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Leadership in Action: Student Leadership Development in an Event Management Course

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to examine the leadership practice scores and leadership behaviors of students before and after an event management course. A mixed methods approach was utilized. The Student-Leadership Practice Inventory (S-LPI) was administered to a sample of 184 students in three semesters of an event management course. Students completed the S-LPI at the beginning and at the end of the course. The students also wrote reflections of their leadership behaviors and learnings.

Results of the study showed that students' mean leadership scores increased significantly for all practice areas between pre and post, with the largest increase for Enabling Others to Act (EA). Also, all correlations between pre and post scores were statistically significant, indicating that responses at pre and post followed similar patterns, with students who scored higher on pre also tended to score higher on post. Reflections from students demonstrated significant understanding of effective leadership behaviors and learning. The sample was college students enrolled in an event management course at one university, therefore results may not be generalized to all students. Results of this study suggest that university and college courses can have a very powerful impact on student learning and leadership development. This paper furthers the knowledge base and understanding of students' leadership growth through involvement in a university course as measured by the S-LPI.

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Findings – Results of the study showed that students' mean leadership scores increased significantly for all practice areas between pre and post, with the largest increase for Enabling Others to Act (EA). Also, all correlations between pre and post scores were statistically significant, indicating that responses at pre and post followed similar patterns, with students who scored higher on pre also tended to score higher on post. Reflections from students demonstrated significant understanding of effective leadership behaviors and learning.

Research limitations/implications – The sample was college students enrolled in an event management course at one university, therefore results may not be generalized to all students.

Practical implications – Results of this study suggest that university and college courses can have a very powerful impact on student learning and leadership development.

Originality/value – This paper furthers the knowledge base and understanding of students' leadership growth through involvement in a university course as measured by the S-LPI.

Keywords – Behaviors, Leadership, Mixed methods, Students

Paper type – Research paper

Leadership in Action: Student Leadership Development in an Event Management Course

Search the term "leadership" in any database and thousands of related titles will likely emerge. Articles range from topics such as characteristics of leaders (e.g. see Goleman, 1998) to leadership styles or personality traits (e.g. see Rudman, 2008; Strang & Kuhnert, 2009). Although the writings about leadership are numerous and the term may carry slightly different connotations to the reader, there appears to be consensus that leadership is important in all context areas of one's life - work, home, school, and community (Love, 2005).

The importance of leadership education for today's undergraduate students cannot be underestimated. In their future careers, students will experience the unpredictable and chaotic work environments of today's global market (Kunz & Garner, 2007). To succeed, students will need the ability to find and synthesize diverse sources of information, to manage self, and to empower others, all hallmarks of effective leadership (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998). Within the field of higher education, Astin, Astin, and Associates (2000) declared universities and colleges pivotal in shaping the quality of leadership in contemporary American society.

Existing literature outlines the importance of leadership skills and behaviors in the workplace. When reviewing the impact of leadership on the overall work organization, the need for leadership and the positive impact on organizational factors are noted. In times of economic difficulty, Berke, Kossler, and Wakerfield (2009) stressed the need for effective leadership in organizations. Researchers have explored the outcomes related to leadership. The benefits of leadership in the workplace are touted as including lower employee turnover (Lim, 2008) and better long-term financial success (Roi, 2006). Additionally, the relationship between the leader and employee appears to impact employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Cogliser, Schriescheim, Schandura, & Garder, 2009). Further, "regardless of the

specific … responsibilities, the job announcement always call[s] for strong leadership skills"
(Schuchardt, 2006, p. 12).

Despite the importance of leadership, there is deep concern among U.S. employers that
young people are not adequately prepared with the skills to compete and thrive in the global
economy (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006). An overwhelming 81% of employers polled
indicated that leadership was "very important" for new entrants with a four-year college diploma.
For both two-year and four-year college graduates, lack of leadership was the second most
frequently reported applied skill "deficiency" (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006).
Although many undergraduate students will become leaders in their professions, there are limited
opportunities within the higher education setting for leadership development and education
(Walker, 2006). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess through both qualitative and
quantitative means the leadership development of students enrolled in a course designed, in part,
to enhance the leadership behaviors of student class members.

