

## **Co-creating Leadership Survey**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to develop a “Co-creating Leadership Survey (CCLs)” by examining the self-perceptions of school leaders, teachers, and staff on the practice of co-creating leadership behaviors and conditions that facilitate the practice. Co-creating Leadership has been conceptualized as the dynamic process of engaging the full use of the organization’s potential (knowledge, experience, and relationships) through a set of social behaviors and dispositions to create common purpose, interest, or solutions. This survey may be used by schools and school leaders to determine school needs, the extent of, and the capacity for the practice of co-creating leadership.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The call for distributed leadership and social justice in schools is not restricted to researchers. Even teacher leaders prefer leadership that is a collaborative effort (Barth, 2001; Boyd & McGee, 1995). These authors found that teachers who are engaged in leadership experience personal gains, intellectual and professional growth, and decreased isolation, all of which spill over to their classrooms. Lambert (1998) found that engaging teachers in reciprocal learning process through leadership enabled participants to negotiate and create meaning together. However, what is missing in schools is sustained dialogue and research pertaining to the factors (personal and environmental) that enables the practice of engaging others in the creation of leadership. According to English (2008), “research about educational leadership is not likely to lead to many new significant discoveries unless it includes aesthetics and traditions of the humanities (the moral dimensions)” (p. 2). Although English has argued for a “zone of transference” where science and art cross into one another, he has emphasized the imperative need to integrate civic humanism (integrity, subtlety, and compassion) in leadership. Goleman,

Boyzatzis, and McKee (2002) argue that leadership is about qualities we all have or can develop. In their research, they found that good leaders use emotional intelligence qualities or dispositions like empathy, integrity, listening, and intuitive abilities. In addition, increased interest in models of leadership that engages others has created the need for research not only in the nature of personal and contextual practices that integrate civic humanism, but also the development of instruments to study factors that impact the capacity and the practice of the leadership model.

Co-creating Leadership has been conceptualized as the dynamic process of engaging the full use of the organization's potential (knowledge, experience, and relationships) through a set of social behaviors to create common purposes, interests, and solutions (Wasonga, 2007). In this case, leadership is not something that "individuals with formal legal authority provide for their subordinates; rather, it is a process involving dynamic interaction with subordinates" through mutual action to create and achieve some purpose (Owen, 2004, p. 95). Like "knowledge dynamic" (English, 2008a, p. 70), "dynamic interactions" acknowledges that issues as truthfulness and problem solving through pluralism are the center of creating new and competing ideas. Thus, co-creating leadership is premised on socio-psychological theory which interprets behaviors as "arising from an interaction between factors within each person and factors in the person's environment" (Owen, 2004, p.18). In this article, factors within each person are the dispositions that motivate people and may be the cause of behavior. Factors in the person's environment are the contexts (conditions, circumstances or situations) in which people work. While the power of dispositions is the positive influence of the leader's behavior and value towards members of the organization (Wasonga & Murphy, 2007), the power of context is found in the environmental argument that behavior is a function of social context (Gladwell, 2002). The symbiotic relationship between dispositions and context is found in Fullan's (2003) proposition that changing the context is likely to change behavior.

The key to unlocking co-creating leadership lies in the understanding of the concept of human nature and how leaders relate to them. The way that management perceives members is likely to determine leadership practices and organizational context. Based on Douglas McGregor's concepts, leaders ascribing to Theory X assumptions are likely to use the classical, top-down approach leading to more authoritarian structured organization. Leaders who accept Theory Y assumptions about members tend to formulate leadership as collaborative effort with others to achieve organizational goals through empowerment, sharing, and problem-solving

together (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2009; Owen 2004). McGregor's theory is based on the premise that managerial actions flow directly from assumptions held about others in the organization. While Theory X is in conflict with individual need fulfillment in the work place, Theory Y espouses the idea that people work not only to fulfill the institutional role requirements (nomothetic), but also for personal (idiographic) need satisfaction (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Ouchi (1981) extended McGregor's theories X and Y from individual to organizational level through Theory Z. According to Lunenburg and Ornstein (2009), "theory Z is not concerned with the attitude or behavior patterns of an individual supervisor but rather with the difference the organizational culture makes in the way the whole organization is put together and managed" (p. 77). While the objective of Theory Y is individual actions for the organization (dispositions), the objective of Theory Z is context - "the ability of the organization to coordinate *people*, not technology, to achieve productivity" (Ouchi, 1981, p. 83).

