Guiding Questions: Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs

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Abstract

Appropriate design and redesign of programs, responses to accreditation agencies, and internal academic legitimacy concerns are critical challenges in education in general and in leadership education in particular. *Guiding Questions*: *Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs* (*Guiding Questions*), a member initiated project sponsored by the International Leadership Association (ILA), provides a framework to address these challenges. In this paper, we first describe the background and context of this initiative. Second, we introduce the *Overview* of the five sections of *Guiding Questions*: Conceptual Framework, Context, Content, Teaching and Learning, and Outcomes and Assessment. Third, we present results of initial field tests of the *Overview* and its framework within three different North American universities. Finally, we discuss next steps and invite the reader to get involved in the further development of *Guiding Questions*.

Introduction

Appropriate design and development of new programs, evaluation and redesign of existing programs, and responses to accreditation agencies and internal academic legitimacy concerns are among the most critical current challenges and issues in education in general (Wolf & Hughes, 2007) and in leadership education in particular (Mengel, 2005; Zundel & Mengel, 2007). *Guiding Questions*: *Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs* (*Guiding Questions*) provides a framework to address these challenges.

Guiding Questions is the result of a four year, broadly collaborative and voluntary project of the International Leadership Association's (ILA) Guidelines for Leadership Education Learning Community. More than 70 leadership educators contributed at one level or another to this project. The project intent was and is to create a document that could guide the process of leadership program design or development at various educational institutions.

On the advice of the ILA Executive Board, *Guiding Questions* was placed on ILASpace to encourage member review, comments, and field tests (http://www.ilaspace.org). A panel at the ILA's 11th Global Conference in November, 2009 in Prague will report field test results. Following this, the ILA Board of Directors will consider the proposal for adoption in Prague.

Guiding Questions is an online document that consists of an introduction with links to documents that describe the project's background, history, and processes; an *Overview*, which is explicated in this paper; and five sections of more detailed questions that should be asked and answered to guide curriculum development, instructional effectiveness, and quality enhancement through assessment. These five sections are Conceptual Framework, Context, Content, Teaching and Learning, and Outcomes and Assessment.

The guiding questions presented within the document are designed to evoke answers that help leadership educators make important choices about the quality, scope, and focus of their programs. Answers can be generated in many ways, whether formally or informally, collectively or individually. Not surprisingly, additional questions are often generated as well. Yet, in all cases, answers or additional questions point the way for development, organization, and evaluation of leadership education programs.

In most cases, the guiding questions include either an introduction or a response to explain and clarify the significance of the question. These clarifications are not intended to answer the questions, but rather provide suggestions for further study and point to answers in relevant research and best practices. Eventually, as the project evolves and matures, there will be links to research and best practice articles.

Guiding Questions is a living document. As an online document, anyone may post comments, suggestions, or recommendations. On an annual basis, revisions may be made through the proposal process for ILA's annual Global Conference. The ILA's Leadership Education Member Interest Group sponsors a permanent conference track to ensure rigorous peer review of proposed revisions.

Overview

Guiding Questions: Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs consists of this *Overview*, which may be used for basic review. Each of the following five sections comprises a more extensive and elaborated section that can be used for a more comprehensive review:

- Conceptual Framework
- Context
- Content
- Teaching and Learning
- Outcomes and Assessment

Each section begins with a brief introduction and provides the context for its particular focus. General guiding questions follow that are designed to assess the relevant section of the leadership program under development or review (e.g., "What is the program's conceptual framework?"). Additional specific guiding questions relevant for each section allow pursuing and evaluating particular perspectives within that section (e.g., "What is the program's overarching guiding principles?"). Finally, a brief reference section guides the reader to literature that has informed the crafting of the guiding questions and that may also provide further information regarding the respective topics.

While each section may stand alone, guiding the reader interested in a particular focus, ample cross-references are provided to other sections that indicate the interconnectedness and comprehensive, multi-faceted approach of this collaborative project and the resulting document (e.g., The question "What theories and beliefs about teaching and learning underlie choices made about pedagogy, assessment, ordering of content and activities?" complements the section on Conceptual Framework).

As a consequence, *Guiding Questions: Guidelines for leadership Education Programs* can be read in sequence if the reader wants to gain an in depth overview of all relevant sections pertaining to leadership education programs; alternatively, the reader can start with a section of particular interest.

Each section is introduced below both in its particular perspective as well as in its context to the whole document. Finally, a conclusive summary is presented together with an overall reference section.

Conceptual Framework

Overarching Guiding Question: "What is the conceptual framework of the leadership education program?"

