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This chapter provides the critical leadership logic model as a tool to help educators develop leadership-learning opportunities. This proactive logic model includes curricular and co-curricular educational experiences to ensure critical thinking through leadership education.

Developing Critical Thinking Through Leadership Education

Daniel M. Jenkins, Anthony C. Andenoro

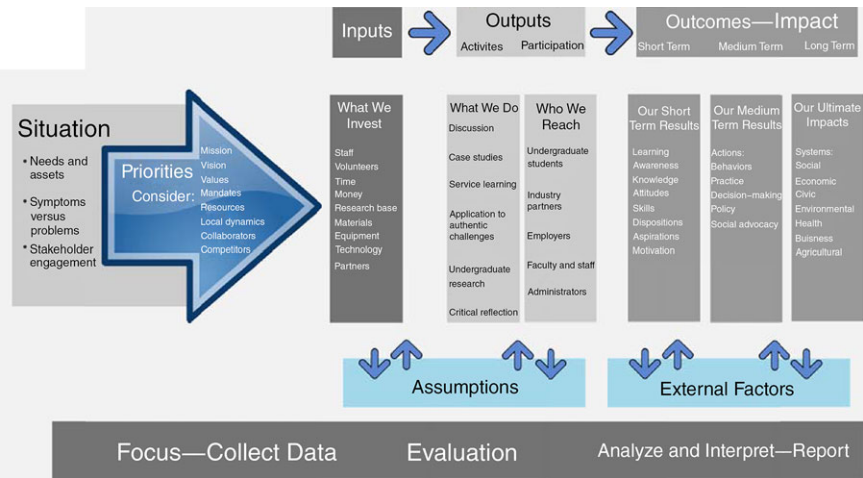
In the movie *Dead Poets Society*, the character John Keating, played by Robin Williams, commented, “I always thought the idea of education was to learn to think for yourself.” This statement identifies one side of an ongoing struggle within education, a struggle that pits the idea of depositing knowledge into learners’ heads so they can do well on exams against building capacity for depth of thought and complex adaptive problem solving. The challenges that face our world are becoming increasingly complex, forcing leaders to leap beyond previously conceived solutions and develop innovative processes and procedures. The ability of leaders to address the crises amid economic struggles, competitive markets, cultural and social adversity, and countless other factors will be critical for the sustainability and advancement of organizations and communities. “The task of leading during a sustained crisis—whether you are the CEO of a major corporation or a manager heading up an impromptu company initiative—is treacherous” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 62). Often those with decision-making power attempt to implement technical solutions to address these challenges. While they can be useful during short periods of organizational practice, technical solutions often ignore the adaptive complexity that is required to create sustainable solutions (Yukl & Mashud, 2010). In response, flexible and adaptive leadership is becoming a critical piece of the leadership landscape as managers and administrators attempt to keep up with the pace of change that affects today’s organizations (Burke & Cooper, 2004; Dess & Picken, 2000). Critical thinking is an essential component of the decision-making process that includes systems perspectives and produces adaptive solutions for real and sustainable organizational and community change. Therefore, it must be a prominent fixture within the higher education landscape.

The problem with this assertion is that the needs of our society far outweigh the capacity of higher education. Learners in higher education are at a deficit when it comes to addressing adaptive challenges. As faculty, we observe learners who arrive with a willingness to learn, and yet the educational opportunities presented to them provide an overload of content that prevents critical application. Further, time constraints make it difficult for instructors to delve into the complexity and systems perspectives that are necessary for developing adaptive solutions. This situation, coupled with an overwhelming amount of content and assessments of mastery focused on multiple-choice exams, provides considerable challenges for learners and may lead to biased and uninformed perspectives. This pedagogical stalemate requires a new educational paradigm that focuses on the inclusion of critical thinking applied within adaptive contexts to the authentic challenges that face today’s world. Chapter 2 addresses critical thinking as a core competency linking leadership education and the liberal arts, but how can critical thinking be included in a new educational paradigm?

