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Leaders of Learning

Adult Development, Teacher Learning, & Leadership

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International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching
University of Bari Aldo Moro, Bari, Italy | July 2023



How do leaders' developmental capacity enable or constrain their support for teachers' learning?

How do teachers learn?

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Teachers Learning



Structure
Identity
Relationships



see Charner-Laird, Ippolito, & Noonan, 2021;
Charner-Laird et al., 2017; Fahey & Ippolito, 2014;
Ippolito et al., 2018; Noonan, 2014, 2019, 2022

The Demands of Educational Leadership

Setting
Class schedules
Fin
ations
School closure
Student protests
Managing community partners
School
writing
far
Trans
ma

The New York Times

'I Can't Breathe': 4 Minneapolis Officers Fired After Black Man Dies in Custody

"Being black in America should not be a death sentence," the city's mayor said as video of the arrest was widely shared.



Fabrice Coffrini, AFP

Critical Race Theory

This Texas high school principal was put on administrative leave after being accused of promoting critical race theory

By Nicole Chavez, CNN
Updated 8:58 AM EDT, Thu September 2, 2021



Josh Galemore, Arizona Daily Star

Online learning

EDUCATION

Indiana schools closed through the end of the academic year

 **Arika Herron**
Indianapolis Star

Published 2:38 p.m. ET April 2, 2020 | Updated 5:19 p.m. ET April 2, 2020

EDUCATION

Schools close for millions of kids as teachers get sick and COVID-19 cases surge: Some districts are holding out

Erin Richards and Elinor Aspegren USA TODAY
Published 5:01 a.m. ET Nov. 20, 2020 | Updated 4:32 p.m. ET Nov. 23, 2020

ALBANY

Coronavirus: New York state orders all schools to close for at least two weeks

Jon Campbell and Joseph Spector New York State Team
Published 12:04 p.m. ET March 16, 2020 | Updated 6:57 p.m. ET March 16, 2020

EDUCATION

Gov. Greg Abbott orders Texas schools closed to students for rest of 2019-2020 school year

