Theory of Change' (TOC) in Higher Education

Broadening Access: Embedding Social Change Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The importance of leadership capability as a priority graduate attribute in preparing graduates to be globally employable has been noted in prior business and education literature. However, leadership development programs tend to be offered as extracurricular lineups that are available to a limited number of student applicants or self-take ups in student organisations. A more recent reimaging of leadership development has been a focus towards social change capabilities. Social change leadership reconfigures leadership from being a traditional positional leadership to being a wider community-civic engagement leadership. Here we use social change leadership as a way to develop students' leadership capabilities with a focus on (1) enhancing students' self-knowledge, including leadership competence and (2) widening access to facilitate positive social change. This chapter presents the findings from a study that empirically tested social change leadership by embedding its competencies into the curriculum as a way to broaden students' access to leadership development. The study specifically employed an intervention-based methodology comprising social change learning pedagogies and assessments. Data were collected from 152 pre surveys and 84 post surveys in undergraduate and postgraduate business and humanities courses. The results provide support for a co-curricular design that embeds social change leadership competencies across units/courses in a degree program to widen student access and to develop graduate attributes that align with social change and employability.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership capability has been identified as a priority attribute in preparing graduates to be globally employable and delivering learning outcomes that see students prepared for work with a mix of practical and theoretical skills (Seemiller and Murray, 2013). Australian employers have also identified leadership along with communication and initiative, as desirable attributes for job seekers (Kinash and Crane (2016). In addition, accreditation agencies expect professional courses to develop students' leadership skills (Seemiller, 2016; Seemiller & Murray, 2013). As a result of their higher education experiences, students are expected when they enter the workforce to lead or at least be prepared to lead (Seemiller & Murray, 2013, p. 41). For example, business schools, as part of their mission statements, claim to develop students' leadership skills (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of

Business, 2016). Seemiller and Murray (2013) provide a list of leadership competencies such as self-awareness, group dynamics, communication, strategic planning, personal behaviour, interpersonal interaction and learning and reasoning that can be used to review programs to determine whether there are sufficient opportunities provided for students to develop these leadership competencies and to discover any gaps.

While there are is consensus for developing students' leadership competencies in higher education, within the leadership domain depending on the concepts of leadership, the expectations of leadership outcomes differ. Researchers have outlined alternate theories or models of leadership to suggest ways that students can learn how to be leaders, for example, there is the exemplary leadership practice model (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) which lists a set of practices, Fielder's contingency theory of leadership (Fiedler, 1978) focuses on situations and trait theories that contend that leaders are born with certain traits. More recently there has been a shift in leadership perspectives. For instance, the social change model (SCM) of leadership development moves beyond the confines of employment opportunities and diverts from traditional leadership perspectives that focus on positional roles (Komives & Wagner, 2012).

The SCM views leadership as being democratic, inclusive, value based, collaborative, and as a process that effects change for others and society (Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), 1996). It is considered an alternative way to develop students' leadership capabilities. The SCM of leadership focuses on two main goals (1) enhancing students' self-knowledge, including leadership competence and (2) facilitating positive social change (HERI, 1996, p.19). Despite the wide range of support for leadership as a graduate attribute, a key criticism is that most student leadership development occurs in the form of extra-curricular activities in student organisations (Foreman & Retallick, 2016), which limit students' leadership access. In addition, depending on the type of student organisation the frequency with which students engage in social change will differ. For instance, Soria, Fink, Lepkowski, & Snyder (2013) note that engagement was lower for students who were leaders in recreation groups (e.g. chess clubs, bike clubs). Whereas, contexts which involve community and civic engagement lead to students being able to identify community and social problems and being able to effect positive change in communities (Soria et al., 2013, p. 249).

In addition to students having limited access to leadership development, there is a dearth of studies that evaluated the teaching and assessment of students' leadership development within the curriculum. The purpose of our project was to therefore (1) broaden students' access to leadership

