

Exploring Signature Pedagogies in Undergraduate Leadership Education

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Abstract

This research explores the instructional strategies most frequently used by leadership educators who teach academic credit-bearing undergraduate leadership studies courses through a national survey and identifies signature pedagogies within the leadership discipline. Findings from this study suggest that class discussion—whether in the form of true class discussion or a hybrid of interactive lecture and discussion—is the signature pedagogy for undergraduate leadership education. While group and individual projects and presentations, self-assessments and instruments, and reflective journaling were also used frequently, overall, discussion-based pedagogies were used most frequently. These findings offer attributes that a variety of leadership educators have shared as effective for teaching and learning within the discipline and may facilitate the development of new leadership programming policies, provide direction for future research, and contribute to the existing body of literature.

Introduction

Since 1990 only a few studies have explored the instructional strategies utilized in student leadership development programming (e.g., Allen & Hartman, 2009; Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1990; Conger, 1992; Day, 2000; Eich, 2008; London, 2002; Yukl, 2006). While these studies have addressed various stakeholders' perceptions of leadership development programming (and student perceptions in depth), only a handful collected data from leadership practitioners not identified specifically as university instructors. For example, in a grounded theory study of high quality leadership programs, Eich (2008) interviewed 62 stakeholders in leadership programs that ranged in type from an academic course, to a week retreat, to a co-curricular program, to a service leadership program. Yet, only 17

of the stakeholders were practitioners (i.e., instructors). Similarly, Allen and Hartman (2009) surveyed undergraduate business students and attendees of a student leadership conference. And while their research provided insight as to student preferences and experiences in leadership development programming, we know little about the experiences of those who deliver said programming or the instructional strategies they employ. In fact, relatively few studies have focused on the teaching methods, instructional approaches, or leadership studies curriculum design and content while a greater number have focused on leadership studies programs (e.g., Allen & Hartman, 2009; Eich, 2008; Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, & Wagner, 2006; Ritch & Mengel, 2009; Roberts, 2007). Yet, according to the International Leadership Association Directory of Leadership Programs more than 1,500 leadership studies programs exist today!

Despite the interest in student leadership development programming, the sparse few studies that have investigated instructors who teach academic credit-bearing courses have been limited to an insufficient number of participants. In fact, almost no research exists in regard to leadership educators. To address this overlooked question, this study specifically targeted instructors that teach academic credit-bearing courses through a national survey.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the instructional strategies that are most frequently used by instructors when they teach courses in the leadership discipline and identify potential signature pedagogies. Despite the increased interest in leadership education, the literature has only sparsely reviewed specific leadership pedagogies as a group. To explore this inquiry, a quantitative survey of most commonly utilized instructional strategies designed chiefly around the learning sources leader development as offered by Allen and Hartman (2009) was used.

Allen and Hartman (2008a, 2009b, & 2009) created one of the first comprehensive lists of leadership development teaching methods found in the literature (see also Avolio, 1999; Day, 2000; London, 2002; Yukl, 2006). This list was embedded in the framework offered by Conger (1992) from his experiences in leadership training programs outside of academia. In the 1992 work *Learning to Lead*, Jay A. Conger explored five innovative leadership training programs outside universities and joined them as a participant and observer (p. xiii). Following his documented experiences in these, Conger and his research team reported no “one best” program for leadership training. Instead, they found that instructional methods each had distinct strengths and drawbacks and the researchers categorized leadership training into four key approaches: (a) personal growth, (b) conceptual, (c) feedback, and (d) skill-building (p. 155). Several years

later in 2008 and 2009, Allen and Hartman built upon Conger's work and published three articles in peer-reviewed journals that identified 40 commonly used learning sources (2008a, 2009b, & 2009). Yet, through their research on students in leadership studies courses, no distinguishable leadership pedagogy emerged. Instead, they had a collection of sorts, identifying 40 sources of learning commonly used in leadership development programming for collegians. This study builds upon the work of Conger (1992) and Allen and Hartman (2008a, 2008b, & 2009). Through a national survey investigating instructional strategy use in undergraduate leadership education this study aimed to address these gaps in the literature and identify distinguishable or signature pedagogies within the discipline.

Research Questions

1. What are the most frequently employed instructional strategies used by instructors teaching undergraduate leadership studies courses?
2. Are there identifiable signature pedagogies in the leadership discipline?