This section is based on the assumption that explicitly describing and communicating values, beliefs, and theoretical frameworks underlying any leadership education program allows assessment of the basis and validity of the program's educational design. Furthermore, explicit frameworks enhance student learning and thus improve the overall quality of the program.

Guiding questions help describe and assess the underlying conceptual framework; its articulation; its theoretical and practical background; its relationship to the program's context as well as to its philosophy, purpose and goals; and its relationship to pedagogy, content, and assessment.

Context

Overarching Guiding Question: "How does the context of the leadership education program affect the program?"

This section describes how leadership programs, their conceptual frameworks, their content, their chosen approaches to teaching and learning, and the respective outcomes and their assessment may be affected by factors and elements within the program's context. Thus, a "systematic approach to leadership education within a social process is encouraged to help increase the 'fit' of the leadership program within its context" (http://ilaguidelineslc.pbworks.com/Section+2:+Context).

Guiding questions help describe the various contextual categories of identity, sector, academics, place, discipline, organization, field of practice, and field of leadership as well as these categories' impact on leadership education programs. Furthermore, this section focuses on the significance and impact of the program's cultural context particularly from a global and cross-cultural perspective. Finally, this section explores the institutional context of leadership programs.

Content

Overarching Guiding Question: "What is the content of the leadership education program and how was it derived?"

This section explores topical areas that may serve as foundational curriculum for comprehensive leadership education programs. In particular, this section encourages a balance of declarative, procedural, and affective types of knowledge that may be "driven by the context, conceptual framework and outcomes for the program" (http://ilaguidelineslc.pbworks.com/Section+3:+Content).

Guiding questions link program content to conceptual and contextual elements; to the program's students' developmental level; and to the program's outcomes,

curriculum, and learning resources. Furthermore, specific questions help explore the following areas that may impact leadership education in particular ways: leadership foundations, strategic leadership, personal development, organizational leadership, and ethical leadership.

Teaching and Learning

Overarching Guiding Question: "What are the students' developmental levels and what teaching and learning methods are most appropriate to ensure maximum student learning?"

This section explores optimal pedagogies that may enhance teaching and learning within the context of the Leadership Identity Development Model's (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006) six stages: Awareness, Exploration, Leader identified, Leader differentiated, Generativity, and Integration. Thus, the guiding questions can be explored within a developmental approach following each of the six stages of leadership development.

Guiding questions explore general issues and concerns of teaching and learning leadership for each of the six stages of leadership development. More specifically, they discuss the role of the instructor; the teaching methodology; the approaches to teaching; expected learning outcomes; and the roles and responsibilities of the learner; the learning activities, projects, and experiences. Finally, two questions link this section and the six stages of leadership development back to supporting philosophical and conceptual frameworks as well as to elements of the social and cultural context relevant to issues of teaching and learning.

Outcomes and Assessment

Overarching Guiding Question: "What are the intended outcomes of the leadership education program and how are they assessed and used to ensure continuous quality improvement?"

This section focuses on formative and summative program evaluation in the context of institutional evaluation and the assessment of student learning outcomes. Furthermore, the section explores the links between "the assessment and evaluation processes and results at each level…to each other and to other underlying contextual frameworks, leadership content, teaching and learning" (http://ilaguidelineslc.pbworks.com/Section+5:+Outcomes+and+Assessment).

The main assumptions of this section are the crucial role of learning outcomes and their assessment for transparency and accountability of institutions and programs towards students and society in large as well as for a consistent institutional, program, and personal / professional development of students, faculty, and staff;

student learning is considered to be "at the core of educational programs" (http://ilaguidineslc.pbworks.com/Section+5:+Outcomes+and+Assessment).

In sum, the guiding questions explore multiple levels of leadership education, namely the institutional, program, and student levels. Guiding questions explicate the identified leadership competencies and proficiencies and their relationship to the program's philosophical and theoretical perspectives; the desired (learning) outcomes; their relationship to conceptual, contextual, content and delivery related elements; indicators for the assessment of learning outcomes and elements of a comprehensive assessment system; and potential criteria of excellence.

Specific questions on the institutional level investigate how assessment of learning outcomes and program evaluation feed into institutional decision making and how external sources inform institutional evaluation and assessment. On the program level questions explore how conceptual frameworks inform the assessment of learning outcomes and program evaluation, how formative assessment and evaluation is incorporated into the ongoing assessment of outcomes, what the identified fields of practice are and how they might inform the evaluation of program outcomes, how summative and formative assessment of student learning might inform the evaluation of program outcomes, what evidence might exist for organizational learning on the program level, and how the chosen outcomes might inform the implementation of the leadership education program. Finally, student level questions explore how competency and growth of students might be assessed.

