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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series**  
**EDU2017-2282**

**Paradigms, Principles, and Perception: Building Leadership  
Competencies from the Inside-out**

**Christie Sweeney**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Plymouth State University**  
**USA**

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This paper should be cited as follows:

**Sweeney, C., (2017). "Paradigms, Principles, and Perception: Building Leadership Competencies from the Inside-out", Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: EDU2017-2282.**

Athens Institute for Education and Research  
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece  
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:  
www.atiner.gr  
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm  
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ISSN: 2241-2891  
19/10/2017

## **Paradigms, Principles, and Perception: Building Leadership Competencies from the Inside-out**

**Christie Sweeney  
Associate Professor  
Plymouth State University  
USA**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promote the growth of self-awareness (understanding of one's personal values, beliefs, and behaviors) and social awareness (understanding of one's self in relationship with others) on students in an educational leadership preparation program. Participants of this study included graduate students enrolled in a Master of Education (MEd) or Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) degree program, with a concentration in an area of educational leadership (e.g. K-12 principal or superintendent certification) at Plymouth State University. Qualitative data was collected from graduate students registered in two core program courses: AD 5030, Research Design for the Professions, a master's degree level course; and EP 7020, Collaborative Leadership, a post-master's degree level course. Results of data analysis indicated that experiential teaching and learning activities focused on an inside-out approach (engaging students in understanding themselves first) had a positive impact on students' personal (self-awareness) and professional (social awareness) growth. How can we prepare current and future educational leaders to meet the overwhelming challenges they face in their schools, and districts, on a daily basis? We can incorporate activities and teaching methods to support the development of self-awareness, to promote personal growth, and social awareness, to promote professional growth. Classroom learning allows us to efficiently disseminate information, however formal classroom instruction is limited, and "efficient delivery does not mean effectively learned" (Mendenhall, et al. 2013, p. 219). Experiential education (McLeod, 2013), which requires participants to confront their preconceived beliefs in order to investigate the paradigms, principles, and perceptions that guide them in their professional work, is a more effective way to assimilate both personal and professional understanding.

**Keywords:** Instruction in Higher Education; Educational Leadership; Emotional Intelligence; Leadership Preparation; Self-Awareness

## Introduction

“We live in a time of massive institutional failure, collectively creating results that nobody wants” (Scharmer, 2007, p. 1). Those results include issues such as climate change (resulting in catastrophic weather), hunger, poverty, violence, terrorism, and racial tension, all of which are escalating on a daily basis. Collectively, we have destroyed “the foundations of our social, economic, ecological, and spiritual well-being” (p. 1), and a new type of leadership would allow us to address those “challenges in a more conscious, intentional, and strategic way (in order) to create a future of greater possibility” (p. 1).

What would it take for the emergence of a new type of leader to collectively create a future of greater possibility? It would take a new way of looking at leadership.

The work of leadership is required when our deeply held beliefs are challenged, when the values that made us successful are less relevant, and when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge...leadership challenges can only be solved by people learning new ways of working them. (Souba, 2014, p. 92)

Many efforts to bring about change are unsuccessful, because they overlook the importance of personal transformation. Effective leadership requires personal transformation, and “personal transformation is about creating access to a broader range of ways of being, thinking, and acting in order to be more effective in dealing with...challenges” (Souba, 2014, p. 98). In order to understand a situation, one must first examine it through their own perspective and then consider the perspective of others. “Learning to be a leader is not...about the acquisition of knowledge or certain personal attributes” (Souba, 2014, p. 77), it is about acquiring the skills associated with self and social awareness. We are individual human beings with a wide range of life experiences that inform who we are and how we are in the world. The process of learning requires growth, and when we grow we change. It is not just our professional self that grows, we grow on a personal level as well. When our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and ways of being change, we grow on both a personal and professional level; this is a natural phenomenon, because we are living, breathing (human) beings (Kabat-Zenn, 1994).

