Designing and Implementing a Leadership Course for MBA students based on the Ide-

al Self and Emotional and Social Intelligence (ESI)

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ABSTRACT

Leadership education for MBA graduates makes business sense, and its need has been felt across

business schools. This paper provides an ESI (Emotional and Social Intelligence) and Ideal Self

based approach to developing individual leadership among MBA students. Drawing upon the expe-

riences of leadership development courses at the Weatherhead School of Managment, Case Western

Reserve University, a thirty hour course for the MBA program is proposed. This includes teaching,

case study discussions, classroom activities, individual assignments and coaching sessions. An ap-

propriate grading system has been recommended. Details of conducting a longitudinal impact

analysis have also been provided.

Keywords: Management Education, Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Ideal Self

INTRODUCTION

Students entering university life are at a stage that has been often described as "emerging adult-hood" (Arnett, 2015). At this stage, they explore a variety of different ideas that help them develop their worldview, which is a key aspect of identity development (Erikson, 1950). They are also preparing themselves to enter the workplace, which is among their top goals (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Korn, 2007). These students are generally open to new ideas, and most find at least some professors who provide that inspiration (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Importantly, the university is a place for experiencing personal growth (Magolda & Taylor, 2015). Also, as Arnett explains, "there are hundreds, probably thousands, of potential romantic partners around every day, having experiences similar to their own, few of them married, all of them with a considerable amount of unstructured time—the perfect setting for explorations in love". It is clear that these emerging adults within the context of a university are going through a significant phase in life that will help them shape their self-concept and define their relationship with the world they live in.

An important sub-set of these students are those pursuing management studies as their major. Many of them will go on to obtain their masters degree in management (Masters in Business Administration, or MBA), and will eventually land in influential corporate roles that will impact the lives of large numbers of employees, customers and members of the communities in which these corporations operate. A smaller number will venture into entrepreneurial roles and create new products, services and jobs. Given that the economic and social impact of an MBA degree is so significant, considerable attention has been given to the MBA education program itself in recent years. And much of it has been a serious indictment of the way it is conducted in most business schools. Criticisms range from MBA programs being remarkably deficient in their efforts to inculcate relevant

management knowledge and skills (Boyatzis, 1994; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009); to not adequately preparing graduates to deal with the challenges of sustainability issues in the workplace (Benn & Dunphy, 2009). This paper primarily looks into the criticism around deficiencies in the area of relevant management skills- especially in managing one's own self, as well as relationships with others. It is in this context that a dedicated learning program around personal leadership with a focus on emotional intelligence and the ideal self is proposed and elaborated upon.

SELF-MANAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AS THE ACHILLES HEEL OF MBA PROGRAMS

Given the importance of good management education, MBA programs remain a popular choice for aspiring managers, incumbent managers, and recruiters (GMAC, 2010). However, the curricula of these programs have had to deal with their fair share of criticisms. As far back as 1968, an article published in Fortune magazine, by Sheldon Zalaznick had argued that the training received by students in MBA programs at U.S. graduate schools of business does not qualify them better for a career in business than does the experience that bachelor-degree holders of equal basic capacity and drive gain by spending two years actually working in business (Grubel, 1969). In 1988, Porter and McKibbin (1988) observed, "for all the changes in the last 25 years, business schools have not made much progress in developing their students' leadership and interpersonal skills". Pfeffer and Fong (2002) point out that to date little evidence exists supporting the actual connection between mastery of the MBA curriculum and subsequent on-the-job behavior. Similarly, Bennis and O'-Toole (2005) have noted that "business schools have lost their way" by refusing to view management as a profession rather than a science. Their criticism is directed at the common business school

practice of hiring and rewarding professors for their research skills rather than their management experience. As a result, "the focus of graduate business education has become increasingly circumscribed, and less and less relevant to practitioners".

In a study, Rubin & Dierdorff (2009) investigated the relevancy of MBA curricula in relation to managerial competency requirements. Relying on an empirically derived competency model from 8,633 incumbent managers across 52 managerial occupations, the results showed that behavioral competencies indicated by managers to be most critical are the very competencies least represented in required MBA curricula. These two competencies are - managing human capital and managing decision making processes. Rubin and Dierdorff define "Managing Human Capital" as coaching & developing others; resolving conflicts & negotiating with others; developing & building Teams; and "Managing Decision-Making Processes" as getting information; judging the qualities of things, services, or people. Such deficiencies exist even in the face of mounting evidence that these are exactly some of the skills that can make the difference between managerial success and failure.

