

Leadership Scholarship and Certification through Cognitive Apprenticeship

A Werklund School of Education Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Funded Study and Research Report

Abstract

CHALLENGE: MEd graduate leadership programs must negotiate scholarly expectations with student eligibility requirements for provincial leadership certification.

METHODOLOGY: The signature pedagogy of cognitive apprenticeship provided a lens for the analysis of course design artefacts and instructor interview data in a Werklund School of Education graduate leadership program.

FINDINGS: Findings portray practices of recursion and reflection, reciprocal apprenticeship, and an intentional situating of self amidst collective (institutional, cohort, and public) capacities. Layers of scaffolding and modelling support students toward identified ends and positions of potentiality.

KEYWORDS: Cognitive Apprenticeship, Leadership Education, Leadership Standards



Introduction

BACKGROUND: The affordances of cognitive apprenticeship as a signature pedagogy (Shulman, 2005) and conceptual framework for teaching and learning are well documented. Current literature posits that signature pedagogies need to be understood more deeply to enable the design and redesign of professional education programs that move students toward scholarly practical wisdom. Other literature questions the role of the academy as participants in leadership certification.

PURPOSE: This study examined enactments of cognitive apprenticeship in a graduate educational leadership program to understand possibilities for shaping theoretically rich and practice-oriented graduate learning experiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1991) provided a theoretical framework through which the design of, and instruction within, a four-course Masters of Education certificate in educational leadership was analyzed.

CONTRIBUTION: Findings offer insights that may help faculty members in professional programs shape theoretically-rich and practice-oriented graduate learning, navigating commitments to high levels of scholarship alongside societal expectations for workforce development.

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Questions and Methodology



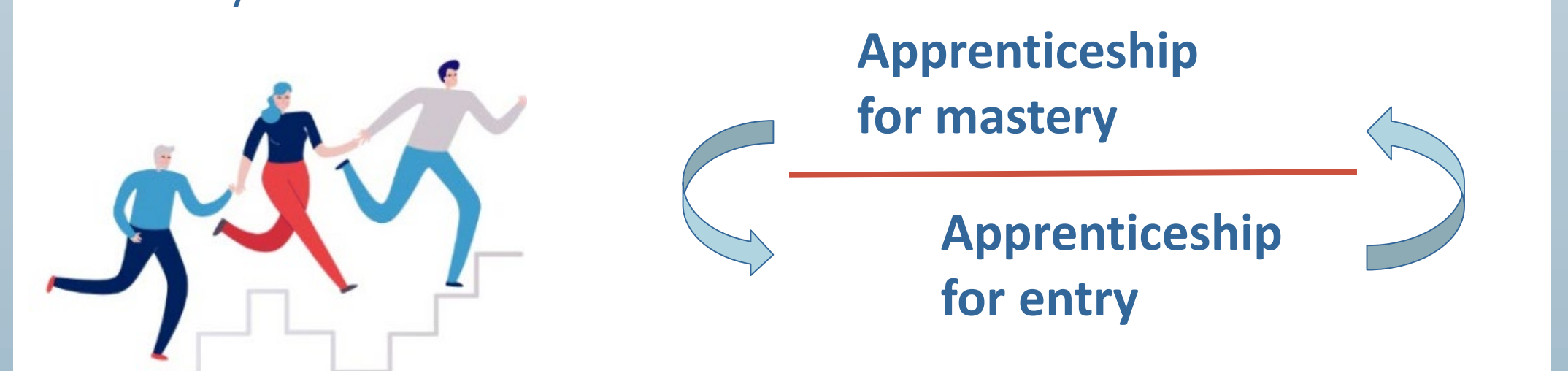
- How does cognitive apprenticeship support students' learning and competency development in graduate programs that enable students to apply for leadership certification?
- How do instructors negotiate compatibilities and tensions between theoretical insights and practical competency requirements?
- Retrospective analysis of program and course design through Collins et al.'s (1991) four dimensions of cognitive apprenticeship
- Interpreted thematic analysis of interview data from three faculty members' descriptions of instructional practices

Discussion

- PRACTICAL WISDOM THROUGH COGNITIVE APPRENTICESHIP**
- Integrative layering of cognitive apprenticeship through program/course design and instructor practices provided situational support and an overall program experience moving from general strategies to a focus on discernment and justified decision-making.
 - Recursive and scaffolded design elements increased the complexity and diversity of student opportunities for deliberative thinking.
 - Instructors intentionally situated their practices within their understanding of the students' learning over the four-course sequence.