This paper is based on original research collected from master’s and post-master’s degree students enrolled in an educational leadership program at Plymouth State University (PSU). I am an assistant professor in the Educational Leadership, Learning and Curriculum (ELLC) department at PSU, and our mission is “*to prepare thoughtful, informed, transformative leaders to excel in a variety of professional settings*”. I believe that individuals must grow on a personal and professional level in order to be successful educational leaders, and there is research to support this assumption (Covey, 2013; Desmarais, 2015; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013, Scharmer, 2007; Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015; Souba, 2014; Wheatley, 2016), so in order to accomplish our

mission, I have been incorporating instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques to support my students' learning on a personal and professional level for many years. However, I haven't really known how, if at all, those activities impacted my students, and that was the impetus for this research project.

The primary research question guiding this study was: what is the impact of instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promote the growth of self-awareness (understanding of one's personal values, beliefs, and behaviors) and social awareness (understanding of one's self in relationship with others) on students enrolled in graduate level educational leadership courses at Plymouth State University? The secondary research questions were:

1. What impact do instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promote the growth of self-awareness have on students enrolled in graduate level educational leadership courses at Plymouth State University?
2. What impact do instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promote the growth of social awareness have on students enrolled in graduate level educational leadership courses at Plymouth State University?

For the purpose of this study, I have identified the leadership competencies of self-awareness as personal skills and social awareness as social skills.

What are the skills our students need to become effective educational leaders? They need a combination of personal competencies (capabilities that determine how they manage themselves) and social competencies (capabilities that determine how they manage relationships) (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). Transformational leadership requires a combination of personal and professional skills. Leaders must be able to utilize a combination of task-related (including technical and conceptual skills) and relationship-related processes (including interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence) (Mendenhall, et al., 2013) in order to be effective. But how do new and potential leaders gain that awareness, and what can we do within our educational leadership preparation programs to support this type of learning?

Utilizing teaching and learning approaches that begin with understanding one's self (personal values, beliefs, and behaviors) will promote self-awareness. Integrating that awareness with an understanding of one's self in the world (relationship with others) supports social awareness. These two powerful skills, which grow and develop throughout our lives, are the foundation of effective leadership (Desmarais, 2015).

## **Literature Review**

This world does not need more entrepreneurs. This world does not need more technology breakthroughs. This world needs leaders. We need leaders who put service over self, who can be steadfast through crises and failures, who want to stay present and make a difference to the people, situations and causes they care about. (Wheatley, 2016, par 1 &2)

Learning and growing on a professional level alone will not promote one's ability to become a thoughtful, informed, transformative leader in any field. The process of transformation requires us to become "critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world" (Mendenhall, et al., 2013, p. 220). Effective leaders have a "particular commitment to their own learning and growth" (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015, p. 28); they realize the importance of self-examination and exploration in their leadership role.

## **Inside-out Learning**

Beginning with an "inside-out approach...means to start first with (your) self; even more fundamentally, to start with the most inside part of self – with your paradigms, your character, and your motives" (Covey, 2013, p. 50). An inside-out approach to learning begins with understanding yourself. This requires you to become consciously aware of your individual paradigms, principles, and perspectives; those are the beliefs, values, and ideals that guide your actions and motivate you to be who you are and behave as you do. Paradigms, principles, and perception are the terms used to describe our unique understanding of the world. It is that understanding which influences all we say and do, and inside-out learning opens up an opportunity for us to explore that understanding.

A paradigm is a personal map, model, theory, or frame of reference which influences the way we "see" and understand our world (Covey, 1989), and those paradigms directly impact behavior.

The more aware we are of our basic paradigms, maps or assumptions, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others and be open to their perceptions, thereby getting a larger picture and a far more objective view. (Covey, 1989, p. 29)

Paradigms are the mental maps we carry around inside our heads. We experience the world through those mental maps, and we assume the way we see things is the way they are and the way they ought to be (Covey, 1989). Those maps, or the way we see things, directly influence the way we act and

relate to others. Since we are all carrying around different mental maps, we don't all see the world the same way.

A principle describes a fundamental law, "a rule or code of conduct" (Merriam-Webster, 2004, p. 572). It differs from a paradigm in that it is an interpretation, or assumption, of behavioral expectations within a particular social context. Principles determine what we believe is right, wrong, good, or bad. Principles are often aligned with organizational culture ("the way we do things around here"). We might think of our principles as ideal ways of behavior.

