

Reflections on the History and Development of ALE and JOLE

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Introduction

The Association of Leadership Educators (ALE) grew out of a need for professional development for persons who work with leadership programs in a variety of contexts. The idea of a professional association developed over the course of three annual leadership development seminars in the late 1980s; ALE was formalized at the third seminar held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1990. The first official conference and annual meeting of the Association of Leadership Educators was held in Denver, Colorado in September 1991. Membership was open to any individual with an interest in leadership education, although the targeted individuals were “career professionals.” The association celebrated ten years of success at its 2001 conference in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The purpose of this article is to share some of the early history of ALE as an organization—how the idea originated, who were involved in the early stages, how the transformation from informal seminars and discussions to today’s organization came about, and why ALE has a unique niche among the growing number of other leadership organizations.

This paper is written from a personal viewpoint, combining some memories with information gleaned from board and association minutes and conference proceedings. A general sequence of events within several categories is provided to illustrate the association’s developmental process. Some explanation of the Cooperative Extension Service¹ and related groups is provided in the footnotes. (Preparation of this paper brought to mind the need to preserve ALE records in some form of archives and to do a more comprehensive, objective, factual documentation of ALE history in the near future.)

¹ The Cooperative Extension Service, now known at the federal level as the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), works with land-grant university partners and others to advance knowledge through university outreach programs.

Response to a Need

The need for a professional development organization for leadership educators was a recurring theme when advisors to Extension Homemakers met. The concept of a professional association was first considered at the 1987 National Extension Homemakers Council (NEHC)² Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. The first one-day Leadership Development Seminar occurred at the NEHC conference in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1988. In the seminar a group of extension advisors for state Extension Homemakers organizations began to promote the concept of a professional organization that would serve leadership educators in many fields.

The founders (sometimes referred to with reverence as the "founding mothers") included Elizabeth Bolton (Florida), Sue Bodkin (New Mexico), Ann Hancock (Purdue), Marjorie Hamann (North Dakota), and "founding father" Tom Mounter (Clemson). This group served as the planning committee for the 1988 seminar. When a second seminar was held, again a one-day event in conjunction with the NEHC conference, in Manhattan, Kansas in 1989, Lynn White replaced Jennie Kitching and Harriett Moyer and Katey Walker joined the group.

The founding group came to the seminars with considerable interest in leadership education in Extension. Prior to the 1987 meeting, there had been efforts to organize an Extension Committee on Policy (ECOP)³ sponsored workshop for extension personnel, but these efforts were unsuccessful. However, the fact that others had seen a need for leadership education suggested a growing perception that professional development opportunities in leadership were lacking for the those who deliver these programs. It also suggested that the linkage was weak or nonexistent between the practice of and research on leadership education.

The lack of a strong linkage is explained, at least in part, by the history of family consumer science programs in Extension. Extension home economics programs in leadership development, until the latter 1980's, had dealt primarily with the Extension Homemaker organization and the development of the skills of those within various positions in the organization. Many perceived the primary purpose of the Extension Homemaker organization to be the dissemination of subject

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²The National Extension Homemakers Council (NEHC) is now known as the National Association for Family and Community Education.

³ The Extension Committee on Policy (ECOP) is one of the policy committees at the federal level, which coordinates many activities that cross disciplinary or program areas.

matter as evidenced by the use of the term “leader training,” which meant providing information to one group who would in turn train others. Thus, leadership development was primarily a train-the-trainer process used to achieve another result—disseminating information that was derived from subject matter.⁴

However, across the country at this time many people recognized that broadening the concept of leadership development was a priority. At these early conferences and seminars, before ALE, it was encouraging to learn others were interested in and struggling with the same issues. Professionals in leadership education, across many disciplines and programs, desired professional development opportunities.

The time was right for making a systematic attempt to increase networking, learn who was doing what, share ideas, and develop a scholarly base for the interest area. With the benefit of hindsight, it appears that some of the weaknesses and limitations identified by the founding group were an expression of the lack of knowledge and experience in many aspects of leadership education.

Initial Goals

The founding group, at the 1988 seminar, established two goals: (1) strengthen the competencies of the career professional who works in the area of leadership education, and (2) broaden the overall knowledge base of leadership education. For the founding group these two goals reflect genuine needs that were not being addressed, and were consistent with a growing national and international awareness of the need for development of leadership capacity.

The development of the goals coincided with the recognition that leadership education would be more meaningful if not limited to Extension, or within Extension to a single program area. Within Extension, the group recognized that there were common needs and interests in such program areas as community development and youth development. In addition, looking outside Extension, the founders identified a broader group of teachers and practitioners of leadership education.

