Teaching Collaborative Leadership: Ideas and Lessons for the Field

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Abstract
This article describes and analyzes a new approach to teaching collaborative leadership to masters of public administration students at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. The 3-year-old course teaches students how to design a collaborative network with the necessary players at the table; structure governance for a collaborative group; negotiate ethically to best leverage resources; facilitate meetings of a network; manage conflict among network members; effectively engage the public, including designing and sequencing civic engagement to make effective use of public knowledge; design useful systems for evaluating the outcomes of collaboration; and operate within the legal constraints on collaborative public agency action. The theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of the course are explained. Ideas and lessons for the field are offered.

Today’s leaders are working in a new landscape that requires them to be collaborative. By collaborative we mean the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organizations. Collaborative means to co-labor, to achieve common goals, often working across boundaries and in multisector and multi-actor relationships. Collaboration typically is based on the value of reciprocity and can include the public (O’Leary, Gazley, McGuire, & Bingham, 2009). This article describes and
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analyzes a new approach to teaching collaborative leadership to masters of public administration students at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

In this article we use the terms collaborative leadership and collaborative management. While we are in agreement with Pascale’s statement (1990) that managers do things right and leaders do the right thing, we find the dichotomy a false one. Rather, we believe that leadership is one of many assets that successful public managers must possess. Yukl (2005) supports this argument by noting that “most scholars seem to agree that success as a manager in modern organizations necessarily involves leading” (pp. 6–7). In fact, much of what is taught in the Maxwell School’s Executive Leadership course is inspired by the literature on collaborative management.

George Frederickson observed early on (1999, p. 702) that public administration was moving “toward theories of cooperation, networking, governance, and institution building and maintenance” in response to the “declining relationship between jurisdiction and public management” in a “fragmented and disarticulated state.” Frederickson emphasized institutionalism, public sector network theory, and governance theory as relevant to the future of public administration research. He defined institutionalism as pertaining to “social constructs of rules, roles, norms, and the expectations that constrain individual and group choice and behavior” (p. 703); public sector network theory as pertaining to “structures of interdependence” that have “formal and informal linkages that include exchange or reciprocal relations, common interests, and bonds of shared beliefs and professional perspectives” (pp. 704–705); and governance theory as occurring at institutional, organizational or managerial, and technical or work levels, including formal and informal rules, hierarchies, and procedures, and influenced by administrative law, principal-agent theory, transaction cost analysis, leadership theory, and others (pp. 705–706).

Bryson and Crosby (2008) theorize that collaboration across sectors emerges after the failure of a single sector to address a public policy problem; they define sectors as markets and business, nonprofit organizations, community and the public, the media, and government. Lester Salamon (2005, p. 16) recently observed:

Unlike both traditional public administration and the new public management, the new governance shifts the emphasis from management skills and the control of large bureaucratic organizations to enablement skills, the skills required to engage partners arrayed horizontally in networks, to bring multiple stakeholders together for a common end in a situation of interdependence.

McGuire (2009) observes:

A “profession” emerges as an occupational grouping matures and there is an identifiable body of technical knowledge—perhaps what
we need to do in public management is reconfigure the professional identity to match the new third-party governance world.

How does public administration as a field begin to reconfigure managers’ professional identity to match this changing landscape? In a recent article, Feldman and colleagues (Feldman, Khademian, Ingram, & Schneider, 2006, p. 93) provide a compelling vision of this new professional identity: “The public manager as inclusive manager facilitates the practice of democracy by creating opportunities for people with different ways of knowing public problems to work together in a collective space to solve problems.” Crosby and Bryson (2005) call this “leadership in a shared power world.” Public managers and administrators need to combine many different disciplines; they need a synthesis of what we are learning not only in public affairs but also in political science, social psychology, organizational behavior, and communications (Bingham & O’Leary, 2006). They need to combine management skills with network theory, negotiation theory, and institutional theory to inform practice. They need to practice public policy dispute resolution, stakeholder processes, and civic engagement. They need to operate within public law’s frameworks for collaboration. They need to understand collaborative governance at the local, regional, state, national, and transnational levels.

Agranoff (2008) observes that in collaborative public management, knowledge is the key. However, knowledge is not a disembodied, platonic idea; Agranoff describes it as a combination of experience, value, context, and insight, because it is knowledge as applied to make sense of new experiences and information. In the tradition of Dewey, Agranoff discusses the differences between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge.

Traditional teaching methods include readings and lecture to convey explicit knowledge. More recently, pedagogy has embraced small-group work or collaborative learning to deepen the way in which students engage with substantive concepts. In contrast, noncredit short courses and training programs address practice and skill development. However, this approach fails on two fronts. First, it fundamentally misperceives substance and practice as separate. Second, it fails to capitalize on the opportunity to convey to students how both are manifestations of a single competency in collaborative public management. The Maxwell School of Syracuse University worked to provide future leaders with an environment and series of experiences combining both tacit and substantive knowledge to give leaders that competency. As Agranoff observes, “Knowledge is broader, deeper, and richer than data or information”; knowledge is how humans combine information with experience and insight to do work: it is “both a process and an outcome” (Agranoff, 2008).