Perception refers to our awareness, or assumption, about the way we see things. "Our attitudes and behaviors grow out of those assumptions. The way we see things is the source of the way we think and the way we act" (Covey, 2013, p. 32). We tend to think we are objective thinkers because we see things as they are, however that is not true. In reality we see things "as we are – or, as we are conditioned to see" (p. 36) them. In describing what we see, we are describing our perception, and "when other people disagree with us, we immediately think something is wrong with them" (p. 36). In reality each person's interpretation of something represents their perception.

We learned how to behave in society: what to believe and what not to believe; what is acceptable and what is not acceptable; what is good and what is bad; what is beautiful and what is ugly; what is right and what is wrong. (Ruiz, 1997, p. 3)

We view the world through our own lens, and that worldview is, in great part, an inherited vision. Since childhood we've been carefully taught how to see the world "correctly". Family dynamics, religious affiliation, ethnicity, social class, living accommodations, and economic status are just a few of the factors that influenced our view of the world. We were impacted by our parents' point of view, the neighborhood we lived in, the friends we hung out with, the schools we attended, the geographic area in which we resided, and the experiences we lived. All the while, our ideas were reinforced within the context of our personal gender and cultural environment. We act in accordance with our paradigms, principles, and perceptions, so they have a profound effect on our behavior.

A variety of teaching methods "to achieve learning at the cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels" (Mendenhall, M. E., et al., 2013, p. 257) is at the heart of an inside out approach. No instructional method works best, for the method will depend on the goal, however, activities that activate student engagement, and are experiential in nature, tend to be most successful (e.g. team building scenarios, small group project-based learning experiences, case studies, storytelling, Socratic questioning, dialogues, and reflective exercises). The main objective is to develop a process to engage people in structured activities they can use to examine their own and other's behavior.

## Leadership Development

How do we prepare current and future educational leaders to meet the overwhelming challenges they face in their schools, and districts, on a daily basis? It is not enough for leadership development programs to deliver content around professional skills. Educational leaders must also develop self-awareness and social awareness to become mindful of different ways of seeing. “Being mindful means switching from automatic communication routines to paying attention simultaneously to the internal assumptions, cognitions, and emotions of both oneself and the other person” (Mendenhall, et al., 2013, p. 22). “Our beliefs inevitably shape the way in which we confront and tackle our leadership” (Souba, 2014, p. 96). In order to grow and change, we must gain new information and become able to see the same thing from a different perspective. As individuals with certain mental maps about how the world works, it is important for us to experience divergent views so we are forced to confront our beliefs and assumptions. Without “confronting our traditional way of seeing or doing, there can be no change (Mendenhall, et al. 2013, p. 220).

What it means to be a leader is inextricably linked to what it means to be human. “Superb leadership (the kind needed to transform the world) begins with understanding the being aspect of human being” (Souba, 2014, p. 83). One cannot effectively lead without a strong internal understanding of oneself. That is why effective leadership development requires building leadership competencies from the inside-out.

No leadership development programs focused on engaging people in acquiring technical skills (e.g. strategic planning, finance, understanding the law, general management) will support the transformation of a person or institution (Goleman et al., 2013). The best leadership preparation programs “are focused on emotional and intellectual learning” (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013, p. 234) and based on the concepts of adult learning and individual change. Those development programs involve participants in active, participatory work in which “people engage in structured activities that they can use to examine their own and others’ behaviors” (p. 234). As one of my students, a principal of a large urban high school, stated, “if we want future generations to truly change the world in a positive way using all of the resources available to them, we have to, as Frieze (2011) states, “stay with the hard places, the uncomfortable relationships, the unanswerable questions” (p. 234).

Preparing students to live and work in the 21st century requires very special leaders who have...gained a sense of who they are and what they believe personally and professionally...underlying such as process is an understanding of oneself as well as others. These understandings necessitate that administrators reflect on concepts such as what they perceive to be right or wrong and good or bad, who they are as professionals and as human beings, how they make decisions, and why they made the decisions they do. (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016, p. 23)



To accomplish the task of preparing those very special leaders, we must change the way we do leadership training. If we keep on delivering leadership training programs that promote professional learning (social awareness) at the expense of personal learning (self-awareness), we'll keep on producing leaders who are unable to cope with the challenges inherent in today's world.