 **Molly Smith**
El Paso Times

Published 11:30 a.m. MT April 17, 2020 | Updated 5:00 p.m. MT April 17, 2020

LOCAL


Midlands teacher's lesson on racism halted after complaints, citing state law

BY BRISTOW MARCHANT

UPDATED JUNE 12, 2023 2:59 PM



What the New, Low Test Scores for 13-Year-Olds Say About U.S. Education Now

 **By Dana Goldstein**

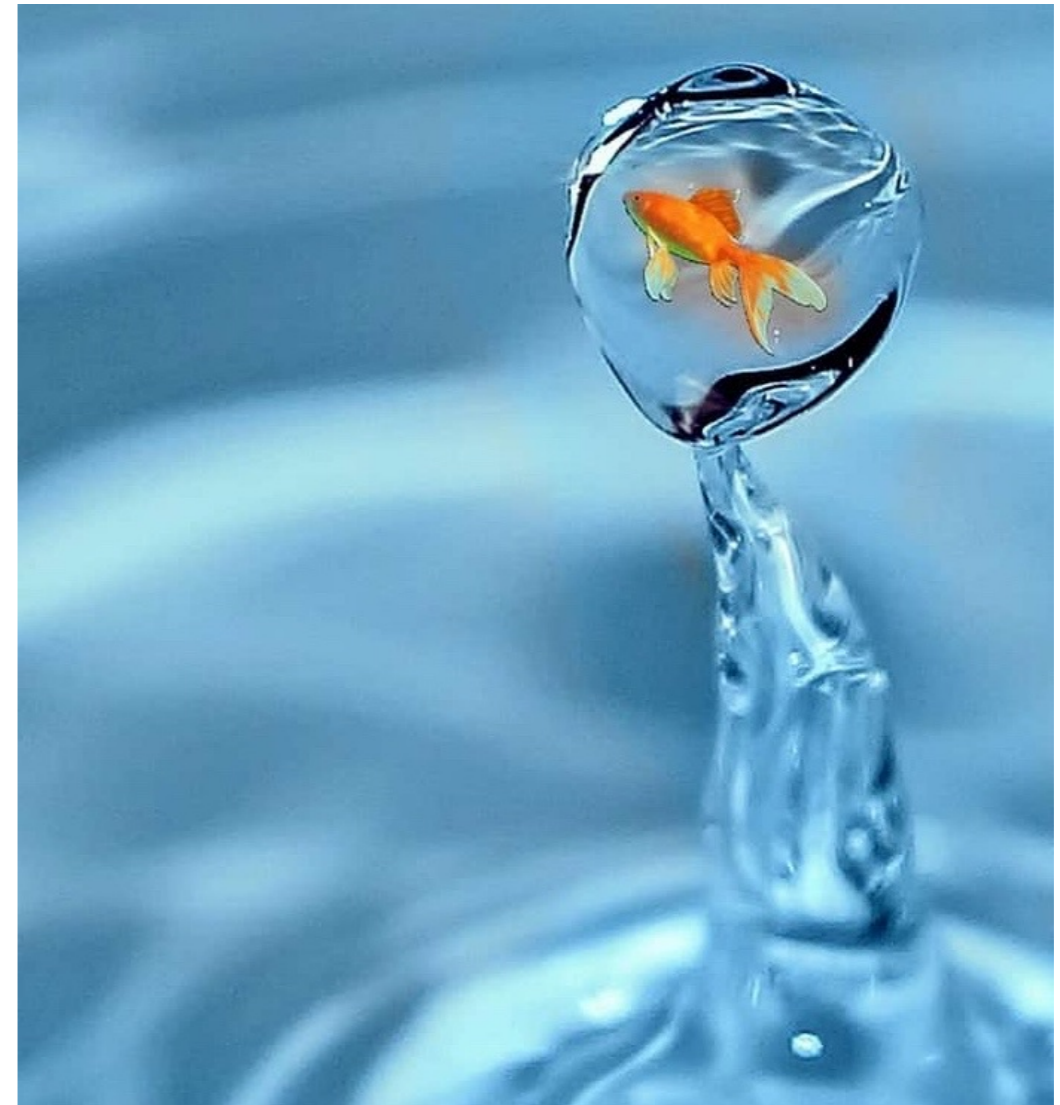
June 21, 2023 Updated 5:13 p.m. ET

Theoretical Framework

Constructive-Developmental Theory





Kegan (1982, 1994) theorized that **adult development** is characterized by an increasing capacity to manage complexity and take perspective on oneself and one's environment

Drago-Severson (2004, 2009) has extensively documented these “ways of knowing” among educational leaders

