The Prometheus Leadership Commons:
A Meta-Framework for Leadership and Leadership Development

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Abstract: Leadership development suffers a plethora of problems: complexity, competitiveness, pressured stakeholders and unmet needs only start to express the challenges. These issues are suitably summarized by this meta-problem for the subject of leadership: How to navigate the territory? How can a student of leadership, a middle manager, an L&D specialist or a CLO plot a pathway through such a confusing landscape? The Prometheus Project initiated a cross-disciplinary research team to conceptualize a framework that addresses this meta-problem. This paper introduces and discusses the resulting framework, describes our method, and asserts recommendations for expanding the circle of consent for a clear framework for developing the capacities and skills of leadership.

Keywords: Adaptive change, coaching, development, executive, framework, leadership, leadership industry, organization development, performance, personal development, training.

Introduction

Barbra Kellerman summarizes the state of leadership research and practice in direct language; "there is a lot of stuff out there that is less than wonderful" (in Volkmann, 2012, n.p.).

She is not alone in her opinion. Pfeffer (2015) talks about "Leadership BS." Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, (2014) outlined four key points driving failure in leadership development programs. Beer, Finnström and Schrader (2016) went as far as calling it the "great training

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robbery" (p. 3) with global training and education spending reaching $356 billion in 2015 with very little return on investment.

It is our view that the persistence of these issues, despite intense intellectual, emotional and financial investment, suggest that we need a structural shift in leadership development, treating it as an adaptive problem rather than a technical one (Heifetz, 1994, Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Fritz, 1989). Continuing to invest time and effort to address the issue with more of the same type of resources will not adequately address these issues and may in fact exacerbate the problem. Rather, a structural shift and alternative approach is necessary to see systematically different results.

It was to the purpose of these structural adaptive changes that the concept of The Prometheus Project was conceived on a sunny July day in Barcelona, 2018.

One of the structural issues underpinning the general failures in the leadership development industry is perceived to come understanding of the phenomenon itself. A CEC[2] report (2017) noted a profound confusion about leadership and leadership development. Veldsman and Johnson (2016) wrote: "To the best of our knowledge, no overall, systemic, integrated and holistic view of leadership exists, and few organizations adopt a systemic, integrated approach to leadership" (p. 2). Likewise, Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, and Osland (2017) summarize that the research literature in this field

> has lacked a coherent and agreed upon classification scheme that helps scholars to clearly describe their research samples, compare and contrast their research contexts and findings with other studies and contribute towards a cumulative and growing body of knowledge about the predictors, correlates and outcomes of global leadership. (p. 564)

Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019) identify the underpinnings as related to conflicting motivations, a gap between leadership skills, the actual needs of organizations and incomplete learning cycles, in that the skills taught are not transferred or applied.

In our zeal to explore and clarify the essence and features of leadership, we define more and more distinctions and conditional situations for leadership. These are reasonable paths for constructivist learning and both theoretical and applied research, but are not sufficiently realistic for creating a useful body of knowledge for leaders. We cannot express enough our support and appreciation for these explorations. We only counter them with the need for pragmatic effect and the collective responsibility of our profession to be the ones accountable for creating useful constructs, as well as valid ones.

Therefore, it was logical that the first initiative of The Prometheus Project would be to address a framework that could open collective consent across a diverse range of stakeholders around what capacities and skills make up the subject of leading. It sought to create a framework that was simple, valid and generalizable, and useful for any stakeholders, contributors or

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[2] CEC is an association representing about one million European managers. https://www.cec-managers.org/

sponsors of leadership development. From that point-of-consent, the collective influence and ambitions of structural change could advance.

For this, we formed a diverse team of researchers and practitioners to undertake responding to this question:

What would a usable proof of concept for such a framework look like?

This article has two goals:

− To introduce this framework as a simple and digestible tool for a complex group of subjects, like leading, development and the human individual and social identity, and

− To provide the more systemic background of the professional roots of this framework.

Therefore, the article outlines the theoretical and conceptual context that bounded our framework design, describes our method, introduces and discusses the resulting framework, and offers observations and recommendations for expanding the circle of consent for a clear framework for developing the capacities and skills of leadership.

Theoretical/Conceptual Context

Our research draws from several areas that shape the resulting framework. This section covers the theories and concepts we considered most relevant.

The objective of the Prometheus Leadership Commons™ framework is to define elements of leadership that are generalizable and accurate. In other words, they *could* be usefully applied by every stakeholder in any context, including; an organization defining its own development strategies, any individual self-determining their own leadership path, by researchers shifting the blocks and constructs of knowledge and by any of the helping professions who have individual and organizational leadership transformation goals.

