Editors' Introduction: The Education of Leadership
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Once upon a time, on a random day during a study abroad trip…
Student: Are we in class today?
Tony: What do you mean, 'in class'?
Student: You know, in a classroom?
Tony: Have we been in a 'classroom' yet on this trip?
Student: No, well, ok, are you teaching and I learning today?
Tony: Aren't you learning every day, all the time? Does it matter if it comes from me?
Student: Hmmm….

Yes, hmmm, indeed! One of the great false distinctions in likely every field of practice lies between doing and learning, resulting in a rather limited social construction of what 'education' entails. The reality is that we learn every day all the time, even if that learning is simply a reinforcement of what we already know. Every interaction with the external world, and subsequent internal processing of that information, strengthens our current conceptualization or builds anew. So too does the process unfold in the development of a field of study.

This special issue of the Journal of Leadership Education (JOLE) highlights current issues and challenges in the field of leadership education. The great variety of organizations across sectors, fields, and nations, combined with our increasing understanding of how organizations function and interrelate, highlights the incredible complexity for which effective leadership will be critical. The current crises only emphasize the unique and often confusing role of leaders and leadership. To successfully navigate, if not lead within, these realities require individual development of many capacities. As the field of leadership studies has grown, so too have efforts to examine, assess, and improve leadership education. Leadership educators have made great strides in curriculum and pedagogy, applying a broad variety of techniques and learning theories. However, as with any field of inquiry, new advances bring forth new challenges.

Understanding, examining, and practicing education in leadership offers a unique challenge for a number of reasons. First, leadership is a multidisciplinary field in research, theory, and practice. Leadership scholars draw from anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, communication, political science, business, education, public policy, and the growing field of their own foundational work in leadership theory and research. Leadership practitioners operate across a variety of fields from theater to child care to nursing to the more recognizable venues such as business, education, and politics. Thus, to teach leadership, one needs to "know" from many different disciplines, in many different ways, and in a variety of venues. A second reason leadership education offers a unique challenge lies in the highly overlapping connection between theory and practice. Because there are actual leaders practicing leadership, should leadership education result in immediate skill acquisition, deeper understanding of underlying principles, enhanced personal capacity, or all three? A third, and perhaps the most compelling, challenge lies in the duality of any subject-specific educational endeavor, namely the need for leadership educators to understand education, i.e., how to craft curriculum, how individuals learn, effective teaching methods. So, what is the most important thing?

Finding "The Important Thing"

Margaret Wise Brown, author of the children's book *Goodnight Moon*, wrote a lesser known book entitled *The Important Book*. Each page focuses on a specific item, like a shoe, and begins with the sentence, "The important thing about a shoe is that you put your foot in it." The next few sentences tell us more about that item, but the final sentence repeats the first, reiterating the important thing. I read this book to students in my leadership courses. In the incredibly complex role of leadership, individuals need the ability to both recognize the array of issues *and* target the important thing.

The effort to assay the field and identify the important thing illustrates the purpose of this special issue of JOLE, which represents a third phase of our efforts. Phase one began as an informal personal survey grounded in our experience, resulting in a framework and compilation of key issues. Phase two comprised a more formal survey of the field. Both phases of our examination of challenges and issues in leadership education are briefly explained in this introduction. The important thing, however, is that the reader utilize as many sources of information as possible, including their own experience and context, to discern the important thing for themselves.

Creating a Framework

The first phase of our exploration was based on self-reflecting on our experiences and collecting ideas and opinions from our colleagues. An initial list of issues was crafted, and we, along with Michelle Jones, Ph.D. (then at Providence College, and now at University of Puget Sound), considered how these ideas might be best organized. Focusing on the education facet of our field, we established five fundamental questions that, in our experience, were key to effective education. These questions provided an organizational framework that we found extraordinarily helpful in seeing connections between issues and the bigger picture. These questions and the issues within them are summed in Middlebrooks and Allen (2008):

> Effective leadership education must begin by addressing the
> foundational questions of teaching and learning:
> (a) theoretical framework – what big picture assumptions and
> objectives inform the program?
> (b) curriculum – what content should we teach?
> (c) instruction – how should that content be taught?
> (d) influences – what influences our teaching and the student's
> learning? and
> (e) assessment – how do we know if learning occurs? (p. 78)

As the list of issues grew, we found that this framework and the questions helped us identify where the issue fit and the important thing about an issue vis-à-vis education. We encourage the reader to do the same.