Literature Review

With the current state and growth of leadership studies, the need for research exploring the various strategies for teaching and learning in the discipline has never been greater. While there are several bodies of relevant literature that informed this study such as research on college teaching and learning and different types of instructional strategies, studies investigating the profile of instructional strategies used across the disciplines are still very limited. Further, the quality or use of specific instructional strategies in leadership education such as reflection (Burbach, Matkin, & Fritz, 2004; Densten & Gray, 2001), service learning (Scharff, 2009; Seemiller, 2006), teambuilding (Moorhead & Griffin, 2009), research leadership (Jones & Kilburn, 2005), critical thinking (Gifford, 2010; Jenkins & Cutchens, 2011), feedback (Day, 2000), self-assessments (Buschlen, 2009), role-play (Sogurno, 2003), simulation (Allen, 2008), exams (Moore, 2010) and the case-in-point approach (Parks, 2005) have been reviewed only in small quantities. Equally, the literature is sparse of exploration into the preferences of leadership educators. Furthermore, the literature offers just a hodgepodge of research on various teaching and assessment strategies in leadership education. And while the literature surveying instructional strategies in leadership education is growing, it remains underdeveloped. Likewise, a gap in the literature related to best practices within the discipline also remains. In order to provide relevant leadership education, it is important to carefully assess stakeholders responsible for delivering knowledge within the discipline. In the

same way, gaining an understanding of leadership educators' preferences at the most basic level is the critical first step to further inquiry within the discipline.

Allen and Hartman's (2008a, 2008b, 2009) conceptualization of Conger's (1992) framework of sources of learning in leadership development was used as the conceptual framework giving meaning and direction to the instructional strategy inquiry in this study. The present study focused on 24 instructional strategies including 12 of Allen and Hartman's (2009) 20 focused sources of learning used in a variety of leadership development programs as well as three of an additional 20 Allen and Hartman tagged as more appropriate for an organizational context. The remaining nine strategies and final selection for inclusion in this study (see Table 1) were based on a combination of recommendations from a panel of experts, a review of the literature, and the researcher's expertise and experience. Admittedly, all instructional methods have their pros and cons. Indeed, because learning leadership and developing leadership skills may be different than learning other content in a traditional classroom setting, leadership education may need different strategies for facilitating learning (Eich, 2008; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007; Wren, 1995). Accordingly, leadership education requires its own examination to determine how effective teaching and learning of leadership is done.

Table 1
Instructional Strategies

No.	Instructional Strategy	Description
1.	*Case Studies	Students examine written or oral stories or vignettes that highlight a case of effective or ineffective leadership.
2.	Class Discussion	Instructor facilitates sustained conversation and/or question and answer segment with the entire class.
3.	Exams	Students complete tests or exams that last the majority of the class period intended to assess subject matter mastery.
4.	*Games	Students engage in interactions in a prescribed setting and are constrained by a set of rules and procedures. (e.g., Jeopardy, Who Wants to be a Millionaire, Family Feud, etc.)
5.	**Group Projects/Presentations	Students work on a prescribed project or presentation in a small group.
6.	**Guest Speaker	Students listen to a guest speaker/lecturer discuss their personal leadership experiences.
7.	*Icebreakers	Students engage in a series of relationship-building activities to get to know one another.
8.	In-Class Short Writing	Students complete ungraded writing activities designed to enhance learning of course content.
9.	*Individual Leadership Development Plans	Students develop specific goals and vision statements for individual leadership development.
10.	Interactive Lecture/Discussion	Instructor presents information in 10-20 minute time blocks with period of structured interaction/discussion in-between mini-lectures.
11.	Interview of a Leader	Students observe or interview an individual leading others effectively or ineffectively and report their findings to the instructor/class.
12.	*Lecture	Students listen to instructor presentations lasting most of the class session.
13.	Media Clips	Students learn about leadership theory/topics through film, television, or other media clips (e.g., YouTube, Hulu).
14.	Quizzes	Students complete short graded quizzes intended to assess subject matter mastery.

No.	Instructional Strategy	Description
15.	*Reflective Journals	Students develop written reflections on their experiences.
16.	*Research Project/Presentation	Students actively research a leadership theory or topic and present findings in oral or written format.
17.	*Role Play Activities	Students engage in an activity where they act out a set of defined role behaviors or positions with a view to acquire desired experiences.
18.	*Self-Assessments & Instruments	Students complete questionnaires or other instruments designed to enhance their self-awareness in a variety of areas (e.g., learning style, personality type, leadership style, etc.).
19.	*Service Learning	Students participate in a service learning or philanthropic project.
20.	*Simulation	Students engage in an activity that simulates complex problems or issues and requires decision-making.
21.	*Small Group Discussions	Students take part in small group discussions on the topic of leadership or some aspect of group dynamics.
22.	*Story or Storytelling	Students listen to a story highlighting some aspect of leadership; often given by an individual with a novel experience.
23.	Student Peer Teaching	Students, in pairs or groups, teach designated course content or skills to fellow students.
24.	**Teambuilding	Students engage in group activities that emphasize working together in a spirit of cooperation (e.g., setting team goals/priorities, delegating work, examining group relationships/dynamics, etc.).

