Editorial

Practitioners’ Corner:

A Multidisciplinary View of Leadership Study

While preparing this issue for publication, one of the recurring thoughts that came to mind was just how intellectually rich the study of leadership truly is. It is a field of ripe diversity of thought and challenging applications of the frequently not-so-obvious. No one discipline can truly call leadership study its exclusive domain. In this issue, we highlight a variety of leadership disciplines including philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, marketing, economics, political science and education. And this is only a partial list.

The article by Michael Maginn, entitled Learning Leadership from History: The Gettysburg Experience, is a fine example of this multidisciplinary approach to the study of leadership. Ostensibly a practitioner’s article about using a historical event as context for an executive development model, the article is so much more. It clearly reflects the importance of story telling and oral history to the adult learning process. In this context, it is built on the traditions of the First and Second Chicago Schools of Sociology, where oral history was a key element to the understanding of the interaction of individuals and groups. The anthropologists Franz Boaz, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead were also major champions of oral history as critical elements in the study of culture.

Those of us who are educators know the importance of stories to the learning process. Almost irrespective of the discipline, they have the ability to illuminate simple and profound concepts alike. Maginn, a master creator of leadership development programs, takes the Gettysburg event and weaves it into a narrative about leadership challenges. It becomes far more than an American military history event. It engages readers and program participants alike in a collective and personal discourse on the relationship of decision-making “moments of truth” and values, a fundamental element of culture.

The article by William Frisbee, entitled Rethinking the Role of Academia in Developing Ethical Corporate Leaders, challenges readers and educators to test personal assumptions about the role of the university in the 21st century. The debate is both ages-old and ageless! He deftly positions some of the traditional literature of Aristotle and John Henry Newman to that of John Kenneth Galbraith and John Ralston Saul. Frisbee, a marketing professor with a passion for the study of philosophy and ethics, prods...provokes...illuminates! He is not afraid to ask the tough questions.
about cultural and personal values: why do we bother to educate; is there a better way; and what is the optimal relationship between commerce and education. He adds his voice to a growing chorus of scholars and academics who are asking the same questions. The article is brief, but the contents are significant. It simultaneously looks at and calls for new reflections on an ageless academic challenge.

The article by Richard Phidd, entitled *The Profession of Government & Theories of Bureaucracy in the 20th Century*, is a look back in time to help the reader more effectively go forward. He takes a multidisciplinary approach to the study of bureaucracy. He posits that bureaucracy is both necessary and a threat. Citing philosophers, economists, political scientists, social psychologists, industrial psychologists, and management scholars, he explains the history of bureaucracy in the 20th century, and why it is still needed today. Phidd, a political scientist, philosopher, and social critic, compellingly integrates the work of such disparate thinkers as Adam Smith, Max Weber, John Stuart Mill, Frederick Taylor, Elton Mayo, Chester Barnard, and Herbert Simon. In the process, he weaves a picture of the profession of government that is built on classical models, and is still evolving. While many of his examples are Canadian in origin, his message is far more universal. He concludes his article by saying: "...organizations are complex phenomena, which have to be investigated by means of interdisciplinary techniques with an emphasis on empirical analysis".

The authors featured in this issue of the *CSL Leadership Review* are practitioner-scholars, well versed in the literature of their respective fields, and constantly in search of a better way. Their scholarship digs deeply into the literature of a variety of disciplines. They are committed to diversity of thought and challenging applications of the frequently not-so-obvious. Their insights have the ability to challenge our leadership assumptions. This makes these articles well worth the reading!

William DeMarco
- Editor