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Leadership Education: A Pilot Study Investigating Employer and Student Perceptions of Value

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LEADERSHIP EDUCATION: A PILOT STUDY INVESTIGATING EMPLOYER
AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF VALUE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

By

JASON SCOTT FARKAS
B.A., Wright State University, 2014

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

April 25, 2016

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Jason Scott Farkas ENTITLED Leadership Education: A Pilot Study Investigating Employer and Student Perceptions of Value BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Science.

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Abstract

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This study examined employer and student perceptions of leadership education, specifically as these perceptions relate to value, or usefulness. As post-baccalaureate leadership certification programs are increasingly added to college and university curricula, it is important to understand if these programs are imparting knowledge and skills that are observable and valuable in the workplace. Employer and student perceptions were collected through pilot focus groups and qualitatively evaluated against Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, a framework that is both teachable and measurable. Suggestions for future graduate-level leadership certification programs will be discussed.

Keywords: leadership, leadership education, Kouzes and Posner, Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, employer perception

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Purpose

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) noted that leadership skills are the primary attributes desired of college graduates entering the workforce (NACE, 2014). Huhn (2014) and Podolny (2009) suggested a growing resentment towards the value of business degrees, namely the graduate-level Master's of Business Administration (M.B.A.), in regards to preparation of students with necessary leadership skills; thus, an apparent gap between educational and organizational outcomes exists. In recent years, organizational leadership degree programs have offered an alternative to the prevailing Bachelor of Business and M.B.A. degree programs. These organizational leadership degree alternatives incorporate the development of desired "soft-skills" lacking in traditional business students, providing great value to employers and the wider community (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Brungardt, 2011; Desman, Moodie, Roebuck, & Siha, 2011; Robles, 2012). So-called soft-skills, including integrity, courtesy, communication, social skills, and flexibility among others, are in high demand within the modern workplace, with up to 87% of employers requesting greater emphasis on leadership and soft skill development among their college-educated workforce (NACE, 2014; Robles, 2012). As the curriculums of traditional business programs and their accrediting bodies -- the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) --

often unsuccessfully incorporate leadership, soft-skills, and ethical study in favor of technical coursework (Huhn, 2014). M.B.A. graduates are entering the workforce with underdeveloped interpersonal and leadership skills along with questionable ethical practices (Huhn, 2014; Pfeffer, 2009; Pfeffer & Fong, 2004; Swanson, 2004). After the ethical and moral failings of business leaders such as Bernie Madoff, Martha Stewart, and others in the banking sector led to the financial downturn of 2008 and subsequent hiring slowdown, the hiring forecast for prospective college-educated job seekers is proposed to increase substantially in the coming years (NACE, 2014; Podolny, 2009; Swanson, 2004). The role and value of leadership education must be a central focus for employers, educators, and students, especially as employers report new college-graduates losing ground in leadership skills (NACE, 2014). Graduate-level leadership certificate programming may provide the necessary bridge between the applicable skills and knowledge desired by employers and the competitive advantage sought by current and prospective business leaders.

Currently, seventeen colleges and universities offer a graduate level leadership certificate program as identified by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (Hanover, 2015). Instructional delivery methods vary between institutions, but course designs range from face-to-face to fully online coursework with some colleges presenting classes in a hybrid model. Required course content is greatly variable between programs as content is focused on non-profit management at one institution (Wheelock College), environmental sustainability leadership at another (Hawaii Pacific University), as well as broader theoretical and business concerns in other colleges and universities. A total of 169 certificates were conferred in 2013, the most recent year that complete statistics were

available, with mid-sized institutions Drexel University (68), Western Kentucky University (33), and Central Michigan University (23) conferring the most certificates (Hanover, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Kouzes and Posner (2006) proposed five behaviors that exemplify ideal leader outcomes. These leadership practices are typically measured via the psychometrically reliable and valid Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Posner & Kouzes, 1993). Internal reliabilities of the LPI range from .77 to .90 while demonstrating a sound test-retest reliability of .94 (Posner & Kouzes, 1988). Posner and Kouzes (1988) also demonstrated the predictive validity of the LPI in identifying high- and low-performing managers. While some qualitative data exist in assessing the intersection where employers, students, and educational institutions overlap in the value placed on these behaviors and their resultant career outcomes, deeper investigation is necessary to better understand stakeholder perceptions as they pertain to graduate-level leadership certificate programming (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Brungardt, 2011; Vasbinder, 2012).

As opportunities for leadership education increase at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, post-baccalaureate leadership certificate programming may serve to provide a third option for meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Consequently, the current lack of an accrediting body for leadership programs may serve to encourage greater soft-skill development in these programs than those required by business accrediting bodies such as the AACSB (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Content analysis of current post-baccalaureate leadership certificate programs as well as employer and student perceptions

of leadership education are necessary to develop curricula that benefit and enhance the effectiveness of individual leaders, businesses, and society as a whole.

In accordance with the International Leadership Association's (ILA) (2009) Guiding Questions for leadership education programming, the researchers must examine the local context of leadership programming and evaluate this context alongside a conceptual framework to determine how content, teaching practices, and outcomes assessment may be best integrated into a post-baccalaureate leadership certificate program.

Definition of Terms

International Leadership Association (ILA) Guiding Questions – A set of five guidelines for the development of leadership development education programs. These guiding questions are: (1) What is the context of the program? (2) What is the conceptual framework of the program? (3) What is the content of the program? (4) What is the teaching and learning framework of the program? (5) What are the expected outcomes of the program, and how will they be assessed (International Leadership Association, 2009)?

Kouzes and Posner's "Five Practices for Exemplary Leadership" – (1) Model the Way. (2) Inspire a Shared Vision. (3) Challenge the Process. (4) Enable Others to Act. (5) Encourage the Heart (Kouzes & Posner, 1987; 2014). These practices are measured by the LPI.

Leadership – Northouse (2013) described leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5). This is a generally accepted operational definition of the term.

Post-baccalaureate leadership certificate – Nontraditional graduate education with a leadership curriculum focus. Typically, this is a 12- to 15-semester-credit program that may include credits transferrable to a graduate degree (Hanover, 2015).

Soft skills – Robles (2012) defined soft skills as “character traits, attitudes, and behaviors—rather than technical aptitude or knowledge” (p. 457). These skills usually involve an interpersonal dimension thought to be necessary for effective leadership, though they are not job-specific but transferable among various professional positions.

Research Questions

RQ1a: Do employer perceptions of valuable workplace skills mirror those of Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership?

RQ1b: Do student perceptions of valuable workplace skills mirror those of Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership?

RQ2: What is the context, per the International Leadership Association’s (2009) Guiding Questions definition, of leadership education in a medium-sized Midwestern city?

RQ3a: Do employers value a post-baccalaureate leadership certificate program incorporating the Kouzes and Posner Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership as a foundation for curriculum design?

RQ3b: Do students value a post-baccalaureate leadership certificate program incorporating the Kouzes and Posner Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership as a foundation for curriculum design?

RQ4: How do student and employer perceptions of valued leadership skills and behaviors differ?

Scope

This research will encompass the views, needs, and opinions of two differing populations: employers and students. Data will first be collected from a broad range of human resource professionals and executives representing employers in the greater metropolitan area of a medium-sized Midwestern city. Sample student data is to be collected from the population of a medium-sized Midwestern university.

