Refereed Article

Beliefs and Characteristics of Leaders of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Programs in Pennsylvania

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Abstract

Qualitative methods in the form of in-depth interviews were used to determine beliefs and characteristics of 18 peer-nominated leaders of adult basic and literacy education programs in Pennsylvania. Two core beliefs that grounded participants' leadership philosophies and administrative practices emerged: the belief in human equality and the belief in the transforming power of adult education. Further, three typologies of leadership characteristics were ascertained and differentiated: Founders represented the grassroots, voluntary history of the field; Mainstreamers pointed toward current business strategies; and Prospectors reflected innovative and progressive administrative trends. These findings set forth the need for professional development programs and processes that may increase leadership well-being and productivity and that could advance the field of adult basic and literacy education.

Introduction

The subject of leadership has been examined empirically through many lenses, leading to the development of a number of instructive perspectives on the application of leadership within organizations. From its origins in grassroots movements to more current examinations of the topic, the literature on leadership has revealed a wide spectrum of characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors that indicate competency in organizational leadership. Zald and Ash (1966) originally distinguished characteristics of leaders of grassroots movements as being issue-focused, change-oriented, and volunteer supported, and they suggested that

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characteristics of grassroots leaders differ greatly from those of leaders in business or of formal educational institutions.

From this start the study of organizational leadership progressed. By the 1990s the descriptive scope of leadership characteristics had expanded, and leadership characteristics began to be applied to nonprofit organizations. Gardner (1990) noted that competent leaders of nonprofit organization may lead from intuition, rather than from logic, and are generally driven by passion for a cause and by the desire to achieve change for oppressed populations. Nonprofit leaders value relationships over capital gains, and they display diplomatic assertiveness, sociopolitical awareness, and resolute determination. Through the use of case studies Oster (1995) also showed nonprofit leaders as possessing social consciousness and noted that they prefer to remain inconspicuous, are motivated by fervent convictions, are grounded in a sense of spirituality and moral courage, and seek to preserve civil liberties. In an interesting treatise of leadership in situations of social crisis, LaBarre (1999) noted that—contrary to stereotypical characteristics—leaders who command respect with immediate follow-through by subordinates exert humility and modesty, communicate and inspire purpose, assert discipline without formality, and give responsibilities—rather than orders—to followers. Finally, Nanus and Dobbs' (1999) thorough discussion of contemporary organizational leadership characterized successful leaders as strategic visionaries, creators of social change, generators of trust and respect through fiscal credibility, and collaborators within the nonprofit community. In all, the literature on leaders of grassroots movements and nonprofit organizations indicate diverse characteristics that draw upon inner strengths, as well as on the visionary skills that often typify mission-driven leaders.

Research Focus: The Field of Adult Basic and Literacy Education
Throughout its history the field of adult basic and literacy education has clamored for legitimacy as a necessary socioeducational program. The field has received minimal attention by scholars, practitioners, and legislators (Beder, 1991; Quigley, 1997), has been perceived as remedial rather than preventive in nature, and has been devalued in comparison to mainstream educational institutions and programs. The field could be described as "marginalized," as it is allocated fewer tax dollars for program operations than is mainstream education. The marginalization of the field of adult basic and literacy education has resulted in continual challenges for program and organizational leaders, who reportedly cope

with high employee turnover, outdated material resources, and lower than average staff salary ranges (Apps, 1994; Beder, 1991; Quigley, 1997). These challenges can reduce positive outcomes for clients and programs; these diminished outcomes, in turn, can lead to demoralization of leaders, who may feel a loss of power in their quest for equitable life opportunities for clients and for ultimate program success.

With the stressors related to the effects of marginalization, one could assume that program leaders in the field might abandon their leadership positions for more lucrative and rewarding ones. Yet the opposite effect seems to have occurred. Despite these presumed reasons to exit their positions, leaders of adult basic and literacy education programs are reported to demonstrate a fervent commitment to the field and to persist in upholding a collective mission (Chisman & Associates, 1990). Indeed, some adult basic and literacy education program leaders—specifically those from the state of Pennsylvania—have received professional recognition within the field for excellence in service delivery (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003). Given this background, program leaders in this field present an ideal population for confirming and expanding upon the characteristics and beliefs of competent program and organizational leaders.