development and (2) examine the effects of embedding social change leadership competencies into the curriculum using an intervention-based methodology. This chapter presents the findings from a project that contributes to the 'Theory of Change' and the development of students' social leadership capabilities for employability. In this chapter, first, we provide a background of traditional leadership development. Second, we discuss the SCM and curriculum embedding. Third, we provide details of the pedagogical intervention used and methodology. Finally, we conclude by discussing the findings, identifying the practical implications, limitations and providing suggestions for future inquiries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are over 225 definitions of leadership which highlight one of the challenges of fully understanding the concept and its wider application. The traditional position on leadership is where leaders are born with innate traits such as self-confidence, while a more contemporary view of leadership is that it is a democratic style, which can be easily learned (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996; Komives & Wagner, 2012; Rost, 1993). For Komives and Wagner (2012, p xii) leadership is "a purposeful, collaborative, values based process that results in positive social change". Kouzes and Posner (2012) examined various contexts of leadership and found that exemplary leaders: (1) modelled the way and gained credibility; (2) inspired a shared vision by enlisting others to their envisioned future; (3) challenged the process by searching for opportunities, experimenting, taking risks and learning from mistakes; (4) enabled others to act by fostering collaboration and strengthening others; and (5) encouraged the heart by recognizing others contributions and celebrating values and victories. Despite the varied definitions of leadership, there is some consensus that leadership can be developed and that leadership development contributes to effective organisational contexts and has societal impact (Komives and Wagner, 2012; Kouzes and Posner, 2012). In addition, there is agreement that the development of leadership competencies as a graduate attribute is critical in higher education teaching and learning (Smith and Chenoweth, 2015; Guthrie and Bovia, 2014; Buschlen and Dvorak, 2011) since it enhances students' employability (Levy & Cannon, 2016). Accreditation agencies expect professional courses to develop students' leadership skills where as a result of their higher education experience students should be prepared for workplace leadership and to lead (Seemiller & Murray, 2013, p. 41). The rationale for developing students' leadership competencies has since moved beyond the confines of employability to include civic contribution. For instance, Augier and Miller (2017) revisited Harvard Business School's original 1908 goal which was to make students better citizens rather than the narrow focus of being competitive workers and seeking higher earning rents.

SOCIAL CHANGE LEADERSHIP MODEL

Proponents of the social change leadership model (SCM) view all students as potential leaders and advocate for extending students' leadership competencies to focus on enhancing students' self-knowledge and for facilitating positive social change (HERI, 1996). The model comprises the seven C's, which are grouped into three dimensions (Komives & Wagner, 2012):

1. Individual level -consciousness of self, congruence, commitment

2. Group level - collaboration, common purpose

3. Society level - controversy with civility and citizenship

Buschlen and Johnson (2014) say there is an eighth C, change. The dimensions are further explained in Table 1.

Table 1

Dimension	Description
Consciousness of self	Being aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes and emotions that motivate one to take action.
Congruence	Refers to thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity and honesty toward others. Congruent persons are those whose actions are consistent with their most deeply held beliefs and convictions.
Commitment	Commitment implies passion, intensity, and duration. It is directed toward both the group activity as well as its intended outcomes. Without commitment, knowledge of self is of little value. And without adequate knowledge of self, commitment is easily misdirected. Congruence is most readily achieved when the person acts with commitment and knowledge of self.
Collaboration	It constitutes the cornerstone value of the group leadership effort because it empowers self and others through trust. Collaboration multiplies group effectiveness by capitalizing on the multiple talents and perspectives of each group member and on the power of that diversity to generate creative solutions and actions.
Common purpose	It facilitates the group's ability to engage in collective analysis of the issues at hand and the task to be undertaken. Common purpose is best achieved when all members of the group share in the vision and participate actively in articulating the purpose and goals of the leadership develop-ment activity.

Controversy with civility	Recognizes two fundamental realities of any creative group effort: that differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and that such differences must be aired openly but with civility. Civility implies respect for others, a willingness to hear each other's views, and the exercise of restraint in criticizing the views and actions of others. This is best achieved in a collaborative framework and when a common purpose has been identified.
Citizenship	It is the process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity. To be a good citizen is to work for positive change on behalf of others and the community. Citizenship thus acknowledges the interdependence of all who are involved in or affected by these efforts. It recognizes that the common purpose of the group must incorporate a sense of concern for the rights and welfare of all those who might be affected by the group's efforts.

The Seven Cs (HERI, 1996, pp. 22-23)

DEVELOPING SOCIAL CHANGE COMPETENCIES

The SCM study examined individual aspects of leadership development that related to students' experiences in co-curricular, leadership roles and leadership programs (Haber & Komives, 2009). Their study used the multi-institutional study (MIS) of leadership data from the 52 institutions that participated in the national study. The MIS instrument included the socially responsible leadership scale-revised 2 (SRLS-R2), a self-report instrument measuring the eight constructs of the SCM, demographic and pre-college variables, environmental variables and outcomes variables such as leadership, self-efficacy, cognitive development and diversity appreciation. The researchers were focused on identifying whether co-curricular involvement, holding formal leadership roles, and participating in leadership programs independently or collectively contributed to students' capability for socially responsible leadership, particularly the individual outcomes of consciousness of self, congruence and commitment. Involvement in student organisations was found to be a significant experience for both men and women. For women, it was significant across all three values of consciousness of self, congruence and commitment, for men it was significant in only two of the values: consciousness of self and commitment.