Significance of the Study

A significant gap exists in the research literature examining the shared perceptions of leadership education. This suggests the necessity for a deeper understanding of the inherent value of college-level leadership training. The possibility exists that students, employers, and educators have mismatched or competing perceptions of the value of graduate level leadership certification programming, the skills developed therein, and expected outcomes. Through analysis of employer and student perceptions of leadership education, additional academic opportunities (e.g., post-baccalaureate leadership certification) may be developed that provide employers and employees/students with an understanding of desired leadership skills that benefit all stakeholders and the greater society.

Summary

The intent of this study is to assess the current perceptions of both employers and employees/students in regards to leadership education via content analysis that will enable the identification of themes pertaining to the use and value of skills acquired through college-level leadership courses. Responses will be analyzed in accordance with Kouzes and Posner's (2006) validated "Five Practices" theoretical framework. Discussion

of opportunities to improve or develop further leadership education programming is provided for consideration by universities interested in offering a graduate level leadership certificate program that benefits students, employers, and the wider local and global communities.

Review of Literature

Overview

The body of leadership research conducted over the last century reveals a wealth of ideas, from the early “Great Man” and trait theories of leadership to more recent investigations of moderating and mediating contextual features that enhance and prevent successful leader outcomes (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Schein, 2010; Zaccaro, 2007). Heeding Schriesheim’s (2003) call for research that is applicable and relevant to everyday practitioners of leadership, the present researcher investigated the subjective perceptions of current leaders and students of leadership regarding valuable leadership skills and whether those skills are teachable.

The primary theoretical framework of interest is Kouzes and Posner’s (1987; 2014; Posner & Kouzes, 1993) five practices of exemplary leadership as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Kouzes and Posner suggested that leadership is composed of five practices that can be developed. These practices and their parallels with the construct of Transformational Leadership, as proposed by Burns (1978), expanded upon by Bass and Avolio (1993) and Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990), and summarized thoroughly by Stewart (2006), will be explored in depth in the next chapter. Secondly, it is necessary to trace the history of leadership education, especially as it relates to the context of higher education, in an effort to determine the

incorporation of these five practices into leadership education curricula. As Kouzes and Posner break from trait theorists in their assertion that leadership is teachable and traceable to five specific behaviors, the next chapter provides an overview of the current state of undergraduate and post-baccalaureate leadership educational practices.

Theoretical Framework

In their now landmark and best-selling book, *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner (1987) outlined their results encapsulating the beliefs and behaviors of hundreds of top organizational leaders. Results from data collected through several hundred interviews and thousands of survey administrations using the psychometrically reliable and valid Leadership Practices Inventory indicated the existence of five skills that nearly every successful leader exhibits (Posner & Kouzes, 1993). Outlined and further explored in Kouzes and Posner's (2014) recent follow-up *The Student Leadership Challenge*, the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership are listed as: (1) Model the Way, (2) Inspire a Shared Vision, (3) Challenge the Process, (4) Enable Others to Act, and (5) Encourage the Heart. Each of these behaviors will be examined.

Vasbinder (2012) investigated the Five Practices construct in relation to undergraduate business students during their final year of study. Students self-assessed their preparation for leadership roles using the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI) and answered qualitative interview questions pertaining to their perceptions of leadership development in the business school. Faculty interviews regarding leadership skills training in the business school were also conducted. Findings from this study highlighted the overwhelmingly positive impact of the business program's dedicated

leadership course in equipping students with opportunities to practice the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership.

Model the Way. The first practice of exemplary leadership requires the knowledge of self. In order to provide a credible model of behavior, the leader is encouraged to engage in a period of self-reflection as a means for understanding of his or her personal values. Personal values, as defined by Rokeach (1973), are guiding principles that serve as a means for achieving desired end states. Schwartz (1992; Schwartz et al., 2012) provided a comprehensive theory of universal basic human values as motivational forces that are oppositional in nature (e.g., Self-Enhancement values cannot be pursued simultaneously with Self-Transcendence values). In order for a leader to transcend the legitimate power of his or her formal job status and attain referent power freely given by followers, the leader must first understand and live in accordance with her values (Kouzes & Posner, 2014; Northouse, 2013). As leaders' values inform their actions in a consistent manner, credibility is built among followers, and the leader provides a model for the behavior of the organization as a whole. Central to this premise is the integrity of the leader, consistently doing what the leader says he or she will do.

Inspire a Shared Vision. The visionary aspect of leadership is a subject of considerable research (Taylor, Cornelius, & Colvin, 2014). The ability of a leader to visualize a superior manner of organizational operation and resultant successful outcomes is a primary function of many leaders' job descriptions. The manner with which these positive outcomes are achieved, however, cannot be left to chance. The inspirational qualities of the leader can and must be developed in order to sustain an organizational culture centered on attaining the desired end state. Expanding on the centrality of values

in the first practice of exemplary leadership, the leader must be outwardly focused in understanding and appealing to the personal values of followers. Bridging the divide among leader, follower, and organizational interests is the construct of value congruity in organizations. Value congruence represents fertile ground for research as recent efforts have suggested a multitude of associated beneficial outcomes (Groves & LaRocca, 2012; Harris & Mossholder, 1996; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1991; Ogufowora, 2014). The leader's skill in articulating the organizational vision in conjunction with shared values between leader and follower encourages the cooperative effort of all parties in pursuit of the desired outcome (Graf, van Quaquebeke, & van Dick, 2011; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990).

Challenge the Process. Possessing an innovative and experimental nature, and exhibiting an occasional bit of healthy dissent, is the key to the third practice of exemplary leadership. When challenging the process, the leader demonstrates dissatisfaction with an ineffective status quo. By constantly collecting facts, ideas, and suggestions from both within and outside the organization, leaders are able to implement small improvements to processes that hinder progress. As such, the leader must be an active listener with a penchant for experimentation. A high degree of resilience is also necessary to overcome setbacks when change fails to provide adequate progress. If the act of management serves to maintain the status quo, the process of leadership must challenge it. Kouzes and Posner (2014) noted that the ability of the leader to recognize and celebrate small victories along the way is key to the practice of challenging the process.

Enable Others to Act. The fourth practice of exemplary leadership is concerned with assembling, mobilizing, and empowering a team to achieve shared goals. In effect, the ability to build and maintain the necessary relationships that encourage successful outcomes is central to this practice. This can be achieved through clarity of vision and direction, as well as the removal of obstacles that prevent teammates from acting. As obstacles are removed, the leader openly transfers his or her power to the team, and allows them to act of their own accord in pursuit of valued outcomes. Enabling others to act has a parallel in the construct of psychological empowerment. As work-enabling resources increase, employee perceptions of empowerment increase as well, thus improving work engagement, and personal well-being (Quinones, Van den Broeck, & De Witte, 2013). Consequently, empowerment and engagement are positively correlated with both individual and organizational commitment and performance (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Encourage the Heart. Simply put, celebration and appreciation are at the core of the practice of encouraging the heart. When a leader recognizes the contribution of teammates, and celebrates the small victories both publically and privately, the satisfaction and well-being of the team increases. This boost to employee well-being echoes the beneficial outcomes associated with the construct of positive psychological capital (PsyCap), the combined effect of personality traits: hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010; Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). PsyCap is a highly supported predictor of both employee and student satisfaction, and organizational performance (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Luthans, Luthans, & Jensen, 2012).

As setbacks are inevitable, the ability of the leader to appeal to the shared values and goals of teammates through celebration of individual and collective contributions promotes the shared identity of the group during tough times. Leader sincerity is central to successful encouragement. As individual follower perceptions of leaders contribute to overall leader effectiveness, it is incumbent upon the leader to invest time and effort with each follower to assure sincerity is perceived (Harms & Spain, 2014). Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh, and Omary (2009) further demonstrated that follower perceptions of leaders' "transformational" practices (as defined by Kouzes and Posner) indicated a correlate to leader effectiveness.

