

Association of Leadership Educators
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“Facilitating Collaboration among Collegiate Leadership Programs: The Kansas Experience”
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INTRODUCTION

“Toto, I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore...”
- Judy Garland as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*

A convergence of several interests has brought about an exciting development in leadership circles within the state of Kansas. An increased interest in facilitative leadership education, a statewide organization with a desire for improved collaboration, a significant foundation committed to health and leadership, and innovative faculty members have come together. For the first time, a Collegiate Leadership Council has been formed to convene the directors of the leadership studies programs at institutions of higher learning within the state of Kansas. These programs are modeling and implementing the facilitative leader model.

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature relating to leadership and facilitation and to describe how these theories at work have produced a nascent structure for collaboration in higher education leadership studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Formalized leadership programs in Kansas date back to the creation of Leadership Kansas in 1978. Inspired by a former Governor and a prominent business leader, the program was created by and is still sponsored by the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Each year the Leadership Kansas program selects 40 individuals who are exposed to a variety of recognized experts and engaged in educational and informational training sessions in six

different Kansas communities. The diversity of the discussion topics, including business, education, agriculture, public policy, societal health and development, economics, and government, help to further shape each class member's personal and professional development.

In ensuing decades, a number of locally based leadership programs were created in communities across the state following the Leadership Kansas model. The 2004 Directory of Kansas Leadership Programs contains 91 listings for state and community based leadership programs. The directory also lists 16 leadership events, seven collegiate leadership studies programs, and 10 statewide youth organizations.

Alumni of the Leadership Kansas program and local programs, plus leadership educators at the university level, were interested in networking together. The first effort to network Kansas leadership educators came in May of 1991 in Salina at the Local Community Leadership Workshop sponsored by Leadership Kansas. A year later, Fort Hays State University began the process of researching and inventorying Kansas leadership programs. This led to a series of leadership meetings bringing together key leadership educators from all areas of the state. A second state workshop for local community leadership programs, co-sponsored by Leadership Kansas and the Kansas Chamber of Commerce Executives, was held in Lawrence in May of 1993 and provided yet another opportunity for networking.

An ad hoc committee met that same month to assess interest and to discuss the process for formulating a formal network. A steering committee was established to plan a conference for Kansas providers of leadership programming. In July of 1993, *The Kansas Directory of Leadership Education 1993-1994* was published by Fort Hays State University and The Kansas Rural Development Council. In October of 1993, the Executive Committee was formed and adopted a Constitution and Bylaws. The result was a new statewide organization of professionals

and volunteers involved in leadership development and education. The name of the organization was the Kansas Leadership Forum.

KLF's first state conference was entitled "The Kansas Leadership Forum '94: Building Leadership Capacity" and was held in May 1994 in Salina. The organization has held an annual conference and regional meetings annually, along with electing officers and producing a newsletter.

Another key development was the advent of a new foundation. In 1985, the Wesley Medical Center in Wichita was sold and a foundation was created with part of the proceeds. That foundation is now known as the Kansas Health Foundation. The foundation's mission is to improve the health of all Kansans. The foundation engages in a strategy of investment in four key categories: Children's health, policy, public health, and leadership. The emphasis on leadership was derived from a listening tour by foundation administrators in 1988. Here is what they indicate they heard:

“In every corner of the state, in towns large and small, we heard a similar cry. People needed more leaders. They wanted individuals with a clear vision for their communities, the ability to bring people together to achieve common goals, and a deep love for their fellow Kansans.”

The foundation went on to create a Fellows program for key leaders, an endowment program to grow and sustain community foundations, a Master Facilitators training program, and the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative to transform locally-based leadership programs. The foundation's assets currently total \$480 million, with approximately \$23 million in grants paid out in 2006. The desired transformation that the Foundation was seeking in leadership

programs was to transition them from teaching an elite, traditional model of leadership to a facilitative, shared model.

Higher education leadership programs were also growing during this time. Regional universities were the first to create leadership studies programs as such. Some of the research universities and the landgrant university also developed programs. In fact, the leadership studies minor at Kansas State University is the largest and fastest-growing minor degree at the university.

Community-Based Leadership Programs

“Change requires leaders; if we didn’t need to change, we wouldn’t need leaders.”

– David Mathews

Kansas communities face many challenges and changes, ranging from urban sprawl to rural depopulation resulting from various causes. While the circumstances affecting communities may differ, a common factor affects the communities’ varied responses to those circumstances: Leadership. The success or struggle of a given community is often attributed to leadership (or lack thereof) in its varied forms and manifestations. As Williams says, implicit in the definition of community development is “the need for leadership to ensure the success of efforts to develop a community” (2002).

