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LEARNING TO LEAD: HOW LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

LEARN TO LEAD


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LISA METHENEY-FISHER
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LEARNING TO LEAD: HOW LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION
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BY

_____
Dr. Susan Sharp, Chair

_____
Dr. Kirby Gilliland

_____
Dr. Irene Karpiak

_____
Dr. Richard Little

_____
Dr. James Pappas

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**Abstract**

Learning leadership in higher education has historically not been a structured process. The purpose of this research is to understand how leaders in higher education learn to lead and the influence experience, professional development; mentoring and critical incidents play in the learning process. In this research both formal and informal approaches were found to be influential in learning through experience, mentoring and professional development. The information in this research will provide a platform for creating, fostering and developing future leaders in higher education.

The research questions addressed by this research include how significant experience, professional development, mentors and critical incidents has been in how leaders learn. It explores the degree to which learning to lead in higher education is derived from experience, the impact of professional development and the influence of mentoring learning to be leaders in higher education.

The methodology for this research included both quantitative and qualitative to include surveys that were sent to 350 leaders in higher education at tier two comprehensive level institutions within the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). From the 118 surveys completed twenty leaders volunteered to participate in a one-hour interview. Findings from this research suggest most leadership is learned through experience and mentoring. For both of these areas, it is important for the leader to have the ability to reflect on situations and understand how to apply the learning to their leadership. Implications from this study would benefit higher education institutions, professional associations/organizations and future leaders in knowing and understanding how leaders learn and develop leadership programs based on this information.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Over the last 25 to 30 years, the canvas of higher education has made immense transformations in leadership methods across campuses nationwide. The social and political climates of the 1960's and 1970's have paved the way for dynamic changes of colleges and universities and the manner in which leadership is viewed (Kezar, Carducci & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). The two significant occurrences that have led to a need for a shifting of leadership have been the changes of technology and the view of higher education through an entrepreneurial focus. Leaders in higher education today face many challenges that the forefathers of institutions never anticipated in academia.

Leaders today are confronted with challenges and issues of entrepreneurial endeavors, globalization, ensuring diversity, finance, governance, access diversity, assessment, content delivery, and budget resource allocation. In addition, leaders must also deal with ever changing state and federal regulations and laws, parents' needs, students' needs, adult learners' needs, and community needs (Brown, 2006; Davis, 2003; & Gilley et al., 1986). Leaders' responsibilities are multidimensional; the paperwork task is straightforward, but leaders must also pay attention to the social and emotional dimensions involved in leading (Strathe & Wilson in Transitions, 2006). These aspects include helping others develop a sense of belonging, commitment and trust, while keeping a focus on information-sharing and participatory decision-making (Strathe & Wilson in Transition, 2006).

Many leaders have dual roles: they must be educational leaders and at the same time act as managers of large complex organizations (McDade & Lewis, 1994, p. 43). This can be a difficult and challenging endeavor. An effective administrator fosters practices that result in each person knowing how she or he contributes to the university (Strathe & Wilson in Transitions, 2006). The policymakers are demanding better, stronger, and bolder leadership at universities and colleges while monetary resources from government are decreasing and, at the same time, the stipulation of accountability, assessment, globalization, and competition is increasing (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989). Leaders must be able to balance it all.

In this ever-changing world of higher education leadership, how are leaders learning to lead? Much of the research focuses on what leaders do, what qualities leaders must possess to be successful, and how the leaders have made organizations successful rather than focusing on what influenced these individuals to become leaders and how these leaders learned to lead. Understanding the formal and informal successions of leadership will add to our understanding of *why* leaders become leaders and *how* they learn to lead.

This research project sets out to offer awareness about the views and perspectives of current leaders in higher education, with the intention that this knowledge will aid in explaining the way in which higher education institutions might consider fostering and cultivating effective leadership learning. This research is both timely and pertinent given the flux and the uncertainty of the economy and its direct

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effect on higher education.  Dwindling budgets, an increase in demands and

expectations on institutions' accountability of leaders are at an all-time high; thus,

ensuring that leaders are at the top of their game is vital.  With the distinct and original

focus of this research from the perspectives and "voices" of those currently in higher

education leadership, the result is that this research is likely to be useful to a broad

range of stakeholders across the spectrum of higher education.

 

This research will assist institutions, potential leaders, and current leaders in

understanding the impact that formal and informal activities have on how leaders learn

to lead.  For the purpose of this research, professional development activities such as

workshops and training that are structured and have prescribed outcomes are defined as

formal development.  Informal development is defined as activities that occur outside

of a defined curriculum.  Informal activities may include but are not limited to learning

by observing others or chatting with a colleague or friend to reflect on experiences.

The practice of mentoring falls under the category of both formal and informal

development, while life experience/critical incidents fall under informal development

activities.  Higher education researchers suggest that participating in professional

development and cultivating mentoring relationships impact leadership development

and the process of learning to lead (Bensimon et al., 1989; Birnbaum, 1989, McDade,

1989).  Most of the research focus on leaders in higher education has been on

presidents or what behaviors or traits leaders must have in higher education. But less is

known about how leaders actually learn to lead (Brown, 2006, Padilla, 2005,

VanDerLinden, 2005).  Davis, in his book entitled *Learning to Lead,* states that "An

important challenge for colleges and universities is the cultivation of leadership itself in all corners of the organization, so that collectively the resources of the institution can be marshaled to address the issues spawned by the new era" (2003). This research aims to explore and identify those institutional resources that cultivate successful leadership in U.S. institutions of higher education through the process of how leaders learn to lead.

*Limitations of the Study*

This study examines the processes that leaders in higher education encounter when learning to lead. Administrators from comprehensive-level institutions within the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) participated in this research study, which is limited to leaders in higher education institutions, and thus may only be generalized to similar populations. The study is limited by the participants' level of voluntary self-reporting on the initial survey and by their willingness to participate in this research. Participants were contacted by email; thus, the use of an electronic survey may have introduced bias towards leaders who use email regularly and are comfortable and familiar with completing surveys online. Therefore, there is a possibility that some leaders who were contacted may have chosen not to participate strictly based upon their unfamiliarity with completing online surveys. Due to geographic limitations and time constraints, this research was narrowed to only include comprehensive-level institutions within the SREB. Although the focus is narrow in area the guidelines of the research allow it to be generalizable to other like institutional leaders in the United States.

*Purpose of Research*

The purpose of this research is to provide an understanding of how leaders in higher education learn to lead.  I seek to understand the impact of both formal and informal development.  This research underscores the importance of understanding the extent to which experience, professional development, mentoring and life experiences/critical incidents have influenced how leaders learn, how they chose to be leaders in higher education and the journey of leadership. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. To what degree is being a leader in higher education learned from experience?

2. What is the impact of formal training programs on one's ability to be a leader in higher education?

3. What particular life experiences (personal, social, educational and/or career) have prepared leaders for leadership roles?

4. How significant have experience, professional development, mentors, and critical incidents been in how leaders learn?

The research includes the perceptions of leaders in higher education and what was useful in how they have learned to lead, including the influence of experience, professional development, mentoring and critical incidents.

*Significance of the Study*

Institutions of higher education, professional associations and future leaders will benefit from knowing how each of these areas affect learning, how each impacts leadership learning and allow programs to be developed or improved to meet the needs of all areas.  Every sector of the work force has noted the increased number of

retirements that are anticipated in the coming years.  The Bureau of Labor Statistics is

estimating that 6,000 jobs will be available annually in higher education from 2004-

2014 (Leubsdorf, 2006).  This gap will create leadership positions to be filled, and

ensuring those leaders are prepared is vital.

**Chapter 2**

**Literature Review**

This review of the literature will examine key theories and concepts related to how leaders learn through experience, professional development, mentoring and critical incidents. The chapter will start with an overview of broad definitions of leadership and then a short synopsis of learning theories that highlight the phenomena of how learning takes place. These theories have specific significance based on learning through experience, professional development, mentoring and critical incidents. Finally, a review of the literature on specific areas of experience, professional development, mentoring and critical incidents will be examined. Much of the literature referencing these areas is qualitative in nature; the complexity of the topic of learning leadership limits the quantitative and/or descriptive research. Leadership is difficult to measure in a quantitative manner as it is different for every leader and every institution.

*Definitions of Leadership*

Actually defining leadership has been an obscure and far reaching task for many scholars. Bass (2008) explores the evolution of the definition of leadership starting in 1920 when leadership was defined as impressing the will of the leader on those led and inducing obedience, respect, loyalty and cooperation. By1960, the definition of leadership was to influence others to move in a shared direction; by 1990, the definition evolved to the "influence of the leader *and* the followers who intend to make real changes that reflected their common purposes" (Bass, 2008, p. 15). Bass believes there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define it (2008). In *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century,* Rost states

that the problem with defining leadership is that the "large majority of leadership

scholars accept definitional ambiguity and confusion" (1993, p.6).  With leadership

being so highly situational and contextual (Cronin, 1995 in Wren, 1995), how do

leaders learn to lead in the complex settings of higher education?  Cronin (1995 in

Wren, 1995) stated, "so much of leadership is intangible that you cannot possibly

define all the parts" (p. 29), therefore, looking at how leadership differs from

management is needed.


The difference between management and leadership is a fuzzy line to some –

not unlike fuzzy math.  John Kotter identified that leadership and management are two

distinctive, but complementary systems of action within organizations (1990).

Management function is planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and

controlling and problem-solving (1990).  In contrast, leadership is about establishing an

overall direction (vision), aligning people with that vision, and motivating and inspiring

people to understand and achieve the vision (p. 4-5).  Building on Kotter's theory, Bass

states the "manager who is not a leader will organize and structure the department, but

he will not enable its members to improve their performance" (2008, p. 23) as

managers are more task driven.  Leadership and management both encompass

accomplishing an agenda, creating coalitions of people and relationships to accomplish

the agenda and then ensuring the people get the job done, but the differences lie in the

scope of the processes (Kotter, 1990, p. 5).  Leadership requires a bigger picture aspect

whereas management is on a shorter timeline requiring more immediate results (1990).

When creating an agenda management is detailed whereas leadership is about a direction of the organization based on a vision focused toward the future.

*Renaissance Thought of Learning and Leadership*

Renaissance views and teachings give insight into how early philosophers considered the learning of leadership. These are basic ideas that, when developed, give way to the fundamental manner in which people learn and thereby how leaders learn to lead. Understanding that leadership is such a diverse concept is much like the Socratic method of inquiry. Vlastos explained, "Socratic inquiry is by no means simple, and calls not only for the highest degree of mental alertness of which anyone is capable, but also for moral qualities of a high order: sincerity, humility, courage" (The Socratic Method, 2011). Socrates provoked the people of Athens to question beliefs and consider answers that move them from a state of complacency (Cahn, 1997; Mayer & Clemens, 1987) to a more knowledgeable society. Socrates challenged his students to "get at the core of the problem" and then implore discussion (Mayer & Clemens, 1987). Learning the Socratic method of communication and dialogue requires engaged inquiry, understanding that the challenge of the problem involves everyone (Meyer & Clemens, 1987). Socrates believed that through questioning, the learner would arrive at an answer that was more fully developed by their own truths (Brownhill in Jarvis, 2002) and would give way to a person's meaning-making and frame of reference. "A Socratic dialogue reveals how different our outlooks can be on concepts we use every day. It reveals how different our philosophies are, and often how tenable-or-untenable, as the case may be-a range of philosophies can be" (The Socratic Method, 2011), considering

that a person's meaning and frame of reference will be different and therefore the learning leadership will be diverse.

One could conceive in Plato's work the *Republic,* the understanding of the need for proper training and education of the "guardians" for the sake of society and "to make themselves the best possible workmen" (Cahn, 1997, p. 64) is an indication of the importance of developing leaders. Understanding that leaders must balance their individual needs with those of the organization and considering Plato's fear of "the leadership of amateurs over professionals, the rise of excessive individualism and the diffusion of responsibility" (Mayer & Clemens, 1987, p. 40) could be indicative of the importance of professional development for leaders. Philosopher Immanuel Kant believed that, through education, human nature can be constantly improved and students may either be trained or enlightened. Kant also adhered to the principle that "the best way to understand is to do" (Cahn, 1997, p. 197), providing early support of experiential learning theory.

Another renaissance theorist, John Locke, believed that "the empiricism and philosophy of education affirmed that humans obtain knowledge from objects in the real world that are perceived through our senses" (Leonard, 2002 p. 146). John Locke with his *tabula rasa* believed that, when born, the human mind is a blank slate upon which experience writes (Leonard, 2002). Locke realized that "people are born with certain biological preformed abilities; those abilities lay dormant, but immediately start to experience the environment via its senses" (Phillips & Soltis, 2004 p. 13-14). How

then do leaders tap into those biological preformed abilities and awake the ability to lead?  At what point can leadership be taught?  Is everyone capable of learning leadership?  The philosophy of empiricism is the basis for the understanding and attainment of human knowledge through our senses and realizing it is not innate (Leonard, 2001; Malone, 1991). The human mind, according to Locke, is a direct result of life and learning experiences. In his *Essay Concerning Human Experience,* Locke explained, "the mind is a product of sensation and reflection with reflection being the simple awareness of our own process of thinking" (Locke in Mezirow, 1991, p. 100). For leaders to learn, they must consider the environment in which they will lead and how this environment impacts that learning. The importance of reflection on situations, circumstances and the contexts are all important to learning leadership.  In the mentoring relationship, it is important to reflect on personal experiences, the mentor's experiences and then being able to use those lessons accordingly when in leadership situations.

A small glimpse of the literature of Renaissance philosophers shows support of the early concern about how learning takes place and the influence on learning leadership.  The Industrial Revolution moved leadership theory into a very task-motivated concept, but the development of leadership into the 21$^{st}$ century has shifted the focus of leadership to relationships between leader and follower and concerns for followers' needs in the organization.

*Learning Theories*

Expanding on early philosophies and to understand how learning transpires, it is necessary to define several learning theories. From a humanistic perspective, learning is centered on experience and allows the individual the freedom and the responsibility to become "what one is capable of becoming" (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, pg. 282). Learners possess unlimited potential for growth and development (Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 19830). Humanists believe that human beings control their own destiny, and their destiny is not predetermined by the environment or by one's subconscious (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 p. 256).