Transformational Leadership

The resemblance of Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership to the components of transformational leadership should be noted. As the transformational leader has demonstrated valuable contributions to a multitude of organizational outcomes (Burton & Peachey, 2014; Mantynen, Vehvilainen-Julkunen, Partanen, Turunen, Miettinen, & Kvist, 2014), it should be of no surprise that these simultaneously developed theoretical frameworks share some overlap in descriptive properties. Some researchers, in fact, go so far as to label the Five Practices as transformational, as well as use the terms seemingly interchangeably (Abu-Tineh et al., 2009; Mancheno-Smoak, Endres, Polak, & Athanasaw, 2009).

The defining feature of transformational leadership lies within the process of the leader's efforts to develop the ethical conduct of the follower in pursuit of a common purpose. As this is achieved, both leader and follower are transformed in a positive sense. By appealing to the values and ideals of the follower, the leader transcends the simple

quid pro quo of transactional leadership whereby something of value is exchanged from leader to follower for work, commitment, or loyalty. Bass (1985) identified four facets of transformational leadership that allow leaders to increase the moral capacity of the follower in a transformative manner, thereby encouraging transformative organizational outcomes. These components are (1) Idealized Influence, (2) Inspirational Motivation, (3) Intellectual Stimulation, and (4) Individualized Consideration. Each component of this model treads the same theoretical ground as Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices.

Idealized Influence, as envisioned by Bass (1985), is concerned with the provision of good role modeling, therefore providing a correlate to Kouzes and Posner's practice of Model the Way (Stanescu & Rosca, 2010). Inspirational Motivation bears more than a passing resemblance to the practice of Inspire a Shared Vision, just as Intellectual Stimulation and Challenge the Process share similar definitions. Finally, Individualized Consideration speaks to both practices of Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart in their aim to speak to and develop the heart of the individual follower. In light of these relative comparisons, we can likely conclude that Kouzes and Posner's framework is of a transformational nature. As these constructs developed separately though simultaneously in the 1980s, reliability and validity of the constructs is supported through the differing means of data collection and analysis (both quantitative and qualitative), as well as the diverse populations subject to analysis.

Leadership Education

With employers demanding greater development of soft-skills over technical and hard skills for business and leadership students, it is necessary to determine if college administrators have sufficiently modified curricula to heed this call (Bunker &

Wakefield, 2004; Podolny, 2009; Robles, 2012). Robles (2012) reported that soft-skills, such as integrity, communication, positive attitude, professionalism, and others are in short supply amongst college graduates, yet responsible for the bulk of students' long-term career success. Pfeffer (2009) noted that leadership development and training has been most effective in the corporate world, as employers are able to target unique training needs specific to their workplace, and devote the requisite valuable resources to meet these training opportunities. What, then, is the state of leadership education in colleges and universities?

Swanson (2004) and Podolny (2009) outlined the overly technical concentration, and morally and ethically relativistic nature, of traditional business programs. Many business programs have added a single leadership course to their curriculum, as well as elective ethics courses, but it is arguable whether or not this compartmentalized approach is having the desired effect of developing leaders above and beyond the technical management skills upon which these programs are based. Hence the growth of dedicated Leadership Studies undergraduate and graduate programs (Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt, & Arensdorf, 2006; Riggio, 2013; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999).

Interest in the leadership phenomenon has been studied for, perhaps, centuries, yet the first dedicated undergraduate major in leadership was not instituted until 1992 at the University of Richmond. Based on groundwork research from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan, the inaugural leadership major at the University of Richmond was an attempt to bridge science with humanities study to help solve the problems faced in modern business (Klenke, 1993). Further, Klenke (1993) stated that the basis of the program lies in the fact that leadership is teachable and learnable, similar to the

propositions of Kouzes and Posner. In the years since, Leadership Studies has grown to include dedicated majors within at least 40 schools in the United States, though as many as 25 of these programs may be nothing more than renamed and rebranded business programs (Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt, & Arensdorf, 2006). Clearly, the understanding of the necessity for leadership has taken root, though agreement in curriculum and pedagogical methodology is far from settled. Brungardt, et al. (2006) further elaborated the inconsistency of nearly every facet of leadership education between schools, though they noted the near universal incorporation of research, theoretical, and skills-based components of the programs. With many business and management programs rooted in an outdated industrial paradigm, advances in leadership education must be made to meet the needs of modern business (Hughes & Panzo, 2015).

The institution of leadership studies departments in universities was perhaps sparked by the dissemination of the work of James MacGregor Burns, an early pioneer of transformational leadership theory, as well as the new paradigm presented by Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* (Komives, 2011). With the general acceptance of transformational leadership as both a valid and teachable model, it should be of no surprise that Ruddell (2008) recently suggested that leadership instructors must model the way of the ethical leader through transformational leadership in the classroom. Hughes and Panzo (2015) advocated for a different approach to graduate level leadership education, focusing on student self-guided activities as a means for learning employer-desired skills, though outcomes related to this approach have yet to be fully understood. It must be acknowledged that leadership itself is a complex phenomenon with student demographic variables affecting the understanding of the leadership construct; for

example, both age and gender contribute to a preference for hierarchical leadership thinking (Ho & Odom, 2015). Armed with the knowledge that current undergraduate leadership education is inconsistent and often consists of broad technical skill development, pedagogical frameworks for both graduates and undergraduates remain untested, and since valued outcomes for students, employees, and employers are in many cases lacking, perhaps a new approach is necessary. A post-baccalaureate leadership certificate could be an educational approach that most successfully incorporates the theoretical and technical understanding of leadership, the skills-based behavioral component, and the values-based ethical component of leadership proposed by Pfeffer (2009).

The post-baccalaureate leadership certificate, a relatively new program option, has gained a bit of traction in recent years. In a research report commissioned by a medium-sized Midwestern university, Hanover Research (2015) identified 17 leadership certificate programs targeted toward post-baccalaureate students. Consistent with Riggio, Ciulla, and Sorensen's (2003) call for leadership studies programming to be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature, the bulk of these post-baccalaureate certificate programs offer a blend of theoretical and practical training in business, management, sociology, communication, and other disciplines. In delineating the purposes of leadership training, education, and development, as Ayman, Adams, Fisher, and Hartman (2003) proposed, we see a clear lack of consistency between programs; as some programs feature career preparation and training (Wheelock College, Hawaii Pacific University) while others place greater focus on reflective development (Marquette University, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth). Further inconsistencies exist in

program costs, instructional delivery methods, faculty backgrounds, and credit transferability.

Riggio et al. (2003) recommend six guidelines for successful academic leadership development programs to institute, to include;

- (1) Leadership studies should be multidisciplinary,
- (2) Leadership studies students should be authorized academically [within a program offered at an institution of higher learning],
- (3) Leadership studies programs are guided by theories and research on leadership,
- (4) Leadership programs should be driven by proven models of learning/development,
- (5) Leadership programs should cultivate the values of the field, and
- (6) Leadership studies programs should be focused on outcomes (pp. 227-231).

Armed with these suggestions, the development of post-baccalaureate leadership certificate programming should provide credit towards a graduate degree in a leadership-related field in accordance with recommendation two, and include Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices as the foundation of its curriculum in accordance with the aforementioned recommendations one, three, four, five, and six. These recommendations very closely mirror the International Leadership Association's (2009) Guiding Questions for the

development of education programs addressing the Context, Conceptual Framework, Content, Teaching and Learning, and Outcomes and Assessment of leadership programs.