### **What are Leadership Competencies?**

Leadership competencies are the skills, abilities, and/or proficiencies one generally acquires to practice being a leader (the individual in charge or responsible for moving goals forward). In reality there are no universally agreed-upon lists of leadership competencies that will support educational leaders in practicing effective leadership. However, many thought leaders (Covey, 2013; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Mendenhall, et al, 2013; Senge, Hamilton & Kania, 2015; Von Ward, 2012, Wheatley, & Freize, 2011) do agree that effective leadership requires more than a set of basic skills. Effective leaders must possess both cognitive (technical skills) and non-cognitive (relationship skills) abilities. "A leader's manner – not just what he (she) does, but how he (she) does it – matters" (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013, p. 6). Leadership is practiced in context, and it is the execution of those skills, applied in a particular setting and for a specific purpose, which make a leader successful.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promote the growth of self-awareness (understanding of one's personal values, beliefs, and behaviors) and social awareness (understanding of one's self in relationship with others) on students in an educational leadership preparation program. Participants of this study included 20 graduate students enrolled in two core program courses: eight students enrolled in AD 5030, Research Design for the Professions, a master's degree level course; and 18 students enrolled in EP 7020, Collaborative Leadership, a post-master's degree level course.

Data was collected from students enrolled in research design (during spring term 2015) through reflective essays, and data was collected from students enrolled in collaborative leadership (during summer term 2016) through journal entries and end of class statements describing what was learned and how it might be applied. Each of the students enrolled in research design were practicing educators with multiple years of classroom experience. Each of the students enrolled in collaborative leadership were practicing educators with multiple years of classroom experience, four of them were serving as school building leaders, and two of them served as school district administrators.

In addition to collecting specific feedback from students enrolled in those two classes, the researcher reviewed reflections, journal entries, anecdotal records, and

notes she had recorded over six years of teaching collaborative leadership in 12 different classes and three years of teaching research design in four different classes.

The intent of this study was to describe the impact of inside-out instruction (strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promote the development of self and social awareness) on the perceptions of graduate students enrolled in educational leadership courses. The following leadership competencies were emphasized in the courses included in this study so that inside-out learning (instructional activities focused on self-awareness, understanding of one’s personal values, beliefs, and behaviors, and social awareness, understanding of one’s self in relationship with others) was purposefully incorporated: emotional intelligence (self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship management [Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013]); intra and interpersonal awareness (Gardner, 2014); communication skills (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000); mindfulness (cultural influence, Goleman, 2017); and reflective consciousness (Kaplan, Silver, LaVaque-Manty, & Meizlish, 2013; Senge, Hamilton & Kania, 2015). Table 1 identifies the competency addressed, the specific skills associated with that competency, and the instructional activities implemented to introduce and practice those skills.

**Table 1.** *Leadership Competencies highlighted to purposefully promote Inside-out Learning*

Competency	Associated Skills	Instructional Strategies and Activities
Emotional Intelligence (Self-awareness; Self-Management; Social Awareness; Relationship Management)	The ability to recognize our own feelings and those of others.	Paradigm stories Four Corner Cards Where Do You Stand? Journaling Learning Journeys Action Plan Assignment
Intrapersonal Awareness	The ability to understand yourself	Four Corner Cards Journaling Learning Journeys
Interpersonal Awareness	The ability to interact effectively with others	Learning Journeys Action Plan Assignment Group and Project-based Activities; Team Building
Communication	The ability to facilitate, and participate in, open, honest dialogues	Four Corner Cards Dynamic Inquiry Learning Journeys Group and Project-based Activities; Team Building
Mindfulness (cultural influence, system thinking)	The ability to focus and be present.	Where Do You Stand? Practicing Mindfulness Learning Journeys
Reflective Consciousness	The ability to think about your thinking.	Where Do You Stand? Journaling Learning Journeys Action Plan Assignment

Students identified six experiential teaching techniques that were most effective in promoting their self and social awareness.

**Findings**

What was the impact of instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promote the growth of self-awareness (understanding of one’s personal values, beliefs, and behaviors) and social awareness (understanding of one’s self in relationship with others) on students enrolled in graduate level educational leadership courses at Plymouth State University? Results of data analysis indicated that inside-out instruction (instructional strategies, activities, and experiential teaching techniques that promoted the growth of self and social awareness) had a positive impact on students’ personal and professional growth when specific skills were targeted to promote that growth. Additional data suggested six specific experiential teaching techniques that were most effective in targeted the promotion of personal and professional skill development.

