Learning to Lead: A Pedagogy of Practice

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The storm: Is knowledge changed when it is applied?

> Let us imagine a pilot, and assume that he had passed every examination with distinction, but that he had not as yet been at sea. Imagine him in a storm; he knows everything he ought to do, but he has not known before how terror grips the seafarer when the stars are lost in the blackness of night; he has not known the sense of impotence that comes when the pilot sees the wheel in his hand become a plaything for the waves; he has not known how the blood rushes to the head when one tries to make calculations at such a moment; in short, he has had no conception of the change that takes place in the knower when he has to apply his knowledge (Kierkegaard, 1941, pp. 35-36).

As Kierkegaard's image of the first moments in which a novice helmsman must take the helm in a storm suggests, learning leadership is far more challenging than learning about leadership. While some doubt leadership can be learned, viewing it as a matter of DNA, others doubt that it can be taught, especially in a classroom. Where, when, and how—except "on the job"—can we learn to deal with the challenge Kierkegaard describes? But if, as the passage suggests, the essence of leadership is an emotional and strategic capacity to meet unexpected, novel, and ambiguous challenges, isn't this what we need to teach? (Bruner, 1986). We argue that leadership can be taught with pedagogy that itself entails leadership, aligning the content of what we teach with the way we teach it. We describe principles of this pedagogy, share a curricular framework, and cite examples drawn from a diversity of contexts in classrooms, workshops, campaigns, and organizations.

Leadership: Head, Hands, and Heart

We argue that leadership is the practice of accepting responsibility to enable others to achieve shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty. As a practice, not a position, leadership does not require formal authority. Authority can be an asset, but can also be a constraint (Heifetz, 1994). Nor is leadership use of coercive force to secure compliance, "authorized" or not (Burns, 1978). We exercise leadership through the interaction of five core practices: building relationships committed to a common purpose; translating values into sources of motivation through narrative; turning resources into the capacity to achieve purpose by strategizing; mobilizing and deploying resources as clear, measurable, visible action; and structuring authority so as to facilitate the effective distribution of leadership (Ganz, 2010). Because coaching is an important way of "enabling" others to deal with "uncertainty," learning to coach, especially in heuristic problem-solving, is central to learning to lead (Ormrod, 2008).

Learning practice

As a practice, leadership is learned experientially, combining "heart, head, hands" or, as described at West Point, "being, knowing, and doing."[1] Because we cannot learn to use our hands in new ways without using our hands in new ways, learning requires the courage to risk action. . . and failure. . . again and again. . .just as learning to ride a bike requires the courage to get on, fall, persist, and adapt (Schein, 2004). Deep experiential learning requires conceptualization—hypothesizing, testing, reflecting, and re-hypothesizing (Kolb, 1984; Zull,

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[1] The West Point formulation is one of "Be, Know, Do"—development of the values that shape who I want to be, the concepts the enable me to understand where I want to go, and the skills to get there.

2002; Gandhi, 1957)—as opposed to the mastery of abstract concepts to be "applied" (Gardner, 1992). Learning how, when, and where to use—or innovate—new skills requires an understanding of their purpose, clarity as to conditions under which they are useful, and the imagination to adapt them to novel contexts and contents. And the relational content of leadership in particular requires developing the self-awareness to distinguish between one's own actions, the actions of others, and their interaction (Langer, 1997).

Learning leadership practice

If we are to teach leadership as practice, we must create conditions in which leadership can be practiced. One way we do this is requiring students to accept responsibility for working with others to achieve a valued goal by the end of a specified learning period. They come to sum up their mission as "I am organizing __(people)__ to __(outcome)_ by __(strategy) __ because __ (story). They work with others to achieve this objective by using the five core practices: creating shared values, building relational commitments, structuring authority, strategizing outcomes, and taking action (See Figure 8.1).

