

July 3, 2007

To: Julia Watkins, CSWE Executive Director

From: Marcie Lazzari, CSWE Senior Scholar

Re: Final Report on Senior Scholar Activities Related to the CSWE Leadership Initiative

Background

My work as a Senior Scholar represents part of CSWE's leadership initiative as the organization explores ways to further develop leadership in social work education in particular, and more broadly for the profession. In addition to conducting an analysis of social work syllabi, I attended the two CSWE Leadership Seminars held in February 2007.

There are volumes written on leadership and leadership styles, with the conclusion that there is no magic answer to the question about the "best" leadership "style" for a given situation or context. Leadership is complex and brings together an individual's personality, knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs and situates those in contexts characterized by idiosyncratic individual and organizational variables. Some perspectives on leadership, such as transformational, feminist, and relational-cultural, tend to place a higher value upon collaboration, relational considerations, shared leadership and shared responsibility, and the need to change systems to better meet the needs of all involved in an organization, community, and/or initiative. Some may view these approaches as being more congruent with social work values and ethics.

Given what we know from the literature about the art and science of leadership as well as the need for the social work profession to develop effective leaders in both education and practice, I wondered about what leadership skills we are teaching our students.

A Call for Syllabi focused upon Leadership Issues/Approaches

On August 7, 2006, a "Call for Courses and Content on Leadership" was sent to the CSWE membership via a broadcast email, and was again announced in September 2006 in CSWE's e-newsletter. Copies of syllabi from courses which focused upon leadership or parts of courses addressing leadership in practice and social work education were requested at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (baccalaureate, master's and doctoral).

Findings

Syllabi were received for approximately six months between August 2006 and January 2007. As of the October 2006 Commission on Accreditation (COA) meeting, the approximate time the syllabi were being collected, there were 509 institutions of higher learning with a total of 639 accredited social work programs: 458 at the undergraduate level and 181 at the graduate level. Thirty-six institutions responded to the request for syllabi, and 97.2% (n=35) of those had accredited programs. Only 6.8% (n=35) of all accredited social work institutions in the U.S. responded to the request.

A total of 74 syllabi were received, with 2.7% (n=2) from social work related programs. Two-thirds of the institutions responding had an accredited Baccalaureate program, but only 20.3% (n=15) of the syllabi came from Baccalaureate programs. Eighty-six percent of the institutions responding had an accredited Master’s program and 79.7% (n=59) of the syllabi came from Master’s programs. Of those Master’s level syllabi, 22% (n=13) specify “leadership” in the course titles. Multiple syllabi were submitted by eleven MSW programs, one BSW program, and three institutions with both Master’s and Baccalaureate programs. No doctoral programs responded.

Additionally, the following special curricular materials were submitted:

- IV-E Child Welfare Leadership Program
- Social Work Management Certificate (post graduate)
- Graduate Certificate Program (LEAD-Leadership in Executive and Administrative Development in Social Work)
- Developing Leadership Capacity with Field Advisory Committees to Strengthen Field Work
- Urban Leadership Program (undergraduate)
- Analysis of Leadership Content in Courses (2)

Method of review

Each syllabus was examined to determine (1) the type of course, (2) stated purpose of the course, (3) level of the course, (4) theoretical leadership models taught, (5) types of assignments, and (6) evidence of addressing diversity as related to leadership.

The following table presents an overview of the findings.

Area of Review	Content		
Types of Courses (primary emphases- total is larger than number of syllabi due to multiple foci)		<u>BSW</u>	<u>MSW</u>
	• Administration	0	10
	• Policy Practice	2	1
	• Community Practice	2	7
	• Organizational Practice	2	9
	• Generalist Macro Practice	1	1
	• Advanced Macro Practice	0	4
	• Management	0	15
	• Supervision	0	4
	• Leadership	5	15
	• Field Education	3	1
Stated Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary emphasis upon skill and knowledge acquisition related to the specific type of course, with secondary emphasis upon themes including, for example, diversity, empowerment, social and economic justice, 		

	<p>social work values and ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership emphasis varies; is most clearly evidenced in courses with leadership as the primary focus
Level of Course (Syllabi Categories)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's • Bachelors • Field-Related • Special Curricular Materials
Theoretical Models Related to Leadership Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trait • Behavioral and Social Learning • Situational and Contingency • Transactional • Transformational • Feminist • Relational-Cultural
Types of Assignments: Individual and Group: Descriptive, Analytical, Reflective, and Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of Written Assignments • Oral Presentations • In-Class Experiential Exercises • Field-Related Activities
Diversity Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidenced in most courses with a range of emphasis from minimal attention to integration • Primary focus upon gender, race, ethnicity, with minimal attention to other aspects of diversity such as sexual orientation, ability status, and class

Limitations

First, only 6.8% of accredited schools responded to the request for syllabi, and we do not know how many other courses exist that could have been included in this review. Second, while syllabi provide an overview of course content, there is no way to know what actually occurs in the classroom. For example, a course that appears to lack a significant amount of leadership content could be taught in such a manner that strongly supports the development of students as leaders. Additionally, since syllabi differ greatly in their breadth, depth, and degree of specificity, one cannot ascertain the totality of course content without an extensive review of the textbooks and supplemental readings. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of the current project. Finally, the qualitative analysis is conducted through the eyes of one person who brings her own values and perspective to this process.