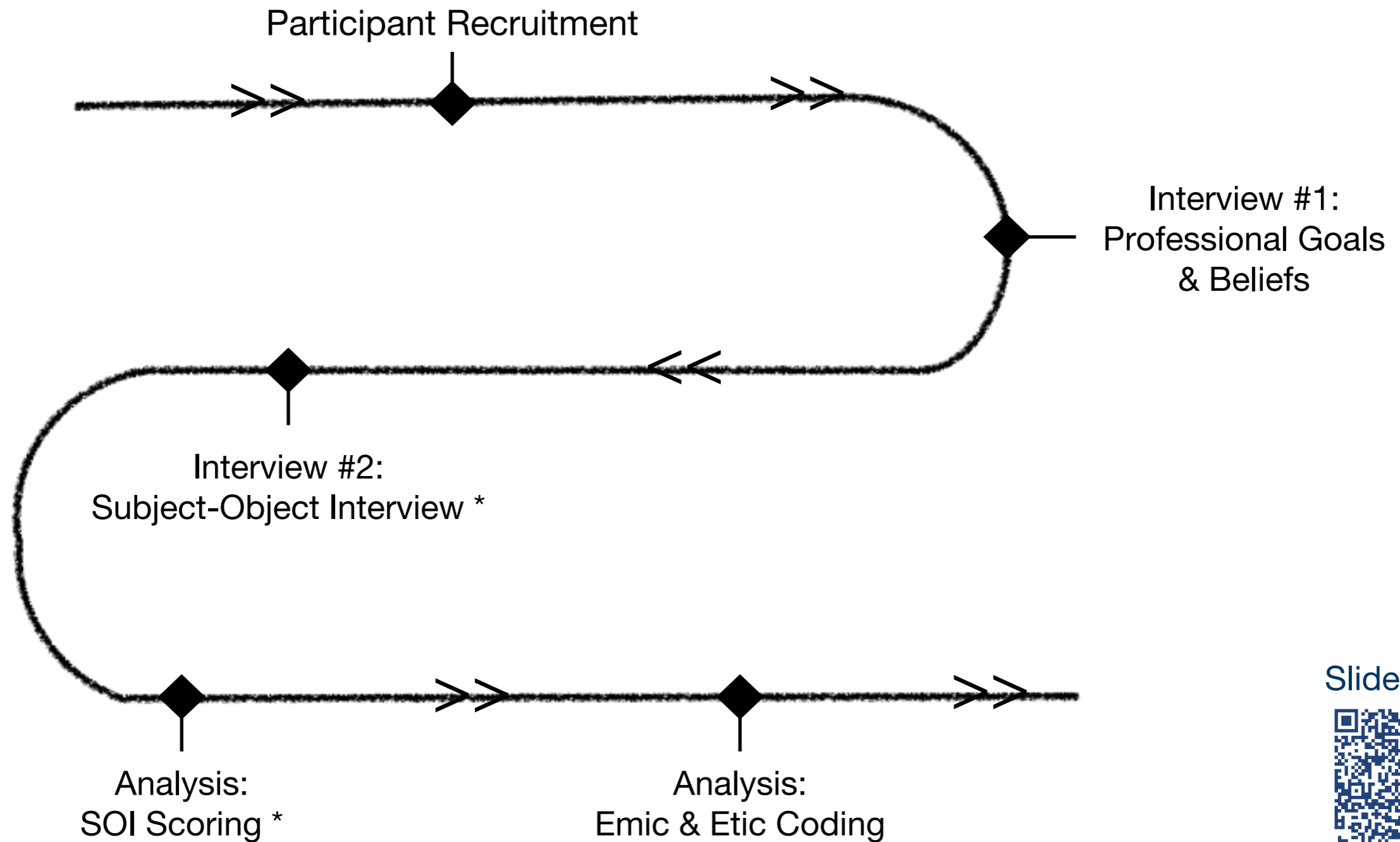


Constructive-Developmental Theory

Managing Increasing Complexity

	Sense of Self	Key Question	Relationships	Experiences of Support	Experiences of Challenge
Self-Transforming (5) 	Incompleteness, continuous learning	“How can you help me grow?”	Can consider one’s goals in context of broader societal goals; sees across & integrates many belief systems	Appreciates opportunities to challenge oneself, wrestle with & synthesize multiple competing notions	Committed to continual growth and sees conflict/opposition as opportunities for evolution
Self-Authoring (4) 	Coherent value system	“Am I true to myself?”	Can consider other perspectives but still articulate one’s own perspective and vision; Able to tolerate ambiguity	Appreciates chance to clarify and articulate own goals/vision, connect with others to clarify own goals	Feels discomfort when internal goals are challenged; competing commitments seen as challenging
Socializing (3) 	Valued others	“Will you still like me?”	Can collaborate with others, with awareness of own and others’ needs; able to prioritize group needs	Appreciates chance to learn with/from others; may not know what’s “right” w/out consulting others	Feels discomfort with conflicting viewpoints; critique perceived as a threat to identity
Instrumental (2) 	Adherence to rules, norms	“Is this right?”	Others are supports/obstacles to getting what one wants/needs. Tit-for-tat thinking.	Appreciates concrete feedback, clear directions or pathways for improvement	Feels discomfort when clear directions are not articulated by someone else