Practically, we structure learning as five modules, each of which focuses on a core practice. Each module begins with a verbal explanation, often aided by visuals, followed by modeling, often by the instructor, with the support of videos or role-play. Students put these skills into practice immediately with peers with whom they share responsibility for a group outcome, which, in turn, lays a foundation for the next module. Students debrief results by articulating their "key learnings" and "plusses" (what worked) and "deltas" (what could be improved).

Fig. 8.1: The Five Core Practices of Leadership

The first core leadership practice is based on the skill of public narrative that is used to access the motivational content of the values that inspire one's call to action, values shared by one's "constituency," and a challenge to those values that requires urgent action (Ganz, 2010). The second core leadership practice is based on the skill of one-on-one meetings and house meetings used to forge mutual relationships based on commitments of resources to shared interests. The third core leadership practice is based on the skill of structuring team leadership based on shared purpose, clear norms, and interdependent roles. The fourth core leadership practice is based on the skill of strategizing turning one's resources into the power to achieve strategic objectives. The fifth core leadership practice is based on the skill of mobilizing and deploying resources in action (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Participants commit to a deadline by which time they will achieve their outcome and key thresholds (peaks) along the way—enactment of what Stephen Jay Gould called "time as

an arrow," the rhythm of change, in contrast with "time as a cycle," the rhythm of continuity"

(Gould, 1987). This campaign mode facilitates the mobilization of resources need to achieve a

final outcome in the course of achieving the outcome, making the road while walking it. Such

a temporal dynamic recognizes that efforts to change the status quo usually begin with far

fewer resources than are ultimately needed (see Figure 8.2).

Campaigns

The peak

Resolution

Peaks

Kick-off

Organization
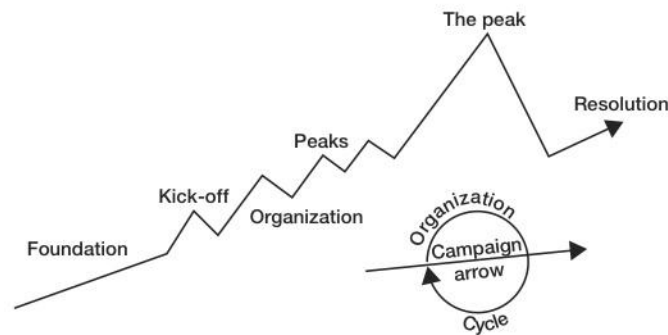
Foundation

Organization

Campaign
arrow

Cycle

Fig. 8.2: Structuring Campaigns

Although we teach the five modules sequentially, the fact that each subsequent module

not only introduces new information, but also alters understanding of what went before, shows

that core leadership practices are interdependent, not additive. Our approach is in the spirit of

what David Perkins (2009) calls teaching the "whole game" —a metaphor for how we learn to

play baseball, for example. We do not master batting first, then throwing, then running, but

rather learn to play the whole game, refining particular skills as needed. With leadership,

teaching the whole game means enabling participants to experience the interplay of all the

elements with which they will be working as early on in the process as possible, albeit in a

very rudimentary way. So when we return to work on a particular skill in a given module, our

understanding of it remains embedded in the experience of their combination.

In teaching the "whole game" it is important to distinguish between a "model" and a "framework," a distinction recognized in the difference between algorithmic and heuristic problem solving (Ormrod, 2008). It is not our intent to specify a formula which students are expected to apply to address the uncertain, evolving, and surprising kind of challenges that Kierkegaard describes. Rather, the intent is to equip students with questions to ask as a way of learning how to address the challenge they face. The experience, then, that we hope to create is not only one that requires making use of all five core practices, but one in which they must learn to bring sufficient clarity to enable action in circumstances in which outcomes, resources, and context are quite unclear. Success is not in "knowing the answer," but, rather, in knowing how to "craft a solution."

One way we teach the whole game at the Kennedy School is with a six-hour introductory exercise in which students participate during the second week of a twelve-week course. In more intensive, shorter workshops, this exercise is less necessary because the workshop itself is an experience of the "whole game."

