



# CONCEPTS & CONNECTIONS

A Publication for Leadership Educators

*Adaptive Leadership*

Volume 20, Issue 3

2014

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# Connections from the Editor

by Michelle L. Kusel

Five months ago, my partner and I welcomed our first child into the world. Since then, life has been a whirlwind. Many days I am not sure of the month, let alone the day! But through the chaos, I try to pause and be mindful of the moments and the memories we are creating as a family. Similarly, this edition of Concepts and Connections reminded me how this mindfulness is also important in leadership and reflection. In the busyness, we must stay intentional and mindful in our work. Easier said than done? Well, throughout this edition, you will find that the authors not only explain the importance but they demonstrate how they have done it! They explain to us the importance of being on the balcony but also

on the dance floor. And then they show us their best leadership dance moves.

Editing this edition of Concepts & Connections provided me space to be mindful. I hope this piece is as timely for you as it was for me and we hope you enjoy, reflect, and learn from this edition of Concepts & Connections.

*Michelle L. Kusel*

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# Feature: Mindful Leadership: Changing the Way Leaders Develop their Attentional Skills

by *Jonathan Reams, Ph.D. and Olen Gunnlaugson, Ph.D.*

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The practice of mindfulness is changing the way that leaders pay attention and engage with the high pressured workplaces of today. A quick google search for mindfulness + leadership revealed 2.8 million results. Bill George has noted the surge in interest in mindfulness, saying that it is at a tipping point and citing a number of companies who have created mindfulness programs to achieve benefits for employee health and well-being (George, 2013). There is now a growing body of organizations like the Institute for Mindful Leadership that offer retreats and workshops to train mindfulness in leaders whose aim is to transform their organizations and communities (Marturano, 2013a). Other mainstream organizations like the American Society for Training and Development have taken up the call for mindfulness in leadership (Garms, 2013). They consider mindfulness as a necessary and distinguishing leadership attribute. Finally, mindfulness in leadership has been presented at the conservative World Economic Forum in Davos, where Janice Marturano (of the Institute for Mindful Leadership) described how a workshop on “The Mindful Leadership Experience” was well received by a room filled to capacity (2013b). Marturano expressed her conviction that the seeds planted there will grow to support the emergence of mindfulness as integral to leadership excellence and presence. Each of these and many other indicators are promising signs that the broader field of leadership is going through a process of acknowledging and validating the importance of how leaders’ manage their attention and the implications of this with stress management, creativity and optimal modes of leadership engagement.

To look more closely at the intersection of the two terms leadership and mindfulness, it will help to briefly examine each of them. Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism as the seventh element on the noble eightfold path. The Pali and Sanskrit terms can also be translated as awareness. In recent decades the

core principles of mindfulness have been developed in secular contexts, most notably by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the Mindfulness-Based Stress reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

Turning to leadership, we find that “in its simplest form [leadership] is a tripod—a leader or leaders, followers, and a common goal they want to achieve” (Bennis, 2007, p. 3). Many “common goals” can be understood in terms of “technical problems” (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009) in that they can be solved using existing knowledge and thus “led” in a relatively straightforward manner. However, today we face more and more “adaptive challenges” (Heifetz et al., 2009), ill-structured, or wicked problems (Brown, Harris & Russell, 2010), which require leaders to understand organizations as complex adaptive systems (Marion & Uhl-Bein, 2001; Schneider & Sommers, 2006). In order for leaders to “get their heads around” and “inside” such complexity, cognitive development becomes a key means for fostering this ability (Joiner & Josephs, 2007; McCauley, Drath, Palus, O’Connor, & Baker, 2006; Torbert & Associates, 2004). Cognitive development for our purposes is viewed as qualitative increases in the depth and complexity of awareness that one is able to perceive and relate to the world in and through. At each successive stage of development, one’s cognitive attentional capacity grows more adept at being able to relate with and hold perspectives with the complex nature of the world around us and inside us.

As a means for further integration and application of mindfulness and leadership, we see the need for mindful leadership as essential for developing a sustained awareness of complexity in the world as well as optimally engaging others in ways of being that are socially and emotionally intelligent (Goleman, 1995).

Given the pressing need to develop this form of mindful awareness in leaders, we also feel that mindfulness-based practices such as deep presencing (Gundlugsong & Walker, 2013) provide a path for applied mindfulness in organizational, leadership and coaching contexts. Building on Scharmer and colleagues' (Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer & Flowers, 2004; Scharmer 2007) notion of presencing, deep presencing fosters the capacity to mindfully engage and learn how to apprehend promising creative possibilities that have not yet emerged in our fields of awareness and practice. A particular challenge that we perceive as fundamental to mindfulness practice in organizational settings is that a leader's attention and awareness are prone to becoming insular and disconnected within one's self and among relationships during periods characterized by volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) and crisis situations within organizational culture. In these instances, a leader's structure of attention and awareness are often compromised, which tend to lead to overlooking vital emergent future possibilities for creative action (Silsbee, 2008).

When this happens, it is often tempting for leaders to default to old habits and patterns from the past that worked then. The antidote for this is in part mindfulness, or working from heightened stillness and awareness of one's activities in the moment alone and with others.