To be effective managers, individuals require a set of critical competencies, which includes competencies related to "people skills" (Boyatzis, 1982; Becker & Huselid, 1998). They can be broadly categorized as - (1) Cognitive or intellectual ability, such as systems thinking; (2) self-management or intrapersonal abilities, such as adaptability; and (3) relationship management or interpersonal abilities, such as networking(Boyatzis, Stubbs, & Taylor, 2002). The latter two clusters make up what has been described as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). However, evidence suggests that MBA degree programs are not doing a satisfactory job at developing these skills among students. A recent survey of members by the U.K. based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that leadership skills (including customer service, sales, and client relationship skills and interpersonal skills) ranked top in the skills organizations will require of their em-

ployees in the near future. Recruiters too tend to now believe that MBA programs could be more relevant by doing more to inculcate "soft skills" such as leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills (Eberhardt, McGee, & Moser, 1997).

Perhaps a reason for this discrepancy could be the fact that teaching "soft skills" around managing oneself and others can be tricky in a traditional classroom setting. Some of the questions discussed can go well beyond the realm of what is considered traditional management education. These include, but are not limited to discovering the underlying values and philosophies of managers or (Boyatzis, Murphy, & Wheeler, 2000), and the ontological and epistemological assumption associated with the manageability of human relations, and indeed the notion of what it is to be human (Grey, 2004). In the following sections, I explain that by using the two anchors of Emotional & Social Intelligence (ESI) and the ideal self, some of these issues can be addressed in an MBA classroom in a reasonably successful manner. Importantly, the proposal is based out of the experience of developing a series of courses starting in 1989 at the Organizational Behavior department of the Weatherhead School of Management of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland (Boyatzis, et al; 1995).

EXPERIENCE AND THEORY BEHIND THE PROPOSED COURSE

A. The Approach at the Weatherhead School of Management (WSOM)

An opinion survey conducted among corporate and civic leaders in 1984 failed to reflect WSOM's self-image, and also clearly indicated that there was a lot to be done to gain respect, recognition and support of the community. The feedback became the starting point for the school's reorientation of

its MBA program and build it on the themes of value creation, competency-based education, and a liberalizing perspective on management (Cowen, 1995). One of the first tangible outcomes was the development of a course called the Management Assessment and Development (Boyatzis, 1995). Unlike a typical academic course, it stimulated students to draw from all their courses, their non-course developmental experiences, work experiences, and leisure efforts for learning and progress on their developmental goals. The goal of the course was to learn a method of assessing one's knowledge and abilities relevant to management and for developing and implementing plans for acquiring new management-related knowledge and abilities throughout one's career.

The course eventually developed into the Leadership Assessment and Development (LEAD)- a comprehensive course that used self-directed learning theory as the basis for its design (Boyatzis, 1994, 1995; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). A longitudinal study at WSOM focused on the impact of the redesigned MBA program on the development of cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies. Entering data collected as part of the LEAD course was used for the analysis. Results showed a dramatic improvement in both cognitive and emotional skills among both full-time and part-time MBA students. Although these results are important to managerial and leadership effectiveness, they are only part of the recipe for outstanding performance and contribution to organizations. In contrast to some faculty fears, improvements in emotional intelligence abilities did not detract from the improvement of cognitive abilities and may have even enhanced development of critical thinking ability (Boyatzis, Stubbs, & Taylor, 2002).

Boyatzis, Stubbs, and Taylor believe that adding the LEAD course to the MBA program played a key part in making the shift happen. In the following section, we shall give a brief overview of the three main theoretical bases of the LEAD course. They are - (i) Emotional and Social Intelligence (ii) The ideal self and intentional change theory, and (iii) Opposing domains theory.

B. Theoretical Basis for the LEAD Course at WSOM

Emotional and Social Intelligence (ESI): Emotional intelligence has been defined as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions," (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional Intelligence skills are distinct from cognitive or technical skills in the sense that its competence relies on social and emotional reasoning abilities based in the default mode network (Boyatzis, Gaskin & Wei, 2014). Studies over the past decade and a half have conclusively demonstrated the impact of Emotional intelligence on objective career success (Poon, 2004)- specifically in aspects such as role appropriate behavior (Hur, Moon & Han,2014), cross-cultural adjustment (Shmueli, Dolan & Cerdin, 2005), and mental toughness (Scarnati, 2000). Clarke (2010) also found that project managers with higher levels of EI and empathy performed better on various outcomes such as teamwork, attentiveness, conflict management, and the transformational leadership behaviors of idealized influence and individualized consideration, even after controlling for cognitive ability and personality.