Public managers need to learn to do, and do to learn how to inhabit this new role. For public managers to engage in artful practice of these various areas of competence, we must adapt our teaching methods. This article describes one approach to cultivating the artful and effective practice of collaborative leadership.
The Collaborative Public Manager: Leading When You Are Not in Charge

Increasingly, scholars have called for change in the nature of public management education to better reflect what our students will encounter as they enter the public service. Lester Salamon (2005, pp. 7–8) recently noted, “We need to move from training public servants or policy analysts toward training . . . professional citizens.” Traditionally, public servants and policy analysts are taught to function in an expertise-driven decisional process. We train public administrators to function within a hierarchical bureaucracy, which is essentially a deductive process. Managers start with a theory of the policy problem, collect information and evidence regarding different approaches, evaluate reliability, and make a considered judgment about how to advance the public good within the scope of their delegated authority. This is a paternalistic model in which those governed are asked to accept arguments from authority based on claims of superior technical expertise. The model depends upon a linear, top-down authority structure and the notion of a chain of command.

Networks differ fundamentally from a single agency in the essence of their organization (Powell, 1990). Instead of a single member of a chain of command making an executive decision, multiple managers and stakeholders negotiate the decision. Moreover, they are not simply negotiating the final outcome; they often are negotiating every intermediate issue, including but not limited to the process through which decisions are made; relevant information, data, and science; the nature and form of intermediate and final outcomes; decision rules; the role of the public, public knowledge, and values; and steps for implementation. Everything may be on the table; there is no assumption that traditionally authoritative expertise such as that of trained policy analysts will determine the outcomes. Network participants each may come from an independent chain of command, or they may come from an organization that has a nonhierarchical structure. Some of the network participants may not have the power to commit their organization to a binding outcome, but instead only the power to recommend its approval, perhaps even ratification, through a vote of the membership or a nonprofit’s board of directors. A network’s decision process also differs from the traditional conception of expert administration. The outcome is not rationally dictated through a deductive process; it may be knowledge or wisdom developed inductively by incorporating the different frames of reference, backgrounds, values, and experiences of the participants.

One might ask how this differs from a committee, team, or working group within a traditional bureaucracy: the difference goes to the heart of the work. Within a traditional bureaucracy, the team, committee, or group always reports to someone up the food chain who has the power to impose a decision in the event of an impasse. The question of what happens if the members of the network reach an impasse is itself subject to negotiation and agreement. More-
over, many networks start from the position of consensus as a decision norm; in other words, there is no majority vote—there must instead be unanimity. One participant can veto an agreement on any of the issues under negotiation. Public administrators need fully to understand the importance of this form of leadership and the absolute necessity of mastering the skill sets of collaboration, negotiation, conflict management, and facilitation to function in a network.

Connelly, Zhang, and Faerman (2008) explain how collaboration presents many new paradoxes for the public manager. They find that as managers work both within their own organizations and within networks, they are challenged in very different ways. Collaborative managers must work both with autonomy (within their own organizations) and interdependence (as members of a network). Collaborative managers and their networks have both common and diverse goals. Collaborative managers must work both with a fewer number (because organizations are blended into a network) and a greater variety of groups that are increasingly diverse. Collaborative managers need to be both participative and authoritative. Collaborative managers need to see the forest and the trees. Collaborative managers need to balance advocacy and inquiry.

To be an effective manager in a networked world, these challenges demand different skill sets. While this is a new type of leadership, it has its roots in the work of management guru Mary Parker Follett (1942), who wrote about “power with” rather than “power over.” There is not only differentiation of roles; managers need the skills to tolerate the paradoxes and the corresponding ambiguity. This practice requires artistry and tacit knowledge in the context of limited authority; managers need to inspire rather than impose. Connelly et al. (2008) also point out the basic paradox of collaboration—that both parties can “win” (citing Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Together, the participants in the network can search for solutions that fundamentally transcend the position of any single participant. Connelly et al. discuss four factors: initial dispositions to collaborate, issues and incentives, number and variety of groups, and leadership. These factors map very closely to the issues that Huxham and Vangen (2005) discuss in their synthesis of many years of study of collaborative practice.

McGuire (2009) conducted an empirical study of county-level emergency management agencies. Emergency management is an interesting case because the professional institutional boundaries are being formed at a time when the work is dependent upon abilities of staff to collaborate. McGuire examined how exposure to different flavors of professional development training contributes to collaborative management practice. While education overall is a significant predictor, the results also suggest that mid-career professional development courses matter—the specialized training in two cases is a significant predictor of collaborative activity (even when it is not stressing collaborative practices, in and of itself). For the high-performing counties, in fact, this professional development is a more important predictor. McGuire discussed the causal mechanisms for this
effect and how it can be true when collaboration is not a focus in the training. He suggested that knowledge transfer among participants teaches that collaboration is the way to get things done. Thus, it is increasingly clear that to engage in networked governance, students must both do to learn and learn to do collaborative public management.