Surveying the Field

The second phase of our inquiry comprised a brief formal survey of the field, the general results of which we report in this section. Electronic surveys were distributed through the list-serve of several leadership education professional organizations, resulting in 147 responses. Nearly 75% of respondents were higher education professors and/or administrators, with the remainder split between leadership educators in community/non-profit, private for-profit, and private consulting. Thus, not surprisingly, 65% of students comprised either traditional (30%) or non-traditional (35%) undergraduate or graduate students. Adult learners in an organizational or work setting comprised 26% of the typical audience of survey respondents. Most (82%) individuals estimated the percentage of their work week spent on leadership education as less than 75%, with nearly half (44%) reporting leadership education as 25% or less of their work week. Judging by the job titles reported (e.g., director, coordinator, administrator, professor, principal) these individuals have multiple roles, including that of leader.

When engaged in leadership education, the respondents indicated using a variety of formats as noted in Table 1.

Table 1. Formats used for leadership education.

Format	Response Count (N=383)	Percentage
Interactive Discussion	112	29
Workshop/Activities	96	25
Experiential/In-the-field	66	17
Lecture	51	13
On-line	23	6
Apprentice/Internship	16	4
Other*	19	5
*Other included: Student research, case study analysis, coaching, mentoring others, self-assessment, multi-media, virtual group projects, and videos		

When asked to specify their main objective when engaged in leadership education, participants reported an array of specific answers that could be organized into five, often overlapping main themes. The most prevalent objective reported consisted of *building skills* and the capacity to execute those skills (32% of responses). This theme includes "thinking" skills as well such as critical thinking and "ethical thoughtfulness," however most answers in this category referred to concrete, specific practices for leading others and/or an organization, e.g., conflict resolution, change management, collaboration, team building. As perhaps a subset of this broader theme, 6% reported objectives that specifically highlighted the ability to *work collaboratively* and in groups.

Objectives that emphasize *understanding concepts/theory* were the next most prevalent (19%) along with those focused on *building self-awareness* and a reflective capacity in individuals (19%). The final category of objectives was those seeking to develop a *social awareness/citizenship* disposition (15%). Knowing that objectives (should) guide practices, and that practices should achieve objectives, comparing the reported practices with categories of objectives calls for more careful scrutiny of our own practices. The five themes of reported objectives also highlights a considerable leadership education challenge, namely that of simultaneously developing the awareness and more individualized facets of the individual, teaching practicable skills, teaching the theory that underpins both the skills and the individual development, and putting all of this to analysis, ethics, and vision crafting at both the micro level of organizational functions and the macro level of community and society. How will leadership educators integrate, reconcile, and/or focus on these equally important and highly interconnected objectives?

We asked survey respondents to tell us their personal definition of leadership that they used to guide what they did in their leadership education efforts. Although many were compelled to highlight their leadership beliefs, data worth a closer look in the future, 25% reported a definition aligned with Northouse (2007) comprising the notions of process, influence, relationships with others, and a common goal. A considerable number of respondents offered a definition focused on one of the latter elements: facilitating/directing (12%), inspiring/influencing others (18%), relationships/collaboration (12%), or a specific vision (organizational and social change/justice, 12%). Importantly, of the 129 definitions reported, 25% were too unique to be categorized in the initial analysis, and they varied considerably, even in size from five words to long paragraphs.