The work of modern-day professionals, such as engineers are deeply embedded in an interpersonal context (Joyner, Mann & Harris, 2012), and thus, requires a degree of interpersonal competence, or, at the behavioral level, emotional and social intelligence (ESI). The EI competencies are: emotional self-awareness, emotional self-control, adaptability, achievement orientation, and positive outlook (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007). The Social Intelligence (SI) competencies are: empathy, organizational awareness, inspirational leadership, coach and mentor, influence, conflict management and teamwork (Amdurer et al., 2015). It is therefore hypothesized that while an understanding of the Ideal Self is important for self-management, moving to the next level of leading others requires a high degree of ESI competencies, and hence it is an imperative to provide these skills to MBA students in order to prepare them for their future roles in the industry.

The ideal self and Intentional Change Theory (ICT): Self-awareness has been now recognized as a crucial aspect of leadership development. A special issue of the *Harvard Business Review* declared self-awareness to be "leadership's first commandment" (Collingwood, 2001), and the advisory council to the Stanford Graduate School of Business deemed it the most important ability for leaders to develop (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007). Empirical research has backed up such claims, and a link between identity development and leaders' development has been established (Carroll & Levy, 2010; Day & Harrison, 2007).

As briefly mentioned earlier, emerging adults go through the process of formulating a self-concept during their years at a university. This holds true for future managers as well, who happen to be the MBA students of today. Studies have shown that judgements about an "authentic self" determine the way people conceptualize meaning and purpose in their lives (Schlegel, Hicks, King, & Arndt, 2011), have an effect on satisfaction with life decisions (Kim, Christy, Hicks, & Schlegel, 2016), and motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It has been shown that employees with higher future work selves salience and elaboration have higher pro-active career behaviors (Strauss, Griffin & Parker, 2012); and those who find opportunities for synergy between their job roles and their ideal self are more engaged and better organizational members, go out of their way to help their peers, and are perceived to better perform their jobs than those who experience less of this synergy (Martinez, 2016).

A particularly salient and meaningful form of the authentic self is the "Ideal Self" (Chodorkoff, 1954). It is one of the many "Possible Selves", or representations of the self in future states (Markus & Nurius, 1986), albeit a distinctly positive and aspirational one. These possible selves are important because they function as incentives for future behavior (i.e., they are selves to be approached or

avoided), and they provide an evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of self. In a similar vein, it has been proposed that the ideal self is the driver of intentional change in one's behavior, emotions, perceptions, and attitudes (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). Boyatzis and Akrivou have explained that—"...once the force of the ideal self is activated, it plays an executive or motivational function within the self. It monitors and guides all actions and decisions in a direction which ensures deeper self-satisfaction through... the emergence of a new state of being with self actualization as a core quality; or the maintenance of a current character or state or condition in life or work, with increased clarity and mindfulness."

Their model of ideal self consists of an image of the desired future (consisting of dreams, aspirations and fantasies)- which itself is derived from personal values, a sense of purpose or calling, and life or career stage. The ideal self is driven by hope and a strong understanding of core identity. It is therefore hypothesized that an understanding and articulation of their ideal selves will enable management graduates to have a clearer grasp of their own deepest motivations and desires, and help them craft jobs and careers that are most meaningful to them. The discovery of one's ideal self, followed by an assessment of one's real self can lead an individual towards a learning plan which can be implemented in the presence of positive relationships. This journey has been described as intentional change, with the ideal self as its driver (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006).

Opposing Domains Theory: Opposing domains theory highlights a neurological tension between analytic reasoning and socioemotional reasoning. Specifically, when we engage in analytic reasoning (the task positive network), we suppress our ability to engage in socioemotional reasoning (the default mode network) and vice versa (Rochford, et al, 2014). The claim that our neural architecture imposes this constraint on cognition is supported by converging evi- dence from several types of neuroscience research, including studies examining task-related activation and deactivations (e.g., Buckner et al. 2008; Jack et al. 2012), the brain at rest (i.e., engaged in spontaneous cognition rather

than a proscribed task (e.g., Fox et al. 2005; Jack et al. 2012), neural modeling (Honey et al. 2009) and meta- analysis (Van Overwalle 2011; Goel 2007; Schilbach et al. 2008).