**Artful And Effective Practice: Teaching Collaborative Capabilities**

Bingham, Sandfort, and O’Leary (2008) write that new network realities necessitate a different type of practice and new capacities. They use the word *capability* advisedly, in the sense of being able to do, not simply being passively competent. According to these scholars, the collaborative public manager needs capabilities in

- Designing a network with the necessary players at the table
- Structuring governance for the collaborative group
- Negotiating ethically to best leverage agency resources
- Facilitating meetings of the network
- Managing conflict among network members
- Effectively engaging the public, including designing and sequencing civic engagement to make effective use of public knowledge
- Designing useful systems for evaluating the outcomes of collaboration
- Operating within the legal constraints on collaborative public agency action

Bingham et al. (2008) point out that there is already a substantial body of research and curricula upon which the field of public administration can draw to develop these collaborative capabilities in public managers; it exists in the fields of negotiation, conflict resolution, conflict management, and participatory democracy.

McGuire’s study (2009) suggests that the field of public administration needs to redesign both degree programs and mid-career professional development to more closely map what people are grappling with in the field. In line with these arguments, in a 3-year experiment, the Maxwell School of Syracuse University attempted to meet the challenge of training these new leaders by teaching integrative and collaborative capabilities. We asked ourselves whether it was possible to create a course that would be a hands-on experience where over 100 students learned the skills of negotiation and collaborative problem solving. (Student information is shown in the Appendix). We wondered whether it was possible to torque the way we teach leadership to focus less on abstract theories and presentations by successful leaders, and more on the concrete collaborative skills that real-world leaders say are so important. We decided to find out. Figure 1 conveys the sequence of events in the course.
Students were asked to read excerpts from classic works on leadership. We wanted students to think about how the world has traditionally defined and operationalized good leadership and to make judgments for themselves as to whether these perspectives fit today’s collaborative world. Box 1 presents these readings, which range from Paul Hershey and Kenneth Blanchard to Warren Bennis and from John Gardner to Steven Sample.

In addition, students were asked to read more contemporary works on networks, collaborative public management, interest-based negotiation, and collaborative problem solving. Box 2 presents these readings. Initial classroom lectures and discussions focused on the changing landscape of governance, the importance of networks and collaborative problem solving, as well as the challenges of integrative and collaborative leadership.

**Nontraditional Classroom Requirements: Win All You Can Win**

We wanted students to experience the opposite of creative problem solving: winner-takes-all competition. The first year we did this by playing a 1-hour game called “Win All You Can Win.” This is a four-person card game that rewards students for thinking in the short term about themselves to the exclusion of the group and long-term relationships. Those who cheat and act selfishly have a better chance of winning than those who think and act in a collaborative fashion. We used real money to foster real competition. Winners won big; losers lost
big. The game was followed by a debriefing discussion on “What does winning mean?” including analyzing individual versus individual competition; group versus group competition; short-term versus long-term relationships; collaboration versus competition; creating value versus claiming value; and whether behaving in this fashion helped or hindered the ability to solve society’s most pressing public policy problems, as well as whether it helped or hindered students’ ability to be integrative and collaborative leaders.

**Interest-Based Problem Solving Training**

After debriefing the “Win All You Can Win” exercise, we introduced the
students to a collaborative problem-solving approach based on principled or interest-based negotiation as created by Fisher, Ury, and Patton and presented in their book, *Getting to Yes*. This part of the course was team taught by a Maxwell Professor of Practice with 30 years experience as a professional negotiator, mediator, and facilitator; and a tenured long-term university senior scholar. It spanned two 3-hour sessions.

Interest-based negotiation allows for using collaborative problem solving and creativity to uncover ways to meet many of the collective needs of the negotiation parties. It is a negotiation strategy that focuses on satisfying as many interests or needs as possible for all parties, as opposed to positions. It is a problem-solving process used to reach an integrative solution rather than distributing rewards in a win-lose manner. It is not a process of compromise. The basic tenet of interest-based bargaining is issue resolution through interest satisfaction.

We taught our students that to prepare for interest-based negotiation, one should first identify the subject and scope of the negotiation. Second, one should identify one’s best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), asking what can your organization do or accomplish by acting alone? The BATNA question is fundamental because it determines whether there is a need to participate in the negotiation. Next, we taught our students to identify the necessary and appropriate network participants; identify the BATNAs of each of the other network participants; identify their own interests and identify or speculate on the interests of the other network participants; determine whether those who participate in network meetings have the authority to bargain, and if not, who in their organization does have authority; and finally, address ground rules or protocols for
We taught the basic steps to doing interest-based collaborative problem solving as follows:

1. Clarify the issue, and frame it as a joint task to meet both parties' needs.
2. Educate each other about your interests (disclose and listen); keep asking why?
3. Generate multiple options.
4. Evaluate the options (how well do they meet needs?).
5. Select or modify options based on which ones meet needs most.
6. Reach consensus solution; develop a plan to implement the agreement, including monitoring.