As we reflected on this phenomena in the context of leadership abilities, we found ourselves drawn back to the fundamentals of Bohmian dialogue (1996), a process that works with two core attentional practices of suspension and proprioception of thought (i.e.,

mindful awareness of thought processes). By slowing down our inquiry and advocacy processes and more carefully observing our thought processes, suspension invites us to lose our habitual hold and identification with our views and beliefs for the purposes of engaging more creatively with what is emerging. As the field of conversation opens via suspension, such gestures model a shared willingness to be open, curious and

more invested in learning in real time. Suspension then is the mindful ability to take a perspective on our views and beliefs for the purposes of unearthing our tacit assumptions. Unlike reflective thinking, suspension involves doing this in the present moment, linking it more directly with mindfulness. With practice, suspension shifts our relationship to our thinking processes and the underlying habits of mind and points of view in which we tend to become imbedded in. Bohmian dialogue thus develops a mindful ability to witness our processes of knowing through forms of meta-awareness. In learning to observe our tendencies to be compulsively enmeshed within our thinking or our feelings, leaders discover a different way of relating

to thinking in order to understand the limited nature of our thinking processes. Thus to be mindful posits a space from which one can more powerfully observe and engage our minds. Wilber (2000) describes this as witness consciousness. Heifetz et al. (2009) describe this process metaphorically as going up on the balcony, and in relation to witnessing our mind in action this balcony necessarily offers a transcendent perspective of being through which we can then engage our everyday processes of deliberation, conversation and action.

*By slowing down our inquiry and advocacy processes and more carefully observing our thought processes, suspension invites us to lose our habitual hold and identification with our views and beliefs for the purposes of engaging more creatively with what is emerging.*

Isaacs (1996) model, which draws upon Bohmian dialogue, has commented more broadly on the experience of how “dialogue can bring people to the realization that their traditional self-concepts can be limiting. Participants are compelled to confront the paradoxical possibility that the center of their identity is ‘no-thing’” (p. 29). Put in another way, dialogue moves from a mental-reflective mode to more engaged contemplative modes of knowing and being that help leaders better understand their social and cultural identities as constructs. Associated with this experience is the freedom from egoic self-identification and a distinctive shift to collective mindfulness and conversations structured primarily by intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness. On the whole, we believe that dialogue practices, deep presencing and other forms of applied mindfulness described above can offer a powerful method and path to address today’s call for mindful leadership. Using deep presencing and the practice of dialogue can train leaders to gain new modes for engaging their attention. It is also a way forward in helping leaders meet, work with and ultimately transform the pervasive complexity of today’s organizational challenges.

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# Learning by Design: The Critical Intersections of Mindfulness and Case-in-point Teaching in the Undergraduate Leadership Classroom

by *Linnette R. Werner, PhD*

## MINDFULNESS AND CASE-IN-POINT AS COMBINED TOOLS FOR MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

Several trends have come and gone since I started teaching leadership to undergraduate students over 13 years ago, but one trend that has prevailed is the notable increase in life stress and mental health issues that students bring to the classroom--from working three jobs, eating and anxiety disorders, to debilitating depression. Teaching leadership in ways that support the shifting needs of the learner has become paramount and finding tools that both offer compassion as well as challenge is critical to this endeavor. Perhaps the most promising combination of such tools is the mindful practice of case-in-point (CIP) teaching. The practices of mindfulness and CIP within the undergraduate classroom have given me powerful reality-based tools for working with the authentic challenges my students face not only on a personal level, but on systemic levels in their current and future lives as leaders.

## WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Albrecht, Albrecht, and Cohen (2012) conducted a literature review on the practice of using mindfulness in the classroom and propose, “The concept of mindfulness...may be simply described as a natural human capacity, which involves observing, participating and accepting each of life’s moments from a state of equilibrium or loving kindness. It can be practiced through meditation and contemplation but may also be cultivated through paying attention to one’s every day activities, such as, eating, gardening, walking, listening and school based activities such as class work” (p.2). In this sense, mindfulness within a leadership classroom is an excellent tool for holding a state of equilibrium in the midst of disequilibrium. It becomes the process of moving from emotional entanglement to noticing patterns of behavior through the lenses of curiosity or compassion instead of rejection or defensiveness.

*“When we are teaching using CIP, there is a tension between what is triggered within one’s own psyche and what is there on behalf of the larger system.”*



## WHAT IS CASE-IN-POINT TEACHING?

Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, colleagues at the Harvard Kennedy School of Leadership, developed case-in-point teaching over 20 years ago as an experiential method to teach the core concepts of adaptive leadership. Although there is debate within the field about how to define case-in-point teaching in specific terms, I believe it consists of three components that set it apart from other teaching approaches:

**1. Keep it in the now:** The actions and behaviors of individuals and the group (events that are “in the room”) are used as a living example for learning. People are drawn to talking about the past or the future, but the now is where real change can occur.

**2. Cause “disequilibrium within/disrupt” ingrained thinking patterns:** Often the instructor, and eventually the group, stop the action or cause disequilibrium in order to disrupt the ingrained patterns of thinking so that participants will become mindful of their own actions and responses.

**3. Link it to the system/learning:** Individual and group responses are used to get beneath the surface of the event to then link these events to larger concepts and systems in order to support greater learning and transformation that start in the now, at the individual level, but move to the entire system.

There is much to learn and read about CIP before engaging with it in a classroom (e.g., *Leadership Can be Taught* (2005) by Sharon Parks; *The Art and Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (2009) by Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky; *Leadership on the Line* (2003) by Heifetz and Linsky; and *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (1994) by Heifetz), however, one important concept of CIP is the productive zone of disequilibrium--the idea that we lose learners if there is too little tension in a classroom, but we also lose learners if there is too much tension in the classroom. Heifetz refers to the range in between these areas as the productive zone of disequilibrium--enough tension to raise the heat of the classroom and make it worth taking risks, but not so much tension that the heat is more than people can tolerate.