The central claim and the key message that emerges from the work reviewed here is the need for leaders to actively work on achieving a dynamic balance between the perspectives offered by two opposing networks in the human brain. When this balancing act is accomplished, true ethical leadership is given an opportunity to emerge. However, when an individual privileges one perspective over the other, shows poor judgment in deploying these different perspectives, or attempts to blend the two perspectives in a way that breaches neurobiological con-straints, then ethical failure become inevitable with time (Rochford, et al, 2014).

COURSE DESIGN

The above discussion strongly suggests that additional components should be added to an MBA curriculum to enhance the ESI skills and Ideal Self vision among graduates. In the following pages, a course outline is proposed that aims to develop these skills among MBA students over a thirty hour course- consisting of ten sessions, each having a duration of three hours.

The breadth of classroom actives have been designed to cover all four of Kolb's learning styles. Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) proposed that learning consists of four interdependent constructs: (1) Concrete experience (CE) involves using direct experience, feelings and emotions to engage with the world; (2) Reflective observation (RO) involves looking back on extant experience, recollecting details of the experience and gathering new information about the experience; (3) Abstract conceptualization (AC) involves creating meaning out of the experience and creating plans to

guide future actions; (4) Active experimentation (AE) involves testing the plan by putting it into action. The theory suggests that while every person uses each of the four learning modes to some degree, individuals develop preferences for using two of the four learning modes over the others. In other words, individuals tend to develop skills and preferences at using either CE versus AC or RO versus AE. This preference for using certain modes over others is described as learning style. Since an MBA class consists of diverse set of students who will most likely represent all the learning style preferences, the course has been designed in a way that the activities are equally divided based on preferred learning styles.

Several scholars, consultants and practitioners have elaborated upon classroom techniques that help students develop a personal vision and ESI skills (Kunnanatt, 2008; Boyatzis, Stubbs & Taylor, 2002; McKee, Boyatzis & Johnston, 2008). Based on a review of available literature, a course with the following focus areas is being proposed:

- (i) **Developing a personal vision:** This course can help students develop a personal vision of their Ideal Self by helping them reflect upon their dreams, aspirations and fantasies, helping them identify their personal values, and what they consider their purpose in life, and how they derive their sense of personal identity. (See Exhibit 1 for an illustration of the Ideal Self exercise).
- (ii) **Coaching with Compassion:** As opposed to coaching for compliance, this process aims to further the coachee's development by focusing on their Ideal Self and on their strengths more than their weaknesses (Boyatzis, Smith & Beveridge, 2012). Therefore, providing students with at least three sessions of coaching for the duration of the course will help them apply the theoretical concepts they learn about in the classroom.
- (iii) **Learning of specific ESI competencies:** Peer enquiry groups can facilitate reflective exercises around specific ESI skills. A key ESI skill is to understand one's own role in a problematic situ-

ation. An illustrative tool called the Learning Pathways Grid (LPG) is provided in Exhibit 2, which is used for "offline collaborative reflection" where a small inquiry group works together to use the LPG to analyze the case writer's role in a specific interaction.

Course Outline: "Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading Organizations"

Based on the above discussion, and mentioned readings, following course outline is proposed:

Course Name: Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading Organizations

Course Objective: Understanding the value and meaning of personal leadership and crafting a path towards being a resonant leader using personal vision and emotional-social intelligence

*Course Duration: 3*0 hours (9 sessions of 3 hours each + 3 coaching sessions of 1 hour each)

Target Audience: MBA students

Required Readings:

(i) Becoming a Resonant Leader by Richard Boyatzis et al.

(ii) You're a Genius by Stephen Taylor

(iii) Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

Table 1: Course Outline				
Session	Classroom activities	Readings		
Session 1: Understanding Resonant Leadership	What Makes a Great Leader? Students reflect on leaders who helped them in their journey so far, and on their own leadership propositions	Chapter 1 of <i>Becoming a Resonant Leader</i> by Richard Boyatzis et al.		
Session 2: Knowing Yourself - I	Reflective exercises: "Personal Canvas" and "Labor of Love"	Chapter 2 of <i>Becoming a Resonant Leader</i> by Richard Boyatzis et al.		
Session 3: Knowing Yourself - II	Reflective exercises to help students understand: Personal Values and Sense of Purpose	Chapter 3 of <i>Becoming a Resonant Leader</i> by Richard Boyatzis et al.		
Session 4: Your Ideal Self	Reflected Best Self exercise; Crafting a personal vision statement of their Ideal Self	Chapter 4 of <i>Becoming a Resonant Leader</i> by Richard Boyatzis et al.		

