1-1-2011

The Impact of Coaching On The Leadership Practicum Process

Marie Yager
Western Kentucky University

John Baker
Western Kentucky University

Phillip Coleman
Western Kentucky University

THE IMPACT OF COACHING ON THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICUM PROCESS

Marie Yager, Western Kentucky University
John Baker, Western Kentucky University
Phillip Coleman, Western Kentucky University

A challenge exists to fully utilize practicum experiential learning due to the nature of a practicum and lack of adequate supervision and guided reflection. Students engaged in leadership practicums apply theoretical concepts and models while advancing their personal leadership. Often, students could obtain a more thorough learning experience if guided by a coach who asks critical questions and creates a venue for more in-depth self-reflection. This paper discusses the impact coaching has on undergraduate leadership practicums and the benefits students can gain from the guidance provided by leadership coaches. A practical application provided a means to qualitatively evaluate the benefits of coaching during leadership practicums while highlighting the resources needed and limitations.

INTRODUCTION

Coaching has been an effective tool for improving performance and enriching learning. In various fields, such as business and the private sector, coaching has been used quite extensively and successfully, whereas in academe its use has been negligible. The benefits of meeting with a coach to discuss goals and next steps, receive feedback, create accountable for timelines, and time to reflect on what one is learning are well documented in the literature. Some of these benefits include improved performance, increased team effectiveness, a higher level of awareness and motivation, a higher level of confidence, and less stress (Boyatzis, Smith, and Blaize 2006, Hackman and Wageman 2005, Alleyne and Jumaa, 2007). In this paper we argue that the "Coaching Model" so successfully employed as a continuous quality control mechanism for personnel in the private sector can provide similar success to leadership practicums in post-secondary education. Coaching can create a more intentional practicum that maximizes learning and reflection.

Definitions

Since coaching varies by context, a generic definition and description of coaching provides clarity for this discussion. This study defines coaching as a series of focused conversations, using non-directive, open questions, designed to facilitate reflective and critical thinking. The coaching process guides an individual toward achieving increased awareness, insight, understanding, and accountability about themselves and their goals. Coaching helps individuals clarify their goals, identify strengths and weaknesses, provides feedback and advice or suggestions, and acts as an accountability partner. Coaching has often been compared to the Socratic dialectical method of teaching with a heavy emphasis placed on good, diagnostic questions to provoke self-learning and self-development.

Leadership has many definitions that apply to multiple contexts. Most leadership definitions contain an element of influence. Northouse (2010) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). Rost (1991) examined 587 publications spanning a 90-year period for definitions of leadership focused on a leadership definition for the 21st century. Rost defined leadership as "…an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real change that reflects their common purposes" (p. 102). This study defines leadership as the ability of one to influence another person to achieve agreed upon goals.

Leadership, in the context of coaching, provides for an effective coaching process. Coaches must have the ability to influence the coached individuals otherwise those being coached will most likely not engage in a meaningful relationship with the coach. The absence of a meaningful relationship negates the credibility of the coach and lessens the probability of achieving coaching goals and objectives. The critical linkage between coaching and leadership provides for meaningful relationships that form the basis for an effective coaching process.

The leadership practicum for this study is an experiential learning capstone course taken by students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels as a partial fulfillment of the requirements needed to earn a certificate in Leadership Studies. The leadership practicum course objective requires students to identify and develop one aspect of their leadership. The leadership practicum process consists of a proposal, defense of the proposal before a committee, conduct of the practicum, submission of a paper regarding the practicum, and a formal presentation to the student's practicum committee.

The Potential Problem

When examining what students are learning from a leadership practicum, questions arise regarding whether students are learning effective methods to lead or if students are simply completing the tasks involved. How intentional have students been in focusing on specific leadership competencies? How intentional have students been in

1

utilizing a theoretical construct for their practicum? How aware is the student of what he or she has learned? What is the student's ability to successfully apply their learning to other contexts? If the practicum is seen simply as logging a certain number of hours, completing specific tasks and writing a paper chronicling their experience, the learning component diminishes and students have not engaged in experiential learning.

The literature related to how learning from experience occurs requires that students take adequate time for reflective and critical thought. This reflective thinking regarding the project and themselves is crucial for productive experiential learning. Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) argue that experience alone is not sufficient for learning and that structured reflection is the key to learning from experience. Many authors have substantiate that experience, although important, is not the only factor involved with effective experiential learning (Daudelin 1996, Giles, Honnet, and Migliore 1991, Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede 1996, Guskin 1994, Kolb 1984, Lynch 1996, McCarthy 1996, and Schon 1983).

Based on observations and the literature review, the research questions examined in this study include:

1. What methods, structures, mechanisms have helped students fully realize the reflective process when engaged in leadership practicums?
2. How have university leadership practicum experiences used reflection and with what results?
3. What effect does coaching have on the experiential learning during leadership practicums?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature focused on coaching reveals an abundance of literature in many disciplines and contexts with the exception of leadership practicums. Published literature includes coaching students in various academic disciplines, but limited literature focused on coaching leadership experiential learning. The leadership practicum design focuses on providing a working knowledge of the leadership field. Coaches and mentors can optimize experiential learning during the leadership practicum by providing students an opportunity to reflect and analyze situations maximizing the learning contained in their experiences. A review of experiential learning in other disciplines can provide insight into the importance and relevance of leadership coaching.