Methods



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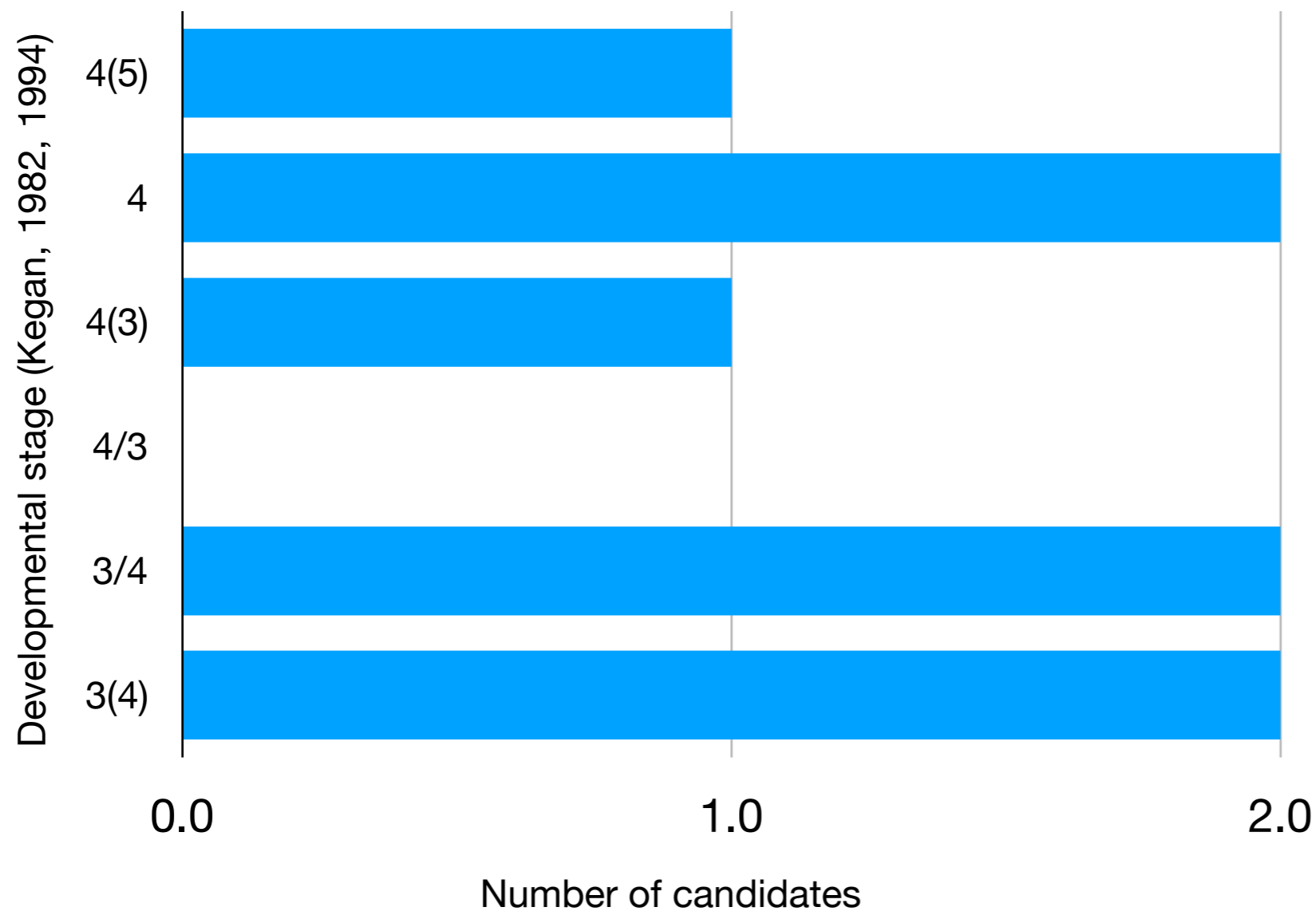


* Lahey, L., Souvaine, E., Kegan, R., Goodman, R., & Felix, S. (2011). *A guide to the subject-object interview: Its administration and interpretation*. Minds at Work

Findings

A Range of Developmental Capacities

Distribution of adult developmental stage (n=8)



Even though candidates completed the same program and were granted the same leadership credential, we found their developmental capacities spanned Kegan's ways of knowing.

Findings

Linking Leadership and Learning

Participant 1 Stage 3(4)

“[L]eadership has too much on their plate. They are in the public eye, which we all knew. They have a lot to worry about, which we knew. The effort to create good PD is almost impossible... I feel very empathetic about [the] lack of time. I feel empathetic about the fact that they are graded on the performance of students without really recognizing how that student body has shifted and changed.”

Participant 2 Stage 4(5)

“[The leadership program] has given me the power to ask the questions that I am asking. You know what I mean? It gave me the idea that leaders are human beings. They make mistakes, and it’s okay to make those mistakes. We are not infallible. We are gonna have a lot of issues as leaders, and it’s okay to do so.”