Summary

The preceding literature review examined Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership through the lens of concrete teachable skills, which lead to a wide range of successful outcomes. The theoretical construct of transformational leadership was examined in relation to its similarities with the Five Practices model. The phenomenological post hoc data collected by Kouzes and Posner combined with the quantitative measures explored in the transformational leadership research suggest the validity of these practices in achieving successful organizational outcomes.

The history and current state of leadership education were explored, from the early adoption of the first leadership undergraduate program at the University of Richmond in 1992 to the present post-baccalaureate certificate offerings. Using current knowledge that suggests the teachable nature of leadership skills, leadership education was examined as a means for the transfer of the qualitatively and quantitatively supported transformational components of the Kouzes and Posner Five Practices model.

Three propositions to be explored in the following research were outlined. These propositions involve the perceptions of employers and students of valued skills and outcomes desired of leadership education, and the inclusion of Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership in the instructional design of leadership education.

CHAPTER II

Methods

Overview

The following chapter will introduce the samples of interest, approach to data collection and proposed analysis, and methods and measures necessary to examine the perceptions of employers and students in regard to leadership education. The necessity of a qualitative method of data collection and analysis to uncover perceptions and assumptions of the population of interest will be outlined.

Data Collection and Analysis

A qualitative methodological approach to the present research was employed to uncover perceptions and hidden assumptions regarding the value, or usefulness, of leadership and leadership education (Chew-Graham, May, & Perry, 2002). Though the rigor of qualitative research has been questioned due to a perceived lack of external validity or generalizability that is more easily assessed through quantitative means, interview techniques are necessary and valuable to exploratory research in understanding individual experience and often reveal accurate experience of phenomena (Appleton, 1995; Krefting, 1991). This qualitative approach investigating individual experience, personal value, and socially constructed reality likely stems from the present researcher's postmodern worldview and critical perspective (Creswell, 2012; Kincheloe & McLaren,

2002). Trustworthiness was addressed through data triangulation and inter-rater agreement (Appleton, 1995).

Data were collected from participants via pilot focus groups. Two of six pilot focus groups consisted of less than seven participants per Berg's (2004) recommendation with all focus groups incorporating 12 or less participants. All focus groups were conducted at a location neutral for both participants and researcher. Each semi-structured focus group lasted approximately one hour and was recorded via Simple Recorder software for later transcription. Each participant was provided with a consent form assuring anonymity of participant responses and provision of consent to report responses in aggregate form. In an effort to maintain anonymity, demographic data was not collected or discussed. The consent form (see Appendix A) also outlined a brief explanation of the current study. A petition to carry out this research was submitted to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and approved (SC# 6029).

All focus group transcripts were analyzed using NVivo software in an effort to identify themes regarding leadership uncovered during the focus group discussion. Berg (2004) noted that focus groups allow the collection of data that reflects shared meaning and perceptions, and so are valuable as a preliminary data collection method in constructing a quantitative measures that explore less subjective and more universal collective thought. Each transcript was analyzed by at least two objective researchers with frequencies of emergent observed themes calculated independently. Reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa, a measure of inter-rater reliability. Each theme was then compared and contrasted to Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

to determine the perceived value of these practices, as well as their inclusion or non-inclusion in future leadership education programming.

Sample

Two samples of participants were recruited via e-mail (see Appendix B) to uncover similar and differing perceptions of the value imparted by leadership education. Samples participating in focus groups were comprised of business professionals and students in the greater metropolitan area of a small Midwestern city. The sample of 42 participants was recruited from organizations providing undergraduate internship opportunities for a medium-sized Midwestern university as well as students participating in the internship portion of an Organizational Leadership undergraduate program at the same university. The employer participants represented a variety of organizational roles including, but not limited to, human resources professionals, recruiting and training staff, and executive level organizational members. All participants were recruited via e-mail, and participated on a volunteer basis.

Multiple focus groups with differing samples provided a means for data triangulation. Data triangulation addresses three out of four of Krefting's (1991) strategies for establishing rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research: Credibility, Dependability, and Confirmability. Krefting's (1991) fourth measure of rigor, Transferability, is also addressed through comparison of responses from differing samples.

Measures

Taking into account Berg's (2004) recommendation to use varying levels of language for differing populations, independent focus group interview question schedules

were developed as guidance for each pilot sample (see Appendices C and D). Each focus group explored the value of general practices of leadership through semi-structured guidance designed to promote broad discussion that may elicit responses that lead to shared meaning among the group. Focus groups also discussed coursework commonly associated with current existing post-baccalaureate leadership certificate programs. Each question explored in the focus groups addressed Research Questions 1 through 3 from Chapter 2 of this proposal. Focus group transcripts were analyzed to identify emerging themes that were used to address Research Questions 3 and 4.

Summary

The preceding chapter provided an overview of the methods and measures used in the current study. A description of the population samples of interest and recruiting method was also provided. These samples were comprised of local business leaders and current students of an Organizational Leadership undergraduate program. Each pilot participant responded within a semi-structured focus group setting assessing a shared perceived value of leadership education. The Measures section of the chapter provided the interview schedule of questions designed to elicit perceptions and assumptions regarding the value of leadership education, and the current needs of employers, employees, and students in regards to desired outcomes of leadership education. An evidence-based justification of the necessity for a qualitative methodological approach to the current research was provided along with the interview schedule in the Measures section.

CHAPTER III

Results

Overview

A total of six focus groups were conducted over the course Spring semester, 2016. A total of 66 employers and 66 former leadership student interns were recruited via email to participate (see Appendix B). Participants were recruited from a pool of students and employers who had previously participated in an undergraduate Organizational Leadership internship program. Seven employers from a wide range of career fields including healthcare, academia, and technology agreed to take part in two focus groups, though one participant was forced to cancel due to illness. Email recruiting from the student intern population was unsuccessful leading to the recruitment of a student sample from a current undergraduate leadership course. In all, four focus groups were conducted with student samples allowing the collection of perceptions from 42 students. Focus groups ultimately incorporating 48 total participants were conducted in two locations (a private conference room and a classroom) on the campus of a medium sized Midwestern university.

Each focus group began with a brief introduction to the purpose of the study as well as a review of the informed consent document (see Appendix A) by the researcher. A single researcher conducted all focus groups, and each group was subjected to six of the same questions to address the question of consistency (see Appendices C & D), while

employer participants addressed four additional questions. Focus group participants then assigned themselves a number to assist in the transcription of audio recordings. A semi-structured interview process was followed to incorporate each of the questions designed by the research team as well as other perceptions related to the research questions. In total, ten questions were used as discussion prompts with the employer sample, while six questions were used as discussion prompts with the student sample (see Appendices C & D). Questions addressed each sample's perceptions regarding the most valuable practices of leaders and the value of practices related to leadership education. Employer focus groups lasted approximately 45 minutes each, and student focus groups lasted approximately 35 minutes each. Each participant was made aware that audio recording was taking place. No participants chose to exclude themselves from the study.