## HOW DO MINDFULNESS AND CIP WORK TOGETHER IN THE CLASSROOM?

Given the increase in mental health issues and personal stress levels among undergraduates, there is a danger in using CIP in the classroom where turning up the heat/tension could mean triggering a student who is under a great deal of stress to go beyond their capacity for holding that stress. The challenge in regulating the classroom tension is that each student has a different range for productive disequilibrium. If the instructor of a CIP classroom is not paying attention to the individuals as well as the collective, the danger of pushing students too far is high. As Albrecht, Albrecht, and Cohen (2012) remind us, mindfulness offers a much-needed foundation for CIP teaching: facilitate from a state of “equilibrium or loving kindness.” Whereas we may lose sight of the

*“When done mindfully, case-in-point has the potential to move us out of our comfort zone of competency and into the void of incompetence where mindfulness flourishes.”*

foundation of loving kindness when we are working in the swampy waters of the CIP classroom (and the pressures to appear the competent authority at the front of the room are at their highest), mindfulness assumes a state of intention that is compassionate, neither righteous nor expert, neither defensive nor dominating, as can sometimes be the case in leadership education. For example, when my classes become their most difficult, it is often because I am charting new territories as a teacher and my students are experiencing a

kind of learning that pulls out the rug of solid foundation in order to begin to see the world in a whole new way. It is at these times that they ask me to tell them the “answer” or give them the list of strategies I would like them to employ to approach an adaptive challenge. These are the times that I have to fight my need to be the expert, to appear competent, to ease their temporary suffering, and to hold steady through the disequilibrium with a foundation of compassion for them as learners and for myself as a mere human being (not the superhuman being I would like to be).

Mindfulness and CIP are also related in the courage and integrity they require from those practicing as well as their reciprocal nature for restoring each other. For example, Sharon Parks (2005) states, “[The] practice of leadership calls for a willingness to be radically honest with oneself in relationship to the reality at hand. It requires self-observation within a complex field of action—and the capacity to improvise. Teaching adaptive leadership using case-in-point requires a kind of courage, and it does extract certain costs” (p.148). Mindfulness, then, is the response to this courage and these extracted costs. Mindfulness gives us a way in to the practice of case-in-point teaching and it gives us a way to restore ourselves when we come out of that practice.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE CASE-IN-POINT CLASSROOM

We have been using a form of case-in-point (CIP) teaching within our undergraduate Leadership Minor since 2007. From 2007 to 2013, our enrollment has increased from 268 to over 1,200 students in the core courses. There is a hunger among emerging adults to experience the kind of authenticity and community within a classroom that a mindfulness-based CIP classroom has the potential to support, but we also have a responsibility to acknowledge the limitations of the approach, especially in the context of rising student stress and mental health considerations. One of those limitations is that teaching in this way requires a certain kind of leader – one who is emotionally capable of holding his/her own work at the forefront of teaching, while not letting it get in the way of that teaching. In addition to having over 1,200 registrants a year, we have a waiting list of 30 instructors to teach within our program. In order to support having over 30 sections, the people who teach in our program often have other full-time jobs and lives—they teach in our program

out of their own hungers for authenticity, community, and self-actualization. Teaching using CIP is hard. It is often disorienting, heartbreaking, heart pounding, and alive in a way that no one person can control. On top of this, our instructors spend an entire semester as volunteers who observe the classes, meet together to study about using CIP in our program, learn from mentor instructors, and complete homework related to preparing to teach. After that, they co-teach with a seasoned instructor for a semester before they finally hold a class themselves.

Finally, case-in-point teaching requires faith in addition to courage. One premise of CIP is that what the system needs to work on will show up within the classroom. When we are teaching using CIP, there is a tension between what is triggered within one’s own psyche and what is there on behalf of the larger system. Ron Heifetz, as quoted by Sharon Parks (2005), surmises that “[t]his kind of teaching requires continual analysis, searching for patterns beneath the surface of what is happening in the class. It requires taking risks in naming what may be uncomfortable but useful to learning,” (p.148).

When I facilitate trainings with leadership instructors on CIP, the first thing I acknowledge is that this practice works on them at the same time it works on the class--no one within the classroom space is immune to the work being done, but that is the point. Without experiencing a mindfulness-based case-in-point class in person, it is difficult to imagine the power of presence that it holds, but CIP teaching is a practice, just as leadership and mindfulness are also practices. When done mindfully, case-in-point has the potential to move us out of our comfort zone of competency and into the void of incompetence where mindfulness flourishes, and no one is immune within that powerful space.

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# Learning by Design: Utilizing Observation Instruments to Promote Student Mindfulness of Leadership Practices, Theories, and Behaviors

by *Donald Dellow, Ed.D.* and *Daniel M. Jenkins, Ph.D.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The breadth of leadership education literature confirms the notion that experience contributes positively and significantly to leadership development (e.g., Fiedler, 1972; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2012; Lindsay, Hassan, & Day, 2009). A keener, more applied look is inclusive of the reflective component as well (e.g., Densten & Gray, 2001; Guthrie & Jones, 2012; Jenkins, 2012). Yet, the capacity to reflect relates directly to how effectively individuals can learn from

*“A promising result of the instructional design was that some students experimented with their own leadership behaviors or focused more intentionally on improving skills from the inventory.”*

their personal experiences (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Recent research in leadership education suggests the prevalent use of experiential and reflective pedagogy (see Jenkins, 2013); however, its cognitive and effectual components are lesser known. Arguably, instructors who employ the abovementioned instructional strategies must be as mindful in facilitation as their students are in execution. For, it is through attention and what Gerzon (2006) calls “presence”—“completely balanced in the here and now”—where we truly learn from and are mindful of our personal and observed leadership experiences.