Bandura and Jeffrey (1973, p. 122) explain the theory of observational learning "as a process in which the behavior of models elicits similar responses in others, and as a result of repeated reinforcement, the modeled actions become cues for imitative responses". Using memory codes Bandura's (1971) observational learning theory suggest a behavior that appears favorable and is reinforced will be modeled and retained in permanent memory through continuous rehearsal. Martens (1975, p. 153) established that demonstration is a more effective in learning than verbal experience as language is unable to define the "critical aspects of human movement". The intricacies of observing those behaviors far outweigh hearing or reading about behaviors that cannot be described by words.

Understanding how human beings learn will give insight into how leaders learn to lead. From his work with children, Maslow concluded the human being is not a stagnant being and infrequently reaches a state of complete satisfaction (1970). People

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naturally have an instinct to exceed their simplest of needs and are continually desiring

the next best thing. Maslow's theory of motivation can be viewed as a building block

pyramid - when the lowest level of needs is met the learner will naturally move to the

next level of the pyramid (Fig.1). Maslow's research found there is a basic level of

needs that must be met before a human being is motivated to move to the next level for

satisfaction (1970).

Figure 1. Maslow's Theory of Motivation
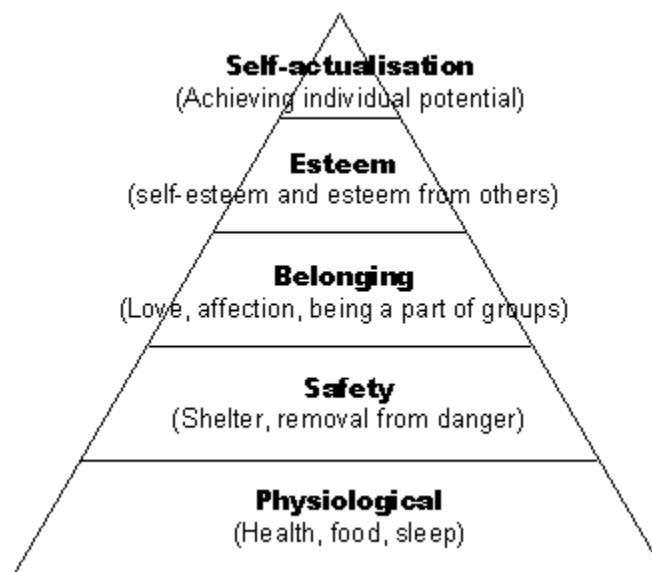
Maslow believed the most rudimentary of needs that must be met are the

physiological needs–these are basic health, food for nutrition and sleep. If hunger is

satisfied, it becomes unimportant to the individual and hunger stops being an active

determinant of behavior (Maslow, 1970). If physiological needs are met, then a new set

of needs develop – the safety needs. The safety needs include the security of one's

environment to include shelter and the elimination of immediate danger to self and

family (Maslow, 1970). Once the safety needs are met, a human being naturally has a

need for belongingness.  The belongingness need includes the satisfaction of being a part of a group or clan and receiving and giving love through family, friends and intimacy (Maslow, 1970).  Moving up the pyramid, the need for self-esteem is reached and the person must satisfy the feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy (Maslow, 1970).  Maslow's highest level of motivation is self-actualization - knowing exactly who you are, what you want to accomplish, a state of well-being and self-efficacy.  Maslow believed the motivation to learn is intrinsic, and the purpose of learning is to bring about self-actualization.  Self-actualization (also known as self-realization) is the highest level for leaders who have a clear understanding of what they hope to accomplish with their career (Rausch, 1981).  Self-actualization is the desire to become everything that one is capable of becoming (Maslow, 1970).  It would appear that Maslow's theory associated with learning leadership suggests that for leaders to reach their fullest potential, the individual must be able to satisfy the needs of motivation to the highest level of self-actualization. Unless the lowest level of needs is met, the ability to learn leadership may be impeded due to the leader's inability to get to a level of learning opportunity. According to London and Mauer (1991) in *The Nature of Leadership,* with leadership and professional development the individual must have "self-insight to understand one's strengths and weaknesses" and the ability for the individual to "self-identify the type of person one is and wants to be and the career goals one wants to achieve" (p. 230).  The importance of Maslow's self-actualization is the understanding that in order to learn, the individual must satisfy the most basic needs of survival and then be able to move to the next level.  Self-actualization would be necessary in order for the individual to

utilize the information learned through experience, professional development and mentoring – the individual has to be able to process the information and produce a meaning that can be applied to their leadership. Taking into consideration the pyramid used for Maslow's hierarchy, few people reach the apex of self-actualization. Therefore, it may be that only a few people are able to learn leadership. If we believed that everyone who is able to rise to Maslow's level of self-actualization is able to learn leadership, there would be more leaders than there are leadership positions. Integrating other theories of how people learn leadership is essential. The goal of self-actualization is to learn–there is an innate need in people to know and understand.

Carl Rogers believed that significant learning leads to personal growth and development (1983). Rogers' theory of learning addresses the needs and wants of learner knowledge (Cahn, 1997) and emphasizes that learning should be 'person-centered' (Rogers, 1983). The person-centered approach focuses on self-awareness and the process of growth (p. 170). In the book *Freedom to Learn for the 80's* (1983), Rogers explains that person-centered learning is the highest level of significant learning and includes personal involvement at both the affective and cognitive levels. To be significant, learning has to be "self-initiated, pervasive enough to change attitudes, behavior and the personality of the learner" (p. 19) The learner has to evaluate the process involved in learning and be able to make meaning as part of the total experience (1994). Rogers believes that significant or experiential learning is defined by the following (1983, p. 20):

Personal involvement – The effective and cognitive aspects of a person should be involved in the learning event.

1. Self-initiated – A sense of discovery must come from within.

2. Pervasive – The learning makes a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner.

3. Evaluated by the learner – The learner can best determine whether the experience is meeting a need.

4. Essence is meaning – When experiential learning takes place, its meaning to the learner becomes incorporated into the total experience.

Significant, personal, experiential learning is learning that makes a difference to the person in relation to their behavior, attitudes and personality.  Learning is acquired through doing; experiential involvement with practical and real problems promotes learning–it must have meaningfulness and relevance for the learner.  It must be more than just the mind; learning must involve both the thoughts and the feelings (Rogers, 1983 p.19).  Significant learning combines the logical and the intuitive, the intellect and the feelings, the concept and the experience, the idea and the meaning (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).  Rogers further emphasizes that to enhance the learning, the learner must "conduct inquiry" (1983, p. 156).  During the conducting of inquiry the "teacher" sets the environment by "posing problems, creating a responsive environment and giving assistance" (p. 156) for the learner to "achieve autonomous discoveries and to engage in self-directed learning" (p.157).  In other words, the teacher provides the opportunity for the learner to discover what he or she needs to know.  This would be important to the mentoring process and for professional development by allowing the

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mentee to discover the process of leadership and being able to apply what is learned in a professional development arena to leadership. With experience, it would be significant for the learner to use past experience applied to future situations.

According to Rogers, there are two types of learning involved for the experience: 1) cognitive learning, which is unimportant to the self because it is based on academic knowledge that does not address the needs and wants of the learner, and 2) experiential learning, which is significant because it is related to learning that has relevance to the individual's life or work experiences (Leonard, 2002 p. 68). Using Rogers' theory of learning helps us to understand the importance of experiential learning in professional development, mentoring and learning on the job through experience.

John Dewey is said by many to be the modern founder of learning through experience. He believed that "purposeful activity in social settings was the key to genuine learning" (Phillips & Soltis, 2004 p. 56). From the humanistic perspective, Dewey believed that life is an expansion of learning, and "what is learned will be integrated into a student's experiences" (Boisvert, 1998, p. 102). Experiential learning is at its peak of effectiveness when learners are fully involved; lessons are clearly relevant to the learner, individuals have an awareness of their own learning and the environment is responsive to the learner's needs (Walter, 1943 p. 2). Accordingly Dewey believed that in order for learning to occur the experience must include continuity and interaction. Continuity means the learner must connect the new

experience to what is already known and modifies existing knowledge, while

interaction requires the learner to be actively involved in the environment and test the

lessons in that environment (Fenwick, 2001, p. 6).

David Kolb expands upon Dewey's theory of experiential learning and defines

learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of

experience" (1984, p. 38). Kolb's cycle of experiential learning requires that the

student and the educator be actively involved in the learning process. As opposed to

the didactic method of teaching where the educator's role is to "give" knowledge, the

experiential learning process engages both the learner and the educator (1984). Kolb

conceptualized that learning from experience requires four different kinds of abilities:

1. The concrete – an openness and willingness to involve oneself in new experiences

2. Reflective observation – observational and reflective skills so that new

    experiences can be viewed from a variety of perspectives

3. Abstract conceptualization – analytical abilities so integrative ideas and concepts

    can be created from observations

4. Active experimentation – decision-making and problem solving skills so new

    ideas and concepts can be used in actual practice (Merriam et al, 2007, p. 161).

Figure 2. Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning
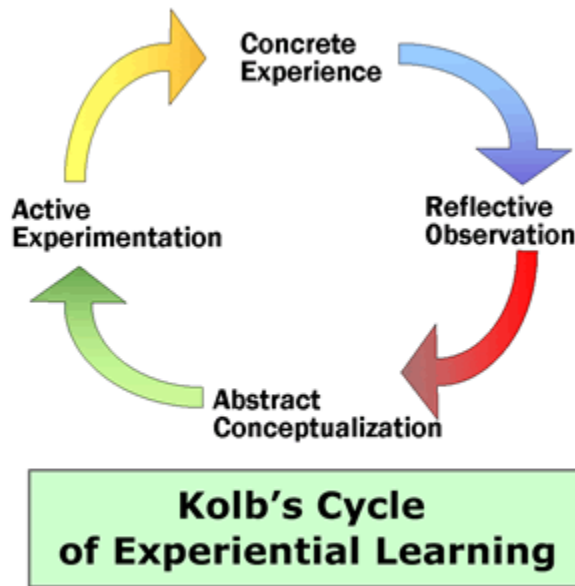
Kolb's theory tries to "clarify exactly how different people learn by integrating their concrete emotional experiences with reflection," using cognitive process of conceptual analysis and then finally understanding (Fenwick, 2001, p. 19). In Kolb's cycle, the learner must move through an inquiry process of concrete experience (this experience could be simulated, as a case study or role play or a real life experience). Reflective observation occurs, and the learner may ask: What did I observe? What was I aware of? What does this experience mean to me? How might this experience have been different? From the reflective observation, the learner creates an abstract conceptualization where generalizations are employed and the learner tries to understand a general "rule of thumb" or an understanding of what the experience reveals about them, others or how things work. Finally active experimentation is implemented where the learner applies the new learning (Fenwick, 2001; Jarvis, 2002).

This interactive model allows the learner to create knowledge through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). The ability to transform an experience into a valuable reference and allows the learner to make meaning, but in order to do that the experience has to apply to a frame of reference for the individual (Merriam et al, 2007; Mezirow, 1997). Through reflective learning and internal processing of an experience, linking the experience to previous learning and transforming the learner's previous understanding demonstrates that experiential learning has taken place (Fenwick, 2001).

Taking into consideration that all of the learners for this research are adult learners, it is important to explore Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference (1997) and concerns how adults make sense of their life experience (Merriam et al, 2007). Mezirow believes that making sense of experience is done through a learner's frames of reference. Frames of reference are known as the "meaning perspective" and give context for making meaning within which a learner can choose what and how a sensory experience is to be constructed and/or appropriated (pg. 16). Frames of reference are defined as the structures of assumptions that we understand in our world and are "primarily the result of cultural assimilation and the idiosyncratic influences of primary caregivers" (Mezirow in Cranton, 1997, p. 6). Cranton (2000) states that one's "cultural background, the knowledge we have acquired, our moral and spiritual beliefs and our own psychological makeup all influence how we interpret and make meaning out of our experience" (p. 182).

Modifying one's frame of reference necessitates critical reflection of assumptions, validating questioned beliefs through dialogue, being committed of one's reflective insight and critically assessing it (p. 9). Mezirow states the ultimate goal of the transformative theory is to yield an autonomous thinker, who will learn to negotiate his or her own values, meanings and purposes (1997). Merriam et al. explain that just having the experience is not enough, but the learner must critically self-examine the assumptions and beliefs that have structured how the experience is to be interpreted (2007). Mezirow (1997) also states that for learning to become meaningful, and for the learner to understand the experience, it must be integrated into an already well-developed frame of reference and the learner must actively involve thought, feelings and disposition (p. 10). Mezirow (1997) believes critical reflection to be the most "distinguishing characteristic" of transformative learning (1997). Through the reflective process learning occurs (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985). It would seem at this point, in order for true transformative learning to take place, the learner must be at a level of self-actualization for the pieces to come together. Being able to reflect on the learning process would be essential. According to Mezirow when individuals reflect on their understanding of an experience they adapt the "meaning perspectives to become more inclusive, differentiating, permeable, critically reflective and integrative of experience" (1991, p. 5, 9).

In the learning theory of constructivism, the learner is the most important aspect. Piaget's work with children brought to light how humans construct knowledge (Brodinsky, Sigel & Golinkoff, 1981). Piaget believes that through the "constructivist

process knowledge is acquired" (Brodinsky et al., 1981, p. 5) and that each person must

be active in the learning process (Fenwick, 2001). The constructivist process

incorporates the learner organizing, structuring and restricting an experience with

existing schemes of thought to make sense of the experience (Brodinsky, et al., 1981).

The structuring of the experience and knowledge gained is continually modified and

enriched through the course of interactions and experiences (Brodinsky, et al., 1981).

Constructivism is based on the learner having "some prior knowledge and experience

as a basis from which to test their hypothesis, build their own set of content to solve a

particular set of problems" (Leonard, 2002, p. 37). In the constructivism model,

learning is "learner-centered," the instructor becomes the "catalyst, coach and a

program manager" (Leonard, 2002), and the learner constructs the knowledge.

Piaget's constructivism theory of learning is based on the idea that growth and

maturation happens through accommodation and assimilation (Leonard, 2002). A

person makes sense of the world through schemata – these are the categories we use to

put the world in order (Wadsworth, 2004). The schema of a child are much different

from the schema of an adult, as schemata change due to growth and development

(Wadsworth, 2004) and are influenced by learning and experience. The two processes

responsible for the change in schemata are assimilation and accommodation.

Assimilation is the cognitive process of integrating new perceptual, motor or

conceptual matter into existing schemata or "seeing old things in a new way" (p. 17).