We[3] aimed for something that would enable leaders, organizations, consultants or coaches to orient themselves and then to navigate all corners of the capacities and skills of leadership. But also, to open comparisons, contrasts and socialization to enrich the learning process, expand the scope of what is learned and align and influence collaborators as a force for a wide set of use-cases. In simple terms: the framework had to include diverse perspectives, or lenses, so that the result held-up as useful for all of those perspectives.

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[3] The 'we' here is the research team for this project, (including the article's three authors), which was intentionally assembled to meet these criteria; global footprint, depth in multiple disciplines, diversity of experience/roles that simulate a design-thinking team. The structure of the team included a primary work group and secondary reference and supplemental group. The primary workgroup included experience in qualitative research, including dissertation chair and dissertation committee experience.

Therefore, we had to consider which concepts we would want to test-for-fit and include those in our research. While our considerations went far beyond what is presented here, we chose these four broad themes as necessary contexts for satisfying the goals for the framework.

Personal Capabilities of the Leader

We are still surprised to find how persistently the idea of leadership as solely an executive function holds in day-to-day discourse and thinking, and ultimately shapes the services and business models of the industry. We want to make it explicit that we have framed our exploration with the lens of leadership as an attribute of the person/leader, not as a role or a position in the hierarchy and that the demands of leading may be applicable to any person given a fit to their context. Some leadership demands may be simple, to fit simple contexts. More complex contexts require more complex capacities and skills.

When you read sources on the topic of leadership development, it is easy to notice that there is an assumption that development strategies include strategies for developing the internal capacities of leaders as well as their skills.

Day, Harrison and Halpin's (2009) approach integrates adult cognitive development theory with the areas of leadership identity and expertise that "appl[ies] to leader development across a wide spectrum of organizations" (p. 4). They note that leadership development implies growth, or change, over time and "includes topics such as personal trajectories, growth modeling, lag times, end states, and a whole host of other related topics. ... [that have] to be as much about development as leadership" (p. 5). Finally, they highlight the need for supporting structures that enable; competency acquisition, leader identity formation, and the process of identity formation that is supported by adult development.

This is further illustrated in Day and Dragoni's (2015) review of leadership development research. They identify four key indicators necessary for leadership development; leadership self-efficacy, self-awareness, leader identity and leadership knowledge, skills and competencies.

Finally, leaders need to have a high degree of personal wellbeing, focusing strengths of their personal capabilities on their leadership context. For this, we draw on positive psychologists' focus on wellness, including Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (2006), Seligman (2002), and Ryan and Deci's (2017) fundamental motivations.

This framing provided us with key ideas related to attributes for including in our framework.

Leadership as a Contextualized Process

Leadership can happen in any context. Therefore, the framework design would need to show capacities and skills suitable for the agency of leading in any context. Further, a leader would have to assess that context and design their leadership agency accordingly.

The combination of both work and relationship as a context is seen in a number of places. Reiche, et al. (2017), Adams and Anderson (2016, 2019) as well as Warren (2017) all identify

capacities for leading work as well as leading relationships. Kotter (1999) defines the practices of leading change to include work and achievement as well as influence and motivation. Kockelman (2007) identifies the elements of agency from a cultural anthropological perspective as both relationship and a process. This is not an exhaustive list.

Other perspectives frame leadership as a process or function, (e.g. Drath, McCauley, Van Velsor, O'Connor, & McGuire, 2008). To illustrate such processes, we utilized Drath et al. (2008), who argue for moving away from an ontological orientation of a leader, followers and a common goal (Bennis, 2007) and towards a process orientation. This means that any activity that contributes to direction, alignment and commitment can be viewed as an act of leadership. Similar sets of distinctions for leadership can be found in Heifetz's (1994) model of adaptive leadership and Grint's (2005, 2010) approach to matching leadership to context.

We also see leaders in a collective creative learning context, as illustrated in contemporary product design practices including design-thinking (Kelly & Kelly, 2013) and dynamic product learning activities such as lean startup (Ries, 2011), leadership in organization crisis (Goldberg & James, 2017) and also in deep traditions of lean and agile transformations where goal, action, reflection, change and iteration learning cycles are a central leadership process (Deming, 2018). Situated with these creative processes are collective leadership constructs that emphasize networks and connectivity across collaborator leaders (Western, 2019).

Finally, a leader can prepare their capabilities but must apply the type of leadership that is required in-the-moment. Their choices of leading must be made based on an assessment of their context.

An illustration of contextualization can be found in Snowden's (2007) model of decision-making. His Cynefin model describes a heuristic for helping identify the type of context one is in. On one hand, there are more predictable contexts, either clear or complicated, but on the other hand, there are less predictable contexts, either complex or chaotic. As well, we often begin in a place of confusion, which triggers a process of identifying what type of context we are in. So, a leader's capacities and skills must be suited to predictable challenges, but also dynamic uncertain extremes.