The organizing skills session: The "whole game" in six hours

"Did you see me? Standing up in front of all those people? I did it!" Those words, spoken by Kate, a master's student, came from a changed person. Six hours before, Kate had been insisting that she was not a leader, hated public speaking, and was just along for the ride. She was an early childhood educator and direct service provider and had entered graduate school hoping to learn how to help children better, not to be a hero. She had been invited to attend one of our bi-annual one-day organizing "skills sessions," held primarily for students enrolled in organizing classes at Harvard, but open to a larger network.

On February 6, 2010, Kate joined over 120 graduate students, fellows, and undergraduates from Harvard University, the University of Massachusetts, Tufts University, the College of the Holy Cross, and Providence College for a six-hour introduction to leading an organizing campaign. Fueled by donuts, coffee, and a potluck smorgasbord, these students participated in a crash course in the five core leadership practices— relationships, narrative, structure, strategy, and action. Each skill was introduced conceptually, modeled, then practiced and debriefed.

Kate's experience began with a one-on-one meeting with an undergraduate from Providence College. Learning that they were both passionate about equity in early childhood education, the two then found another pair of students who wanted to teach literacy. They shared their personal narratives to establish a base of shared values to motivate action. They became a team for a day by setting norms for themselves, specifying roles and agreeing on a shared purpose with respect to child literacy. They then strategized how to turn their very limited resources—especially time—into a meaningful specific outcome. They would collect fifty books in one hour by situating themselves in front of Curious George Goes to Wordsworth, a children's bookstore, and ask shoppers to buy an extra book. The books would be donated to a child literacy program in

the housing development where Kate volunteered. They then acted by investing ninety minutes learning how to address shoppers, ask for their help, and "close the deal" with a book donation.

Collectively, in multiple such mini-campaigns that culminated in ninety minutes of action, the 120 workshop participants raised $1215 for causes ranging from food for children in Haiti to literacy programs; collected 1120 signatures on petitions on topics as diverse as supporting a bill protecting tenants' rights, establishing "Kids' Nights" in Harvard Square businesses, and reducing greenhouse gases; and collected eighty "onesies" for infants in Haiti —none of which they had planned to do when they arrived six hours before. In the final debrief of the day, one member of each team stood up and described their team's experience and learning. Fired up by her team's success, and cheeks still pink from the chill outside, Kate stood up to announce to a packed room that they had not only reached their goal of fifty books, they had surpassed it.

"Whole game" experiences, ranging from one-day skills sessions to three-day workshops to semester long campaigns, help students learn how each core practice interacts with the others to produce the final result. They are almost always surprised by what they can accomplish with focused effort engaging others over a short amount of time. This prepares students for greater complexity, scale, and scope, which, in a fractal kind of pattern, retain the shape of the original (Perkins, 2008).

Pedagogy as practice

Pedagogy as practice takes experiential learning a step farther: we practice what we teach in the way we teach it. We teach leadership by practicing leadership. This requires a learning venue in which we, as instructors, "accept responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty." We base this approach on requiring students to take responsibility for a project rooted in their values, intended to achieve a specific goal within a specified time (day, workshop, semester) which they may or may not achieve, and that requires engagement of others. The risk of failure is real, consequential, and transparent. Similarly we make our pedagogy as transparent as we can, invite adaptation, and, using probing and targeted questions, coach—rather than instruct—students in their development of each of the five practices.

Because developing the leadership of others is so central to the practice of leadership as we teach it, we use a "cascaded learning" approach to create opportunities for "learners to become teachers." We enact this approach by coaching students to learn how to coach others, even as they receive coaching. As they develop their coaching skills and build new capacity, they learn to facilitate their own teams, then become coordinators of teams of facilitators, then project managers of teams of coordinators. In our own university classes each year, we recruit graduate students to become teaching fellows, responsible for the learning of some twenty new students the following year. Teaching fellows often become collaborators on workshops, projects, and campaigns in the "real world." This approach has enabled us to introduce our leadership pedagogy in a widely diverse range of settings around the globe (see Appendix).

