Faculty development as institutional leadership: A framework for meeting new challenges

K. Lynn Taylor
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada
taylorl@cc.umanitoba.ca

Dieter J. Schönwetter
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada
schonwet@cc.umanitoba.ca

Abstract: Post-secondary institutions are faced with enormous opportunities and challenges to change. A number of trends, including increasing expectations for accountability, technology integration, faculty renewal, and the continuing development of the scholarship of teaching have created a press for change that challenges the traditional values and practices of academic communities. Within this dynamic and uncertain context, faculty developers are often called upon to facilitate institutional problem solving and change. The changing context of contemporary post-secondary education offers faculty developers exciting opportunities to optimize the leadership potential of the faculty development role. Once we begin to conceptualize faculty development as leadership, conceptual and practical tools from the leadership literature become valuable assets. To become more systematic in applying effective leadership principles in the complex task of leading through faculty development, we identified specific principles and qualities from the leadership literature that are relevant to faculty development practice. Rather than attempting to practice these leadership characteristics in parallel with faculty development, we argue that they should be integrated to conceptualize leadership as an inherent role in faculty development practice. This leadership perspective is built on the processes Parker Palmer (1998) uses to frame effective teaching: personal identity and integrity, knowing in community, teaching in community, and learning in community. The purpose of this paper is to engage colleagues in an exploration of a leadership perspective intended to provide faculty developers with a unifying framework to conceptualize their diverse work with individuals, programs, and institutions.

Key Words: Faculty development, academic leadership, change

Over the last 30 years, the faculty development role in Canadian universities has benefited from continuous growth and development as a field of practice and study. From its first emphasis on developing teaching strategies and techniques, faculty development has evolved to include a comprehensive range of professional development services that contribute both to the development of faculty and graduate students and to the enhancement of the quality and recognition of teaching in our institutions (Wilcox, 1998). In Canada and beyond, this increased synergy among instructional, faculty, and institutional development is contributing to a third wave of evolution: the emergence of the institutional leadership role of faculty
developers (Fletcher & Patrick, 1998). Increasingly, faculty developers are called upon to facilitate problem solving and change at the institutional level (Fletcher & Patrick, 1998; Hart, 1997). The primary challenge of this emerging leadership role is to find an approach to leadership that is consistent with the traditions and values of effective faculty development practice. This paper describes one such approach. Based on Palmer’s (1998) concepts of knowing, teaching, and learning in community, the proposed leadership perspective is intended to provide faculty developers with a unifying framework to conceptualize their diverse work with individuals, programs, and institutions.

The Leadership Context

The changing context of contemporary post-secondary education offers faculty developers exciting opportunities to optimize the leadership potential of the faculty development role. Across higher education, the press for accountability in teaching, research, and administration activities has been a powerful influence in promoting change in higher education (Hendley, 2000). There have been demonstrable shifts in expectations for not only student learning, but also for retention, and level of achievement. More broadly, expectations for affordability, accessibility, and responsiveness to community needs have increased (Donald, 1997; Gaff, 1991; Hendley, 2000). In particular, these changes have multiplied demands for faculty development support in the areas of teaching effectiveness, career development (e.g., Åkerlind & Quinlan, 2001), curriculum development (e.g., Cook, 2001), and integration of technology in teaching (e.g., Gandolfo, 1998) for institutions, as well as for individual faculty members (Fletcher & Patrick, 1998; Hart, 1997).

These increased demands for accountability are influencing the nature of faculty development practice and scholarship. Furthermore, they are having an impact on perceptions of teaching as scholarly work. In the Canadian context, the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) provides leadership through the “Making Teaching Count” initiative that is designed to increase the profile of teaching in the Canadian university reward structure (Smith, 1997). This initiative is related to a broader exploration of faculty roles and rewards in contemporary academic communities (Rice, 1996). In particular, the concept of the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990) is evolving in directions that permit faculty to demonstrate scholarship in teaching beyond being an effective teacher. Emerging definitions of the scholarship of teaching argue that scholarship in teaching is characterized by not only being an effective teacher, but by systematically investigating teaching, learning, or curriculum development processes, and disseminating the results of those investigations (Hutchings & Schulman, 1999). Institutions are changing not only the specifics of teaching and learning experiences, but their fundamental beliefs about how scholarship in the area of teaching can be valued, demonstrated, and rewarded. In this changing context, “… efforts to change teaching and improve learning are essentially battles over institutional values, rewards, and behaviors.” (Lazerson, Wagener, & Shumanis, 2000, p.19). This characterization clearly places faculty development in the leadership domain. More importantly, it prompts us to explore a particular leadership perspective to guide us in our enhanced roles in institutional leadership - a perspective that is appropriate to the discipline knowledge, values, and history of faculty development practice.