Accordingly, this article presents a snapshot of an innovative instructional strategy utilized across a semester in two separate courses: (a) LOS 350 – Leadership, undergraduate-level leadership studies at the University of Southern Maine, Lewiston-Auburn College; and (b) EDH 7632 – Leadership in Higher Education, graduate-level higher education administration at the University of South Florida. The strategy equipped students with survey instruments that operationally defined specific leadership behaviors as “observational instruments” (guidelines) to assess the leadership practices and behaviors of others. Students then reflected and wrote about their findings, observations, and connections to course content. The strategy focused students’ attention on a specific leader from their workplace while maintaining contextual mindfulness of course content.

## MINDFULNESS IN ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

According to Daniel Goleman (2013), “Mindfulness gives us the capacity to notice when the sea of distractions we swim through in any given day has pulled us in.” Working with adult learners in leadership education has its share of opportunities and challenges. It became clear that most of our students were in leadership courses because they were motivated to learn how to improve their leadership effectiveness; they were not enrolled just to fulfill a requirement. Moreover, our students were almost always employed, often in mid-level managerial or administrative roles and had enough real world experience to contribute to classroom discussion and reflect through a variety of experiential activities and assignments. Nonetheless, busy students may suffer from “mindfulness” as competing demands distract their attention towards family or work. Goleman suggests that, “When we are mindful we bring an even, full attention to whatever is at hand. It gives us the power to move our concentration from place to place as we move through our day – finishing a report, relishing a meal, loving a child” (2013). Consequently, intentionally embedded mindfulness in pedagogy becomes ever important.

### MINDFUL PEDAGOGY

We felt that mindfulness, when applied in an observational capacity, could contribute positively to students demand for strategies for improving their leadership effectiveness. When presented with the notion that leadership effectiveness could be learned, students responded with questions about how they could improve their leadership skills. They wanted to move beyond reading and discussion of leadership to a greater focus on improving some of the skill-based components of leadership. It seemed that students had the two major components of motivation and ability that signaled their “developmental readiness” for a more focused leadership development (Hannah and Avolio, 2010).

In the process of teaching the leadership courses, it became evident that students were willing to subscribe to the idea that leadership was very complex, and although they might have difficulty defining it, they certainly knew it when they saw it. When students were asked to identify some of the specific leadership skills of those they were observing, they were generally

unable to do so. It became obvious that an important pedagogical goal was to help students more clearly identify the presence or absence of specific leadership skills in someone who was in a supervisory role over them, as a subject for a case study. We hoped that this process would promote a greater awareness of what they needed to do to improve their own leadership and would generally be more mindful of theirs and others’ leadership capacity. Subsequently, we decided to develop an instructional strategy that focused students’ attention mindfully on specific leadership skills and provide an opportunity for self-reflection on their experiences.

### UTILIZING OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENTS TO ENHANCE CASE STUDIES

As leadership educators, we identified several theories that we felt best explained leadership effectiveness. One of those leadership theories selected for our courses was the work of Kouzes and Posner (2007), who have written extensively about the “Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership”: (a) Model the Way; (b) Inspire a Shared Vision; (c) Challenge the Process; (d) Enable Others to Act; and (e) Encourage the Heart). Fortunately, each practice is defined by observable behaviors that might be considered skills. The practices provided an excellent theoretical perspective that identified some specific behaviors that might be considered “necessary, but not sufficient” for effective leadership. (Arguably, leadership educators could utilize any theoretical framework pragmatic to their course objectives or outcomes.)

In requiring students to complete a semester long case study, the challenge was to find a way to help keep students mindful of the presence or absence of the leadership practices’ behavioral indicators. A case study that focused students’ attention on the presence or absence of specific behavior indicators could assist in their better understanding of theoretical concepts and how they played out in the real world. Using the discussion of specific skills described in *The Leadership Challenge*, an observation instrument was developed that provided examples of behavior characteristics of each of the practices. For example, one of the behaviors listed is “Model the Way.” Accordingly, the leadership practice section of the observation instrument was “During this observation period did he/she: Set an example for you and others, “walked the talk?” The choices to help students think about fre-

quency were: (a) Did not observe during this period; (b) Observed occasionally; (c) Observed frequently; and (d) Observed most of the time. The students were encouraged to look at the frequency as a general sense of how often the behavior was exhibited, but not focus on the specific frequency. The semester-long course assignment required three case study segments and students tended to see and discuss different leadership practices over the course of the semester (unless there was a dominant behavior across time). A “reflection log” followed the case study portion of each segment.