Assimilation does not change, but it does grow as the person has new experiences

(Wadsworth, 2004). The process of accommodation is when a person creates new

schemata or there is a modification of old schemata or modifying existing schemas to fit the new information (Wadsworth, 2004). These processes must occur together, and as a person makes sense of these processes there is equilibration (Wadsworth, 2004) and a better understanding of self (Kegan, 1982). Constructivism takes the idea of interconnectedness between learner and environment; the environment influences [the leader's] internal processes and at the same time, those same internal processes influence the environment (Jackson, 1996). Driscoll noted, Piaget (1971), believed the acquisition of knowledge is a process of continuous self-construction (1994 p. 171). In experiential learning, the constructivism orientation is associated with cognitive reflection upon concrete experience (Fenwick, 2001). Fenwick (2001) postulates that the experiential experience is enhanced by "facilitating adults' reflection and critical reflection on experience by instigating holistic experiences in instructional settings, by coaching and mentoring adults to enhance their learning in the midst of experience and by assessing adults' experience" (p. 1).

Robert Kegan has expanded on Piaget's idea of self, the influence of the environment and how meaning is made through social maturity. Kegan builds upon Piaget's constructivism theory explaining that the "meaning-making process is only accomplished after years of continual experience and reflection" (1986, p. 30). In Kegan's meaning-making, the importance is the universal, on-going process that is the fundamental context of personality development (1982 p. 267). A person's meaning-making is defined by more than just the experience, including what an experience means to him or her (p.113). Kegan explains that to understand the individual, we must

understand the environment in which the person exists and how the roles of the environment affect and interact with the individual (1982). Kegan developed a succession of junctures a person must progress through to move to a higher level of meaning-making (1982).

Kegan explains the development of growth as moving from impulsiveness and self-centeredness and yielding to "other-centered" where the interpersonal relationships and mutuality are paramount for progression to the ultimate goal of inter-individual (1982). In essence Kegan believes that people must develop from a simple understanding (tangible or concrete) to a more complex understanding (abstract or non-tangible). As people gain social maturity their understanding of self allows for continuous renegotiation between self and other (1982). Kegan emphasizes not the stages, but the quality of transition between them (Daloz, 1999, p. 67). The leader who has achieved self-actualization will realize that stage may take years to accomplish, but the success would be in making the transition through the stages (p. 67). The mentor could assist the leader in movement and help them understand the significance of the transitions in relation to learning leadership.

Considering these learning theories allows us to understand how leaders learn to lead in higher education in reference to the leader's experience, professional development, mentoring and critical incidents. Each of these theories' purpose is to describe or categorize specific ways humans learn, but the individual must be considered and how the individual interprets the environment. The essence of all of

these theories is for the learner to consider their experiences, their learning potential, the environment and situations that will influence the learning process. Understanding how learning takes place from infancy to adulthood is important, but also the processes that influence learning are fundamental. The individual must have the maturity to apply the learning in a leadership context.

Where Dewey, Kolb and Mezirow believe that experiential learning must be an active and participative process through reflective learning, Jarvis (1987) suggests that there can be reflective learning and non-reflective learning. Reflective learning is defined as contemplation, problem-solving or active experimentation, whereas non-reflective learning is about absorbing information, unconsciously internalizing new understandings or mechanically practicing new skills (Fenwick, 2001).

*Defining Experience, Professional Development, Mentoring and Critical Incidents Based on Learning Theories*

It is important to understand and define for this research the four areas in which leadership learning may occur. For this research, the following areas are considered: experience, mentoring, professional development and critical incidents.

*Experience/Experiential Learning*

Experience is defined by many different scholars. Dewey defined experience as "one in which the material of experience is fulfilled or consummated, as for example when a problem is solved, or a game is played to its conclusion and is also marked off from other experiences, containing within itself an individualizing quality" (Stanford

Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Saddington (in Fenwick, 2001) defined experiential

learning from two lenses. The progressive lens defines Dewey's experiential learning

as "educators help learners unveil their hidden untapped knowledge through reflection

on life experience" and the humanistic lens focuses experiential learning "on the learner

at the center of the process of discovery and self-actualization, in a drive towards

personal enrichment, integration and psychological development" (Fenwick, 2001, p.

9). Kolb (1994) defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is

created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the

combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p.38) to understanding. Jarvis

(1987) believed that "there is no meaning in a given situation until we relate our own

experience to it" (p. 164). Andresen, Boud and Cohen (2000) provide a list of criteria

for experience-based learning. The authors state that for a project to be truly

experiential, the following attributes are necessary in some combination:

- The goal of experience-based learning involves something personally significant or meaningful to the students.

- Students should be personally engaged.

- Reflective thought and opportunities for students to write or discuss their experiences should be ongoing throughout the process.

- The whole person is involved, meaning not just their intellect but also their senses, their feelings and their personalities.

- Students should be recognized for prior learning they bring into the process.

- Teachers need to establish a sense of trust, respect, openness, and concern for the well-being of the students.

Fenwick (2001) defines experiential learning as a process of human cognition and

experience incorporates reflective as well as kinetic activity, conscious and unconscious

dynamics and all manner of interaction among subjects, texts and contexts (p. 3).

The importance of experiential learning is more about what we do with the information gained from the experience rather than the actual experience (Mezirow, 2000). The learner must be able to sift through an experience and use it to learn to grow as a leader. The school of experiential learning emphasizes the role of explicit reflection throughout (Mezirow, 2000, pg. 259). According to Saddington (1998), the basic concept of experiential learning is to yield an independent learner who is able to reflect on an experience and construct new understandings for improvement. Phillips and Soltis (1985) remind us of John Locke's famous words:

> Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas. How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it an almost endless variety? When has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is found; and from that it ultimately derives itself.

*Professional Development*

Professional development provides the learner with the tools necessary to conceptualize experience and reach insights that alters the leader's perceptions of their role and task (Miller & Warren, 1983). Through formal education and development, it is believed that leaders will be more adept at successfully leading a highly sophisticated

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organization and meeting the demands of the global world of higher education.

Professional development programs for leaders in higher education have to be

specifically tailored to meet the particular needs, challenges and demands of higher

education. Many organizations assume that leadership will be learned on the job or

gained through experience. This assumption can be costly to an institution, and the

lack of leadership ability and knowledge could put the academy at a disadvantage for

growth and development. Leadership development, when left to one's own resources,

is a long and complex melee of self-learning and/or learning by mistake. These are

costly lessons to the organization, and inattention to the human resources could be of

dire detriment to the institution. McDade (1997) believes that professional

development programs can formalize and accelerate necessary learning by providing an

organized, focused forum for developing specific skills needed to solve institutional

problems (pg. 3).

Green and McDade (1994, pg. 5) stated the importance of leadership

development:

> Leadership development encompasses many activities and
> experiences that enhance the ability of individuals to make
> a difference, to shape the direction of their institution or
> unit, and to bring others along in sharing and implementing
> goals. It is identifying new leaders, providing people with
> opportunities to grow and learn, to affirm their beliefs and
> values, to expand their understanding of issues and people

and to improve their [leadership] skills. While individuals

must create opportunities to develop themselves,

institutions must help them do so by effectively managing

human resources, by establishing a climate that encourages

participation and innovation, and by actively promoting

leadership development.

When the institution fosters professional growth and leadership development, the long-run benefits far outweigh the short-sighted costs.


Many institutions forgo formal professional development because of costs and time away from the institution. The return on investment is difficult to measure and not obviously apparent. For this reason, when it comes to budget cuts, many institutions will freeze funds for leadership development/training. But the overall costs of not paying attention to leadership development may result in turnover, costly searches, institutional stasis and individual burnout (Green, 1991). Sharon McDade (1994, pg. 34) noted that the benefits reaped by leaders and institutions from leadership development programs are:

- New skill and knowledge–today's leaders need a broad range of expertise ranging from budgeting and planning to legal savvy and computer literacy and people skills.

- Stimulation and renewal–meeting new people and being exposed to new ideas can be stimulating and can help people see old issues and problems in new focus.

- Contacts and networking–meeting and exchanging views with one's counterparts offers ideas and opportunities that are unique to higher education leadership.

- Reflection and perspective – provides needed respite from pressures and routines, as well as time to consider problems thoughtfully with colleagues and to see similar issues played out in different contexts.

- Increased self-confidence – leadership development experiences help leaders sort out what they know from what they do not know; and provide frameworks of reference, knowledge of resources for help and information and a sense that their jobs are manageable.

Institutions and leaders must recognize the need for leadership development, but then the individual must be able to integrate the lessons learned in their leadership roles. According to Green and McDade (1994) leadership development is an investment both in the short-term effectiveness of an institution, thereby increasing job performance and satisfaction, and in its long-range health by identifying and preparing people to assume greater responsibility and increase their contribution to the institution. Returns on investments may be maximized for the institution and the leader when a seminar investment strategy is designed for the institution (Van Auken & Ireland, 1980). Greater dividends will be reaped if investments are carefully selected, prepared for and followed up (p. 210). Investment strategies allow the individual to prepare. Green and McDade (1994) offer two checklists that individuals and institutions can use as guidelines to ascertain the best match for program to individual and institutional needs and goals.

Checklist for Individuals (p. 206)

- Does the program address the individual's career development needs? Is it at the appropriate level?

- Are the topics congruent with the individual's interests?

- Who are the speakers or program faculty? What are their backgrounds and areas of expertise?

- What are the instructional methods? Are they suited to the individual's learning style and preferences?

- Does the length and format suit the individual's needs and learning styles? Is it a compact, information intensive session or a program designed to promote more leisurely dialogue? How much informal interaction with colleagues does the participant seek and how much does the program provide?

- What types of administrative positions and institutions will be represented? Is the individual seeking diversity of participants for cross fertilization or commonality of interests to facilitate information swapping and "how-to" conversations?

- Is there an opportunity for the individual to serve as a speaker or panelist?

- Is the program affordable? Are the timing and location right? Will the participant need to pay some expenses personally to supplement the institution's contribution?

- Is there provision for the participants to evaluate the learning experience at the program's conclusion or at a later point?

- Is there provision for the participant's to benefit from program follow up or alumni activities that can extend the learning experiences?

Checklist for Institutions (p. 206)

- Does the program speak directly to the short or long term needs and goals of the institution?

- Will the program introduce new information and ideas that will help address a specific institutional problem, goal or activity?

- Who are the speakers and program faculty? What are their backgrounds? Are any of the presenter's potential resources, speakers, consultants or employees for the institution?

- What are the instructional methods? Will they help the participants apply what they have learned?

- What types of administrative positions and institutions will be represented? Will other participants be potential resources, either for the individual in the fulfillment of his or her job or for the institution?

- Can the institution afford the programs' time and cost? Are there less expensive alternatives?

People and communities have recognized the need for leadership development across all spectrums of organizations. Many programs are focused on CEOs, CFOs and presidents, while other programs center on general leadership skills paired with team-building activities. In higher education, many people who advance into leadership positions may be coming directly from a professorship position and have never held a leadership position within a department. Or, a leader may have been promoted from an administrative management position to a more complex leadership responsibility based on performance and education, yet he or she has never performed a leadership role, and many have stumbled into administration with no formal preparation (Ard, 1994; Birnbaum, 1989; Brown 1990; Davis, 2003; Fulton-Calkins & Mulling, 2005; Green, 1991; McDade & Lewis, 1994). Moving from a skills-based position into a leadership position requires the leader to move from managing to inspiring and motivating followers to believe and work toward their organization's vision (Yukl, 2005).

According to Green and McDade (1994), historically, promotion to a leadership position in higher education has been about promoting one not based on leadership ability. Instead, "new administrators enter the senior ranks with little preparation beyond a job well done from a more junior position" (p. 86). Leaders in higher education must learn to balance the needs of many constituents. The fundamental challenges of balancing an institution of very diverse and distinct entities within the same organization can be immense and overwhelming for someone who does not have the skills to orchestrate this concert of leadership.

McDade (1997, 1987) has organized professional development into four types: national institutes, administrative conferences, conventions of national associations and short seminars, workshops and meetings. The national institutes offer extended, intensive training programs and investigate education issues and management techniques; examples are the ACE Fellows Program, Harvard Institute Educational Management (IEM) and Bryn Mawr Higher Education Resource Services (HERS). Administrative conferences address the tasks, responsibilities and leadership roles in specific administrative areas. The third type is conventions of national associations (American Association of Community Colleges). These conventions usually highlight prominent speakers, panel discussions and position papers. Short seminars, workshops and meetings provide focused instruction on specialized issues and problems in education.

*Mentoring*

Socrates used the mirror with students as the proverbial manner of feedback, to let them see themselves in an expanded context (Daloz, 1999). Mentoring is defined as a dyadic relationship that involves a one-on-one interplay between two individuals-a more experienced practitioner and a student or novice (Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009, p. 15). But, for the mentoring process to be impactful, the mentee must be able to understand their own experiences as well as learn from the experiences of another. Carol Mullen (2009) describes mentor as the "a guide who opens up others to new experiences and the world, and who encourages and protects protégés" (2009, p.10). According to Mullen (2009), mentoring is an educational process focused on teaching and learning within dyads, groups and cultures; mentorship is a holistic form of

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teaching and learning that embraces the professional, personal and career facets of the

protégé's development and includes such activities as advising, tutoring, coaching and

counseling (pg. 12). Nakamura & Shernoff (2009) also explain that historically, the

ideal mentor has been conceived as someone who served as an advisor, sponsor, host,

exemplar, and guide for a relative novice who is moving from dependence and

inexperience toward independence and proficiency. In higher education, "mentoring

has long been recognized as valuable to the development of successful administrators"

(Strathe & Wilson, 2006, p. 8) and assisting new leaders in learning, understanding and

navigating the culture of an institution. Through their influence, mentors have the

ability to shape the future of their profession (2009), thereby offering the opportunity

for new leaders to "see" leadership from the perspective of others while developing and

reflecting on their own experiences. Nakamura & Shernoff's (2009) research was

focused on the capacity of mentors to model and teach practices exemplifying

professional excellence and ethical responsibility (p. 9). Mentors help mentees

transition through the "meaning-making framework"; moving from a relatively narrow

and self-centered filter to an increasingly inclusive, differentiated and compassionate

perspective (Daloz, 2008). Kram (1985) noted that the long-term effects of

psychosocial development of the mentee results in an increase of confidence in their

ability to move forward to positions with greater responsibility. Active mentoring is

grounded in Dewey's theory of educative experience in which the learner (mentee)

interacts with their environment in ways that result in growth (in Cranton, 1938). Both

Dewey and Piaget posit that individuals construct meaning by doing.