An important role for business leaders is to guide or coach subordinates to develop their leadership abilities. Gandossy and Guarnieri (2008) stated that companies should hold leaders responsible for cultivating leadership skills in others illustrating the importance of coaching to performance in the business realm. Butler, Forbes, and Johnson (2008) conducted before and after surveys on MBA students enrolled in a coaching skills leadership course

finding significant differences in student perceptions regarding the use of leadership coaching skills. Douglas (2009) stated "…it is the leaders job to direct the creative energy in the right direction based upon the core purpose of the team and the targeted goals" (p. 3). Wakefield (2006) emphasized the importance of leadership coaching as instrumental to the successful development of talent in any organization. Coaching, along with mentoring and good feedback leads to the skills and confidence needed to manage a diverse workforce (McPherson, 2009)

Leadership coaching in education continues to find significance in developing teacher-leaders. Blackman (2010) stated that the use of leadership mentoring and workshops may provide positive developmental effects for educational professionals. School principals functioning as change agents benefit greatly from the mentoring and advice of an external coach. Wise and Jacobo (2010) stated "There is an immense value in spending time with a skillful coach who has no link whatsoever to the principle's evaluation…" (p. 162). Teachers are leaders, regardless of the individual professional perspective regarding classroom stewardship, and the addition of coaching future educational leaders provides added value for experiential learning.

Students pursuing a career in the health care profession require extensive experiential learning providing an ideal coaching venue. Henochowicz and Hetherington (2006) commented that leadership coaching was not effectively utilized by health care executives, but could provide interpersonal skills necessary to lead increasingly complex organizations. Physician leader, physician educator, and medical student respondents to a physician leadership competency survey indicated that the most effective methods for developing physician leadership competencies included mentoring from an experienced leader and coaching (McKenna, Gartland, and & Pugno, 2004). Regardless of the academic discipline, coaching surfaced repeatedly as an enhancement to or necessity for effective experiential learning and leadership development.

Since coaching is a relatively new field, without formal regulations and standards, there is good reason for some skepticism regarding coaching validity. Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, Hernez-Broome, and Whyman (2010) noted that established, accreditated standards do not exist for leadership coaches illustrating the lack of formal recognition and the importance of informal coaching and mentoring, especially in educational contexts. Although formal leadership coaching standards appear missing, Ely et al. (2010) identifed trust and confidentially as critical aspects of coaching. Ting and Hart (2004) identified rapport, collaboration, and commitment as constructs that enhance effective coaching. The identified constructs appear more important to coaching effectiveness and the coaching relationship than prescribed techniques or standards. The lack of formal leadership coaching standards indicates the importance of effective models based on relational

2

constructs that incorporate an establish structure for effective leadership coaching.

Leadership, by its very definition, lends itself to coaching. Feldman and Lankau (2005) stated that early applications of coaching focused on correcting deficiencies, but current applications address and facilitate learning that enhances performance through reflection and mentoring. This application, positive in nature instead of the traditional, negative corrections, enhance the student's perception of coaching and its application. Although various questions and assignments enhance the practicum process, a simple model has not been found that incorporates these reflective and mentoring components. The effectiveness of leadership coaching and the lack of coaching models for leadership development in academe provides an opportunity to explore insights regarding the impact leadership coaching can have on undergraduate leadership practicums.

LEADERSHIP PRACTICUM PROCESS

Students enrolled at a medium-sized, public university in the Southeast have the option to earn a certificate in Leadership Studies at both the graduate and undergraduate level. The five-course curriculum consists of a general leadership theories, concepts, and models foundation course and elective courses in three areas: 1) ethics and social responsibility, 2) human relations, and 3) critical thinking and empirical assessment. Students participate in a leadership practicum as the final course that focuses on developing one aspect of their leadership. Students design and conduct the practicum with approval and oversight by a two-member committee consisting of faculty and professional staff. All practicums require student to have a leadership position where students lead a group of people to accomplish a goal.

The overall student learning objective for the leadership practicum focuses on developing one aspect of the student's leadership, selected by the student from leadership assessments taken during the leadership certificate foundation course and personal reflections. Once students identify an area for improvement, a thorough literature review provides needed insight and knowledge that students utilize during the practicum process. The event or activity used by students to develop their leadership during the practicum must allow students opportunities to practice various skills and competencies associated with the focus of their leadership improvement. Finally, an evaluation strategy provides students valuable feedback to gauge their progress towards accomplishing their learning objectives.

Students participating in the leadership certificate practicum develop a proposal for their practicum and work with the practicum course instructor to ensure that the student's proposal meets minimum practicum requirements. At this point, the students are assigned to their coach who reviews their proposal and then discusses their project and leadership goals with them. Their proposal is revised and

the next step is to meet with their practicum committee. The committee consists of two-university faculty or professional staff members that understand the leadership certificate program, are well versed in diverse aspects of leadership, and volunteer their time to assist students in developing their leadership. Students meet with their committee, discuss their proposal, get their feedback and suggestions, and then gain permission to conduct their practicum. The coach then meets with each student approximately every two weeks throughout the semester. Students fulfill practicum course requirements by providing a formal presentation and paper regarding their practicum experiences to their practicum committee. The committee must evaluate the paper and presentation before granting the student a passing grade for the course.

Students selected for inclusion in the coaching program consisted of undergraduates who lived on campus or had ready access to campus. Non-traditional students and those commuting long distances did not participate in the coaching program due to practical considerations. Students selected for the coaching program worked with a practicum coach and their practicum committee, fulfilling all normal course requirements. The coach did not approve or assign student grades, but supplemented the student's practicum experience with additional coaching sessions focused on the practicum process approved by the student's practicum committee.