Each focus group audio recording was transcribed to text (see Appendix E) and analyzed in nVivo qualitative analysis software to identify emergent discussion themes. Two researchers independently analyzed the transcripts in order to calculate Cohen's kappa, a measure of inter-rater reliability. Several qualitative themes related to the research questions were predetermined. These themes were labeled as "Perceptions of Value" ($\kappa = .14$, % Absolute Agreement = 67.83), "Teaching and Learning Practices" ($\kappa = .24$, % Absolute Agreement = 58.21), and "Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices" ($\kappa = .12$, % Absolute Agreement = 62.08) with its related sub-themes of "Model the Way," "Encourage the Heart," "Challenge the Process," "Enable Others to Act," and "Inspire a Shared Vision." Each theme that was not predetermined, but emergent within focus group discussion was coded as a new theme. Frequencies of all themes were then analyzed to determine similarities and differences among samples. Perreault and Leigh (1989)

cautioned against drawing conclusions on the reliability of inter-rater agreement based upon the calculation of Cohen's kappa alone. While Cohen's kappa and percentage of agreement are used across many research fields to determine reliability, the measures have significant shortcomings when multiple raters must find agreement on a wide range of emergent themes in a large dataset. For this reason, there is questionable value in calculating the significance of Cohen's kappa, discrediting low kappa values, or making a judgment of objective reliability in a the bulk of qualitative data analysis investigating consumer perceptions.

Data Analysis

Research question 1.

Focus group discussion prompts one, two, three, and four (see Appendices C & D) encouraged participants to explore their shared perceptions of the most valued leadership skills and practices. Employers continually revisited the construct of "initiative" as the most valued single quality of leaders with 19 total statements identified within this theme. One employer stated that it was necessary for leaders to, "[be] able to take initiative and call a vice president or a director and say, 'Hey, can I meet with you to talk about X project?'" A second employer discussed initiative in the necessity for leaders to, "Go towards the heat, not run away from it. You'll learn more that way," while several employers simply and specifically mentioned "initiative" as a desired quality. Regarding the importance of skills related to Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, 45 specific references were made to behaviors associated with these practices. Of these, the practice "Model the Way" was identified 11 times, with one employer stating, "I always look and say, 'whether you think somebody is looking at you

or not, you could possibly be somebody's role model.” The practices “Enable Others to Act” and “Inspire a Shared Vision” followed closely behind “Model the Way”, and were each identified ten times. Speaking to both of these practices, participant 3 in the second employer focus group spoke to the importance of, “...how well you can get everybody to work together to accomplish a goal, and whether you accomplish it or not is not necessarily the point.” Employers identified “Challenge the Process” and “Encourage the Heart” less frequently than many other leadership qualities and behaviors; mentioning these practices six and eight times, respectively. Participant 1 in the second employer focus group identified “Challenge the Process” on two occasions, discussing the importance of, “...maybe challenge the way it's been for the past fifty years,” and “... see if there may be a better way or a different way to go about doing things.” Speaking to the practice of “Encourage the Heart,” in the second employer focus group, participant 2 stated:

In our office, I was here for like two weeks, and I was saying something to my supervisor about one of the other people on our staff, and he was like, “How do you know all this?” It's not like I go and ask 20 questions every day. You just have to small talk with people. “Hey, how's it going? Are you the oldest?” Whatever... You have conversations. You look around in their office. “Oh, I didn't know... did you play basketball? You have a basketball here.” [...] It's just funny what motivates people.

Of the remaining skills and practices discussed in the employer focus groups, Communication was a recurring theme throughout the discussions. Participants touched on the necessity of strong oral and written communication skills as well as effective

communication internal and external to the organization. Participant 2 in the first employer focus group elaborated on this point, “I’m amazed at the number of leaders in my organization that are not comfortable speaking. I’m like, ‘How are you a leader?’”

Student participants identified and discussed many of the same themes as the employers, though the focus and frequency of each theme differed somewhat. While employers identified 16 skills, practices, and behaviors associated with leadership, students discussed 32 different themes, effectively doubling the number of employer themes related to valued leadership practices. The most frequently discussed themes in student focus groups related to “Communication,” “Interpersonal Skills,” “Adaptability,” and Kouzes and Posner’s practices of “Encourage the Heart” and “Model the Way” (see Table 1). Of particular note in student discussions was the repeated emphasis on the necessity for leaders to embrace Kouzes and Posner’s practice of “Encourage the Heart” with 16 different statements concerning this theme. One student described this practice:

I think one thing that’s huge in encouraging and instilling confidence, when someone’s doing something right, and then when there’s failures, or strife, or anything... Like, those are the most crucial moments because there’s emotion tied to that, and I think that’s where people learn the best...

Another student pointed out the absence of “Encourage the Heart” in her organization:

We have a meeting and it’s like, “y’all need to do this, do this,” but never like, “y’all worked with two aides on Christmas. Thank you.” You know what I’m saying? It’s just, “y’all ain’t do this.” It’s just constant nagging. It’s so annoying.

Many students discussed the importance of “Model the Way,” with participant 2 in student focus group 2 stating, “you can more *show* leadership than teach it.” Similarly, multiple students mentioned “leading by example” and being a role model. Curiously, the practice of “Challenge the Process” only emerged within student discussions on three occasions. This was also the least frequently mentioned of Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices in the employer discussions. In a statement representative of this practice, a student participant said, “... a lot of the people I work with have been working here for thirty plus years, and they have gotten stuck in their rut, and they don’t want to change. That’s not always a good thing.”

Overall, 38% of employer statements regarding valued leadership skills and behaviors involved themes related to Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, while 30% of student statements adhered to the Kouzes and Posner framework.

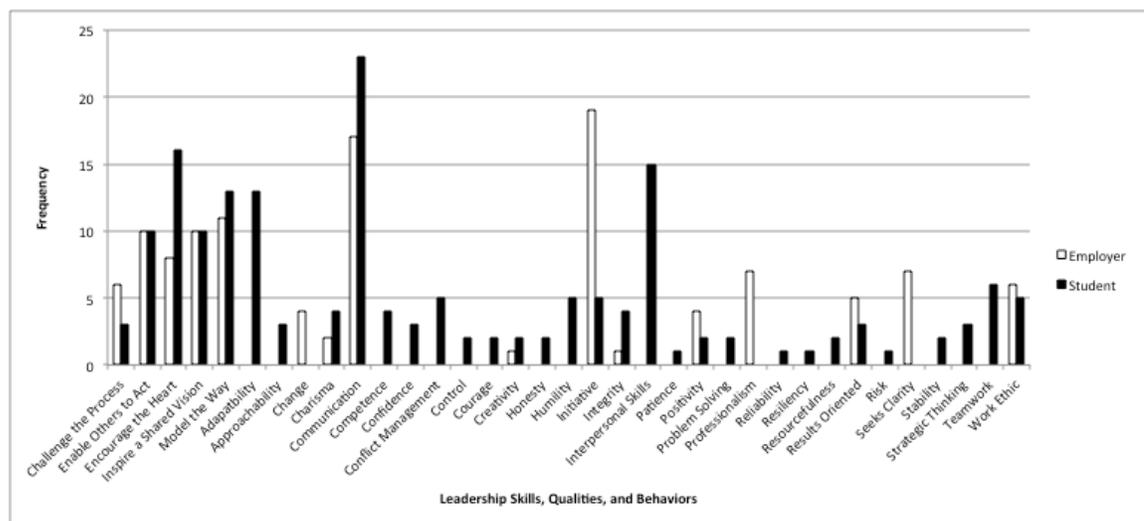


Figure 1. Comparison of focus group discussion theme frequencies related to valued leadership skills, qualities, and behaviors among student and employer samples.

Research question 2.