Finally, and more to the point of our inquiry, we asked participants what they felt was the greatest challenge to leadership education. The results of this question are as telling for what respondents noted as for what they did not. Although a more detailed analysis of the data need be completed, two iterations of identifying common themes resulted in 11 categories accounting for 115 of the 128 comments (Table 2).

Table 2. Challenges in leadership education.

Challenge	Response Count (N=128)
Clarifying leadership complexity – beyond position, trait, hierarchy	20
Communicating leadership importance to students, admin, public	18
Developing student behaviors: engagement, reflection, integrity	14
Translating theory to practice – especially modeling leadership	12
Convincing students they can lead, that they can learn leadership	9
Student's inflated self-competence because they hold a position	8
Student's lack of experience to draw from and ground theory/practice	8
Lack of funding	8
"Turf" issues by discipline and lack of collaboration/communication	6
Connecting to current affairs	5
Assessment, how to	5
Others	15

The two most noted challenges, often described in frustrating terms, dealt with the preconceived notions about leadership. As a curricular and theoretical framework

issue, educating and in some cases convincing individuals that leadership is far more effective long term and big picture if one conceptualizes the process beyond traits, position, and hierarchy. As one participant noted: "Helping students understand that leadership is not about formal authority and positions," and another: "Conventional paradigms of leadership and 'cook-book' strategies distract us from learning the important lessons of leadership - deeper leadership." The challenge of bridging theory and practice (with 12 comments) provides one reason for this misguided initial perception. Practicing leaders, i.e., those in a leadership *position*, display characteristics deeply embedded in their personality (that appear as *traits*), and operate within a *hierarchy* that provides the power of immediate outcomes. Getting to a deeper more thorough understanding of leadership requires deconstructing these "obvious" notions frequently reinforced in practice.

The second major challenge follows from this simplistic, practitioner-oriented, and the recently emphasized assessment-focused conception, namely the challenge of how students, administrators, and the general public perceive leadership and its value. "The perception of leadership as a soft skill development rather than a complex, interdisciplinary field of study. Also, the perception by students that leadership courses should be easy and that they know more than they actually do about the topic," as one respondent explains the challenge. And another notes, "The co-opting of 'leadership' to mean any type of training that a student receives. (And) A diffuse general definition of 'leadership'." Ironically, 'leadership' is often the first focal point when an organization fails. However, this blame follows from the misperception described as it is focused on the individuals in leadership positions, and often on their personal failings. In any case, clearly and consistently clarifying a more complex notion of leadership should be high priority of leadership educators, particularly in their initial efforts to recruit and orient students, clients, and public.

Developing student behaviors was listed by 14 respondents as the biggest challenge in leadership education. Comments often referred to getting students to engage, challenge themselves, and reflect: "Motivating students to really think and examine what they do and what they think and not just look for the "answers". In addition to specific behaviors, there was an interesting dichotomy between the challenge of "convincing" students that they could learn and lead versus other students who, by virtue of their personality and/or positions they held, over-estimate their capability, and consequently are less receptive to learning. This issue ranges from young students: "The tendency for students involved in high school organizations to believe they already understand and practice good leadership," to established professionals, "Helping people realize that they may not already be a leader, they may simply be a manager or supervisor...even though they do well, they can do better." And, "Teaching smart people to learn - Helping very successful individuals see opportunities to set aside

what has led to their past success in order to try a different way (because that is what is needed at the next level)."

Translating theory to practice was noted by 12 respondents. This of course is a challenge for many fields; however one facet of this challenge is particularly salient to leadership education: as Kouzes and Posner (2007) term it, "modeling the way." This, often failure, happens in all forms of leadership education, from mentoring and on-the-job training: "Senior management articulating desired behaviors that are inconsistent with actual behavior, not genuinely supported by the organization (i.e., little chance of on-the-job transfer of learning," to formal classroom and the role of teacher as leader. The "turf" issues noted by 6 respondents speaks to this issue as well: "The least enjoyable challenge is the dampening effect of organizational rivalries within the academy. The Communications department, Education department, Business department, and even the Engineering department all think they own key aspects of Organizational Leadership, and make the education of non-traditional students in a non-traditional academic field unnecessarily difficult."