THE PROMISE OF A COACHING MODEL

Coaching is a relatively recent personnel development tool that has experienced success in the private sector and has increased in popularity. Although coaching research is still in its infancy, the evidence indicates that coaching contributes to improved organizational and personal performance (Passmore 2006). Many prominent business publications have recognized the importance of professional coaching as organizations experience increased business performance attributed to the results of professional coaching (Fortune Magazine, Money Magazine, Investors Business Daily). The application of this model to educational institutions, however, has been much more modest. Perhaps leadership coaching has had its greatest success in retention efforts by post-secondary educational institutions. Fishman and Decandia (2006) stated,

> At the heart of the (retention) program is the College Coach component. A College Coach is a college employee who chooses to participate in the SUCCESS@Seneca program. The coach takes an active interest in the student's college progress, has a willingness to assist students in exploring services that can improve their skills and motivates them to successfully complete their college journey. The aim of the College Coach is to keep the students connected, on track, goal oriented and motivated. The coach can help students establish

3

goals, anticipate and trouble-shoot problems, encourage them to explore and connect with the appropriate college resources and people and promote self-sufficiency. (p. 16)

In a manner similar to its application in post-secondary retention efforts, coaching shows promise as an intervention mechanism to develop the learning component of an educational practicum. This is achieved when the coach facilitates the structured reflective process to enhance student learning (Black, 2010). The important activity of structured reflection interacts and supports innovative applications of coaching. The following section provides an overview of the five generic components of the coaching process applicable to the leadership practicum experience. The five components include: 1) identifying the gap between the student's existing leadership skills and his/her expectations for a desirable future leadership state, 2) develop goals to overcome the gap, 3) design an action plan, 4) implementation, and 5) evaluation.

The Leadership Practicum Coaching Model

The first step to leadership practicum coaching is the identification of the gap or the difference between the student's existing leadership skills and knowledge and his or her expectations regarding a desirable future leadership state or condition. The coach assists the student in thinking through and clarifying an end goal or vision to meet those expectations. Typical coaching questions to facilitate identifying the gap include:

- What is your vision for this project?
- What is important to you about the project? What matters the most to you?
- What are your expectations? What do you hope to learn or gain through your practicum?

At this stage, the coach should also help the student assess his or her current situation--his or her strengths, weaknesses, obstacles, and resources available. This process establishes baseline information. It may be helpful at this point to have the student take an assessment such as the Strengthsfinder 2.0 (Rath, 2009). Other appropriate assessments for students are the Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientious (DISC) (Brocato, 2003) or the Jung Typology, a modified version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Both DISC and Jung Typology exist online and provide insight to various aspects of student leadership strengths and areas for development. After identifying the gap, the student and coach develop goals.

The second stage consists of the coach and student developing specific, measurable, and realistic goals to overcome the gap. The coach assists the student in translating his/her leadership future state into challenging yet attainable goals. Useful questions the coach may ask include:

- What specific leadership competencies do you want to learn or improve?
- What leadership theory will you use in this practicum?
- What obstacles do you anticipate?
- What resources will you need? (skill, time, money, and support)

After determining appropriate goals, the coach and student engage in developing a plan to make the necessary changes to the student's leadership style.

The coach and student build an action plan based upon the defined gap and development goals. Action plans focus on building relatively small, incremental action steps to move the project along to its ultimate goals. Several elements critical in deriving viable action steps to achieve the project's goals include:

- Brainstorming various actions.
- Discussing the pros and cons of alternatives and selecting the best action steps.
- Anticipating obstacles and resources needed to overcome the obstacles and preparing a plan to manage both anticipated obstacles and resources.

An important aspect to the action plan is to create action steps that are challenging, yet not overwhelming or discouraging for students. The coach plays an important role in developing the action steps, challenging and encouraging the client, as well as providing feedback to the student while creating his or her action steps. The implementation stage allows students to experience the developed plan to achieve the practicum goals.

The implementation stage of the coaching process requires that both student and coach to work together effectively in setting timelines for the execution of action steps. The student needs to set a specific date, time, and place for the execution of various action steps. Continuous, on-going coaching becomes crucial to effective execution. The coach assists in maintaining the vision and goals for the student and supports the student's commitment to the project through encouragement and on-going accountability. The coach can ask questions such as:

- On what date and at what time are you planning on executing your action step?
- What specific resources do you need--people, materials, money? When will you ask, buy, attain what you need?
- How will I know how you are progressing with that goal or action step?

Accountability is essential during the implementation phase to keep the action going forward and achieving results. Evaluation follows implementation and provides for effective reflection.

Evaluation of any endeavor provides feedback for improvement and legitimizes the pedagogy or activity in the eyes of many outside observers. Evaluation is on going throughout the process as the coach helps the student reflect upon and critically evaluate his or her experience with the project. Reflection about the project, as the literature suggests, is important to the learning process and coaches should incorporate reflections throughout the project. As students achieve objectives and goals it becomes important for the student to step back and critically evaluate the process. Questions that the coach can ask include:

- What went well with your project this week?
- What did not work as well? What could you have done differently?
- What will you do differently next week?

At the end of the project the coach may consider asking the following questions:

- Were the goals you set in the beginning accomplished?
- How was your organization affected by the project?
- What was the most meaningful experience during your project?
- In what ways or in which areas have you grown? How have you changed?
- What have you learned about yourself? about leadership?