Once we begin to conceptualize the faculty development role as leadership, conceptual and practical tools from the leadership literature become valuable assets. The purpose of this paper is to engage colleagues in an exploration of the leadership roles of faculty developers, the leadership strategies that optimize success, and how a leadership perspective can be integrated in a model of practice that can frame faculty development work.
Leadership in a Faculty Development Context

Across traditional faculty development contexts, assessing needs and facilitating change with individuals or small groups characterized successful practice. Faculty developers can readily articulate the specific strategies they use to facilitate change (Taylor & Schönwetter, 2001):

- building collegiality
- communicating
- stimulating teaching innovation
- understanding culture and context
- networking
- modeling
- assessing needs
- defining needs to motivate action
- presenting new idea in non-threatening ways
- setting expectations
- forming coalitions
- using teamwork effectively
- ensuring confidentiality
- relying on research-based evidence
- maintaining a problem solving orientation
- acting as an honest broker

In contemporary university contexts, our mandates often include facilitating change across an entire academic community (Candy, 1996; Fletcher & Patrick, 1998; Hart, 1997). Facilitating change across larger groups also characterizes effective leadership (Ramsden, 1998; Van Velsor, McCauley, & Moxley, 1998). The challenge for faculty developers working to effect institutional change is to recognize how the strategies traditionally used with individuals and small groups can be utilized or adapted to facilitate institutional leadership through faculty development. The leadership literature is a valuable resource in making the transition to facilitating institutional, rather than individual change.

Contemporary Definitions of Leadership

A representative sampling of leadership definitions from the current literature offers points of connection with traditional faculty development practice:

- “Leadership roles and processes are those that enable groups of people to work together in productive and meaningful ways.” (Van Velsor et al., 1998, p. 4)
- “…a shared enterprise dependent on a relationship between followers and leaders... developing and enabling colleagues to contribute to the goals of the department and the university.” (Ramsden, 1998, p. 116)
- “…leaders create a shared vision, energize others by communicating that vision at many levels, stimulate others to think in different ways and to excel, give individual consideration to others, and provide an organizational climate that helps others to accomplish activities of value and feel appreciated.” (Lucas, 1994, p. 47).

Among the observations that can be made about these definitions is that the leadership literature has finally caught up to faculty development practice. The contemporary leadership literature does not define effective leadership in terms of the power or even in terms of ability to persuade others to do things a particular way. Instead, leadership is characterized by a reciprocal process of setting goals and creating ways to reach these goals (Drath, 1998). As the list of change strategies identified by faculty developers illustrates, working with others to create supportive environments and learning opportunities are familiar tasks in faculty development practice. To become more systematic in applying effective leadership principles in the complex task of leading through faculty development, we identified specific principles and qualities from the leadership literature that are relevant to faculty development practice. Rather than attempting to practice these leadership characteristics in parallel with faculty development, we have integrated these principles to conceptualize leadership as an inherent role in faculty development practice. This integration is based on the processes Parker Palmer (1998) uses to frame effective teaching: personal identity and integrity, knowing in community, teaching in community, and learning in community.
A Parker Palmer Perspective on Leadership through Faculty Development

Figure 1 illustrates how Parker Palmer’s conceptualization of effective teaching can be interpreted in a faculty development context. Throughout this interpretation, there are many opportunities to demonstrate principles and characteristics from the leadership literature. To clarify some of these linkages, several examples of the leadership characteristics that are inherent in each facet of the Palmer framework are summarized in Table 1.

**Personal Identity and Integrity**
The conceptual framework begins with the personal identity and integrity of the faculty developer and his/her academic community [Figure 1 (1)]. Palmer (1998) characterizes identity as the ability to recognize the diverse forces of self, discipline, and context that make up one’s life and how these forces are related. From this knowledge of self come the confidence, credibility, honesty, and trust that are essential to effective leadership (Kotter, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Ramsden, 1998). Based on one’s sense of identity, personal integrity derives from the ability to relate to those forces and respond to them in ways that generate a coherent response consistent with knowledge of self, discipline, and context. From this congruence of knowledge and action come the competence, genuineness, and commitment characteristic of effective leaders (Kotter, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Ramsden, 1998). A third personal factor is the capacity for growth through learning from the inevitable “gaps and grinds” (Palmer, 1998) discovered from the interconnections among the sometimes competing perspectives of self, discipline, and context. This openness to learning maintains the qualities of open- and fair-mindedness required of leaders (Kotter, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Ramsden, 1998). It also characterizes the intellectual challenges that motivate the scholarly work of many faculty developers.