## REFLECTION LOG

An important function of leadership education is to provide opportunities for student reflection so that students gain understanding of how they perceive and interpret their observations. Further, reflection is important for leadership development as it can provide leaders with a variety of insights into how to frame problems differently, to look at situations from multiple perspectives or to better understand followers (Dentzen & Gray, 2001). The reflection log in these instructional settings were described as an opportunity to put in writing the students’ thoughts as they were reading course material or focusing on what they had observed. Students were encouraged to reflect on their reaction to seeing the presence or absence of specific behaviors.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE

The results of using the observational instruments in a case study, linked to a reflection log provided some refreshing results. The students used the observation instruments to analyze the leadership behaviors around them and keyed in on specific behaviors representative of the leadership practices they were observing. There were many comments like the following, about the usefulness of focusing on specific behaviors:

*Because this project allowed us to focus on very specific leadership skills and characteristics, I was able to filter out all of the things that were not viewed as meaningful when it comes to effective leadership. At first, I was apprehensive because I thought it would be difficult to see real examples of certain behaviors; however, I quickly realized that they are more obvious than I expected.*

Perhaps the most important result of the exercise was in students’ reflection of their own leadership skills as

they observed others: “In focusing on the specific leadership behaviors of my observee, I found that I reflected on how I would have handled a similar situation (or focused on my own skill levels).”

Another promising result of the instructional design was that some students experimented with their own leadership behaviors or focused more intentionally on improving skills from the inventory. For example, one student wrote the following:

*Drawing upon the resources and information I have gathered in class thus far, I recently sat down and outlined a new practice to better communicate with those whom I supervise, which is directly related to the Model the Way criterion. My new practice involves making time for a weekly meeting with my direct report.*

Overall, the use of the observation instruments seemed to serve their purpose. Students were able to see theoretical concepts in a behavioral context.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article discussed the use of an innovative instructional strategy that promoted mindfulness and resulted in students’ understanding and experimenting with various leadership skills and behaviors. By providing students with a structured observation experience, leadership educators can facilitate opportunities for students to be mindful of the presence or absence of specific leadership behaviors. Moreover, a critical self-reflection log exercise provides students with a dedicated forum to reflect on their own leadership behaviors and even contemplate experimenting with or changing others.

By focusing students’ attention on a particular theoretical framework of leadership through the use of observation instruments, theory informs practice in a very real way. Nonetheless, the specific theory and the specific instrumentation is not as important as the use of an observation instrument and a log as a vehicle for critical self-reflection. We feel that the use of this instructional strategy produces a greater mindfulness of leadership behavior.

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# Program Spotlight: Leading for Mindful Change: Frostburg State University's Leadership Competency Model, from inception to practice

by *Douglas J. Baer and Jeffrey L. McClellan*

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## INTRODUCTION

In fall of 2012, Dr. Ron Riggio visited Frostburg State University to help initiate the development of a leadership competency model for the University. What he found surprised him. In a meeting summarizing his visit, he suggested that while Frostburg had not previously been on his radar as an institution focused on leadership development, it was now. He further inferred that in some ways the number of efforts rivaled those of his own institution.

Dr Riggio's comments came as no surprise to those familiar with leadership development at the University. For years, Frostburg has been expanding its leadership development programming and academic offerings. The university offers a minor in leadership and academic course offerings in leadership in multiple disciplines, including a required leadership course in the college of business' undergraduate and graduate degrees. The university also has a doctoral degree in educational leadership. Co-curricular programs include the Freshman Leadership Retreat, an experiential off-campus retreat for first-year students in which themes of leadership, resilience, and community are promoted, the Sloop Leadership Institute, a sophomore/junior level experience in which students attend a conference-style retreat in which alumni are invited to touch on themes of professionalism and community involvement, and the President's Leadership Circle, an elite group of senior leaders provided intercultural learning experiences along with access to the University's President for professional and personal development, as well as a variety of other programs.

In addition, Frostburg offers a tremendous variety of opportunities to take on leadership roles. Many of these involve participation in clubs, fraternities and other student organizations. However, the college has also created a variety of paid student leadership positions that incorporate students into the actual work of the student affairs and administrative divisions of the institution. In addition to working in residence halls as resident assistants or head residents, students coordinate social media and brand management campaigns, plan events, manage technology, and supervise other student's work in established managerial positions across campus. Throughout these leadership development-oriented experiences, students are challenged to cultivate communication, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills to be more effective, mindful professionals. The abundance of opportunities provided underscores the University's valuing of student leadership development; a more formalized plan to ensure that the student learning experience is more purposeful, consistent, and mindful is, however, has yet to be designed.

The President invited a group of faculty and staff to create and lead an effort to develop a leadership competency model that would align these efforts to insure that leadership development was intentional and effective institution wide. In the official charge given by the University's President, it was suggested that this model would not only provide focus to the efforts that already existed, but would also guide in expanding these effort to include faculty and staff leadership development.



## WHY A COMPETENCY MODEL?

In general, leadership development at universities and colleges focus efforts on educating students in accordance with some guiding leadership theory or model (Komives et al., 2011). Common models used in higher education include servant leadership, transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, the social change model of leadership, and the leadership challenge model among others (Komives et al., 2011; Roberts, 2007). An alternative approach, however, is to draw upon multiple theoretical frameworks to develop a competency model that is uniquely designed to respond to the needs of the institution and its students.

The use of competency models to guide leadership development is a common practice in the world of business and in the military (Kolditz, 2007; Lawson, 2008; Zenger & Folkman, 2002). In fact, it is used by many top leadership development oriented organizations, such as Target and 3M. These organizations use the models they develop to select high potential leaders through intentional design of onboarding processes. They then incorporate the models into the way they train new leaders.

*“In leading mindful change, it is important that those who will be expected to make changes be engaged in the process of creating the change.”*

Finally, they evaluate and manage performance based on these models. This competency approach has been used in higher education by a variety of leadership development programs, including the Kravis Center.