Session 5: Understanding Emotional Intelligence	The components of Emotional Intelligence and associated competencies	Articles: What makes a Leader by Daniel Goleman (HBR, 2004), Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee (HBR, 2001)
Session 6: El and Leadership	Case Study discussion	Case: The Unmanageable Star Performer by Abhishek Goel (HBR, 2013)
Session 7: Learning Plans - I	Forming Two-column cases, and Learning Pathways Grids (LPG)	Chapters 4 & 5 of You're a Genius by Stephen Taylor
Session 8: Learning Plans - II	Change Immunity Maps (CIMs) and Leadership Experimental Plans	Chapters 6 & 7 of You're a Genius by Stephen Taylor
Session 9: Reaching Resonance	Assessment and class discussion: How Mindful Are You?	Articles: How Resilience Works by Diane Coutu (HBR, 2002), How Mindful Are You? by Jacqueline Carter, Rasmus Hougaard & Rob Stembridge (HBR, 2017)

Course Evaluation and Gradings:

Personal Canvas and Labor of Love presentations (10%): A 10 minute presentation to the class on your personal canvas (a collage slide with pictures and images of what you consider important elements of your life and life-journey), and Labor of Love (a personal project / accomplishment that you are proud of).

Reflective Best Self Essay and Ideal Self Vision Statement (20%): A 1000 word essay on your reflected best self based on inputs from your peers, family, colleagues and managers; and a 1000 word essay on your dreams, hopes and aspirations for an ideal self 10-15 years into the future.

Case Study Discussion (10%): Classroom participation in case discussion (The Unmanageable Star

Two-Column Case Analysis (10%): 2-3 page report containing your two-column case and analysis

Performer) and a one page case study discussion summary with analysis and insights.

based on the text (You're a Genius)

LPG Analysis (10%): 2-3 page report containing your LPG and its analysis based on the text *Change Immunity Map analysis (10%):* 2-3 page report containing your CIM and its analysis based on the text

Leadership Experimental Plan essay (10%): 2-3 page report containing your hypothesis and experimental plan based on the text

Final Presentations (20%): Class presentation based on the results of your leadership experimental plans and roadmap ahead.

Measuring impact of the course

The impact of the course can be measured on three key parameters of the course itself - the ideal self, the real self and resonant relationships. Assessments of the same both before and after the duration of the course can offer us a fair sense of the impact. These can be measured through the following methods -

- (i) Ideal Self Test for measuring impact of the course on the Ideal Self's Salience A refined version of the Personal Vision statement that comprehensively articulates the person's Ideal Self the salience of the vision measured through the Ideal Self Test (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005)
- (ii) The Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI-U) University Edition to measure the impact of the course on the Real Self- This provides a 360° assessment of a person's emotional and social behavior. The ESCI measures 14 competencies that set excellent performers apart (Available through the Hay Group).
- (iii) The Relational Climate Survey to measure the impact of the course on resonant relationships. It measures the socio-emotional atmosphere that is created and maintained as people interact in a dyadic relationship, team, or organization (citation).

Exhibit 1: Ideal Self Exercise © Richard Boyatzis, Kathleen Buse and Scott Taylor, 2010.

Describe, in as much detail as possible, your dreams of your ideal life for 10 to 15 years from now. The following categories may help stimulate your reflection.

- Your passion, calling, and sense of purpose
- Your legacy
- Your values and philosophy
- Your dreams, fantasies and aspirations
- How you feel about your future possibilities
- Other components or elements of your dream

Exhibit 2: Learning Pathways Grid © Steven S. Taylor, 2015.

Actual frames guidelines: Ask, what assumptions would you have to make, to take the actual action? Focus on frames in use (rather than espoused frames) Look for contradictory frames Test each frame with the case writer	Actual actions guidelines: Start with the verbs for each utterance Look for patterns, when X blanks, then blank (e.g., When X inquires, take it personally and counter attack)	Actual outcomes guidelines: Consider instrumental, relational, and emotional outcomes Consider negative outcomes
Desired frames guidelines: Look for actual frames that could be made more salient Look for small modifications to actual frames Go to desired actions (and work back from there) if there's no progress	Desired actions guidelines: Connect to desired frames Consider desired outcomes Consider generic practices (e.g., balance advocacy and inquiry, move from content to process, or intervene into the dynamic) Role play what a desired action would look like	Ask the case writer what they wanted Consider instrumental, relational, and emotional outcomes Consider negative outcomes

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