In addition, while organizational leadership has been studied using various populations, empirical study of leadership in adult basic and literacy education has not been conducted, making the study of leadership within this population necessary to the field's development. Practical research on leadership in adult basic and literacy education can instruct the field in characteristics and beliefs of its own competent leaders and can be a useful tool with which to promote professional development for the field's leaders.

Characteristics of Leaders in Adult Education

While not specific to adult basic and literacy education, the literature on leadership in adult education describes some broad characteristics of leadership in this field. Knowles (1980) noted an essential characteristic of competent leaders in adult education: respect for learners. This characteristic separates adult education from other fields by acknowledging the social stigma projected on some adult learners and the subsequent need for sensitivity to learners. Apps' (1994) contemporary characterization of adult education leaders adds passion to respect, a characteristic that "comes from the core of what leaders value and believe" (p. 112). Furthermore, Apps notes, conscientious

adult education leaders have a perspective of history, a spiritual dimension, and a need to seek solitude so that they can contemplate complex issues. Apps also recognizes the competent leader's courage to take and manage risks, to reconcile paradox, to balance life, and to understand multiple perspectives.

According to Eble (1992), adult education leaders show breadth of curiosity, candor, and loyalty to the adult education mission. Finally, Galbraith, Sisco, and Guglielmino (1997) and Dean, Murk, and Del Prete (2000) suggest intrinsic leadership skills that initiate in characteristics, and include the ability to inspire, plan, lead, and manage information; use critical thinking skills; and utilize marketing, budgeting, networking, and evaluating tools. Overall, the literature on characteristics of leaders in adult education substantiate many features of leadership in grassroots movements and nonprofit organizations while also making them specific to the field of adult education.

Methods

Given the study's exploratory nature, classic qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze data and convey findings. In-depth interviews were conducted, using a semi-structured interview protocol (Patton, 2002) to collect data on the leaders' perceived characteristics. Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) was conducted, and specific leadership characteristics emerged and were presented as core beliefs and typologies.

The sample was gathered through a peer-nomination, multi-stage sampling process in which 187 leaders from 137 adult basic and literacy education programs in the state nominated three colleagues that they identified as "highly competent." The *ABLE Administrator Competencies* (Johnson & Coro, personal communication, April 21, 2001), a list of characteristics of competent program leaders designed specifically for the field of adult basic and literacy education, was used to inform and focus the nomination process, to reduce bias, and, thereby, to increase methodological credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Moreover, the peer nomination process gave leaders a voice in, and some ownership of, the research process as they influenced decisions on the final group of interview participants.

Sixty-eight leaders responded to the request for peer nominations, with 36 leaders receiving multiple peer nominations as highly competent

program leaders. Through follow-up communication with the 36 nominated leaders. 22 leaders indicated their interest in being interviewed for the study. With the application of additional sampling criteria and with some attrition, 18 leaders finally were selected to be interviewed. The interviewed leaders operated programs located in urban and rural areas throughout the state, and they varied as to the types of organizations in which their programs were housed and in the number of years that they had been employed in their current leadership position. In other respects, the sample of interviewees was quite homogeneous, with 14 leaders being female, all leaders being white, and all leaders holding graduate degrees.

Findings

The findings gave both a depiction of leadership beliefs and characteristics and an interpretation of development of the field of adult basic and literacy education. These findings are described through two core beliefs and three typologies of leadership characteristics.

Core Beliefs

The leaders adhered ardently to two core beliefs that grounded, validated, and informed their leadership practices and that also empowered their commitments to the field of adult basic and literacy education. Found consistently in leaders from each typology, the core beliefs united leaders in this field and guided their perception of the field's mission. The core beliefs demonstrated the leaders' sense of community and their goals of personal advocacy and social change.