The specific experiential teaching techniques that were most effective in promoting self and social awareness, from the students’ perspective are included in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Activities Effective in Promoting Self and Social Awareness*

Activity	Promoted Self-awareness	Promoted Social Awareness
Four Corner Cards	26	26
Where Do You Stand?	26	26
Practicing Mindfulness	26	0
Reflection and Journaling	26	12
Be a Cage Buster	26	20
A Compelling Learning Journey	26	26

All 26 students found that the six activities promoted their self-awareness and three of the activities (Four Corner Cards, Where Do You Stand, A Compelling Learning Journey) promoted their social awareness. None of the students felt Mindfulness activities promoted social awareness, 12 students felt Reflection and Journaling activities promoted social awareness, and 20 students felt the Be a Cage Buster activity promoted social awareness. Specific student comments in response to these activities follow.

**Four Corner Cards** (Emphasizes intra and interpersonal awareness, reflective consciousness & communication skills)

*“This gave me greater self-awareness in working with others.”*

*“Context kept coming up. I’ve learned that my mental model will be different from others (I’ll have to remind myself of this all the time!)”.*

**Where Do You Stand?** (Emphasizes emotional intelligence competencies [self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship management]; mindfulness [cultural influence]; & reflective consciousness)

*“I’ve learned not to make assumptions or try to solve other people’s problem/issues, but rather to be an empathetic listener to gain clarity about another’s perspective”.*

*“Start with the internal, not reaction plan. Take the time to work through your own mental models and your teams to have that opportunity for a shared vision”.*

**Practicing Mindfulness** (Emphasizes mindfulness & reflective consciousness)

*“Remember HOW - Honest Open Willing.”*

*“Even when I think I may be a creative problem solver, I am so limited by my frame of reference. I need to slow down the world more and use the beginners’ mindset”.*

**Reflection and Journaling** (Emphasizes emotional intelligence competencies [self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship management]; intrapersonal awareness; mindfulness [cultural influence]; & reflective consciousness)

*“Overall, I enjoyed writing the reflections in this course. It was as if I were having a discussion with myself about how my personal journey and background would affect me in the future”.*

*“These reflection pieces require us to not only be the consumers of the knowledge and information, but to also be producers of it through taking the time to think about it, process it, and reflect on what we have learned”.*

*“I have decided to journal my school year and see what growth in leadership happens to me”.*

**Be a Cage Buster** (Hess, 2013): “Cage-busting doesn't tell leaders what to do. It helps them see with fresh eyes and lead accordingly” (p. 1). I assign this article for reading and then facilitate a class discussion on the implications of being a cage buster in your organization. This works well as an introduction to the learning journey action plan assignment.

*“Be a cage buster! Think way outside the box”.*

*“The single most important take away for me was how important it is to always consider context. In order to fully understand...I must be self-aware and willing to take risks, and always be moving forward”.*

**A Compelling Learning Journey** (Emphasizes emotional intelligence competencies [self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship

management]; intra and interpersonal awareness; communication skills; mindfulness [cultural influence, system thinking]; & reflective consciousness)

*“A learning journey is a great tool for reflection about what my current situation is, what factors are influencing the current status, and who the key players are to collaborate with”.*

*“I learned a great deal about thinking in terms of the entire system and how the actions of one person can create other unexpected changes. I learned more about myself and my own leadership style. I learned about new ways to approach problems and that change takes time and patience – it is a slow process, but worth it”.*

*“In slowing down I can reflect honestly about the things I currently have control of to fix and of things I have to be patient about living with the tension until the time is right to try to move to more change (personal mastery)”.*

*“I’ve learned not to make assumptions or try to solve other people’s problem/issues, but rather to be an empathetic listener to gain clarity about another’s perspective.”*

### **Student Comments Regarding their Learning**

“In order to fully understand these concepts, I must be self-aware, willing to take risks, and always be moving forward”.

“I think (this) made me realize that my perceptions may affect the way I look at research data, and I need to be open to the results, even though they may contradict my own beliefs.”

