

Weekly Column
Korean Newspaper



Melvin University
and Me

Adaptation leadership

When we talk about leadership in general, we have been going from "primary leadership to open-minded, empowering leadership to leadership that let them decide."

But since it's a global era, if we go to another country with people from other countries, will it work if we show the leadership we used to do in our own country? It may be similar to what happens when a new daughter-in-law enters in our family. It's hard at first because we don't know each other well.

When I first came to Melvin University, I had such a difficulty because the culture was so different. In particular, the concept of time was so different from that of Korea. At that time, I once made an appointment with the vice-president at the school office, but he didn't show up after three hours of the appointment. When I asked where he was, he said he was meeting someone in the city and would come soon. I was waiting longer again, but he doesn't come. So I went to a place downtown where he is and just got angry very much. (I have a straight personality, too.) "Why don't you keep your promise?" He seemed to be talking about the school with the head of our university's faculty. Both seemed very surprised because of my resentment. They said they couldn't keep the appointment with me because they were talking.

As I later found out, Kenyans had no "punctual." One of our students told me of it. Because the student studied in England, so he seemed to know the problems of his own country. For example, if they promised to meet at

school at 9 o'clock, it is common to show up around 11 o'clock. I think it's a concept that they only have to show up before sunset. Of course, it's been fixed a lot since they were born.

In a way, there were problems on both sides. They didn't know each other's culture at all. One must be a thorough concept of time (punctual), the other must have grown up without such a concept, etc. In the end, will you adapt to other cultures in a word? It seems to be a matter of what to do. There are many multiculturalities in Korea, and as the global era is becoming more and more, such problems will emerge.

Will I adapt to the world? Will the world adapt to me? Irish writer George Bernard Shaw says that rational people adapt themselves to the world, and irrational people continue to insist that the world adapt to them. Most of the time, however, it is the latter. It can also mean that everyone is living in such a conflict that they want the other person to suit us. It is also proof that it is difficult for me to adapt to others. The reason may be that we don't want to lose, or get rid of, our own style. Maybe we've been stuck in the winner mold for a long time.

It is also said that such a gap should be solved in theory, but the reality is that it does not work in practice. Looking at the book "Global Dexterity" (by Andrew L. Molinsky, 2013), there are three key challenges ahead of us when we come into contact with other cultures, when we work with people from other cultures, and when we try to adapt to other cultures.

The first is the feeling that we ourselves are not ready to adapt to other cultures in terms of knowledge or skills. In my case, I have visited many foreign countries, but it is my first time in Africa, and moreover, I have been in Kenya for two years full-time, and I have been in an intensive managerial position, so it is true that I lacked "basic knowledge" about Africa.

The second challenge in this book is my own past lifestyle, my own understanding of other cultures, and "my own beliefs." After all, it's a challenge to myself. Personally, I like it because I (Byeong) myself have a

strong belief in something, but there seems to be something to be revised in working with foreigners for a long time. I often feel that the development, vision, and direction of Melvin University in my own opinion cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the Kenyan staff here.

The third was that adapting appropriately to other cultures would be a burden and pain. I don't think that's the case with me. I think it's because I tend to keep up with it rather than being a burden. However, as this book says, it is necessary to proceed without being disturbed by our own ministry. I think it is necessary to adapt well without interfering with the progress.

The conclusion is how to overcome the above three challenges and demonstrate our leadership as a leader to reach our desired goal and final destination well. Of course, it is clear that these are not easy to overcome. Wasn't I also very angry at first?

However, if vision, direction, and purpose are clearly shared with each other, of course this will take time, but it will be the best, and it will be solved well.