

Teaching and Learning Leadership: Assessing Teams in Higher Education

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Abstract

Leadership education and training are challenging, multidimensional undertakings that require a willingness to engage in deep personal growth as the most critical antecedent to learning. This article explores the strategic alignment of values, efficacy, and goals using two tools in practice, which are part of a current research design. The Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1] and The Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy [Figure 2] are innovative tools for practitioners in Higher Education that may be applied to other industries as well. The powerful and innovative tools are in practice and are part of a current 2016-2017 research aimed at tracking leadership learning at Norwich University which will benchmark data from 9 other graduate degree programs involving over 800 instructors, staff, and executive leadership positions.

Introduction to the Issue

Understanding why or how values impact leadership and organizational success is not a universally known or understood phenomena. In support of a values-oriented organization and mission, the problem is knowing which skills and motivations are needed to begin movement toward a more *mindful organization* (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Frangos, 2013). Individual skills are not the same as group skills, naturally; thus, one must apply the teaching and learning to both the individual as well as the group processes (Herzberg, 1987; Gawel, 1997; George, McLean, & Craig, 2008; Meade, 2010). Organizational leaders must assess and align the experience, organizational knowledge, and intellectual capital of individuals in a strategic way (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Audi, 2009; Meade, 2010; Merat, 2013). Leadership credibility is born from two central antecedents to teaching leadership: values-based leadership traits and modeling leadership behavior (Norwich, 2015).

Exploration of the antecedents to teaching and learning leadership are related to experience and maturity within four dimensions (leading the self, others, the organization, and leading in service). Leadership is not just a discipline of study to be taught by an expert on the literature or a researcher analyzing the patterns of practice. To effectively teach the nuances of leadership, one must have felt the frustration of reaching the “management ceiling” and thus be inspired to learn and re-learn leadership in context with reality. Leadership, as an academic

discipline, involves how leaders mobilize others to want to get extraordinary things done and the practices used to transform "... values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards" (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p42). Research is needed in order to understand the antecedents to teaching and learning leadership.

Review of Related Scholarship

Background to the Issue. How well can a Higher Education organization, or any organization, develop leaders and teach leadership without the antecedents of modeling effective leadership behavior and employee willingness to change their own behavior? Like most industries, leadership learning within Higher Education institutions might fail to have the high functioning and healthy organization needed (Sacket & DeVore, 2001; Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2013). The dismal results often have less to do with the concerted improvement efforts and more to do with a lack of human capital development (Meade, 2010; Adams, 2014; Frangos, 2013). Executive leadership, who expect strong leadership throughout an organization, must teach and learn leadership as a way of being (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) propose processes for assuring high performance and explain how the *high reliability organization* forms a collective state of *mindfulness*. The *mindfulness* among a group can function as a form of Servant Leadership that acts as a learning model of leadership (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Frangos, 2013).

The Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1] presents the candid criterion for leaders on a continuum of learning and ties individuals to a shared mindfulness – and at the very least, a clear expectation.



Figure 1.

*Values-Base Leadership Model (NORWICH, 2015a) shown without detail matrix or legend

Connections to Leadership. When top leadership aligns individual belief systems under the umbrella of a shared, motivated mission – one where initiatives are developed and measured

in the same direction of growth and innovation, the energy will build in a united way. The motivation to share a mindfulness for excellence is propelled until all departments are building the same energy or momentum toward ultimate greatness or success. What if the end goal is for all individuals to tap into their individual leadership potential? An organization cannot simply be born to teach and learn leadership. The organization must first gain a leadership team whose experience and maturity are poised to serve by leading the self, others, the organization, and in service – as a way of being.

Connections to Pedagogical Theory. During organizational assessment for leadership learning, the question becomes: how does an organization obtain, or grow, a leadership team? First, we must consider leadership theories, which can be observed at three levels: the individual level, the group level, the organizational level. Is it the interrelationships among these levels that create today's more modern way of looking at leadership theory, also known as neo-charismatic theory (Lussier & Achua, 2013)? The current Innovative Practice Paper will explore the three paradigm levels (self, others, organization) in order to explain successful, influencing leader-follower relationships (e.g. Ansoff, 1977; Bass, 1980; Mintzberg, 1990; George, McLean, & Craig, 2008; CCL, 2015).