At the third Leadership Development Seminar, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1990, the group added new emphases. The most important was enhancing the quality of the discussion through professional/scholarly papers and adding new audiences with different interests. Most participants in the seminar realized that there was a unique niche for a new leadership organization, while recognizing the existence of other leadership, community development, and related organizations that shared

⁴ Bolton, Elizabeth B. “Introduction to the Leadership Development Seminar.” In: Proceedings, *Empowering Adults as Leaders Through Home Economics Program*. July 1988.

some similar goals. This seminar was titled, appropriately, *People, Problems, and Solutions: the Leadership Connection*.

Those participating in the seminar voted unanimously in favor of establishing a new association of leadership educators. Discussion in the seminar indicated that there was wide agreement that the new organization should become the professional organization for leadership educators in all fields of work. Participants agreed that the new name for the organization would be Association of Leadership Educators. All present were eligible for charter membership.

The three Leadership Development Seminars were funded in part by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation⁵ and the Rural Development Centers⁶. Doss Brodnax of the Southern Rural Development Center was particularly involved in the early stages of the seminars and Daryl Heasley of the Northeast Rural Development Center was an early ALE officer and Distinguished Service Award winner. Additional support was provided by the Farm Foundation as well as state extension services of the organizing group.

Forming the Association -- the Founding Board

Participants at the third Leadership Development Seminar established the Founding Board of Directors for new Association of Leadership Educators. The first board members were:

Elizabeth Bolton, President
University of Florida

Ann Hancock, Vice President
Purdue University

Marjorie Hamann, Treasurer
North Dakota State University

Jennie Kitching, Home Economics Program Leader
Texas A & M University

⁵ The W. K. Kellogg Foundation is a philanthropic organization, formed in 1930 to “help the people help themselves.” Dr. Gary King of the Kellogg Foundation provided continuing support of the seminars and the development of the association.

⁶ The four Rural Development Centers serve the land-grant institutions of their respective regions by supporting research and extension efforts.

Tom Mounter, Director
Clemson University

Harriett Moyer, Director
University of Wisconsin

Katey Walker, Secretary
Kansas State University

Lynn White, Editor
Texas A&M University

The charge to the board was to lead the transition to the official association and expansion from the informal one-day seminars to an annual two or three-day conference. The president and vice president focused on conference planning; the directors worked on increasing membership and on conference site selection and resource development (funding); the editor initiated a quarterly newsletter; and, the treasurer established bank accounts and data bases while the secretary handled minutes, communications and record keeping. The group began work on a constitution and bylaws, which were approved at the January 1991 board meeting for presentation to the membership at the 1991 conference.

The board also initiated work on the letterhead and logo for the new association. Under Bolton's direction, a graphic artist in the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida created 12 alternative logos, one of which the Board selected. The Board also selected reflex-blue and linen-gray as the organization's colors.

It is worth noting that the initial board meetings and association business meetings were conducted on a rather informal basis. There was a general feeling that the association wanted to remain small enough that all members could know one another well and serve in a supportive manner.

The First Conference: 1991

The first conference of the Association of Leadership Educators was held in Denver, Colorado, on September 13-14, 1991. The theme of the meeting was "Leadership Education: A National Agenda for the 21st Century." The agenda followed the pattern of many professional conferences with a reception, keynote address, concurrent sessions, business meeting, and a closing speech. Evaluations from participants were uniformly very positive and supportive of this format.

Presentations addressed topics of new paradigms and strategies for leadership education, assessing impact and measuring program change, and models for program success. The papers and workshops represented 40 authors from 20

states, indicating the widespread interest in leadership as it is taught and practiced. The large number of participants and breadth of topics, compared to the initial seminars, indicated high interest in the association.

At the business meeting, members approved the initial constitution, which provided for a board consisting of a President, Past President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and four regional directors. Standing committees or ad hoc committees could be appointed as needed. Highlights of the business meeting included the following:

- Two hundred fifty-six members had been certified as charter members. The association also acquired its first international members at this meeting. Certificates for all charter members were presented.
- The Board was working on achieving nonprofit tax status.
- Dues for 1992 were raised to \$25, with fiscal year running from January 1 to December 31.

The nominating committee, chaired by the past president, was to consider ethnic diversity, gender, public/private employment, and geographic location when selecting nominees. The intent of having regional directors was to attract members from wider locations than just one or two geographic areas.