The framework design considers that leaders (and the participants in the development of leaders) require the capabilities to assess the context that they are leading in and respond by employing a variety of collaborative modes and resources as aids to navigate their decision-making, capability development and deployment and interventions.

Learning as a Leadership Capacity

One of the aims of the framework is to enable learning experiences that develop leadership both individually and collectively. The framework's organization, levels and distinctions are constructs to support finding salient and relevant learning objectives for individuals, sponsors, program designers, and experience designers.

The framework is not only a learning and development tool, but also includes learning as an element of leadership capacities and skills. The processes of learning and the processes of leading are seen to be inseparable.

Learning theory and learning models weighed heavily in our design. The resulting framework had to address several learning-related challenges. These include; the personal capacity to learn as a capability of leaders, the process of leading includes learning as an intentional outcome and leadership development is a complex process inclusive of short-term acquisition, short-medium term integration, and long-term development and integration.

Meeting this list of criteria became an important element of the Prometheus Framework.

We approached learning based on Fischer's (1980; Fischer and Bidell, 2006; Mascolo and Fischer, 2010) dynamic skill theory and Dawson's (2020; Dawson and Stein, 2011a, b) virtuous cycles of learning (VCoL) model. Learning is understood as incrementally making connections with existing knowledge and skills by setting appropriately challenging goals, gathering relevant information, applying it to real world challenges and reflecting on outcomes to build new skills.

Motivation for learning can be seen in terms of the dopamine opioid cycle, where goal setting stimulates dopamine production which stimulates incentive salience (Berridge, 2007), motivating one to meet a challenge. Achievement of the goal releases opioids, our reward for the effort that makes it easy to reset the goal and to go around the cycle again (think of an infant learning to walk). Applied to learning and leadership in adulthood, the cycle enables us to reconnect to our natural learning experience and becomes the engine of leadership development.

Development Strategies

The framework has to be useful in the process of setting leadership development strategies with both short-term and long-term trajectories.

Building a leader's capabilities is a continuing journey, which can start at a young age. Navigation through development is unceasing, as outlined in Vaill's (1996) discussion about learning to navigate modern leadership challenges. Leadership development includes psychological development, which is masterfully synthesized by Basseches and Mascolo (2009).

Roux (2020) identified life-long learning as a key theme for leadership. She concludes that leadership adequate for the 21st century is;

integrative, complex and multi-layered. There is a need for lifelong horizontal and vertical development journeys using adult development theory, virtuous cycles and neuroplasticity as core theories of continuous growth. Leadership needs to be scaled to enable work in new contexts of digital, virtual and flexible environments that are in constant flux with wicked problems that can only be solved collectively. (p. 30)

Stage-based interpretations of leadership (e.g. Kegan and Lahey, 2016; Torbert & Associates, 2004; Joiner and Josephs, 2007; Kuhnert and Lewis, 2006) spotlight a significant practical

problem. These models all note that very few people, perhaps no more than 2-5% of the population, ever achieve the highest levels of adult development, which correlate with leadership having the capacity to best address the most complex challenges. Collins (2007) writes that only 12 of the 14,000 leaders he observed reached his criteria for a Level Five leader.

This premise spotlights a number of issues related to leadership development strategies.

– First, development processes to these higher levels take a long time, are too costly and too risky for many companies experiencing the war for talent and retention.

– Secondly, organizations must be able to map the leadership competencies of job-hoppers, new members and joint-venture members, so they can rapidly deploy and use them.

– Thirdly, with a limited supply of high-functioning members, rigid traditional deployment practices, there is likely to be ever more frequent capability mismatch conditions between individual leaders and their contexts.

– Therefore, you almost certainly need to engage in real-world challenges with the leaders that you have, not the leaders that you want.

In summary, the framework should allow for flexibility in development and maintain utility for these real-world complex challenges where development may be likely across the lifetime of the leader, but at the same time they are called to lead in the moment, ready-or-not.

Methodology

Mortimer Adler was faced with a similar dilemma to ours in the field of western philosophy, which spurred a lifetime of scholarship. When faced with the problem of existing terms being irreconcilable, Adler (1967) took on a necessary re-synthesis of topics in a process he called "syntopical analysis" and "coming to terms." Literally, the process of choosing the best unifying terms across complex seemingly disconnected diversity.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Our research was designed as constructivist grounded theory (CGT) (Bryant, 2017 & 2009; Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Mills, et.al., 2006; Thornburg & Charmaz, 2010). Bryant (2017) asserted that insightful research adopts one or more methods that are complementary to their specific project context. Our CGT adopts contemporary deliberative practices of Collective Intelligence (Engle, et al., 2014), lateral thinking (De Bono & Zimbalist, 1970) and creative problem solving (Treffinger, 2005).[4]

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[4] Much of our method included leadership and development theory and to that extent our methodology also followed the steps of meta-theory as a method (Edwards 2010) and certainly shares the intentions of that school of theoretical research.