Literature Review

Student Learning

University and college mission statements reflect the value placed on developing future
leaders who can contribute to lifelong, productive participation in society (Eich, 2008). Faculty
within higher education strive to prepare students for their chosen professions so that upon
graduation these students are ready to enter the workforce. In their study of hospitality
management students, Zhong and Couch (2007) found that female students perceived "that
education should prepare women for leadership roles in industry" (p. 371). Furthermore, it seems
that student learning through participation in higher education assists with leadership
development. Marques (2006) reexamined the important link between student learning in higher

education and leadership with a notable section entitled: "Most great learners become great leaders" (p. 926). Shertzer et al. (2005) focused on the need for students to learn to distinguish among the requirements for and implications of positional leadership, authoritarian leadership, democratic leadership, shared leadership, and civic responsibility. They addressed four dimensions of student leadership: (1) the importance of leadership to the student, (2) self-perception as a leader, (3) importance of leadership after college, and (4) the need for leaders to be able to work in teams and groups.

Learning, therefore, appears to be an essential component to leadership development. Heifetz (1994) referred to this leadership philosophy as "learning leadership," whereby the leadership concept is a learning strategy applicable to all people, not just leaders with assigned authority. In her leadership book, *Leadership can be taught*, Parks (2005) illustrated these distinctions as follows: "You might exercise leadership from a position of authority, but you might not - a lot of dominant people don't exercise any leadership … a lot of people in positions of authority don't exercise any leadership" (p. 39).

Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005) presented learning stages students must go through for leadership development. In the first stage, students believed that others, not them, "do" leadership. In the next stage, students viewed leadership as positional (only those identified formally as leaders demonstrate leadership behaviors). In the final stage, students adopted the notion of "leadership as a daily process - as a part of self identity" (p. 607). It is important to note that not all students in the study reached this final stage of leadership identity. To further this area of study, Posner (2009b) studied graduate students to assess their learning tactics and leadership behaviors. Learning scores were higher for students engaged in leadership behaviors with leadership scores lower for students not as frequently engaged in

leadership behaviors. Students reported using thinking as a learning tactic more frequently than the other learning tactics identified (action learning, learning through feelings and learning thorough accessing).

Student Leadership Development

College classroom strategies have been suggested for developing and learning leadership. In the Kellogg Foundation Project *Leadership in the Making*, the researchers concluded that leadership potential exists in every student and universities can develop this potential through leadership programs and activities (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Eich (2008) commented, "Students learn about leadership in the process of understanding themselves, others, and the world around them" (p.186). Hay and Hodgkinson (2005) proposed a focus on teaching the skills of negotiation, networking, conflict resolution, and communication as helpful leadership skills for management students. The value of teamwork as a way to develop student leadership skills/behaviors has been presented (Arendt & Gregoire, 2006). Reflective activities have been suggested for classroom use (Arendt & Gregoire, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2006) and have been utilized in the workplace (Densten & Gray, 2001; Loo & Thorpe, 2002; Winch & Ingram, 2004). In general, experiential learning which engages students at the emotional, physical, and cognitive levels helps students make connections between their learning and their personal lives; forming deeper, longer-lasting learning (Hawley, 2005; Kolb, 1984). An overriding theme in developing student leadership behaviors and skill is the aspect of doing leadership. Posner (2009a) summarized the idea as follows, "We should assign students projects that require them to go out and lead and then come back and reflect on that experience" (p. 5).

