in the program. They should be able to connect their own personal value development with the values of people and organizations they meet.
2. Pragmatic: *What are the practical applications and skills acquired in this program?* Our participants often receive a certificate of participation recognizing skills and competencies acquired in the program.
3. Engaged: *What are the connections and perspectives of other organizations?* Adult students need to see the larger picture and realize the complexity of subjects and contexts. They need to see how they can concretely contribute with their own leadership and professional backgrounds.
4. Sustainable: *Is the program feasible for the students, coordinators, and institutions involved?* The institutional support to the program is essential for its continuation. Participants should have the possibility to continue the values of the program at home and in their career.

Inspired by the leadership of Saint Vincent de Paul, patron of our Vincentian Universities, students are invited to transform their values and skills into a positive and sustainable effort to better the economic, societal, and environmental conditions of this world. The goals of our international *andragogy* aim higher than providing skills for a degree for a job or career. Our teaching methods aim to recognize our students' vocations so that they are able to align their personal aspirations with a rewarding career and engaging professional life and leave a positive legacy. These programs invite our students to become global citizens and socially responsible leaders in an interdependent, international, and intercultural global society.

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