Before the coaching experience terminates, coaches should congratulate students and celebrate with students for accomplishing their goals.

The Coaching Process and the Practicum

The practicum coaching sessions for leadership practicums consist of the following parts:

    A. Proposal Sessions (2 Sessions)
       1. Introduction.
       2. Revision of Proposal.
    B. Meet with Faculty Committee. (1 Session)
    C. Implementation Sessions. (3 Sessions)
    D. Final Paper and Presentation Session. (1 Session)
    E. Debriefing Session with Coach. (1 Session)
    F. Evaluation Session with third party after presentation. (1 Session)

The first three sessions (usually the first three to four weeks of the semester) set up the framework of the practicum and the coaching process. During the next six weeks, which are the Implementation sessions, the majority of the coaching takes place. In the last two to three weeks the final paper is written and revised and then the presentation given.

The following three to four week timeline outlines the actions to be taken for the initial phases of the leadership practicum.

First Week:

- Student finalizes decision regarding type of practicum project.
- Student meets with course instructor to discuss proposal, leadership competency to improve and theoretical construct to utilize.
- Student writes practicum proposal.
- Course instructor checks proposal for minimum requirements.
- Student emails proposal to coach.

Second and Third Weeks:

- Coach meets with the student.
- First meeting: Introductions and introduction to the coaching process.
- Second meeting: Revision of proposal.
- Student emails completed final proposal to coach and course instructor.
- Student is assigned a two person Practicum Committee.

Third and Fourth Weeks:

- Student meets with Practicum Committee and receives approval to proceed.
- Student meets with his/her practicum student team members and begins the practicum.
- Student conducts and completes a literature review on the agreed upon theoretical construct.

Coaching the Action Plan and Implementation Stage

The action plan and implementation stage usually occurs during the second month of the semester after the student receives approval from his/her faculty committee. The proposal is in place, the goals are clear, and the student has chosen the practicum members. Now the student begins to lead his/her team in brainstorming ideas, selecting the best options, anticipating and collecting resources needed, delegating assignments, and setting timelines for execution and accountability.

The coach assists the student during coaching sessions to think through what is working and what is not working, how obstacles might be removed, and brain storm possible solutions to problems. The coach serves as a thought and accountability partner, to give suggestions when needed and

5

to provide feedback and encouragement. The coach is also there to help the student reflect on what he or she is learning regarding leadership. Some of the areas the coach and student can discuss include:

- How to run meetings, how to delegate and create accountability structures.
- How to communicate with team members – how often, with what means.
- How to state objectives, goals and purposes clearly.
- How to leverage team member strengths and what leadership styles to employ.
- How to encourage and appreciate team members.
- How to manage conflict.
- How the leadership theoretical constructs apply to their practicum.
- The specific ways the student has used the focus leadership competency.
- What the student is learning regarding himself/herself as a leader.
- What the student is learning regarding the process of leading.

This is an active learning stage of the practicum. The coaching sessions are a time to reflect and think, gain clarity for the next steps, problem-solve, and gain new ideas.

A progress report can assist and increase student productivity. The student completes the progress report before meeting with the coach allowing the student to organize his/her thoughts for a more meaningful coaching session. The following provides examples of typical progress report questions:

- What do I want to get out of the coaching session today?
- What action did I take since our last session? What were my wins/challenges?
- What new opportunities have emerged for me since the last session? (See Appendix A for the complete progress report)

At the end of each coaching session, the student should review with the coach and annotate the agreed upon action steps for completion during the next week.

Emails are another important aspect of the coaching, especially during the implementation stage. Emails can remind students of new learning that emerged during the past session, encourage the student, or often can stimulate the student to creatively think between sessions. The student also has access to the coach when questions or a problem arises.

Debriefing and Evaluation Session

At the end of the semester, the coach should arrange time for students to critically evaluate, analyze, consolidate, assimilate, and integrate newly learned concepts and information. Reflections facilitated by the coach provide students a means to deepen their learning and develop connections for future leadership development. An additional aspect of the evaluation process is an evaluation by the student regarding the value of the coaching process during the leadership practicum. This formative coaching evaluation provides the coach with valuable information to adjust coaching methods and approaches based on student feedback. Coaching evaluations are currently not prevalent with approximately one third of all coaching endeavors incorporating coaching evaluations (McDermott, Levenson, and Newton, 2007).

Reflection of coaching participants allows for future leadership development. Ladyshewsky (2006) conducted qualitative research to examine the use of peer coaching creating deeper learning and promote the transfer of theory into practical application. Ladyshewsky 's (2006) use of reflection illustrates the value of reflection in the coaching process.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A practical application of practicum coaching provided insight to the aforementioned leadership practicum coaching process. During the course of this study, researchers compared 10 undergraduate students who received leadership practicum coaching to 5 students who did not receive any form of coaching. The mean age of students was 21.73 years and included 12 white, 1 African American, 2 Asian, 6 male and 9 female participants. To compare the value and impact of the added learning enrichment of coaching to an absence of coaching, two evaluation processes were created; an oral interview questionnaire and a written qualitative questionnaire was administered to all students in the study. Objective third party persons consisting of graduate students administered both of these questionnaires anonymously at the end of the participant's practicum. Interviews occurred in university offices and the total time required to administer both questionnaires was approximately 45 minutes.

The oral, interview questionnaire (see Table 1) was administered to all students who participated in leadership practicum study during the school year.