In an effort to address this shift and promote the development of the next echelon of leaders, countless academic and student development programs have begun prioritizing the development of critical-thinking skills and dispositions in their learners in the hope that they will create a foundation for sound leadership practice. However, the definitions, programmatic initiatives, and methodologies surrounding the development of these skills and dispositions vary considerably. This merits the consideration of a focused and intentional trajectory that creates process-oriented outcomes for the fusion of leadership and critical thinking education.

Grounded in the work that informs our understanding of critical thinking, we provide a process logic model (see Figure 5.1) that addresses key

Figure 5.1. Critical Leadership Logic Model



considerations for building a context that empowers critical thinking and engagement in today's learners. To establish a foundation for the model, it is important to consider the roots of critical thinking. Prior to 1990, much of the literature devoted to understanding critical thinking was focused on skills and skill development. This focus contributed to a superficial view of critical thinking that limited its characterization as an assortment of skills rather than as a complex intentional process that aids individuals in making reasoned and judicious decisions (Paul & Binker, 1990). In 1994, Peter and Nancy Facione provided an important addition to the scholarship on critical thinking, aligning the previously identified skills with disposition. Their understanding of the intersection between skill and disposition is highly transferable to leadership education contexts. Facione and Facione (1994) define critical thinking as follows:

purposeful, self regulatory judgment which results in the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference as well as the explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which judgment is based. (p. 2)

The definition's distinctive connection between disposition and skill provided a more holistic understanding of critical thinking than prior definitions and has received considerable attention in recent decades as academics attempt to create a foundation for the development of related skills and dispositions within leadership contexts (Facione & Facione, 1994; Halpern, 2002; Stedman & Andenoro, 2007). Ennis (1993) also defined critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 2). Ennis's use of the word *or* is an important evolution because it suggests action (doing) versus simple beliefs (thought).

Through the development of critical thinking skills and dispositions, student and academic affairs professionals, faculty, and countless others who work in dynamic learning contexts can create a foundation for a variety of the necessary competencies linked to successful leadership. Moore and Parker (2012) identify critical thinking as the foundation for reasoning, developing arguments, examining doubts, communicating effectively through written and oral forms, establishing credibility, problem solving, and creating a moral foundation for practice. These skills are essential for successful leaders and align with what employers are looking for. Employers value both skill and disposition (Halpern, 1996), making them essential to higher education and vocational preparation (Stedman & Andenoro, 2007). Further, the case has been made that educating learners to be critical thinkers is vital for society in general (Kennedy, Fisher, & Ennis, 1991; Sternberg, 1985). Those who become critical thinkers acquire such intellectual resources as background knowledge, operational knowledge of appropriate standards, knowledge of key concepts, possession of effective heuristics, and certain vital habits of mind (Bailin, Case, Coombs, & Daniels, 1999).

Critical race theory and critical pedagogy, as referenced in Chapter 4, are examples of how these skills can be utilized in leadership and leadership education.

An Innovative Approach to Critical Thinking Within Leadership Education Contexts

Leadership education is the pedagogical practice of facilitating leadership learning in an effort to build human capacity and is informed by leadership theory and research. It values, and is inclusive of, both curricular and co-curricular educational contexts (Andenoro et al., 2013). Yet, only recently has critical thinking integration in postsecondary leadership education been documented (e.g., Burbach, Matkin, & Fritz, 2004; Jenkins & Cutchens, 2011). Nonetheless, the interdisciplinary contexts of leadership programs are ripe grounds for the aforementioned transcendent approach to critical thinking integration. One advantage is that the approach “prompts greater appreciation of the importance of *how* one thinks about different types of problems and solutions” (University of Southern Maine, Lewiston-Auburn College, 2013, p. 6). No matter the discipline or context for teaching, “the point of getting learners to think critically is to get them to recognize, and question, the assumptions that determine how knowledge in that discipline is recognized as legitimate” (Brookfield, 2012, p. 28). According to Jenkins and Dugan (2013), an interdisciplinary approach to leadership promotes application across contexts, exposure to multiple ideas, and the recognition of situational influences, such as what leadership looks like across disciplines. This approach allows for a variety of streams of critical thinking pedagogy, such as borrowing best practices from multiple disciplines and integrating them within a shared language of leadership. Thus, it is the responsibility of instructors to facilitate this conscious integration.