The full text of *Guiding Questions* can be found at http://ilaguidelineslc.pbwiki.com/.

Field tests

Three institutions volunteered to field test the *Overview* of *Guiding Questions* within the context of various review or design processes of leadership programs: (a) Wally and Louise Bishop Center for Ethical Leadership at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP), (b) Evelyn T. Stone College of Professional Studies, Roosevelt University (RU), Chicago and Schaumburg, Illinois, and (c) Renaissance College (RC), the University of New Brunswick's (UNB) leadership school, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. In the following, we briefly describe the different contexts and processes for the field tests as well as their result.

University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, Florida, USA

The Wally and Louise Bishop Center for Ethical Leadership Studies, in conjunction with the USFSP's College of Education, offers an undergraduate

leadership studies minor that was established in 1999. Faculty members agreed that the program needed a formal, comprehensive review. Accordingly, the *Overview* was used to identify programmatic elements that required further analysis and to develop an action plan to make improvements. The results were used to plan appropriate retreats as well as to identify research and development needs.

Five faculty members used the *Overview* to guide discussion by answering each the overarching questions. This led to additional questions and answers that pinpointed programmatic strengths and weaknesses. Among these were the need to develop a formal, well articulated conceptual framework and an assessment plan. Faculty members agreed that Section 1, Conceptual Framework, and Section 5, Outcomes and Assessment, will be used to facilitate a comprehensive review that will lead to the creation of the conceptual framework and assessment plan.

Faculty members found the *Overview* to be extremely heuristic. Several additional needs were identified including a weakness in the institutional strategic plan, the need for an undergraduate studies college, further definition of the co-curricular leadership program, and better alignment of student stages of leadership identity and teaching methods. A clear program improvement agenda was created. Faculty members unanimously agreed that this use of the *Overview* was a very effective and efficient way to plan comprehensive program review and revisions for established programs.

Roosevelt University, Chicago and Schaumburg, Illinois, USA

The Evelyn T. Stone College of Professional Studies of Roosevelt University began offering a Bachelor's of Professional Studies degree in Organizational Leadership degree in 2003. The program has grown significantly since its inception and, after establishing an Advisory Board in 2007, began to review its curriculum. The *Overview* of *Guiding Questions* was provided to the faculty as they began review of the curriculum and the feedback from the Advisory Board.

The faculty at Roosevelt University's Organizational Leadership program agreed that conceptual frameworks within the construct of leadership must have a purposeful interconnectedness to the competencies required by the organizations and communities in which we work. Developing a conceptual framework is key to setting the stage for a quality program and grounds the program in key leadership principles. Furthermore, the framework helps students and faculty identify connections within the curriculum and opportunities for further curriculum and professional development. The conceptual framework helps to assure alignment between student goals and vision for leadership. Subsequently, such a conceptual framework was developed for the program and is being used currently to guide the course revision process, providing a useful guideline for

establishing coursework priorities, demonstrating how various courses fit together, and providing a more holistic approach to the leadership development of the students.

The context section provides a backdrop for the global and local issues that impact leadership, which is key to ensuring that the program meets the students' needs, serves institutional mission and has real world applicability. Identifying key stakeholders in the outcomes of the educational process and serving those needs is essential to the program's relevance.

All faculty members agreed that the teaching and learning section of the *Guiding Question* was where their personal contribution can make the most difference. Their ability to translate content into actionable knowledge for animation within organizations is key to the successful execution of this component. Faculty recognized that content must undergo a regular review process to adapt to a changing environment, account for additional knowledge added to the field by research, or to turn theory into practice in new and innovative ways. Identification of goals and objectives is critical to the content area.

Lastly, the outcomes and assessment section prompted faculty to focus on both long-term student success and professional achievement, and the establishment of appropriate metrics around shorter term programmatic goals. The Organizational Leadership faculty committed to working closely around outcomes for individual student success and converging those practices for a holistic programmatic approach. This resulted in the establishment of a student portfolio to document student progress throughout the course of study and to serve as a repository for evidence around student competencies. Each course in the degree program contributes an assignment that demonstrates the competency to be mastered in that course.

In summary, the development of the conceptual framework was one of the most important lessons learned. Previously, faculty member's understanding of the curriculum was somewhat unarticulated and based on assumptions about the right course of action. Using the *Overview* of *Guiding Questions* forced faculty to answer some questions that many took for granted about reasons for activities and future directions.