For this research, formal mentoring is defined as relationships initiated through some organizational program that assigns mentors and protégés and facilitates and supports developmental relationships within the assigned dyads for a specific period of time.  Formal mentoring relationships may take the form of peer relationships, team mentoring or mentoring circles and structured networks (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007, p. 250).  Informal mentoring is defined as relationships that are relatively unconstrained with respect to frequency, length or content of meetings between the parties, and interactions with respect to frequency, length, or content of meetings between the parties, and interactions may vary in length and content (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007, p. 251).

Within their research, Nakamura & Shernoff found that mentors modeled behavior, while mentees identified the modeling as a means by which they learned (2009).  Active emulation occurred with mentees who deliberately watch admired mentors in order to learn from their example (Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009).  Effective mentoring results from the mentor being present and involved without becoming overly controlling (p. 197).  As mentees begin to develop, mature and evolve, the mentor's role should become supportive and act more as a resource on an "as needed" basis (2009).  Good mentoring will provide future leaders a foundation to continue the mentoring process and provide future generations of leaders in higher education this same foundation (2009).

Mentoring has historically been divided into two categories: formal or informal. Most mentoring in higher education administration is informal, and the administrator serves as a role model for the mentee (Strathe & Wilson, 2006, p. 8).  Informal mentoring can be described as relationships that occur outside the context of an organized program (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2008, p. 45) and informal mentoring relationships are self-initiated, unplanned and may continually change depending on the needs of the mentee (Mullen, 2009).  The mentor and mentee may not even realize until years later the impact of this informal relationship.  Formal mentoring occurs within organized programs and relationships that are assigned (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2008, p. 45) and has definitive guidelines and expectations (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2008; Mullen, 2009; Strathe & Wilson, 2006).  Formal mentoring at the beginning of the relationship is structured, and objectives and expectations are communicated at the onset of the relationship.

According to Kinnersley (2009), both formal and informal mentoring can be successful, but understanding the significance of either formal or informal for the mentee will define success and serve different purposes.  In either relationship, for the experience to be successful it is critical for both to know themselves, work with people who are a good match, address individual differences, enact key values and practices in plain view, think out loud, create a community that complements and amplifies the direct transmission of knowledge, values and practices, help mentees learn by doing, and facilitate mentees' building of social capital (networking) (Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009, p. 253).  For mentees, self-knowledge, seeking a good fit in a mentor, seeking a

good fit in learning and working environment, playing an active role in learning from others, and seeking out multiple influences are important (2009). Mentors provide encouragement and opportunities to share information, act as role models, encourage continued education and teach mentees how to be politically astute, especially in reference to the culture of higher education (Durnovo, 1990, p.7). Mentors provide understanding for the mentee of how leadership functions within the institution, the manner in which decisions are made, and who has the most influence (Gmelch, 1999). Ultimately, for mentoring to be successful, the institution must support the mentoring process, reward mentoring, and prepare future mentors (Kinnersley, 2009).

There are numerous benefits to mentoring. The psychosocial benefits of mentoring include role modeling, counseling, friendship, acceptance and confirmation (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2008, p. 45), while the career benefits include coaching, protecting, sponsorship and assignments (Kram, 1985). Hopkins and Grigoriu found that the psychosocial functions enhance an individual's sense of competence and identity in the work role, while the career functions enhance advancement by offering opportunities for exposure and guidance in career development (2008, p. 41). Schwille (2008), in her research, found that mentoring as a professional practice means that mentoring is an educational intervention. Therefore, a good mentor links forms of mentoring to the immediate needs of the novice (mentee) as well as to the broader end they have in view, (i.e. helping the novice/mentee learn) (p.160). Daloz (1999) stated one of the most important aspects of a mentor is the ability to hold up the mirror that

allows the student the capacity to extend their self-awareness and the development of self within the mentee (p. 228).

Kinnersley's research about women and mentoring in the higher education in Tennessee found that mentees in informal mentoring relationships provided more career experience than those in formal mentoring relationships (2009).

*Critical Incidents*

For the purpose of this research, critical incidents are understood as a "defining moment(s), motivational drivers;" they are produced by the way we look at a situation, an interpretation of the significance of an event or incident. It becomes an incident that is "critical" when it is memorable and interpreted as significant by what the incident means to the individual (Inman, 2007, p. 52). In his research, Parker (2002) concluded that critical incidents were defining moments and such experiences were motivational drivers (p. 33) that created the innate sense that have carried [them] throughout their careers (p. 34). Inman (2009) concluded that reflection and construction of perceptions of personal experiences are important, and developing a meaning of these "incidents is, therefore, required if some experiences are to become critical incidents" (p. 53). Using critical incidents as a form of meaning-making in learning how to lead would appear to be noteworthy to the learner. Critical incidents require the leader to use heuristic means to learn, discover, understand or solve a problem on their own by experimenting, evaluating possible answers or solutions or by trial and error (Inman, 2009). Leaders must be able to interpret and reflect and put the learning into a context in which they are able to conceive, interpret and apply.

*Other Significant Research*

Diana Bisbee's (2007, p. 857) research of 249 participants from sixteen institutions found that institutions need to do "a better job in early identification and training of future leaders". Bisbee's research found that most leaders came directly from faculty and suggested institutions "make serious investment in professional development and career training as the individuals will likely be leaders in their own institutions" (p. 85). Bisbee also suggested that formal mentoring programs should focus on leadership skills that would assist participants in being effective and efficient leaders.

Ingrid Baartman (2010) recognized that mentoring helps newly hired faculty adjust to the university by providing support. This in turn helps them feel less isolated in their new institution, provides a sense of support and lessens the feelings of isolation that may be encountered (2010).

Del Favero (2006) reported on a study in which deans ranked learning experiences that were beneficial to their role as an academic dean. The deans in this research had at least five years of experience, and the institutions were research granting. The deans' rankings of important experiences were distributed as follows:

- Past administrative experience          79%
- Past relationships with faculty leaders     44%
- Working with a mentor          23%
- Trial and error          17%
- Past committee service          17%
- Leadership training          17%

Del Favero concluded that "much of the learning of the dean's job occurs prior to the assumption of the post" (p. 284).

Margaret Inman's research (2007) of how middle-level leader-academics in the United Kingdom learn to lead found that the leadership position necessitated both awareness of the institutional environment and the environment outside the institution "requires awareness of the internal environment, but also sensitivity to the external environment" (p. 149). Inman did a phenomenological study of leader-academics life histories at both charter and statutory institutions in the United Kingdom and the influence of critical incidents, significant people and professional development and training. Inman found that learning leadership is a lifelong process that begins in the home where moral values and attributes are established and then are reinforced in primary and secondary education. At the career stage, a leader's experiences add to their collection of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The leader then takes both positive and negative experiences and the meanings of best practices are refined (2007). Inman (2007) found that leadership is "autobiographic in character, grounded in life history and is very individual" (p. 182). Inman suggested that how leaders learn cannot be generalized because of the individuality, but she does deduce that both experience and other influences help determine the manner in which a person leads. Inman's research found that significant people influenced on how leaders learn from the formative years and through their careers. Early influences included parents, extended family and teachers who helped them value hard work, education and promoted interest in their current career. Inman established that mentoring played a significant role in the

development of leaders and also identified that learning leadership does not stop at any particular point, but is a continuous process.

*Summary*

In this chapter, leadership is defined from a historical perspective and in contrast to the role of a manager. Some discussions of theories and ideas that support the focus of this research were drawn from Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory, Carl Rogers's significant learning theory, John Dewey's learning through experience theory, and David Kolb's expansion of the experiential theory. Green and McDade emphasized the understanding of the investment in professional development for both the institution and the individual. According to Daloz (1999, p.145), mentors help mentees transition through the "meaning-making framework" (1999). Critical incidents require the leader to reflect and construct, and through these critical incidents the leader must be able to use heuristic means to learn, discover, understand or solve a problem on his or her own, by experimenting, evaluating possible answers or solutions or by trial and error (Inman, 2009). These theories and ideas directly support the research through the surveys and interviews done in this research.

## Chapter 3

## Methodology

*Overview of Chapter*

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology employed for this research to include (a) participant selection based on Carnegie Classification criteria and leadership titles, and (b) survey and interview design procedures.

*Methodology*

Explanation, critical evaluation, and justification of research methodology are clarified by taking into account issues such as access, ethics, validity, and reliability. This research was directed "towards developing knowledge for understanding", and, as a result, it could be used as a basis to support "knowledge for action" (Wallace, 2003, p. 18).

Rather than testing formal hypotheses, this study is exploratory in nature. The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what degree is being a leader in higher education learned from experience?

2. What is the impact of formal training programs on one's ability to be a leader in higher education?

3. What particular life experiences (personal, social, educational and/or career) have prepared leaders for leadership roles?

4. How significant have experience, professional development, mentors, and critical incidents been in how leaders learn?

A mixed-methods research design was used, including both quantitative and qualitative analyses, but emphasizing a qualitative model. A mixed method approach was chosen so as to develop a more comprehensive explanation of how leadership is learned. A mixed method research allows for a more complete picture together versus a stand-alone approach (Creswell, 2006) and "encourages the use of multiple worldviews" (p. 9). Creswell explains that using "mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative" (p. 9). Where quantitative research fails to give voice to the subjects, qualitative research brings out the voices of participants (Creswell, 2006). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) describe mixed methods research as acknowledging a diverse approach, balancing both the quantitative and qualitative techniques – thus not making one more important than the other, but acknowledging the importance of both to the research.

The strengths of mixed methods, according to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.21) include:

- Words, pictures and narrative can be used to add meaning to numbers.

- Numbers can be used to add precision to words, pictures and narrative.

- Can answer a broader and more complete range of research questions because the research is not confined to a single method or approach.

- Can add insights and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used.

- Can be used to increase the generalizability of the results.

- Qualitative and quantitative research used together produce more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice.

The survey was quantitative and designed to describe the overall picture of leaders'

perceptions of how they have learned to lead and the factors that have influenced their

learning.  The qualitative aspect consisted of interviews designed to allow exploration

of the learning experiences of participants. For the purpose of the survey, descriptive

research was used to get an indication of what leaders feel influenced learning how to

lead.  Descriptive statistics are primarily concerned with describing some

characteristic(s) of the sample (Toothaker & Miller, 2004).  In contrast, qualitative

research allows  researchers to better understand, interpret, or explain the social and

personal characteristics associated with an event, process, or phenomenon by taking the

researcher into the natural setting and using the thoughts, experiences, and perspectives

of the people involved (Merriam, 1998). By using both, this study gives an overview as

well as a more in-depth understanding of how the various sources of learning have

manifested in the experiences of the subjects.


*Participants*

With over 3,601 colleges and universities in the United States, time constraints

for completing this dissertation made it impossible to contact the leaders at all

institutions within the United States.  Thus, the study is limited to one region of the

country. For this study, the operational definition of leaders was defined as those

leaders employed at-comprehensive-level doctoral institutions within the Southern

Regional Educational Board (SREB).


A sample of 350 leaders within the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

was chosen from institutions identified by the Carnegie Classification criteria as

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comprehensive-level institutions with medical/veterinary or non-medical/veterinary colleges.

The SREB is made up of sixteen states within the southeastern United States. The SREB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to improve public pre-K through grade twelve and higher education. Founded by the region's governors and legislators in 1948, the SREB was America's first interstate compact for education. Currently, the SREB is the only regional education compact that works directly with state leaders, schools, and educators to improve teaching, learning, and student achievement at **every** level of education. SREB member states include Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia (SREB 2010).

The Carnegie Classification definition of comprehensive-level institutions was modified in 2005, and the institutions are now identified by two categories; either comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary or comprehensive doctoral with no medical/veterinary. Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary institutions are institutions that award research doctorate degrees in the humanities, social sciences, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, as well as in medicine, dentistry, and/or veterinary medicine. They also offer professional education in other health professions or in fields such as business, education, law, public policy, or social work. Comprehensive doctoral with no medical/veterinary institutions award

research doctorate degrees in the humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields. They also offer professional education in fields such as business, education, engineering, law, public policy, social work, or health professions *other than* medicine, dentistry, or veterinary medicine (Carnegie Classification, 2011).

Comprehensive classification is based on degrees conferred, not degrees offered, for 2008-2009, as reported to the National Center for Education Statistics (Carnegie Classification, 2011).  The advantage of using degree data is that degrees are reliable artifacts of instructional activity, and thus permit detailed analysis by field of study. A disadvantage of using degree data is that degrees are inherently retrospective—it takes a few years for new programs to show up in the data. There is an initial time lag until graduates are produced, and a secondary time lag for release of the data reporting those graduates. Similarly, degree data may include degrees for programs that have since been closed (2011).  For this research, based on the Carnegie Classification and the SREB, a total of seventy-nine comprehensive institutions were identified as eligible for this research.

Leaders were identified as potential survey participants according to their position title as listed on each university's website and were chosen based on their title, with their level of responsibility as a leader implied by their title.  As there are not common uniform titles for positions across all colleges and universities, research recipients of the initial survey letter were identified as leaders who reported directly to the President/Chancellor, Academic Provost/Vice President (also known as Chief

Academic Officer), or an Administrative Provost/Vice President.  As higher education

institutions can be extremely complex and varied in reporting procedures, levels of

reporting to the institution's President/Chancellor were kept to a minimum of three

degrees.  A variety of leadership areas were selected  in an effort to capture and review

a wide spectrum of leaders rather than limiting the research scope to only one or two

specific areas (i.e. academics, student affairs, institutional research).  This is based on

the theory that it takes many leaders to run a comprehensive level institution

successfully.


The universities' website directories for all seventy-nine institutions within the

SREB were reviewed, and a list of leaders was compiled for this research. Leaders

identified with the title of Provost/Vice President, Associate (or Assistant)

Provost/Associate Vice President, Department Dean, and Director were invited via

email correspondence to participate in an online survey.


*Materials*

*Survey.*  A survey tool was used to gain information about the general

population of leaders in higher education as well as about the processes of learning to

lead.  The survey also allowed leaders the opportunity to self -identify if they were

willing to participate in the follow-up interview for the qualitative research part of this

study.


