AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO COURSE RESTRUCTURING IN LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

Phillip Schlechty claims that leaders set a course for failure when they choose a sales rather than a marketing approach to improved learning. This 5ale5~mentalitytranslates into pushing existing programs rather than assessing the needs of the student clientele; and the result of this approach to restructuring is typically the justification of existing misalignments rather than the development of more appropriate designs. This artide focuses on improved learning in one doctoral-

)evel.leadership course in order to address the fleeds of today's more diverse student clientele.

The Rationale for Restructuring

Leading minds in the field of organizational improvement, like Peter Senge (2000) and the late Peter Drucker (1995), warn leaders to rethink before they redesign. Leading minds in the field of educational improvement, such as Michael Fullan (2001, 2005) and Andy Hargreaves (2003), in like manner, caution that if insufficient attention is given to reculturing issues, then restructuring efforts may produce more cynicism than significance. How can the insights of these four researchers, who have extensively analyzed issues of learning and leadership, speak to a restructuring need-in-one-leadership-studies course? This article describes the rethinking/reculturing process surrounding the redesign

of a course in curriculum evaluation in which the professional needs of the student clientele challenged the traditional course design and its relationship to program goals.

The Significance and the Process of Client-Centered Redesign

Phillip Schlechty's (1997) case studies of restructuring efforts suggest that educators at any level set a course for failure rather than betterment when they choose a sales rather than a marketing approach to improvement. This sales mentality translates into pushing existing programs as opposed to assessing the needs of the student clientele; the result of this approach to restructuring is typically the justification of existing misalignments rather than the development of a more appropriate design.

SELF, STUDENTS, AND THE CHALLENGE
As a veteran educator, I had chaired curriculum committees, mapped numerous curricular matrices for both undergraduate and advanced degree programs, directed an assessment center, and won a national award for research in the field of evaluation. Why then did an upcoming doctoral seminar in curriculum evaluation seem challenging? My students represented a clientele of self-motivated and experienced professionals who were balancing numerous life responsibilities in order to advance their career goals. - But they also reflected a professional diversity that challenged the traditional structuring of this course. Their professional labels included school

principal, human resource directors, headmaster of a charter school, director of correctional facilities, university librarian, college administrative assistant, and nurse practitioner with a specialty in clinical teaching, trauma treatment, and hospice care.

Curriculum evaluation clearly meant something different in each of our work environments, but what could it mean to all of us so that collectively we could stretch our theoretical intellect and strengthen our workplace performance? Data-based definitions suggest that curriculum is hallmarked by sets of courses within larger programs and defined by a prospectus or a syllabus. But what operational definition would cross workplace settings from prisons to libraries and from hospitals to schools? Furthermore, what foundational resources would enable us to transform information into improved teaching and learning transactions in our representative professional cultures? Meeting the goals described in the course catalog could match any number of college texts on the market; but meeting the specific needs of this diverse professional clientele was a more daunting task. Focusing on contemporary curricular issues brought about by an era of high-stakes stateregulated testing and federal legislation would be provocative but not professionally profitable for over half the members of this class, whose daily work culture was not in K-12 school settings.

A focus on common issues using "uncommon" literature, however, proved to be the component that simultaneously differentiated and unified our learning investment. It created increased opportunity for questioning issues relative to teaching and to learning in different work environments. It addressed the professional needs of a diverse body of learners while still adhering to institutional specifi~ations, national accreditation requirements, and state certification standards within the leadership program.

COMMON THEMES AND UNCOMMON LITERATURE AS THE CORE OF COURSE IMPROVEMENT

A central tenant of architectural design is that form follows function. The operational tenant of curriculum design that enabled the linking..of form. And function. in this client-centered effort was the management of knowledge. Based on this guiding concept and its

successful application to value-added improvements in other organizations (Fullan, 2002; Malhotra, 2002; Reamy, 2003), I shifted reading requirements from a common text to choices of texts to be used for each of five 6-hour seminars. This restructured component enabled students and professor alike to grow collectively more informed as we filtered common questions about how knowledge was managed, transmitted, and assessed in our different professional cultures through the conceptual frameworks of different authors.

Our initial seminar examined the evolving nature of knowledge and connections to social and educational change. Students chose from either the research of Rosabeth Moss Kanter (2001), teacher/scholar, longtime editor of the *Harvard Business Review,* and prolific best-selling author, or the work of Linda Darling-Hammond (1997), dynamic educational leader, advocate, and scholar in the fields of policy, assessment, professional development, and teacher training. The insights of these accomplished women relative to teaching and learning transactions and basic curricular ideals of those exchanges in corporate and in educational settings facilitated what Peter Senge and Daniel Kim (1997) refer to as a deep cycle of knowledge management in which learning moves back and forth between theory and application in evaluating individual and institutional improvement. Sharing Kanter's and Darling-Hammond's major themes regarding the teaching and learning process in different work cultures broadened our existing professional expertise in analyzing how knowledge was managed in our different institutions and how it related to our different leadership responsibilities.

Another set of parallel reading choices enabled us to explore how knowledge is acquired, shared, and used. Recognized authors John Kotter (1996) and Michael Fullan (2001) both addressed the central issue of change from their respective corporate and educational perspectives. Again, evaluating a common concept such as the change process through both educational and corporate applications enabled a more complex but a more complete understanding of how teaching and learning transactions are planned, enacted, and assessed in various work environments. The works of both men expanded our analysis of effective change when individual beliefs and actions resulting from new learning impact overall institutional transformations.

In yet another class session, we used the same author but two different texts. Insights from cognitive psychologist David Perkins (1995,2003) enabled us to focus more intently on either an individual or an institutional approach to the management of knowledge as presented in *Outsmarting IQ' The Emerging Science of a Learnable Intelligence* (1995) or in *King Arthur's Roundtable: How Collaborative Conversations Create Smart Organizations* (2003). Curricular literature gives significant attention to performance on the part of the learner. In corporate literature, the symphony metaphor is frequently used in order to describe how the performer must perfect one's own area of responsibility while simultaneously working and learning in conjunction with others. But in both professional cultures the management of knowledge depends upon merging individual responsibility with collaborative capacity in order to reach common goals within the larger institution or organization.

Our final seminar focused on the territory of the unknown: those leadership decisions about how knowledge is managed, disseminated, and assessed for which no prior scenarios or experiences exist to define problems and guide informed choices. The common research platform for our discussion drew from the findings of Costa and Kallick (2000) relative to "habits of mind." Students created case examples, based on' workplace leadership responsibilities, which highlighted the application of such habits as persisting, managing impulsivity, gathering data through all senses, innovating, thinking flexibly, taking responsible risks, and remaining open to continuous learning. Discussing how such strategies or habits could be levers for enhanced performance in our different workplaces affirmed Margaret Wheatley's (1994) claim that adults are self-organizing in both what they choose to learn and how they transform themselves and their institutions because of those learning experiences.

Conclusion: An Improved Outcome

Through this experience, we realized the positive impact of evaluating the management of knowledge through our filter of similar themes and dissimilar literature. This approach fostered a ~ore complex and a more complete assessment of teaching and learning

transactions in a variety of organizational settings. The evaluation instrument used by this university later reflected that "relevant resources" was the factor contributing most significantly to students' overall positive rating of this course. At the semester's end, we all returned to the more limited constraints of our individual professional roles, but with a greater range of analysis in examining the management of knowledge in the teaching and learning process and its relationship to effective leadership within those workplaces.

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