A key finding from various local, state and national needs assessments is the need for a “broader, better trained leadership base” (Langone, 2002). Fear said specifically, “Leadership development programs that help ensure an adequate supply of effective leaders are an important and continuing need in community development” (1985). Such programs have expanded and proliferated across American society, as schools, professional development associations, trade

associations, businesses and communities have adopted various forms of leadership development programming.

But what about the results of these programs? Langone notes, “Documenting the program impact of many of these community development programs has been lacking” (2002). Williams and Wade wrote, “Further research, including case studies, should be conducted to investigate the critical factors required for successful partnerships in sponsoring community leadership development programs” (2002).

Procter (2005) describes community in several dimensions: Community as territory, as relational, and as symbolic. While certain leadership programs are organized around a community of interest, such as the Kansas Environmental Leadership Program or Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership, most locally-based leadership programs are oriented to a particular locale or community of place.

In a broad sense, the process we are considering at the community level is “social interaction theory” as articulated by sociologist Kenneth Wilkinson. Wilkinson writes, “Social interaction is the dynamic, creative force that defines and articulates the relationships among actors [that comprise] the structure of the community.” He argues that rural communities depend on purposive social interactions that express a “locality-orientation” which ultimately encourages and cultivates community development. Within a given locality, however, Pigg, Langone, Williams, Zacharakis, Williams and many others have identified a need for educational initiatives to build community capacity – specifically, local leadership.

This leads us to a second fundamental theoretical base: Civic engagement theory, as expressed most clearly in Putnam’s *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000). Putnam argues that social capital – just like physical capital or economic

capital – is a fundamental building component for strong communities. He argues that social capital is positively correlated with an individual's belief in community and government and urges that individuals be socialized into the shared norms and cooperative societal actions of local communities. This is a fundamental premise and purpose of most community leadership development programs.

The next step is an identified need for an intentional, educational program for leadership development and involvement. Walker (1999) wrote, "Leadership is a body of knowledge that can be taught and learned. Leadership and citizen involvement are key ingredients in addressing many problems which communities face today." The Cooperative Extension Service has identified leadership development as an important priority, helping "people and communities acquire the attitudes, skills, and abilities for active participation in creating meaningful futures and dealing with community issues" (2005).

Certain other theoretical elements underpin this work as well. One has to do with asset-based community development as pioneered by Kretzman and McKnight (1993). This approach focuses on "building communities from the inside out," through identifying and building on existing human and other indigenous assets to strengthen communities from within. This is another key element of leadership programs. A related tenet has to do with civic, collaborative leadership as described by Chrislip (1994). Chrislip states, "In most places, leaders and citizens simply do not know how to collaborate. Community leaders and citizens can learn to design, initiate, and sustain collaborative initiatives to address issues of shared concern in their cities and regions." Coming together in constructively designed, collective educational leadership programs can be a step to bringing about such collaborative communities.

“Learning is the making of meaning.”
- Robert Kegan

“The facilitator also serves as a teacher...”
- Roger Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator*

Common themes among the community based and collegiate leadership programs would include the importance of collaboration and the use of facilitation.

What is Facilitation?

Facilitate: To make easier, to help bring about.

- Webster's New Riverside University Dictionary

Facilitation has been defined as a process through which a person helps others work effectively (Bens, 2006). Walker described facilitation in this way: “By providing non-directive guidance, the facilitator helps the group arrive at the understandings and decisions related to its task. The facilitator focuses on the group and its work. The role is one of guidance and assistance, never control.” (1999) According to Schwartz, group facilitation is a process in which a person whose selection is acceptable to all the members of the group, who is substantively neutral, and who has no substantive decision-making authority, diagnoses and intervenes to help a group improve how it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions in order to increase the group's effectiveness (2002).

Curtin makes a distinction between teaching and facilitating. He termed Teaching to be “the transfer of ... information to groups or individuals by instructors who are to some degree experts.” He describes Facilitating as “the development of ... information by aiding groups or individuals to discover the knowledge and skills ... within a process; the process is always experiential in nature and involves action.” (2002)

Schwartz indicates that the facilitator's main task is "to help the group increase effectiveness by improving its process and structure." *Process* refers to how a group works together and *Structure* refers to the ongoing organization of the group. These are contrasted with *Content*, which refers to the substance of what a group is working on. Thus, the facilitator's role is somewhat circumscribed to deal only with process and structure. This makes the facilitator's role more universal, but less in depth.