“I’ve learned not to make assumptions or try to solve other people’s problem/issues, but rather to be an empathetic listener to gain clarity about another’s perspective”.

“I’ve learned that my mental model will be different from others (I’ll have to remind myself of this all the time!)”.

“I must admit, I didn’t think this...would be helpful to me in the beginning of the course. I think some of that is a little ignorance, thinking that self-reflection is just “one more thing,” and believing that it won’t help (a lot of people share this belief with you). However, each time I sat to do a reflection, I found that the more I wrote, the more that came out. I kept digging, and kept discovering more thoughts, more links. As I’ve been learning...(this) process is quite trying, and requires patience, hard work, the ability to think things through, the willingness to admit and adjust when things aren’t quite right, and the gusto to keep trying. Without the reflection piece, I feel there would be a critical piece of the process missing”.

“These reflection pieces require us to not only be the consumers of the knowledge and information, but to also be producers of it through taking the time to think about it, process it, and reflect on what we have learned”.

“I think the reflection papers made me realize that my perceptions may affect the way I look at research data, and I need to be open to the results, even though they may contradict my own beliefs”.

“Overall, I enjoyed writing the reflections in this course. It was as if I were having a discussion with myself about how my personal journey and background would affect me as a researcher in the future.”

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

In many cases, my students begin their learning journeys with mental models (Senge, 1990) intact and mostly invisible. To complete their assignments I asked them to: suspend their assumptions and view their world through a beginner’s mind; move out of their comfort zone and into the unknown; and learn about themselves and about other people in their organizational system. Their assignment was to understand their own mental models and to determine others’ mental models in relation to something within their organizational system. I asked them to reflect on their learning. I wanted them to understand that how they see the world is not necessarily the way everyone else sees it. I wanted them to realize that we all carry mental models, and when we make them visible it can make a huge difference. I kept asking, they kept showing up, and we learned a great deal together.

Teaching and learning from the inside-out requires us (teachers and students alike) to confront the truth (how we *really* feel, what we *really* think, and what we *really* believe about people, places, and things). This internal exploration – telling ourselves the truth – can sometimes be painful, and it often surprise us. What we frequently face are our fears – of being too much; of not being (smart, interesting, accomplished, attractive or competent) enough. The truth is that most of us are afraid of what we REALLY think and feel. Yet, it is often the very thing we fear – moving into ourselves and the unknown - that opens up new possibilities. As one student explained, “it’s all about getting to know ourselves better...each of the topics were carefully selected to help us become better aware of our own biases and perceptions of the world”. This knowledge allows students to develop (and practice) conscious awareness of the connection between their personal beliefs and their professional behavior.

Figure 3 illustrates this paradox quite vividly. Most of us choose to remain ignorant of our internal biases. We would rather live in our comfort zone where we feel safe and secure. In our comfort zone we are confident about who we are (sibling, parent, friend, relative, caregiver, volunteer, mentor, teacher, lawyer, doctor, professor, principal, director, superintendent, and president) and where we are. We don’t want to know what we don’t know (about ourselves), because the unknown can be frightening, so we remain firmly rooted in our safe, secure comfort zone.

**Figure 3.** *A Paradox*

(Personal Communication, L. LaPierre, June 2017)

Ironically, confining ourselves to a comfort zone box can cause us to feel angry, constricted, complacent, and unhappy; we may ourselves complaining that life is boring, predictable, dull, or tedious. An inside-out approach to learning can motivate students to move out of their box and delve into new and exciting opportunities. Graduate students have already taken the first step; they have signed up for a class. As their instructor it is my job to support them in taking the next steps.

One way to invite students to experience this shift is to ask them to view the world through a beginner's mind. "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's there are few" (Suzuki, as cited in Hess, 2013, p. 1). During our collaborative leadership class, as we prepare for the final project (see sample Action Plan Assignment) I ask my students to move away from a solution orientation to consider viewing a "problem" differently. Educators tend to be solution oriented; we observe what we believe to be a problem, issue or concern, and we develop solutions to address it. Instead, I ask students to observe what they believe to be the "problem they intend to fix" from the lens of others. In his article, "Be a Cage Buster", Hess (2013) describes this as a way to approach "subjects with curiosity and an open mind, even when you think you already know it all" (p. 1). In essence this request requires a paradigm shift, and at first I get a lot of push back. Students must leave their comfort zone (solution orientation) to go into the unknown, but slowing down actually allows them to see things more clearly as they are, not as they appear to be, and in time students begin to realize the power of a beginner's mind. As Meg explained: "I can now step back and evaluate other's feelings better. I can start with a BEGINNER'S MIND".