The belief in human equality. First, every leader interviewed expressed a strong belief in basic human equality and social rights, that is, the entitlement of all human beings to share in the opportunities of their community and to achieve the highest possible level of personal accomplishment. This core belief energized the leaders' commitment to the field of adult basic and literacy education. As one leader asserted, "Human equality is a life commitment for me, one that I do not take lightly." Another leader expressed her commitment to adult basic and literacy education and explained her convictions by saying:

I know there is inequality and social injustice, and I want to open doors for people to get past the inequality. I give everything I can

to my community and to the organization I lead. I speak up on behalf of the people who don't get a chance to speak up for themselves.

Some leaders shared their resolute commitment to human equality by expressing forthright convictions. "My goal is that everyone somehow has a level playing field," stated one female leader. Another leader resolutely avowed, "I will do my part to be sure that everyone has an opportunity no matter where they start in the process."

The leader of an independent literacy organization in a major city relayed the mission of the agency as a core belief with political overtones:

> We have a philosophy of equality—that everybody has a right and that everybody should have opportunities. We try to provide the needed educational opportunities. Everybody has a voice, a say, in the workings of their life and in this democratic society.

This political theme carried through by another leader, who stated:

> I am very involved in human rights and civil rights. Creating equal opportunities for individuals is really what I am all about. I speak up when others keep silent, and I am sometimes criticized for that. But there comes a time when you have to recognize that you are put in a position to help open doors of democracy for others. That's human rights.

Some leaders assigned culpability for human inequality to the socioeconomic structure of American society and suggested that illiteracy may be a root cause of other social problems. One leader, who had served in her position for 23 years, stated her feelings on the issue of illiteracy and socioeconomic disparity:

> Even though illiteracy can happen across all socioeconomic levels, when it occurs in middle to upper class people, there is more access to interventions. The further down the socioeconomic ladder you go, the less access they have to help.

The belief in the transforming power of adult education. The second core belief to which these leaders adhered corresponded with

the first belief and revealed the process through which inequality and other social injustices could be overcome and human rights achieved. Subsequent to their belief in human rights, the leaders believed in the transforming power of adult education. For these leaders the key to overcoming personal and social oppression lay in the pursuit and achievement of adult basic and literacy education.

One leader, who was close to retirement, declared his belief:

I have been preaching from day one that education and learning are the most therapeutic things you can do for many people. It has a better chance than anything else. There is nothing more reinforcing than to learn new information and put that new information to work for you. Education changes everything about a person's life.

A leader of a community-based organization emphasized the importance of adult education in solving other community problems:

People understand that many of the problems in our communities—violence issues, abuse issues, work and unemployment, drug and alcohol use—the lack of basic education is a part of it. And we know there is a solution to that part. We know that if people have more education, they have more choices.

Other leaders noted the relevance of adult basic education in the way "it impacts people's lives," in the manner through which it "instills self-worth in the learner," and in the way that adult basic education "gives [learners] hope for a better life." As noted by the leader of a rural organization, "Education is not about a diploma. It's about the feeling learners get when they can say, 'Hey! I did it!' It's an internal change that occurs."

The learner's sense of self-accomplishment was reflected in the comments of another program leader. She stated,

Have you ever seen the look in a person's eyes, someone who was not able to recognize street signs before you rode the bus with her and helped her read them? Have you ever seen tears well up in someone's eyes because of one simple session in which he was shown

how to read a job application? Those are the reasons that I know beyond a doubt that adult basic education changes peoples' lives.

One business-minded leader shared his perspective on the transforming power of adult basic education by expressing his frustration over the lack of sufficient funding for programs:

> I have been in this business for a long time, and I have watched it become somewhat more credible to funding sources, but I still feel like I have to force legislators to comprehend the magnitude of the effect adult basic education could have on society. So many other social programs could be reduced if the government would adequately fund this field. Education for adults is the most important approach to social welfare reform.