Findings

Implications for Leading Learning

3(4): “[leaders] are graded on the performance of students”

- Empathy for the wellbeing of the group
- Focus on validation, approval of external authorities
- Concern about values, needs, or interests that may deviate from accepted norm

4(5): “[leaders] make mistakes and it’s okay to make those mistakes”

- Comfort with risk-taking and disequilibrium required for learning
- Oriented toward learning themselves
- Risk-taking not always seen as an asset

see Breidenstein et al., 2012

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Findings

Linking Leadership and Learning

Participant 3 Stage 3(4)

“I think the challenge will be there will be certain things I don’t know how to do and being able to forgive myself for not knowing how to do them because no one’s ever showed me.”

Participant 4 Stage 4

“I look forward to tapping into what's already there. Having teachers lead meetings, that when they see a problem instead of me coming up with a way to fix it, let them figure out, and then come to me with ideas rather than me dictate, ‘Oh, this is the way that we're gonna fix it,’ because they really have the expertise. Tapping on teachers to help with the work.”

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Findings

Implications for Leading Learning

3(4): *“because no one’s ever showed me”*

- Emphasis on knowing and communicating “best practices”
- May struggle without guidance from external authority
- Focus on hierarchy and “top-down” structures

4: *“because they really have the expertise”*

- Openness to broad spectrum of expertise
- Willingness to embrace ambiguity and conflict
- Deference may be destabilizing for some learners