*Denotes one of Allen and Hartman's (2009) 20 focused "sources of learning."

**Denotes one of (or an adaption of one of) Allen and Hartman's (2009) "other sources of learning."

Further, this study was informed by Lee S. Shulman's (2005) framework of signature pedagogies. These frameworks place the research within its intended context of collegiate teaching and learning within the leadership discipline, which begins with the exploration of the target population in order to identify and explore their teaching preferences. According to Shulman (2005), signature pedagogies are the forms of instruction that leap to mind when we first think about the preparation of members of particular professions. They implicitly define what counts as knowledge in a field and how things become known. They define how knowledge is analyzed, criticized, accepted, or discarded as well as inform

students to *think*, to *perform*, and to *act with integrity*. To date, literature does not exist which discusses signature pedagogies in the leadership discipline. Yet, scholars have applied Shulman's model to other disciplines. Perhaps it is because the study of leadership transcends the academic disciplines and professions (Northouse, 2010; Rost & Barker, 2000; Yukl, 2006). Since 2005 a number of published books have examined educating specific professions such as clergy (Foster, Dahill, Golemon, & Tolentino, 2005), lawyers (Sullivan, Colby, Wegner, & Bond, 2007), nurses (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2009), engineers (Sheppard, Macatangay, & Colby, 2009), and physicians (Cooke, Irby, O'Brien, & Shulman, 2010). Most recently, *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind* (Gurung, Chick, & Haynie, 2009) provide a collection of discussions describing commonly employed pedagogies in the disciplines of humanities (history and literary studies), fine arts (creative writing and arts), social sciences (geography, human development, and psychology), natural sciences (agriculture and biological sciences), and mathematics (computer science, mathematics, and physics).

Shulman (2005) explains that effective signature pedagogies are those that incorporate active student participation, make students feel deeply engaged, promote a learning environment where students feel visible (making it hard for students to disappear and become anonymous). Furthermore, signature pedagogies tend to be interactive, meaning students are not only accountable to their teacher, but also to fellow students. Ultimately, signature pedagogies breed accountability of performance and interaction, as well as simply removing the cloak of invisibility leading to a much higher affective level in class. In fact, the pedagogical attributes that enhance student learning and leadership development are at the center of determining excellence in leadership education (Eich, 2008). Arguably, since leadership development workshops, classic teambuilding seminars, and other interactive activities represent the earliest forms of leadership education, leadership educators have consistently demonstrated these types of techniques. Is there then, a signature pedagogy in leadership education? Are leadership studies educators/programs preparing members of particular professions? Many scholars argue that leadership studies transcend the disciplines and prepare students for all professions (e.g., Doh, 2003; Wren, Riggio, & Genovese, 2009; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Thus, the challenge of identifying signature pedagogies in leadership is an important one.

Methods

The 303 instructor participants that teach academic credit-bearing undergraduate leadership studies courses is the largest reported study of this population in any area. Participants self-reported having taught an in-class/face-to-face (not online)

academic credit-bearing undergraduate leadership course in the United States within the previous two years. This initial question determined the eligibility of participants and to use said course as a reference point while they completed the survey. The analyzed data was collected from a web-based questionnaire through a national study that targeted thousands of leadership studies instructors through two primary sources from October 25, 2010 through December 1, 2010. The first source was the organizational memberships and databases of the following professional associations/organizations or their respective member interest groups: the International Leadership Association (ILA), NASPA (Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education) Student Leadership Programs group, and the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs (NCLP). The second source was a random sample of instructors drawn from the ILA Directory of Leadership Programs, a searchable directory of leadership programs available to all ILA members. While the first source was more of a shotgun approach—these organizations were most likely to have ideal participants as members—return rates for the 303 analyzed surveys for the ILA (7.84%), NCLP (10.04%), and NASPA (0.93%) were less than desirable. Conversely, the second and more directly targeted source from the ILA directory provided a 52.49% return rate. These data collection procedures provided the researcher with the best possible sources to generalize the population.