The challenge of modeling leadership must begin with leadership educators in their classroom or teaching context, in how they administer their organization, and in their personal interactions. Modeling the way is the truest form of translating theory into practice: "Walking the talk. In other words, living and being the example of leadership we need more of in the world. Too many people talking about leadership, not doing leadership. If actions speak louder than words, perhaps we might look in the mirror every so often. "Being the change we want to see in the world" challenges our relevance every day." And with that sentiment, we transition to the third phase of our inquiry into current challenges in leadership education – the contributions to this special issue of JOLE.

Special Issue Contributions

The third phase of our examination of challenges and issues in leadership education comprises this special issue of JOLE. The acceptance rate for this issue is 35%, and the accepted papers represent some very consequential issues.

In addition, this issue includes three invited papers addressing what we felt were some of the most current and relevant issues in the field: the distinction between leadership skill development and leadership personal development (Barry Posner), the challenge of identifying and aligning educational activities to this development (Susan Komives and her colleagues), and efforts to put a consistent framework on leadership education activities and programs (the *Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs* reported by Stephen Ritch and Thomas Mengel).

Theoretical Framework

We begin this special issue focusing on the theoretical framework issues in leadership education. As always, Barry Posner has us thinking about the broader context of leadership education, namely what matters most in individual leadership development. In his article, "From Inside Out: Beyond Teaching *About* Leadership," what matters most to Posner is that individual leaders "find their voice", their core self. Complementing Popa's paper explaining backward design, Posner asserts that leadership education must begin with facilitating the inner journey, motivating students to "explore their inner territory" through reflective practice. Educators should pose critical personal questions such as: "What do you *stand* for? What do you *believe* in? What are *discontent* about? What makes you *jump for joy*? What keeps you *awake at night*?" From this self-awareness, he argues, rises the capability to live life with intention, forward-moving, as if carefully and mindfully crafting a legacy.

Real situations are so much more complex than theory, books, or classes can capture. And many leadership educators have asserted the importance of *doing* leadership as a way of learning leadership. "We must create opportunities for them to be leaders – to do leadership," notes Posner. However, he expands this notion by integrating the reflective inner journey with active, forward-thinking initiative through the notion of *being* leadership. Perhaps being leadership provides a conceptual road map to what Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2006) call leadership identity. For Posner, *being* leadership is a means to the more important question of how one, as a unique individual, will make a difference.

Perhaps the central question of leadership education is: how do individuals become leaders? This question begs the more important question from an educational perspective, namely what does a "leader" look like? As Michael Dickmann (2008) offers, what do leaders KnowDoBe (yes, all one word)? Theoretical frameworks provide a necessary and extraordinarily helpful foundation for the often unique approaches of leadership educators. As the field evolves, however, theory must be replaced by research-based models. To this end, Komives, Longerbeam, Mainella, Osteen, Owen, and Wagner take a significant step for the field in their work on further developing one picture of how a leader develops and what that end might look like.

In their article "Leadership Identity Development: Challenges in Applying a Developmental Model," Komives, et al., reiterate the six-stage Leadership Identity Development (LID) model, highlighting key transition points that

educators would be well-advised to note. In this highly thoughtful contribution, the LID model is examined vis-à-vis other developmental theories and in the context of common leadership education issues at multiple levels of analysis. After examining macro level issues such as assessment and program design, and micro level issues such as effective group work and promoting self-efficacy, Komives et al., offer a concise sum of ten recommendations regarding the application of the LID model within leadership education.