TABLE 1

Practicum Interview Questions

1. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being no progress and 10 being great progress) how much progress do you feel you made in your leadership development during your practicum?
    Mean for non-coaching participants = 5.8
    Mean for coaching participants = 8.7

2. What keeps that number from being a "10"?

3. Was there something your advisor or coach could have done differently that may have made your rating closer to a "10"?

4. Was there something your advisor or coach could have done more of or done differently that may have made your practicum experience even more effective?

5. Was there something in the practicum process which could be added or changed to make the process more effective?

6. How did the meeting with your committee help you with your practicum?

7. In what ways has advising/coaching helped you in your practicum?

8. What did you find particularly effective or helpful about your advisor or coach?

9. In what way could your advisor or coach improve?

10. How have you benefitted from your participation in this practicum?

11. What advice would you give to future practicum students?

12. Do you have any other thoughts or ideas to share?

The questionnaire resulted from the author's coaching experience and was designed to capture the student's perspectives of the interaction between their coach and/or practicum committee members. The intent of the questionnaire and the small sample size required only face validity for the questionnaire. The mean response for question one of the practicum interview survey (see Table 1), although not significant, indicates the importance and positive impact coaching had on students participating this study's leadership practicums.

The responses from students to the questions in Table 1 represent generalized themes determined from the aggregate of questions. Due to the small sample set and similarity of questions, an aggregate summary versus themes from individual questions provided more meaningful insight to the impact of coaching on the practicum process. Responses from students who did not receive leadership coaching are summarized below:

1. It would have been helpful if there were more faculty members and or committee members that were more involved with us, than just at the beginning and end of the practicum.

2. Quicker feedback from the faculty committee may have prevented obstacles before they arose.

3. Most practicum students felt they could benefit more from helpful insight or oversight from faculty members throughout the practicum. Faculty members were available via email or phone, but the lack of specific supervision times did not enhance student progress.

4. The focus [of the leadership practicum] seemed to focus more on the paper instead of the practicum...the faculty committee should have a more active role in leadership development aspects of the practicum.

5. Most students agreed that they could have made more progress if they would have met with their advisors to have discussions regarding their research. It would have been reassuring to have faculty committee opinions regarding the leadership style that students used and focus of the literature review.

6. Most students felt that they had only scratched the surface when they really could have gone deeper with a more true understanding of the literature review.

7. More meetings with advisors would prove beneficial as advisors could measure progress and hold student accountable.

Student responses generally indicated the desire to have more involvement from either their practicum committee or a have a coach during the practicum process to enhance the reflective process. The intent for the practicum is for students to act independently as leaders to develop their leadership. The unfamiliarity of independently leading by practicum students reinforces basic leader development tenets that require active involvement and a presence of the leader developer when positively influencing others (Baker, 2011). The physical presence and active participation from practicum committee members or a coach can prove challenging given the time required for active coaching or committee member participation and the number of practicum students. Regardless of the time constraints, the results illustrate the importance committee members or a coach's active participation have on a student's learning process to fully realize reflective processes during the leadership practicum.

In contrast, open-ended responses from students who had received coaching indicate satisfaction with the coaching process and the importance coaching had on their leadership practicum success. The following summarized aggregate comments resulted from students participating in a coaching leadership practicum based on the questions found in Table 1:

1. My coach kept me focused on my goals.
2. My coach helped me build my confidence.
3. The beginning sessions were extremely valuable to determine my leadership goals and to assist in writing the proposal.
4. My coach helped me identify learning on a regular basis.
5. My coach held me accountable for goals and intended actions.
6. I would suggest coaching for other practicum students.

The comments from students who received coaching illustrates the positive effect coaching had on the students participating in the leadership practicum. Students appreciated the personalized guidance, facilitated reflection, and greater sense of accountability provided by the practicum coach. The results indicate the importance of incorporating coaching or more active participation by practicum committee members into the leadership practicum process. Student responses to the interview questionnaire provide insight to research questions one and two that focus on the reflective process during practicums and the importance of a guided reflection during the leadership practicum.

A second questionnaire, Coaching Impact Survey (Appendix B), was administered to those students who received coaching to evaluate the leadership practicum coaching process and the coach in greater detail than the oral questionnaire (Table 1). Nine out of the 10 coaching students completed the Coaching Impact Survey. Results of the Coaching Impact Survey indicate student mean responses consistently rated his or her coach and practicum experience as agree or strongly agree for both the coaching process and the effectiveness of the coach. Aspects of the coaching practicum process rated highest (5 of 5) by all participants included sessions where coaches assisted students to identify leadership goals, assisted in writing the proposal, and feeling that the coach believed in the student and was confident the student would succeed. Other coaching aspects rated high were assisting students with the paper and presentation requirements, keeping students focused on achieving goals, effective listening by the coach, availability of the coach, and suggesting coaching for other leadership practicum students. The one aspect rated lowest focused on the coach helping students identify learning during the practicum process. The low score could reflect a poorly worded question or an area coaches can focus to improve the practicum coaching process. The overall student responses provides insight to the effectiveness coaching has on leadership practicums and answers the third research question relating to the effect coaching has on experiential learning during the leadership practicum.