Bryant also asserts that while CGT can vary in its details, it should be consistent to its core elements. In an interview late in his life, Strauss, one of the founders of the grounded theory methods, identified three elements necessary to meet grounded theory requirements (Legewie & Schervier-Legewie, 2004). Our research addressed each of these:

– Theoretical sensitive coding. This means that there is a strong instinct and capacity to 'listen' to the essential stories underlying the ground, and to construct useful parts to be used in sense-making and organization of the ground (data).

– Theoretical sampling. This means choices of data are well considered to advance the learning and creative formation spiral.

– Comparison. Choices for what to compare are fearless so as to stretch the theories, test them, sharpen thinking, and cull bias.

The mechanics of CGT have been described as a spiral (Mills et al., 2006) of learning and discovery that materialize with many variants. Our spiral is expressed as:

– Green-field. Theorizing (as much as feasible) without bias or pre-condition of existing structures.

– Sample. Data which can be any kind of source that informs the theoretical process.

– Conceptualize. Building the linguistic labels, from which an overall theory will be constructed, technically referred to as 'coding.'

– Frame. Positing exploratory and partial concepts and segments of theory, technically referred to as 'memoing.'

– Form. Expanding or synthesizing a more integrated theory or model.

– Test and Compare. Constant comparing and lateral thinking to cull out bias, pre-conception and refine thinking and articulation of the theory.

While inductive and deductive reasoning are prevalent as part of the creative process (Treffinger, 2006), CGT especially emphasizes the essential process of *abductive reasoning* in which the theorist creates the simplest and most likely explanation for making sense of the grounded observations. This result is "plausible and useful" (Bryant, 2009, np) but is qualified as uncertain or provisional pending experience and confirmation in use.

How do you know how flexible your process mechanics should be? CGT practitioners consistently remind us that the *principles* of the process are primary to the *mechanics*. Balancing orthodoxy with the pragmatic, if your sources are reams of paper, emails or physical evidence, then meticulous tagging and organization are a pragmatic requirement to make sense of the data. In our methods, we adjusted to the age of virtual communication and collaboration and leverage the practices and technical tools to conceptualize and frame our primary, secondary and tacit

knowledge into discrete parts. We were intentional, conscious and methodical, but also agile and pragmatic.

How do you know when you are done with spiraling? Following Eisenhardt (1989), our perspective is that you are sufficiently done when you have consistent experience as you test and compare. In other words, "we have seen this before" or "this fits well." Interdisciplinary comparisons led us to conclude sufficient consistency to warrant a release of the framework, opening further experience and confirmation in practice and research.

Data Choice and Theoretical Sampling

Our data and theoretical sampling included three classes of sources. First, the intentionally diverse experience of the research team, second, a selected extended reference group to provide feedback for bias and critical thinking, and lastly, published and unpublished scholarly work, selected based on preliminary rounds of analysis (see below).

The analytical team members hold two PhDs and three Masters, have decades of practice in leadership development, education, business transformation, coaching, training. Members have engaged in thousands of leadership development interactions from the role of coach, organization sponsor, executive, development professional, researcher, and educator. They have depth of knowledge across disciplines and roles in the leadership development context and have methodology experience with dissertation chair and committee experience. Members were located from Asia, Europe and North America. All were English speakers.

The extended reference group included some who were not available sufficiently to the process, so became ancillary resources. In other cases, these resources represented specializations that we targeted for exploration.

Cross-disciplinary theoretical comparisons included; learning objectives and processes in learning theory, from Bloom (1956) through Gagné (1985) to Dawson and Stein (2011a, b), psycho-therapeutic development objectives synthesized across the major psycho-therapeutic disciplines by Basseches & Mascolo (2009), leadership development practice from the US Army, (e.g. (Day et al., 2009)) whose programs range from the ranks to top echelons (Gavin & Watson, 2019), executive leadership education from Moldoveanu & Narayandas (2019) and finally, leadership assessment models of Anderson & Adams (2016, 2019) and Warren (2017) which infer leadership attributes and developmental factors from observed traits.

Pedagogical Considerations

Pedagogical learning objectives and pedagogical sequence were weighed to support the clustering phases and the cohesiveness of the framework groupings. The framework is intended to facilitate setting and sequencing learning goals and objectives from general to detail/micro-learning and from fundamental to advanced development objectives. Here, we also weighed usability as part of strategy and design of leadership development programs.

Theory Finalization

Comparisons and refinement are a key part of meta-framework finalization. To this end, each team member applied the framework in small field-tests or reviewed the framework with peer advisors and experts to gauge any indications of change or refinements. In addition to the peer/expert feedback, the frameworks' systems and subsystems were cross-referenced to a sample of independently defined inventories of leadership development and curriculum subjects from public and private executive development programs. Notably, we leveraged the extensive anthologies of leadership knowledge from Bass (2008) and Nohria & Khurana (2010) to confirm the grounded field of our consideration and inform design choices.