One example of how cascading leadership development can play out is in our work on immigration reform in 2009. In collaboration with the Center for Community Change and the New Organizing Institute, we participated in an effort to engage a grassroots base for reform in key states across the country.

Cascaded learning: The fight for immigration reform

In late summer 2009, immigration reform advocates determined a need for renewed mobilization of local support in key legislative districts. On August 28, thirty youthful advocates—fifteen from Florida and fifteen from Colorado—gathered outside Miami for a three-day workshop to launch this effort, based on our leadership practice pedagogy. In this first workshop, the presentation, facilitation, and coaching were provided by experienced trainers, most of whom were former students. Three weeks later, the fifteen Florida trainees had applied their learning to organize another three-day workshop of 175 young people who, deployed as thirty-six leadership teams, organized fourteen actions across Florida in which 1350 people participated to launch the campaign. By the second training, three of the fifteen original trainees had begun serving as presenters, five as coaches, and all in key leadership roles. Colorado followed a similar pattern. Encouraged by this success, a second "train the trainers" workshop was held in Washington, DC, in November, attended by one hundred young people from six more states: North Carolina, California, Nevada, New York, and Ohio. One workshop of thirty young people at the end of August had launched a twelve-state "movement building network" that was the backbone of a sustained campaign, culminating in a demonstration of some 200,000 in Washington, DC. Although not enough to achieve the sought-after legislative victory, this approach not only created capacity and developed leadership, but equipped participants with the skills to continually adapt what they had learned to new challenges.

Cascaded learning works as both a means of building resources in the learning environment as well as modeling the type of leadership development that participants are working to learn. As scholars of "situated cognition" report, learning happens most effectively when activity, concept, and culture work interdependently, as what people learn is perhaps more a product of the "ambient culture" than of explicit teaching (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Stigler & Hiebert, 1998). Our pedagogy aims to create a culture of teaching and learning in which teachers do not only teach about leadership, but exercise leadership themselves.

Four Learning Structures: Projects, Scaffolds, Reflections and Contexts

Project-focused learning

If, as teachers, we model leadership by enabling our students to achieve purpose in the face of the uncertainty of their projects, then students begin to actually learn leadership through their experience of commitment to an organizing project. Students thus enjoy an opportunity to learn their "practice" in interaction with real constituents, yet with access to coaching, feedback, and instruction. In classrooms, the project requires commitment to an outcome by the end of the semester. In campaigns, the outcome is tied to ongoing work, a first step. In workshops, outcomes vary but may be as straightforward as finding a way in which participants can support each other's learning.

Creating conditions in which participants must take initiative to acquire the information, skills, relationships or other resources they need to achieve a goal encourages learning (Gardner, 1992). In the case of leadership, it is the substance of what is being learned. Because the project is conducted in the "real world," many more factors are outside a student's control than is the case with a simulation or role-play, and "real" results involving "real"

people are at stake. While these factors introduce uncertainty into the project context, they also

enable the student to exercise autonomy in deciding how to deal with that uncertainty. This

autonomy, when linked with a task that is both "significant" and that has identifiable

boundaries on which one receives real feedback, engages the student's sources of intrinsic

motivation, long associated with higher quality and more adaptive, more effortful work

(Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

An organizing project: Organizing a tenants association

Diane was a veteran community organizer whose organizing leadership project focused on engaging residents of a low-income housing development to get involved in a local redevelopment process. In a traditional classroom project, Diane may have ended up conducting a needs assessment, interviewing a few residents, and writing a proposal for the creation of a tenants' association to address their issues. We, however, encouraged Diane to turn her interviews into a series of one-on-one meetings, intended to identify and recruit members of a leadership team, who in turn, would recruit twenty residents to attend a meeting launching a tenants' association—a project with a measurable outcome that required the collective commitment of others. This project was clearly more risky than writing a paper, and Diane was not certain it was doable. Additionally, she was nervous about imposing her "vision," as a white upper-class woman who did not live in the development, on the residents, who were largely African-American.

