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**A MULTIVARIATE STUDY OF
PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT OF MASTERS-
LEVEL SEMINARY STUDENTS AT
DALLAS THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY**

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A Multivariate Study of Perceived Leadership Development of Masters-Level Seminary Students at Dallas Theological Seminary

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ABSTRACT

The problem was to determine differences in Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI-Self) scores between masters-level students at Dallas Theological Seminary based on the selected independent variables of the age of the student, amount of classroom instruction in leadership principles, typical course load of the student, ministry leadership involvement prior to enrollment, ministry leadership involvement while enrolled, participation in an internship, participation in a Spiritual Formation group, leadership of a Spiritual Formation group, and gender.

Statistically significant differences were found in the LPI-Self scores between groups based on age (Wilks' lambda = 0.905, $F = 2.182$, $p = 0.006$) and current ministry experience (Wilks' lambda = 0.898, $F = 3.586$, $p = 0.000$). Non-traditional age students, especially 40 years old and older, scored significantly higher in Challenging, Enabling, Modeling, and Encouraging. Students who were involved in 10 or more hours of weekly ministry experience scored significantly higher in Challenging, Inspiring, and Encouraging. While the MANOVA did not show significant differences in the overall LPI-Self leadership scores, the univariate tests showed differences in Enabling between groups based on course load. There was no significance found between groups based on the remaining independent variables.

Introduction

Higher education today is being judged by the type of student that is coming out of its schools. In order for higher education administrators and outside stakeholders to make evaluations of the student educational products coming out of their schools, there must be a way to measure objectively course and program effectiveness and a way to take this information to provide direction for improvements. This is the role of intentional higher education assessment. At the heart of higher education assessment is the idea of competence. The idea of competence forces schools to ask what college graduates should know, be able to do, and value. Competence in leadership and transferable people skills is being demanded of college graduates. More and more college and graduate programs are including some type of internship to help facilitate experiential learning in the area of leadership and transferable people skills. It is noted by researchers that experience is a key element to leadership development. For educational leaders, internships serve as a link between theory and practice.

If seminaries are going to continue to see leadership development as one of their primary roles in the twenty-first century, it is imperative for seminaries to continually evaluate the leadership "product" graduating from their academic halls as well. To deal with the many demands of twenty-first century church leadership, some traditional seminaries are evaluating their current leadership development process. Seminaries are beginning to become intentional in their leadership development of their students. While only a small minority of seminaries "requires" some type of specific leadership class, more seminaries are beginning to offer these

types of courses. In addition to these classroom instruction opportunities in leadership education, most seminaries are offering more intentional on-site leadership internships and mentoring. Besides this emphasis in competence in theological education, the population of incoming seminary students is changing too. Numerous studies have shown that entering seminary students are “older” and more experienced in other careers than previous generations. And unlike their younger counterparts, many of these non-traditional students are either not able or are unwilling to pursue their education full-time. The rise of extension centers, alternative class scheduling (such as one day a week classes), and distance learning in part has come about due to this shifting student population. Instead of losing potential ministerial candidates by only offering “one path,” seminaries have diversified to meet the need.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine differences in Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI-Self) scores of groups of masters-level students on the main Dallas, Texas campus of Dallas Theological Seminary, based on selected categorical independent variables. The independent variables were the age of the student, amount of formal classroom instruction in leadership principles received while enrolled in seminary, typical course load of the student, level of ministry leadership involvement prior to enrollment in seminary, level of ministry leadership involvement while enrolled in seminary, participation in a Field Education internship while enrolled in seminary, participation in a Spiritual Formation small group while enrolled in seminary, leadership of a Spiritual Formation small group while enrolled in seminary, and gender.

Method

During the first week of classes (25 August 2003), the researcher distributed 1,254 survey packets (consisting of a demographic survey and the LPI-Self survey) to every masters-level student on the main Dallas, Texas campus of Dallas Theological Seminary through the school’s on-campus student mailbox system. The survey packet (which was computer scannable) was developed with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at Dallas Theological Seminary.

The LPI-Self was developed by James Kouzes and Barry Posner to measure five leadership practices of exemplary leadership (Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart). The LPI-Self consists of thirty statements, six statements for measuring each of the five practices of exemplary leaders. Each statement has a ten point Likert scale. Internal reliabilities as measured by Chronbach alpha for the LPI-Self range from 0.75 (Enabling) to 0.87 (Inspiring and Encouraging). The demographic survey asked the survey participants questions concerning the following factors: age, gender, degree plan, marital status, parenting status, course load, prior ministry experience, current ministry experience, leadership class completion, Spiritual Formation participation, Spiritual Formation leadership, and Field Education completion. Students were asked to complete the survey packet and return the completed packet to a designated mail slot on the first floor of the Dallas Theological Seminary Student Center by 19 September 2003. A total of 330 survey packets were returned to the researcher by the due date set by the researcher and scanned into SPSS for statistical analysis by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Data Analysis

A series of Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) tests were used to determine differences in overall LPI-Self scores in groups of students formed from the categorical independent variables in the demographic survey. Separate univariate tests for each of the dependent variables were also employed. In cases where the MANOVA consisted of more than two independent groups, Scheffé was considered as the post-hoc test. The researcher found statistically significant differences in the overall LPI-Self scores between groups of students based on age (Wilks' lambda = 0.905, $F = 2.182$, $p = 0.006$) and current ministry experience (Wilks' lambda = 0.898, $F = 3.586$, $p = 0.000$), using an alpha level of 0.05.