A letter of introduction with an explanation of this research and an Informed

Consent Form was sent via email to 350 leaders in higher education at comprehensive-

level institutions within the SREB, inviting them to complete the survey. Emails were sent to each leader's official university email address listed on the university's website directory. The letter and Informed Consent Form explained (a) the purpose of the research, (b) that they were knowingly participating in research by their own choice, and (c) that their participation was completely voluntary. The password-protected survey was available on the World Wide Web at SurveyMonkey.com for thirty days. A Letter of Consent and Agreement introduced the purpose of the research and the researcher's affiliation as a doctoral candidate with the University of Oklahoma. Willing participants indicated consent to participate by clicking on the icon next to the following statement: *"I have read the email letter explaining the purpose of this survey. I have asked and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in this study. By clicking 'YES', I am agreeing to participate in this study."*

The survey consisted of twenty-nine questions including multiple-choice, yes/no/not applicable, and short answer formats (Appendix A). In addition, participants were asked questions about past leadership positions in higher education, in which state their institution resides, and were provided the opportunity to provide personal information if so desired; however, anonymity remained an option.

Of the 350 leaders who received the email invitation to complete the survey, 119 responded; 118 respondents were considered useable for this research, representing a 34% response rate. One respondent's questionnaire was not useable as the survey was not completed. The survey questionnaire is attached in Appendix B. Of the 119

who responded, sixty-one identified their current leadership position as dean, thirty-seven identified as Vice President, one identified as Director, and twenty did not answer the question. The following table (Table 1) gives representation of survey participants by state. Of the 119 only one participant did not list the state of their institution and only one state within the SREB, South Carolina, had no respondents.

Table 1 - SREB States and Number of Institutions Surveyed per State.

| State | Institutions | State | Institutions |
|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| Alabama | 5 | Mississippi | 1 |
| Arkansas | 2 | North Carolina | 7 |
| Delaware | 3 | Oklahoma | 7 |
| Florida | 9 | South Carolina | 0 |
| Georgia | 3 | Tennessee | 20 |
| Kentucky | 1 | Texas | 39 |
| Louisiana | 1 | Virginia | 10 |
| Maryland | 5 | West Virginia | 6 |

For the development of the survey questions, this researcher reviewed a previous study of how leaders learn that was conducted in the United Kingdom by Margaret Inman (2007). The survey instrument was reviewed by the dissertation chair and piloted with two leaders in higher education who were not affiliated with the project. The following comments and revisions were received: a) the survey took less

than ten minutes to complete, which was good, b) questions numbered 14 and 15

should offer the option to choose "no" or "not applicable", c) questions in areas where

the leader does not have experience (i.e. mentoring, professional development or a

critical life incident) should allow respondents to skip.

According to the feedback, the survey was adjusted and revised, and it was

stated by the pilot subjects that the survey design addressed the proposed research

questions. Face validity of the survey was supported by responses from the pilot survey

respondents. According to Berg (2006), face validity is the degree to which the content

of the survey instrument appears to measure what it claims to measure. Of the twenty-

nine questions/statements on the survey, four questions/statements were related to a

critical incident, six of the question/statements referred to mentoring and twelve

questions/statements related to professional development.

The critical incident questions/statements asked if the participant had an

incident in their formative or professional years they felt led to following a leadership

career path. The mentor questions/statements had the participant reflect on whether the

mentoring relationship had influenced areas such as financial/budgetary, administrative,

faculty, external/internal affairs, policy management or other (open response). Other

mentor questions asked how long they had worked with the mentor, if the mentor was

in higher education, and if not, what area, did they feel the relationship was beneficial.

There was an open response question of one concept/phrase/lesson they learned from

their mentor. The professional development questions focused on participation in state

or national level leadership development programs and whether their institutions offered a leadership development programs. If so, they were asked if they had participated in the program.  Questions also asked whether the participant felt the professional development was beneficial to their role as leader and in what areas the professional development had influenced them as a leader – administrative, faculty, financial/budgetary, policy management, internal and external affairs and/or other (open response).

Of the 119 leaders who completed the survey, 115 were used to analyze results. Four of the surveys were not completed and therefore not useable for this research. Thirty-eight of the 119 self-identified as willing to participate in a one hour interview for this research, representing a 32% response rate.  Some of the questions allowed participants to answer more than one choice, and these will be identified later in this research.  Questions also allowed the subject to skip a question if they felt it was not relevant. All thirty-eight leaders who indicated willingness to participate in an interview were contacted via email with an invitation to participate in an interview by telephone, Skype or in person.  The date and time were set with the option to alter to fit the participant's schedule.  Of the thirty-eight contacted, twenty leaders confirmed, were scheduled and completed an interview resulting in a 55% response rate of those who had indicated willingness to participate in an interview.  Twelve were male and eight were female; eight participants were from state land grant institutions, two were from private institutions and ten were from state public institutions.

*Interview.* Interviews allow participants to discuss in their own words their

interpretation of the phenomena under study and make sense of their social world

(Inman, 2007). For this research, interviews were semi-standardized. These questions

are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the

interviewer is expected to probe far beyond the answers to the prepared standardized

questions (Berg, 2006). Questions were designed to be open-ended to acquire the

unique experience to be personalized for each participant. Semi-standardized interviews

allowed the questions to be reordered during the interview, wording of questions to be

flexible, interviewer to ask questions and make clarifications and the interviewer to add

or delete probes to interview between subsequent subjects (Berg, 2006).

The interview questions were formulated based on issues identified in the

literature review. The questions were based on the following:

- What kind of formal leadership development had they experienced (pre- and post- current leadership position)?

- Did their institutions support leadership development?

- How did they go about learning to lead and what or who influenced them in the process?

- What will leaders in higher education need in the future?

- Did they have a mentor(s) to assist with learning leadership?

A copy of the full interview schedule is attached in Appendix C.


*Design and Procedures*

The interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis either in person, by

telephone or via Skype (video conferencing). Individual interviews were needed

because of the logistics of the institutions spread across sixteen states, but also the nature of the issues discussed.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using all three of these types of interview modes. The advantage of face-to-face interviews would allow the interviewer to interpret body language and prompt further in-depth questioning or cease specific questioning. The disadvantage of face-to-face interviews is the cost involved in traveling and the cost of time (Berg, 2006). The vastness of the locations of the universities for this research would have required significant costs and time. The advantages of telephone interviews include a method by which the investigator can easily monitor ongoing interviews to assure quality and avoid interviewer bias, and the ability to reach widespread geographic areas at an economical cost (Berg, 2006). The telephone also offers the interviewee a kind of instant anonymity (Hagan, 2003) and may allow for more openness and frankness on the part of the participant. One disadvantage of telephone interviews is the inability of the researcher to read body language and cues.

The use of Skype, a web-based, video camera and synchronous environment provided the researcher and interviewee with an experience similar to face-to-face interaction insofar as it provided a mechanism for back and forth exchange of questions and answers while being able to see each other (Berg, 2006). This mode of communication has advantages as well. The interviewer has the opportunity to ask probing questions to elicit additional information (Berg 2006) based on body language

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and cues, similar to face-to-face interviews.  Of the twenty people who were interviewed, five participants were interviewed in person, thirteen people were via telephone, and two people were interviewed via Skype.

*Analysis of Data*

   *Surveys.* The analysis of the surveys was to determine areas that are pertinent to how leaders learn to lead in higher education.  This researcher's approach was to reveal the variety of meanings that were anticipated to be shared by leaders.

   *Interviews.*  The qualitative interviews were recorded and transcribed, which allowed for a closer examination of the interview content.  During the interviews, the interviewer took informal notes, and these were used to enrich meaning to the transcribed interviews.

   The transcribed interviews were analyzed and themes were structured based on the research questions. The themes consisted of the following:

- Experience and experiential learning

- Professional development formal and informal

- Mentoring

- Critical life experiences

- Challenges of learning to lead

For this researcher, unanticipated topics arose from the interviews that included leaders not planning on leadership positions, leaders who participated in informal professional development, the lack of leadership training for leaders new to leadership positions and what future leaders need to lead at institutions in the future.

*Ethics of the Research Study*

As this research was conducted with human participants, permission through the Institutional Review Board of the University of Oklahoma was required. According to the guidelines of the Office of Human Research Participant Protection, all participants were advised of the purpose of the study, the procedures that were involved in the research and any risks and benefits that would result from the study. Participants were also advised there would be no compensation for participation; the researcher advised of the confidentiality factor that was abided by for participation and the participants were made aware of contact information if questions or concerns should arise from their participation.

The nature of the research (learning to lead) and the environment (universities) did not call for immediate concern of ethical issues. But due to the sensitive nature of the personal information being shared during the interviews, it was imperative that the researcher respect the principle to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants as set forth by the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board (2011). To not have interviewees anticipate responses to questions, the questions were not revealed before the interview. Instruction was given to the interview subjects that they were to free to withdraw from the research at any point during the interview.

*Summary*

Chapter 3 provided a an in-depth view of leaders who participated in this research, identification of the two research methodologies 1) quantitative survey and 2) qualitative interviews and the information gleaned from both of these strategies on how

leaders have gone about learning to lead. For this research, 350 leaders from

comprehensive level institutions in the SREB were solicited with 119 responding to

initial survey and twenty of the 119 agreed to in-depth interviews.  The research

methods include both online surveys and interviews.

**Chapter 4**

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The purpose of this research was to explore how leaders in higher education are learning to lead. The research analysis includes experiences, perceptions, differences and commonalities of individuals who lead at comprehensive institutions within the SREB. The information gathered in this research will show how professional development, mentoring, or critical incidents influenced how these leaders have learned to lead. This chapter presents data collected from the survey and the statistical analysis related to the research questions as well as the interviews and the themes that resulted from the twenty interviews. The structure of this chapter will be divided into the survey results and findings from the interviews based upon experience, professional development, mentoring and life critical incidents.

*Interview Participants*

All interview participants were sent an email introducing myself, explaining the research and a link to complete the survey. The survey was available on Survey Monkey for thirty days. On the survey participants were able to self-identify if they would be interested in participating in a one hour interview. Participants were chosen based on their title, and their position had to be within three degree levels to the university president. Titles of participants included provost (3), vice president of student affairs (2), vice provost (2), vice president for research (2), dean of college (9), associate vice president (1) and associate vice president (1).

*Experience*

One of the survey questions (question 4) asked participants whether or not becoming a leader had been part of their overall career plans. Slightly less than half 46% (n=52) stated that becoming a leader was in their overall career plan, while 54% (n=62) stated it was not in their plans. Many of the leaders interviewed had not intended to enter the leadership realm of higher education. They were trained as researchers and enjoyed the teaching. The descriptive words or phrases used to describe how they came to be leaders in higher education were "trajectory", "accidentally fell into a leader role", and "thrust into leadership". The importance of experience was summed up by interviewee 2 who stated, "Book knowledge is important, but you have to have the experience to know what will work and what won't".

Turning to experience, the questionnaire asked subjects what had the most influence on how they made decisions. Multiple responses were allowed and experience was reported as the most influential factor in how subjects made decisions, followed by mentors and professional development. For question one, 70.4% (n=81) of the respondents stated experience had the most influence on how they make decisions as a leader; 20.9% (n=24) reported that a mentor had the most influence, 19.1% (n=22) indicated professional development influenced and 11% of respondents chose other. The responses entered under "other" included personal attributes, moral and spiritual belief structures, studying literature on leadership, multiple role models, work and professional experience, and participation in professional organizations. The results to this question are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2 - Distribution of Responses to Question 1: *Which of the following do you feel has had the most influence on how you make decisions as a leader? (Multiple responses allowed).*

|                            | Number | Percent |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|
| Experience                 | 81     | 70.4%   |
| Mentor                     | 24     | 20.9%   |
| Professional Development   | 22     | 19.1%   |
| None                       | 0      | 0.0%    |
| Other                      | 0      | 0.0%    |
| Other (please specify)     | 14     | 12.2%   |
| * Total is more than 100% due to multiple responses | | |

The interview responses showed similar patterns, with learning leadership through experience being the most common among the leaders interviewed.  When asked how they felt they learned to lead, their responses reflected this clearly.  For example, one interview participant responded, "By trial and error more than anything" (Interviewee 5). Others had similar responses, such as "By the seat of my pants!" (Interviewee 6), "Hands on approach….forced upon me" (Interviewee 9), "Picked up things along the way" (Interviewee 14), and "Best lessons learned by doing" (Interviewee 20). The importance of learning through experience was underscored by one individual, who stated, "On the job training……learn by your mistakes" (Interviewee 16). One of the Vice Presidents added to this, stating that there "was nothing more influential than experience – tell young professionals to take a job where you are going to have an opportunity to rub elbows with professional people.  NASPA [Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education] has been very influential to me……I have a lot of opportunities that have been great help to me with my professional development".

*Professional Development*

Many of the research subjects had participated in leadership programs at various levels, ranging from institutional to national. Slightly more than half (54.4%, n=62) reported that their institutions offered leaderships development programs, and 43.4% (n=23) of that group had participated in a leadership development program at their institution. Another 23.5% (n=27) reported participating in state level leadership programs, and 15.6% (n=18) reported participation in regional level leadership development programs.  Participation in the national level programs was also reported. A total of 21 participants in this research had participated in one or more national level academic leadership programs, including eighteen (15.6%) who had participated in the Harvard Institution of Educational Management (IEM), while four had participated in the American Council of Education (ACE) Fellows program.

Participants in the survey were asked about the relevance of their leadership training.  Responses to this question were mixed, with 23.9% (n=21) of those answering the question reporting that the training received was highly relevant and 31.8% (n=28) reporting that it was mostly relevant.  In contrast, 32.9% (n=29) report that the training received was only somewhat relevant, and 11.4% (n=10) reported that it was not relevant at all.  Eighty-eight participants responded to this question, and 28 skipped it. The responses are presented below in Table 3.  In question 20, the responses to whether participants believed the programs would have been more effective if they had more experience as a leader are presented.  Only 15 participants believed this was the case, while 56 answered "no" as seen below in Table 4.