Method

Instrument

The current study assessed leadership of students enrolled in three semesters of an event management course at a land-grant university in the Midwestern United States through the Student-Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI). The tool was developed originally based on more than 2,500 manager case studies (Kouzes & Posner, 1987) and later validated as a good predictor of leadership behavior and effectiveness (Posner & Kouzes, 1988). The Student LPI (S-LPI), targeted toward students, paralleled the development of the LPI, with the exception of students' personal best stories and follow-up interviews in comparison to managers' (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). The 30-item S-LPI includes five leadership practice areas: Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Encouraging the Heart, Challenging the Process, and Enabling Others to Act (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). A description of each is provided:

- Modeling the Way: behaving in a way that you want others to copy

- Inspiring a Shared Vision: spreading enthusiasm and gaining support for the vision

- Encouraging the Heart: celebrating accomplishments and giving support when others are exhausted or frustrated

- Challenging the Process: willingness to seek out and conquer challenges

- Enabling Others to Act: fostering teamwork and building trust

Researchers continue to utilize the LPI and S-LPI with valid and reliable results. Internal reliability scores for the five practice areas range from .66 for Challenging the Process to .80 for Encouraging the Heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Demographic differences do not seem to impact scores on the S-LPI. However, there is evidence to suggest that leadership coursework

and leadership experiences positively impact S-LPI scores. Students' self-perceived leadership behaviors improved with participation in a leadership development course or serving in a formal leadership role, as measured by the S-LPI (Arendt & Gregoire 2005a, 2005b; Pugh, 2000).

Procedure

Hunter, Bedell-Avers, and Mumford (2007) presented several problems with typical leadership studies noting the lack of context understanding within the study itself as well as potential overuse of leadership surveys without regard for whether the study participants perform the leadership activity or not. To help remedy this, variables were measured related to the context where the leadership behaviors were taking place (in the classroom) and descriptions of leadership behaviors were used to support the students' understandings of the leadership assessment tool.

Therefore, this research study employed a mixed methods approach using both a quantitative method of data collection (S-LPI) and a qualitative method of data collection (open-ended, reflective questions). Using a scheme presented by Bryman (2004), this study is classified as expansion and complementary, where responses from the open-ended questions were used to expand on the findings from the S-LPI. The study received institutional review board approval. All students in the three semesters of the course were invited to participate in the survey, with no extra credit or other compensation provided.

The researchers distributed the S-LPI as a pre- and a post-test to students over three semesters of an event management course; the pre-test during the first class meeting and the post-test during the last week of the semester. The survey included Likert-type items in which students were asked how frequently they engaged in the leadership behaviors and actions, with responses ranging from 1 = rarely to 5 = frequently. For example, students were asked to rate

how they "Actively listen to diverse points of view." Following each semester, the researchers received student demographic data from the Registrar's Office including semester grade point average, credits taken during the semester, ACT scores, age, and year. Descriptive statistics were used to measure frequencies, means, and standard deviations of response items. Paired *t*-tests measured differences between pre-and post-test scores.

As a final, end-of-course assignment, students were instructed to complete a typed reflective report that detailed their constructive, yet realistic assessment of themselves as a member of the event management course. Students were prompted to describe a situation in which they learned something about their leadership behaviors. The authors first independently analyzed these statements according to the five practice areas established by Kouzes and Posner (2006). Next, the researchers worked together to compare, discuss, and finalize the placement of these themes into the five practice areas utilizing a back-and-forth process of interpretation (Spiggle, 1994). The researchers achieved a 100% agreement level through this process.

Event Management Course

Event management is a growing field and covers a wide variety of events and festivals (e.g., sports, fundraisers, conferences, meetings, and weddings). The event management course, used in this study, was developed to enhance the leadership skills of student class members; the majority of which enrolled in the department of Apparel, Educational Studies, and Hospitality Management. The capstone experience of the class was an annual fashion show, which regularly fills a 2,200-seat university auditorium. Students enrolled in the elective course for 3 credits, repeatable for 1 credit. Between 65 and 75 students enrolled each spring semester and were placed based on student interest and class needs into the committees of design, fundraising, hospitality and alumni relations, modeling, publicity/public relations, and set design. Student

directors (positional leaders) for these committees were interviewed and selected by the producers of the show. Committee members enrolled as 200-level students, and directors enrolled at the 400-level; this provided recognition to those students assuming a greater leadership role. Two producers were appointed by the class instructor. They were typically seniors and their job was to oversee the vision for the fashion show and the direction of each class meeting.