Moving from theoretical framework issues at the individual development level to the institutional level, Scroggs, Sattler, and McMillan describe efforts at one institution to gather their varied curricular and co-curricular leadership efforts together under one shared vision. In their article, "The Art and Science of an Undergraduate Leadership Mosaic: A Challenge of Shared Purpose," Scroggs, et al., organize their mosaic by distinguishing between leadership training, education, and development, providing the reader with both a framework and preview of the challenges of undertaking such an endeavor. The issue of distinguishing and further defining training, education and development is later examined by Allen.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

What do we teach and how do we teach it? Popa ("Form Follows Function: A Backward Design to Develop Leadership Ethics Curriculum") examines how we teach ethics, and provides an example that aligns what we know about developing ethical leadership with pedagogical approaches complementary to that end. Popa introduces us to the increasingly common (in the education field) curricular approach of backward design. Focused on building curriculum from the student back to the context, backward design offers the opportunity to align curriculum and pedagogy with the student's development, as well as further the effort to balance in-class learning with experiential learning. Indeed, backward design's individual consideration implicitly models the transformational and servant—leader relationships advocated in a deeply integrated ethics leadership curriculum.

Albert and Vadla take us into what seemed to be a transformational learning experience for all involved. In their article, "Authentic Leadership Development in the Classroom: A Narrative Approach", the authors examine the factors that contributed to one central question – What was it about the course that made it such a meaningful leadership experience for students? The authors begin with a description of authentic leadership and the process of constructing narratives about oneself, a group and others helps students develop an authentic leadership voice. They continue with a description of three types of leadership stories – *Who I Am Stories, Who We Are Stories, and Future Stories*. In addition, the authors provide student perspectives on each of the assignments. The authors conclude by sharing key ingredients for re-creating this powerful learning experience.

The sole research feature of this special issue focuses on student perceptions of working as a group or team. In their article, "Case Study: Student Perceptions of Groups & Teams in Leadership Education," Coers and Lorensen report interview data from students engaged in group activities. This contribution highlights two very salient issues. The first issue consists of the assumption that pedagogy is perceived as curriculum. In other words, if we ask students to work as a team on a project, the activity of working as a group results in *learning* how to work in a group. Coers and Lorensen did indeed find this to be the case in their course. The second issue this paper illustrates is the need for much more individual, in-depth, micro-genetic research methods in the field of leadership education. If we are to advance the field, this very detailed qualititative work can provide the foundations for theories that can then be quantitatively tested and refined.

In his idea brief, "Critical Thinking in Groups," Harter challenges us to examine the need for critical thinking in higher education and leadership studies, but in a considerably different manner than the lone reflective leader. The author suggests that no matter what the world might throw at them, graduates with this skill set would cope when a situation turns volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Harter also introduces the importance of *collaborative* critical thinking in groups. He suggests it is better to draw on the greater intellectual resources of the group, a concept Harter refers to as the "extended mind: "Leaders are also embedded in a network that would be foolish to ignore. Better to draw on the greater intellectual resources of the group and use the minds surrounding you."

Truly drawing on the minds around us means examining perspectives most different from our own. The increasing importance of developing globally literate leaders seems to be one leadership challenge that many in the field, especially in the United States, have given only limited attention. Perhaps the problems stems from a disconnect between the time and activities of the sometimes cloistered university experience, or perhaps a specific organization is simply not yet working in international markets, or worse because the well-documented Americentric view persists. Moore, Boyd, Rosser and Elbert outline a proposed program to infuse a global perspective into an agricultural leadership curriculum in their article, "Developing an International Agricultural Leadership Program to Meet the Needs of a Global Community." Their proposed approach to developing globally literate leaders involves a series of problem-based courses and a required international experience. The strength of their proposal, however, lies in the integration of multiple facets of leadership development. As they note, "Preparing students to solve global issues involves the application of leadership theories, critical thinking, cultural competence, and multiple agricultural disciplines."

Influences

What influences our teaching and the student's learning? Guthrie explores the use of technology in the classroom not as an instructor-led infusion but rather as a student-utilized tool. Arguing that students are immersed in technology for many other purposes already, engaging these contexts may actually serve as a form of situated learning, capitalizing on the socio-cultural context already communicated to students through their technology. Tasked with creating a video of leader interviews, students reported numerous tangential benefits beyond a factually greater understanding of the definition of leadership (the original assignment). Guthrie reports that student's comments regarding process facets of technology use (e.g., conducting the interviews and editing the video) provided opportunities to learn leadership process, and thus offer an expanded view of what integrating technology can aim for in leadership education.