Focus group discussion questions four, five, six, and ten addressed the context of leadership education in a medium-sized Midwestern city. Nearly every participant from both samples indicated there was no formal leadership training program in their workplace. The exceptions to the rule were two participants from the employer sample. Participant 2, a healthcare worker, from focus group 1 explained:

We have a lot more leadership development in the last 18 months than we ever have. So, that's something we are working on. Right now we are working on an on-boarding program for a leader. This is only for new leaders. Within three months of joining the organization, a new leader does an on-boarding, a 360. We're also looking at defining what are the leadership competencies we need to execute on our strategic plan.

This participant also described her organization's partnership with an executive leadership training seminar series held at a local university, "I think that type of exposure to different thought leaders and the people that are out there coming up with these concepts, I think is a really cool thing."

A participant from the second employer focus group expressed frustration in the summer leadership training her office provided for student organization leaders, "It's just hard to come in the classroom, y'know, 'Here it all is. You're going to need this one day. Trust me.'" Despite this frustration, the participant did note that several popular leadership books were incorporated into these trainings and were very well received by the student leaders. Coincidentally, Kouzes and Posner's *The Student Leadership*

Challenge (2014) was specified as one of the more popular books in this training program.

Participants from the student sample, with little exposure to formal leadership education in the workplace, described their perceptions of a world that actively discourages leadership training. One student participant described the focus on technical education to the detriment of leadership training:

Maybe the university system in general should have started this a long time ago. Because, now they've gotten into such a routine of, "learn just economics, and then learn just science to become a doctor," and you miss all this life experience and actual interpersonal skills in between.

Another student followed up on this theme:

It's like what he said. You don't have the employers looking for people with teamwork. You don't have the teamwork skills. You have the skills for science. You don't know how to work with a team to get it done.

This theme was revisited again:

I think that a lot of majors focus on what that is, so for an accounting major, they're just going to focus on accounting. Or, a nursing major is just going to focus on nursing. They're not going to focus on the fact that they will have interactions with people daily, and that they will have leadership skills and styles that they need to learn and perform.

Participant 5 from focus group 6 added:

They just like to focus in on your individual person, and yourself, and making it a competition rather than... For instance, med school, I know

that it's a very competitive nature. Students there and in pharmacy school too. I was in pharmacy. They wanted to knock each other out of the competition.... Schools emphasize self and competition whereas the real world doesn't encourage that. So, I think that's the problem, the education system.

Aside from the formal leadership training programs previously described by two of the employers, the perceptions regarding the local context of leadership education suggest that there is a contrast between the needs of local businesses and the training and resources that are being provided.

Research question 3.

Each of the focus group discussion questions were designed to elicit responses that may allow the researchers to uncover perceptions regarding the value of leadership education, and the value of Kouzes and Posner's framework as the foundation for a leadership education program. The proportional frequencies of themes related to Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (38% for employers, 30% for students) suggest that these are valued leadership skills and behaviors that would be wise to incorporate into any leadership education program. Themes related to "Communication" and "Interpersonal Skills" were almost equally valued and so should also be considered as the foundation for leadership education.

When focus groups were asked directly about the broader value of collegiate leadership education, there was a nearly unanimous and overwhelming enthusiasm for the value this could provide for students and employers. Most of the participants from both samples specified the need for leadership education to include group project-based hands-

on learning as opposed to traditional classroom lecture. One student participant, an Organizational Leadership undergraduate major, stated:

The group work, the group teambuilding, everything like that, I think is definitely crucial to learning how to lead. Even if you may not be a leader yourself in the group, you're seeing others lead. You can take what they're doing and maybe apply it to yourself.

One of the employers spoke on this theme as well, "Real world experience means so much more and is more impactful, and they stick with you rather than just reading in a book, y'know?"

An Organizational Leadership student added that leadership education "helps you become a people person... You think you get a paycheck just because you fix problems, but that emphasis on being a people person is way more important."

Participant 2 from employer focus group 1, in response to a discussion of the value of post-baccalaureate leadership training exclaimed, "Oh! I think that would make them so marketable." Echoing this sentiment in employer focus group 2, participant 2 stated:

Their experience goes up. I mean, they're able to not only know their marketing or engineering field, but "Hey, I can get up and talk to ten people about engineering," or whatever they're studying... You have this skill, this competency, and maybe you'll get better over time talking and doing things that are considered leader-like.

Several of the employers expressed their concern that students and new employees do not understand the value of advanced leadership education, as students may believe that

technical skills are all that are necessary to gain employment. One employer speaking from the perspective of her employees voiced this concern, “I want to learn what I need to know to get a job.’ I’m not sure if students realize that leadership is part of that.”

Research question 4.

As evidenced above in the results of Research Question 1, differences in employer and student perceptions regarding valued leadership skills and behaviors emerged during focus group discussions. Most noticeably, the sheer number of themes (64) emerging in student discussions dwarfed the number of themes valued by employers (32). Though many of the leadership qualities perceived as valuable to students were only mentioned briefly, several qualities emerged again and again. The concepts of “Adaptability” and “Interpersonal Skills” were perceived as necessary qualities by students, but only discussed briefly or not at all by employers. Students revisited the theme of “Adaptability” through discussion of being, “flexible,” “willing to evolve,” and “adapt[ing] to other people’s requirements.” Students also stressed “Interpersonal Skills” and the necessity of leaders to be, “someone that people will genuinely like,” “a generally easy to like person,” and “...somebody who gets along with everybody, everybody wants to be around,” while “Interpersonal Skills” as they relate to likeability were not discussed by employers. Students discussed the practice of “Encourage the Heart” twice as often as employers. Conversely, employers mentioned the value of “Initiative” nearly four times as often as students. Employers also thought that behaviors related to “Seeking Clarity” were valuable for leaders, though students did not share this perception. Interestingly, personality traits such as “Honesty”, “Humility”, and “Integrity” were perceived to be much more valuable by students. A single participant in the employer focus groups

mentioned the theme of “Integrity” as a valuable leadership quality, “I think it’s probably important that they understand and are able to make good moral judgments, have high integrity,” though this statement is qualified with the term “probably”. Students elaborated upon this theme, describing “Integrity” as, “not only living and upholding your own values, but also upholding the values that your organization says that they want their employees to exhibit.”

Themes that were valued by employers and students in fairly equal proportions included all of Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership and “Communication”.

Discussion

Both employers and students echoed the findings of NACE (2014), describing leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills as valued in the workplace, though students placed an emphasis on the interpersonal aspect of leadership, while employers focused on the initiative taken by leaders. Though NACE does not specify the exact criteria that constitute leadership, participant responses suggested that the Kouzes and Posner (1987) framework is supported as a valid list of valued leadership behaviors. Curiously, students reported likeability as an important leader attribute and the practice of “Encourage the Heart” as a valued leader behavior, while employers identified themes that were more task, process, and outcome oriented such as “initiative”, “results-oriented”, and “work ethic”, and so leadership education should incorporate elements addressing initiative and motivation. Though there is great overlap in participant responses, there is an apparent disconnect between employers and students in their expectations for leaders in the workplace. What is of concern, however, is the lack of

clear responses regarding the ethical choices and moral character of leaders with honesty and integrity receiving little attention from participants. Perhaps it is unimportant or taken for granted that leaders will possess high moral character and ethical decision making abilities, though this is unclear from the results of these focus groups.

In nearly universal agreement, employers and students concurred that leadership education could benefit employees and students from all career fields. Most participants felt that there was too little leadership education within their organizations and in the education system as a whole, with several participants discussing the lack of emphasis on leadership training as embedded within the culture of education is itself.

Many of the participants discussed the importance of project-based teamwork in the acquisition of leadership skills and behaviors. In contrast to the academic model of many college majors emphasizing competition and individual achievement, the focus group participants within this study discussed the strengths of a leadership education program that abandons the traditional model of lecture-based individual development in favor of practical application of leadership practices in a group context.