In finalizing the framework, the structure evolved from an initial three to five and then six meta-categories identified as leadership systems and spanning the whole of the leadership phenomenon (figure 1 below). The same process was used to further divide these system categories into a second level of detail sub-systems (figure 2 below). We held a constraint of no more than five of these subsystems in each of the six level meta-categories. This constraint was not easily fulfilled, but ultimately led to satisfying abstractions that can have resonance across the stakeholder spectrum, from academic, to clinical to popular consumption.

This research did consider many samples to form a hypothesis of the nature and composition of a third level of detail in the framework. However, we did not attempt an inventory and organization of the large number of leadership topics that fit into level 3 and defer this to further research. However, we did define this level in the framework.

It is our view that the framework meets its goal of providing simple, valid and generalizable (useful) meaning-making that can open communication and hold focus on these complex topics which are otherwise often deflected or bogged-down. Our goal is a semi-stable standard reference that is usable by all stakeholders and that allows orderly evolution. We invite engagement and refinement as we expand the circle of contributors and the complexities of the level 2 and 3 domains, what Kockelman (2007) refers to as flexibility and accountability.
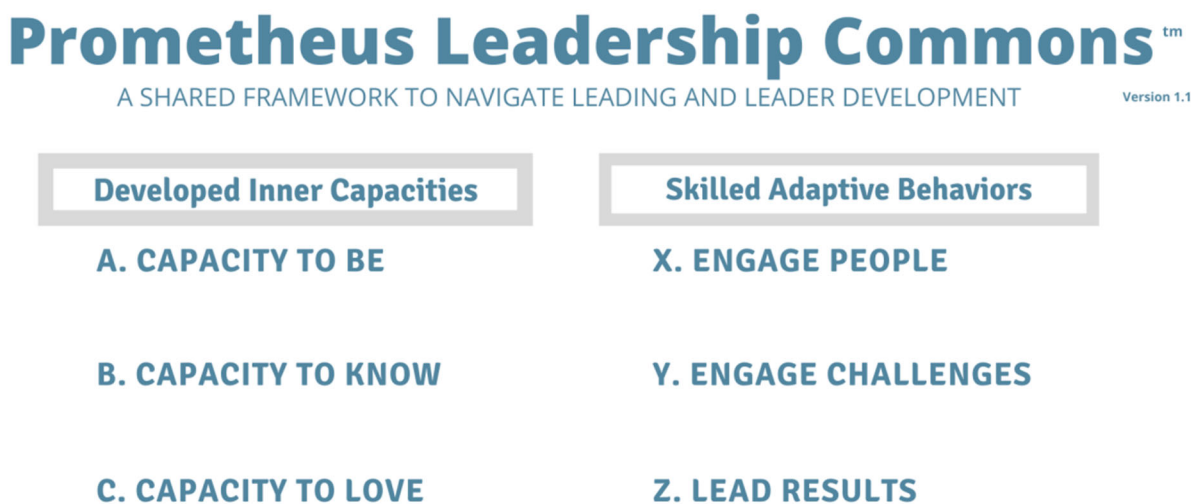
Results

We express the research results as the Prometheus Leadership Commons[TM.] framework (PLC):

- "Prometheus" because it represents "forethought," the Greek archetypal meaning.
- "Leadership" because this is the concept that we wish to unchain and maintain.
- "Commons" because, even as it is facilitated and governed by a central organizing group, it is framed to become the shared open-source framework for all stakeholders' uses.

The PLC framework is structured in 'levels' with the first level showing 6 meta-categories, grouped between inner capacities and adaptive behaviors. Categories A, B, and C are personal

capacities of leadership.[5] Categories X and Y are skills adaptive to engaging in contexts of leading relationship or task. Category Z are the skills adaptive to the action of leading.[6]

Level 1 is useful in application and should not be seen as only a way to organize lower-level details. Its simplicity belays its approachability and easy navigation power which opens conversation, comparison, deconstruction and exploration (see figure 1).

Prometheus Leadership Commons™
A SHARED FRAMEWORK TO NAVIGATE LEADING AND LEADER DEVELOPMENT
Version 1.1

Developed Inner Capacities

A. CAPACITY TO BE

B. CAPACITY TO KNOW

C. CAPACITY TO LOVE

Skilled Adaptive Behaviors

X. ENGAGE PEOPLE

Y. ENGAGE CHALLENGES

Z. LEAD RESULTS

Figure 1. Prometheus framework level 1.

That simple and easy navigation is even more valuable because it supports confident exploration into additional details found in level 2 and level 3. This layering allows explorations with more granularities for each area while keeping confidence in the relationship to a whole system of a leader's capacities and skills.