This theoretical framework (Figure 1) lays the foundation for investigating the dispositions and contexts for the practice of leadership that engages in a process of harnessing the collective talents of the individuals necessary for collaborative group effort in schools. Although studies on distributed leadership has provided fundamental insights on shared governance, Owen (2004) states that there is still "a moral or ethical problem" (p. 277) that is anchored in the entrenched resistance of those who hold power position and play Theory X soft games especially in educational settings. These leaders use "various forms of participative methods—holding meetings, calling on people to be open and honest, using the language of participation—while guilefully making sure that no significant power was shared with subordinates" (p. 277). Owen (2004) suggests that moving organizations from traditional leadership to transformative leadership requires the development of new processes or context through "which teachers can learn new roles and new skills required for active participation in team work and collaboration" (p.281). However, success in school context also requires an "explicit focus on the distinctive qualities of interpersonal social exchanges in school communities, and how these cumulate in an organizational property that we term *relational trust*" (Bryke & Schneider, 2002, p. 13). Bryke and Schneider found that qualities (dispositions) of social interaction are "powerful concepts shaping the thinking and behavior of local school actors" (p. 12). They also found that little attention has been focused on human nature, specifically trust, as a substantive property of the social organization of schools. English (2008a) argues that,

without compassion we cannot become effective leaders for social justice, nor will we be able to advance in any significant way our understanding of leadership or improve its effectiveness beyond the metaphors and models of efficiency which are already regnant in our discourse (p. 10).

He has also intimated doubts that we will be able to prepare school leaders that will undertake deep change or democracy unless we understand and recognize “human interiority and its dynamics with belief, values” (p. 11).

The purpose of this study was to explore and develop a multidimensional survey instrument that would capture the synergy between personal dispositions and school contexts that are likely to facilitate the practice of co-creating leadership in schools. The identification of items that constitute dispositions and context for co-creating leadership bear critical theoretical and practical implications due to the dearth in studies that investigate personal orientations that enhance co-creating of purposes and solutions in schools. Identifying items that constitute dispositions and contexts provides schools and school leaders the opportunity to determine personal needs, the extent of, and the capacity for the practice of co-creating leadership.

#### METHOD

Based on earlier qualitative research and literature reviews (Wasonga & Murphy, 2007; Wasonga, 2007), a set of statements reflecting dispositions (collaborating, active listening, cultural anthropology, egalitarianism, patience, humility, trust and trustworthiness, and resilience) and context (deep democracy, quality relations, evolving power) for co-creating leadership were developed for gathering quantitative data. These statements were based on inductive and deductive analyses of teachers’ descriptions of the practice of co-creating leadership. The 89 statements were reviewed for content and structural validity and modified based on input from experts in the field of Educational Administration (professors, school leaders, teachers, and staff). In analyzing these statements, attention was given to suggestions that have been found to produce valid results (Krathwohl, 1998). First, the statements were tailored to the target population. For example the terminologies or phrases used were those that the target population are likely to be familiar. In general, the statements are short, simple, and specific. Secondly, to ensure that the statements are interpreted as intended in the survey, the expert reviewers were requested to explain their understanding of the statements. Statements that elicited varied interpretations were eliminated. Similarly, statements that were found to be double-barreled (statements that pose two issues within one statement) were

modified or eliminated (Krathwohl, 1998). The preliminary co-creating leadership survey consisted of statements listed on a 7-point Likert scale. A column (a-f) was provided to enable the respondents indicate the extent of the practice of the item. The score of 1-7 (a-f) was given to represent the options ranging from Almost Never to Always for the extent to which the disposition was practiced or context provided. All the items were positively worded.

Following the reviews, a 72 item survey was developed. The survey was piloted with a group of 120 subjects (101 teachers, 15 school administrators, and 4 staff from three schools (Elementary, Middle, and High). The results of this pilot were analyzed using reliability measures and factor analysis (SPSS). The reliability of the instrument was established as .968 (Cronbrach's Alpha). The purpose of factor analysis was to compute communalities among all questions in order to determine items that were highly or weakly correlated within a variable (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The Product Moment Coefficient  $r$  was also calculated between each item and the total score for each variable. Some of the statements that were highly correlated with in a variable (disposition or context) were eliminated. Items that had non significant or low correlations ( $>.05$ ) with the total score for the variable were also eliminated. This process yielded a 44 item survey.