In the same way, educators, administrators, and practitioners often attempt to apply theories and perspectives within a wide range of contexts. While this can be effective for some contexts, it can actually be a detriment for others. This provides the impetus for critical reflection. Leadership educators in various contexts should reevaluate the percentage of time devoted to conveying and discussing information on leadership versus the time spent by participants reflecting on their own situations and applying tools to help them successfully navigate those situations (Conger, 2013). The logic model we provide in Figure 5.1 and the accompanying narrative illustrate a proactive process oriented to develop critical thinking and leadership capacity in undergraduate learners. This forms a foundation for adaptive leadership practice and sustainable organizational and community change. Further, educators, administrators, and practitioners can use the model to create valuable leadership-learning opportunities for the learners they serve.

The Critical Leadership Logic Model

The logic model progresses from left to right, examining the various elements influencing the development of critical thinking through leadership-learning opportunities. For the practical purposes of this description, educators, administrators, and practitioners will be referred to as *instructors*. Before attempting to construct any leadership-learning opportunities, it is important to consider the situational influences that impact the learning environment. These institutional factors set the foundation for understanding why the priorities of the learning opportunity have importance. The priorities arrow asks the instructor to consider the institutional constructs that provide parameters for creation of the leadership-learning opportunities. The model then follows an input (what we need), output (what will we see), and outcome/impact (demonstrated results) format. The inputs area of the model then transitions to the outputs area, which is comprised of activities (what we aspire to do) and participation (who we aspire to reach). Accordingly, the inputs and outputs take into account the assumptions of the learners and instructor as identified by the assumptions box beneath the sections. Finally, the outcomes and impacts are influenced by external factors.

Situation. Context is critical. A learner who possesses a superficial understanding of the systems impacting a given situation is predisposed to making superficial decisions about that situation. These superficial decisions often lead to superficial outcomes and a lack of sustainability. Thus, it is absolutely critical to consider the situational factors within a given context, as noted by the arrow on the left side of the model. In his model of integrated course design, Fink (2013) suggests identifying the situational factors that influence decisions about educating learners with respect to learning goals, teaching and learning activities, and feedback and assessment. These factors include, but are not limited to, the context of the class, learners, meeting modality, the nature of the subject, and the characteristics of the learners and teacher. Similar to problem-based learning, described in Chapter 3, learners must connect each of the aforementioned factors to their own contexts and experiences to come to new knowledge and conclusions.

An example of this can be seen within the idea of critical leadership. *Critical leadership* refers to a call for instructors to bridge, integrate, and facilitate the gaps between critical thinking and action for learners in leadership programs (Jenkins & Cutchens, 2011). Yet, a current gap exists that limits the transcendence of leadership learning across knowledge, experience, practice, and application. Conger (2013) describes three critical shortcomings that limit classroom experiences in leadership education and impede the facilitation and transfer of useful learning and its application to the day-to-day challenges that leaders face: (1) the reality gap, (2) the skill-intensive gap, and (3) the application gap. “Many of our leadership

constructs fail to identify leadership as a process that is highly contingent and multidirectional; instead focusing on models or approaches that offer 'what ifs' versus actual action" (Conger, 1992, p. 30). Moreover, educational experiences need to reinforce the necessity of "situation reading" skills (Conger, 2013, p. 80), provide opportunities for learners to apply critical-thinking skills to leadership decisions and actions (Jenkins & Cutchens, 2011), and connect theory and practice.