Theoretical Implications

The research presented contributes further validation of Kouzes and Posner's (1987) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership framework, and gives insight into the perceptions regarding the value of other leadership skills and behaviors beyond this framework. The responses of 48 total participants further suggested that the construct of leadership is not inextricably linked with ethical or moral character. This collective decoupling of ethics from leadership may either be the result of or contribute to the ethics neutral business and educational environment reported by Huhn, (2014), Pfeffer and

Fong (2004), Swanson (2004), and others. Finally, the perceived value of project and team based leadership skill building may inform the understanding of effective classroom practices for leadership education in general.

Practical Implications

The ability for students to communicate effectively in regards to the leadership skills they have developed within their academic programs is a necessity in the job search. NACE (2014) reported that the ability for job seekers to communicate and demonstrate leadership skills on resumes and in interviews contributes to a clear advantage in employee selection. Through the pursuit of a dedicated leadership certificate program, students, employees, and job seekers in all fields can build the skills and practice the behaviors desired by employers, giving themselves a marketable qualification. While it is clear that technical skills are necessary and valued by employers, the “soft-skills” discussed by Robles (2012) are perhaps just as valued, encouraging the development of a post-baccalaureate leadership certificate program that is capable of imparting *experiences* that develop leadership skills beyond traditional lecture based learning. Team- and project-based experiences within a certificate program allow the practical and behavioral application of theory while giving future leaders marketable skills for the job search and career growth. With the lack of an accrediting body for leadership education programming, the current study may inform the development of a standardized post-baccalaureate leadership certificate curriculum that will provide both students and employers with experiences that will serve to impart the most valued transformational leadership skills and behaviors. With formal leadership training programs nearly nonexistent within workplaces local to this research (as reported

by study participants), an academic certificate program will likely provide valuable opportunities for leadership development to employers, students, and workers.

Limitations

Perhaps the greatest limitation to this study is the lack of a wider variety of participant viewpoints, as nearly all student responses were from the perspective of current undergraduate leadership students at an open-access public university. Though a large sample of student perceptions were recorded, transferability is limited by the narrow range of educational backgrounds from which student participants hailed. The fact that these students are immersed in literature and practice of leadership on a daily basis likely influenced the themes that emerged within focus groups and led to a greater perception of value attached to individual leadership skills and behaviors. Incorporating the voices of students from a multitude of educational backgrounds such as business, science, engineering, mathematics, and creative and liberal arts may have led to differing conclusions surrounding the value of leadership education. A second limitation that is necessary to consider concerns the fact that each of the employer participants currently or previously employed interns from an undergraduate organizational leadership program. It is likely that each employer's frame of reference and perceptions of leadership were swayed by the behaviors, whether positive or negative, of these interns. Further, the imbalance of employer and student focus group participants (six and 42, respectively) may limit the comparability of emergent themes between groups. Finally, the degree of inter-rater agreement in the qualitative analysis of focus group transcripts can be judged as poor from the standards of Cohen's kappa and percentage of absolute agreement,

though the reliability of these statistics for the purpose of this study has been called into question (Graham, Milanowski, & Miller, 2012; Perreault & Leigh, 1989).

Recommendations for Future Research

This exploratory study provides a springboard for future research projects. A follow-up study should be undertaken to quantitatively assess the themes that emerged within the focus groups through the development, validation, and norming of a rank sums test or a Likert-type survey. As previously mentioned, further focus group exploration with samples encompassing a broader range of educational backgrounds and career fields may prove valuable in collecting a more representative cross-section of perceptions regarding valued leadership practices. Finally, the emergent themes uncovered in these focus groups may be used to compare and contrast against the coursework offered in the 17 existing post-baccalaureate leadership certificate programs. This may allow a greater number of universities to develop a standardized post-baccalaureate leadership certificate program that fills an educational gap and incorporates the needs of employers and students from all career fields.

Summary

The preceding chapter outlined the methods and results of a series of focus groups investigating the manner in which local business leaders and students perceive value in various leadership skills and abilities, as well as the local context of leadership education, and perceptions surrounding the value of leadership education. Six focus groups encompassing 48 participants were conducted with their associated audio recordings transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes. The themes uncovered within the focus groups suggested that both employers and students perceptions of effective leaders

adhere to the framework introduced by Kouzes and Posner (1987). These themes also suggested a marked disconnect between students and employers regarding the importance and value of interpersonal skills, encouraging behaviors, and task-oriented behaviors. Both employers and students perceived that the local context of leadership education was lacking with few resources promoted within the workplace, and only promoted sparingly throughout college curricula. Students and employers unanimously described continuing leadership education as valuable and marketable, though there were some contradictions regarding the ultimate desired outcomes of such advanced leadership training.

Theoretical and practical implications of this research were explored. This exploratory study, while displaying some limitations, presented a springboard for future qualitative and quantitative research and practical application.

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Appendix A

Subject Informed Consent Document

Leadership Education: Employer and Student Perceptions of Value

Investigator(s) name & address: Jason Farkas and Dr. Mindy McNutt, Wright State

University Department of Leadership Studies, 490 Allyn Hall

Site where study is to be conducted: Wright State University

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: (937) 775-3236 or (937) 775-4712

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study is being conducted by Jason Farkas and Mindy McNutt, Ph. D. Approximately 30 subjects will be invited to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the value placed on leadership skills and the manner in which leadership skills are taught and learned.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to participate in a single focus group session that will last approximately one hour. The focus group will investigate your understanding of leadership and leadership education. Some questions will relate to practices outlined in Kouzes and Posner's "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" model as assessed by the

Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). You may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

The entire study will incorporate the perceptions of approximately 30 participants and will be conducted over the course of Fall 2015 and Winter 2016. Your participation is limited to a single session.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

Benefits

The possible benefits of this study include a greater understanding of the practice of leadership, the resources necessary to develop leadership practices among college students, and the wider dissemination of valuable leadership practices into the workplace.

The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

Confidentiality

The researchers will try to maintain confidentiality of the data. However, the nature of focus groups means that we cannot guarantee confidentiality. Please respect the privacy of the other participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public.

Your information may be shared with the following:

- The Wright State Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
- Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)

Security

Any data collected, including this consent form, will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet in the Department of Leadership Studies located in 490 Allyn Hall at Wright State University. All recorded interview files will be stored in a password protected computer, and destroyed/deleted upon completion of written interview transcripts. All interview transcripts will be maintained in a locked file cabinet along with consent forms in the Department of Leadership Studies.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints

You may contact the principal investigator, Jason Farkas, at (937) 775-3236 or farkas.2@wright.edu, or Dr. Mindy McNutt at (937) 775-2447. If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Wright State IRB Office (937) 775-4462. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject with a member of the IRB or staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions,

as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

This paper outlines what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature means that this study has been discussed with you, that your questions, if any, have been answered, and that you will take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a signed copy of this consent to keep for your records.

Signature of Subject	Date Signed
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Signature of Investigator	Date Signed
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Appendix B

Recruitment E-Mail

Subject Line: Participants Sought for a Leadership Research Study

Jason Farkas and Dr. Mindy McNutt are looking for participants for our research study investigating leadership. You are receiving this email because you have assisted with or participated in the Organizational Leadership internship program at Wright State University. Your email address was obtained from Brenda Kraner, Director of Internships at Wright State University.