The majority of participants were white (83.8%) and female (54.8%). Also, 58.4% had doctorates, 38.6% had master's degrees, and 60.2% reported having more than five years of teaching experience. Perhaps surprisingly, only 7.9% of the participants earned their advanced degree in leadership or leadership studies. Instead, degrees in organizational studies (13.9%), higher education (12.9%), college student affairs, development, or personnel (12.2%), and miscellaneous education-related degrees (11.6%) were more prominent. Participants' primary activity at their institutions was teaching (46.2%), student affairs (23.4%), or administration (19.5%). Additionally, 95% of participants taught at a four-year public or private university or college. At these institutions, the academic college delivering the undergraduate leadership courses taught by the participants was usually Business (13.9%), Arts and Sciences (12.2%), or Education (11.6%). The specific academic department offering these courses was Leadership (19.1%), Business, Management, or Organizational Studies (16.2%), or Student Affairs (14.9%). More than half of all participants reported having personally experienced undergraduate leadership experiences while in college (50.2%) and 74.3% reported taking graduate coursework in leadership.

Type of Research Data

The analyzed data was collected from a web-based questionnaire through a national study. The questionnaire format of the web-based survey in this study implemented as many principles from Evans and Mathur (2005) and Dillman, Tortora, and Barker (1999) as possible. The questionnaire was modeled after the approach used by Djajalaksana (2011) to collect data identify the most frequently used instructional strategies for teaching Information Systems (IS) courses and identify possible signature pedagogies found within the IS discipline. In this study, the survey instrument was used to collect demographic information to profile the participants and identify the most frequently used instructional strategies for teaching leadership courses, to identify possible signature pedagogies in the leadership discipline, and assess the learning goals instructors teaching these courses emphasize most. Based on Shulman's (2005) description, signature pedagogies are those teaching methods that first come to a faculty member's mind when he or she is asked to identify the most dominant instructional strategies used to teach a specific discipline. The 24 instructional strategies included in the survey were derived chiefly from Allen and Hartman's *Sources of Learning in Collegiate Leadership Development Programs* (2009), reviewed by a panel of experts and tested in a pilot study.

Data Analysis Techniques

Answering Research Question One involved creating a frequency tabulation and percentage of responses for the items on the survey that looked at instructional strategy use. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the mean and confidence intervals of the item responses indicating frequency of instructional strategies use. Answering Research Question Two involved an explanatory factor analysis—specifically principal axis factoring (common factor analysis)—in order to identify the patterns of instructional strategies most often used in the leadership discipline. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess reliability. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the composite scores of each subgroup.

Findings

Instructional Strategy Use in Undergraduate Leadership Education

Answering research questions one involved creating a frequency tabulation and calculating the percentage of responses for the items on the survey that looked at instructional strategy use. Participants reported frequency of use of each strategy using the following rating scale:

- 0 - Never (0% of my class sessions).
- 1 - Rarely (Less than 10% of my class sessions).
- 2 - Occasionally (11-33% of my class sessions).
- 3 - Frequently (34-65% of my class sessions).
- 4 - Almost Always (66-90% of my class sessions).
- 5 - Always (91-100% of my class sessions).

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the mean and confidence intervals of the item responses indicating frequency of instructional strategies used. Table 2 contains the means, standard deviations, and 95% confidence intervals (CI) of instructional strategies used. In Table 3 the original five-point rating scale was condensed into three categories (0-33% of class sessions, 34-65% of class sessions, and 66-100% of class sessions) to sharpen the visual representation of the results. A subsequent survey question asked participants to identify the three instructional strategies they used most frequently in their course. This question included the same 24 instructional strategies from the previous questions, but also included an “other” field in which participants could add an additional instructional method. Three participants noted using Ronald Heifetz’s famed strategy, “Case-in-point” (Heifetz, 1994) while no “other” instructional strategy appeared more than once. Table 4 illustrates the instructional strategies participants reported in their Top 3.

Table 2
Mean Frequency of Use of Instructional Strategies with Confidence Intervals and Standard Deviations (N = 303)

Instructional Method	M (SD)	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Class Discussion	4.48 (0.79)	4.39	4.56
Interactive Lecture & Discussion	3.84 (1.15)	3.71	3.97
Small Group Discussion	3.49 (1.19)	3.35	3.62
Group Projects & Presentations	3.31 (1.29)	3.17	3.46
Research Project Presentations	3.00 (1.61)	2.82	3.19
Reflective Journals	2.80 (1.61)	2.62	2.98
Self-Assessments/Instruments	2.80 (1.38)	2.64	2.95
Media Clips	2.62 (1.31)	2.48	2.77
Team Building	2.61 (1.47)	2.45	2.78
Case Studies	2.42 (1.18)	2.29	2.56
Individual Leader Development Plans	2.32 (1.63)	2.14	2.50
Lecture	2.28 (1.46)	2.12	2.45
Ice Breakers	2.21 (1.46)	2.05	2.38
Guest Speakers	2.03 (1.26)	1.89	2.18
Games	1.96 (1.28)	1.81	2.10
In-class Short Writing	1.93 (1.48)	1.77	2.10
Service Learning	1.91 (1.66)	1.72	2.10
Interview of a Leader	1.91 (1.47)	1.75	2.08
Peer Teaching	1.87 (1.52)	1.70	2.04
Stories	1.84 (1.51)	1.67	2.01
Exams	1.76 (1.61)	1.58	1.94
Role Play	1.71 (1.30)	1.56	1.86
Simulation	1.69 (1.37)	1.53	1.84
Quizzes	1.42 (1.44)	1.26	1.58

