

The Practical and Professional Aspects of Leadership Training.

Bruce Arai

Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University



Abstract

The training of contemporary leaders, whether in the form of business executives, clergy, the military, coaches or politicians has been attempted in myriad ways, with mixed success. One reason for this is that there are numerous theories of leadership on which leadership training programs are built. And if the theoretical assumptions underlying a program are incorrect, the program has little chance of success. This paper reviews the age-old idea that leadership resides within particular people, and shows how current theories of leadership have made this view obsolete. Instead, leadership is a product of situations and relationships, and leadership training programs need to focus on preparing people for those situations, and being a part of those relationships, when they arise. In contrast to many programs that focus on specific skills, the best way to prepare people for leadership roles is through a rigorous grounding in the liberal arts, with plenty of opportunities for deep thinking, the improvement of rhetorical abilities, and mentorship opportunities. We have built a program on these principles at Laurier Brantford, and while we have had a fair amount of success, we are always looking for ways to improve it. The paper concludes with some of the lessons we have learned in this process, in the hopes that these may benefit other programs.