The class met for two hours each Wednesday evening, with additional one-hour weekly director meetings. Committee members were expected to devote an additional 1.5 to 5 hours each week outside of class on the tasks of their committee; for example, the fundraising committee was expected to find sponsors for the 25-plus awards and the modeling committee was expected to audition, select models, and hold weekly practices. Committees worked collaboratively to ensure the many tasks of show planning and promotion were completed. For example, the set-tech and design committee needed to work together to approve a final stage and lighting design that would not detract from the theme of the show or the garments on display. The publicity/public relations committee worked collaboratively with the fundraising committee to ensure award sponsors received sufficient acknowledgement and publicity during and following the event.

The instructor for the course provided a sounding board for the students, but generally allowed all decisions to be made through the process of committee or classroom consensus and/or majority rule. During the first week of each semester, students were guided in a discussion of the hallmarks of effective team-work. Other than this formal lesson, throughout the semester, the instructor would informally highlight exemplary illustrations of team-work and leadership and/or discuss on an individual basis problems committees were enduring. According

to the department's 2007 review, students took great pride in the university classification of the class as a "student-run organization."

Results

The sample consisted of traditional college-aged students. Participants in the study ranged from 18-32 years with 94% between the ages of 19 and 23. The majority of the students were female, representative of the greater student body of the Apparel Program. The number of credits taken in the spring semester of enrollment in the event management course ranged from 3 to 21 credits. The average number of credits taken was 14.9, typical of students in the department. Spring semester grade point averages (collected from the Registrar's Office following the semester) ranged from 1.6 to 4.0, with an average student GPA of 3.28.

Quantitative Results

Internal reliability scores for the five practice areas were acceptable and ranged from .66 for the pre-test of Enabling Others to Act to .84 for the post-test of Encouraging the Heart (Table I). Paired *t*-tests were used to determine whether observed differences between pre and post scores were statistically significant. The results are summarized in Table II. The major finding is that mean scores increased significantly for all practice areas between pre and post, with the largest increase for Enabling Others to Act (EA). Also, all correlations between pre and post scores were statistically significant, indicating that responses at pre and post follow similar patterns, with students who score higher on pre also tending to score higher on post. The strongest correlation was for Enabling the Heart (EH) and weakest for Enabling Others to Act (EA).

Table I. S-LPI Practice Areas and Standardized Cronbach Alphas

S-LPI Practice Areas	Standardized Cronbach Alphas
Modeling the Way (Premodel—6 items) (M = 23.6793, SD = 3.04796); (Postmodel—6 items) (M = 24.8207, SD = 2.96895) Example: I set a personal example of what I expect from other people.	Premodel = .731 Postmodel = .772
Inspiring a Shared Vision (Preinspiration—6 items) (M = 23.6630, SD = 3.49481); (Postinspiration—6 items) (M = 25.1957, SD = 3.19405) Example: I look ahead and communicate about what I believe will affect us in the future.	Preinspiration = .774 Postinspiration = .806
Challenging the Process (Prechallenge—6 items) (M = 23.0054, SD = 3.37217); (Postchallenge—6 items) (M = 25.0652, SD = 3.21133) Example: I look around for ways to develop and challenge my skills and abilities.	Prechallenge = .750 Postchallenge = .795
Enabling Others to Act (PreEA—6 items) (M = 25.1304, SD = 2.55526); (PostEA—6 items) (M = 26.1467, SD = 2.58731) Example: I foster cooperative rather than competitive relationships among people I work with.	PreEA = .657 PostEA = .756
Encouraging the Heart (PreEH—6 items) (M = 24.5870, SD = 3.40893) (PostEH—6 items) (M = 25.8859, SD = 3.15934) Example: I praise people for a job well done.	PreEH = .813 Post EH = .843