Level 2

Level 2 shows twenty-nine sub-categories (or subjects) nested within the level 1 meta-categories (see figure 2). For each of the level 1 systems, there are 4 or 5 subsystems (or subjects). Examples of the subsystems include one-to-one engagement skillsets vs. the skills to engage in groups.[7]

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[5] The most unique category (relative to comparative frameworks) is the Capacity to LOVE (to be gracious or serving) and is the 'object' of our self-consciousness in contrast to the Capacity to BE as 'subject.'

[6] We observe that many resources on leadership express differences in practice or types of leaders, but not as frequently express the act of leading. In the PLC LEAD RESULTS domain frames this. The primary sources for the LEAD RESULTS domain is a synthesis of the essential practice of leading from well-researched models including Adaptive Leadership (Heifetz, 1994), Change Leadership (Kotter, 1999), social anthropology concepts of agency (Kockelman, 2007), and learning cycles of Dawson and Stein (2011a, b).

[7] There are some PLC sub-systems that may stand out against convention and are invitations to mainstream as well as fringe ideas if they are substantiated and rationally articulated. These include a category for collective transpersonal identity which may include spiritual traditions, physical capacity that

Prometheus Leadership Commons™

A SHARED FRAMEWORK TO NAVIGATE LEADING AND LEADER DEVELOPMENT

Version 1.1

Developed Inner Capacities

A. CAPACITY TO BE
Personality and Identity that enables leading
1. **Self Identity** - fundamental construction of me
2. **Self Experience** - instinct, emotion and self-talk
3. **Self Profession** - values, purpose and convictions
4. **Physical Self** - energy, vitality and pathways
5. **Collective Self** - trans-personal identity and values

B. CAPACITY TO KNOW
Quality of learning, sense-making, confidence
1. **Learning** - learning to learn
2. **Exploring** - instinct, intuition, semiotics, somatics
3. **Thinking** - bias, discernment, consent
4. **Complexity** - polarity, structure, construction
5. **Domains** - knowing the context we lead in

C. CAPACITY TO LOVE
Creative relationship with the outside
1. **Presence** - all ways of listening and connecting
2. **Devotion** - purpose that opens motivation
3. **Service** - enabling others, followership
4. **Openness** - vulnerability and co-influence.

Skilled Adaptive Behaviors

X. ENGAGE PEOPLE
Skills to lead in diverse organization contexts.
1. **One : One** - between individuals
2. **Groups** - high-performing teams
3. **Complex** - globally, cross-boundaries, scale
4. **Humans** - differences in people, power and culture
5. **Collective** - co-leaders, co-learners, co-influencers

Y. ENGAGE CHALLENGES
Skills fit to patterns of work challenge
1. **Crisis** - in high importance and urgency
2. **Discover** - in ideation, innovation & creativity
3. **Change** - in scaling and transitioning
4. **Perform** - incremental continuous improvement
5. **Complex** - globally, cross-boundaries, scale

Z. LEAD RESULTS
The essential processes of leading (FICRA)
1. **Frame** - prepare ahead and in the moment
2. **Intend** establish vision, goals, or points of inquiry
3. **Consent** - sufficient to commit to act and experiment
4. **Resolve** - design, experiment and realize the intention
5. **Attend** - notice, appreciate and recognize

Figure 2. Prometheus framework levels 1 and 2.

The X Y Zs

There is a daily deluge of posts, promoted content and publications on leadership and leadership development on our sites and in our inbox. We easily find discussions across the rainbow of leader models (authentic leaders, transformational leaders, adaptive leaders, vertical leaders, situational leaders, etc.). It is also easy to hear exhortations to discover our purpose, center our being, to explore either our strengths or our innermost fears.

It is rare to find a simple description of what we are doing when we lead. Yet, this is the basic focus that any of us must hold as we engage in the agency of leading – or as we orient ourselves for learning and development.
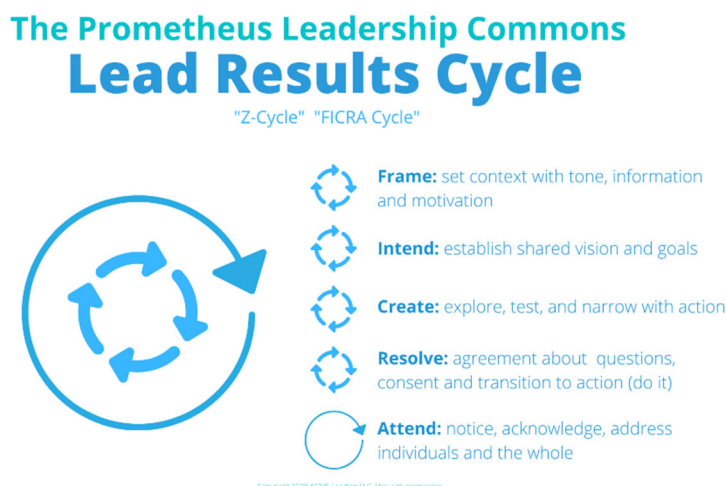
We include that description of what leading is in the PPLC as level 1 domain of (Z) LEAD RESULTS (figure 3 below). Even though the authors normally eschew clever acronyms, we did articulate FICRA as the mnemonic for this domain (and it is hardly clever!).