In being mindful that differing programs and opportunities needed latitude within a designed structure to meet their individual needs, Frostburg State opted to pursue a competency model that blended skills and

areas of focus ranging from the individual’s need to practice personal wellness in leadership to intercultural understanding. Through developing an internal model, the University’s unique campus and community features were amplified, assisting with universal buy-in and applicability.

## LEADING THE CHANGE INITIATIVE

Because the transition to using a competency model represented a major change in the way leadership programming would be coordinated across the university, the process for advancing the initiative was developed based on change management and leadership processes. This was also essential due to the need to promote broad consensus and support for the initiative. The key components of the process involved were: creating the foundation for change, developing an initial draft, engaging the community, finalizing the model, and announcing completion.

## CREATING THE FOUNDATION

A change management effort, in order to be successful, must begin by laying a solid foundation change. This includes identification of a change agent, a sponsor, the formation of a guiding coalition, and the development of a plan for how to proceed (Bridges, 1991; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Kotter, 1996). As part of this foundation building process, Dr. Ron Riggio was contracted to assist the steering committee as an external consultant.

The role of a change agent is to take responsibility for leading the process and for its success or failure. The institutional sponsor is an executive level supporter who works to ensure that the process is supported at the highest levels of the institution. These two roles are essential for a change effort to achieve success (Kotter, 1996). In this case, both of these requirements were met through the formation of a core steering committee, which included the Vice President of Student and Educational Services, the student affairs division within the University. The role of the steering committee was to drive the process and complete the work of developing the model, while collaborating with a larger taskforce to provide insight, feedback, and assistance.

The task force consisted of over twenty key stakeholders across campus that were engaged in leadership development/education efforts or represented other key constituencies. The role of this task force was to

participate in the model creation process by providing insights and recommendations that would provide the content for the leadership model. In relation to the creation of a foundation for change, this body represented the guiding coalition for the change (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

Once the coalition was designed, a plan for leading the change process was established. This involved, first, bringing the group together to explain the charge and their role; second, providing them with research and readings relevant to the work of the taskforce; third, coordinating an initial campus retreat that invited key stakeholders across campus among faculty, staff, and students to share their insights regarding the types of competencies students need to be effective leaders at Frostburg State and beyond; fourth, using the feedback gleaned from the retreat to develop a competency model that would then be vetted for feedback until a final document could be drafted; finally, announcing the completion of the document and its formal acceptance by the president.

## DEVELOPING THE DRAFT

Once the plan for proceeding was developed, it was put into action. Following the initial meeting with the taskforce to discuss the charge, the following documents were provided to the taskforce members using a blackboard-based “class” as a means of facilitating information sharing: The SCANS report on achieving necessary skills, an article on global leadership needs (Cohen, 2010), The Association of American Colleges and Universities’ LEAP report (National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and Americas Promise, 2007), and the CAS standards for leadership programs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2011), as well as information on basic leadership models and approaches (Roberts, 2007). In ad-

dition, a brief video presentation was developed regarding the value and processes associated with developing competency models for members to review in preparation for the leadership retreat.

At the retreat, taskforce members, faculty, staff, or students who were interested were invited to participate in a series of dialogues designed to identify the core development needs of students relative to achieving success in a global environment, as well as within their roles on the campus. Dr. Riggio and other task force members facilitated, participated in, and attended these discussions. At the conclusion of the retreat, the taskforce met to summarize what they heard in the various meetings. They provided the steering committee with a list of more than forty leadership skills, values, etc. that would need to be considered for inclusion in the model. The steering committee organized this information into a list of core competencies and reflected ways they might be combined to create a campus-specific model.

The steering committee, equipped with the information gleaned, facilitated two separate workshops where task force members were asked to organize and categorize these broader leadership competencies into clusters and themes that represented core competencies. Two separate models were designed and shared with the task force members to identify the most appropriate to take back to the larger campus community. After the most mindful and purposeful model was selected, it was refined and shared with the campus community in order to solicit feedback.

## ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

In leading mindful change, it is important that those who will be expected to make changes be engaged in

*“How does a complex, unique campus blend the vision for a leadership competency model that resonations across all boundaries without being too specific, too complex, or too difficult to employ?”*

the process of creating the change. Participation tends to increase commitment (Sahon, Behera, & Tripathy, 2010) by assuring that those with the problem own the solution (Heifetz, 1994). In higher education, it is important to engage the broader community as well in order to effectively manage the political context that is inherent within university systems (Bolman & Deal, 2003). In order to address these needs, the task force sought feedback from the broader campus community through open forums throughout the process. This began with the retreat where student, faculty, and staff input was solicited regarding what competencies were necessary. A survey was then created where all the core competencies were identified. We then asked faculty and staff to identify those that were most relevant in their work. This feedback was used to help create the initial draft competency model. Later, the rough draft of the model was shared with the campus community in which feedback was sought in terms of identifying what was “missing,” what might need changed, and what resonated most. Feedback was incorporated as appropriate into the model. Additional iterations of revision and feedback occurred working with the steering committee and taskforce.

In engaging the campus community, the task force was mindful to a large, over-arching issue: how does a complex, unique campus blend the vision for a leadership competency model that resonates across all boundaries without being too specific, too complex, or too difficult to employ? As a result of our dialogues with the campus community, common themes of valued and desired student leadership skills and traits were highlighted, deduced, and utilized.