Table II. Results of Paired Samples *t*-Tests (*n* = 184)

		Pre and Post Mean	Pre and Post Standard Deviation	Correlation Between Pre and Post	Mean Difference (Post minus Pre)	*T*
Pair 1	Premodel	3.9466	.50799			
	Postmodel	4.1368	.49482	.456***	.19022	4.933***
Pair 2	Preinspiration	3.9438	.58247			
	Postinspiration	4.1993	.53234	.455***	.25543	5.940***
Pair 3	Prechallenge	3.8342	.56203			
	Postchallenge	4.1775	.53522	.469***	.34330	8.232***
Pair 4	PreEA	4.1884	.42588			

	PostEA	4.3578	.43122	.377***	.16938	4.804***
Pair 5	PreEH	4.0978	.56816			
	PostEH	4.3143	.52656	.588***	.21649	5.895***

*** $p < .001$

Repeated measures analysis of variance was employed to estimate a model for the post

practice area measures, with the within-subjects factor consisting of the five post practice area

variables and the between-subjects main effect factor consisting of the three years that data were

collected. In addition, covariates were included to adjust for premodeling, preinspiration,

prechallenge, preEA, and preEH scores, in addition to students' spring semester grade point

average, number of credits taken in the spring semester, ACT test scores, age, and year. Thus, the

model allows testing whether there is: (a) a difference among the means of the five post practice

area variables, (b) a difference over time in scores on the five post practice area variables, (c) an

interaction between year and practice area (that is, whether the trend over the three years differs

for the five post practice area variables), and (d) any effect of the covariates. Descriptive

statistics for the five post practice area variables, for each year (2007, 2008, and 2009) are

summarized in Table III.

Table III. Descriptive Statistics for Post Practice Area Variables, by Year

	year	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
POSTmeanmodeling	2007	4.0327	.43043	56
	2008	4.2000	.49270	60
	2009	4.1667	.53795	68
	Total	4.1368	.49482	184
POSTmeaninspiration	2007	4.0685	.48698	56
	2008	4.2972	.51993	60
	2009	4.2206	.56387	68
	Total	4.1993	.53234	184
POSTmeanchallenge	2007	4.0655	.45580	56
	2008	4.2139	.55072	60

	2009	4.2377	.57398	68
	Total	4.1775	.53522	184
POSTmeanenableoth ers	2007	4.3571	.41001	56
	2008	4.3167	.42375	60
	2009	4.3946	.45703	68
	Total	4.3578	.43122	184
POSTmeanencourage theheart	2007	4.2560	.57293	56
	2008	4.3639	.48079	60
	2009	4.3186	.52841	68
	Total	4.3143	.52656	184

Multivariate statistical tests (Wilks' lambda) showed that there was not a significant difference among the means of the five practice area post scores ($p = .269$), nor for premodel ($p = .173$), preEA ($p = .209$), spring semester grade point average ($p = .467$), credits taken in spring semester ($p = .243$), ACT scores ($p = .424$), age ($p = .663$), or year ($p = .289$). However, statistically significantly higher levels of post-test scores were associated with higher values of premodeling ($p < .001$), prechallenge ($p = .011$), and preEH ($p < .001$). Although the statistically significant result for Mauchly's test of sphericity ($W = .691, p < .001$) indicated that the correlations among the five post scores were not equal, further evaluation using standard adjustments for lack of sphericity (Greenhouse-Geisser, Huynh-Feldt, and lower-bound) showed that these conclusions were robust and valid even in the absence of constant correlations among the outcome measures. Tests of between-subjects effects, summarized in Table IV, indicated that the average of the five post activity areas was predicted significantly by only preEH.