We also taught the students a number of critical but relatively easy-to-acquire communication skills that improve one's ability to achieve mutually advantageous outcomes when working collaboratively. These include asking problem-solving questions to identify interests, reflective or active listening to reduce tension and manage the conflict, and responding to hard bargaining tactics through a variety of means.

We taught the students that for negotiation and collaborative problem solving in the context of a network, a good, long-term bargaining relationship is not the same as approval of the other side, shared values, avoiding disagreement, or perfect trust (Fisher & Brown, 1989). Instead, it is establishing an attitude that is unconditionally constructive by using rationality in response to emotion, understanding others when they misunderstand you, consulting others even if they appear not to listen, being reliable in not trying to deceive, being noncoercive and not yielding to coercion, and accepting others and their concerns as worthy of consideration.

Simulations

We then presented the students with opportunities to apply what they learned in hands-on collaborative simulations. First, the students participated in a two-person job negotiation simulation that concerned two characters from an upcoming larger simulation. This simulation lasted 1 hour. Second, the students participated in a four-person simulation lasting 3 hours that brought together three cities and a nongovernmental organization (NGO) interested in protecting groundwater. Finally, the students participated in a 10-person public policy simulation concerning water quality and quantity, which was streamlined each year. Negotiations occurred over a 16-hour period divided into 2 consecutive days.

Finding simulations that would allow students to take leadership roles and practice integrative and collaborative skills was a formidable challenge. The case we used, which we called “The Pablo-Burford Sustainable Water Quality Network,” started as a highly technical Sustainability Challenge Foundation simula-
tion, originally written by biophysical scientists. We adapted the simulation for MPA students, which took 6 months. The streamlined instructions were 16 legal-sized pages long, plus 4 pages of confidential instructions for each of 10 leader/negotiators. The simulation brought together 10 leaders from two countries, Burford and Pablo, as well as several international leaders: The head of the Burford Environmental Department, a federal agency; the director of the North Rhine Sustainable Agriculture Organization, an organization headquartered in Burford composed of organic farmers; the head of the Burford Farm Association; a governor; the head of the Pablo Agriculture Department, another federal agency; the director of CONSUME, a worldwide advocacy group working to end hunger; the head of the National Farmers Union of the country of Pablo; the director of the Trade Alliance of Pablo, an industry group interested in expanding trade; the head of the international organization The Earth Coalition; and the director of the international consortium of biotechnology companies called BIOtechlink.

The leaders had six decisions to make: First, they had to establish network governance and negotiation rules. Second, they had to choose water quality management schemes. Third, they were tasked with choosing options for water use reduction. Fourth, they grappled with options for chemical management. Fifth, they had to agree on how to enforce network agreements. Sixth, they had to agree on who paid for what. The leaders also had to figure out when to collaborate and with whom; facilitate meetings of the group; manage conflict in the network; engage the public; follow laws that both helped and hindered their efforts; and evaluate their integrative and collaborative strategies.

In an effort to foster an environment of creativity needed to solve cross-boundary challenges, we hired Tim Mahar, a graduate of The Second City Improv, to work with the students half way through their negotiations. The Second City is a famous comedy theater that originated in Chicago. Its alumni include John Belushi, Mike Myers, Gilda Radner, John Candy, Tina Fey, Steve Carell, and Stephen Colbert. Our Second City Improv expert taught students how to connect with others, solve unexpected problems in the moment, and create better ways of working. In addition, he taught our students how to create something out of nothing on the fly, especially when “the best-laid plans” go awry.

The following are some of his ideas to promote creative problem solving as collaborative leaders:

- Don’t judge.
- Stay open.
- Don’t say no.
- Don’t stop the action.
- Start anywhere.
On the same day, we introduced the students to “Thinkpak,” a creative brainstorming card deck created by Michael Michalko (available on Amazon.com). Thinkpak is a brainstorming tool that forces users out of their habitual ways of thinking. It is based on the idea that everything new is just an addition or modification of something that already exists. It requires users to take an idea and:

- substitute something.
- combine it with something else.
- adapt something to it.
- modify or magnify it.
- put it to some other use.
- eliminate something.
- reverse or rearrange it.

Our rationale was that in an integrative and collaborative world, these thought processes might catalyze creative thinking concerning new challenges.

Back to Collaborative Problem-Solving Negotiations

Throughout the negotiations, participants used their newly acquired improv and creative brainstorming skills. Each group had access to a Thinkpak, but it was left to the group whether and when to use it. They were encouraged to think creatively about the possible solutions to the pressing public policy problems they were grappling with.

One crucial part of the large simulation was the use of coaches. The first year, we used four PhD student coaches and two professional facilitator coaches who observed, and gave feedback, to 10 negotiating groups. The unevenness and lack of maturity across PhD student coaches, however, convinced us to drop that strategy the second and third year and ratchet up the coaching expertise. Instead, we hired five seasoned negotiators with an average of 29 years experience in public policy negotiation. Two PhD students were used as informal tutors when students did not understand their roles. Coaches had the discretion to “stop action” within a simulation in order to seize upon “teaching moments.” Typically, these time-outs were called when a group appeared to be stuck in positional bargaining and conflict.