Table 3 - Distribution of Responses to Question 19: *Do you believe the leadership development programs you have participated in have been relevant to your current leadership position?*

|  | Response Percent | Response Count |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Highly relevant | 23.9% | 21 |
| Mostly relevant | 31.8% | 28 |
| Somewhat relevant | 33.0% | 29 |
| Not relevant at all | 11.4% | 10 |
|  |  | **N=88** |

Table 4 - Distribution of Responses to Question 20: *Do you believe the leadership development you participated in would have been more relevant if you would have had more experience as a leader?*

|  | Response Percent | Response Count |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 15.2% | 15 |
| No | 56.6% | 56 |
| Not applicable | 28.3% | 28 |
|  |  | **N=99** |

It is interesting to note here that Bisbee (2007) found in her research deans who were promoted to leadership positions from faculty positions desired more specific training in leadership development during the course of their career trajectory. From Table 4 above, it may be inferred that more leadership development early in their career might have been helpful while they were "learning the ropes".

Participants felt overall that their participation in leadership development programs had been useful. In response to a question about whether leadership programs in which they had participated had been useful to their development as leaders, 58% replied "yes," while only 31% replied "no." Furthermore, 59% indicated that the leadership programs in which they participated had influenced their decisions

as leaders, while 28% indicated the programs had not been influential on their decision-making as leaders.

Areas impacted by the leadership training programs were also addressed. Leaders were asked how the development programs they have attended influenced their leadership knowledge area, with multiple responses allowed. Of the 79 participants who answered this question (multiple answers were allowed), 82.3% (n=65) responded that the programs had influenced their knowledge about administrative work at the institution, 34.2% (n=27) reported the programs had influenced their knowledge about faculty, 35.4% (n=28) reported the training had influenced their knowledge about financial and budgetary issues, 44.3% (n=35) reported influence on their knowledge about policy, and 50.6% (n=40) reported the training had influenced them in internal and external affairs.. An additional 10.1% (n=8) reported the leadership training had influenced them in other areas, including decision making, organizational development, internal networking, how to prepare myself for the next step, people management, learning about what other administrators/leaders are thinking, going from dean to provost or president and diversity. The results are reported below in Table 5.

Table 5 - Responses to Question 21: *The leadership development programs I have attended have influenced my leadership knowledge in the following areas:*

|  | Response Percent | Response Count |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Administrative | 82.3% | 65 |
| Faculty | 34.2% | 27 |
| Financial/Budgetary | 35.4% | 28 |
| Policy Management | 44.3% | 35 |
| Internal and external affairs | 50.6% | 40 |
| Other | 10.1% | 8 |

All leadership programs were not the same, however. Participants in the survey reported that only 29.2% of the programs involved experiential learning, 66.3% reported programs included participative learning, and 56.2% reported case management was included (Table 6 below).

Table 6 - Responses to Question 22: *Did the leadership development you participated in involve any of the following?*

|  | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|---|---|
| Experiential learning | 29.2% | 26 |
| Participative learning | 66.3% | 59 |
| Case management | 56.2% | 50 |
| Not applicable | 15.7% | 14 |
|  |  | **N=89** |

The participants were also asked which aspects of their professional development were most beneficial to their development as leaders. Experiential learning was the most common response, chosen by more than half of the subjects (n=61, 53%). Participative learning was chosen by 29.6% (n=34), case management by 0.9% (n=1), and reflective learning by 15.7% (n=18) of participants. One participant did not respond. Table 7 presents the responses for this question.

Table 7 - Distribution of Responses to Question 2: *Which of the following do you feel benefited you the most in your development as a leader?*

|  | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Experiential learning | 61 | 53.0% |
| Participative learning | 34 | 29.6% |
| Case management | 1 | 0.9% |
| Reflective learning | 18 | 15.6% |
| Not answered | 1 | 0.9% |
| *TOTAL* | *115* | 100.0% |

The survey questions for professional development tell us that professional development does influence the development of leaders and influences later decisions/actions of leaders. The interviews support this information that professional development is important, but some of the leaders who agreed to be interviewed found professional development not specific to higher education much more useful. Professional development was something that was seen as needed and useful, but the few who had participated in programs specific to higher education leadership were not overwhelmingly satisfied with programs specific to higher education. A dean (interviewee 8) seized the opportunity for professional development when she negotiated her contract; the institution allowed her to hire an executive coach for one year. Another vice president (Interviewee 10) stated that the leadership development specific to administration at his institution was "rather minimal". However, he had the opportunity to participate in a leadership program sponsored by the state governor's office. The program was housed at the Vice President's institution, but no one from the institution had ever participated in it. The VP stated that it was "some of the best training I have ever had in my life". The VP expressed that the development was "robust, it was good". The unspoken perception of his institution seemed to be that formal training was not necessary. Another vice president (Interviewee 11) recalled that when he expressed to his immediate boss that he was interested in taking a leadership course, the boss did not say no, but he said [our professional] organization is working on one, "so let's wait and see what happens with that". The VP voiced his opinion that, "it is generally true that people are brought into these positions of leadership with very little training or real guidance. I think it is a general failure".

Three leaders interviewed had participated in professional development specific to higher education. Interviewee 4, who had participated in the Harvard Institute for Educational Management, stated she referred back to the program many times as a leader and had learned a lot about how to approach leadership.  Another interview subject had attended the Harvard IEM.  This participant found the training useful, reporting that, "I got to look at other disciplines and learned more than anything else is the strategic budgeting-long term vision, short term plans.  Harvard helped me figure out the road map to get to plans; you have to be timely, realistic and be attainable and they did a really, really good job of helping you see that timely thing".  This interviewee did state the program was not the "life changing experience everyone said it would be, but it was a good experience".  Interviewee 14, who attended the Women in Higher Education at Bryn Mawr, stated the program "awakened more areas I had not dealt with – I had not done a full range of budgeting" and the "speakers brought to light a broad perspective to areas……the programming was good and nice to be in a concentrated place".  However, when asked if she kept in touch with any other attendees or referred back to the materials from her training, she replied that it was not something she referred to.

Of the twenty interview subjects, eight had participated in a leadership program that was not specific to higher education.  One vice president (interviewee 1) who participated in a leadership program with the Center for Creative Leadership, T*he Looking Glass Experience,* declared the program to be "in one word it was

transformational; the best week of my life!" This program is designed specifically for

high level leaders, but not specific to higher education. This vice president stated the

best part of the program was the feedback that he received. He believed the CCL

program "really set [me] on a path to do full-time university administration that I do not

think I would have done had I not gone to the training".

A common denominator for each of the programs that leaders defined as

"transforming" or "best training" was that the training included a segment of

individualized needs of the leader (i.e., 360º feedback evaluations, Meyers-Briggs).

However, the programs also made the professional development relevant to everyone in

the program (i.e., reviewing and discussing the restricting of budgets). The programs

took the information gathered and "put them all together to show us how we

performed". This helped the leader to "view the position, view my job" (Interview 1).

The leaders also indicated there was significant learning about how they interacted with

people, which helped them immensely. The evaluations used within the development

programs (i.e., 360º feedback evaluations, Meyers-Briggs) were highly praised by the

leaders who participated.

Some leaders expressed they were in a culture where professional development

was not viewed as necessary. A vice president at one of the largest institutions (in

terms of enrollments) in this project found the philosophy of the institution to be, "we

are the University of _____ why do we need professional development?" The

interviewee was of a different opinion, believing that, "I need every opportunity I

could. I never believe I am at the top of my game, and I am always striving to learn more". Another interviewee, when asked if his institution encouraged leadership development, stated, "my institution has failed miserably…and I don't think we are alone".

Interestingly, there was a lack of leadership development at the majority of the institutions, but more significant was the lack of knowledge of whether there were programs at the institution. One dean stated that this project incited him to check if his institution offered leadership development programs. From this inquiry, he found out his institution did have a program for aspiring leaders, and he recommended four of his faculty to the program.

The survey questions for professional development indicate that professional development does influence the development of leaders and influences later decisions/actions of leaders. The interviews support this conclusion that professional development is important, but some of the leaders who agreed to be interviewed found the professional development not specific to higher education much more useful.

Professional development was something that was seen as needed and useful, but some who had participated in programs specific to higher education leadership were not overwhelmingly satisfied with these programs. As described above, one leader was allowed to hire an executive coach for one year. Another vice president (Interviewee 10) stated the leadership development specific to administration at his institution was

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"rather minimal". One leader concluded that the system overall failed its leaders by providing very little preparation for leadership.

State level leadership programs were identified by leaders in Tennessee, Texas and Florida. Only two of the three mentioned were specific to higher education. Other formal leadership opportunities sometimes existed as well. A dean of the nursing college at a land grant university was presented with the opportunity to hire an executive coach as part of her contract. The dean was able to interview and hire a coach who fit her needs. The coach had previously been a president of a land grant university, so he understood the system. The coach executed a 360º evaluation for the dean and assisted the dean in learning the politics of higher education. This professional development is very unique, but was an opportunity for her to hone her leadership skills, learn the state university system and develop the human resource aspect of hiring the right people for her college.

*Mentoring*

In this section, I turn to the role of mentoring in the development of academic leadership. For question number five (see Table 8 below) 36.3% (n=113) report having a mentor, while 63.7% reported not having a mentor. Two individuals did not respond to this question. If participants responded "no" to this question, then the following five questions were automatically skipped. The participants who answered question seven (N=40) reported their mentor was in higher education (95%), although two participants (5%) also reported a non-academic mentor. Participants reported working with mentors

for varying lengths of time, ranging from two or fewer years to more than ten years.

The majority of participants had been working with a mentor for five or more years, as

can be seen in Table 9.

Table 8 - Survey Responses to Question 4:  *Do you have someone who is your mentor?*

|  | **Response Percent** | **Response Count** |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 36.3% | 41 |
| No | 63.7% | 72 |
|  |  | N=113 |

Table 9 - Survey Responses to Question 5: *How long have you worked with your mentor?*

|  | **Response Percent** | **Response Count** |
|---|---|---|
| 0-2 years | 11.9% | 5 |
| 2-5 years | 17.0% | 8 |
| 5-10 years | 23.8% | 10 |
| 10+ years | 45.2% | 19 |
| Other (please specify) | 2.4% | 1 |
|  |  | N=41 |

Working with a mentor appeared to benefit the individuals in a number of

different areas. Of the forty-five participants who answered question eight (Table 10),

multiple responses were allowed by participants, 91.1% (n=41) reported that working

with a mentor had helped them learn about administrative duties, 51.1% (n=23)

reported the mentoring relationship had helped them in working with faculty.  An

additional 40% (n=18) reported the relationship had helped them learn about financial

and budgetary issues, 48.9% (n=22) reported learning about policy management, and

33.3% (n=15) reported it had helped them with internal and external affairs. Other

responses included institutional politics, reflective decision making, understanding the

influence of politics and planning and budgeting.  These results are reported in Table

10.

Table 10 - Distribution of Responses to Question 7: *If you have been working with a mentor, what areas do you believe your knowledge has increased and helped you to learn about leadership in the following areas?*

|  | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|---|---|
| Administrative | 91.1% | 41 |
| Faculty | 51.1% | 23 |
| Financial/Budgetary | 40.0% | 18 |
| Policy Management | 48.9% | 22 |
| Internal External Affairs | 33.3% | 15 |
| Other (please specify) |  | 4 |
|  |  | N=109 |

The mentoring relationships were viewed as beneficial by the majority of the

participants in question ten (Table 11), with 80.5% of the forty- one who answered the

question reporting that their mentor relationship was very beneficial.  The remaining

19.5% (n=8) reported a mentoring relationship was somewhat beneficial.  The

participants in the survey were also asked to name a concept or phrase learned from

their mentor. Common themes from the responses include being fair and consistent,

having honesty, respect and integrity, listening, understanding responsibilities, and

working hard.

Table 11 - Distribution of Responses to Question 9: *If you have or had a mentor relationship how beneficial do you feel this relationship has been in learning to be a leader?*

|  | Response Count | Response Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very beneficial | 33 | 80.5% |
| Somewhat beneficial | 8 | 19.5% |
| Not beneficial at all | 0 | 0% |
| Not applicable | 0 | 0% |
|  | N=41 |  |

Mentors were by far the strongest influence for leaders in their journey of learning to lead. The survey questions indicated that less than half of the leaders overall had mentors, but those who did have mentors found them very beneficial in the learning process. Many of the participants interviewed said their mentoring relationships were more informal.  One common theme that came out of the interviews was that the leaders were very cognizant of watching their mentors and emulating their behaviors. One provost explained he had "no formal mentoring relationships; my approach was to closely observe people and observe the outcomes of their behaviors; then kind of modify it to my personality" (Interviewee 13). A dean expressed that as a mentor himself, he tried to "do for others what my [mentor] did for me" (Interviewee 2). Another interviewee (3) believed her mentors "saw something in me that I didn't even see in myself" and that the mentors helped her progress into learning leadership.

Mentoring relationships were dynamic, evolving over time. One leader described his more than thirty year relationship with his mentor as being "somewhere between a leader, a coach and an older brother" (Interviewee 7).  Another leader made the following comment about the mentoring relationships: "Mentoring relationships have evolved as [he] has gotten older more about conversations….." (Interviewee 5).

Yet another leader stated she had a dean early in her career who was a mentor, and "he really knew how to be a mentor" (Interviewee 8).  She went on to say one of her greatest challenges was working with people, and the dean eventually helped her improve this challenge.  Dealing with people was "something you don't learn from a

book - it helps to have someone to discuss this with" (Interviewee 8). A vice president had a much more immersed opportunity for mentoring during her graduate assistantship, when her dean gave her equal access to most of his leadership duties. She sat in on meetings, drafted his letters, and discussed reoccurring issues in the college. She got a real opportunity to see what it takes to run a university (Interviewee 14). This unique opportunity allowed her to see the workings of leadership in a college first hand, knowledge that proved important later in her career.

Another interviewee had a much more formal mentoring relationship, but she felt the relationship was just as valuable as an informal one. She and the provost would "meet every other week for about one hour and we would discuss what I was having challenges or issues with" (Interviewee 9). Although this was a more structured style of mentoring, it was very beneficial to this leader as a learning tool.

The survey results indicated that mentoring is important and widely used in higher education. The interviews support this, but they also suggest that mentoring transpires on a much more informal basis across campuses. It occurs regularly, although it appears to be something that "just happens". Most of the time, the leaders do not realize mentoring is occurring. Upon reflection, one leader realized that his unknown desire to become a leader was tied to "a desire to make a better world and help people". He also commented that he realized he "always had someone there to get to that next step along the way. I believe in giving back" (Interviewee 15).