Table IV. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	F	p	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power(a)
Intercept	22.398	.000	.115	.997
Meanmodel	.829	.364	.005	.148
Meaninspiration	.001	.978	.000	.050
Meanchallenge	.818	.367	.005	.147
Meanenabling	.078	.780	.000	.059

Meanencouragingheart	16.757	.000	.089	.983
Spring semester gpa	.228	.634	.001	.076
Credits taken in spring semester	.979	.324	.006	.166
ACT	.211	.646	.001	.074
Age	1.572	.212	.009	.238
Year	.805	.449	.009	.186
Error				

a Computed using alpha = .05

Qualitative Results

Student statements on the end-of-course reflective assignment supported the quantitative

results (Table V).

Table V. Student Comments regarding their Leadership Practices

Leadership Action Statements[a]	Illustrative Student Comments
Modeling the Way	- Within my committee, I was a leader by example. I was always among the first people to volunteer my ideas and participate in group discussions. I hope I inspired my fellow members to brainstorm new ideas and added to the group dynamic. I hope my involvement inspires future students to become involved with the fashion show (Tanner). - There were numerous modeling practice days when I would be tired or at my house [40 minutes off-campus] and I would consider not going, but I knew not showing up would only hurt my committee. When you are a part of a group you have to put in the time and the energy to be a valuable group member. I definitely learned that skill….everyone's actions and decisions impacted the entire group (Elizabeth).

Inspiring a Shared Vision	• The last thing I wanted was to misrepresent the show. The show's theme was about being classy, elegant, and romantic. So, it was my duty to make sure that when posting [show] fliers, that where I placed them and how I placed them represented how we wanted our show to look to outsiders. And if I saw a flier on the ground, torn up, or placed in an appropriate place, I would pick it up or fix it. Just because looks and placement are very vital to how others see our show (Kristin).
	• When people came through the [auditorium] doors to watch the show on Saturday night, I greeted everyone as a guest, welcomed and thanked them for coming. I commented on how well-dressed some people were and strived for a positive first impression. This way when the show rolls around next year, they have an impression of being a guest and remember positive aspects even while exiting (Anne).
Encouraging the Heart	• If we ever seemed to be sitting around or not doing a whole lot, I would try to get the other members excited about participating. It was important to always keep a very positive attitude no matter how long the day was running (Cassandra).
	• My committee members allowed me to excel in my style of leadership. With all of our committee members being reliable, organized, hard working, and driven to succeed, I was not forced to be a more dictatorial leader. My co-director and I planned the best we could, but our committee would also come up with suggestions for improvement and a lot of other great ideas. We all worked well together (Angela).
Challenging the Process	• When visiting the business I realized the different ways people respond to how you present the information. I found that the more relaxed, outgoing, and fun we were, the more likely the businesses were to donate. (Lynn).
	• As public relations co-director, I have been able to extinguish my fear of public speaking by giving weekly updates to the class but also by interacting with potential sponsors in a professional way (Emily).

Enabling Others to Act	• As producer, I was able to let the directors and committee members' first figure out how to do tasks themselves while always being available for help and questions (Kate). • In class I felt like people felt comfortable coming up to me and asking questions without getting shut down or criticized… after all, it is a class effort when producing the fashion show. Keeping my mind open and having a positive outlook on situations even when I felt like time was being wasted was a leadership skill I brought to the table (Michaela).

[a] Leadership action statements taken from Kouzes & Posner, 2006.

Students mentioned the importance of *modeling* positive behavior to their classmates and to others outside of the classroom setting. Amanda, a co-producer, commented,

> In class and during director meetings, I tried to stay positive even if I wasn't feeling it so that the class would stay motivated to complete the show goals. I also tried to stay motivated when talking to people about the show outside of the class, I did not want to give anybody the impression that our show would be anything but the best.