But, we like it because a mnemonic is good for quick recall.

We hope that supplying this mnemonic will help anyone maintain clarity in the heat-of-the-moment, when *all* of the leader's faculties may be challenged by the heat or complexity of the work and people at-hand.

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includes connection to the idea of personal energy fields, instinct and intuition as a component of intelligence, inclusion of business or technical domain knowledge as a leadership attribute, the reality of people, culture and power as a context, and the identification of love as a leadership capacity.

Two further domains in the X Y Zs grouping are (X) Engage PEOPLE and (Y) Engage CHALLENGES (see figure 4.). They represent skills for relationships and for work, respectively. Considering development sequencing, some of these are markedly cumulative. For example, engaging one to one (commonly referred to as 'people skills') includes skills as diverse as listening, feedback,

Figure 3. The lead results cycle.

feedforward, coaching and the less intellectual practices of touch, presence or even eye-reading. Yet, these skills are also foundations to more complex engagement, in a group or team and potentially across more globally diverse and complex relationships.
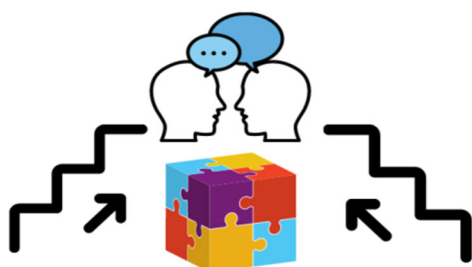
Figure 4. Engage people and challenges.

The Engage PEOPLE domain includes two higher-order subjects.

Humans includes the skills to assess and adapt to the human context for leading, including your individual constituents, and the constraints (or enablers) of power, politics and culture. The framework sees them as realistic contexts that leaders-on-the-ground struggle with every day. In our thousands of leadership development interactions, we find that members of the profession prefer the soft subjects such as inner discovery and affirmative relationships, while our clients – from the front line to the boardroom – are living in the rougher reality of teams, organizations and communities. The framework asserts both of these perspectives as necessary for effective action.

Collective includes the skills to learn, decide, act, reflect and lead *collectively* in order to be effective in the moment and in real-world contexts. These collective skills may be the most important emphasis in the framework and least in-focus across leadership programs.

Taken as a whole, these five Level 2 domains create a very rich and robust span of skills related to the engagement of PEOPLE in the dynamics of leading.

The Engage CHALLENGES domain, (figure 5) identifies skills for four archetypal patterns readily found in teams, organizations, industries, networks, or communities regardless if they are for commercial, altruistic, civic, political or social purposes.

In addition to these basic four patterns, there is a fifth subject in the CHALLENGES domain that focuses on skills for leading work in contexts that are more complex than the norm; such as combinations or parallels of the four basic patterns, which are often mixed in real-world complex settings. For example, crisis, operations and innovations may be simultaneous challenges.

Of all of the domains of the PLC, this set most reflects executive business thinking and skills which we place in the realm of positional leadership across a wide range of contexts.

Figure 5. Engage challenges.

The A B Cs

The level 1 A B C capacities of BE, KNOW and LOVE, (figure 6) are about personal development, versus skills and behaviors, or versus simply holding *knowledge about* those capacities.

The A B C domains support what Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1962) would identify as affective learning objectives as contrast to cognitive or operational. The strategies for developing these leadership capacities do include supporting objectives of *learning about* these concepts, and putting them into practice, but in support of the primary objectives of *internalizing* these capacities.

Figure 6. The A B Cs.

The framework also considers *the combination* of these three domains as how the leader constructs their identity-as-a-leader, beyond their self-identity as a being. So, the self, (BE) is also component of the leader's identity, which includes the components of their relationship to knowledge (KNOW) and the outside (LOVE).

Capacity to LOVE is the leader's relationship to "the outside." This part of the framework includes the concepts of dedication to purpose and learning, selflessness in relation to the other, but also their openness and being affected by the other. This progression is consistent with adult maturity stages that are conventional and post-conventional, where the leader's consciousness extends from themselves to things and others-beyond-themselves.

Capacity to BE is very much the range and balance of self-experience of the leader, as is richly expressed in psychological lenses. In addition, it provides two areas that are not often emphasized in leadership development. The first is Physical dimensions of leader self-experience. The second is the Collective dimensions of self-experience, or trans-personal consciousness.