Overall, students who received leadership practicum coaching enjoyed a more detailed and enriched learning experience that increased their awareness of their leadership strengths and areas for improvement. An additional benefit that coaching students received was practical experience regarding the importance leaders (the coach in this instance) had in leader development. The importance of developing an effective relationship between the leader (coach) and follower (student) provided a valuable insight to practicum students illustrating the critical nature of relationships to the leadership process. Although information and coaching occurred through email exchanges, the most effective coaching took place during scheduled meetings. The personal and physical presence of the coach enhanced the coaching process and allowed full utilization of the practicum experience to develop the leadership of the practicum student. Leadership practicum coached students were afforded the opportunity to experience personal involvement and commitment to leadership development providing valuable experiential learning that will hopefully translate into the student better understanding the critical role leaders play in developing other leaders.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations occurred during this study that future studies can learn from providing for a more effective construct allowing a more thorough examination of research

8

questions. The methodology provided by the leadership practicum model is appropriate, but a much larger sample size would allow a quantitative analysis that may provide convergent validity to the qualitative findings of this study. A more thorough qualitative analysis is possible with a larger sample size. Future studies may also incorporate software programs that provide a more detailed qualitative analysis.

This study focused only on undergraduate students. After developing a larger sample size, the study could incorporate graduate students that would allow greater confidence in generalizing results. A larger, more diverse sample size would require more analysts who can collect data in multiple contexts rather than only focusing on undergraduate students. The larger number of analysts would necessitate more thorough and deliberate analyst frame of reference training and calibration to ensure a consistent data gathering methodology.

Coaching has had a positive and encouraging impact on students participating in leadership practicums, providing a framework for future leadership development. Although coaching provides a positive influence on the leadership practicum process, several limitations exist that could prohibit or restrict integrating a coaching aspect in leadership practicums. The limitations that could impact implementing a coaching aspect into leadership practicums include inadequate resources, the number of potential students needing coaching sessions, flexibility to accommodate non-traditional or geographically distant students, qualified coaches, the difficulty encountered when measuring learning outcomes, and program evaluation.

The most critical resource impacting the implementation of a coaching aspect into practicums includes time and cost. Coaching requires a tremendous time commitment from both coaches and participants when properly conducting a coaching session. Coaches need adequate time to prepare then conduct coaching sessions. Student time is valuable, especially at universities where a large percentage of students commute and/or have jobs to support their financial requirements. Cost also impacts coaching, as the time needed to prepare and conduct coaching sessions requires proper compensation for coaches.

The number of students that desire to participate in the coaching sessions can exceed the number of coaches or amount of coaching time available to accommodate the coaching demand. Students who live at great distances away from campus can create circumstances making coaching sessions impractical or difficult to accommodate. Online students participating in leadership practicums via telephone or Skype-type technology create coaching challenges that could prohibit quality, personal, coaching sessions decreasing the effect of coaching on learning outcomes.

The number of qualified coaches can impact the ability of a program to provide coaching sessions for students. Qualified coaches must understand coaching techniques and have the needed knowledge regarding leadership studies to coach students effectively to accomplish leadership practicum learning objectives. Coaching curriculum can require several years to complete coaching qualifications and at great expense.

Measuring leadership practicum learning outcomes proves difficult and often the only measures available include self-reflections and anecdotal or face validity statistical analyses. There are numerous leadership assessment instruments existing that can assess various leadership theories, models, or aspects. However, rarely can an assessment measure the exact learning outcomes of a leadership practicum as students focus on personal leadership behaviors or constructs that involve multiple or variations of established leadership constructs. Program assessment also provides challenges as leadership practicum courses and programs provide curriculums that can create ethical issues or constructs not conducive to experimental or quasi-experimental assessment analysis.

The limitations discussed provide challenges to overcome when implementing coaching into leadership practicums. Several solutions can provide the needed coaching aspects desired to enhance or achieve learning outcomes while acknowledging the constraints that exist for effective leadership coaching. Although not ideal in most instances, the proposed solutions can provide varying degrees of leadership coaching.

Group coaching can mitigate the lack of qualified coaches or limited coaching time available for leadership practicums, allowing more students to participate in leadership coaching. One difficulty encountered with group coaching involves coordinating student and coaching schedules. Often student and coach schedules accommodate only the most undesirable meeting times. Group coaching decreases the personal nature of leadership coaching and prohibits many personal conversations needed for an effective coaching session. Although not most desirable, group coaching can accommodate larger numbers of students providing a limited version of leadership coaching.

Limited meetings can provide the focus students need to elevate an average practicum to a very good practicum. Often, a student's first experience with a practicum occurs with the leadership certificate requirement. A guiding hand can alleviate the ambiguity that students experience when participating in an experiential learning experience for the first time. Meeting even once with a student after the student begins the leadership practicum can provide the needed assurance and guidance the student needs to enhance their learning experience and create a more meaningful leadership development experience.

Virtual coaching can also provide meaningful guidance experiences especially if the alternative provides no coaching. The advent of Skype and other public domain applications provides easy and cost effective access to coaches and coaching sessions. An alternative to visual and audio technology is audio only through phone conversations or the use of intercom phone devices that allow hands-free

9

conversations. The ability to peruse files and other documentation while conducting a conversation increases the coaching session effectiveness and enhances the ability to accomplish learning objectives. Although not ideal or preferred, alternative, virtual coaching sessions can provide coaching sessions for students not able to attend face to face meetings or increase the number of students a coach can accommodate.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Enhanced experiential learning appears to occur with the inclusion of coaching sessions during leadership practicums at the undergraduate level. Challenges still exist to accommodate greater numbers of students participating in leadership practicums given limited resources. Although constraints exist, future studies could focus on expanding coaching sessions to other student populations to include graduate students, recent graduates looking for leader development in professional contexts, and high school students who have a desire to experience leadership before entering higher education or the work force.