In this statement, Amanda expressed her commitment to maintaining a personal enthusiasm and optimistic outlook, realizing that her behaviors and actions impacted multiple constituents - the directors who led their own small committees, the class as a whole, and everyone outside of the class experience, including other students, faculty, administrators, and guests. The need to model the way during particularly difficult situations was mentioned by Kayla, a design committee member. In reflecting on the class rejection of a high-profile guest judge because he did not "fit" the theme of the show, Kayla commented,

> I knew that if I got bent out of shape about it, then the committee would follow my lead and become bitter and unresponsive. The best way to handle it was to stay in a positive mindset and remind our group that our decisions were to be made in the best interest of our show. As the time passed, I think they all kept their heads up and continued to work hard the make the show the best it could be.

Kayla set a personal example of what she expected from her fellow committee members by modeling and sharing positive behaviors and actions. In this manner, Kayla was able to ensure

that her committee remained focused on the greater goals and purpose of the show, rather than personal disappointment.

Inspiring a shared vision describes the leadership behaviors of spreading enthusiasm and gaining support for the vision. Melissa, a fundraising director, *inspired a shared vision*, when she helped establish a committee mission statement. In explaining her reasoning for the creation of this group-created document, Melissa stated, "Many companies have a mission statement so that everyone knows what to expect out of the experience, and what type of behavior and goals should be met." Several members of the fundraising committee mentioned the establishment of this shared vision as contributing to group cohesive and their success - this committee was the first in fashion show history to receive sponsors for each of the show's awards. Inspiring a shared vision later, rather than earlier in show planning process, Dania, a modeling committee member, expressed the ways in which her group crafted a more unified vision. She mentioned the implementation of an e-mail group list containing committee members and models, weekly email updates sent by the directors to the committee, and the decision that committee members would arrive 30 minutes earlier for modeling practices to decide upon goals for that practice. According to Dania, "This extra communication and extra meeting time paid off. We were much more involved in the modeling training process and felt more comfortable giving tips and displaying leadership qualities at the practices."

Students mentioned demonstrations of *encouraging the heart*, or celebrating accomplishments and giving support to others in subtle, rather than blatant, ways. Naomi, a set-tech director, reflected on the conscious decision that she and her co-director made to include elements of each of the committee members' ideas into the final set design. While it was difficult "to incorporate so many different ideas and work with a lot of different individuals," Naomi

stated satisfaction that each committee member was tangibly involved in the process and final

outcome of the show. Interestingly, she also commented that her only regret as a leader were the

few times that personal frustration prevented her from giving more encouragement to others. One

director very simply commented the way in which her committee members supported one

another was, "By treating each other with the utmost respect and by constantly encouraging each

other, we were able to work successfully together."

>*Challenging the process* describes a willingness to seek out and conquer challenges.

Demonstration of this leadership practice area was eloquently described by Hannah in her

dealing with a disorganized and chaotic backstage area for dress rehearsal just two nights before

the fashion show.

> It was a mess! So I took about 5-6 hours creating little information cards for each model that had their name, a description of their garments, and the order of their garments in the show. I asked the models for feedback and they all said it helped them manage their time better. This situation showed me that I can take my own initiative to solving a problem, even though I am not a director. I saw a problem, found a solution, and developed it myself.

Leslie, a co-director for the hospitality and alumni relations committee, discussed the personal

growth that she experienced from a difficult experience related to show planning. When a faculty

member not associated with the show asked Leslie to create "fancy nameplates" for portfolios

the day before the event, Leslie reflected,

> That is where I put my foot down. I spoke to the person about their ideas and told them there was no extra time to implement it and they could take the idea on themselves and keep me informed. That said; nothing else was included. I try to be a people-pleaser all the time and this experience gave me an opportunity to recognize how to say no and that it was okay [to say no].

This experience would have been very difficult for any student, let alone a self-professed

"people-pleaser" like Leslie. In her decision not to make last-minute changes that did not fit

within her committee's timeline, Leslie challenged her own "natural" inclinations and the typical

faculty-student power relationship.

