

Studying Leadership as Praxis: Experience With a Worldwide Education System



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A Missing Piece for Public Leadership

- Jackson and Parry (2018) noted five ways one can go about studying leadership: “You can actually attempt to lead, you can observe leadership in action, you can talk about leadership, you can read about it and you can write about it” (p. 1).
- While some leadership scholars gained valuable experience prior to their academic roles, their ongoing study of leadership is often at the fringes of the action, and the research tends to be in somewhat sterile and controlled environments.
- Crosby and Bryson (2018) have called for public leadership research to go beyond the traditional case study method, yet there is limited guidance on how to enact such research.



Our Presentation Purpose

Highlight praxis-oriented leadership research, through the lens of Raelin’s (2020) leadership-as-practice (L-A-P) framework, as seen with the United States Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).



Leadership-as-Practice (L-A-P)

- Resonates with closely related traditions: collective, shared, distributed, and relational leadership.
- Pushes for a line of inquiry that differentiates from a focus on traits, behaviors, abilities, or competencies in a way to gain a deeper knowledge of leadership as a social phenomenon.
- Focuses on processes whereby things, such as humans and their agency and socio-material elements, co-constitute as an unfolding set of fluid emergent practices.

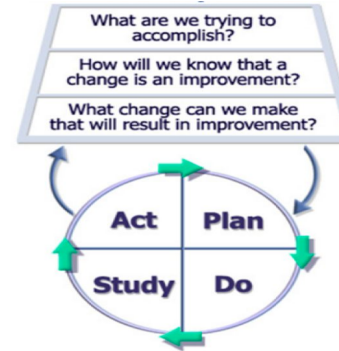


Traditional vs. L-A-P Research (Raelin, 2020)

Traditional (Positivist)	L-A-P (Praxis Oriented)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering the world as it is. • Researcher is formal and detached from respondent. • Researcher derives and confirms meaning from respondent. • Context is a fixed structure within which actors behave. • Power is enacted through influence of top leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering the world as it evolves. • Researcher is informal and directly engaged with participant(s). • Participants and researchers make meaning through dialogic practices. • Context and participants are mutually engaged. • Power is emergent through participants' competing choices and practices.

A Praxis Model for Improvement

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle



(Langley et al., 2009)

DoD Education Activity: A Case Study



DoDEA Restructuring for Student Achievement: The Priorities

Urgency is a "bedrock" that acts as a foundation and triggers growth of a network as per organizational demand; it keeps leaders focused on the upcoming opportunities. (Kotter, 2014)

Priority 1: Strengthen DoDEA's standards-based educational system by transitioning to:

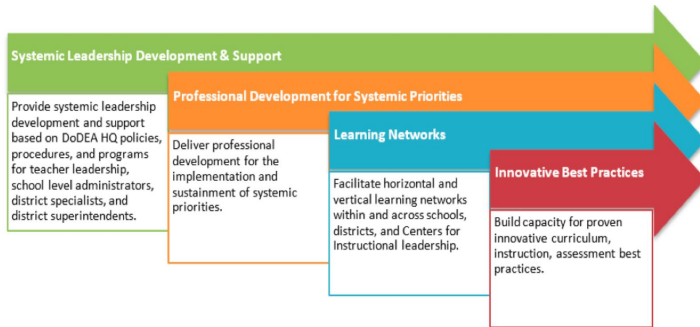
- (a) college- and career-ready standards that are infused with rigor and relevancy; and
- (b) a common standards-aligned curriculum, instructional framework, and assessment system.

Priority 2: Establish the organizational capacity to uniformly improve student achievement and school operations.

New Organizational Support Structure: Centers for Instructional Leadership

Beyond avoiding the complexity of information transfer, a guiding coalition provides opportunity for stakeholder involvement in the decision making process.

(Calegari, Sibley, & Turner, 2015)



Partnership Phase 1



Professional Learning Delivery Icons:

- ▲ Face-to-Face (F2F) Workshops for Annual Symposiums
- ◆ F2F Strategic Planning Workshops with CILs at HQ
- Three-hour Professional Learning Sessions on Focused Collaboration / Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- ★ Week-long Professional Learning Institutes in Each Region
- ▼ 90-Minutes Webinars with Assessment Task Group

Support Activities:

- ◆ F2F Planning Between Project Leads (VT & DoDEA)
- ◆ Kick-Off Meetings
- ◆ Strategic Planning Check-Ins with Regions and Districts
- ◆ Facilitating Feedback-loops on Learning Walkthrough Protocol
- ◆ Professional Learning Needs Assessment
- ◆ Schoology Course Launch for Sharing Materials
- ◆ Professional Learning Post Assessment Reporting
- ◆ Facilitation of Leadership Advisory Board (LAB) Meetings
- ◆ Crafting Newsletter Template
- ◆ Facilitating Focus Group Discussions
- ◆ Crafting Innovation Configuration Map on CIL Functions

