

Building Leadership Competencies for the Workplace: Teaching Authentic Leadership

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Educational Background

- 2000 Ph.D., Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
Major: Educational Policy Studies, Higher Education
- 1977 M.S., Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA
Major: Textile Science
- 1976 B.S., Spelman College, Atlanta, GA
Major: Clothing and Textiles

Courses Taught

- LS 101: Foundations of Leadership
- Bus 321: Leadership and Professional Development
- Bus 360: Principles of Marketing
- Bus 463: Marketing Management

Personal

Belinda teaches courses in leadership and professional development in the Morehouse College business program and teaches leadership theory in the Leadership Studies Minor. Belinda serves as program coordinator for the Leadership Studies Minor, a curriculum she developed during her two-year tenure as the Associate Director of the Leadership Center at Morehouse College. Other leadership development activities include being the founding director of the Morehouse College Executive Mentorship Program and a faculty mentor for the Morehouse College Spring Tour. Outside of work, Belinda enjoys engaging in sports activities by attending her son Robert's college baseball games and her daughter Bethany's high school cheerleading appearances. She is also involved in numerous church and community activities.

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Abstract

As part of the business program accreditation process in 1994, Morehouse College added a three-credit hour course entitled Leadership and Professional Development (LPD) to its business core curriculum. This undergraduate course is designed to prepare the emerging leader for the 21st century workplace—a workplace that requires positive leadership and exceptional professionalism. The purpose of this class is to assist students in developing the knowledge, skills, traits, behaviors, and attitudes needed to develop the positive leadership perspectives that will enable them to be valuable assets to a global, civil society comprised of their organizations, communities and families.

Specifically, the course focuses on three (3) areas of leadership development:

- personal leadership – self understanding and values identification
- personal management – professional behaviors
- interpersonal leadership – teamwork and civic responsibility

This paper will explore the need, delivery methods, results to date and future implications surrounding the personal leadership component of the course.

Introduction

A recent survey conducted by The Center for Creative Leadership and *Training* magazine explored the leadership competencies most important to corporate America. 85% of the 275 senior-level managers participating in the study identified ethics, integrity and values as the most important leadership competencies. In sharp contrast, though, only 31% of those surveyed thought the leaders of their organization reflected a high level of competence in these key areas (*Training*, September 2001).

These findings present a challenge to academia. Should higher education play a role in closing this gap? Does higher education have a responsibility to address this issue? What, if anything, can higher education do in its classroom to assist the next generation of business leaders to develop the leadership competencies in the area of values and ethical behavior? How can the authentic leadership development process be validated?

The purpose of this presentation is to address these questions. The specific learning objectives of this presentation are

- To engage leadership scholars in a discussion on the feasibility of teaching “authentic leadership”;
- To provide an example of an undergraduate core business course that addresses authentic leadership; and
- To identify ways to empirically validate authentic leadership development.

Background

Morehouse College is the nation's only private, historically black, four-year liberal arts college for men. Founded in 1867, Morehouse has a long tradition of producing outstanding leaders. Noted alumni include Maynard H. Jackson, first African-American mayor of Atlanta; Martin Luther King Jr., Nobel Peace Prize laureate and civil rights leader; Shelton "Spike" Lee, filmmaker and president of 40 Acres & A Mule; Edwin C. Moses, Olympic gold medallist; Louis W. Sullivan, former secretary of health and human services; David Satcher, former U.S. surgeon general; and Nima A. Warfield, first African-American Rhodes Scholar from a historically black college and university.

As stated in the College mission, Morehouse College seeks to cultivate the personal attributes of self-confidence, tolerance, morality, ethical behavior, humility, a global perspective, and a commitment to social justice. The College mission is supported by the business degree program, which states as its mission “excellence in the preparation of students for business leadership” and places emphasis on students developing ethical principles that are keeping with the high standards expected of organizational executives (Morehouse College 2003-2004 catalog).

As part of its process of earning national accreditation from the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in 1994, the business program added to its core curriculum a three-credit hour course entitled Leadership and Professional Development (LPD) and requires every business major to take the course. The purpose of the course is to provide training and instruction in the non-technical, human relations, or “soft-skills” side of business.

How It Works

LPD uses a variety of interactive pedagogical methods, which include the following:

- **Classroom Activities** - Discussions, role-play, workshops, team exercises and presentations, and guest speakers
- **Executive Lectures** – Interactions outside of classroom with significant contemporary and corporate leaders
- **Community Service** – Hands on involvement with Atlanta Public School students

The course is taught each Monday of a 13-week semester for a 2.5-hour time slot. One hundred students are in the class.

Authentic leadership is presented within the leadership framework of:

- Personal leadership – self-understanding and values identification
- Personal Management – professional behaviors
- Interpersonal Leadership – teamwork and civic responsibility

Authentic leadership, according to Robert J. Lee and Sara N. King, authors of *Discovering the Leader in You: A Guide to Realizing Your Personal Leadership Potential*, is based on your vision and values as well as on your individual style and strengths. Other approaches that support organizational leaders with a strong personal value system include principle-centered leadership (Covey, 1990); ethical leadership (Yukl, 2002, pg. 402); and values-based leadership (Daft, 2001, pg. 530). Classroom discussions are guided by these four (4) approaches to personal leadership development.

Results to Date

Anecdotal data secured through discussions and brief surveys of Morehouse College business program graduates, corporate recruiters, and guest speakers, suggest that LPD is highly effective in teaching students the professional skills, traits, and behaviors necessary to successfully negotiate corporate America. Course effectiveness in the development of authentic leadership is yet to be empirically measured.

Conclusions and Future Implications

Research shows that successful leaders are equally competent in the three-category taxonomy of leadership skills: technical, interpersonal and conceptual (Yukl, 2002, p. 176). While higher education is effective in developing these skills, can it also develop the traits and attitudes associated with authentic leadership? The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how undergraduate students effectively learn the skills, traits and behaviors of personal leadership, personal management and interpersonal leadership through a three credit hour course in leadership and professional development (LPD) in the nationally accredited Morehouse business program. Using a team-teaching approach, LPD services 100 business majors each semester.

Although strong anecdotal data supports the effectiveness of this course in developing personal leadership, personal management and interpersonal leadership, the course has not been validated through a rigorous empirical process. A validation methodology would allow this course, and others like it, to add to the body of knowledge on leadership development for undergraduate students.

References

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