**Community Identity and Integrity**
Similarly, communities can demonstrate identity, integrity, and growth. Communities that grow and change recognize the diverse forces that create their community dynamics. They understand and respond to the interactions among these forces in a coherent and comprehensive way, and they become “learning communities” (Candy, 1995; Ewell, 1997; Senge, 1990). The heart of effective faculty development practice - and leadership - lies in facilitating individual and collective growth in ways that maintain identity and integrity among individuals and communities. We propose that Palmer’s processes of knowing in community, teaching in community, and learning in community contribute not only to effective teaching and learning, but to effective faculty development and leadership, as well.

In faculty development, as in teaching, it is essential to know yourself, your discipline, and your community [Figure 1 (2)]. This depth and breadth of knowing requires listening and reflecting, but as Palmer points out, this is not a passive knowing. It is knowing not only about community, but also knowing community through actively sharing territory, goals, resources, and problem solving (Palmer, 1998). The importance of knowing in community to leadership is underscored by Schein (1992) who observed that “The bottom line for leaders is that if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them.” (p. 15). Consequently, the leadership literature emphasizes the importance of listening, communicating, and consulting, together with a knowledge of internal and external contexts (Kotter, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Ramsden, 1998).

**Knowing in Community**
In a faculty development context, it is critical for practitioners not only to know their communities (Lueddeke, 1997), but also to be able to help their communities to know themselves in the Palmer sense. The importance of the faculty development role in helping academic communities to appreciate the complexities of their contexts is underscored by
Kayrooz, Pearson, and Quinlan (1997) who describe developers as “boundary spanners” (p. 64). In this role, we are increasingly asked to provide leadership by facilitating communication across students, faculty, administrators, or external stakeholders in our work across the community.

Figure 1: A faculty development leadership perspective

**Teaching in Community**

The second process critical to effective faculty development is teaching in community [Figure 1 (3)]. Teaching in community has two critical components. The first is using expertise to make connections among self, learners, the knowledge to be learned, and the context. The second is to achieve balance with respect to a number of continua in the teaching and learning process, including: openness/structure in the learning experience; individual/group voice; challenge/safety in the learning environment; the role of personal/discipline knowledge; time for speaking/reflecting; and the degree of individual/community learning (Palmer, 1998). The appropriate balance point on any dimension will vary with the needs of learners in a particular learning context. Many of the principles of teaching in community are mirrored in the leadership literature as characteristics of effective leaders. Like effective teachers, effective leaders communicate well, set clear goals, and provide feedback and rewards. Of equal importance is that effective leaders also know when to enable others to act, encourage efforts, accommodate choice and foster conditions for success, rather than provide directives (Kotter, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Lucas, 1994; Ramsden, 1998).

Teaching in community represents a major component of faculty development practice. We routinely use our expertise to help others achieve their goals in workshops, consultations, discussion groups, curriculum development, committee work, and special projects. Within and across these vehicles, Palmer’s continua shift as we use our expertise more or less directly and provide variable degrees of substance and facilitation, depending on the situation. In every case, however, we are guided in our decision making by connections among self, clients, what needs to be learned, and the context.

**Learning in Community**

The transition from teaching in community to learning in community fundamentally changes the leadership potential for faculty development. Learning in community [Figure 1 (4)] is a reciprocal process of recognizing opportunities to learn, forming partnerships, combining ideas, and building capacity for collaborative problem solving. Learning in community
requires leadership in setting expectations for learning, and facilitating the reflection, discussion, and action necessary for learning (Palmer, 1998). Communities that fail to become learning communities frequently lack this leadership. Given their established roles as “honest brokers” in identifying problems and facilitating solutions, and their expertise and facilitation skills, faculty developers are well positioned to provide leadership in learning-in-community processes with respect to teaching and learning issues. This leadership role is distinguished from the more commonly exercised teaching-in-community role in that the focus shifts from directly sharing expertise to help people solve problems, to using expertise more indirectly to build community problem-solving capacity.