Another study by Dugan and Komives (2010) surveyed over 14,000 college students from 50 institutions to explore what influenced their leadership capabilities. They gathered demographic, institutional characteristics, collegiate experiences and leadership efficacy outcomes as well as data from an adapted version of the SRLS. They found that the key influences were socio-cultural conversations with peers, faculty mentoring and participation in community service. Dugan and Komives's (2010) finding relates to social-cultural conversations with peers which was supported by Riutta and Teodorescu's (2014) study. The latter study explored leadership development at the end of first year students' attendance in a diverse college environment, described as being diverse in ethnicity, religious beliefs and socioeconomic status. Their study found that the quality of student interactions was more important than the frequency of the conversations and were more important than engaging with faculty. Building on these prior findings, we adopted the SCM leadership tool to empirically examine student leadership development and broadening access.

METHODS

The study was undertaken across three universities in different states within Australia, referred to University one, two and three. One of the universities, University one, had two campuses where students were enrolled in a business degree. The data were collected in two phases through a pre-unit (unit in this context refers to a course of study within a degree program) and post-unit survey from two studies. A pre survey was undertaken at the beginning of the semester's teaching period and prior to the 'intervention', likewise the post survey was undertaken at the end of the semester and after the 'intervention' was completed. The intervention comprised of embedding selected leadership competencies into the discipline content using a range of learning pedagogies and assessments.

Study one was undertaken with students enrolled in a business course and study two was undertaken within built environment courses. The built environment students were enrolled in postgraduate degree programs while the business students comprised undergraduate enrolments and postgraduate enrolments. A total of 152 respondents participated in the pre-unit survey and 84 participated in a post-unit study. The following tables highlight the number of students who participated in the pre-unit and post-unit survey.

Table 2: Pre-unit and post-unit surveys for study one

Course/unit name	Pre-unit survey	Post-unit survey

Postgraduate business unit 1 (University 1 campus 1)	13	10
Undergraduate business unit 2 (University 1 campus 1)	18	23
Undergraduate business unit 2 (University 1 campus 2)	32	12

Table 3: Pre-unit and post-unit surveys for study two

Course/unit name	Pre-unit survey	Post-unit survey
Postgraduate built environment unit 3 (University 1 campus 1)	55	30
Postgraduate built environment unit 4 (University 2)	32	9
Postgraduate built environment unit 5 (University 3)	2	0

The SCM was implemented in study one in the business unit in 2019 and assessed the development of 'individual values' (consciousness of Sslf – see Table 1). The pre and post survey questions in study one included four categories. In addition to a three-scale rating (mostly aware, some awareness, yet to develop awareness), there was a section for open ended responses (refer to attached appendix). The intervention techniques included a mediation role play by students, self-directed workshop facilitations and written self-reflections.

In study two, the SCM was implemented in the built environment unit of study in 2019 and assessed group values (collaboration + common purpose – see Table 1). The invention techniques comprised: 1) establishing a common purpose using a 'vision wall technique' 2) working collaboratively using role playing. The built environment students were asked to complete the pre and post survey questions similar to study one, with a section for open ended responses (refer to attached appendix).

RESULTS

The results from study one indicated an increase participants' levels of self-awareness and areas for improvement. Ninety % of the respondents indicated being 'mostly aware' of their personal values, strengths and areas for improvement after the interventions. Similarly, the post-intervention findings also indicated an increase in levels of self-awareness from 42% to 60%. Interestingly while the pre-

survey results showed higher levels of self-ratings for 'some awareness', in the post survey findings the levels of 'mostly aware' substantially increased across three categories. Table 4 highlights the results from the pre and post interventions for business students:

Table 4: Study one results for pre and post intervention

	Competency Levels	Pre intervention (%) N=12	Post intervention (%) N=10
Postgraduate participants			
Rate your awareness of your personal values, strengths, and areas for improvement	Mostly Aware	42	90
	Some Awareness	58	10
	Yet to Develop	0	0
Rate yourself as having insight of others' values and perspectives (such as respect for diverse views and values)	Mostly Aware	42	60
	Some Awareness	58	40
	Yet to Develop	0	0
Rate your practice of mindfulness (awareness of self and surrounding environment, being in the present to understand your audience group, workspace)	Mostly Aware	42	40
	Some Awareness	50	60
	Yet to Develop	8	0
Rate your cultural competence (understanding and respect of cultural differences)	Mostly Aware	33	80
	Some Awareness	67	20
	Yet to Develop	0	0

The results from study two indicated that 41% of participants had developed deep listening skills. Similarly, the post-intervention results across the four categories show an increase in levels of competencies, for instance students' cooperation skills increased by 20% as compared to the pre survey results of 46%. In addition, 62% of respondents were seen to have strengthened their competencies relating to working with a common purpose. Table 4 highlights the results from the pre and post interventions for built environment students:

Table 5: Study two results for pre and post intervention

	Competency Levels	Preintervention (%) N=54	Postintervention (%) N=29
Postgraduate participants			
To what extent do you listen to understand (deep listening) rather than to react or defend?	Have Developed	30	41
	Some Development	65	52
	Yet to Develop	5	7
Rate your ability to develop shared information and provide mutual support (cooperation skills)	Have Developed	46	66
	Some Development	52	31
	Yet to Develop	2	3
Rate your ability to develop common tasks and compatible goals (coordination skills)	Have Developed	44	55
	Some Development	50	45
	Yet to Develop	6	0
Rate your ability to establish a common purpose and develop strategies in an integrated manner (collaboration skills)	Have Developed	41	62
	Some Development	55	35
	Yet to Develop	4	3

DISCUSSION

According to the social change leadership model (SCM) all students should be regarded as potential leaders, therefore the focus should be on enhancing the students' leadership competencies (HERI, 1996, Buschlen & Dvorak, 2011)). The SCM has been suggested since it comprises competencies that are grouped into three dimensions. At the individual level there are three competencies that can be developed: consciousness of self, congruence and commitment, while at a group level greater concentration should be placed on competencies that develop the ability to collaborate and work with others towards a common purpose. At the third, society, level which is broader in scope, emphasis is needed towards developing students' abilities that resonate with 'controversy with civility and

citizenship' (Komives & Wagner, 2012). Although it has been suggested that leadership programs incorporate skills development that target all three levels for a holistic leadership development process, we explored two levels as part of the current study. We explored student leadership development by embedding selected leadership competencies within the curriculum over a semester period. We employed a range of resources as intervention tools to explicitly enhance the selected leadership competencies that tie back to social change leadership. The findings from studies one and two indicate an increase in leadership competencies associated with self-awareness at the individual level and collaboration and working with common purpose at the group level.

At the individual level, self-development is critical to leadership growth followed by interpersonal skills and managing change. Individual values provide awareness into specific experiences and self-awareness is a significant aspect of individual values (Haber & Komives, 2009). It enables learners to recognise their personal competencies, beliefs and values that help shape individual behaviours (Haber & Komives, 2009). Importantly, self-awareness through self-reflection helps learners to generate meaning from their experiences (Burns, Diamond-Vaught, & Bauman, 2015). It assists students to consider their past experiences and assess how they can respond to current and future situations (Burns et al., 2015). In study one we adapted Burns et al's (2015) suggestion and created self-reflection activities that 'challenged', 'connected' and required 'contextualisation'. First, we used challenging reflections using diverse perspectives of a situation through role playing and written reflections that pushed students outside their normal expression towards different ways of expressing themselves. Second, we employed connected reflections where students connected past experiences with their future aspirations and established an understanding of developing relationships with others. Third, the contextualised reflection component enabled students to address internal and external contexts to develop their self-understanding and leaderships skills. In addition to the findings from the quantitative survey data, students provided their perspectives on leadership competencies in the open-ended question section. As an example, one student noted:

"If others have a different perspective or points of view to yours, that is okay but is important to remain professional, respectful and try to reach common ground. Where there is the capacity to influence or challenge other behaviours, to respectfully be more considerate or self-aware, the opportunity to give feedback should be taken. Ultimately people can't grow themselves personally if they are not aware of the way in which they come across or act."