## **FINALIZING THE MODEL**

The final phase of developing the model involved establishing face validity. To do this, operationalizing the competencies in the model was critical; therefore, the task force provided definitions that both described each competency and grounded it in the relevant literature. This was accomplished by identifying content experts from amidst the task force and organizing them into groups based on the competencies. These groups were then tasked with identifying relevant literature related to each competency and using the literature to develop definitions. The resulting definitions were vetted by the larger committee and by Dr. Riggio and revised based on the feedback received. Having done so, the docu-

ment was approved by the taskforce and the president.

## **ANNOUNCING THE COMPLETION**

In March of 2013, Frostburg State University invited Dr. Ron Riggio to return to campus and participate in the formal announcement of the model and to discuss plans for the future. In this exchange, there was a general spirit of approval and some interest was expressed in creating a leadership center on campus to coordinate the work of implementing and using the model. At present, the University is exploring the viability of establishing a center, but are working to develop an interim structure to consolidate the gains as the center is defined (Kotter, 1996).

## **GOING FORWARD**

At present, the competency model is being incorporated into the work of the Office of Leadership and Experiential Learning, a student leadership focused office in which the aforementioned programs are housed and facilitated. The Freshman Leadership Retreat and Sloop Leadership Institute have been redesigned to incorporate the competencies into the selection processes, developmental programming, and assessment of outcomes. Additional program redesign is planned for the other leadership development efforts of this office. As part of this effort, three surveys have been developed and are being validated to assess student competencies. These include a self-assessment, a 360 degree assessment, and self-perceived learning assessment for specific leadership experiences.

The minor in Leadership Studies, an interdisciplinary minor housed within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, will be using these assessments to determine how the current courses are contributing to the development of the leadership competencies. Based on the results of this work, the minor’s curriculum committee will be revisiting the course structure and content of the major and will focus on redesigning the courses to more intentionally focus on and promote leadership development based on the model. In addition, a series of workshops is being offered across campus to assist department programs who wish to use the model to identify relevant competencies and develop their own selection, development, and assessment processes based on these. Individual consulting is beginning with the office to achieve the same results.

the major and will focus on redesigning the courses to more intentionally focus on and promote leadership development based on the model. In addition, a series of workshops is being offered across campus to assist department programs who wish to use the model to identify relevant competencies and develop their own selection, development, and assessment processes based on these. Individual consulting is beginning with the office to achieve the same results.

Finally, a partnership with the Human Resources office has been forged to develop a set of competencies that focus on organizational leadership processes for supervisors and administrators. This will be used to design new supervisor training, ongoing leadership training, and content for an annual staff and faculty development conference focused on leadership.

## CONCLUSION

Frostburg State University has reached a pivotal moment in its work to formalize a purposeful model of how student leadership is promoted and facilitated within its educational experiences. Recently, the University launched a new branding initiative utilizing the slogan “One University, a World of Experience.” This slogan communicates the University’s commitment to mindful collaboration in providing a wide variety of experiential learning oriented activities for students. In the end; however, we are one University with one mission - to prepare “future leaders to meet the challenges of a complex and changing global society.” The development of Frostburg State University’s leadership competency model is a cornerstone of the campus’ work to contribute to this goal.

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# Scholarship and Research Updates: Adaptive Leadership through Mindfulness - Scholarship Review

by *Brenda McKenzie*

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“Human civilization has always faced the challenge of adapting to change” (Hunter & Chaskalson, 2013, p. 33). Leaders in today’s society face more challenges than ever before. Being a positional leader means having to address a wide variety of stakeholders and a host of issues including sustainability, a global economy, and the increasing impact of technology on communication. In addition there has been a shift in thinking about what leadership means and who can be a leader. We are realizing that leadership can happen at any level of an organization and it is not just about being in a position of authority. Grassroots leadership and entrepreneurialism, for example, are increasingly influencing how leadership is envisioned. These challenging situations facing leaders and changing views of leadership are creating complexity in our organizations.

## ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

What does this increasing complexity mean for leaders and leadership? This means that leaders can no longer rely on doing things the “same old way.” Contemporary theories of leadership have reframed leadership “...with a greater focus on moral discourse and social purpose...” (Komives & Dugan, 2011, p. 111) where leadership is a social and dynamic process among individuals in pursuit of a common goal.

Heifetz (1994) describes leadership in today’s society as requiring an approach that goes beyond the routine to one that is adaptive. We have to be able to address the complex challenges being faced today. The concept of adaptive leadership is defined as “...the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 14). This concept of leadership moves beyond that of the competencies and behaviors of an individual leader to viewing leadership as a process that requires creativity, innovation, and the involvement of all stakeholders (Randall & Coakley,

2007). This also matches what Yukl and Mahsud (2010) state, that “successful adaptation to such changes often requires an innovative new strategy rather than merely refining the existing strategy or using a predetermined contingency plan” (p. 86).