A variety of teaching methods "to achieve learning at the cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels" (Mendenhall, M. E., et al., 2013, p. 257) is at the heart of an inside out approach. No instructional method works best for all students, for the method will depend on the goal, however, activities that activate student engagement, and are experiential in nature, tend to be most successful (e.g. team building scenarios, small group project-based learning experiences, case studies, storytelling, Socratic questioning, dialogues, and

reflective exercises). The main objective is to develop a process to engage people in structured activities they can use to examine their own and other's behavior.

See Appendixes for a sample of the teaching activities that students found most effective in promoting self and social awareness.

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## Appendix 1

### Four Corner Card Activity

Utilizing a Think, Pair Share Strategy as Talking Points for Dialog

**Purposes:**

- Ice breaker
- Trust builder
- Review work: vocabulary words; tests; drill and practice
- Nametags, place cards, business cards
- Initiating new groups
- Other

**Example:**

Where you are from	One school memory
<b>Christie</b>	
Unique trait or characteristic	Current position/ job title and

**Steps:** The students will:

- write first names in center of 3x5 index card;
- fill in one corner at a time as teacher describes topic for each corner (Think);
- describe information on four corners of card, as comfortable, with a partner (Pair); and
- use four corner conversations to introduce partner to whole class (Share).

**Other Corner Topics:** summarizing content knowledge, hobbies, personal interests, favorite school subjects, summer vacations, extraordinary abilities, special memories, future goals/aspirations.

## Appendix 2

### Where Do You Stand?

Think, Pair, Share activity to initiate awareness of unexamined assumptions.  
*Take a moment to answer the following questions independently, then turn to a neighbor to discuss your responses.*

How do you define the following words: belief, behavior, and influence?

Do beliefs influence behavior? Why or why not?

Do behaviors influence beliefs? Why or why not?

Do beliefs influence abilities? Why or why not?

Do beliefs influence learning? Why or why not?

Can beliefs be changed? Why or why not?

## Appendix 3

### Practicing Mindfulness

#### What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. The ultimate goal of mindfulness is to wake up to the inner workings of our mental, emotional, and physical processes. <http://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>

You might begin with guided meditation, walking meditation, or sitting and observing. I initiate the idea of "being mindful" with my research design students with an assignment, sort of like a field trip. We go on a walking meditation which is really a way to observe the world around us. After taking observational field notes, we share our thoughts and realize each of us "saw" something different, even though we walked together through the same spaces.

**A Mindful Activity to Increase Awareness** "Your focus is your reality" (Yoda).

Using mindfulness to bring to awareness allows us to see things more clearly as they are, not as they appear to be, and it requires practice.

Practicing focus activity: eating a raisin (prep: three raisins in a plastic container for each participant; if anyone has allergies, use an alternative like nuts or berries)

Look at it; internally reflect

1. Place one in your palm, notice color, shape, size (as if for first time)
2. Turn it over, feel it
3. Touch it to bottom of lip, notice what happens in your mouth
4. Place intentionally in your mouth, roll it around inside your mouth

5. Chew it and observe what's happening
6. Swallow it, notice absence of raisin now
7. On own finish raisins if wish
8. Reflect and debrief: bring to mind what experience was like and compare it to what happens when you grab a handful of raisins, or anything, and unconsciously eat them.

#### **Appendix 4**

##### **Reflection and Journaling**

An example of an assignment we use in our Leadership for a Diverse World class:

**Journals:** The journal entries are designed to engage your thinking about readings in a reflective manner. Prompts are open ended and intended to allow you to synthesize and connect course topics and materials with other relevant areas of your work and personal life. Each entry should be no less than 350 words and demonstrate responsive engagement with concepts, implications, and applications of the specific material of the prompt/question.