Given these limitations, the results do provide a “landscape and impression” of what is currently being taught regarding leadership in the social work profession. This overview, in conjunction with the sessions presented at the Leadership Seminars in Charleston and Phoenix, both reinforce the findings from the curricular review and point to directions that CSWE might want to consider as next steps.

BSW Course Syllabi

Of the 15 undergraduate syllabi received, seven can be categorized as part of a macro practice sequence while two focus upon women’s gender development and leadership, and others upon exemplary leadership, most specifically in field education. Leadership in field education will be discussed later in this report.

MSW Course Syllabi

The vast majority of the syllabi represent required courses that are part of concentrations or specializations in macro practice (including administration, community, policy, organizational, and generalist practice). Only one course specifically focused upon leadership appears to be required of all MSW students regardless of their concentration or area of study. Skills such as budgeting, grant writing, managing staff, policy advocacy, resource development, program design and implementation are emphasized. All of these courses contain content on leadership theories/approaches, mostly taught in one or two course sessions and/or implied as part of all that a manager, administrator, and/or supervisor does. Some courses have learning goals that link macro practice with the attainment of social and economic justice. Diversity content is included in most courses although emphasized differentially. Two schools in particular, view their entire macro practice concentration as being focused upon the development of social work leaders.

Of the 59 MSW syllabi, 13 have the word “leadership” in the course titles, and one additional uses the word “transformational.” While these courses are not necessarily “better” than the others, language conveys different messages and is, therefore, important.

As a generalized observation, those courses that focus more in depth on leadership tend to communicate a “motivational” tone (i.e., visioning and a call to leadership), as well as more directly link leadership with the values and ethics of the profession. Also, there is generally a more explicit acknowledgement that the ways we have been conducting ourselves as leaders no longer works. Thus, there tends to be more of an emphasis upon the need to transform our institutions and to acknowledge the need for leadership at all levels of an organization. In short, good leaders and good followers are needed, and the roles can be interchangeable. Notions of team work, partnerships, and collaborations are emphasized, along with the basic skills needed to effectively function in formal leadership roles. Leadership tends to be studied through more of a socio-political lens, thus critically analyzing power and the linkages to striving for the realization of political and economic justice.

All of the MSW courses acknowledge that leadership is complex and that there is no one way to be a good leader. Leadership is viewed as being both an art and a science.

PhD Course Syllabi

As noted above, no course syllabi were received from doctoral programs. Preliminary finding from concurrent research presented at the Leadership Seminar held in Charleston, SC, may shed some light upon this.

So`Nia L. Gilkey, MSW, LCSW, Doctoral Candidate (University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work) and her colleagues Andre Stevens (Johnson C. Smith University) and Sharon Parker (UNC-Chapel Hill) are currently conducting an online survey of doctoral students from 55 randomly selected doctoral programs in social work. At the time of the presentation, 85 responses had been received with a goal of 130. A series of questions are asked, and one in particular may explain why no syllabi from doctoral programs were received.

Does your doctoral program offer leadership content in your coursework?

Yes	22.7%
No	60.2%
Unsure	17%

At the same time, 73.3% of the respondents see themselves assuming leadership roles in social work education, research, practice and/or policy. Many other informative questions are asked, and a model for leadership development in social work education is offered.

Field Education

Field or practicum education is a central component in the social work curriculum. Syllabi for three undergraduate and one graduate field education seminar were submitted. In general, these courses are focused upon helping students assess their own leadership abilities and interests and view the practicum as the place to practice being a “leadership practitioner.” Courses such as these have potential for reframing what students do in their practicum placements and increasing their awareness of leader/follower roles.

There was one presentation at the Leadership Seminar in Charleston and three sessions at the Leadership Seminar in Phoenix that focused upon field directors as leaders by utilizing the following three approaches: (1) using field advisory committees to provide leadership in strengthening fieldwork program, (2) using field based leadership projects as one way to integrate clinical practice skills with the skills required for leadership, and (3) examining power dynamics and cultural competence in field education.

Leadership Seminars

Of particular relevance to undergraduate social work education was a presentation by Margaret R. Calista and Daria V. Hanssen (Marist College) at the Leadership Seminar held in Charleston. Their basic premise is that leadership content is embedded in the generic social work knowledge, values, and skills taught at the undergraduate level. They discussed how their current BSW curriculum develops leadership in both students and faculty. By renaming and reframing social work processes, they drew clear parallels with leadership processes. They encouraged participants in this session to claim our curriculum as one that prepares leaders and acknowledge the strength of what we already have. We need to identify it, (re)name it, and make it explicit to students.