Table 3
Percentage of Instructors' Instructional Strategies Use in Class Sessions

Instructional Method	0-33% of class sessions	34-65% of class sessions	66-100% of class sessions
Class Discussion	2.0%	6.9%	91.1%
Interactive Lecture/Discussion	11.6%	21.8%	66.7%
Small Group Discussions	18.5%	29.7%	51.8%
Group Projects/Presentations	25.7%	30.7%	43.6%
Research Project/Presentation	38.3%	19.1%	42.6%
Reflective Journals	46.5%	15.8%	37.6%
Teambuilding	50.5%	19.5%	30.0%
Self-Assessments & Instruments	42.6%	29.0%	28.4%
Individual Leadership Development Plans	56.8%	16.5%	26.7%
Media Clips	47.9%	28.7%	23.4%
Lecture	60.7%	17.5%	21.8%
Icebreakers	65.7%	13.9%	20.5%
Service Learning	66.0%	14.2%	19.8%
Case Studies	61.4%	21.5%	17.2%
In-Class Short Writing	70.0%	12.9%	17.2%
Exams	76.9%	6.3%	16.8%
Story or Storytelling	71.9%	11.2%	16.8%
Interview of a Leader	70.6%	13.5%	15.8%
Student Peer Teaching	70.0%	14.5%	15.5%
Guest Speaker	71.3%	14.5%	14.2%
Simulation	76.6%	10.2%	13.2%
Games	70.6%	16.5%	12.9%
Quizzes	80.2%	8.6%	11.2%
Role Play Activities	79.9%	9.9%	10.2%

Table 4
Instructor's "Top 3" Most Used Instructional Strategies

Method	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Class Discussion	165	54.5
Interactive Lecture & Discussion	143	47.2
Group Projects & Presentations	87	28.7
Self-Assessments & Instruments	72	23.8
Small Group Discussion	72	23.8
Reflective Journals	64	21.1
Case Studies	34	11.2
Service Learning	34	11.2
Research Projects & Presentations	33	10.9
Media Clips	26	8.6
Individual Leadership Development Plans	20	6.6
Lecture	20	6.6
Teambuilding	20	6.6
Guest Speakers	18	5.9
Peer Teaching	14	4.6
Exams	13	4.3
Simulation	12	4.0
Other	10	3.4
Leader Interviews	10	3.3
Games	9	3.0
Stories or Storytelling	9	3.0
Quizzes	8	2.6
Role Play	8	2.6
Ice Breakers	4	1.3
In-Class Short Writing	4	1.3

Overall, instructors teaching undergraduate leadership studies courses use varying forms of Class Discussion more so than any other instructional strategy. Specifically, Class Discussion, Interactive Lecture/Discussion and Small Group Discussion had the highest means scores and were used more frequently in 66-

100% of class sessions than all other instructional strategies surveyed. Conversely, these instructors use skill-building instructional strategies such as Simulation, Games, and Role Play Activities far less. Specifically, two out of three instructors surveyed used Class Discussion or Interactive Lecture/Discussion in 66-100% of their class sessions and 88.5% use them at least one third of the time. Further, 54.5% of instructors listed Class Discussion and 47.2% listed Interactive Lecture/Discussion in their Top 3 most used instructional strategies. At the same time, only 10.2% of instructors use Role Play Activities, Games, or Simulation 66-100% of the time with only 20.1% using them at least 34% of the time. Also of note, only 11.2% of instructors use Quizzes or Exams 66-100% of the time with only 19.8% using them at least 34% of the time. Likewise, only 4.3%, 3.0%, and 2.6% of instructors, respectively, listed Simulation, Games, and Role Play Activities in their Top 3 (see Table 4). Additionally, only 4.3% of instructors listed Exams in their Top 3 and only 2.6% listed Quizzes.