As she moved forward with her project, Diane found herself frustrated with the slowness of change and the failure of her two primary "allies" in the development to show enthusiasm for the idea of holding a meeting, or to deliver on other ideas. They failed to show up for meetings with her, seemed distracted by other concerns, and did not connect her with anyone else who seemed to have interest in making change in the neighborhood. Ultimately, Diane was unable to organize a leadership team or a meeting and was not able to complete her project within the timeframe of the class.

In a typical classroom, the results of a project like Diane's might be evaluated as a

failure to complete the work, and hence, a failure of the student. The student might then learn

to avoid risking interdependence with others in the future. We treat failure, however, not as

"judgmental," a reflection of a person's capacity, but as strategic, an experience from which

one can learn (Sitkin, 1992). Students thus move from an understanding of leadership as a

natural gift to understanding it as practice they can develop (Dweck, 2008). We ask, "What

could be done differently to create the capacity you needed? How could you have developed

better relationships or selected people with whom to develop a relationship more wisely? How

could you have motivated your leadership team's commitment?" The answers to these

questions are more often found to be rooted in emotional barriers than conceptual ones; e.g., fear of the risk of being rejected, of seeming too "pushy," of being thought "odd," etc. In turn, coaching a person in this kind of challenge requires emotional resources more than conceptual ones. Students who learn to practice leadership with coaching in how to engage with the emotional risk can learn to "lean in" to the pain of failure, emerging better prepared and more willing to engage with future challenges.

Objections to teaching leadership in this way may grow out of a hesitancy to require students to commit the requisite resources. Opportunities for focused learning are time-bound (e.g., a semester-long course) and resource constrained (e.g., financial resources go to books and materials, not project overhead). Students have other classes—or jobs—outside the scope of the project. On the other hand, "real" projects that motivate real commitment can, in turn, generate new resources.

One test of the readiness of students to commit the required time, energy, and effort played out in the 2010 launch of a fourteen-week distance-learning version of our course, part of Harvard's Executive Education program, in which participants commit to a leadership project that has impact on their real-life work. Each week, participants were required to attend one ninety-minute live online lecture or discussion section and to commit at least four to five hours to coursework and field work. Skeptics of high-commitment distance learning argue that working students already have too much on their plate. But we found that requiring more commitment up front screened out those less prepared to learn and engaged participating students' sense that they were doing meaningful work, resulting in higher levels of participation. While the typical Executive Education distance learning class usually drops to a 50 percent attendance rate at on-line meetings over the course of the semester, our course

consistently had 85-95 percent attendance throughout. At the time of this writing, campaigns started by alumni of the course to reform health care in England, reduce corruption in Serbia, and support political mobilization in the Middle East have achieved significant victories, and graduates from Serbia, Jordan, and multiple states in the U.S. have returned to act as teaching assistants for the next iteration of the course.

Scaffolded learning

Learning new skills requires venturing beyond the limits of one's perceived competence—a step both exciting and frightening, and one that requires motivational, conceptual, and behavioral resources. Scholars describe this uncharted territory as a "zone of proximal development"—a space between what an individual will do on their own and what they will undertake with the encouragement of another—parent, teacher, or coach (Vygotsky, 1978).[2] Just as one must fall to learn to keep one's balance on a bicycle, "training wheels" can, for a time, help a learner acquire courage to face the moment when they must come off. The pedagogical challenge is deciding when such "scaffolding" provides productive support, and when it inhibits development. We offer scaffolding for the hands (behavioral), for the head (intellectual), and for the heart (motivational) (Hackman & Wageman, 2005).

