Leadership Education, Training, and Development: What Should We Be Doing and What Can We Be Doing?

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Education, training, and development involve different kinds of activities and result in quite different outcomes. An ideal program to create leaders should incorporate all three: educating participants to provide a knowledge base, training them to acquire the desired skills, and assisting them in developing insight into their own beliefs and values and their effect on others.

Education is the most academically legitimate when compared to training or development. The transfer of information and knowledge from sources, usually a textbook and an instructor, to recipients is the standard academic model. The degree to which students are able to correctly identify concepts, ideas, or values through quizzes and tests provides information that can be used to assess outcomes. Northouse's book *Leadership Theory and Practice* provides an excellent source of information on a rather wide range of models, theories, and perspectives on leadership. It also permits the reader to analyze the case studies provided at the end of each chapter.

In the end, education results in the ability, as an example, to contrast and compare different theories, models, and perspectives. However, it can also allow an individual, on a personal basis, to accept one or more theories, models, or perspectives as most appropriate to her or his current situation or perhaps to an anticipated position. Education in the sense used here usually does not result in any kind of behavioral or attitudinal shift on the part of the student. If such a shift occurs, it is a byproduct of the leadership course of instruction.

Training is of lower status in the academic world, but is a regular component of many curricula. In the case of leadership studies there are many possible kinds of skill training. As an example, individuals can be taught to use a standard way of conducting a meeting from the generation of an agenda, to opening the meeting, encouraging discussion, perhaps using brainstorming, and providing a written record afterward. In a more formal way a person can learn the rudiments of parliamentary procedure to include not only the agenda, but also the rules for making and amending motions, for conducting votes, and for providing minutes afterward.

More sophisticated training can be done. The process of coaching, important in supervision, can be presented and then the participants provided several opportunities to practice the skills involved before taking them back to the job situation. Similarly, it is possible to conduct training sessions in active listening, first providing a list of effective listening responses and then having participants engage in active listening with one another. Skill training of the type described here can be evaluated so that the academic requirement for grading can be accommodated.

Development, as used here, goes beyond education and training and may be the least acceptable of these processes in academe for several reasons, as will be apparent from the following discussion. Leadership development should focus on two related issues. The first is to gain insight into self and the second is to understand the effect a person has on others.

It would seem that an important ingredient in successful leadership is that the leader should have a core set of beliefs and values which are then made evident and become the basis for influencing others. Anything less than this smacks of manipulation rather than leadership. However, for many, if not most people their behaviors and activities are based what they believe others expect them to do. Their core beliefs and values are hidden beneath a veneer of correct and appropriate behaviors learned from parents, sibling, peers, teachers, coaches, ministers, priests, rabbis, and other influential persons in their lives. An effective development program should encourage participants to examine their core beliefs and values, digging down to find out what they really believe and hold dear.

The second part of development is to gain an understanding of how other persons react to the leader or potential leader. For the most part, individuals are blind to the responses of others except in the most blatant cases where there is immediate feedback. This is particularly true for leaders who may have significant power over a follower or subordinate. Subordinates risk a great deal in confronting the leader. A development program provides an opportunity for an individual to get that kind of feedback from other people who are not followers or subordinates. Of course, it is also possible for a leader to get information on her or his effect on others through anonymous questionnaire techniques sometimes employed in organizational change efforts.

One potential problem with development of insight is that it can be and often it is transformative. Transformation is potentially risky, particularly to anyone who encourages or facilitates it in someone else. First, the outcome of a transformative process cannot be predicted. Second, the result is irreversible. There is a potential liability issue for any institution that undertakes a development effort for individuals without their prior and informed consent.

A final problem with development, again in the sense used here, is that it defies any attempt to evaluate or asses the outcome on an objective basis. After all, how does anyone decide whether another person has really achieved insight? Or truly understands his or her impact on other people? Any judgment on the part of a facilitator would be entirely subjective.

Based on the descriptions of education, training, and development provided up to this point, it would seem that the ideal way to create good leaders would be to devise a program in which education, training, and development processes take place. To implement such a program would require a range of abilities on the part of the instructors, trainers, and facilitators. An effective classroom presenter may not be the best facilitator of insight in others. Such a program would also require the approval of an academic institution's administration and faculty and probably require waiving traditional evaluation and grading for the development portion of the program. Clearly, the easiest route is to provide education, again in the sense used here – that is, to have students *learn about* leadership and to provide training in a range of skills needed in the organizational world or in the community. The question is whether that is sufficient.

Biography

Dr. Ernest L. "Ernie" Stech is an Adjunct Professor with Arizona State University and Executive Director of the Flagstaff National Monuments Foundation. He is author of two books, *The Transformed Leader* and *Leadership Communication*. He is a contributor of a chapter on the psychodynamic approach in Northouse's book, *Leadership Theory and Practice*. Stech helped develop an undergraduate course in leadership at Western Michigan University in the early 1970s and is emeritus from that institution. He co-authored two texts on small group communication and has had several other works published. Stech was President and CEO of Frost Engineering Development Corporation in Englewood, Colorado from 1985 to 1994. His interests are in developing leaders, formal leadership theory, and leadership processes.