To answer research question two, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to explore which of the 24 instructional strategies from the questionnaire related most closely to one another (see Table 5). Then, the groups or “factors” from this statistical procedure were analyzed to see which groups emerged as those used most frequently. It was anticipated in the current study that the instructional strategies would group together similarly to the Four Approach models of leadership development posited by Conger (1992) and Allen and Hartman (2009). The four approaches in these models were: (a) Personal Growth, (b) Conceptual Understanding, (c) Feedback, and (d) Skill Building. While Personal Growth and Skill Building were retained, Conceptual Understanding was split into three separate dimensions: *Research/Observation Conceptual Understanding*, *Interactive Conceptual Understanding*, and *Conceptual Understanding & Feedback*. Accordingly, the third dimension of Conceptual Understanding from this study, *Conceptual Understanding & Feedback*, included instructional strategies found in both the Feedback and Conceptual Understanding approaches of the original models.

Table 5
Factor Loadings for Promax Oblique Seven-Factor Solution for the Items of the Web-Based Questionnaire

Item	Factor Loading
Factor 1: Skill Building	
17. Role Play Activities.	.88
20. Simulation.	.56
4. Games.	.54
Factor 2: Personal Growth	
15. Reflective Journals.	.61
19. Service Learning.	.49
7. Icebreakers.	.41
9. Individual Leadership Development Plans.	.39
8. In-Class Short Writing.	.37
Factor 3: Conceptual Understanding & Feedback	
11. Interview of a Leader.	.59
12. Lecture.	.54
22. Story or Storytelling.	.47
9. Individual Leadership Development Plans.	.45
13. Media Clips.	.42
16. Research Project/Presentation.	.37
18. Self-Assessments & Instruments.	.35
Factor 4: Traditional Assessment	
3. Exams.	.73
14. Quizzes.	.72
Factor 5: Research/Observation Conceptual Understanding	
5. Group Projects/Presentations.	.59
16. Research Project/Presentation.	.51
6. Guest Speaker.	.44
Factor 6: Interactive Conceptual Understanding	
21. Small Group Discussions.	.77
23. Student Peer Teaching.	.42
24. Teambuilding.	.33
Factor 7: Class Discussion	

Item	Factor Loading
2. Class Discussion.	.70
10. Interactive Lecture/Discussion.	.50

*Note: $N = 303$ and $\alpha = .88$

Labeling and Analysis of the Factors

Of greatest interest to the researcher was the emergence of two new approaches not included in the original models posited by Conger (1992) and Allen and Hartman (2009). These dimensions were Factor 7: *Class Discussion* and Factor 4: *Traditional Assessment*. While *Traditional Assessment* (exams and quizzes) proved to be the least frequently used group of instructional strategies, *Class Discussion* was used more often than any other group. The *Class Discussion* group includes traditional class discussion where the instructor facilitates sustained conversation and/or question and answer segment with the entire class as well as interactive lecture/discussion where the instructor presents information in 10-20 minute time blocks with period of structured interaction/discussion in-between mini-lectures.

The instructional strategies contained in Factor 1: *Skill Building* (role play activities, simulation, and games) all fell within Allen and Hartman's (2009) categorization of "Skill Building." These instructional strategies all emphasize active, experiential, classroom-based pedagogies that promote students doing and engaging in learning. Use of these pedagogies is often considered medium- to high-risk (the risks that students will not participate, use higher-order thinking, or learn sufficient content, that faculty members will feel a loss of control, lack necessary skills, or be criticized for teaching in unorthodox way) by college instructors (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). While the instructional strategies contained in Factor 2: *Personal Growth* (reflective journals, service learning, icebreakers, individual leadership development plans, and in-class short writing) all fell within Allen and Hartman's (2009) categorization of "Personal Growth," with the exception of icebreakers and in-class short writing (which was not one of the sources of learning contained in their model). In their model, informal networking appeared in this category and arguably, icebreakers are as much about breaking the ice as they are about networking in an informal environment. Further, in-class short writing is clearly an individual activity designed to stimulate the learner to think, write, and reflect. This group of instructional strategies emphasizes personal growth through some type of reflection, service, or articulating through writing a personal vision statement.