When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately comparing groups of students based on the independent variable of age; Challenging ($F = 4.427$, $p = 0.005$), Enabling ($F = 5.929$, $p = 0.001$), Modeling ($F = 5.712$, $p = 0.001$), and Encouraging ($F = 5.570$, $p = 0.001$) were found to be statistically significant using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of 0.01. When Scheffé (using an alpha level of 0.05) was employed as a post-hoc test for Challenging, Enabling, Modeling, and Encouraging; the group of students age 40 to 49 scored significantly higher than the group of students age 29 or younger in all of these four dependent variables. In addition, the group of students age 30 to 39 also scored significantly higher than the group of students age 29 and younger in the dependent variable of Enabling. Table 1 shows these results. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately comparing groups of students based on the independent variable of current ministry experience; Challenging ($F = 8.237$, $p = 0.000$), Inspiring ($F = 14.412$, $p = 0.000$), and Encouraging ($F = 9.328$, $p = 0.000$) were found to be statistically significant using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of 0.01. When Scheffé (using an alpha level of 0.05) was employed as a post-hoc test for Challenging, Inspiring, and Encouraging; both the group of students who were involved in ministry 10 to 19 hours a week while in school and the group of students who were involved in ministry 20 or more hours a week while in school scored significantly higher than the group of students who were involved in ministry 9 hours or fewer a week while in school in all of these three dependent variables. Table 2 shows these results.

Table 1. Scheffé Comparisons Based on Independent Variable of Age

	29 and Younger	30 to 39	40 – 49	50 and Older
Challenging the Process	M = 39.54 SD = 8.853		M = 44.29 SD = 8.169 $p = 0.008$	
Enabling Others to Act	M = 44.84 SD = 6.540	M = 47.37 SD = 6.304 $p = 0.023$	M = 48.43 SD = 5.715 $p = 0.006$	
Modeling the Way	M = 43.00 SD = 7.388		M = 46.96 SD = 6.296 $p = 0.005$	

Encouraging the Heart	M = 40.69 SD = 8.702		M = 45.88 SD = 7.469 p = 0.002	
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Table 2. Scheffé Comparisons Based on Independent Variable of Current Ministry Experience

	9 or Fewer Hours	10 to 19 Hours	20 or More Hours
Challenging the Process	M = 39.60 SD = 8.768	M = 44.10 SD = 8.145 p = 0.001	M = 42.83 SD = 8.180 p = 0.041
Inspiring a Shared Vision	M=37.31, SD=10.365	M = 43.68 SD = 9.064 p = 0.000	M = 42.88 SD = 8.367 p = 0.001
Encouraging the Heart	M = 40.76 SD = 8.660	M = 45.29 SD = 7.529 p = 0.001	M = 44.24 SD = 7.570 p = 0.019

It was also discovered that while the MANOVA did not show significant differences in the overall LPI-Self leadership scores, the univariate tests showed differences in one dependent variable between groups of students based on course load. There was a significant difference found on Enabling; with the group of students who took fewer than 12 hours of classes a semester scoring significantly higher (M = 47.75, SD = 5.993, p = 0.004) than the group of students who took 12 or more hours of classes a semester (M = 45.56, SD = 6.558).

Discussion

While leadership is being studied extensively by business leaders, it has been noted by researchers that there is still a lack of empirical information on leadership development programs in higher education in general, much less seminary education. This study sought to explore this leadership development assessment need in one particular academic setting, but the desire is for this study to be a part of a larger dialogue in theological education.

The following can be given as a summary of the major findings of this study. First, non-traditional age students, especially students 40 years old and older, scored significantly higher in the leadership practices of Challenging, Enabling, Modeling, and Encouraging. The assumption with age was that the non-traditional age students scored higher in leadership due to their greater exposure to life experiences. All of life offers leadership experiences in the normal course of living that can be seen as potentially beneficial to leadership development if seized upon by the individual and if filtered through the theological grid of godly servant leadership. This growing non-traditional student population on seminary campuses offers a goldmine of “ready made” leadership practitioners that the seminary can tap into and hone.

Second, students who were involved in 10 or more hours of weekly ministry experience scored significantly higher in the leadership practices of Challenging, Inspiring, and Encouraging. This finding stresses the importance of practical ministry experience during a minister’s seminary education for their overall leadership development. Seminaries must continue strongly to encourage students to engage in noteworthy ministry opportunities while

pursuing their academic studies. Seminaries must also continue to evaluate their current curriculum structure to ensure that there is a balance of academic rigor with flexibility for more time intensive real life ministry service opportunities.

Third, the typical course load of a student was not a significant predictor of leadership practices overall, although it should be noted that the part-time students scored significantly higher than the full-time students on Enabling. At the very least, the part-time seminary student exhibited the same leadership abilities as the full-time seminary student. While only statistically significant in the area of Enabling, the part-time student even scored higher in all five categories of leadership. Instead of being intimidated by those students taking classes full-time, these part-time students should be affirmed in their own leadership abilities.

Finally, current leadership classes at Dallas Theological Seminary, prior ministry experience of a student, the Field Education internship program at Dallas Theological Seminary, the Spiritual Formation program at Dallas Theological Seminary, gender, and marital status were not significant predictors of leadership practices.

This study touched on some key issues in leadership development in theological education, but there were some noteworthy opportunities discovered for further research. These include conducting a longitudinal study of students, examining the specific non-ministry life experiences of entering students, examining the specific ministry experiences of entering students, studying the effect of popular weekend and short term leadership education opportunities, conducting a wider study of non-traditional students across a variety of seminary campuses, analyzing leadership class curriculum and materials of a particular seminary, and comparing various internship settings to look for differences in leadership scores based on the particular setting.

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