After the 2-day negotiation, groups presented their creative solutions to
Common End-of-Course Comments by Students in Response to Questions: “What is the number one thing you learned about leadership in this course?”

- Getting beyond people’s positions to find the common ground.
- The importance of negotiation and collaboration. In order to get anything accomplished, it’s absolutely essential to be open-minded, and willing to collaborate for the overall greater good of everyone involved.
- Working with individuals who have opposing roles in interest-based negotiations requires patience, creative thinking, and collaborative efforts.
- I learned that everyone can be a leader; it’s empowering to view leadership as a skill set and commitment rather than a born talent.
- Leaders must have negotiating and people skills.
- The importance of negotiation and collaboration. This is a skill I need to improve and the leadership course this year offered me tools to do this.
- IBPS [Interest-Based Problem Solving] is an amazing process for professional, academic, and interpersonal settings.
- Negotiation based on interests not position and the difference between talking leadership and doing leadership.
- Negotiating on basis of interests and not positions results in agreements that shift relative power dynamics.
- That active listening is a critical skill. Shut up and listen…you will learn a great deal.
- That the best leaders focus on relationships. Active listening and asking why to learn interests builds trust and understanding which in turn encourages mutual respect.
- Positions are not interests and often people are not even aware of what their interests are. It takes careful listening, time and trust to uncover interests.
Box 3.  
Continued

The importance of negotiation when you can’t or don’t want to give orders.

Those negotiations play such a big role of a leader’s responsibilities. Hearing the professors and lecturers say this several times drove the point home.

Leaders look to the future for opportunities, develop the capacity of their organizations, foster collaborative efforts between organizations and people, and continue to learn and evolve as professionals. Leadership can take many forms, from facilitating a small meeting to developing a vision for a large multinational, but in all cases paying attention to people’s needs, wants, desires, fears, and aspirations is important. Good leaders take risks and learn from mistakes, are straightforward communicators, and know how to delegate.

Interest based problem solving. Whereas some of the leadership literature and lectures seemed abstract to me, I really liked the practical element to this negotiation process and intend to use it in many capacities.

A [collaborative] leader needs to be able to bring diverse groups of people together and work with them to solve a common problem.

Leadership is generally assumed to take one form, the boss, the leader, the decision maker . . . when there are really many forms of leadership appropriate to different situations, styles, and groups.

the class as a whole. They then debriefed both with their coaches and with the class. A final writing assignment called a “Core Learnings Paper” asked them to link what they learned in the class with their entire MPA experience. This was coupled with another assignment called a “Reflected Best-Self Portrait,” which asked students to interview 20 people who know them well to analyze when they are at their best as an integrative and collaborative leader.

Box 3 reflects some of the most common statements about collaborative leadership made by students in their written work in response to the question: What is the number one thing you learned about leadership in this course? (See Appendix for student demographics.)

Box 4 contains a letter from a student in the class 3 months after the
Box 4.
Letter from Student 3 Months After End of Course

September 15, 2008
Professor:

Greetings from our nation’s Capitol!

I wanted to let you know about my current job and what I do on a daily basis. During Executive Leadership (EL) I sensed frustration among my classmates and they were always asking “why are we doing this?” I think I mentioned this to you during the course as well. I am a big believer in “show me, don’t tell me” so hopefully my example will provide this “show.”

I am at the Conference of State Bank Supervisors in Mortgage Policy. . . . We have the daunting but important task of licensing mortgage loan originators as part of the recent Federal Housing legislation that you probably know because it allows FHA to now guarantee up to $300 billion in additional loans.

Working with 50+ state agencies/regulators to come to ONE nationwide, voluntary policy on how to license loan originators and all that goes with it is, well, ensuring I have no social life for the next year! To be frank, I use the skills taught in EL on a DAILY BASIS and my job would be impossible to perform without such skills. Every working group I run, every meeting I attend, every policy discussion I participate in involves skills you and the crew taught us during EL. 100% of my job is consensus building, negotiation, collaboration, etc. The best part is—IT WORKS!

When you have grumblers point them my way. Tell them I am doing something that has massive implications for regulation and the economy (hmmm . . . maybe this is important??) and I would fall flat on my face if I would not have had the EL experience over the summer. . . .

course ended. During the course, this student, who came to the Maxwell School after 12 years on Wall Street, expressed distain for the improv and creative problem-solving exercises. He continually challenged the professor to explain why learning negotiation and interest-based problem solving was important. At one point in time, he lamented that the 3-credit course could not have been another budgeting and finance course. Just 3 months in the public sector catalyzed a 180-degree turn.
Lessons for the Field

This pedagogical experiment sought to teach MPA students collaborative capabilities needed by today’s public leaders. There are several lessons for the field that emanate from this experiment. We analyze the lessons for the field by returning to the lens provided by Bingham et al. (2008).