The instructional strategies contained in Factors 3 (*Conceptual Understanding & Feedback*), 5 (*Research/Observation Conceptual Understanding*), and 6 (*Interactive Conceptual Understanding*) were all closely related to Allen and Hartman's (2009) categorization of "Conceptual Understanding." Following *Class Discussion*, these three categories were used most frequently. In leadership education, conceptual understanding focuses on improving the learner's knowledge through exposure to the topic of leadership and is much more observer-oriented (Conger, 1992); while other instructional strategies involve more individual activity and inclusion (Allen & Hartman, 2009). The differentiation between these three factors emerged from the approaches of the instructional strategies therein. First, Factor 3 included the following instructional strategies: interview of a leader, lecture, story or storytelling, individual leadership development plans, media clips, research project/presentation, and self-assessments & instruments. This group focused on the understanding of leadership concepts through a variety of instructional strategies designed to invoke and connect with the pragmatic and also provide useful feedback. Yet, while lecture, stories, interviewing leaders, individual leadership development or vision plans, and media clips are only briefly mentioned in the literature, there is an extensive literature base on the use of assessments and instruments in leadership education. Second, Factor 5 included the instructional strategies group project/presentation, research project/presentation, and guest speaker. These instructional strategies emphasize students presenting leadership research and/or observing peers or guest speakers. Third, Factor 6 include the instructional strategies small group discussions, student peer teaching, and teambuilding. In this study, the term "interactive" was used to describe the active, group-oriented, and relational aspects of these concept-focused instructional strategies.

The analysis of the composite scores based on the mean of the items in each group resulted in findings similar to those from the initial frequency tabulations. Specifically, *Class Discussion* was group of instructional strategies instructors reporting using most ($M=4.16/5.00$), while *Skill Building* ($M=1.79$) and *Traditional Assessment* ($M=1.59$) were the strategies instructors reported using least. The composite (mean) scores of *Research/Observation Conceptual Understanding* ($M=2.78$), *Interactive Conceptual Understanding* ($M=2.40$), and *Conceptual Understanding & Feedback* ($M=2.24$) were separated by only 0.38. *Personal Growth* ($M=2.24$) was used slightly less than the three Conceptual Understanding groups and more so than *Skill Building* and *Traditional Assessment*.

Signature Pedagogies in Undergraduate Leadership Education

Until now, no one has investigated signature pedagogies in leadership education. According to Shulman (2005), signature pedagogies are the forms of instruction that leap to mind when we first think about the preparation of members of particular professions. They implicitly define what counts as knowledge in a field, how things become known, and how knowledge is analyzed, criticized, accepted, or discarded. One of the unique characteristics of leadership studies is that it transcends the disciplines and prepares students for all professions (Doh, 2003; Wren, Riggio, & Genovese, 2009; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). This question prompted the researcher in this study to ask: “What are the signature pedagogies used to prepare the future leaders of our organizations?”

The findings of this study suggest that class discussion whether in the form of true class discussion or interactive lecture and discussion are used most frequently. Perhaps, class discussion or “discussion pedagogy” is *the* signature pedagogy for undergraduate leadership education. Yet, the results of this study also indicate that instructional strategies that include group and individual projects and presentations as well as self-assessments and instruments, small group discussion, and reflective journaling are also used far more frequently than most others. Thus, the signature pedagogies in undergraduate leadership education might be a collection of class discussion, projects and presentations, self-assessments and instruments, and critical reflection.

Implications for Practice

This study was undertaken with the vision that it could be pragmatically used by leadership educators and student affairs professionals. This exploratory study of instructional strategies and learning goals within the leadership discipline has numerous implications for practice for a variety of individuals who seek to advance teaching and learning leadership. As well, the findings of this study have implications for leadership studies and pedagogy. These findings can provide a foundation to develop workshops for leadership educators or enhance existing ones. Findings from this study may also catalyze ideas for innovations to the way leadership is taught or promote focused research on the use and best practices of the most frequently used instructional strategies.

Instructional Strategy Use

There ought to be workshops on best practices in leadership education. For example, while simulation, games and role play are used quite infrequently by the instructors surveyed in this study, perhaps they value it but do not know how to

use it effectively. Workshops that emphasize best practices including the design of these activities, what high quality work looks like, and how to assess their effectiveness could prove extremely beneficial in the discipline.

Equally, if discussion-based pedagogies are the most frequently employed instructional strategy used by instructors teaching academic credit-bearing undergraduate leadership studies courses, it is imperative that this strategy is utilized effectively. Yet, a review of the literature uncovered very few resources that help faculty effectively facilitate class discussion. Experts agree that leading a producing discussion is among the most challenging and demanding tasks of an instructor—and one of the most satisfying when things go well (Cross, 2002). According to Davis (1993):

A good give-and-take discussion can produce unmatched learning experiences as students articulate their ideas, respond to their classmates' points, and develop skills in evaluating the evidence for their own and others' positions. Initiating and sustaining a lively productive discussion are among the most challenging of activities for an instructor. (p. 63)

Cross (2002) stresses that participation is a necessary but hardly sufficient condition for learning. Further, like leadership, leading productive discussion takes planning. Cross used a basketball metaphor to explain that just as a basketball coach goes into the game with a strategy, one flexible enough to change if conditions demand it but firm enough to reach the goal, a teacher must do likewise and have their eye on the objective. This is related to the leadership practice and application in meetings posited by Eich (2008). Meaningful discussions and episodes of difference might very well occur during class discussion; the most frequently reported instructional strategy from this study. However, what we do not know is whether leadership programs or their instructors are doing these things effectively. How will student affairs professionals such as leadership program directors or leadership studies faculty know they are being effective?