    Enabling others to act describes the fostering of teamwork and the building of trust.

Nicole, a member of the publicity and public relations committee, stated that she demonstrated

this dimension of leadership, "by keeping quiet so that others can learn, showing up to class on

time, and thinking of ways that I could help members of my committee brainstorm ideas when

they were struggling or stuck." Jennifer, treasurer for the class, enabled her classmates to act by

proficiently completing her tasks. She reflected,

> Whenever someone would submit money or receipts to me to deposit, I would make sure
> to take care of that the same day or at the latest the next day. I didn't want to negatively
> affect others by being careless and irresponsible; therefore, I made it a priority to be
> organized and efficient.

Discussion

    This study assessed the leadership development of students enrolled in three semesters of

an event management course. Reliability results indicated a high level of internal consistency in

measurement of the practice areas, which implies the S-LPI performed its intended role very well

and that the results of statistical hypothesis tests were solid. Results from this study suggest that

leadership development as measured by the S-LPI increased as a result of participation in the

event management course. According to the quantitative results, student scores from the pre- to

the post-test increased on every measure of the S-LPI, encompassing the dimensions of modeling

the way, inspiring a shared vision, encouraging the heart, challenging the process, and enabling

others to act. The dominant predictive role of pre-Enabling the Heart at predicting post-results

for the five practice area post-scores signified that this was the most important element to take

into consideration for understanding post outcomes. Although this finding suggests that

interventions perhaps should be targeted primarily toward enhancing student pre-test responses

to the items included in the Enabling the Heart practice area, doing what is necessary to increase student pre-test performance on the challenge and modeling practice areas also will make consideration contributions to positive student outcomes.

The learning leadership model (Heifetz, 1994), in which the leadership concept is a learning strategy applicable to all people, not just leaders with positional authority, was utilized in the event management class. Each student in the class was given the responsibility and duty to work effectively as a team to complete their committee's goals for the fashion show event. The opportunities to work in a team and then time to reflect on their actions enabled students to demonstrate and learn techniques for managing self and others; an important trait for both personal and career paths. In their qualitative comments, students provided examples of leadership behaviors they exhibited during their participation in the event management class. Many of these reflective statements indicated a conscious decision to "do" leadership. Similar to Eich's findings (2008), students in this study seemed to discover and learn about their leadership identities by interacting with others within and outside of the event management class.

Similar to the findings of Hay and Hodgkinson (2005), many of the students discussed leadership behaviors emerging from difficult situations that involved the skills of negotiation, conflict resolution, and communication. In their reflective statements, students wrote about acting positively "even when they did not feel like it" and making decisions benefiting the show and their committee even if these decisions went against their individual preferences and personalities. Students also realized, often by enduring negative circumstances, such as the rejection of a notable guest judge or chaotic modeling practices, the importance of encouraging and enabling one another to work effectively as a team.

Limitations

The sample included college students enrolled in an event management course at one university, thus results may not be generalized to all students. While student responses to the S-LPI were anonymous, student reflective comments were not. Due to this, students may have completed written statements that reflected positively on themselves, rather than an objective analysis of their learning and actual behaviors.

Implications for Practice

University and college courses can have a very powerful impact on student learning and leadership development. Instructors within the higher education setting should consider ways to involve students in construction of their learning experiences. Activities in which students are not only engaged, but responsible for the outcomes of their learning, may provide longer-lasting and meaningful experiences that will impact students far beyond their college education. Providing a variety of experiences focused on building leadership skills will give students the opportunity and experiences necessary to thrive in the current, global economy. In the words of Maggie, an alumni relations and hospitality director,

> This semester has been very challenging for me, trying to take a full load to graduate on time and being active in other extra-curricular activities. Balancing my daily priorities on top of fashion show priorities was challenging at times. Having said that, these [event management]experiences I have taken away will help me to be better prepared for the future. These experiences are priceless.

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