Also of relevance to undergraduate social work education was a presentation in Phoenix by Rhonda V. Impink (Indiana State University). Like the presenters in Charleston, Dr. Impink contends that we must reframe what we do and work with BSW students to see the importance of assuming leadership roles to promote positive social change in organizations and communities.

Diversity Issues

As noted previously, most of the syllabi submitted contain content that addresses diversity issues, although some clearly more than others. In particular, issues related to gender and to race/ethnicity are more frequently noted with little mention of members of the GLBT communities, persons with disabilities, and others who face unique challenges in both the academy and in practice. What is hopeful is that there is an increasing awareness of these issues and a willingness to openly address them, as was evidenced in many of the sessions at both Leadership Seminars.

Implicit Curriculum: Course Structures and Assignments

The implicit curriculum was discussed in Charleston during the Commission on Curricular Education and Innovation (COCEI) session for other CSWE Commission members and in a presentation by Jacqueline B. Mondros (Hunter College School of Social Work) and Carol S. Cohen (Adelphi University School of Social Work). Generally speaking, this concept applies to approaches to teaching as well as classroom and organizational structures and gives a strong message to students. Hearing about the implicit curriculum and thinking about the assignments as written in the syllabi, I was struck by the nature of the assignments and what was then implied about the student/teacher relationship. In the vast majority of the courses, the assignments were prescribed by the instructors in what I would describe as a hierarchical course structure. In some courses, students had some degree of choice, and in one course only, the students were responsible for designing their assignments in consultation with the instructor. Having the course instructor “be in charge” is not unusual. Might we think, however, about the knowledge and skills needed for effective leadership and create classroom environments, including assignments, which encourage students to think of themselves and act as leaders? Might we also think about the nature of the student/teacher relationship and envision a collaborative learning experience where leadership can be fostered and nurtured? Where responsibility for teaching and learning is shared? Where peer evaluation is taught with respect and valued? Where diverse students feel safe sharing their concerns and strengths?

Such approaches are not new, and there is no way of knowing to what extent they are used in social work education. However, if these syllabi reflect the larger picture, then greater effort must be placed upon changing components of the implicit curriculum.

Recommendations

1. Examine leadership content integration into social work curricula by identifying model syllabi.

How and to what extent leadership content is integrated into the social work curricula needs further examination. It might be helpful for CSWE to consider placing a call for model syllabi and programs in social work schools/programs (i.e., best practices) that address some of the issues identified above (the significance, for example, of the implicit curriculum). It would be helpful to engage a range of reviewers for such a project that includes those who are

knowledgeable about leadership theories and skills as applied to all social work curricular areas, along with those who bring more of a visionary perspective to the potential for social work leaders.

2. Track leadership development strategies with an interdisciplinary approach.

Of interest are two syllabi that were submitted by a non-CSWE accredited program. The one at the graduate level (interdisciplinary masters/public policy course) has leadership as one of its major learning objectives as does the one at the undergraduate level (Collaborative Health and Human Services degree). Both emphasize social justice and building community capacity for equity and diversity. While it is optimistic to see this emphasis in non-social work degree programs, social work must be aware of these types of programs and of their appeal. While doctoral education appears to need attention, we must begin to develop social work leadership at the undergraduate level. The work noted that is being done on renaming and reframing social work curricular components should be examined in more depth. Additionally, programs designed to promote student leadership such as the IV-E Child Welfare Leadership Program (collaboration between a university and the department of human services to identify and mentor potential leaders in children's services) and the Urban Leadership Program (an undergraduate program that combines leadership course work concurrently with field placements) need further examination.

3. Promote leadership development events through CSWE volunteer groups by utilizing a collaborative model.

CSWE leadership might consider having its commissions and councils that are already doing work in this area assume roles in planning events such as the leadership seminars. This recommendation is similar to one of Dr. Sheafor's recommendations (January 2, 2006, Senior Scholar report to CSWE) of adopting a collaborative model for leadership development. He notes groups that are already engaged and interested in collaboration for leadership development including Baccalaureate Program Directors Association, National Association of Deans and Directors Leadership Academy, CSWE Minority Fellowship Program, Council on the Role and Status of Women, other various diversity constituency groups, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work.

4. Provide opportunities for students to contribute to decision-making

Finally, as a profession, we must listen to students and more recent graduates at all levels. CSWE must find meaningful ways to include them in dialogues and decision-making because they are our future leaders. Perhaps CSWE can find a way to include students as members on some of its commissions and councils as one way to address the inclusion of fresh perspectives and new voices.

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge and thank all of the instructors and staff members who responded to the call for syllabi. I had the privilege of communicating via email and in person with some of them. The interest in both responding to the call and to participating in the Leadership Seminars is hopeful. There is a great deal of knowledge and commitment to building leadership in and for the profession. This commitment is not blind to the sometimes overwhelming challenges facing social work in academia and in practice. Along with the dangers facing the profession, there are

opportunities. Moving forward now is critical to the survival of social work and, perhaps, to reinventing itself in a manner that results in an increased positive impact upon the academy and society.

References

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