*“To be successful in addressing adaptive change, it is important for the leader to be in the moment, to be aware of the emotional struggle followers may be experiencing, and to be open to new and creative solutions.”*

Two types of problems confronting leaders have been identified in the model of adaptive leadership – technical and adaptive. Technical problems, while they may be complex, have known solutions that anyone with expert knowledge can solve (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2007; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Randall & Coakley, 2007). Adaptive problems are not well defined and can only be addressed “...through changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties” (Heifetz et al,

2004, p. 19). As Heifetz and Linsky (2004) further explain, technical problems reside in the head and require logic and intellect to solve while adaptive problems lie in the stomach and the heart requiring deep inner change. To successfully lead adaptive change, one must consider what components of the past need to be let go as well as what should be preserved for the future. A leader must understand that their role is to push individual's toward change while realizing the emotional loss this can mean for people. It also means being comfortable with the unknown and operating in a state of disequilibrium (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2007; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Randall & Coakley, 2007). A key to the process of adaptive leadership is to give the problem over to followers to engage them in the solution (Randall & Coakley, 2007; Tetenbaum & Laurence, 2011). To be successful, leaders must realize they cannot do this work alone, they must encourage conflicting views, acknowledge loss, and accept responsibility for their role in creating the problem (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Tetenbaum & Laurence, 2011).

## MINDFULNESS

Embracing adaptive change is not easy and can create a sense of chaos for leaders and followers. One way to address the need for leaders to maintain focus during these challenging times is the concept of mindfulness. "Mindfulness is a way of attending to yourself, others, and the world around you that allows one to adopt more productive and positive ways of acting and being" (Chaskalson, 2011 as cited in Hunter & Chaskalson, 2013, p. 35). Kabat-Zinn (1994) defined mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (p. 4). Mindfulness comes from the Buddhist tradition and can involve aspects of meditation. There are examples of mindfulness being applied in stress reduction programs (Baer, Carmody, & Hunsinger, 2012; Trisoglio, 2013) as well as in educational settings such as business ethics education (Lampe & Engleman-Lampe, 2012). It has often been used in clinical settings but is relatively new to the areas of business, education, and leadership.

According to Baer et al (2012), "...regular practice of mindfulness should cultivate the ability to respond mindfully to the experiences of daily life" (p. 756). Being mindful is the ability for a leader to find answers "out there", from reports and data as well as from "in here", from thoughts, feelings, and sensations (Rogers, 2013,

p. 52). It means being open to new ways of viewing a problem and taking different perspectives into account (Sherretz, 2011). Being mindful is to be reality-oriented, focused on the here and now, open, creative and flexible, responsive, and accepting (Lampe & Engleman-Lampe, 2012).

## MINDFULNESS AND ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

What does the concept of mindfulness have to contribute to successful adaptive leadership? As Heifetz (1994) states, how we make sense of change influences how successful we are. To be successful in addressing adaptive change, it is important for the leader to be in the moment, to be aware of the emotional struggle followers may be experiencing, and to be open to new and creative solutions. Hunter and Chaskalson (2013) propose that the capacity to be mindful – being present, aware of self, others, and the world around them, recognition of their own perceptions and biases, and actions they need to take – is a critical skill for adaptive leaders. This idea of mindfulness and the ability to train oneself to be mindful when addressing adaptive challenges is reflective of Heifetz et al's (2009) idea of being in the balcony and on the dance floor at the same time. A leader needs to be able to be in the moment with others but also be able to see the bigger picture and examine new ways of addressing the problem with others. Leaders cannot be on autopilot when it comes to adaptive challenges – going through the same old motions or using the same solution. This is being mindless not mindful. Training oneself to be mindful opens up productivity and creativity, not just for the leader but for followers as well.

## LIMITATIONS

While the concept of mindfulness appears to have strong application possibilities for leaders, there is very limited research on what this would look like or examples of how leaders have applied the concepts in real-world settings. Much of the literature on mindfulness focuses on the practices of meditation and being in the moment, how it has been applied in more clinical settings, and is just beginning to be seen in the business literature. The most frequent example of its application in business has been with stress management programs for employees (Baer et al, 2012). More research on mindfulness directly connected with leaders and leadership is

needed to fully understand the implication of its use in leading adaptive change.

## CONCLUSION

Given the complexity of today's world and the problems being faced by leaders, the ability to be adaptive is critical. To be an effective adaptive leader, however, one needs to "...manage the stress of others in an organization... [and] demonstrate an emotional capacity to tolerate uncertainty, frustration, and pain" (Tetenbaum & Laurence, 2011, p. 47). One way to approach this is through the practice of mindfulness, developing an ability to be focused on the moment while allowing for innovation and new ideas to solve the problem at hand. While we need to know more about how to apply mindfulness in leadership settings, there is much potential for this to offer a new perspective and application for effectively leading adaptive change.

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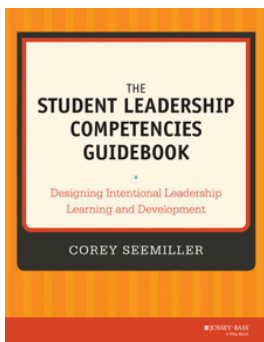
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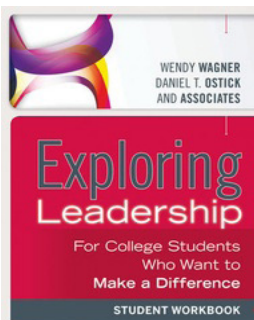
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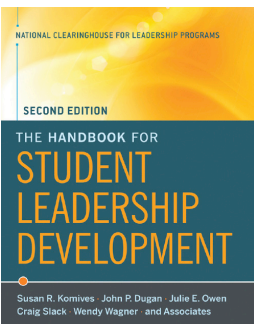
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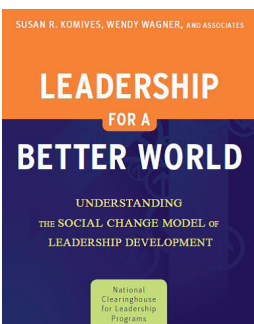
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