"Self-awareness means understanding and recognising your personal competencies and where they fit in relation to the context you are exploring. For example, when a discussion is taking place, it is about recognising the different perceptions and viewpoints of others and comparing/contrasting them to your own views to recognise all angles." (student response)

Since the intervention phase in study one, included explicit development of self-awareness, it was important to incorporate knowledge application and optimisation into the learning process. As Lane and Chapman (2011) note self-awareness can be developed to a level where individuals are able to maximise their behaviours and talents and understand where to apply their knowledge and skills. The following responses illustrate how self-awareness extends itself to self-improvement and knowledge application.

"Taking the knowledge I have and use that to influence my behaviours and attitudes so that I am responsive and considered in how I act. Seeking out better ways of doing things and improving myself so that I am putting forward a good version of myself to peers." (student response)

"Through research and an increase in knowledge, you can develop an appreciation that every person's circumstances are different. It is important not to practice judgement or approach a situation with a preconceived outcome; rather asking questions and being purposeful/curious, to better understand different perspectives and points of view." (student response)

Group Values

Engbers (2006) argued that educators could develop programs focusing on skills that are individual in nature such as self-awareness and communication, as well as group-level skills such as community building and leading change. These experiences form a part of co-curricular activities that can contribute to cooperative behaviours rather than be supplementary to leadership development (Haber & Komives, 2009). At the group level, the respondents noted that post the interventions their teamwork skills and ability to work towards a common purpose and collaborate with group members had improved. Some written responses included aspects relating to trust and group effort.

"Being able to collaborate and work with other team members to a common goal makes, each assessment easier as you can trust other team members to assist you when needs and carry out their own work as required." (student response)

"In having common purposes and set skills towards collaboration, I am able to work more effectively and efficiently when working in a group situation, and as a result, I am able to achieve work to a standard reflective of a collective group effort." (student response)

The ability to collaborate contributes to achieving goals in a way that is valued by industry, government and community. Participants agreed that they gained skills at an individual level and team level. Additionally, the capacity to collaborate improved their overall employability skills such as better communication, critical thinking skills, building confidence, team cohesiveness, developing listening skills, adaptability, creativity, being open-minded, flexible, strengthening assertiveness and negotiation skills.

"As a team member, I am always there on time, anywhere and very respectful of the decisions and contribution of the other. I collaborate and engage at a certain point, but when I feel it is not respected or is not making sense to others, I tend to pull myself back a bit and try to listen to their ideas and then move forward with that. I think in teamwork communication is the biggest strength, and sometimes some people tend to do stuff by not notifying the members which leads to a misunderstanding. I am very upfront and straightforward, and that helps me a lot in getting the work done in a proper manner which I believe is highly valued in the industry." (student response)

The qualitative data from the interventions revealed that participants agreed to have improved their team management skills. The participants noted that the interventions provided them with the opportunity to share ideas and align their goals to the common group goals.

The empirical findings highlight that educators can provide opportunities to improve students' leadership development. At an individual level, students are able to develop a cadre of skills to identify issues, embrace diversity, be disciplined, develop deep listening skills and be creative. At a group level, students are also able to broaden their leadership capacity. Importantly the findings from study one and two suggest that access to students' leadership development can be broadened using curriculum embedding processes. It is also possible to build social change leadership skills using creative teaching and learning resources that concentrate on development at the individual, group and societal level. Rather than leadership development being available to a select cohort of students, this study has highlighted that within discipline contexts it is possible to extend leadership capacity building to a wider range of students. In turn these competencies enhance students' graduate attributes and their employability.

A key limitation of this study has been the absence of assessing the SCM at the societal level. As the intent of the study was to roll-out the curriculum embedding processes across a range of discipline subjects over several semesters, the opportunity to access the societal level interventions still prevail.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined intervention techniques such as self-reflection, role playing and mediation exercises that can be employed as tools in study one for social change leadership development. In study two a range of work integrated learning pedagogies were introduced that included studio assignments and case studies encompassing problem based learning and reflection; participatory ways of working and team work. It also strengthens the argument for embedding leadership competencies into existing discipline contexts, without the explicit need for stand-alone leadership programs that limit learning access. It is critical for emerging professionals to interact effectively with the social environment by applying utilitarian and context responsive knowledge. It becomes essential therefore, to enhance students' social leadership capability by providing them with an exposure to real-world situation. These resulted in an enhancement of students' cooperation, coordination and collaboration skills at individual and group levels. An enhanced capacity to collaborate led to better communication, critical thinking and listening, adaptability, management and negotiation – all skills that are deemed essential for graduates' increased employability.

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