Connections to Theory and Literature. The Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1] is grounded in work from a variety of sources (e.g. George, McLean, & Craig, 2008; CCL, 2015) including historically acclaimed leadership paradigms. As such, the model includes the consideration of the individual, which is where we are able to consider and analyze the leading of self. Trait Theory (e.g. Bass, 1980) examines personality and other traits and remains important today as a person in any leadership position considers their own style (e.g. Owens & Hekman, 2012). Applying trait theory is important for seeing advantageous traits as well as ineffective traits. For example, effective leadership traits linked to personality by Lussier and Achua (2013) include attributes such as surgency, agreeableness, adjustment, openness, and conscientiousness. Ineffective traits documented in countless research spanning decades (e.g. Morgan & Lombardo, 1988; Linstead, 1997; Sackett & DeVore, 2001; Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2013; Namie, 2014) have included negative traits and influences including bullying, coldness, betraying trust, over-managing, and inability to build a team. The impact of Emotional Intelligence (EI) onto organizational leadership learning and efficacy also proves undeniable to practitioners (e.g. Bradberry & Greaves, 2005; Stein & Book, 2011). Countless factors impact leadership learning capacity but in the context of self, others, and organization, emotionality (Freedman, 2007) and interpretations of power (Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2013) might be the most relevant contexts when applied over time and place.

Discussion

For any leadership educator, the need to obtain and grow a mature and experienced leadership team is a glaring reality. Values based, leadership learning is presented as the most effective way to gain the mature and experienced team. Utilization of the Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1] and the application of the Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy [Figure 2] provide a real world assessment tool that can begin dialogue and investigate how we should examine and assess leadership teaching and learning.

Norwich Guiding Values

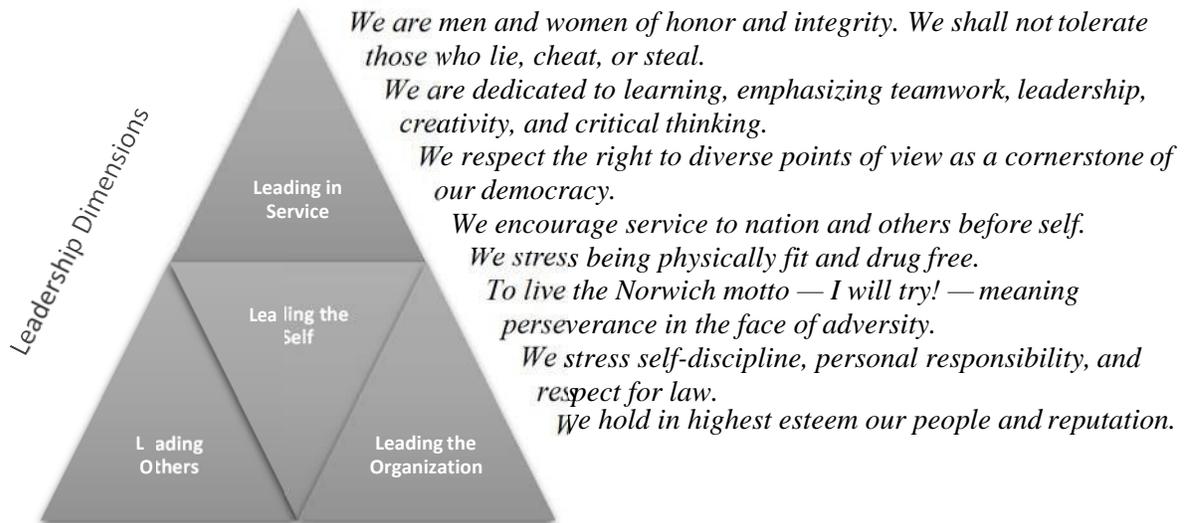


Figure 2. Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy (NORWICH, 2015b) shown without competency checklist connecting each value and dimension.

Strategic Alignment and Assessment of Leadership Learning

Values-Based Leadership: Leading the Self. Viewing traits in the context of the competency, *leading the self*, can expose an individual's performance areas such as *increasing capacity to learn* and *increasing self-awareness* which are noted in the Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy (Figure 2). Effective traits, viewed through a values-based lens, show that traits such as Surgency and Conscientiousness (Lussier & Achua, 2013) correlate with demonstrations of ethics and integrity as well as displaying drive and purpose. These traits and associated competencies in the dimension of *leading the self* are revealed in an individual's demonstrated abilities; the associated competency in *leading the self* can be revealed and assessed in a multitude of ways.

Values-Based Leadership: Leading of Others. Convictions of leadership theory influenced the *Leading of Others* paradigm including behavioral leadership theories (e.g. Ansoff, 1977; Mintzberg, 1990; Mintzberg, 1994, Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998; Audi, 2009), where objectivity and behavior are highly analyzed. Leadership behavior is based on personality and other traits, such as style (autocratic, democratic) and habits. Behavioral theories also include Herzberg's Two-factor Motivation theory (high and low needs) and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (which proposes that people are motivated based on their individual level of need within categories: physiological, safety, esteem, and self-actualization) (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Gawel, 1997). Behavioral leadership theories are evidenced in the consideration of the group, which is where *leading of others* is evidenced. The Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1] and the Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy

[Figure 2] include criteria for the evaluation of group behaviors observed and assessed. These tools allow a leadership learning and assessment to examine higher viewpoints of an organization's capacity for leading others. Use of the tools set a reliable framework for a leader to practice valuing diversity and difference, assist in leading others by building and maintaining relationships and also create effective teams and work groups.