**Entry 2** – Reflect on an in-class exercise, activity or experience you participated in as a whole or small group task. Think about why you think we included this experience in our instructional design. What insights did you gain (or feel you missed) from participating in this exercise, activity or experience and how was it related (or not) to the content of this course? What connections did you make (or did you feel were missing) in terms of the application of this to your personal and/or professional life?

#### **Appendix 5**

**Be a Cage Buster** (Hess, 2013): “Cage-busting doesn't tell leaders what to do. It helps them see with fresh eyes and lead accordingly” (p. 1). I assign this article for reading and then facilitate a class discussion on the implications of being a cage buster in your organization. This works well as an introduction to the learning journey action plan assignment.

#### **Appendix 6**

##### **A Compelling Learning Journey**

Invite students to take a journey through their personal and professional lives to observe their daily routines and notice what they see. According to Wheatley and Frieze (2013), “A learning journey can be judged...by how much it destabilizes and challenges our worldview” (p. 13). When we take a risk and step into a world different from our own we realize that “our judgements and assumptions often limit our ability to see new possibilities” (p. 13). This experience can offer students new insights and they may be confronted with truths they never knew. Be sure to have them reflect on what they learned.

Action Plan Assignment (with Learning Journey)

Think about the organizational system in which you work. Specifically focus on the area (division, section, department, or branch) within the organization in which you work *most closely*. Conduct a learning journey through that system to determine the current reality through three pivotal levels: “the individuals in the organization, the teams in which they work, and the organization’s culture” (Goleman, Boyatzis, &

McKee, 2013, p. 234). Use this insight to uncover a target for your action plan. As defined by Lock, Spirduso and Silverman (2014), a target is “the experience we have when an unsatisfactory situation is encountered. Once carefully defined, it is that situation, with all the attendant questions it may raise, that can become the target” (p. 45).

As you journey, consider the following questions:

- What is the mission of your organizational system (and your specific department or team)? Does the organization also articulate a specific vision, set of values, beliefs or guiding principles?
- What are the practices that most influence the individuals, the teams in which those individuals work, and the organization’s culture?
- What impact do those practices have on aspects of your workplace, in particular your division, section, or department?
- What practices consistently get your attention, resonate with you, excite you, motivate you and/or move you in some way?
- How well are things functioning? What seems to be working, inspires you and encourages you? What seems to be problematic, concerns you, or might be described as “an unsatisfactory situation”?
- “What exists today, and what do you really want to create?” (Senge, Hamilton & Kania, 2015, p. 31).

Reflect on your learning: What is the unsatisfactory situation (target) you encountered? How do you know this target is an unsatisfactory situation (what evidence do you have that things aren’t working)? What do you really want that target (situation) to look like in the future?

Your assignment is to identify ways you might foster collective leadership (Senge, Hamilton & Kania, 2015) to address the target you have identified. Draft an action plan to indicate the processes or procedures you would use to engage the individuals, the teams in which they work, and the organizational culture. Use what you have read, practiced, acquired, and assimilated through group experiences, class discussions, and any other related course activities to accomplish this task.

Describe and explain the following elements in your plan (and include a reference page):

- the organizational system’s current reality (in relation to mission, vision, values, and/or guiding principles);
- the target and evidence to explain why target is an unsatisfactory situation;
- vision for the future - what you hope to accomplish (what would target look like if it were no longer an unsatisfactory situation?);
- a rationale (why you hold this particular vision, want to address this particular target, and potential impact on the organizational system);
- processes you would use to engage individuals, the teams in which they work, and/or the organizational culture to:
  - a) understand *the current reality*
  - b) determine and define the target (is there consensus that there *is* a target [unsatisfactory situation]?)

- c) create a shared vision - determine what target would look like if it were no longer an unsatisfactory situation (what *you all* hope to accomplish)

Specific information regarding these elements will be discussed in class.

**Food for Thought:**

- “Good change agents know they must first understand and then change peoples’ mental maps (models) in order to implement a change” (Mendwenhall, et al., 2013, p. 196).
- It is very important to “find out reality so you know what needs changing” (Mendwenhall, et al., 2013, p. 198).
- “Transforming systems is ultimately about transforming relationships among people who shape those systems” (Senge, Mailton, & Kania, 2015, p. 29).
- “The articulation of a (shared) vision and the ability to communicate this vision are key competencies for global leaders” (Mendwenhall, et al., 2013, p. 196).