Inputs. Inputs ask the instructor to consider what a learner should invest in the learning opportunity. This often-overlooked piece ensures that the leadership activities, lessons, or programs will be sustainable. Decisions about these inputs should involve multiple stakeholders and account for the context characteristics of the learners and instructors in each learning environment (see Fink, 2013). Instructors in curricular and co-curricular contexts invest time, money and materials, and often staff, volunteers, and institutional or community partners into their learning environments. Moreover, they are compiling knowledge resources and making epistemological decisions about the content of their leadership programs, choosing from textbooks, articles, and videos; websites; and workbooks, to name just a few. Through this process, they are assembling the essential inputs required to facilitate critical leadership learning.

Outputs. Outputs ask the instructor to consider what the learners will see, do, or experience in the learning that occurs. The activities section provides facilitated activities that create opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and dispositions in the leadership learners. Specific learning activities engage learners in critical thinking activities aimed at creating a foundation for the development of real solutions for authentic challenges. The participation section lists specific participants that are critical to the leadership-learning process. Inclusive participation demonstrates an integrated approach to learning that prioritizes diverse perspectives, systems thinking, and application to real-world contexts.

According to Harvey and Jenkins (2014), knowledge, praxis, and reflection are the three critical elements in leadership programs, regardless of the discipline, college, program, or department facilitating the learning. Arguably, pedagogies that intentionally integrate critical thinking across these three elements will have the greatest influence on the development of learners' critical thinking dispositions and skills. A focus on knowledge (or inputs, within the tripartite model) would provide opportunities for learners to challenge assumptions, theories, models, and approaches. Perhaps pedagogy is the bridge to practice (or praxis), just as critical leadership bridges thinking with action.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., noted that "the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically" (Hobbs, 2010, para 1). For instructors, facilitating practice opportunities in and out of class in which learners can apply critical thinking to leadership situations is a critical challenge. While not comprehensive, discussion, case studies

and method, problem-based learning (see Chapter 3), and critical reflection pedagogies may provide learning environments conducive to teaching critical thinking in leadership contexts.

Outcomes—Impact. Assessment and evaluation of programmatic and educational experiences are critical to our understanding of how we can strengthen and create curricula to better develop future generations of leaders. This is affirmed by the outcomes and impact portion of the model as it provides an answer to the question “leadership for what?” This section asks the instructor to identify short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes that can be demonstrated by the leadership learners. Short-term results focus on the development of skills and dispositions, while medium-term results focus on the actions and behaviors that stem from the short-term results. Finally, instructors focus on the ultimate impact of their efforts, addressing systemic and institutional impacts and shifts. This piece of the model creates opportunities for formative (ongoing solicitation and analysis of feedback/data during a given educational experience) and summative (evaluation of perspectives or performance compared against a benchmark measure at the end of a given educational experience) measures. However, this also provides an opportunity for developmental evaluation. Developmental evaluation goes beyond formative and summative evaluation by “supporting innovation development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments” (Patton, 2010, p. 1). This becomes critical to understand as leaders and educators are faced with adaptive challenges within contexts rich with complex variables. Functionally, developmental evaluation identifies and frames a set of educational opportunities that are responsive to a particular situation and are aimed at eliciting a given outcome (Patton, 2010). Essentially, it is a process that defines and codifies the process resulting in leadership.

Strategies for Developing Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions

Leadership educators focus a significant component of their work on helping students become strong critical thinkers. Three salient strategies—discussion, case studies, and critical reflection—are practical ways for students to develop critical thinking skills and dispositions.

Discussion. According to Cross (2002), discussion is uniquely designed to encourage learners to strengthen their intellectual muscles and practice their strategic learning moves. Thus, it is important to note that discussion-based pedagogies are the most frequently used in leadership education (see Jenkins, 2012, 2013). Yet, experts agree that leading a productive discussion is among the most challenging and demanding tasks of an instructor—and one of the most satisfying when things go well (Cross, 2002). Thus, it is imperative that leadership educators facilitate discussions that are intentional and, perhaps even more so, critical. According to

Brookfield (2012), to make discussion critical, facilitators should: (a) focus on members identifying assumptions, (b) focus on the degree to which these assumptions are accurate and valid, (c) attempt to fix the contextual validity of assumptions, (d) uncover evidence for generalizations, (e) keep a record of the links in an “inferential chain,” (f) generate multiple perspectives, and (g) be alert for groupthink. Additionally, criteria for evaluating whether a discussion is critical include: (a) structures that are in place to ensure inclusivity, (b) time limits, (c) mutual respect, (d) foci on similarities and differences that emerge, (e) a shared power differential, and (f) active listening as the primary goal (Brookfield, 2012).