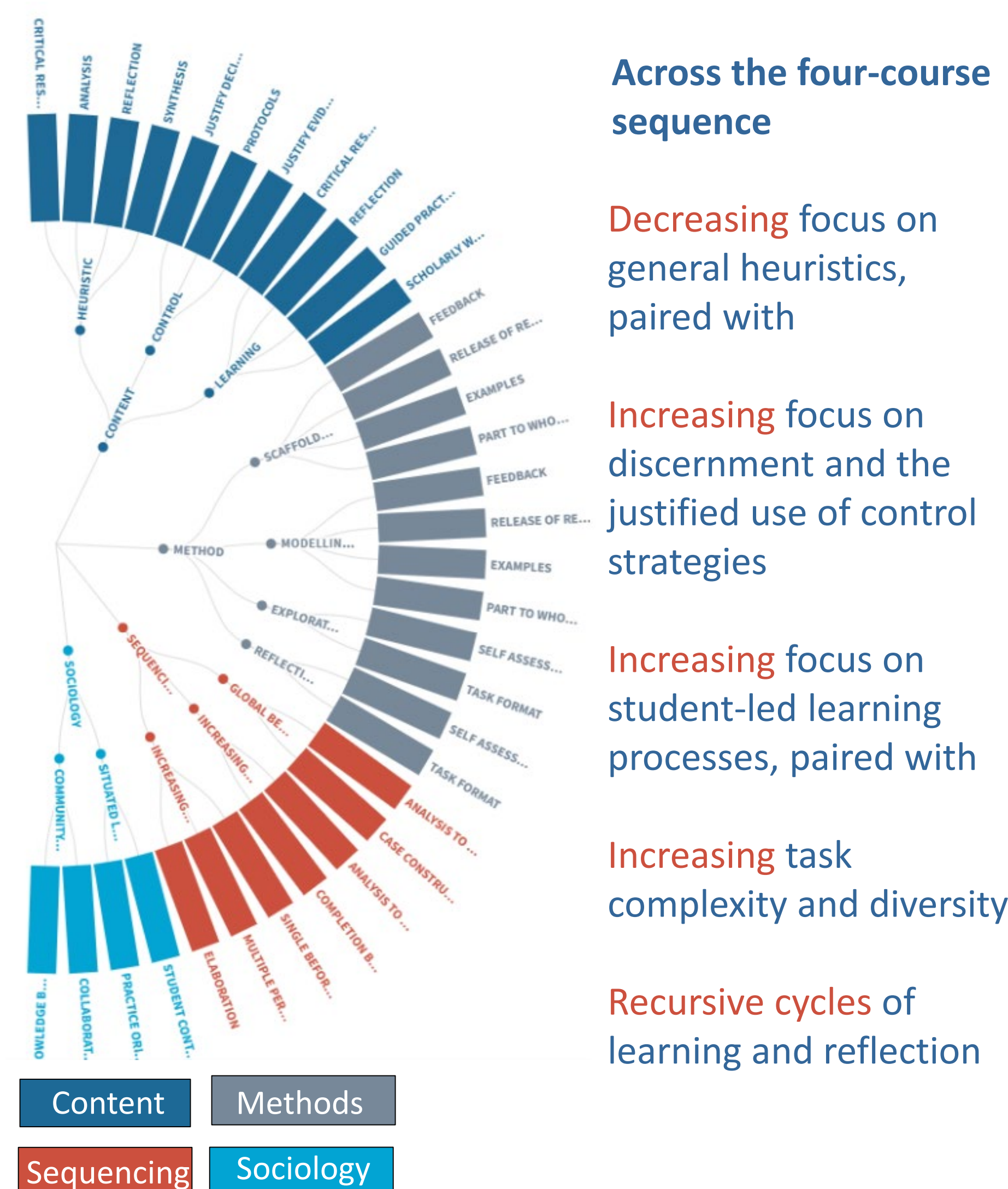
- RETHINKING STANDARDS THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP**
- Eliciting diverse positions while questioning experiences and epistemologies allows for interrogating normative practice, including the generic and teleological intentions of standards.
 - It also opens opportunities for equity, voice, and contextualized leadership.

- EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF COGNITIVE APPRENTICESHIP**
- An orientation to an open future reconsiders the "master/mastery" narrative of cognitive apprenticeship.
 - It allows educative experiences to occasion potentialities of self and practice while developing scholarship.
 - Apprenticeship for mastery and for points of dialogic, studious entry can be balanced and iterative.



Findings

Elements of Cognitive Apprenticeship in Program and Course Design



Across the four-course sequence

- Decreasing focus on general heuristics, paired with
- Increasing focus on discernment and the justified use of control strategies
- Increasing focus on student-led learning processes, paired with
- Increasing task complexity and diversity
- Recursive cycles of learning and reflection

Elements of Cognitive Apprenticeship in Instruction

Modelling	Scaffolding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> scholarly reading intertextual connections leadership thinking scholarly dialogue resources as models use of strategies analytic processes use of textual evidence decision making peers as models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chunking assignments responding to thinking formative assessment feedback cycles bridging from familiar building on experience students as resources simpler versions of tasks
Reflecting	Theory-Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> questioning perceptions engaging with previous thinking questioning responses synthesizing discussions questioning assumptions substantiating criticality evidence base for thinking locating discourses situating a moment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experience as site of inquiry drawing on student contexts identifying action as theorizing relating leadership experience practical thinking experience as resource for theory structuring dialogue application of ideas connecting with field creating practical contexts building leadership identities

Supporting Student Learning while Negotiating Scholarly and Leadership Competencies

Leveraging collective capacities

- Eliciting diverse positions
- Creating critical exchanges and reciprocities of mastery and apprenticeship

Questioning discourses

- Surpassing the immediacy of experience
- Examining confidences and intentionality

Opening future possibilities

- Engaging sense of future selves
- Anticipating action and being

It's not just your own experiences that you get to draw on, but it's their experiences. ... turning that practical experience into a resource for others, or asking for their practical experiences that that might connect, and then really engaging in consideration of that experience with them.

...trying to meet the students where they are and validating the thinking, but at the same time, questioning it, being able to see a strength in their posts that maybe they didn't notice. Pull it out, and then play with that idea a little bit with them, and invite them to step into playing with that idea through the conversation.

It's theoretical and it's based in long histories of understanding, but it's about opening a world for students. It's about being able to say, "Here's something that might be possible or might not be possible for you."

So the first time ... I developed a provocation.. [It] certainly wasn't really as good as the ones that they developed in following sessions.... Each week gets better and better and better.... I feel like I learned from them this whole course.

[Asking], when you make a statement, what's causing you to say that? What's making you pull these things out from the research? What's resonating with you and why? And then being mindful about whether you're making this comment based on a connection to experience, or based on something you've read.

Everything that's in the theoretical work has a home or a potential home, or a potential point of interaction with what it means to be a school leader, not just about what it means to think about school leadership.

The practical [requirement] is the context for what they're doing, but then they have to imagine participating in that practical setting with new understandings, with new lenses.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Cognitive apprenticeship is an integrative framework for course design and instructional practices that responsibly bridges democratic, scholarly, and practical interests in graduate professional study.

- Intentionally integrate cognitive apprenticeship program design with the practices of instructors/instruction.
- Use scholarly practices of questioning discourses, eliciting diverse positions, and creating critical exchanges to negotiate standards of practice with the critically-questioning, ethical, and knowledge-creating responsibilities of the academy.



Collins, A., Brown, J.S., & Holum, A. (1991). Cognitive apprenticeship: Making thinking visible. *American Educator*, 15(3), 6-11.

Shulman, L. (2005). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(Summer), 52-59

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