Designing the Network: Students Need to Learn When to Collaborate and With Whom

In the Maxwell School experiment, the students were “dropped” into a water quality network and were told to swim (pun intended). They struggled to figure out how to work in a collaborative fashion. The myriad possible directions for the network left dozens of options concerning how to get the job done, when, with whom, and how to motivate network actors to collaborate.

Managers first need to recognize whether they need to collaborate with partners (other agencies, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, other elements of the public or civil society) to accomplish a policy goal or objective. Next, they need to know when to collaborate (is the problem sufficiently identified and developed or ripe for collaboration?). Finally, collaboration starts with the right players. For collaboration to be effective, public managers may need the skills to analyze relevant stakeholders and convene a representative group.

The literature on convening stakeholder groups from the discipline of environmental and public policy conflict resolution (e.g., Moore, 2003; Susskind, McKearnan, & Thomas-Larmer, 1999) is instructive for the issue of network design. For example, it can help managers identify which players have the ability to veto a deal or prevent its implementation. Managers need to learn to inhabit the role of convener. They need to see their roles as related to broad framing of public problems to inspire participation.

There are substantive areas of knowledge that can help managers understand how one might motivate the necessary players to collaborate. We teach managers about organizational theory, diffusion of innovation, institutional theory, contingency theory, and performance measurement. We teach them how to use the lessons of organizational behavior to motivate people; to understand how groups develop, function, and make decisions; and to learn how people perceive things and absorb information differently. We teach them about personality and communication styles. Ingraham and Getha-Taylor (2008) discuss the current disconnect between institutional design in the redesigned federal human resources system and the espoused goals of the public sector workforce; for example, they point to more working across boundaries and problem solving. Managers are motivated to collaborate because people want rewarding work and to feel like they are making a difference working on significant problems. Design of the network should identify and take advantage of these potential incentives, and it should structure rewards for collaborative behavior not only at the individual level but also at the program level if individual rewards are not feasible.
Students Need to Learn How to Structure Governance for the Collaborative Network

In the Maxwell School experiment, one of the first tasks assigned to students in their simulation groups was deciding how to structure governance for the network. This entailed negotiating with nine other leaders of public, private, and nonprofit organizations. They had to reach an understanding of how they would govern themselves to accomplish their task. This included skills like identifying goals, framing the mission, and setting an agenda of work. It included identifying ground rules, agreeing upon conflict management processes, and selecting decision norms (e.g., majority vote or consensus). Members had to address how they would communicate their ongoing work to their respective organizations, agencies, constituencies, and the media. Governance sometimes also included decisions about transparency or communication with the public, civic engagement and the public voice, and accountability to each other and to the public. Research on multiparty negotiation suggests that reaching agreement on these preliminary issues can help build trust for the balance of the negotiation (Moore, 2003). Research on facilitated collaborative management of watersheds suggests that the work of reaching agreement on these issues can help build social capital among the stakeholders that carries over to other collaborative work over time (Leach & Sabatier, 2003).

Students Need to Learn How to Negotiate in a Network

In the Maxwell School collaborative simulations, no one person was in charge. Instead of giving orders, members of the network had to persuade and negotiate. Having professional negotiators teach the students these skills before they participated in the simulation was important.

Every leading scholar writing on collaborative public management emphasizes that negotiation skills are essential to effective participation. It is the fundamental skill set for collaborative problem solving. It helps managers recognize and use different types of knowledge and find ways of processing and reconciling differences. They need to learn negotiation analysis, which entails recognizing their best alternative to a negotiated agreement, their own interests, and reservation prices or the outer bound of the bargaining set. The relevant skills entail interest-based, principled, or integrative bargaining (Fisher et al., 1991; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Schneider & Honeyman, 2006). These forms of bargaining help managers learn how to identify interests or basic needs such as security, economic well-being, belonging, recognition, and autonomy; determine which ones are shared, reconcilable, and conflicting; and craft agreements to maximize joint gains to the greatest possible extent. Negotiators must also learn the difference between interest-based and competitive bargaining, between creating value and claiming it in a negotiation (Lax & Sebenius, 1986), and how to recognize bad-faith or hard bargaining tactics.

This family of skills also includes active listening and communication. Active listening includes learning to paraphrase, ask open-ended questions (who, what, etc.)
where, why, how, why not?), and make statements in the first person (I or we statements) rather than second person (you statements are often heard as accusations). Mastery of negotiation skills gives managers the ability to suspend judgment and consider alternatives, which is an essential quality of creativity. Creativity helps managers to recognize cultural differences and symbols; this in turn enables them to cross boundaries and surmount barriers to agreement. Through extensive use of simulations involving multiparty negotiation, students and managers can become comfortable with the notion of negotiating as a stakeholder in a group. By learning these skills, they will be more effective at leveraging agency resources to accomplish shared goals as well as at knowing when the agency can function most effectively without collaboration.