As intellectual scaffolding we offer a conceptual framework linking each core leadership practice with the others in an interdependent whole. Our intent is to provide a framework, not a formula, however. In his discussion of learning, Thich Nhat Hanh (1993)

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[2]While most conceptualizations of the Zone of Proximal Development define it as the distance between what an individual "can" do on his own and what he "can" do with assistance, we understand ability ("can") as being intimately linked with belief and motivation ("will").

recounts a parable in which the Buddha asks his disciples about the wisdom of a man who built a raft to cross a raging river, only to drag it around with him for the rest of his life in gratitude for the job it had done in that time and place. In the spirit of heuristic problem solving, our learning framework can serve as a "raft": a way to focus on critical tools, attend to key questions, observe interactions among key elements, and share a common language to learn from each other's experience. But, like any framework, ours is only a hypothesis, not a recipe, and requires constant testing, evaluation, and adaptation.

The emotional scaffolding available—in addition to the fact that we root projects in the participants' values—comes through a coach, facilitator, or peer learner. Leadership requires one to find sources of the courage to risk uncertainty, ambiguity, and novelty (Peterson, 1999). Values can be such a source, not as abstract ideas, but as emotional—or moral—resources. When confronted with a novel challenge, our impulse to retreat to the safety of what we know, or, at least, what can reduce our anxiety, means we avoid learning what we need to learn to adapt ourselves, and encourage others to adapt, to the challenge. On the other hand, throwing ourselves headlong into the breach can guarantee failure. We learn best when we can balance the risk of exploration enough security that we can find the courage to risk exploration (Marcus, 2002). Eliciting our students' narratives, for example, may require probing, yet empathetic, questioning by a coach to encourage them to risk the vulnerability required for learning. An even more emotionally challenging aspect of "enabling" others can be asking for specific, clear, and unambiguous commitments. We scaffold students' engagement with this challenge by having them practice "the ask" in front of their peers, often with real-time coaching, and always followed by a debrief of the student's internal process in deciding when and how to make the ask. Unless students find their way through these more challenging

aspects of social interaction, they will justify the anxiety that inhibits them by rejecting the framework, blaming the environment, or otherwise avoiding the work.

Finally, we provide behavioral scaffolding by modeling what we are teaching in the way we teach. We also use explicit role-playing exercises, such as practicing the art of getting commitments, for students to experience the practice, observe others, and get feedback on their performance in a safe learning environment. Most important, however, we create opportunities that require students to practice newly acquired skills in the real world with feedback, and support, from peers and instructors, as in the full day "organizing skills" workshop described above.

The student-dubbed "hot seat" is one pedagogical technique that exemplifies how conceptual, emotional, and behavioral scaffolding come together in our teaching practice. In the hot seat exercise, a student receives coaching on his or her project or practice in a focused, targeted way in front of the other learners. This creates an instant moment of narrative in which the class focuses on how the student will handle the challenge, not only in terms of the specifics of their project, but of being coached in front of the entire class. It thus yields conceptual learning (for example, the importance of having clear, measurable outcomes), but also emotional learning, enabling the person being questioned to learn they can handle the pressure. Finally, it provides behavioral scaffolding, providing those watching with a model of the value of and method to asking tough questions. In fact, after having been in the hot seat, students often can be found to be more confident coaching others. Having been pushed out of her comfort zone into a place of uncertainty, the hot seat participant realizes that she has made a developmental leap with a little pain and a lot of learning, and is encouraged to help others on her team do the same.

Briget Ganske: The view from the "Hot Seat"

One day in the first few weeks of my Public Narrative class, Professor Ganz was describing how we would coach each other in telling our Stories of Self, Us, and Now. There was a palpable sense of apprehension in the classroom; it felt like a daunting task to succinctly describe the challenges we'd gone through ourselves, choices we'd made, and the passions that were leading us to do work we cared about — in two minutes—let alone help other students, mostly strangers, do the same.