### Sample

The subjects selected for this study were teachers, principals, and staff who agreed to rspnd to the survey. The survey was administered at the schools selected for the study. The schools were selected based on a ciriteria (that the leadership of the school engages in parctices that demonstrates co-creating leadership). Selection of participating schools was done in two steps (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.28): 1) Snowball or chain: by identifying cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases (schools) are information-rich in this concept of co-created leadership; 2) Criterion: All cases that meet the criterion with an average score of 3 or greater based on the school leaders assessment (Appendix 1). Participating schools were those identified as engaging in processes that define co-creating leadership to create school structures, address problems, and achieve the school's vision.

The 40 item survey was administered to sample population (345) of school leaders, teachers, and staff drawn from schools ranging in academic achievement, socio-economic status, and grade levels in the Northern Illinois region. Stratified method was used to identify a representative group of schools. Of the six schools involved, one is a high school, three are

middle schools and two are elementary schools. Three schools were low performing based on state standards, three were high performing, and three were designated low in socio-economic status schools. Sixty five percent of the questionnaires were received of which 2% were incomplete. Therefore 63% of the population made the sample. Among the 345 respondents 87% were females, 15% were in administrative positions, 5% were staff (secretaries, janitors, teacher aids), 80% teachers and 72% had a Masters degree and above. The surveys were completed at staff meetings at the beginning and end of the school semester over a period of six months. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived the practice of co-creating dispositions and the presence of context in their schools.

#### Data analyses

Reliability and Factor analyses were applied to the data. The principal factor analysis with Varimax rotation was used to detect the communalities and unique aspects addressed by each variable (Huck, 2008). The purpose of this analysis was to “reduce a set of observed variables into a relatively small number of components that account for most of the observed variance” (Marcoulides & Hershberger, 1997, p. 164). Items whose factor loading was less than 0.50 were removed as this was not considered sufficiently high to assume a strong relationship between the item and the component (dispositions or context). Four questions were removed from the survey leading to a 40 item questionnaire (Appendix 2).

#### RESULTS

The reliability of this survey was examined with the use of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient which measures internal consistency of the items in the survey. The reliability analysis of the 40 item survey revealed a reliability coefficient of .960. The coefficient alpha reliabilities for the subscales were also high (.948 and .887 for dispositions and contexts respectively). The Factor analysis yielded 8 components accounting for 64.03% of the variance. The 40 item survey resulted in a two-factor solution (dispositions and context) presented in Table 1. Correlation coefficients amongst the subscales of dispositions and contexts are presented in Table 2. The correlations ranged between moderate .460 and .815 ( $p < .01$ ).

#### DISCUSSION

This study was designed to develop and verify a quantitative survey instrument that may be used to assess the practice of co-creating leadership. Two components of co-creating leadership were delineated (dispositions and context). Dispositions consisted of eight factors (trust and trustworthiness, humility, active listening, resilience, egalitarianism, patience,

collaboration, and cultural anthropology). Context consisted of three factors (deep democracy, quality relations, and evolving power).

A coefficient correlation analysis amongst all the factors in the study revealed moderate to strong significant positive relationships. The strongest relationships were found between resilience and evolving power ( $r=.815$ ) and between resilience and trust and trustworthiness ( $r=.781$ ). Resiliency has been identified as both a personal and organizational factor that may lead to success (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Milstein & Henry, 2000). According to Milstein and Henry, resiliency is an approach that expands our thinking about students, educators, leaders, schools and communities beyond problem identification and resolution to strengths and actualization. They found that leaders who practice resiliency strategies and promote resiliency in others make a positive difference in the lives of others around them, sometimes in spite of difficult and challenging environments. Generally, of all the dispositions, trust and trustworthiness and resilience had higher correlations with all of the factors (dispositions and contexts). Of the contexts, evolving power and quality relations yielded higher correlations.

The high coefficient correlations among the disposition and context factors indicate high levels of commonality. These dispositions and contexts are complimentary. In combination, they result in a more complete and comprehensive multidimensional leadership that is more inclusive. Because different aspects of dispositions or contexts will appeal to different people, a multidimensional instrument is appropriate. Such a multidimensional instrument that may lead to diverse outcomes that school leaders can use to begin a conversation with others in the organization about engaging in leadership that is co-creating. Leaders may also be able to reflect on their own levels of these dispositions and the effects on the democratic governance and social justice in the organization. Information gathered using this instrument may lead to modifications in dispositions and context in which leaders, teachers, staff, and students operate. Goleman et al (2002) found that aptitudes of leadership can be learned at any point in life. But there is need for a benchmark. The benchmark may be established by this multidimensional survey. More data is needed to enhance the findings of this study.

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