**Students Need to Learn How to Facilitate Meetings of the Group**

Students in the Maxwell Executive Leadership class had to learn how to facilitate meetings of the group. This proved to be one of the more compelling teaching challenges because skill in facilitation was unequal across students. By the third year of teaching this course, we learned to appoint students with previous training in facilitation as the initial facilitators in order to jump-start productive negotiations.

In the real world, unless the group hires an outside facilitator, members will need to have someone run the meetings. There is an art and science to good facilitation skills—that is, skills that allow each participant in a meeting to contribute their knowledge constructively and feel that they have been heard (Schwarz, 1994, pp. 19–41). These skills include active listening (paraphrasing, mirroring, problem-solving questions), knowing when to suggest that the group break into small-group meetings or committees, and knowing when stakeholders need to caucus or meet privately with one or more other participants to address some issue. Facilitators can help group members engage in brainstorming to generate ideas for solving a shared problem. There are a variety of techniques for brainstorming, visioning, and storyboarding, which are all procedures for encouraging group members to “think outside the box.” The facilitator acts as a recorder, keeps stakeholders from criticizing any idea prematurely, helps the group members set priorities for the ideas they want to discuss, and helps them to combine these ideas in ways that yield a workable agreement. Group members develop social capital and learn how to resolve conflict. Role-plays and interactive simulations can permit students and managers to become comfortable in the facilitator role. Empirical research on facilitation in networks can deepen students’ understanding of this dynamic (Leach & Sabatier, 2003).

**Students Need to Learn How to Manage Conflict in a Network**

Conflict occurred throughout the simulations. This was deliberately built into the simulation and was inevitable given the diverse interests of the parties at the table. Students learned how to manage conflict before and during negotia-
tions. Often times, however, the intervention of a coach was needed to demonstrate possible positive ways to channel conflict.

Milward and Provan (2006) find that one of the most important tasks for network managers is to try to minimize the occurrence of conflict and try to resolve it successfully if and when it does occur. Networks, by their very nature, are composed of multiple members with different organization-level goals, methods of operation and service, and cultures. All of these characteristics make managing conflicts in networks extraordinarily challenging.

Many guiding principles from the conflict resolution literature can assist in managing conflicts in networks. These include reframing (redefining) conflicts as mutual problems to be solved together (Moore, 2003); educating each other to better understand the problem; developing a conflict management plan that addresses procedures, substance, and relationships; involving members of the network in designing the process and developing a solution; striving for balanced representation; insisting that network members participate directly, fully, and in good faith; maintaining transparency; attending to timeliness; and ensuring implementability of agreements.

**Students Need to Learn How to Effectively Engage the Public**

The Maxwell experiment was structured to include members of the public in negotiations. While this was a scaled-down version of what collaborative leaders must do in the real world, it compelled the students to think about how they might engage the public in a meaningful way.

When a collaborative network does the public’s work, appropriate civic engagement is important both to address potential conflicts and to foster participation in democracy. By allowing managers to work in partnership with the public, within the scope of their delegated authority and the constraints of representative democracy, new forms of civic engagement can provide a mechanism through which to make the decision process and content transparent, and they can enhance managers’ accountability by providing them with an independent source of information on public preferences and values.

A wide variety of tools and approaches are inherent in collaborative governance, “a term used to describe the integration of reasoned discussions by the citizens and other residents into the decision making of public representatives, especially when these approaches are embedded in the workings of local governance over time” (http://www.ca-ilg.org, an excellent resource for information on local government uses). Collaborative governance includes deliberative democracy, a form of participatory democracy in which citizens engage in civil, small-group discussions, exchanging viewpoints and sharing their informed judgment and values with public managers and elected officials to influence decision making. In this regard, the new forms of collaborative governance include deliberative polling, choicework dialogues, 21st-Century Town Meetings, study circles,
public solutions dialogues, citizen juries, national issues forums, and a variety of other models (Bingham, Nabatchi, & O’Leary, 2005).

Managers need to know how to design a sequence of processes for meaningful civic engagement by a network. For example, in determining how to allocate limited vaccine supplies during a possible future flu pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and a number of network partners have designed a series of dialogues to engage the public in setting priorities and weighing important values (http://www.everyday-democracy.org). Collaborative public managers need to develop both the substantive, explicit knowledge of these new forms and the facility to work within them and use them for networks to become both transparent and accountable to the public.

Students Need to Learn How to Evaluate Collaborative Strategies

At the end of the Maxwell course, students were asked to think critically about what they did and to evaluate their collaborative strategies through the lens of accountability to the public. This component is necessary to address the criticism that collaborative networks are not sufficiently accountable to the public. Evaluation should be a piece of the network’s initial design and construction. Evaluation can help the network learn continuously. Public administrators should be introduced to principles from public program evaluation as they apply to the collaborative context.

