

“Competencies of the new global leader”

4:00 pm to 5:30 pm, September 15, 2011.

WWF Auditorium, 172 – B Lodi Estate

Given the importance of coming up with a new generation of competent global leaders capable of entrepreneurial leadership, Aspen Institute India organized a session on “Competencies of the new global leader” with Dean Robert F. Bruner, Dean, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia.

The panel also included Ambassador Kishan Rana, Former Ambassador to Germany who chaired the session.



Taking the centre stage, Dean Bruner explained that the issue of competencies of the new global leader was motivated by three key questions. Firstly, is technical mastery simply sufficient as a basis for global entrepreneurship leadership? How should one balance global vs. local knowledge? And, how should companies and schools respond to the answers to these questions?

Dean Bruner explained that in a leading study it was discovered that around 13000 institutions award degrees of businesses of some kind which leaves students with a vast choice. However, less than 10% of these institutions are credited and we don't know anything of balance 90%. This creates a research

opportunity. As a result, schools are collaborating across borders at a dizzying pace and particular interest is between the developed economies and developing Asia.

Upon critiquing the curriculum of business schools in the era of globalization, the most controversial conclusion reached was that business schools were not keeping up with the pace of intellectual development emanating from the actual globalisation basis. Moreover, upon examining the in depth cases of globalization in business schools the conclusion reached was that one size does not fit all. Schools are testing and experimenting with globalization in a variety of ways to make this field of management education and early stage industry like in the case of Bollywood, Silicon valley etc. Thus, as the Professor aptly describes it “ there is this effervescence of innovation”.

However, he also warned that following the boom of innovation there tends to be a bust. But, he also optimistically adds that this “rave of educational globalization” has a long way ahead.

He also added that it is critical to understand places and localities, accordingly the Professor talked about four related dimensions such as differences relating to culture, language, religion and administration and law. There is also geographic distance which creates remoteness in some markets and proximity in others the differences in sizes and time zones prove to be quite significant in determining the ways in which global leaders do their work. Economic distance also matters in terms of differences in income, GDP and capital, the asymmetric distribution of resources, stability of finances etc.

As a result of research at the Darden school it was found that competencies are being built upon the mastery of technical knowledge i.e. the ‘to know what’ part of the knowledge. However, it is also necessary to build skills i.e. on the ‘to know how’ part of knowledge. This includes skills like negotiating skills, selling skills, giving feedback in a constructive way, motivating and organizing people. Apart from these it is important to develop management competencies relating to integrity, ethics etc.

Competencies tell us a great deal about the development of leaders. Research on competencies has been the foundation for helping to distinguish superior performance from others. These competencies can be gained through training as these are not inherited traits. The general idea today is that competencies in the form of knowledge, skills and attributes drive performances.

He also emphasized that competencies are a meaningful basis of development rather than simply focusing on getting tasks done. It is also necessary to focus on behaviours that arrive at such competencies like observing the task performance, the manner of success and execution of work etc. Thus, focusing on competencies is much broader and helps in assessing better a performance.

Competency based applications are highly valuable to managers because they capture the complexity of success. Infact, focus on competencies can improve our service to students, employees of corporations etc. Thus, a focus on competencies recognizes that the learner does not stop learning when he or she exits the classroom.

A combination of strategic vision and mission towards the values and commitments are demanding a rethinking of the way we focus on the development of global leaders. We need to develop on the concept of management development which is not only competency based and knowledge based but it also needs to be drawing in on the actual experience of the learner.

In conclusion, Professor Bruner stated that globalisation business is simply an inexorable force and it will be a dominant theme in years to come. Global Management is essential to the advancement of the global leader. We need to write a new story that focuses on competencies in order to develop the next generation of global business leaders.

When asked whether it was dangerous to focus too much on leadership as it ignores an important aspect of humility in leadership, the aspect of subsuming one's ego, Mr. Bruner replied that that there was no place for 'I' in a team. A leader must possess the attributes of humility, ethics etc to build trust. Power is ultimately based on the respect of people who work with you.

While alluding to Japan's case of rigid leadership development that is slow resulting in the stagnation of the ingenuity and innovation of the leaders, Mr. Bruner emphasized that it was necessary to also strike a middle ground, meaning that it is important to train leaders to be humble at the same time leave space for them to break out and experiment and come up with fresh ideas.

The video can be watched here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/aspeninstituteindia?feature=mhee#p/u/35/MAttIEEpAc>