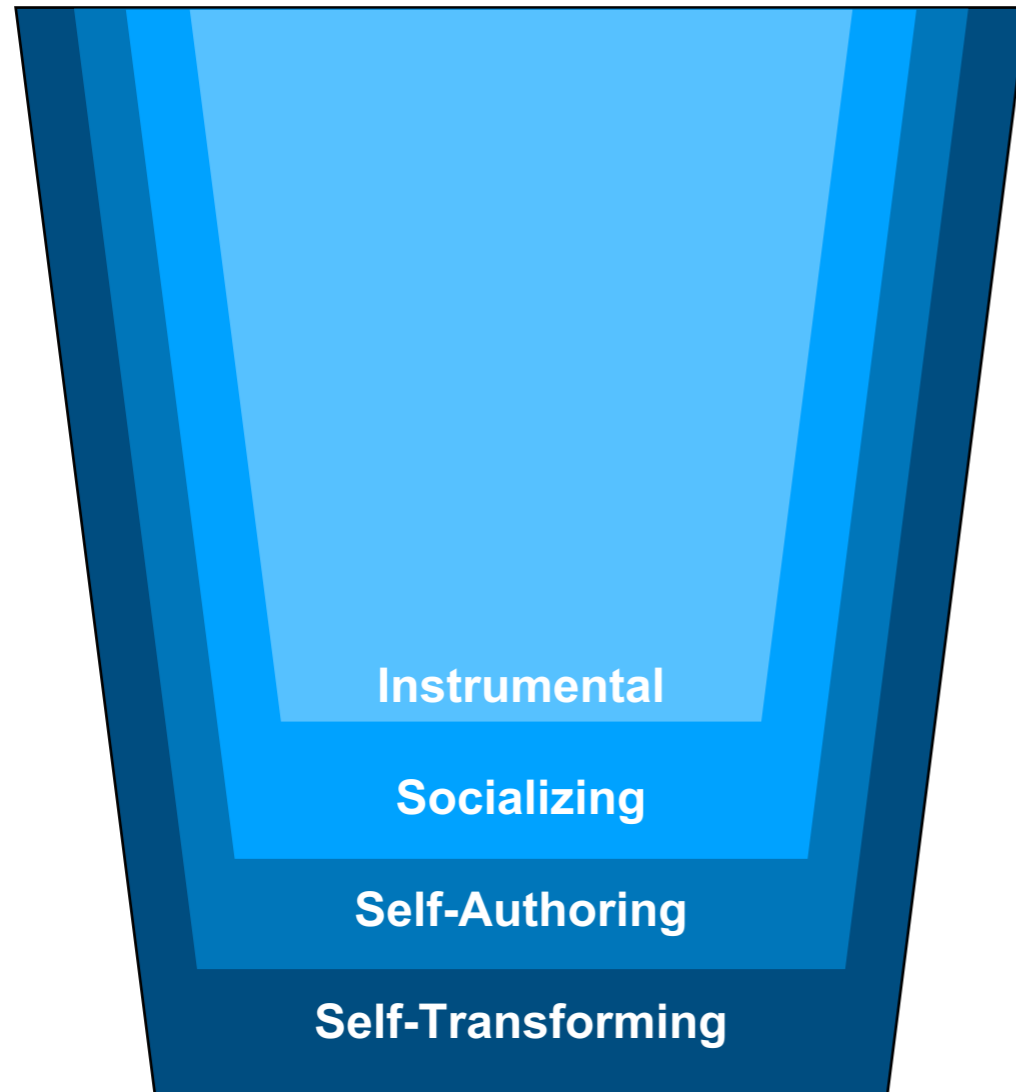
see Breidenstein et al., 2012

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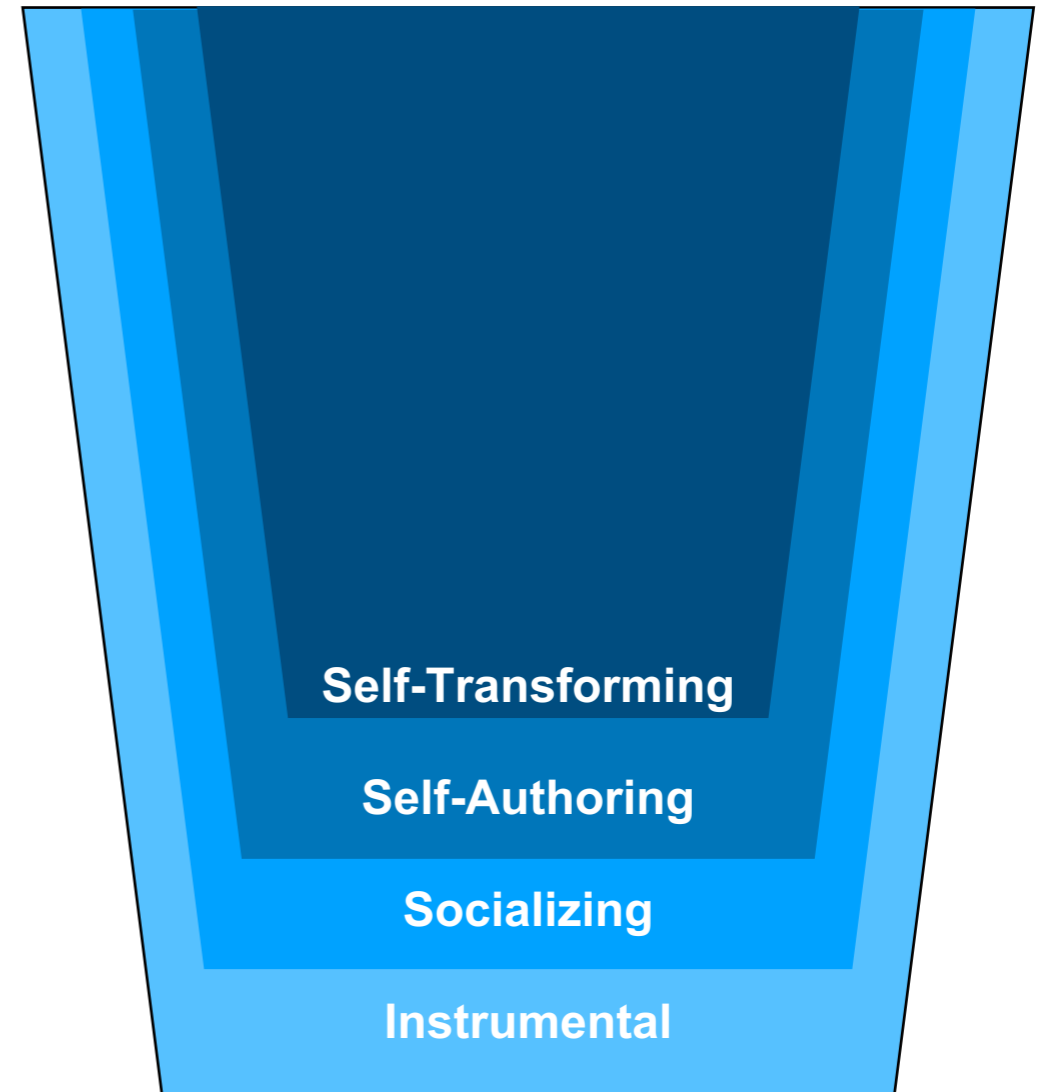


Implications for Theory

Nested Holding Environments



Individual development, over time, allows for greater capacity for complex thinking



Group development requires “nested holding environments” to allow for the simultaneous support for all.