Resonating with the well-known research of Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, leaders must inspire a shared vision. Likewise, instructors teaching leadership to undergraduates must have a vision for the class discussion. Where will it go? What, specifically, do they want students to learn from each class meeting? Undergraduates in leadership studies courses aptly enjoy these courses. In fact, the unique pedagogical practices in undergraduate leadership courses are a magnet for many. Yet, instructors must—*must*—be purposeful in their pedagogical processes.

Future Research

The use of instructional strategies in collegiate leadership education are underdeveloped in the literature and thus a potentially rich area for further research. Moreover, the process of conducting this research and viewing the current state of the leadership teaching and learning literature, a number of opportunities and recommendations for future research have surfaced. While the comparisons among leadership educators and their teaching methods with reference to gender, ethnicity, and other demographic perspectives is endless, other areas offer more holistic merit. Specifically, while this study measured frequency of instructional strategy use, future studies might delve into the *quality* of their impact, effectiveness, and student learning outcomes. Just because instructors are using this or that instructional strategy frequently does not mean they are using them effectively. Also, does the use of certain instructional strategies actually improve student learning? Research is needed to assess strategies for instructors within the discipline in order to guide and inform to use of teaching methods.

This study was also limited to U.S.-based undergraduate face-to-face courses. Research is needed to explore instructional strategy use the global level. Future studies might look at graduate level, non-academic, or even online leadership courses. While this study was the first to explore instructional strategy use in leadership education empirically with such a large sample, research is needed to expound these findings.

Lastly, this study also collected data to help describe the participants. One key area was the academic college and department where the academic credit-bearing leadership studies courses were delivered on each campus. An analysis of these data suggests that instructional strategy use varies somewhat depending on what academic area is delivering the leadership course. For example, instructors in business departments used exams, quizzes, research projects/presentation, case studies, and lecture far more frequently than instructors from student affairs. Equally, instructors from student affairs used peer teaching and reflective journals more often than their business counterparts. Research is needed to explore instructional strategy use within academic departments as well as identify best practices for each area.

Conclusions

In closing, the findings from this study offer new knowledge into the instructional attributes—specifically from the instructor’s point of view—of undergraduate

academic credit-bearing leadership studies courses. The purpose of this study was to identify the instructional strategies that are most frequently used by instructors when they teach courses in the leadership discipline and identify potential signature pedagogies within the discipline. In the absence of any prior studies exploring instructional strategies from the educators' perspective, signature pedagogies in the leadership discipline or from an empirical perspective, the findings from this study provided insight in the current state of undergraduate leadership education and identified the instructional strategies most currently utilized.

The most widely used instructional strategies in leadership education were at one time considered limited to approaches that emphasized personal growth, conceptual understanding, feedback, and skill building. Yet, instructors teaching leadership education may succumb to discussion-based and modeling behaviors as much as they also emphasize active and experiential learning strategies. Holistically, leadership education is defined as learning activities and educational environments that are intended to enhance and foster leadership abilities (Brungardt, 1996). Arguably, this definition is limited. Leadership education can and should do more than enhance and foster leadership abilities in a vacuum. More so, leadership education should be transcendental. Moreover, leadership education is uniquely positioned to prepare future leaders across the disciplines. Regardless of a student's major or career path, leadership education complements any academic track and helps prepare students across the disciplines to be leaders in a global society. And it does so in educational environments that model inclusiveness by utilizing inclusive pedagogies.

At the largest level the researcher hopes that institutions, academic departments, and leadership programs will be able to use these findings to evaluate and plan leadership education in meaningful ways. Moreover, it is an aim of this research that future scholars implement workshops, conference sessions, and publications on best practices in instruction within the discipline. At the more scalable level, the researcher hopes these findings will be able to catalyze innovation in leadership education and stimulate new ideas in the classroom. At the very least, these findings should offer attributes that a variety of leadership educators have shared as effective for teaching and learning within the discipline. In addition, the findings from this study may facilitate the development of new leadership programming policies, provide direction for future research, and contribute to the existing body of literature. Incorporating ideas for the sake of quality and innovation in leadership education can offer opportunities for further assessment and research that can contribute both nationally and globally.

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