*Critical Incidents*

The role of critical incidents in learning how to lead was the final area examined in this research. Slightly more than one third (36%, n=41) reported a critical incident or "defining moment" led them into leadership in higher education. An even smaller percentage (27.2%, n=31) reported a critical incident in their formative years that led them to pursue leadership. Slightly more of those reporting a critical incident leading them to pursue leadership said that incident occurred in adulthood (35.7%, n=40 with 2 skips).

Similarly, critical incidents did not have as much of an impact for the leaders interviewed as anticipated, but this may have been due to their understanding of what was meant by critical incidents. Two leaders indicated they felt they experienced incidents in their early adult years that led them to leadership. One Vice President (Interviewee 14) was elected into a leadership position in undergraduate school; she realized at this point that she had an ability to motivate and get people "fired up". She knew then she liked being in a leadership position.

*Unexpected Leadership Role*

One unexpected theme that resonated throughout the interviews was that most of the leaders had not intended to become leaders. It was a role that happened upon them, most often when others around them recognized their skills as a leader. Among the twenty leaders who were interviewed, a few common themes emerged. The most challenging aspect of leadership for all was the sheer amount of learning involved in the job; many were not prepared for the enormity of the relationships they were

expected to nurture and facilitate from outside the academy.  The pure volume, depth

and breadth of knowledge and the learning curve were extremely challenging.  Those

who were coming into leadership positions from no experience with the politics of

higher education were very surprised to learn the intricacies of the culture. The

bureaucracy of higher education and how decisions were made can be challenging,

particularly to understand the give and take.  Learning how to represent the

college/university to the legislature was seen as a challenge, and there was often no one

to teach the roles.  Balancing fairness was another large issue, and treating all people

the same with the diversity of a college was difficult and could not be done quickly.

One interviewee expressed the importance of "learning that when asked questions I did

not have to give an answer immediately or solve the problem right then.  That was a

significant learning experience".  Another leader explained that leaders in higher

education "have to know the book knowledge [of leadership], but have to have the day-

to-day experience to know how to relate to people, what works and what doesn't work

and learn to rely on your gut feelings sometimes".


*Climate of Change*

Leaders who came to their current institutions in positions of leadership found it

very difficult to make changes.  The culture of higher education is very entrenched.

Academia is very much about individual achievement, and moving to a culture that

recognizes working together can be very challenging, but very rewarding when it all

comes together. One vice president (interviewee 4) expressed that when she came into

her role, there had not been a "good sense of communication", all the departments

under her authority were working in silos.  Opening the lines of communication and

bringing people together was very important.  With open communication came the realizations that departments were duplicating and triplicating work.  Therefore, bringing together a sense of community, cooperation and collaboration had been the biggest challenge, but it also had the biggest rewards.  A provost (interviewee 6) believed his greatest challenge was learning to communicate.  He stated "it did not matter how carefully you decide to communicate.  If you did not have multiple ways to communicate, the message would not get out, and that had nothing to do with people distorting the message".  Interviewee 6 also explained that with communication being so much more instant with the advances in technology, "we stay on edge all the time".

A dean who had relocated from a university in the Northeast to one in the Southeast found that one of her challenges was coming into a department where there was a division amongst the faculty based on race.  Making it more difficult was the fact that she was one of two female deans at a university with eleven deans.  Unable to find a support system within the institution, that dean has cultivated a support system outside the institution.  The university did not have formal mentoring program for new deans nor did there appear to be a culture of informal mentoring.

One of the last questions for all interviewees was, "Looking into the future twenty-five years what additional knowledge, skills and leadership tools would you need as a leader in higher education?"  Overwhelmingly most of the leaders stated that technology and fundraising would be areas that they would suggest leaders receive the most development.

*Summary*

Collectively, this research represents over 300 years of leadership experience in higher education. The experiences of the interviewees in the process of learning leadership have been explored, and the results are the researcher's best understanding of these experiences as told through interviews and through the administration of the survey. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed for common themes. Themes of how leaders learned to lead and the influences on their leadership and emerging patterns of experience, professional development, mentoring, and critical incidents are summarized. Reoccurring and unexpected themes of communication and unintentional moves into leadership were found.

## Chapter 5

## Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of experience, professional development, mentors and critical incidents in how leaders in higher education are learning to lead. Chapter 5 is divided as follows: a) summary of study, b) overview of purpose, research questions and methodology, c) findings related to the literature, d) unexpected findings, e) implications for action, f) recommendations for future research and g) summary.

*Summary of Study*

Learning leadership in higher education is important and includes many facets that are an evolving and continuous process. This research examined the impact of experience or experiential learning, professional development, mentoring and critical incidents. The study revealed through surveys and interviews that learning through experience is by far the most important way in how leaders are learning to lead. The study provides an overview of learning theories related to learning leadership. Mentoring was found to be important to learning leadership, and informal rather than formal mentoring was more widely used. For a few, professional development was important to learning leadership, but only one of the leaders interviewed believed that the program attended was "transformational" to his development as a leader. In this research, critical incidents did not appear to have a significant impact on learning leadership, but there is a need for expanded exploration into this area.

The literature on leadership and learning theories gives a background to how learning occurs and the factors that are involved for learning to transpire. Theorists included in the literature review were Maslow, Dewey, Kolb, Kegan and Rodgers. Related research studies examined findings from Del Favero, Inman and Bartmaan.

Each research question was addressed with the purpose of responding to the learning theories identified in the literature review. In doing this, the goal was to provide a context in which future leaders, current leaders and institutions of higher education could view this research as a contribution to understanding how leaders in higher education learn to lead. Further policy and program development may be able to incorporate the findings from this research to continue to develop better leadership in institutions of higher education.

*Purpose Statement*

The purpose of this research was to understand how leaders learn to lead and the roles that experience, professional development; mentoring and critical incidents play in the learning process. Within this research, valuable information indicated both formal and informal approaches are noteworthy in the learning of leadership. Insight was gained from both surveying and interviewing leaders in higher level leadership positions at comprehensive level institutions (with and without medical programs) within the SREB region. The information found through this research should provide a platform for creating, fostering and developing future leaders in higher education.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. To what degree is being a leader in higher education learned from experience?

2. What is the impact of formal training programs on one's ability to be a leader in higher education?

3. What particular life experiences (personal, social, educational and/or career) have prepared leaders for leadership roles?

4. How significant have experience, professional development, mentors, and critical incidents been in how leaders learn?

*Review of Methodology*

The research study was a mixed methodology using quantitative and qualitative, emphasizing a qualitative model. A mixed method approach was chosen so as to develop a more comprehensive explanation of how leadership is learned. The participants were sent an email invitation with the survey link was sent to 350 leaders in institutions that were classified as tier two level comprehensive institutions within the SREB. Of the 350 leaders who received the email invitation to complete the survey, 119 responded; 118 respondents were considered useable for this research, representing a 34% response rate. One respondent's questionnaire was not useable as the survey was not completed.

Interviews were conducted with leaders who indicated willingness to participate from the email request. Potential interviewees were contacted via email with an invitation to participate in an interview by telephone, Skype or in person. The date and time were set, with the option to alter to fit the participant's schedule. Of the thirty-

eight contacted, twenty leaders confirmed, were scheduled and completed an interview, resulting in a 55% response rate of those who had indicated willingness to participate in an interview. Twelve were male and eight were female; eight participants were from state land grant institutions, two were from private institutions and ten were from state public institutions.

In this study, both the survey and interviews revealed that the most influential manner in which leaders learn to lead is through experience − 70.4% indicated that experience had the most effect on their learning leadership. Mentoring and professional development programs had far less impact, with 20.9% and 19.1% respectively for learning, although those who had mentors found them to be significant to learning leadership. Similarly, 54% identified experiential learning as the most beneficial in their development as a leader. This is positive in that the leaders recognized their own learning from experience. When leaders reflected upon their journey of learning leadership in the interviews, mentoring and professional development seem to have some influence on how they learned to lead, but experience was by far the most overwhelming influence on learning to lead. Furthermore, mentoring appeared far more influential than professional development programs for the majority. This study supports the early theories of Dewey, Kolb and Rogers in which people learn from life experiences; learning involves active participation and must involve a reflective practice. Incorporating Maslow's theory of self-actualization with Roger's theory would support that the learner must be at a level of motivation in order for the learning

to be "self- initiated, pervasive enough to change attitudes, behavior and personality" (Rogers, 1983, p. 19).

The interviews for this research revealed that many of the leaders were learning by trial and error. One interviewee (5) stated the best lessons were learned by doing. This supports the theory of experiential learning. The prevailing thought of the interviews expressed that learning for leadership was predominantly done through experience and supplemented by mentoring and professional development. Tying this back to Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning (2011) and Maslow's Theory of Motivation (2011), if the learner is at the level of self-actualization identified by Maslow there is increased likelihood that experiences can be transformed into an experience of reference for future leadership situations.

Only about one-fourth of the participants of the survey expressed that the professional development they participated in was highly relevant to their leadership. However, national programs were rated higher overall than regional and institutional ones, and programs not specifically designed for higher education also were viewed as important. One interviewee expressed that the national program he participated in was "transformational" for learning to lead.

National professional development programs such as ACE Fellows, Harvard IEM and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) *The Looking Glass Experience* were much more influential compared to those who had participated in lower level

regional or state programs. Only one leader who was interviewed found a state level

leadership development program that was sponsored by the governor's office was

significant to his learning of leadership, but this was not the most important aspect of

learning leadership for him. Leaders who participated in state, regional or homegrown

professional development programs did not believe the experience to be as effective or

influential in their learning leadership. The programs at the national level may be able

to offer programs that are more in-depth and with opportunities for leaders to use

expensive tools (i.e., 360° feedback, Meyers-Briggs) as they have more financial

investment through grants and federal monetary support.


It is interesting to note that when leaders were asked if their institutions offered

professional development specific to learning leadership, many said they did not know.

Not that they were not aware, but that none had ever inquired. It is fascinating to note

that many leaders do not seem to actively pursue learning leadership.


Reviews of the findings were guided by the questions listed above in the

*Purpose of Statement* section. The findings from these questions based on the surveys

and interviews will be categorized by experience/experiential learning, mentoring,

professional development and critical incidents.

*Learning Leadership through Mentoring and Experience*

In this study less than half of the participants of the survey reported having a

mentor, and many of the mentoring relationships developed informally. The

participants reported that mentors had helped them most in learning the administrative

process and the responsibilities of the leadership role. This research also found that most of the mentoring relationships were informal with one interviewee expressing "it was not planned it just happened". One interviewee who found herself the only female dean was very frustrated with the difficulty of learning the culture of the institution. She felt that being partnered with a mentor in a formal capacity would have benefited her in learning to lead at this particular institution. This dean's frustration and the feeling of being left to flounder added to the uphill melee she appeared to be struggling with as a leader. The dean talked of how her department was removed from the main campus of her institution so she did not have direct access to the culture and being in the thick of the happenings on campus. The dean felt that a formal mentor to help her learn the culture and the processes would have cut the learning curve of the job tremendously. Taking this example may have implications for how institutions could foster learning leadership for new leaders at an institution.

In this research, the most valuable lessons in learning leadership came from the interactions with a mentor and learning through experience. Interviewees expressed that mentors were able to help them process through and challenged them to reflect on issues that involved the people portion of leading. The mentoring relationships developed on an informal basis. This finding supports the concepts of Daloz (2006), who believed mentors help mentees transition through the meaning making framework and Kegan's theory (1982) of being able to move from self-centered to other-centered. Helping the mentee ultimately understand how the vision of the leader and the people in the institution can work in a more synergistic environment. This is significant in

considering the benefits of mentoring as it pertains to the theories by Piaget (in Kegan 1982), Mezirow (2000) and Kegan (1982) who believe the most significant factor in modifying one's frame of reference is about moving to that next level of learning leadership.

Many of the leaders declared that their mentor helped them to work through issues, and the mentor was able to help them learn to just make sense of things-the meaning-making. The process of meaning-making came when their mentors were challenging and questioning, allowing the mentee to reflect on what the process means and how it related to their development as a leader. Sometimes this process happened without the mentee's knowledge; it was only later when reflecting back that the leader realized the lessons learned. As John Locke believed, people may be born with certain biological preformed abilities, and it appears that through experience and mentoring the mentor is able to open up these senses for the mentee to explore and learn. It would seem that those who are able to reflect on situations and circumstances to learn leadership would be higher on Maslow's Theory of Motivation scale (1970). This may indicate that the level self-actualization has been reached by the leaders because of their motivation and desire to be a good academic, leader and person. Most of the leaders interviewed revealed they never intended to be leaders but had been in some way encouraged, propelled or asked to move into these leadership roles. There is something that intrinsically motivates them to excel–even in a leadership role they never intended to pursue. Those who reach that level of self-actualization seem to be able to take information from one experience and apply to a broader sense of learning. Although

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some of the leaders did not realize that they would be good leaders, a mentor saw something in them. Once that "something" was pushed, challenged and/or sparked, they realized leadership was a good fit for them.

The definition of self-actualization in which a person wants to self-improve stood out about the leaders interviewed in this research. They realized at some point they needed to improve and sharpen their leadership skills (Maslow, 1970). They took action to go about learning leadership. This supports Carl Rogers' theory that in order for learning to be significant, it must be self-initiated, pervasive enough to change attitudes, behavior and personality (Rogers, 1983, p.19). The acknowledgement and understanding that the individuals needed to develop their leadership skills suggests that they had reached that level of self-actualization recognized by Maslow (1970). Many of these leaders sought out ways in which to develop their leadership skills, making it an intentional act. Although, a few who did not have mentors did state that they tended to identify leaders they admired and emulated that style of leadership.

In this research, it seemed that informal mentoring was a better fit for learning leadership compared to formal mentoring. Informal mentoring allows the relationships to happen more spontaneously. The mentor and the mentee develop a relationship based on trust that is a good fit for both. One dean stated that being new to a college created difficulty in learning the culture. Had she been paired with someone who could have been a mentor, she thought it would have helped tremendously. This suggests that it is important that institutions be open to facilitating and cultivating a philosophy that

supports both formal and informal mentoring.  The overall benefits of mentoring are to make it an investment in learning leadership that is a win-win situation.