Implications for Practice

Structure, Identity, and Relationships

In general, leaders with more complex “ways of knowing” may have greater capacity to manage learning environments that:

- Include structures for collaboration and risk-taking
- Account for participants’ unique needs, identities, and values
- Support the development of group identities and relationships oriented toward growth

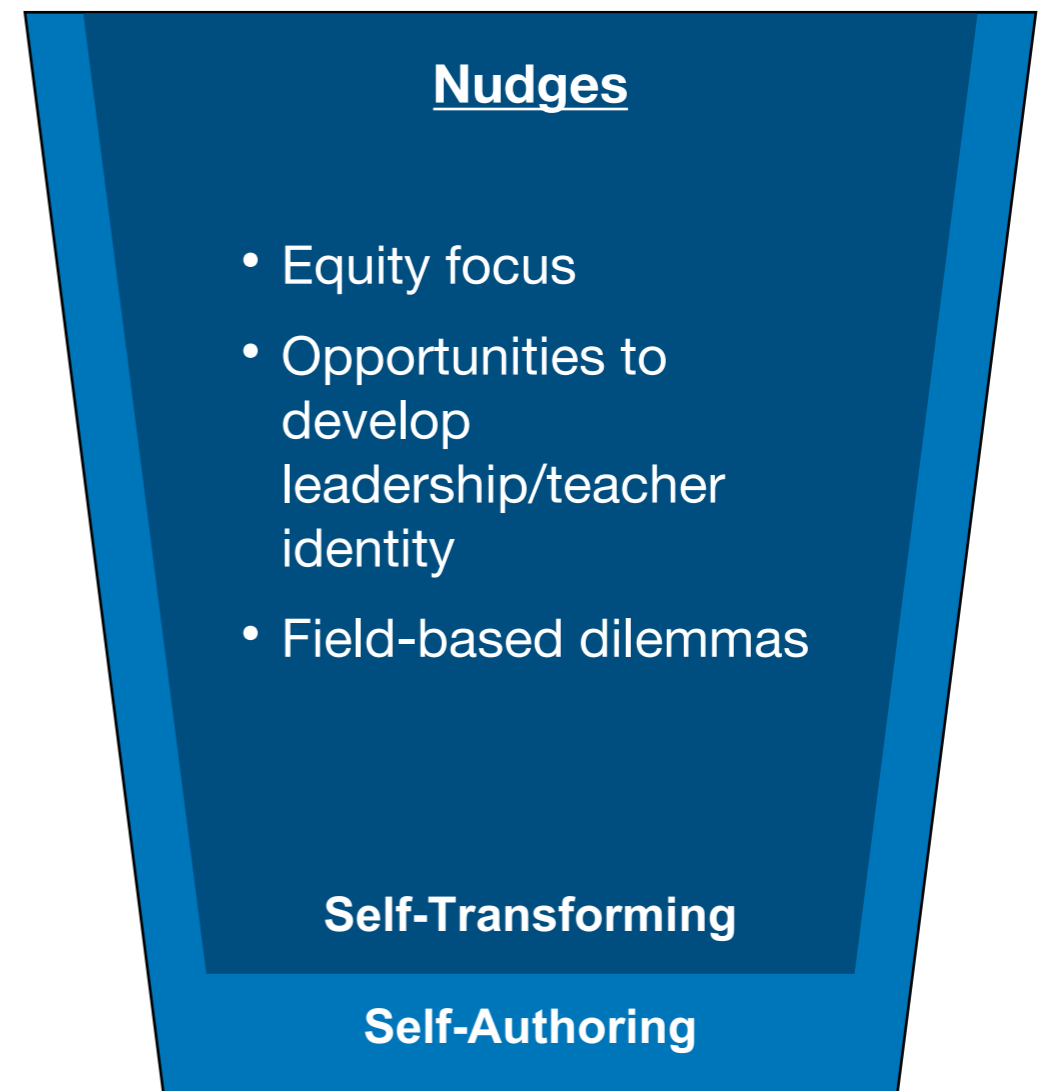
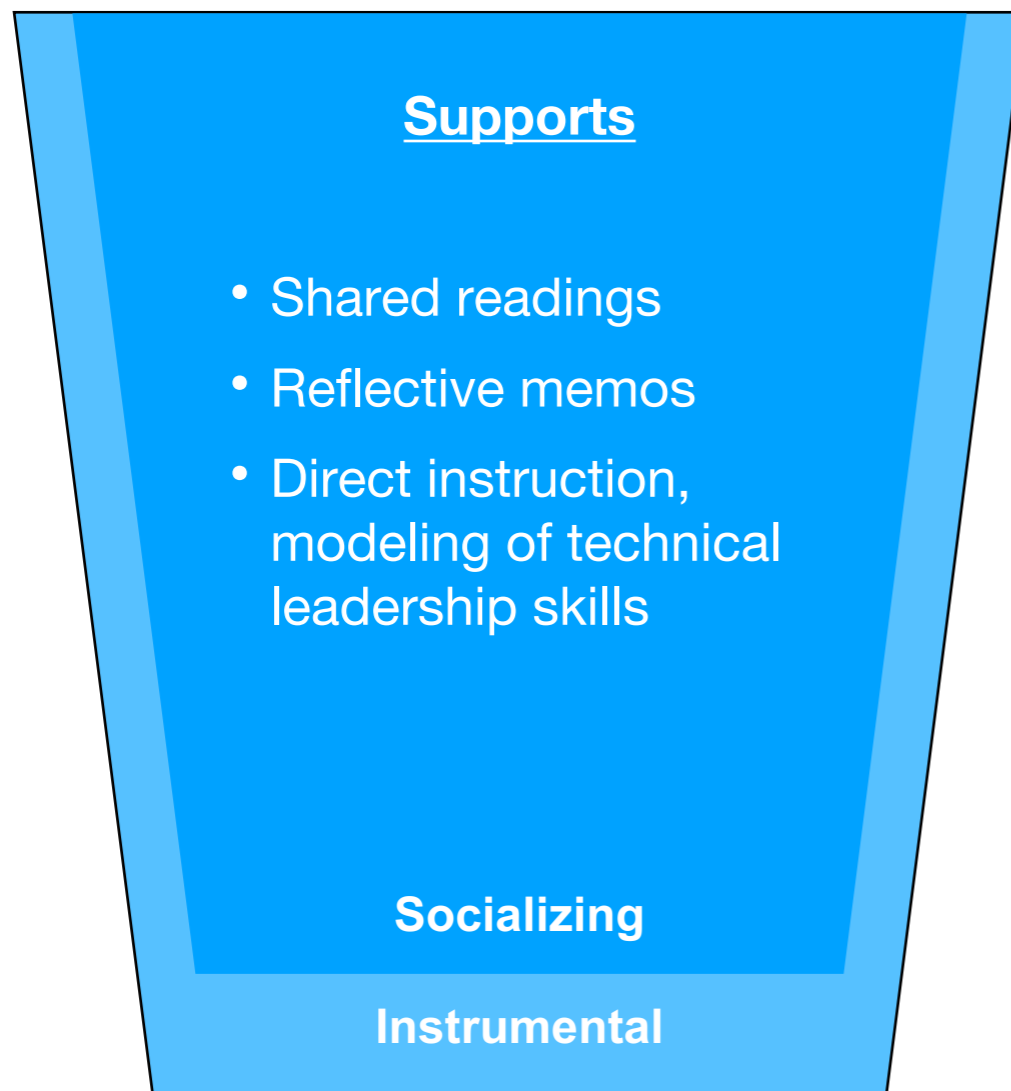
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Implications for Practice

Supports and Nudges

“What causes people to develop? I would say, at a practical level, it is the experience of **optimal conflict in the context of optimal support**” (Kegan, 2003, p. 44)



Implications for Research

Longitudinal Studies To Track Growth

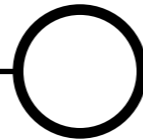
**Before
Program**



Interview 1:
Beliefs and
Motivations

SOI 1

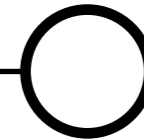
**Mid-
Program**



Interview 2:
Beliefs and Learning
Experiences

SOI 2

**End of
Program**



Interview 3:
Beliefs and
Debrief

SOI 3

Thank you

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