Following on the theme of increasingly utilized technologies perceived in different ways, Saks' article, "Education at a Distance: Best Practices and Considerations for Leadership Educators," points out a variety of helpful considerations from multiple perspectives. Saks raises the issue of implicit influences in distance education rooted in communication differences between genders. As Saks notes, "Because of their differing communication styles and needs (Tannen, 1989, 1991), women may have a harder time being perceived as valuable members of the virtual community, and they may also find the experience less meaningful than their male counterparts (Harper, 2007)."

Assessment

Evaluation of leadership development initiatives is another common discussion point of leadership development scholars. According to Avolio (2005), those interested will find that only ten percent of the leadership development interventions evaluate past Kirkpatrick's first level (reaction). Conger (1992) asserts that the value of leadership is difficult to measure. This dilemma makes it extremely difficult for companies to commit large sums of money to something from which they will see no immediate tangible results. We want to see what we pay for. Leadership is an elusive, long-term investment, especially for a society that often looks only to the next quarter or the next year (p. 190).

On the other hand, Avolio (2004) suggests that

> Evaluating leadership development programs is essentially testing the construct validity of the model that underlies leadership development. Taking the full range model as an example, there is an expectation that transformational leadership transforms followers into leaders. Having a valid theoretical model to guide leadership development efforts is fundamental to understanding how this 'black box' works. (p. 93)

This issue features three articles that add to the discussion on the evaluation of leadership development.

In his article, "Assessment in Academic Based Leadership Education Programs," Goertzen challenges leadership educators to intentionally engage in assessment to ensure that participant outcomes are in fact realized. He begins with a brief history of assessment and a call for a 'mission-driven' approach to developing and implementing comprehensive assessment plans. He continues with a call to consider additional properties and sources of evidence of student learning and highlights a number of potential direct and indirect assessment techniques.

In "Leadership Education and Assessment: A Developmental Approach," the authors, faculty in the Department of Behavioral Sciences & Leadership at the United States Air Force Academy, highlight their approach to assessment. The authors begin by calling attention to assessment challenges such as individual considerations and identifying items for assessment. Lindsey, Foster, Jackson, & Hassan then provide two examples of how intentional assessment strategies can be implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of leader education and development. The conclusion highlights results such as cross-sectional evidence of progression in leadership style, as commanders in their second year are rated by subordinates as significantly more transformational than first year commanders.

Rosch and Schwartz of the Illinois Leadership Center round out our focus on the assessment of leadership development with their article, "Potential Issues and Pitfalls in Outcomes Assessment in Leadership Education." The authors pinpoint several common mistakes leadership educators are liable to make when assessing their programs and activities. These mistakes include: Honeymoon, Horizon, Hollywood, Halo, and Hallmark effects (a.k.a, recency, response-shift, socially desirable, and respondent biases). The authors provide a description of each and suggestions for practitioners on how to avoid them. Rosch and Schwartz conclude by suggesting that achieving assessment validity in leadership education is not only necessary but also achievable.

Faculty development

The challenges and issues of leadership education necessarily extend to questions of how we train and develop the next generation of leadership educators. Bringing an international perspective to the issue, Braun, Nazlic, Weisweiler, Peus, and Frey examine "Effective Leadership Development in Higher Education: Individual and Group Level Approaches." The authors first highlight a gap in leadership development for employees in higher education and their approach to

meeting this need. Next, the authors provide a detailed description of two different programs offered at a large German university; one program at the individual level (leader) and another at a departmental level (leadership). Braun, et al., conclude with recommendations for practitioners to facilitate effective leadership in higher education. Among other suggestions, the authors (like others in this special issue) highlight the need for scientifically based program evaluation.