Case Studies. The case study method incorporates active learning and provides learners with a variety of important skills; more specifically, active learning helps learners develop problem-solving, critical reasoning, and analytical skills, all of which are valuable tools that prepare learners to make better decisions and become better learners (Kunselman & Johnson, 2004; Popil, 2010). Case studies can also provide opportunities for learners to practice critical thinking skills in various leadership scenarios (e.g., Burbach et al., 2004; Powley & Taylor, 2014). To demonstrate this, Jenkins and Cutchens (2010) provided case studies for learners to analyze and apply the “12 actions a leader can take to lead critically” (see Jenkins & Cutchens, 2011; see also Chapter 2) to determine instances in which leaders’ decision-making processes excelled or broke down. Additionally, opportunities are provided for learners to make decisions in scenarios where action has not yet been taken.

Critical Reflection. Scholars have alluded to practicing critical reflection—a behavior that integrates personal experiences with new learning and understanding—to engage and mobilize learners to act on new ideas and to challenge conventional thinking in both theory and practice (Jones, Simonetti, & Vielhaber-Hermon, 2000; Reynolds, 1999). By creating opportunities to practice critical leadership, instructors can encourage and facilitate the important connection between critical thinking and leadership development (see also Guthrie & King, 2004; Stedman, 2009). Yet, engaging in critical reflection can create student discomfort and dissonance (Brookfield, 1994; Dewey, 1933; Reynolds, 1999). Nonetheless, as Fink (2013) and others assert, discomfort often means learners are really thinking and consequently really learning. Moreover, when reflection is absent, there is the constant risk of making poor decisions and bad judgments (Brookfield, 1995). For example, without reflection, leaders may be convinced of their invincibility by past successes and fail to consider other viewpoints, with possibly disastrous consequences (Densten & Gray, 2001). Similarly, leaders may avoid reflecting on a course of action because such reflection might challenge their favorable perceptions of themselves (Conger, 1992). In leadership education, deep reflective learning requires learners to consider the underlying dynamics of power and to question basic assumptions and practices. For example, learners could be required to

reassess the power they use in leadership situations to achieve their desired results (Jenkins & Cutchens, 2011) through use of counterstorytelling, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

No specific combination of knowledge, pedagogy, praxis, discussion, case study, and critical reflection can ensure integration of critical thinking in leadership education. Further, no secret recipe exists to perfectly evaluate critical leadership outcomes, and there is no concrete standard for measuring how theory is applied to practice. Nonetheless, the logical, educationally grounded, and intentional approach offered here is deeply rooted in student leadership development and leadership education theories and pedagogical approaches, and it presents a process that demonstrates practice to empower and engage our emerging leaders. Further, the process supports a foundation for the creation of leadership-learning contexts capable of developing critical thinking skills and dispositions in undergraduate learners.

The underlying premise of the model demonstrates the need for constant evaluation of the associated processes. Through intentional and focused data collection, analysis, and interpretation, reports can provide valuable insight into the creation of holistic leadership-learning opportunities that prioritize the development of critical thinking. For instructors teaching in leadership programs, their imperative is to build a context to facilitate the process of leadership learning first, utilize critical thinking as a construct within that process, and evaluate learning outcomes. Together, the model bridges experiential leadership education with critical thinking, action, and accountability.

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DANIEL M. JENKINS is an assistant professor of leadership and organizational studies at the University of Southern Maine, Lewiston-Auburn College.

ANTHONY C. ANDENORO is an assistant professor of leadership education within the Department of Agricultural Education and the coordinator of the campus-wide leadership minor at the University of Florida.