Values-Based Leadership: Leading of the Organization. Contingency leadership theories (e.g. Fiedler, 1964) allow practitioners to examine both the trait theories (self) and behavior theories (others) in order to address the simple truth that managers and leaders need to adapt when dealing with the permanent state of change and change variables when working with people in a group. Contingency leadership theories allow the consideration of multiple groups and influences, and to consider the *leading of the organization*. In order to consider contingencies within an entire organization, the focus re-examines the individuals who are part of the organization, not one by one within the smaller departments, but by beginning at the top leadership positions and the leaders for each of the departments or teams. Consideration of the organizational mission, environment, and skills needed in an actual organizational work culture can be seen in terms of interdependence and influence among the dynamics when examining observations in the context of the Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1] and the application of the Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy [Figure 2]. To enhance business skills and knowledge requires leadership learning in the three areas: leading the self, leading others, and leading organizations (Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1]).

Values-Based Leadership: Leading in Service. *Leading in Service* involves demonstrating ethics and integrity, humility, empathy, stewardship of others' needs and persuasiveness that can only come from the self-awareness and an understanding others that must be learned through experience. Leaders must benchmark observed behaviors and communicate the desired behaviors in the context of a Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy [Figure 2], where competencies for *leading in service* can be demonstrated. Being a good steward of other's needs is the ability, for example, to navigate political environments or influence others to get service work done with limited resources.

Summary. The aforementioned dimensions of values-based leadership have formed the assessment lens that Norwich University has cultivated in order to assess leadership learning. The assessment lens is guided by the Values-Based Leadership Model & Competency Map [Figure 1] and the application of the Values-Based Leadership Taxonomy [Figure 2]. Norwich University leadership continues to use these tools in order to obtain and train a leadership team with the experience and maturity needed to both learn leadership and teach leadership.

Implications

The tool outcomes provide users with the opportunity to critically think about their own role as leadership educators. Consideration of firsthand experience using the two research-based tools give access to the data that directly impacts students, employees, and outcomes to quantify evidence. Antecedents to teaching and learning leadership begin with understanding the needs of

those leading.

Our emphasis is on our institutional values and nearly 200-year legacy of developing leaders that, in the face of adversity, live the Norwich motto “I will try!” We focus what we teach on organizational knowledge learned first-hand from our student customers and their organizations. We develop our leadership curriculum and learning experiences based upon continuous real-time learning. In the Norwich leadership programs, the unofficial motto is “living what you learn” and we practice that as leadership educators in how we develop and design our leadership curriculum as well.

Our premise for the antecedents to learning leadership, therefore, inform the antecedents to teaching our leadership students. Since our program is not suited for individuals wanting just to “study” leadership, it would naturally follow that our faculty cannot just be those interested in just “teaching” leadership. So academic pedigree is certainly important, but not the sole antecedent to being able to effectively teach leadership.

Values driven leadership experience is extremely valuable to students wanting to understand the diverse ways in which the theory we teach can be applied in a wide variety of organizations, especially as it pertains to the human side of the organization. Is an impressive resume enough? At Norwich, becoming a “master” involves the combining of academic excellence with applied relevance. Academic excellence referring to scholarship and applied relevance equates to usefulness in each individuals’ world of work.

Research 2016/2017. Data will be collected during 2016-2017 academic year, spanning four (4) semesters, each lasting eleven (11) weeks. Each semester will provide the opportunity to collect data executing a comprehensive research methodology and data collection. Methodology and analysis during the upcoming year will include a research project assessing Experience, Knowledge, and Maturity during each of four intervals during the 2016/2017 semesters. There will be four measures:

Measure 1: Graduate Faculty Quarterly Self-Assessment of Delivery against Outcomes
Assessing and Deploying Visceral Team Learning

Measure 2: Quarterly Graduate Faculty Surveys

Assessing and Deploying Team Productivity and Alignment

Measure 3: Group Leaders Team-Assessment (Productivity and Alignment)

Mastering a Master’s program

Measure 4: Post Semester Input from stakeholders

The above general outline for research is planned for the 2016-2017 academic year and will focus on the antecedents to teaching and learning leadership at the graduate delivery level (online and hybrid) will also factor scalability indicators, demographic correlatives, and burnout thresholds.

The outcomes of the 2016-2017 academic year will be part of a multi-year project. Data will be analyzed and applied to t levels of teaching and learning leadership in the following year for two other programs: Undergraduate-traditional delivery (on campus, 18 – 22 years average age) and Undergraduate-degree-completion delivery (online or hybrid, adult learners).

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Dr. Michelle Manganaro is a school administrator and professor. Her specialties include leader- and team- development, emotional intelligence, ethics, and communications. She has served 15+ years as a professor, online instructor, and consultant. She presents at national conferences, recently representing Norwich at the 2015 23rd Annual Conference of the American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences (ASBBS).