Developmental Highlights

Changes in Organizational Structure

During the first year several changes in structure were quickly identified. The secretary-treasurer position proved to be overwhelming for one person and the functions were separated into two offices. Also, the number of directors was found to be too high, and was reduced to two, one for resource development and one for membership.

Further, it wasn't possible to find interested individuals from each of the four geographical areas, so that requirement was dropped. Maintaining diversity has continued as an association policy although finding candidates has not always been easy. A special ballot, with photo's, brief biographies and reasons for running was added as the association grew and not everyone knew everyone else. Mail ballots were changed to electronic voting in 2000.

State or Local Affiliates

Several discussions were held at board and business meetings about the potential role of state or local chapters. The consensus was to allow for this possibility but not actively recruit local groups. The Board developed guidelines for state or local

affiliates for ALE; Texas, Kansas, and Minnesota have active state or local groups but no formal affiliation has been made.

Change in Conference Dates

A continual problem for busy people is finding times and dates with a minimum amount of conflict with other interests and obligations. After much discussion at a business meeting, it was decided to move the date from August or September to July. This would benefit teaching faculty and some others who had heavy commitments scheduled in the fall and would avoid being too close to the National Public Policy Education Conference (NPPEC) attended by many in the Association. On the other hand, July tended to be too close to July 4 vacations/family reunions and to the Community Development Society annual meeting. It was decided to try July dates to determine their feasibility and this schedule has continued since 1993.

NELD (National Extension Leadership Development Program)⁷

The president of ALE, or a representative, has served on the NELD advisory board, initially because of the personal involvement of Gary King and Steve Scheneman in their capacity as ALE presidents. Katey Walker and Karen Zotz also served on the board. In the future, ALE may have the opportunity to serve as an at-large board member. The benefit of serving on this board has been to encourage publicity and networking among leadership educators.

Proceedings

Preparing, editing, printing and distribution of the conference proceedings has been an ongoing challenge. This was only partially alleviated by the change to web-based proceedings. Early on, ALE provided some funding and a volunteer editor, often a member of the conference committee who had institutional support, to compile and print the Proceedings.

Gary King prepared a file box of materials as a method of preserving some of the ALE papers for future reference. This box was to be passed on from one president to the next. The contents were to include materials not duplicated in other ways (i.e., not in minutes, financial reports, or newsletters but less formal notes on varied topics).

⁷ NELD is a national leadership development program for Extension personnel, sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service.

Committees

Two new committees, (1) Awards and Recognition and (2) Publicity were formed.

Awards

The suggestion of giving annual awards was initiated by Dave Torell of Nevada. The initial suggestion was for service to ALE and/or more broadly, one for service to leadership. An alternate was an outstanding program award, for either formal or academic programs.

At the 1994 conference in Virginia, the hospitality event was formalized as the President’s Reception. The board decided to announce the new officers and present the first annual Distinguished Service Award at this event. Subsequently, awards have been given for Distinguished Service and an Outstanding Leadership Program, as determined by an ad hoc committee.

Publicity Committee

The difference between the Publicity committee (chaired by the secretary) and the membership and conference committees required some attention at various times. The difference that evolved over time was that the Publicity committee’s job was to promote the organization in general, largely through displays and news articles. At one time, ALE had a traveling display that could be exhibited at other professional meetings of professional development events.

The Delphi Survey: 1993

John Tait, then secretary, organized a Delphi survey of current and past board members and charter members to identify some of the most valued current activities of the association and identify possible new strategies for enhancing the association’s benefits to the membership. A brief summary of the results follows:

ALE Future Directions Survey

1. What goals or objectives should the Association of Leadership Educators address to position itself as the premiere leadership organization for the 21st Century?

<u>Goals or Projects</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Continue high quality annual meetings	1
Increase membership numbers and diversity	2
Continue with top quality newsletter	3
Establish state or regional (multi-state) chapters	4*
Publish a professional journal	4*

2. What target audiences would we recruit for membership in ALE?

<u>Target Audience</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Extension faculty	1
Teachers of leadership courses in higher education	2
Professionals from leadership centers, programs and/or leadership funding organizations	3
Researchers	4
Student counselors, college student leadership program directors	5

3. What actions can the Association of Leadership Educators take to enhance the professional development of members?

<u>Professional Development of Members</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Provide outstanding seminar and annual meeting	1
Continue current diversity - written newsletter	2
Continue publishing proceedings of annual seminar	3
Develop special interest groups	4
Publish a journal	5

4. What could our professional organization do to strengthen itself?

<u>Strengthen Professional Organization</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Recruit new members and retain membership from year to year	1
Continue diversity written newsletter	2
Define ourselves and keep a focus	3*
Network with other organizations and institutions concerned with leadership development	3*
Improve board/member communications and participation	5

* Indicates a tie.