Palmer’s conceptualization of learning in community parallels contemporary definitions of leadership that emphasize the reciprocal and collaborative nature of leadership, and the facilitative rather than directive nature of the role (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Lucas, 1994; Ramsden, 1998). The profile of effective leaders described in the leadership literature is also consistent with the skills necessary to facilitate learning in communities. Effective leaders recognize opportunities to learn and improve, build shared goals, collaborate, share responsibility, nurture mutual trust, support reciprocity, sustain interaction, enable others to act, and develop competence (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Ramsden, 1998; Senge, 1990). When an issue requires learning, rather than teaching in community to best facilitate the required problem solving, faculty developers must exercise sophisticated leadership roles.

Effecting Change through Faculty Development

To varying degrees, change can be effected from each of the processes of knowing, teaching, and learning in community (Figure 1). The subtlest changes come from knowing the forces that shape self, discipline, and context and how they are interconnected. More explicit change results from effective teaching in community, in which faculty developers share their expertise with clients to develop new ways of understanding and facilitating teaching and learning or academic career development, more generally. Teaching in community can facilitate individual and institutional problem solving in a wide range of situations. However, when the need for change is systemic, or challenges the values and norms of an institution, then learning in community is the optimal change strategy.

Learning in community is a process that meets the conditions that support successful change processes, including:

- building a shared perception of a need for change
- involving the community in developing a plan
- articulating clear goals
- ensuring that the plan is practical in terms of resources
- considering the culture of the organization in the planning process
- securing support from the top
- developing a critical mass of support in the community
- preparing the community for change
- providing infrastructure to support change
- identifying an effective leader

(Creamer & Creamer, 1988; Ewell, 1997; Farmer, 1990; Hirschhorn & May, 2000)

However, the process of learning in community is an intensive and time-consuming strategy. Consequently, an important leadership skill is knowing which of Palmer’s three processes are most appropriately applied in a given situation, and how to balance knowing, teaching and learning in community across the increasingly complex demands of faculty development practice (Diamond, 2002).
Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to engage colleagues in an exploration of how faculty development is evolving in ways that emphasize the leadership capacity of faculty development practice. Many of the characteristics of our practice can be mapped directly onto the characteristics of effective leaders. It has been suggested that Palmers’s (1998) conceptualizations of knowing, teaching, and learning in community constitute a perspective on leadership that is consistent with the knowledge, values, and history of faculty development practice, and that can contribute to the advancement of faculty development as a field of practice and scholarship.

Table 1: Parker Palmer Principles and Leadership Principles

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<th>Parker Palmer Principles</th>
<th>Related Leadership Principles</th>
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| Personal Identity and Integrity | • credibility, fairness, honesty, connection, enthusiasm, genuineness, commitment, competency; sensitive to values and hopes, openness (Ramsden, 1998)  
• honest, forward looking, inspiring, competent, fair-minded, supportive, broadminded (Kouzes & Posner, 1995)  
• credibility, trust, commitment, motivating (Kotter, 1990) |
| Knowing in Community | • listens, appreciates and uses context, knows institution and external influences, recognizes problems and opportunities, consults, vision in harmony with community (Ramsden, 1998)  
• listens, communicates, knows constituents, knows internal and external contexts (Kouzes & Posner, 1995)  
• aware of conventions, communicates, aligns (Kotter, 1990) |
| Teaching in Community | • communicates, seizes teaching opportunities, sets clear goals, helps others achieve goals, fosters conditions for success, provides feedback and rewards, leads by example (Ramsden, 1998)  
• communicates, role-models, enables others to act, encourages efforts (Kouzes & Posner, 1995)  
• fosters professional development (Leithwood, 1992)  
• role-models, coaches, recognizes achievement, gives feedback, accommodates choice (Kotter, 1990) |
| Learning in Community | • recognizes opportunities to learn and improve, collaborates, forms partnerships, shares responsibility, consults, combines ideas, respects autonomy, learns from others, learns from experience (Ramsden, 1998)  
• finds common purpose, nurtures mutual trust, supports reciprocity, sustains interaction, collaborates, believes in others, enables others to act, develops competence (Kouzes & Posner, 1995)  
• develops and maintains collaborations, helps people solve problems together (Leithwood, 1992)  
• nurtures capacity for others to solve problems or find new ways, builds shared goals, collaborates, provides opportunities to lead, recognizes accomplishments (Senge, 1990) |

References