Suddenly, Professor Ganz asked, "Is Briget Ganske here today?" He had never called anyone out like this before, and people looked around curiously. I tentatively raised my hand. Professor Ganz smiled and asked, "Briget, why are you called to do what you're called to do?" The whole room grew silent. I felt hundreds of eyes watching me as my face grew hot. Stalling for time, I repeated slowly, "Why am I called to do what I'm called to do?" Called to do? I felt I was thirteen again, forgetting my lines in the school play. Professor Ganz was nodding, calling me to answer.

"Uh," I fumbled, starting to say something about being at the Graduate School of Education and how I was a photographer and loved teaching young people. My voice sounded far away and unfamiliar. "Why do you like teaching?" Ganz asked. I started saying something abstract about the importance of education. "Where did you grow up?" Ganz asked, bringing me back to my real experience, of growing up in Iowa. "What do your parents do? Was education important to them?" A string of questions began leading me to describe my parents' medical and political careers and how I learned about service and the democratic process through delivering yard signs and listening to people at town hall meetings. "And photography?" Ganz asked, pulling out of me stories of learning to use my grandparents' camera, inspirational teachers I had, and my own experience staring an after-school program New York City. Again and again, Ganz asked, "Why? Why did you make that choice? What was that experience like?" I recalled stories I had forgotten or hadn't thought relevant to tell but now saw as important vignettes illustrating who I was and what mattered to me.

After what felt like a re-living of my whole life (but was probably only ten minutes), Ganz thanked me and turned his attention to the rest of the class. "What am I doing?" he asked, "besides putting her on the spot." Everyone laughed. "You're giving her coaching," someone called out. What had been an abstract and slightly scary concept had been brought to life, and I had survived.

During the remainder of the class, my heartbeat slowed its to normal rate and I grew more and more glad I hadn't run away; it was as if I were more clearly seeing my life, the close-up details and the overall composition. In photographic terms, I had gained focus, a focus that helped me connect with others in a way that my previously blurry story had not. After class, dozens of people came up to me, saying things like, "I'm from Iowa!" "My parents were politically active too." "I'm a photographer as well." "I'm a big supporter of arts in education." Suddenly, the class of strangers had become real people, people with stories—like myself. I realized that the story of uS had already begun and the story of now was starting to form.

Critical reflection

Among the challenges of teaching leadership are assumptions students bring with them

about familiar skills that may serve perfectly well in private life, but not in public life—such as

how to build relationships. While scholars of learning emphasize the need to engage prior

knowledge explicitly when building new knowledge (Strike & Posner, 1985; Bransford,

Brown, & Cocking, 1999), unexamined assumptions about leadership are especially

challenging. Although few people may have prior knowledge about, for example, quantum

physics, everyone has theories about how to build relationships, tell stories, and strategize

outcomes. The "schemata" we develop to organize our understanding of the world enable and

constrain (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). They enable us to make sense of things, generalize, make

choices, draw conclusions, and act. But, as stereotypes, they can inhibit clarity of perception,

cause us to see what we expect to see, and make it difficult for us to learn.

One way we try to address this challenge is by modeling "mindful learning:" bringing

transparency to our assumptions to free us from their constraints, allowing us to develop more

useful theory (Langer, 1987). We model this not with third-person case studies, but by

debriefing students' own experience of learning verbally with others, in shared writing, and in

class presentations. A major focus of debriefing is what worked (plusses), what could have

worked better (deltas), and what was learned. The intent is to turn challenges into learning

opportunities as opposed to judgments on one's capacity or worth (Dweck, 2008). By

concluding each class, presentation, or workshop with "plusses and deltas" we invite students

to partner with us in "testing" the assumptions that guide their learning. To circumvent the

power of negative bias, we begin by asking students to identify what worked well; what

facilitated their learning (plusses). We then ask students to identify improvements that could be

made (deltas). We do this with the entire group, encouraging people to speak up, and recording

the results on posters or a black board. Once one opens up this process, however, one has to

follow through by making useful improvements in the teaching, which models how

assumptions, when questioned, can be adjusted. At the same time, the practice shifts

responsibility for learning away from the instructor alone to a responsibility shared by the

class, as students' comments change from "you could do this" to "we could do this." Processes

of shared reflection and open evaluation encourage students to accept the vulnerability required to learn from their failures as well as from their successes.