A substantial literature exists on evaluating collaboration in environmental conflict resolution and policy consensus processes, and it bears directly on col-


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upstream</th>
<th>incorporating public values, improving decision quality, resolving conflict, building trust, educating the public, socioeconomic representativeness, information change, effectiveness, efficiency and equity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midstream</td>
<td>positive net benefits, measurable objectives, cost-effective implementation, financial feasibility, fair distribution of costs among parties, flexibility, incentive compatibility, improved problem-solving capacity, enhanced social capital, clear documentation protocols, and reduction in conflict and hostility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downstream</td>
<td>participant procedural justice, comparative satisfaction of different categories of disputants, reducing or narrowing issues, referrals, and voluntary use rates</td>
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</table>
laborative public management and collaborative governance (Bingham, Fairman, Fiorino, & O’Leary, 2003; Bingham & O’Leary, 2006). Environmental conflict resolution entails the creation of a collaborative network of governmental stakeholders from federal, state, and local government; tribal sovereign governments; nongovernmental organizations; citizen groups; and the private sector. The upstream/midstream/downstream frame for the policy process has proved useful in that context (O’Leary & Bingham, 2003). Upstream includes the formation of policy, midstream its implementation, and downstream its enforcement. Box 5 shows the exemplary indicators for assessing success of upstream, midstream, and downstream.

Many of these criteria, developed to assess collaboration in one context, have a direct bearing on evaluating the success of collaboration in the new governance. Public managers need a framework for thinking about how to measure results in collaboration.

*Students Need to Think About the Importance of Operating Within Legal Constraints When Acting in a Collaborative Fashion*

Students in the Maxwell experiment were told that all actions of the network must be conducted lawfully and ethically. Public administrators have an obligation to know and comply with the Constitution and public law. Robert Agranoff (2007) finds that legal constraints have an impact on the work of collaborative public management networks; networks with express legislative authorization or charters are more likely to take action rather than simply to share information. Feiock (2008) illustrates how legal authority to collaborate facilitates local government collective action. Whether perceived legal constraints are real or merely feared, managers must address them for collaboration to reach its full potential in public management and governance. Existing legal infrastructure in state and federal administrative law provides that a public agency may use certain processes in governance across the policy continuum (legislative, quasi-legislative, quasi-judicial, and judicial; see Bingham et al., 2005). These statutes do not expressly refer to collaborative public management networks (Bingham, 2008). They have been used, however, to authorize collaboration in the fields of environmental and public policy conflict resolution. Understanding the scope of existing legal infrastructure as it provides authority and incentives, or presents constraints, obstacles, and barriers, is an important form of explicit knowledge that can shape practice.

**Conclusion: Teaching Collaborative Leadership**

Conditions within the field require those of us involved in training the next and current generations of public managers to deeply consider what we teach, why we teach, and how we bring these new topics into the classroom. This is a tall charge. Most of us involved in teaching were, ourselves, trained during an era that emphasized the control and mastery of facts rather than application.
We were socialized into academic disciplines that focused on the development and refinement of abstract knowledge rather than that gleaned through practice experience. In short, many of us feel more comfortable teaching topics that draw upon explicit knowledge—concrete information, facts, predictable relationships—rather than situations requiring the development and refinement of tacit knowledge. Some professional education creates a dichotomy between these two types of learning; law schools, for example, have doctrinal classes where students master explicit knowledge and clinics where they develop tacit knowledge through practice. Yet, the potential in public affairs is to bridge these two traditions, recognizing that the new public management practice requires professionals who are skilled as analytic and social actors as two aspects of a single competence. As McGuire (2009) points out, a professional emerges through the training of people in particular knowledge and skills. In public management, we must align our pedagogy with the realities that public management occurs in networks of many different actors.

In this article, we have presented an experiment in teaching a new body of skills that is necessary if people are to be equipped to function effectively as collaborative leaders. Rather than simply supplement with continuing education training, we have tried to adapt the public administration curriculum needs to the new realities of administrative practice in a world of collaborative networked governance. As a field, we need to reconfigure managers’ professional identity to one that includes being collaborative leaders. We need to cultivate capacities including convening a network with the right members, structuring governance processes, engaging in collaborative practice using the skills of negotiation, facilitation, and conflict management, designing processes for public engagement, evaluating progress toward outcomes, and ensuring that the network operates in a transparent and accountable fashion within public law. We can cultivate these abilities only through active and experiential learning. These capacities are the enactment of both explicit and tacit knowledge in context. In other words, public managers must learn to do collaborative practice, and only through doing can they learn to be effective in this new landscape.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Jodi Sandfort and Barbara Crosby for many helpful discussions.

The authors also thank the Maxwell School’s Collaborative Governance Initiative for ongoing support to develop teaching materials on collaboration, collaborative governance, collaborative management, and collaborative problem solving. Cases and simulations may be downloaded free of charge in English, Spanish, and Chinese at http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/parc/eparc
References


Teaching Collaborative Leadership: Ideas and Lessons for the Field


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Appendix

*Student Demographics*

Table 1 shows demographics of graduate students who enrolled in the Executive Leadership course at Syracuse University in June 2008. Ages ranged from 22 to 53 years. Of these students, 46% were male and 54% were female.

Table 1.

*Student demographics (N = 107)*

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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