However, Schwartz goes on to identify two different types of facilitation and several related roles in what he terms the Skilled Facilitator approach. In his taxonomy, there are two types of facilitation: Basic and Developmental. In the basic type, the facilitator helps a group solve a substantive problem by essentially lending the group his or her process skills. Once the facilitation is complete, the group has solved its substantive problem, but by design it has not learned how to improve its process. In the developmental type, the facilitator helps a group solve a substantive problem and learn to improve its process at the same time. Here the facilitator also serves as a teacher so the group can eventually become self-facilitating. Developmental facilitation, according to Schwartz, requires significantly more time and facilitator skill and is more likely to create fundamental change.

Related facilitative roles are depicted in Table I. The elemental *facilitator* role is to be a third party who is substantively neutral and an expert in process without a stake or part in decision-making. Unlike the facilitator, a *facilitative consultant* is used for expertise in a particular area to help the client make informed decisions. A *facilitative coach* may work one-on-one with a client, jointly designing the learning process with them. The *facilitative trainer* integrates facilitation skills into his or her responsibilities for teaching a particular topic. The *facilitative leader* may have strong views or responsibilities on a given topic but uses facilitation

to enhance the core values, principles, and effectiveness of the group. (Schwartz, 2002). Bens focuses on the latter category, describing facilitative leadership as “a skilled approach to leading that’s based on the core beliefs and practices of group facilitation. It makes extensive use of process tools in order to provide structure and casts the leader in the role of helper and enabler.” (2006)

Table I - Facilitative Roles

<u>Facilitator</u>	<u>Facilitative Consultant</u>	<u>Facilitative Coach</u>	<u>Facilitative Trainer</u>	<u>Facilitative Leader</u>
Third party	Third party	Third party or group member	Third party or group member	Group leader or member
Process expert	Process expert	Process expert	Process expert	Skilled in Process
Content-neutral	Content expert	Involved in Content	Content expert	Involved in Content
Not substantive decision-maker nor mediator	May be involved in content decision-making	May be involved in content decision-making	Involved in content decision-making in class	Involved in content decision-making

Bens indicates that facilitative leaders share the core beliefs of facilitation:

- People are intelligent and capable and want to do the right thing.
- Everyone’s opinion has value, regardless of an individual’s rank or position.
- Groups can make better decisions than individuals acting alone.
- People are more committed the ideas and plans that they create.
- People will take responsibility and assume accountability for their actions and can become partners in the enterprise.
- The role of the leader is to evoke the best possible performance from each member of the team.

Leadership styles and roles have changed with time. This has application to those people working as administrators in a college or university setting. Bens describes the traditional directive leaders' role as a command-and-control style that was created for a bygone era when a great deal of work was deliberately reduced to its simplest components and mechanized.

Traditional directive leaders:

- Are task focused
- Set direction and make strategic decisions
- Control work assignments
- Work with people individually
- Control information
- Retain the right to make decisions
- Place a minor emphasis on people skills
- Have rank and privileges
- Relate in a distant and formal style
- Communicate down
- Have few meetings
- Rarely give or receive feedback
- Feel that staff work for them
- Retain accountability for outcomes
- Work to meet the expectations of their managers

According to Bens, today's more engaging leaders are still highly involved with directing tasks, but they combine this with an increased focus on both improving how work gets done and enhancing interpersonal relations. These more involved leaders:

- Are open, informal and friendly
- Possess interpersonal skills
- Value teamwork and collaboration
- Are customer focused and quality conscious
- Are interested in continuous learning
- Are willing to engage and empower their people
- Have meeting management skills
- Are receptive to change
- Are communicative and open to feedback
- Are highly involved in improving both work processes and staff capabilities
- Are still involved in directing tasks
- Remain accountable for results
- Still feel that staff work for them
- Still work to meet the expectations of their managers

These new roles place new demands on facilitative leaders. As Schwartz indicates, facilitative skills are increasingly becoming a core competency for those working with groups.

But what about in the realm of education?

Group Learning

A similar transition from centralized control to group facilitation can be found in higher education. Foyle wrote:

“Higher education faculty members usually see their roles as that of information givers and skill builders. Variations of the traditional lecture-discussion method are widely used in many academic settings. In recent years, instructors have been turning to more interactive learning approaches in order to stimulate student thinking, motivate student involvement, and enhance student learning.”

McManus takes a more pessimistic view, writing, “Slow as the change in teaching is in higher education, it is conspicuously slow in research universities.”(2005) Curtin noted the value of group work, writing that when facilitation engages groups and individuals in real problems, it fuels effective learning (2002). Davis summarized, “Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process.”(1993)

Schwartz advocates a mutual learning model, guided by these four assumptions: (1) I have some relevant information and other people also have relevant information; (2) each of us may see things the others do not; (3) differences are opportunities for learning; and (4) people are trying to act with integrity, given their situation.