Weeks, Weeks, Barbuto, and Langone report on a grant-funded project to train faculty from a specific discipline in leadership education. In their article, "The Challenge of Developing Faculty to Teach Leadership as a Secondary Discipline," Weeks, et al., describe the Leadership Education Institute (LEI) program that combined the talents of three land-grant institutions to serve a cohort of ten faculty, each representing a different institution. Although this one-time opportunity resulted in advances for the participants and their institutions, a continued need exists in both agriculture and other disciplines.

The challenge addressed by Weeks, et al., speaks to the simultaneous multidisciplinarity of leadership coupled with the ubiquity across fields of practice. In other words, to know and teach leadership requires knowledge in many disciplines, which portends a shortage of faculty. While at the same time more and more fields of practice are realizing the value and import of leadership activity and capacity-building. Weeks, et al., note, "Many universities offer leadership courses and programs for specific populations and at the same time are assigning the responsibility of teaching leadership to faculty not academically trained to teach leadership." Their project comprises one solution to this issue. Another approach to this issue, or perhaps another facet to addressing the problem, lies in the work of the *Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs* team reported by Stephen Ritch and Thomas Mengel.

In the third invited paper of this special issue, Ritch and Mengel describe a multi-year, cross-disciplinary, broadly collaborative initiative to provide some degree of consistency in excellence to the field of leadership education. The great challenge in this effort, of course, is to provide this framework without stifling innovation in the field and the dynamic flexibility required in a situational and dynamic construct such as leadership. The present solution, reported in this paper by Ritch and Mengel, consists of a series of *Guiding Questions* across five sections: *Conceptual Framework, Context, Content, Teaching and Learning,* and *Outcomes and Assessment*. In addition to reporting the history, context, and field tests of these Guiding Questions, the authors solicit further input and engagement from leadership educators in all fields. The contact information is listed in their paper (full disclosure: we, the editors, have been a part of this initiative in varying capacities).

Commentary and Sum

Just as Scroggs, Sattler, and McMillan start this issue highlighting the importance of looking at leadership education from the "forest" view, across an organization (in their case a university) as a mosaic, Fincher and Shalka imply that so too must leadership educators take the "trees" view, particularly from perspectives and disciplines different from their own. In the article, "Co-curricular Leadership Education: Considering Critical Questions," Fincher and Shalka pose a number of critical questions from their perspective as co-curricular directors. Balancing multilevel needs, clarifying a shared definition of leadership, preparing students to succeed in other contexts, and expanding our own lens of values and beliefs about leadership represent some of the important questions they raise. What they do not ask, but perhaps should, is the extent to which co-curricular leadership programs consult with, collaborate with, and/or complement curricular, community, and field of practice leadership education efforts.

And from the perspective of the academic, Blackwell's commentary, "Leadership Theory and Education: Building Bridges or Digging Chasms," examines the question – "…are we, as academicians, creating meaning about leadership for society or are we creating, with our research and theories, an even greater distance and disconnect?" In a thought provoking essay that raises as many questions as it answers, Blackwell challenges academics in particular to critically examine what is happening in the larger context, and how their work integrates with organizational and community practice, the social problems we purport to address, and popular perception. As Blackwell sums, "We need the common understanding in society that leadership is a process, not just a word."

For many leadership educators, including us, the extraordinary diversity and breadth of the field provides limitless opportunity for exploration and engagement. Yet it is this characteristic that fuels many of the challenges we face. Perhaps the 'important thing' about leadership education is the ability to recognize, honor, utilize, and integrate the many different facets, practices, disciplines, and fields of practice. After engaging leadership education through the lens of identifying current challenges, we hope this special issue will serve as a catalyst for future research and practice, and enable leadership educators to better meet the needs of their students and the organizations and communities they seek to lead.

> *We shall not cease from exploration*
> *And the end of all our exploring*
> *Will be to arrive where we started*
> *And know the place for the first time.*
> *-T.S. Eliot*

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