Partnership Phase 2

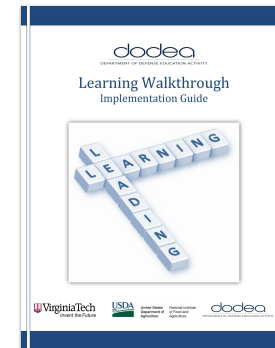
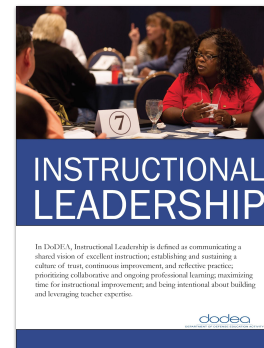


Support Activities:

- ▲ Face-to-Face (F2F) Professional Learning Seminars
- ▼ 90-minute Virtual Check-Ins with Regional CILs
- ★ Multi-Day Professional Learning Institutes in Each Region
- ◆ Facilitating Regional Feedback-Loops on Coaching Model
- ◆ Briefing DoDEA Deputy Director on PL Plans
- ◆ Professional Learning Post Assessment Reporting
- ◆ DoDEA Newsletter Contribution on Coaching
- ◆ Facilitation of Coaching Trio Session Feedback
- ◆ CILD & HQ Meeting Contributions & Feedback Facilitation
- ◆ F2F Planning Between Project Leads (VT & DoDEA)
- ◆ Crafting Innovation Configuration Map on CIL Functions
- ◆ Facilitating Orientation to Instructional Leadership Toolkit
- ◆ Facilitating Feedback-Loops on CIL Reporting Structures
- ◆ Facilitating Focus Group Discussions & Interviews
- ◆ CIL Time-on-Task Pulse Data Collection

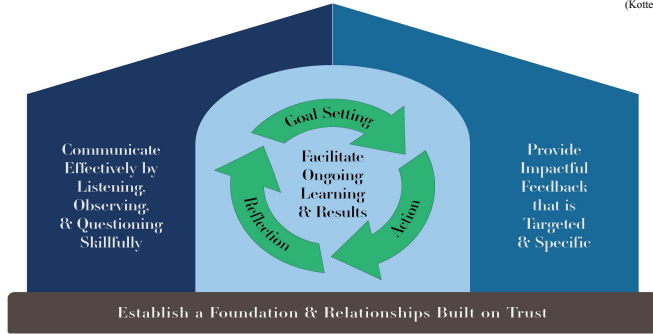
Example of Praxis: Learning Walkthrough Protocol

Integrating changes into policies and procedures ensures that the changes are sustained over time. (Kotter, 2014)



Example of Praxis: Blended Coaching

Much of the action has to do with identifying and removing barriers which slow or stop strategically important activity. (Kotter, 2014)

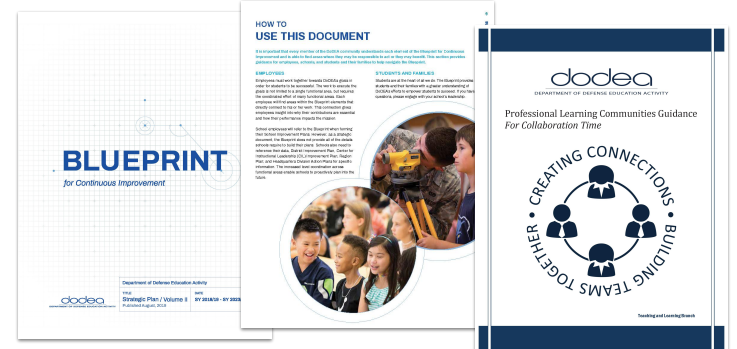


Adapted from and credited to Blended Coaching (2005)



Example of Praxis: The Blueprint

Building PLCs is a powerful staff developmental approach and a potential strategy for school improvement. (Jones & Thessin, 2015)

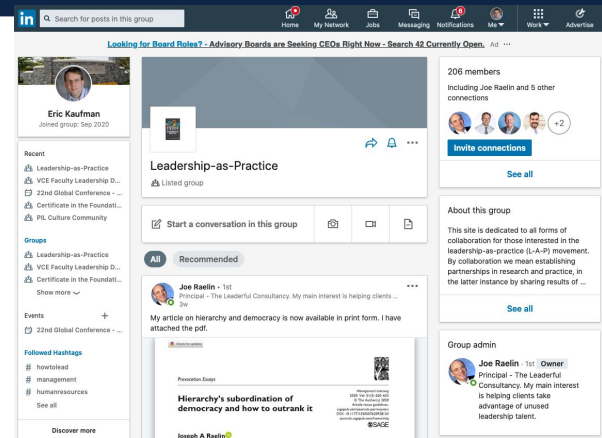


Insights & Recommendations

- ❖ Get buy-in from the partner organization(s).
- ❖ Create a “get-to” environment that generates an army of volunteers.
- ❖ Involve people’s hearts (not just heads).
- ❖ Invite, encourage, and promote many, many small acts of leadership.
- ❖ Ensure all those involved are in alignment.



Continue L-A-P Discussion on LinkedIn



Questions

*Jot them down, and
we'll discuss them at
the end of the session*