Finally, one leader encapsulated the importance of adult basic education as an agent for change when she said, "Like a match that ignites a bomb to create an explosion, so adult education is a catalyst in the transformation process."

Clearly, leaders of adult basic and literacy education programs in Pennsylvania believed in human equality, that is, in equal access of all individuals to the work and leisure opportunities of this country. Furthermore, the leaders affirmed resolutely their belief that adult basic education can transform people's lives such that access to opportunities are not lost and so that change can occur within the community. These fundamental beliefs worked in conjunction with each other and formed the crux of the philosophy that drove these leaders forward even in the midst of adversarial conditions.

Typologies of Leadership Characteristics

Even as the leaders formed a consensus around the two core beliefs, they differed in the characteristics through which they demonstrated their beliefs and incorporated them into thier practice. While there was variation in leadership characteristics, these characteristics nonetheless form clusters—or typologies—that corresponded somewhat to the leader's place in the history and the development of adult basic and literacy education as a profession. These typologies of leadership characteristics emerged from the data through judicious analysis. None of the leaders fit perfectly into one typology; characteristics showed

some overlap across the typologies, and some leaders displayed characteristics that belong to the typologies of two, or even all three, typologies. Nevertheless, the typologies prove useful in categorizing the leadership characteristics discerned in this study.

Founders. Every field of study, every academic discipline, and every organization begins with its founders, the individuals and groups who believe so strongly in a certain scholarly perspective, theoretical viewpoint, or mission that they devote their lives to the pursuit of that in which they believe so strongly. The four leaders categorized as "Founders" were forerunners in the field of adult basic education, setting the field's initial philosophy.

Founders reported themselves as having strength, passion, authenticity, and practicality. They were animated, speaking with zeal and courage. Founders mentioned their fearlessness. They were candid and spoke with the wisdom that comes with longevity in the field. Founders identified themselves as "advocates from the grassroots." One Founder stated that she felt "closely tied to the grassroots nature of the literacy issue."

Founders were not exclusively the leaders with the most years in the field. Some Founders were mid-career leaders who saw one of their primary tasks to be political activism, to influence legislation on behalf of the field. One Founder, in particular, delivered a strong opinion on the political pulse of the field. She asserted:

> It's one thing for people in adult education to believe in adult education, . . . but it's another thing to really want to ensure that you're spreading the word. It's fine for adult educators to know what it is they do, but without governing officials buying in, there won't be programs. That's why I stay involved in lobbying.

Another Founder discussed the ways that she remains active in social and political change. She noted,

> I see myself as one of the originators of the literacy movement. I believe illiteracy and poverty are linked. I fight for minority groups because I believe they are the most economically oppressed groups in our society.

Founders approached their work with faith and tied religion into their communication. Several Founders mentioned that they felt "called by God" to this field. Founders also motivated learners by using language that could instill faith. As one leader in this group shared, "I tell my learners they are like an apple holding on to a tree. God will give the sun and rain, but their job is only to hold on until they are ready, and then they can move on." Yet another Founder justified the use of faith images. She explained, "Faith metaphors are visualizations that learners can see. They are meant to help learners not lose heart and to become all God intended for them to be—whole, complete and happy."

Finally, Founders demonstrated astute business judgment in two areas. First, Founders prepared their organizations for their successors. With 23 years in her leadership position behind her, one Founder equipped her staff for the day when she will leave her position. She stated:

> I plan to leave the agency with the staff being well equipped with the knowledge of the program and with the same depth of passion for the program that I have. I don't want my work to be lost upon my departure, so I have prepared my team for the future.

Founders also showed good business sense in board development. "I feel it is my job to educate my board of directors," noted one Founder. Another woman also recognized the importance of board development by saying, "I see to it that my board comprehends the organization's mission like I do. They understand the organization and have a working knowledge of the systems that are in place."