University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

Renaissance College (RC) is the University of New Brunswick's (UNB) leadership school and offers an undergraduate leadership degree program: The Bachelor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Leadership Studies (BPhil) (Mengel, 2006). Furthermore, it is currently in the process of implementing a Leadership Minor in cooperation with various other faculties on campus.

The *Overview* has been used twofold: First, a team of faculty, staff and an alumna tasked with the design of a leadership minor for UNB have decided to outline their design process based on the *Overview* guiding questions. Second, one of the authors of this paper used the *Overview* to review the process and results of a comprehensive redesign of the leadership stream courses offered at RC conducted from 2005 to 2007.

Design of a UNB Minor in Leadership Studies

Late in the fall of 2008, UNB had started the process of creating and implementing a Minor in Leadership Studies (MILS) to allow students enrolled in various UNB faculties "to nurture the capacity…to exercise leadership in their professional, personal and civic lives" (Renaissance College, 2009); the intent is to offer the Minor to students of partnering faculties in the fall of 2009. A team consisting of the Dean of RC, two faculty and staff members, and an alumna of the BPhil program was formed to design the MILS. The team first met in December 2008 and started working based on a few principles: The new minor should be developed around learning outcomes, the design process should be systematic and quality driven in spite of the short timeline, and the MILS should as much as possible benefit from resources, experience and expertise already existing within the PBhil program offered through RC.

From the start, the MILS design team had adopted the five sections of the *Overview* as the outline to guide their work on the new Minor. Throughout their working sessions, the team members had a chart outlining the five sections visible in the board room. First, the decision to base the MILS on a learning outcomes approach similar to the approach taken within the BPhil program was made and a set of overarching learning outcomes was identified that was to be detailed further later in the process. Second, the discussions focused around the context of the existing programs, resources, and expertise within RC and the partnering faculties. Third, key components for the content of the MILS were identified (core and elective courses, practicum). Fourth, intertwined within the discussions and decision making around program content were deliberations about the envisioned approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., outcome based, interdisciplinary, and experiential). Finally, the outcomes identified earlier have been described in detail and in relationship to the identified program components.

Naturally, the design work and the respective discussions of the MILS team went back and forth between the various aspects and elements that needed to be identified, detailed, and decided upon. However, the five sections of the *Overview* have proven to be extremely helpful in guiding and anchoring the work around basic principles and respective questions. Furthermore, the *Overview* served as a continuous 'quality check' to help ensure a comprehensive design process. Thus,

the potential danger of a one-sided and pragmatic program development focusing on choosing the 'right content' could be avoided in spite of the existing time pressure. Finally, the *Overview* as well as *Guiding Questions* in total will be used for a milestone review after the first term of offering the MILS at UNB (December 2009).

Conclusion

Essential guiding questions relevant to five comprehensive sections including Conceptual Framework, Context, Content, Teaching and Learning, Outcomes and Assessment have been developed in a four-year collaborative project of many leadership educators and scholars. The resulting document, *Guiding Questions: Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs*, has been posted on the ILASpace for further collaborative development.

The promising results of field tests of the *Overview* and the respective principles in three different universities have substantiated the need for and value of *Guiding Questions* and the *Overview* for design and review processes of leadership education programs. Systematically applying these documents and the respective design and review processes will help educational institutions to significantly improve the quality and increase the legitimacy of their leadership education programs.

Future Steps

As noted above, *Guiding Questions* is available for review and comment on ILASpace. More extensive and rigorous field tests of the guidelines need to be conducted in various contexts, with the results presented and discussed at the ILA's 11th Global Conference in Prague. These reviews, comments and field tests will inform the ILA Board of Directors as the proposal for adoption is considered

How to get involved

Guiding Questions has been and will continue to be a collaborative and dynamic work. As leadership educators and scholars, you are invited to comment on, discuss, and review the existing documents and thereby contribute to the further development of *Guiding Questions*. Please contribute your insights and expertise in any of the following ways:
- ILA members can join the discussion and / or post comments at: www.ilaspace.org. Go to the Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs group space. Non-members can view *Guiding Questions* at http://ilaguidelineslc.pbworks.com/.

- Contact the authors of this paper and submit your comments or suggestions via mail or email.
- Field test *Guiding Questions* in the context of your programs and share the results through the above mentioned website or with the authors directly.

Your results and comments will be considered in Prague.

Acknowledgements

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