This survey illustrates ALE’s continuing efforts to maintain and improve itself as a beneficial organization to its members and to others interested in leadership education.

The 1993 Update: Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives

The Board of Directors held an intensive work session, in Orlando, Florida, to reaffirm the principles on which ALE was founded and to clarify directions and strategies for the organization’s future. Strategic planning was combined with the development and adoption of vision, mission and goal statements. The intent was

to build on existing strengths and interests and at the same time develop strategies to explore expansion and/or affiliation with other organizations.

The first step was to prepare a vision statement that would challenge the membership and stretch the organization. Goals and objectives to support the vision and mission were then outlined. These statements became the guiding principles for ALE and were featured in the new policy handbook.⁸

The vision of The Association of Leadership Educators is to be the premier professional organization for leadership educators.

The goals and objectives of the Association of Leadership Educators are to:

1. Strengthen and clarify the multidisciplinary base of leadership education by:
 - providing an annual seminar to share and discuss current issues and trends,
 - publishing a newsletter,
 - and publishing a journal.
2. Enhance the competencies of professional leadership educators by:
 - publishing an annual conference proceedings,
 - developing a credentialing procedure and process,
 - recognizing excellence in educational programming, and
 - service to the association.
3. Build a broad support base for the organization by:
 - networking with compatible organizations,
 - providing displays at annual meetings of related organizations,
 - developing and disseminating a membership brochure,
 - developing special interest groups within the membership,
 - developing a fund-raising strategy,
 - developing a management and maintenance system,
 - developing state and local ALE chapters/affiliates,
 - extending ALE to international individuals and groups,
 - expanding membership, and
 - publishing an annual membership directory.

This was an ambitious set of actions to aim for. Some goals were achieved relatively easily, others were pursued over time with varying results, and a few were/have been postponed, including "publishing a journal". One ongoing problem with this association's action plans is the difficult role of most members, many of whom "do leadership" as add-ons or secondary parts of their major job responsibilities. Keeping the cost of membership and the annual conference low is

⁸ Heasley, Daryl. *ALE Policy Manual*. Published for ALE by the Northeast Center for Rural Development at Pennsylvania State University.

related to this situation, since it is not the primary professional organization for many. Another barrier is the rotating nature of the officers and conference locations. As yet, there is no central office or paid staff person to maintain consistency and coordination.

Conference Formats and Changes

Various additions were explored in different years. A hospitality, get acquainted event at the beginning was popular and contributed to achievement of the networking goals. Tracks for concurrent sessions were attempted. Special interest groups (SIGs) were arranged as roundtable discussions over breakfast. Some SIGs organized themselves as ongoing discussion groups, while others were one time only events. Examples of included topics are ethical leadership, women in leadership, and multicultural leadership.

Another feature at some conferences was a pre-conference workshop, which provided another small group session. This was also beneficial in another way, a lower airfare cost due to a Saturday night stay. For example, three pre-conference workshops were offered at the 1994 meeting:

- Building Coalitions
- Leadership Studies: Teaching Leadership
- Multiplying Your Efforts through Others: Connecting with Volunteers

Commercial exhibits and/or book sales were also explored, with the sale of leadership books fairly successful. These topics indicate the way ALE continued to implement and expand the original goals and the philosophy of sharing leadership skills with others.

Annual Meetings

The following is a list of the titles, dates, and locations of the annual ALE meetings. A top quality conference with published proceedings and increasing membership were top priority goals from the beginning. The continual need to pursue publishing a journal was recognized. The presidents of ALE for the year leading up to the conference is also included in the list.

Pre-ALE Seminar Titles

1988 *Empowering Adults as Leaders Through Home Economics Programs.* July 10, Charlotte, North Carolina.

1989 *Developing Human Capital Through Extension Leadership Programs.* August 6, Manhattan, Kansas.