Founders of the adult basic and literacy education movement have dedicated their lives to raising awareness of illiteracy as both a social problem and a personal dilemma. By raising awareness, Founders have forced the public to view, recognize, and acknowledge possible shortcomings in the traditional educational system, to reckon with answers to complex questions involving culpability, and to develop remedial approaches to illiteracy as a social concern and for basic educational and literacy needs of the population.

Mainstreamers. The 10 leaders characterized as Mainstreamers possessed the same core beliefs and exhibited the same passion for the field as the Founders. However, Mainstreamers displayed these values by grounding their work in the business world, and they led their

programs with steadfast business acumen. Unlike the Founders, who embraced the grassroots, voluntary nature of adult basic and literacy education, Mainstreamers desired to "professionalize" the field of adult basic and literacy education. With pride and diplomacy, one Mainstreamer stated, "I know that we run a nonprofit organization, but—don't be fooled—nonprofits are businesses, just like any other."

Mainstreamers differed from Founders in some other noteworthy aspects of their leadership. First, strategic planning, business agendas, political and social tact, and business-like decorum replaced grassroots activism for most Mainstreamers. Second, inasmuch as Founders described themselves as "change agents," Mainstreamers sought to reach a pinnacle described by one Mainstreamer as "optimal organizational functioning." Third, Mainstreamers distanced themselves from radical politics. As one leader asserted, "I get frustrated over cumbersome politics, peoples' prejudices, and a lot of things that hinder my chances of getting the work done." Mainstreamers also refrained from aggressive community involvement and from raising social awareness. Instead, as one Mainstreamer noted, "When it comes to awareness of the issue, I'd rather not 'rattle my cage.' I prefer to be civic-minded."

Mainstreamers referred to their leadership role as one of "gamesmanship," suggesting that they were competing for scarce resources. As one Mainstreamer noted, "I play by the rules of the game. I follow protocol, and, as a result, I usually get what I want. I win at the money game." A second Mainstreamer referred to his role as playing "the chess game of management." In a similar vein, one female Mainstreamer added,

> I see management as a juggling act. When the "fiscal ball" is in the air, the "staffing ball" may be in your hand. It's all a matter of what part of the act is most important at the time. That's the "ball" you catch on its way down.

Many Mainstreamers addressed the issue of strategic decision making more directly. For example, two Mainstreamers referred directly to the use of data for making decisions; one concluded, "One should never make a decision based on emotion or on what is popular. I always make decisions based on program and evaluation data." A second Mainstreamer mentioned his enjoyment of data analysis: "I love to examine the data I've collected to answer questions on how to optimize

resources, how to plan programs, and how to teach staff." Another female Mainstreamer discussed strategic maneuvering when she pointed out that she "analyzes different forces to see where things are coming from and where they're going, and I steer forces in the direction that I philosophically agree with. That's strategy. That's program development."

Mainstreamers also reported their values with respect to networking and collaboration and stressed their position on the importance of diplomatic communication and problem solving. As one male leader of a small literacy education department in a community college suggested:

> A lot of people are talking about collaboration these days. And it's true that collaboration is very important. But not as many people talk about cooperation. I think it's important to cooperate in your collaborations. That's the way to get the job done.

A female Mainstreamer, a leader of a statewide organization, also touted the importance of judicious problem solving:

> Often I come to the mediation table with leaders from several organizations, and we need to work out some issue that affects them all. . . . In order for me to determine the so-called "best" possible decision, I must call upon some creative mediation and problem solving skills.

Yet another Mainstreamer reiterated these points on communication when she said,

> One needs to recognize that, in work situations, 90% of problems stem from poor communication follow through. Communication has to be complete, with message senders saying all they intend to say and receivers hearing the message as it was intended.

Business acumen, data-driven decisions, and diplomatic communication created meritorious professional goals for Mainstreamers. As one Mainstreamer proudly declared, "I came to this organization with one goal: to make this agency a world-class organization."