This study is about the value of leadership education. If you take part in this study, you would participate in a focus group lasting approximately one hour. The focus group will discuss the value of different aspects of leadership and leadership education. In order to take part in this study, you must have assisted with or participated in the Wright State OL internship program.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please email: Jason Farkas (farkas.2@wright.edu) or Dr. Mindy McNutt (mindy.mcnutt@wright.edu). You may also call: Jason Farkas at (937) 775-3236 or Dr. Mindy McNutt at (937) 775-2447. Thank you.

Appendix C

Interview Schedule A (Employer)

1. What leadership skills and qualities are most desired in your organization?
2. What leadership skills and qualities are most desired of new employees?
3. In your organization, what leadership skills and qualities contribute to career advancement?
4. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (2015), leadership qualities are among business leader's most desired skills of new college graduates. In this regard, can you describe your experience with new college graduates?
5. NACE noted that 78% of employers desire college graduates with leadership skills above all other skills. They also stated that many employers find that new college graduates have lost ground in leadership skills compared to previous cohorts. Why might that be?
6. In your experience, can leadership skills and qualities be taught? How?
7. How beneficial would an advanced leadership-skills training program be to your organization? Why?
8. What would you like to see in a leadership development program? What coursework or skill development classes would be beneficial?
9. Does your organization have a leadership-training program? If yes, describe what it entails.

10. What list of leadership skills do you think all college graduates entering the workforce need to learn or practice?

Appendix D

Interview Schedule B (Student)

1. What leadership skills and qualities will be most desired in your future organization?
2. What leadership skills and qualities will be most desired of new employees?
3. In your organization, what leadership skills and qualities will contribute to career advancement?
4. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (2015), leadership qualities are among business leader's most desired skills of new college graduates. Can you describe your experience learning about leadership in college?
5. NACE noted that 78% of employers desire college graduates with leadership skills above all other skills. They also stated that many employers find that new college graduates have lost ground in leadership skills compared to previous cohorts. Why might that be?
6. In your experience, can leadership qualities or skills be taught? How?

Appendix E

Transcript Sample (Student)

Interviewer (J): The first question is, what leadership skills and qualities will be most desired in your future job?

2: I would have to say communication.

9: I was, you stole the words out of my mouth, participant 2.

2: Really? Haha

J: Ok, communication. What's that mean? What do you envision when you think about communication?

2: Go ahead...

9: I would say that I envision, um, a set of common goals and thriving to reach those goals as a team.

2: I would say, just, making sure that everybody is just on one accord and that nobody feels left behind with, just like, small detailed information, because sometimes the small stuff can lead to bigger things. So, just make sure everybody know what is going on, and what I'm offering to them, and what you can offer to me.

J: Anything else? Leadership qualities that might be valuable in your next job or your organization?

8: Teamwork. I think teamwork is good because, like, if you're a leader, you're obviously going to be leading other people, so you have to be able to work with them good...

6: I'd say a clear understanding of vision because it's easy to get off track if you're not continually focused on your purpose, your reason why you're here, why you come together. Your motivation. All those things are encompassed in your vision, so that people won't become lackadaisical, things won't just slip off, having a constant reminder of why you're here and your vision.

3: Um, I would have to say adaptability and flexible. Being flexible because sometimes things don't always go as planned. You have to be able to prepare to (unintelligible).

J: Go with the flow a little bit?

1: And, I would say being in a leadership position, the ability to deal with conflict effectively.

Curriculum Vitae

Jason S. Farkas

375 W. Center College St. #145 • Yellow Springs, OH 45387 • Phone: (937) 532-9638 •
E-Mail: farkas.2@wright.edu LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/jfarkas10

Education

Wright State University 2016

Master's of Science in Leadership Development (MSLD)
Member – Midwest Academy of Management
4.00 GPA

Wright State University 2014

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology
Member- Psi Chi, International Psychology Honors Society
3.60 GPA, Cum Laude Latin Honors

Experience

Graduate Research Assistant – Wright State University 2014 – Present

- Assist in all facets of research project development including survey selection and design and focus group question development.
- Distribution and collection of research survey instruments with extensive administration of Schwartz Portrait Value Questionnaire.
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of survey responses. SPSS data analysis and coding.
- Maintain confidential database of survey responses.
- Maintain partnerships with key faculty to obtain access to survey respondents.
- Literature review and reporting of results in APA style for submission to peer-reviewed journals.
- Other research related tasks as deemed necessary by Principle Investigators Drs. Mindy McNutt and Roxanne DuVivier.
- Test proctor
- Course Introduction (Organizational Leadership - 4950)

General Manager - Guitar Center Inc. 2003 – 2013

- Responsible and accountable for all daily operations within given retail location. Maintain and exceed annual sales goals of \$4-5 million while improving profitability and overall market share of location.

- Development of customer outreach initiatives that foster long-lasting customer relationships.
- Recruit, hire, train, and retain a diverse commissioned sales team that is capable of delivering an outstanding customer experience. Coach and mentor all team members to perform beyond their own expectations.
- Mentored many team members who are currently top performers within Guitar Center management and other organizations. Assisted and championed team members in career, personal, and leadership growth. Identified appropriate professional and career growth pathways for all team members.
- Facilitate daily, weekly, and monthly store meetings. Meet individually with all associates to discuss performance, accountability, and administer disciplinary measures.
- Handling of sensitive and confidential information on a daily basis.
- Sales trend analysis and application of improvement measures.
- Continually achieved exceptional year-to-year revenue increases. Same store comp sales growth of 25%+ on multiple occasions.
- Annual and monthly district sales award winner on multiple occasions.
- Responsible for stores including: Dayton, OH, Colorado Springs, CO, Kalamazoo, MI. Served as Sales Manager for stores in Columbus, OH, and Cincinnati, OH.

Volunteer Experience

- Volunteer Research Assistant to Emily Polander, PhD ABD on a project entitled “Understanding Low Income Patients Health Experiences to Improve Adherence to Hypertension Management Plans” – Presented at: International Conference of Behavioral Medicine, Netherlands in August 2014.
- Lab Assistant: Workplace Personality and P.A.R.T. Labs under the supervision of Dr. Gary Burns and Dr. Herb Colle, 2014.
- Wright State University Graduate School orientation volunteer (multiple dates), Fall 2015.
- On-site Logistics Support – Midwest Academy of Management Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, October 2015.
- Food preparation, assistance, and service for Your Father’s Kitchen, Friday Night Hot Dog Ministry, Wilmington, OH, 2013.

Presentations

- “Job Burnout: Eradicating an Epidemic” – Wright State University College Readiness Event, January 2014
- “Student Support Seeking Strategies and Academic Burnout” - Wright State Celebration of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities, April 2014
- Guest Speaker – Wright State University “Undergraduate Research Experiential Learning (UREL)” event, March 2015

Skills

- Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certified Social/Behavioral Investigator (2014)
- Extensive knowledge of personality assessment instruments including Schwartz Portrait Value Questionnaire, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, NEO-PI-R, and StrengthsFinders.
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills - Able to effectively communicate and identify with all levels of an organization as well as a diverse customer base. Able to quickly negotiate mutually beneficial solutions.
- Proficient with Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook applications. Proficient with Apple OS operating system. Working knowledge of PsychoPy 2, psychology experiment builder software. Working knowledge of R, R Studio, and SPSS statistical modeling software. Proficient with DayForce scheduling software.
- Able to work well within a team or with minimal supervision.
- Proven track record of sales growth, team building, and people development.
- Easily navigates change and difficult situations.
- Strong attention to detail as well as time and money saving opportunities.