Mutual learning is consistent with the approach which Foyle (1995) termed a collaborative model:

“The collaborative model builds on Cooperative Learning strategies but extends beyond having the students work together to complete a predetermined task. In collaborative learning, professors and students actively and mutually engage in the learning process. Together they define and create a body of knowledge that informs and transforms our world.”

Cottrell (1966) described several functions of teachers, of which one is to be a builder of community among people. Cottrell writes, “Nothing is learned in isolation, for knowledge is defined by relationships.” This would seem consistent with the notion of group work. In fact, Cottrell writes that organized societies “only accomplish their educational purposes in programs conducted through groups of individuals.” Grippin notes that learning is a process of reorganizing accretion learning into more meaningful structures, sometimes accomplished through group work.

Such group work and facilitation thereof needs to take into account the dynamics of the relationships between and among participants in the group. Knowles defined group dynamics as the complex forces that are acting upon every group throughout its existence which cause it to behave the way it does (1972).

In *Leaving the Lectern: Cooperative Learning and the Critical First Days of Students Working in Groups* (2005), McManus describes his journey from a traditional, lecture-centered model to a highly successful cooperative learning approach at a research university.

The National Research Council study, *How People Learn* (2000), notes the value of community-centered environments involving norms that encourage collaboration and learning. Fullan (2001) wrote that leadership must create conditions that value learning as both an individual and collective good. Similarly, Knowles indicated the application of such group work in the education of adults years ago. He noted that adult education is a multidimensional and highly interactive social system (1962): “The methodology of adult education tended to move away from traditional classroom methods in favor of methods that would make greater use of the experience of the adult learners, such as group discussion, role playing, case method, book-based discussion, the unstructured group method, and various combinations.”

METHODS

As leadership educators at the community level as well as in higher education worked through the transition in leadership models, they came to recognize the similar challenges which they were facing. One leadership studies faculty member commented, “There are multiple leadership studies programs at the colleges in our state. We all teach our students to collaborate, but we don’t collaborate among ourselves.” The officers of the Kansas Leadership Forum came to a similar recognition. The KLF officers were seeking to re-engage the collegiate segment of

the organization's membership and to enhance the state of leadership studies across institutional lines.

In spring 2006, KLF was cosponsoring a one-day leadership seminar at one of the state universities. Invitations were sent by the KLF officers to the directors of leadership studies at every one of the colleges in the state plus the Kansas Health Foundation to attend the seminar and participate in a luncheon with their peers at no charge. Personal followup was conducted by telephone and email. Fourteen people participated in the luncheon. That discussion led to a sharing of information and ideas and a willingness to continue a dialogue. Subsequent information and scheduling matters were exchanged by email. In October 2006, at the Kansas Leadership Forum annual conference in Newton, Kansas, a more formal convening of this targeted audience was conducted. The new group became known as the Collegiate Leadership Council of KLF.

FINDINGS

The Collegiate Leadership Council is in the initial stages of its organization and development. To date, participants include representatives of the following institutions: Fort Hays State University, Kansas Health Foundation Leadership Center, Kansas State University, Kansas Wesleyan University, Southwestern College, University of Kansas, Washburn University, and Wichita State University.

The focus, scope, and purpose of the programs at these universities have certain commonalities and some significant differences, which are in the earliest stages of being explored. The incipient dialogue has focused on three purposes: 1) share information about each others programs; 2) discuss assessment strategies and student outcomes; and 3) share classroom experiences and pedagogies.

CONCLUSIONS

Committed facilitative leaders in institutions of higher learning and in the statewide leadership organizations have taken the initiative to create a new structure to enhance dialogue among and between those Kansas colleges and universities engaged in leadership studies. This collaborative, facilitative model might not have been able to take root and flourish - or at least germinate - without the groundwork which had been done by the Kansas Health Foundation, the Kansas Leadership Forum, and others investing in new models of leadership development. More nurturing will be needed if this new organization is to succeed. The participants in the CLC will need to develop their own shared understanding of the role and function of the organization. Is it simply to be a place for occasional sharing and commiseration among peers, or can it be a transformative entity to advance scholarship, pursue civic engagement, and make an impact at a higher level? The purpose of the CLC and its very value and sustainability are open questions. However, the organization has made a promising start at creating sharing among peers. The process of building social capital within the group has begun. The CLC itself must be described as a work in progress.

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