Prospectors. If Founders are historians and Mainstreamers are contemporaries, the four leaders labeled as "Prospectors" can be viewed as futurists. These leaders reported their interest in, and commitment to, cutting-edge leadership procedures and practices. Prospectors discussed their searches for innovative learning technologies, curricula, and tools, and, if they could not find the resources they needed, they invented them for their own use and for use by others in the field. Possessing a doctorate in education, one Prospector placed his energies on the development, marketing, and delivery of, and training for, a multi-level, multi-faceted program of individualized instruction. He explained his reason for rejecting current curricula and teaching methods:

> I am convinced that adult education teachers and tutors need to use instructional materials that are adaptable to each individual they teach. Traditional methods didn't work for our people when they were used to teach them in the past, and I don't think things are going to be better for them twenty years later. Besides, some of the teaching materials are designed for much younger learners and demean older adults. One of the greatest things we can give the adults we work with is a sense of self-respect. How can we do that if we use materials that have a condescending tone? So, I struck out and created my own materials.

Other Prospectors contributed to this argument, referring to themselves as "entrepreneurs." As one female Prospector noted, "I guess I feel like an entrepreneur, like I am inventing something that's never been thought of before." Another woman offered a similar idea:

> I keep coaxing my teachers to try new ways of relaying information to learners. I suggest ideas that will drive home a point to the learners in ways the teachers never thought of. Sometimes they resist my suggestions, but eventually they come to me and tell me that they tried my ideas and they were successful.

Original teaching tools were not the only innovative strategy employed by Prospectors; they also embraced cutting-edge methods of staff supervision, rejecting the use of positional power and opting instead for a flattened organizational hierarchy and shared decision making

among staff members. Stating that she was "uncomfortable with power terms," one Prospector noted,

> One of my strategies is shared leadership. My predecessor was very "top-down," a gentleman who really did not like a collaborative management style. At first my staff was petrified to have some input, but now—even though the responsibility still scares them— they are thrilled to have some say in what goes on in our office.

Another woman's approach to leadership coincided with her colleague's style: "I am very uncomfortable with the archaic idea of subordination. I prefer to use positive supervision." A third Prospector— also a woman—aligned her thinking and practices with the other women. She concurred, "I don't believe in using power to control staff. I believe it is possible for a professional staff to be intrinsically motivated. I place expectations on my staff with this belief in mind." Coincidentally, this same Prospector had been in her leadership position for only two-and-one-half years, the shortest number of years of any of the study's participants.

Some Prospectors expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation, due, in part, to their futuristic orientation. Several Prospectors reported being misunderstood by their peers, by their boards of directors, and by their staff members. As a result of perceiving themselves as being misunderstood, some Prospectors acknowledged their decision to separate themselves from their peers. As the only man among the Prospectors, one leader shared, "I generally stay away from most of the other administrators in [the area]. They don't understand my methods and try to convince me to change them. Needless to say, I select work relationships with care." As another young Prospector contributed,

> My colleagues have difficulty understanding the way I operate, my leadership style. So I've had to stop discussing administrative matters with other program leaders. I've taken my share of criticism, and now I'm afraid to talk about work-related matters.

Because they tended to move away from "tried and true" managerial practices and risked using novel administrative techniques and procedures, Prospectors reported having problems with the general functioning of the organizations or departments they operate. They

reported having difficulty obtaining and maintaining good instructors and lacked office support. However, some Prospectors were motivated by the challenge of "running the agency without support." Nonetheless, while their immediate administrative tasks may have been incomplete, Prospectors contributed to the field of adult basic and literacy education by seeking, finding, and creating innovative ways of accomplishing their learner-centered goals and objectives.

Implications

Two points merit discussion, both of which may add dimension to the concept of leadership in this field and, in general, to the understanding of leadership. These are compelling leadership and the evolution of leadership with the field of adult basic education.

Compelling Leadership
First, the characteristics of these leaders indicate a dimension of leadership that can be described most appropriately as "compelling leadership." As Apps (1994) points out, the passion that leaders in adult education exude "comes from the core of what [they] value and believe" (p. 112). Two core beliefs were found among these leaders: the belief in human equality and the belief that adult education transforms lives. While these leaders were clearly passionate about their work, these findings suggest that their passion is grounded in, and may be preceded by, their core beliefs. Essentially, the leaders' beliefs compelled their passion.