Cross-contextual learning

Deep understanding of practice requires learning how to distinguish what is particular to a given context or content from what is core to the integrity of a process. For example, when it comes to building relationships, cultures vary widely in their rituals of expectation, encounter and follow-up. But relationships themselves grow out of reciprocal exchange between parties, commitments reaching beyond a single exchange, and the possibility of future utility, growth, or learning. Similarly, strategic conventions differ widely, but the hypothesizing of outcomes based on choices one makes about current activity does not. And the telling of stories, perhaps the most highly contextualized practice of all, is based on a widely shared framework of plot, character, and moral. Understanding this dynamic enables one to focus on the questions that can discern genuinely unique factors salient to a particular situation in which one finds oneself. This can clarify the difference between "one way" to do a thing, and factors without which that "thing" will not happen.

One way we address this challenge is to situate learning in cross-contextual settings as much as possible (Bernstein, 1971). In our distance-learning course, for example, we structured an interactive learning venue in which ninety-three students from eighteen countries participated. Students from Serbia, England, and Spain, for example, observed over live video as a fellow student from Amman organizing a national teachers' association modeled relationship building with a student from elsewhere in Jordan, who was himself focused on business development. This experience was cited repeatedly by students as one of the most useful examples of leadership practice that they had seen. By learning across contexts,

participants began to understand elements of the skills that are not local to a particular project or even a particular culture, such as the difficulty and significance of eliciting mutual commitment. In similar fashion, in our spring 2010 Kennedy School organizing class, ninety-two students used a common framework to work on eighty-four different projects, several of which were the main focus of discussion each week. In this way a capacity to connect intimate detail of particular circumstances—the trees—with a broader vision of the whole—the forest—that is so important for strategic thinking can be developed even as one learns specific skills.

Conclusion

In this paper we argue that leadership not only can be but, in fact, *is* taught in classrooms, communities, campaigns and associations—but it could still be done much better. We've specified some ways to structure this kind of learning. We hope our work contributes to a move away from leadership development as a process of selecting extraordinary individuals, giving them extraordinary opportunities, and expecting extraordinary things from them. One alternative is to understand leadership development—and leadership itself—as a practice of accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty, a practice which itself develops new leaders. Given the increasing uncertainty of life in our rapidly changing world, growing fragmentation, and increasing stratification, the need for leadership is greater than ever. We hope our pedagogy can help equip us to meet this challenge in a better, more interdependent way.

APPENDIX: Where We Teach Leadership

Courses and Seminars

MLD 355: Public Narrative: Self, Us, Now

MLD 356: Public Narrative: Conflict, Continuity, Change

MLD 377: Organizing: People, Power, Change

MLD 327: Moral Leadership: Self, Other, and Action

Social Studies 98fu: Practicing Democracy: Leadership, Community & Power

Faith & Leadership in a Fragmented World

Leadership, Organizing, & Action: Leading Change (distance learning)

Achieving Excellence in Community Development (AECD)

Community Practice Campaigns

Organizing for Health Project: organizing community health reform efforts across the U.S.

National Health Service (UK) Project: organizing health practice reform

California School Employees Association (CSEA) Project: union leadership development

Jordan Organizing Project: training community organizers

Syria Leadership DevelopmentProject: developing youth leadership

Center for Community Change: Immigration policy reform

Episcopal Public Narrative Project: lay leadership development

Workshops

C.S. Mott Foundation: training community organizers in public narrative

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME): organizer

training

Middle East Women's Initiative (Harvard Kennedy School): organizer training

Leadership for the Twenty-First Century (Harvard Kennedy School): organizer training

Latino Leadership Initiative (Harvard Kennedy School); organizer training

Columbia Institute (Toronto): community, political, union organizer training

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