*Professional Development*

In this study, professional development was found to be beneficial, but it did not have a high impact on learning leadership.  One interviewee expressed that professional development was not viewed in the institution's culture as necessary.  This is in contrast to McDade and Green's (1994) conviction that leadership development is an investment in both the short-term and long-term effectiveness of increasing job performance and satisfaction.  Institutions that develop an "investment strategy" for professional development (Van Auken & Ireland, 1980) may see a higher return on knowledge and benefits to the institution through professional development, but the national level leadership development courses seemed far more effective than local and regional ones.  This further suggests that during an era of tight budgets, institutions would be wise to carefully consider how to spend money for developing the institutions' leaders.  Considering that the institutions in this study are considered some of the most elite, it is interesting to note Bisbee's (2007) findings that 90% of academic leadership came from faculty, but only 25% of those had leadership development.  This information is suggestive that institutions are developing students for leadership at other organizations, but not attending to their own leaders.

Professional development that was more dynamic appeared to be a stronger catalyst to help leaders to learn.  Dynamic professional development would need to present the practical and new knowledge about learning leadership, but then assist the

learner in integrating the new and practical knowledge with the experiential and how to make it all work together. There were a few programs that were specific to higher education leadership that seem to do this better than others–American Council of Education (ACE) Fellows Program and the Harvard Graduate College Institute for Educational Management (IEM). Both of these programs are specific to higher education, and both participants and institutions have expressed overall satisfaction. However, it may be that programs not specific to academia may also be effective. One program mentioned in an interview was the CCL–*The Looking Glass Experience*. This program, though not specific to higher education, is designed to "deliver the most impactful development experiences to leaders at all levels of the organization" (CCL website, 2012) and the vice-president (interviewee 1) who attended this program described it as the most profound occurrence in his development as a leader. State and local programs appeared to be more effective if they focused on specific items such as state funding. One leader who attended a professional development program that was sponsored by the governor of the state felt he learned a lot from the program and specifically how the budgets for the state worked, giving him better insight into budgeting and planning for his institution.

*Critical Incidents*

In this research, I did not find that critical incidents played an overall important role in learning to lead. Less than 36% of the overall participants of the survey regarded a critical incident as being significant in their learning of leadership. This may be due the evolution of time and of the participants being unable to recall the impact of an incident being significant. Additionally, the wording of the questions in

the questionnaire regarding may not have elicited the desired information.  It appears

that the research on this requires much more in-depth focus and more extensive

interview process to uncover significant critical incidents influence on learning

leadership.  This study did not reveal any noteworthy conclusions on the impact of

critical incidents in the learning of leadership.  Clearly further research may be needed

in this area.

*Implications for Future Research*

Finally, while this study did not support the idea that critical incidents are

significant drivers or motivational forces to learning to lead, the research did support

that mentoring and experiential learning were significant in learning leadership.

Professional development is important, but it must be planned and thoughtful to make

sure the experience is significant to the leader and the institution.  The key finding of

this research is that there is not a "one size fits all solution" that would work for all

leaders.  One leader stated, "there is nothing more telling of learning leadership than

through your own mistakes," while another leader found that mentoring was the most

important support network for learning leadership. Yet another leader found

professional development to be transformational in his learning leadership.  The key to

learning from one's own experience and learning from a mentor is for the learner to be

able to reflect back on the encounter and then put the lesson into practice in every-day

leadership.  Having a mentor who challenges you, questions you, but also challenges

and questions themselves appears to be significant in learning leadership.  In order to

reflect, learn and put into practice a leader would need to be high on Maslow's

Hierarchy of Motivation; and thus being at a place of self-actualization would be

important.  The learning must be self-initiated for it to be purposeful and significant.

Leaders must know how to use information learned through experience, mentors or

professional development–there is nothing more wasteful than time spent learning

when that being learned is not being put into practice.  Future research should address

how to identify the level of self-knowledge in potential future leaders in order to

maximize the benefits of training, experience and mentoring.

The current study was limited by the method of selecting participants.  The

participants were selected by the position, but it may be that the individuals occupying

the specified positions are not necessarily good leaders.  Thus, future research should

also strive to differentiate between the position and the individual occupying the

position, perhaps utilizing such techniques as 360° evaluation methods.

*Implications for Practice by Administrators*

The most challenging aspect of leadership for all leaders interviewed was the

sheer amount of learning involved in the job; many were not prepared for the enormity

of the relationships they were expected to nurture and facilitate from outside the

academy.  The pure volume, depth and breadth of knowledge, and the learning curve

were extremely challenging.  Those who were coming into leadership positions from no

experience with the politics of higher education were very surprised to learn the

intricacies of the culture.  This alone should motivate and encourage institutions to be

better prepared leaders.

Institutions of higher education need to become more proactive in facilitating and encouraging more active and reflective learning of leadership in both formal and informal modes. Since this study indicated that the majority of the leaders felt their primary learning of leadership occurred through experience and mentoring relationships, institutions should focus on developing a culture that facilitates both of these practices. The findings suggest that if institutions took more time to understand and ask questions of leaders, they may be able to implement methods of learning leadership that are effective for the leaders but also beneficial to the overall health of higher education. More intentional inquiry of lower-level administrators who aspire to leadership is needed. Assisting leaders in learning leadership will give major advantages for the leader and the institutions in the complex menagerie of higher education. Future research should include institutions and leaders identifying what will have the most impact in learning to lead. This knowledge could come from asking leaders at their specific institutions what has helped them the most to learn. Understanding of the informal learning that is taking place and creating more opportunities for informal learning to occur is needed. With federal and state budgets for higher education in jeopardy of being cut and the increased requirement of accountability being required by higher education institutions, it is more important than ever that leaders be well-prepared. In considering the job trends speculated by the Bureau of Labor (2008) this research will assist academic institutions to prepare leaders to take the helm of leadership. The Occupational Outlook Handbook estimates that "the number of students at the postsecondary level is projected to grow more rapidly than other student populations," (p. 4) thereby creating larger demand for faculty and

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administrators to lead these institutions.  The U.S. Department (2008) of education is projecting a 10% increase of enrollment from 2009 to 2017.

Findings in this research on professional development supported that institutions and leaders may want to consider national programs as part of the learning leadership as they are more dynamic in the curriculum and have a better application in the overall leading of an institution.  As McDade and Green stated, it is important for the institution and the leader to identify the expectations of what is to be learned through professional development.  Having a professional development plan for both the institution and the individual leader would help both better chose which professional development program will be beneficial.  As VanDerLinden (2005) discussed, an institutional audit would be beneficial to understand where and how opportunities for learning are occurring and what type of professional development may be needed.  This would suggest that a debriefing after the professional development would help the leaders understand how the professional development can be implemented. A debriefing would help the institution/department understand the nature of the professional development a leader has attended and also allow the leader to reflect and potentially implement what was learned into their every day, practical leadership. One of the interviewees (5) stated that the most important thing I would learn as a researcher for this dissertation is that together "the institutions" and the leaders need to identify what will have the largest possible impact on learning leadership and move forward.

The findings in this research will be significant in assisting higher education institutions and administrators to implement and apply strategies in which leadership learning is fostered and cultivated. In realizing the importance of experiential learning, the leaders must be able to reflect on the experience and then apply appropriately. Pairing experience with a mentoring relationship where the mentor can support, assist and help the protégé learn through the reflection of situations could enrich the overall knowledge of leaders. Augmenting both experience and mentoring with professional development that is of value to the leader and to the institution may reap further rewards. Following Green and McDade's (1994) professional development checklists may also validate for the leader and the institution that professional development is warranted. If the "experts" are correct in their predictions of trends in enrollment growth and employment for institutions of higher education, the demand will grow for leaders who can balance, delegate and lead institutions successfully. In an effort to understand how leaders in higher education learn to lead, it is imperative that academic institutions attend to the findings in this research to develop and enhance how leaders in higher education learn to lead.

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**Appendix A – Letter to Participate in Survey**

Lisa Fisher
University of Oklahoma
College of Liberal Studies
lisa.m.metheney.fisher-1@ou.edu

Dr. Firstname/Lastname
Institution
Address, City, State, Zip

Dear Dr.   ,

My name is Lisa Fisher and I am a PhD candidate with the University of Oklahoma Organizational Leadership program.  I am currently working on my dissertation with a focus on leadership development in higher education.  The goal of my research is to understand the how leaders learn and what impact professional development, life experiences and mentorship has influenced how leaders learn to lead.

Below is a link for a short survey/questionnaire, which will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. This survey will be completed by numerous leaders at institutions within the Southern Regional Education Board states.  You have been chosen to participate in this survey based on the position you hold within your university/college.

 The questions I will be attempting to answer with this research are as follows:

1. To what degree is being a leader in higher education learned from experience?
2. What is the impact of formal training programs on one's ability to be a leader in higher education?
3. What particular life experiences (personal, social, educational and/or career) have prepared leaders for leadership roles?
4. How significant have experience, professional development, mentors, and critical incidents been in how leaders learn?

Your participation in this survey would be greatly appreciated.  The expertise you offer as a leader in higher education will enhance and support the research I am attempting to facilitate for higher education leadership.


Lisa Fisher
Organizational Leadership Doctoral Candidate, University of Oklahoma

Cc: Dr. Susan Sharp, Professor University of Oklahoma, Committee Chair

## Appendix B – Survey Questions

Learning to Lead in Higher Education Survey

1. Which of the following do you feel has had the most influence on how you make decisions?
   a. Life experience
   b. Mentor
   c. Professional Development
   d. Other _____
   e. None

2. Which of the following do you feel benefited you the most in your leadership development?
   a. Experiential learning
   b. Participative learning
   c. Case management
   d. Reflective learning

3. Reflecting back was becoming a leader part of your overall career plan?
   a. Yes
   b. No

**Mentor(s)**

4. Do you have someone who is your mentor?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. If yes, how long have you been working with this mentor?
   a. 0-2 years
   b. 2-5 years
   c. 5-10 years
   d. 10+ years

6. Is your mentor in higher education?
   a. Yes
   b. No, if no what area? _____

7. Working with a mentor has increased my knowledge and helped me to learn about leadership in the following areas:
   a. Administrative
   b. Faculty
   c. Financial/budget
   d. Policy Management
   e. Internal and external affairs
   f. Not applicable

8. Have you had the opportunity to work with a mentor during your career as a leader?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. If you have or had a mentor relationship how beneficial do you feel this relationship has been in learning to be a leader?
   a. Very beneficial
   b. Somewhat beneficial
   c. Not beneficial at all
   d. Not applicable

10. What one concept/phrase/lesson do you recall from your mentor as it applies to leadership?


**Critical Incident/Life Experience**
(Critical incident is a "defining moment[s]; motivational driver[s])

11. Do you feel you had a critical incident in your life that has led you to the journey of leadership?
    a. Yes
    b. No

12. Do you recall a critical incident in your formative years that you believe led you to pursue leadership?
    a. Yes
    b. No

13. Do you recall a critical incident in adulthood that you feel led you into the leadership journey?
    a. Yes
    b. No


**Professional Development**

14. Have you participated in any of the following national professional development programs?
    a. American Council of Education (ACE) Fellows
    b. Harvard Institute for Educational Management (IEM)
    c. Higher Education Resource Service (HERS)
    d. WK Kellogg Foundation National Fellowship Program
    e. Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities Higher Education Institute
    f. Other _____

15. Have you participated in any regional leadership development programs?
    a. SACUBO
    b. NACUBO
    c. WACUBO
    d. Other _____

16. Have you participated in any state level leadership development programs?
    a. Yes, if so please list _____
    b. No

17. Does your current institution offer an institutional leadership development program?
    a. Yes
    b. No

18. If so, have you participated in your institution's leadership development program?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not applicable

19. Do you feel the leadership professional development programs you have participated in have been relevant to your current leadership position?
    a. Highly relevant
    b. Mostly relevant
    c. Somewhat relevant
    d. Not relevant at all

20. Do you feel the leadership development you participated in would have been more relevant if you would have had more experience as a leader?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not applicable
    d.

21. The leadership professional development programs I have attended have influenced my leadership knowledge in the following areas:
    a. Administrative
    b. Faculty
    c. Financial/budget
    d. Policy Management
    e. Internal and external affairs
    f. Not applicable

22. Did the leadership professional development you participated in involve any of the following?
    a. Experiential learning
    b. Participative learning
    c. Case management
    d. Not applicable

23. Do you believe the leadership development you have participated has been significant in your growth and development as a leader?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not applicable

24. Do you believe the leadership development you participated in influences the decisions you make as a leader?
    a. Yes
    b. No

25. What one concept/phrase/lesson do you recall from participating in professional development that applies to your leadership?

26. What was your first leadership position in academia?
    a. Associate or Assistant Dean
    b. Dean
    c. Vice President/Vice Chancellor
    d. Other

27. Which of the following leadership positions have you held in academia? (Please select all that apply.)
    a. Department chair
    b. Associate or Assistant Dean
    c. Dean
    d. Vice-president/Vice Chancellor
    e. Other

28. Which best describes your current position?
    a. Department chair
    b. Associate or Assistant Dean
    c. Dean
    d. Vice-president/Vice-chancellor
    e. Faculty
    f. Other

If you are available for a one hour interview to further this research in how leaders in higher education learn to lead please complete the information below.

Name:
Title:
Institution:
Interview preference: In person  Telephone   Skype
Email address:
Telephone number:
Mailing address:

**Appendix C – Interview Questions**

In-depth leadership interview questions:

1.  What is your current leadership position? Tell me a little about your responsibilities.

2.  When you came into your current position what did you find the most challenging?

3.  How long have you been in leadership in higher education? (Probe for history of leadership appointments)

4.  How have you seen leadership change in the institution during your tenure? (Probe for explanation of changes)

5.  Does your institution encourage leadership development? How?

6.  How have you gone about "learning" leadership? (Probe: Who or what has been the most influential in your learning process?)

7.  Have you developed any type of mentor relationship? (Probes: How did this relationship develop? Did it result from your participation in a leadership program? Tell me how you feel this mentor relationship has helped you as a leader.)

8.  Describe your experience with the ACE or Harvard leadership program.(Probes: What do you feel was the most significant tool you gained from the program? Why? What benefits do you feel you gained from the experience? What benefits do you feel your institution gained from your attendance to the program?

9.  Can you recall some of the challenges you had as a leader before you attended the ACE or Harvard programs? Do you think your leadership style or philosophy changed after you participated in the ACE Fellows or Harvard IEM?

10. Looking into the future 25 years what additional knowledge, skills and leadership tools would you need as a leader in higher education?

11. Can you give an example of how you have incorporated the skills you learned into how you perform as a leader?