Future research should consider Bandura's work on vicarious learning as coaching involves learning from modeling. Modeling appropriate behavior contributes to the ability of one to learn from his environment and social context. People learn from modeling the information they receive by observing behaviors of other people. Without such observations and modeling, learning in social context would prove ineffective (1977). Banduar's work would complement the leadership practicum coaching model used in this study and may provide insights to more effective coaching of leadership practicum students.

Leveraging technology can provide opportunities unknown today that may have positive impacts on reducing constraints within the coaching process described in this study. Virtual technology increases almost daily with the introduction of newer, more capable, lower-cost iPads and other electronic media devices. Virtual classrooms, only in concept several years previously, now reflect reality. As technology costs continue to decrease and enhancements increase visual resolution, operating ease, and accessibility, the need for re-evaluating coaching methods and process to maximize new capabilities may provide solutions to the previously discussed constraints. In addition to reducing constraints, the new technology may also provide exciting new possibilities that may provide coaching opportunities more effectively.

REFERENCES

Alleyne, J., & Jumaa, M.O., (2007). Building the capacity for evidence-based clinical nursing leadership: The role of exective co-coaching and group clinical supervision for quality patiet services. *Journal of Nursing Management, 15,* 230-243.

Baker, J. (2011). *An analysis of peer leadership competencies and skills.* (Doctoral dissertation). retrieved from http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/diss/7.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc. Bell, M., & Habel, S. (2009). Coaching for a vision for leadership. *International Journal of Reality Therapy , 29* (1), 18-23.

Black, P. (2010). A multi-dimensional model of reflective learning for professional development. *Reflective Practice, 11*(2), 245-258.

Blackman, A. (2010). Coaching as a leadership development tool for teachers. *Education 36*(3), 421-441.

Boud, D., Keogh, R. & Walker, D. (Eds.). (1985). *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning.* London: Kogan Page.

Boyatzis, R.E., Smith, M.L., & Blaize, N. (2006). Developing sustainable leaders through coaching and compassion. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 5(1),* 8-24.

Brightman, B., & Moran, J. (2001). Managing organizational priorities. *Career Development International , 6* (5), 244-257.

Brocato, R. (2003). Coaching for improvement: An essential role for team leaders and managers. *Journal for Quality and Praticipation, 26* (1), 17–22.

Butler, D., Forbes, B., & Johnson, L. (2008). An examination of a skills-based leadership coaching course in an MBA program. *Journal of Education for Business* (March/April), 227-232.

Crum, K., & Sherman, W. (2008). Facilitating high achievement. *Journal of Educational Administration , 46* (5), 562-580.

Daudelin, M. W. (1996). Learning from experience through reflection. *Organizational Dynamics. 24*(3): 36-48.

Douglas, K. (2009). The firefly effect: Build teams that capture creativity and catapult results. *Business Book Review Library, 26* (36), 1-11.

Effron, M., Greenslade, S., & Salob, M. (2005). Growing great leaders; Does it really matter? *HR, Human Resource Planning , 28* (3), 18-23.

Ely, K., Boyce, L.A., Nelson, J.K., Zaccaro, S.J., Hernex-Broome, G. & Whyman, W. (2010). Evaluating leadership coaching: A review and integrated framework. *Leadership Quarterly (21),* pp. 585-599.

Eyler J., Giles, D., & Schmiede, E. (1996). *A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service-learning: Student Voices and Reflections. A Technical Assistance Project funded by the Corporation for National Service.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

Feldman, D., & Lankau, M. (2005). Executive coaching: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Management , 31,* 829-848.

Fishman, S., & Decandia, L. (2006). SUCCESS @ Seneca: Facilitating student and staff success. *9*(2). College Quarterly. Retrieved June 6, 2011, from College

10

Quarterly: http://www.senecac.on.ca/quarterly/2006-vol09-num02-spring/fishman_decandia.html

Gandossy, R., & Guarnieri, R. (2008). Can you measure leadership? *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *50* (1), 64-70.

Giles, D.E., Honnet, E.P., & Migliore, S. (Eds.). (1991). *Research Agenda for Combining Service and Learning in the 1990s*. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education.

Guskin, A. (1994). Reducing Student Costs and Enhancing Student Learning: Restructuring the Role of Faculty. *Change 26*(5), 16-25.

Hackman, J.R., & Wageman, R. (2005). A theory of team coaching. *Academy of Management Review, 30(2)*, 269-287.

Harris, L., & Kuhnert, K. (2008). Looking through the lens of leadership: A constructive developmental approach. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, *29* (1), 47-67.

Henochowicz, S., & Hetherington, D. (2006). Leadership coaching in health care. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *27* (3), 183-189.

Holt, S., Bjorklund, R., & Green, V. (2009). Leadership and culture: Examining the relationship between cultural background and leadership perceptions. *Journal of Global Business Issues*, *3* (2), 149-164.

Hunting, P. (2001). Developing natural leadership. *The British Journal of Administrative Management*, *May/June* (25), 28-29.

Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Ladyshewsky, Richard (2006). Peer coaching: A constructivist methodology for enhancing critical thinking in postgraduate business education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, Vol 25 (1), 67 – 84.

Lynch, C.L. (1996). Facilitating and assessing unstructured problem solving. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 27, 16-27.

McCarthy, M.D. (1996). One-time and short-term service-learning experiences. In B. Jacoby and Associates (Eds.), *In Service-Learning in Higher Education*, (pp. 113-134). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

McDermott, M., Levenson, A., & Newton, S. (2007). What coaching can and cannot do for your organization. *Hum Resource Planning, 30* (2), 30-37.