The question, then, is this: "Why do these highly competent leaders remain committed to the field of adult basic and literacy education when it has so few rewards?" These findings suggest that these highly competent leaders were bound to the field by two compelling beliefs. One can speculate that they do not leave this marginalized field for more lucrative careers because to do so would contradict their beliefs and create a dissonance that would be difficult to resolve. In other words, they do not leave the field because their beliefs do not permit them to leave. They cannot abandon their beliefs. If remaining in a marginalized field can be attributed to any leadership characteristic, it may be that these leaders are able to believe persistently in their mission despite challenges and obstacles to their program's success. Therefore,

despite the constraints of marginalization, these highly competent leaders are duty bound to the mission and, subsequently, to their leadership roles.

Of course, it is necessary to entertain an alternative reason for the leaders' commitment to a marginalized field. These leaders could use the belief in human equality and in the transforming power of adult education as a rationalization for remaining in the midst of the consequences of marginalization. They may need these beliefs in order for their positions to be tolerable. However, given that these leaders were determined to be highly competent, to have the highest level of integrity, and to perform the demands of their roles with utmost excellence, one may find this viewpoint to be inconsistent with the intrinsic tools and skills that leaders of this caliber possess and use for endurance.

That the beliefs and characteristics associated with compelling leadership emerged among program leaders in adult basic and literacy education is, in itself, important. Clearly, this field has many competent leaders, and the mission has progressed through them. Additionally, the idea of compelling leadership could be a dimension of leadership that may also increase understanding of leadership in other fields of practice, both public and private, profit and nonprofit.

Evolution of the Field of Adult Basic and Literacy Education
The second point for discussion pertains to the differentiation of leaders by the typologies. Throughout the data collection process it became clear that the leaders held strong differences of opinion about the changing field of adult basic education, particularly as these changes pertain to professionalization of the field and standardization of instructional methods. The desire to see professionalization in the field increased as the leaders moved away from the field's early formation. Founders desired strongly to see the field remain committed to its voluntary, grassroots beginnings and to individualized instruction; Mainstreamers desired to professionalize the field and to standardize methods; and Prospectors conceptualized a hybrid professional structure with innovative instructional and leadership methods.

These differences of thought and perceptions indicate the evolution of the field and demonstrate the struggle that often ensues through transitions. Regardless of historical location, these leaders expressed both their appreciation for, and sadness over, the development of the field of adult basic and literacy education. Most of the leaders carried

contradictory—and even conflicting—emotions about these changes, welcoming them and disliking them at the same time. These dualistic emotions are one aspect of the leaders' relationship with the field. The leaders perceived themselves to be acting upon the field, understanding themselves to be in control of the end product—quality programs. However, even as the leaders were acting upon the field and programs, the field also was acting upon the leaders. Therefore, the leaders may have less control than they perceived and may actually be agents of change while simultaneously being sufferers of change.

Suggestions for Professional Development

Both the compelling leadership seen in these highly competent leaders and the influence of an ever-changing field can and should be subjects of ongoing professional development for all leaders of adult basic and literacy education programs. The characteristics seen in these competent leaders can serve as topics that leaders can explore in philosophical discussions with one another, at leadership retreats and conferences, and through the professional development offered at regional Professional Development Centers.

Also, these characteristics can help local programs and the broader field to establish a state-level, comprehensive process and program that upholds leaders through the dynamics of change. Leaders, because they are rich with wisdom and insights, could benefit the field through a structured forum in which they can share their experiences regarding change. Information gained through structured forums could advance the understanding of the consequences of field-wide change on leaders, especially on those who are highly committed and competent. To bring the importance of leadership beliefs and characteristics and of field-wide evolution to light could prove useful in preventing leadership burnout and subsequent turnover, a positive outcome that could result in a more thoughtful use of human resources and conscientious use of program dollars.

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