1990 *People, Problems and Solutions: The Leadership Connection*. August 18-19, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

ALE Annual Meeting Titles

1991 *Leadership Education: A National Agenda for the 21st Century*. September 13-14, Denver, Colorado. Elizabeth Bolton, President

1992 *Leadership and Ethics*. September 10-12, Orlando, Florida. Ann Hancock, President

1993 *Leadership and Service*. July 14-17, Chicago, Illinois. Daryl Heasley, President

1994 *Building Leadership Connections*. July 7-9, Blacksburg, Virginia. Gary King, President

1995 *Challenging Boundaries in Leadership Education*. July 6-8, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Katey Walker President

1996 *Leadership in a Changing World*. July 10-13, Burlington, Vermont. Christine Langone, President

1997 *Leaders in Leadership Education*. July 9-12, Columbus, Ohio. Martha Nall, President

1998 *Leading Learning Organizations*. July 12-15, Charleston, South Carolina. Steve Scheneman, President

1999 *Creating Leadership Synergy*. July 8-10, San Diego, California. Karen Zotz, President

2000 *Emerging Leadership in a New Century*. July 13-15, Toronto, Canada. Marilyn Corbin, President

2001 *A Leadership Odyssey*. July 19-24, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Robin Orr, President

2002 *Leadership Beyond Boundaries*. July 10-13, Lexington, Kentucky. Larry Wilson, President

Collaborations

In the beginning, the board decided to explore collaborating with different groups to see if this would be a productive way to increase membership and share information. Some worked well, others not so well. Increasingly it became

evident that ALE fills a special need or niche for many of its members and that linking to another conference or organization was not always effective.

National Association for Community Leadership (NACL)

The first official conference collaboration for ALE was with the National Association for Community Leadership, in 1991. Wendell Walls, executive director of NACL, met with the board to share thoughts and plans. In 1991, NACL began its conference immediately following (Saturday afternoon) the closing time of the ALE seminar. The partnership between the associations allowed for a "piggybacking" time schedule. Each group complemented the other well. The Board provided a membership for Wendell in ALE to reciprocate for NACL's offer to allow ALE members to participate in their conference at member rates.

A similar arrangement was continued in 1992. However, there was a major deterrent to ALE members' participation in the NACL conference—the expense. No further "piggyback" conferences were held after 1992.

Jepson School of Leadership

Ann Hancock, serving as Board president in 19--, had initiated planning for a joint annual conference with Howard Prince of the Jepson School of Leadership at the University of Richmond. Cost and logistics, along with Ann's untimely death, became insurmountable barriers, and this effort was discontinued. Although ALE moved its conference to another site, and the dates conflicted, friendly working relationships were maintained. Subsequently, Howard Prince continued his ALE membership and later was awarded a distinguished service award.

Institute of Leadership and Volunteer Development (Virginia Tech)

In 1994, the need for a rapid change in the conference location led to partnering with the Institute of Leadership and Volunteer Development at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. Shirley Gerken, ALE Board member, took on the major role of making local arrangements chair. This partnership was an excellent fit with ALE members' interests and budget constraints. The North Carolina branch of the Center for Creative Leadership provided a panelist and information on the Center's work. This effort lasted only one year as the Board desired to move the conference around the county.

Center for Creative Leadership

In 1995, at the Colorado Springs conference, a close relationship with the Center for Creative Leadership developed. They provided the keynote speaker and a tour of their main headquarters as part of the ALE meeting.

The emerging format that seemed successful was for ALE to hold their own conference but allocate part of the meeting time to a nearby leadership organization or professional conference.

2001 Visioning and JOLE

In 2001, ALE members, in a pre-conference visioning session, reemphasized the need for communication and continuing to work on the association's goals to carry out the mission. The session also reemphasized that ALE has a niche among leadership organizations and the work continues to refine and carry out the vision as identified by the founding members. One of the initial goals of the original ALE Board, and membership, was to establish a scholarly publication.

At the 2001 visioning session this goal was restated and re-energized by the present board. At the 2001 annual meeting members voted in favor of the Board's recommendation to develop a supporting journal. Since the 2001 meeting the Board and Editor have been establishing the foundation for a journal, including giving it a name: The Journal of Leadership Education, or JOLE, and selecting the founding editor, Tom Gallagher, of Oregon State University.

This inaugural issue of JOLE completes one important part of this vision—and will continue as a way to enhance communication and serve as a source of inspiration to leadership educators everywhere. The ALE membership has challenge and opportunity to contribute to the journal.

Summary Comment

The history of the Association of Leadership Educators illustrates Margaret Mead's often quoted statement:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

The small group of founders and subsequent charter members had a vision of a leadership educator's association that could and would fill a special need, preserving the small friendly connected group while providing challenge and diversity for thinking and doing. This retrospective on ALE illustrates that concept that "leadership is a journey, not a destination."