McKenna, M.K,, Gartland, M.P., & Pugno, P.A. (2004). Development of physician leadership competencies:

Perceptions of physician leaders, physician educators and medical students. *The Journal of Health Administration Education, 21*(3), 343-354.

McPherson, B. (2009). Equipping managers to lead a diverse workforce. *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care, 2* (2), 37-40.

Nelson, K. (2009). Leadership coaching tip: You are your most important tool. *Integral Leadership Review*, *9* (4), 1-3.

Nissen, L. B., Merrigan, D., & Kraft, M. (2005). Moving mountains together: Strategic community leadership and system change. *Child Welfare*, *84* (2), 123-140.

Northouse, P.G. (2010). *Leadership theory and practice* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Passmore, J. (2003). Goal-focused coaching. *The Occupational Psychologist*, 49, 30-33.

Passmore, J. (2006a). Integrative Coaching. In J. Passmore (Ed), *Excellence in Coaching.*. London: Kogan Page.

Passmore, J. (2006b). Coaching psychology: Applying integrative coaching within education. *British Journal of Leadership in Public Services. Vol 2* (3) pp 27-33.

Ralph, E., Walker, K., & Wimmer, R. (2009). Practicum and clinical experiences: Postpracticum students' views. *Journal of Nursing Education*, *48* (8), 434-441.

Rath, T. (2007). *Strengthsfinder 2.0*. New York: Gallup Press.

Robertson, J. (2008). *Coaching ecucational leadership: Building leadership capacity through partnership*. London: Sage.

Rost, J.C. (1991). *Leadership for the twenty-first century*. London: Praeger.

Schon, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

Ting, S, & Hart, E.W. (2004). Formal coaching. In C.D. McCauley & E. Van Velsor (Eds.)., *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development* (pp. 116-150). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Volckmann, R. (2009). Leadership coaching tip: Preparing for a difficult conversation. *Integral Leadership Review, 9* (5), 1-3.

Wakefield, M. (2006). New views of leadership coaching. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, *29* (2), 9-12.

Walker, E. (2009). Bunches, groups and teams working together. *Physician Executive*, *35* (5), 90-91.

Wise, D. & Jacobo, A. (2010). Towards a framework for leadership coaching. *School Leadership and Management, 30*(2), 159-169.

Marie Yager, MA, is adjunct professor in Leadership Studies at the Center for Leadership Excellence at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA. Mrs. Yager is a certified leadership coach, coaching students in the Leadership Certificate program who are completing their capstone practicum. Mrs. Yager conducts research on the impact of coaching on leadership studies and she also teaches leadership studies classes.

11

John Baker, Ed.D., is an assistant professor in Leadership Studies at the Center for Leadership Excellence at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA. Dr. Baker teaches leadership studies in various topics at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. Baker's research agenda focuses on peer leadership and leadership development.

Phillip Coleman, Ed.D., is an assistant professor in Information Systems/Systems Management/Computer Information Technology Department at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA. Dr. Coleman has various research interests in both technology and leadership and teaches leadership studies at the graduate level.

APPENDIX A

Progress Report

Please email this form to me the day before each coaching session.

1. How have things been the last few weeks (with practicum or just in general)?

2. What actions did I take since our last meeting?

3. What key "learning moments" did I have since our last meeting? What key learning moments did I have in my specific area of competence development?

4. What am I most proud of?

5. How did I let myself down? What can I learn from this?

6. What is the next step?

7. What do I want to discuss and work on in our next coaching appointment?

APPENDIX B

Coaching Impact Survey

Part I. Which competencies were improved? (open-ended question)

Part II: (answers based on five point Likert scale, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

1. The beginning sessions dealing with thinking through leadership goals and writing the proposal were valuable to me. Mean participant response = 5.00

2. The sessions/emails reminding and focusing me on my leadership development goals were valuable. Mean participant response =4.67

3. The sessions dealing with my paper and/or presentation were valuable. Mean participant response =4.89

4. I produced results faster/easier because of my coaching. Mean participant response = 4.67

5. Overall, the coaching I received helped me achieve my *project* goals. Mean participant response = 4.67

6. Overall the coaching I received helped me achieve my *personal leadership* goals. Mean participant response = 4.67

7. I would suggest coaching for other practicum students. Mean participant response = 4.89

12

Part III. (answers based on five point Likert scale, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

1.   My coach helped me create realistic goals and timelines. Mean participant response = 4.67

2.   My coach kept me focused on goals. Mean participant response = 4.89

3.   My coach reviewed progress on my leadership development on a regular basis. Mean participant response = 4.78

4.   My coach helped me to identify learning on a regular basis. Mean participant response = 4.33

5.   My coach encouraged me to think of the next action step. Mean participant response = 4.67

6.   My coach held me accountable for goals and intended actions. Mean participant response = 4.67

7.   My coach gave me the feeling that he/she believed in me and was confident that I would succeed. Mean participant response = 5.00

8.   My coach focused on success in our interaction rather than on my failures. Mean participant response = 4.78

9.   My coach listened fully to what I had to say before giving feedback. Mean participant response = 4.89

10. My coach asked questions that demonstrated understanding and involvement. Mean participant response = 4.78

11. My coach provided support and encouragement when I tried new behaviors and actions. Mean participant response = 4.78

12. My coach was available between sessions. Mean participant response = 4.89

13