Finally, the Capacity to KNOW is the leader's capacity to have a relationship with knowledge, with truth and bias, polarity and paradox, and with the continuing experience of learning. There two subjects that stand out from the conventional leadership content: the challenges of complex knowledge and the place of domain knowledge as an attribute of a leader.[8]

Ultimately, the framework wants to lead the learner to a place of harmony and integration across all three of these domains, as what we experience in ourselves and bring from ourselves to the process of leading.

Sequencing and Complexity

The level 2 sub-systems are defined with sequence and hierarchical complexity in mind, where earlier subjects can be prioritized differently from more advanced or complex development subjects. For example, in the skill domain of Engage PEOPLE, there are two early subsystems (one: one and group) that easily illustrate a sequence relationship, where mastery of the former is a substantial prerequisite for the later.

Level 3

The PLC framework acknowledges the vast number of topics in the knowledge-sphere of leadership and provisionally created the construct of level 3 for them. We classify the elements for level 3 as topics or composites; *topics* being made up of single subjects that are seen as first-order constructs used for higher-level abstractions as well as for assembly into composite elements and *composites* made up of compound and complex attributes that may even span the level 1 categories and level 2 subjects.[9]

These topics and composites were part of the research ground used to conceptualize the meta-structures of the PLC framework. The sheer numbers, and the absence of an aligning or comparative framework, make these difficult to adopt and integrate – so the PLC framework is a way to organize as well as open a more integrated view.

The framework, in its current version 1.1 does not attempt to fully inventory all possible level three topics or composites. However, some of the level 2 subject descriptions do provide a good set of examples of what they might be. The subject of Exploring, within the Capacity to Know includes the specific topics of; instinct, intuition, semiotics and somatics, which make a very suitable inventory of what would be level 3 topics in this sub-domain.

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[8] We had some discussions about if bundling the Capacity to Know with Be and Love was the right framing and noted that many in the industry see intellectual and cognitive capacities as skills or see them as distinct from personality, emotion and relationships. It became clear to us that this combination in the internalized domains was one of the biggest values in including cognition, truth and knowledge as intimately human and internalized experiences.

[9] An example of a composite element may be the popular concept of "grit," which may be composed of topical elements such as emotional maturity, persistence, goals setting and holding dedication to principles.

It *may* be valuable to organize or catalogue these further, articulating explicit relationships and sorting the more valuable from the questionable. Some of this may be explored in further research and in The Prometheus Projects' structured communities and initiatives.

We do not see this kind of complex analysis as a pre-requisite to the framework's value, and it may be unrealistic and unnecessary. There is evident value in being able to traverse between a given topic or construct and contextualize them. This traversing and contextualizing is a valuable learning and communication practice.

Walkabouts

This framework with two simple divisions, six major domains and twenty-nine sub-domains (or subjects) is both simple and complicated. As you test and digest it, you likely will need to adjust your incumbent thinking and make new comparisons and contrasts. Some areas of the framework will be familiar, others highlight new connections and still others unrecognized gaps. This kind of opening awareness, contextualization and re-combination is exactly the navigation that the framework is looking to serve.

We also assume that the PLC framework is new content for anyone reading this article, so some illustrations (in lieu of conversation) would help move it from strange to familiar. We offer just a few of these (reference figures 3-6).

You can read figure 1 from upper left to lower right, as if it were a shipping manifest. However, we recommend reading top-to-bottom from top layers to lower detail, and from the lower right (starting with Z).

Top-to-bottom simply means that you consider the inner capacities and adaptive skills as useful navigational constructs to explore and to explain. Try thinking or conversing just with those. You might ask: "What part of this leadership subject is about inner capacities and what part is about adaptive skills?" We have found that this question and the simple discussion it invites are helpful.

Then, try the ABCs and the XYZs. As a group, how many examples can we find for each of these domains?

Starting from lower right, LEAD RESULT, offers the perspective of observation of the leader in action, and the development needs that might illuminate. Try asking questions such as:

- What inner capacities (or adaptive skills) do you draw from when you (insert one of the FICRA subjects)?
- How do your adaptive skills and inner capacities serve or derail the action of leading?
- Where are your strengths and which areas may be under-explored?
- What areas might you co-lead as a 'spiky'[10] strategy?

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[10] See elaboration of this concept below.

From here, you can naturally walk back through the framework for exploration as development goals or co-leadership strategies. This walk back might be facilitated by developmental assessment techniques, coaches or mentors.

Another illustration of applying the PLC framework is our conversations around the immunity to change (ITC) process for leadership development with Minds at Work.[11]

The ITC process includes a first step to set personal commitments or improvement goals. The insights for setting these goals often come from self-reflection, strengths and weaknesses feedback, psychometric and 360 assessment results. However, these also always need the subject to make some kind of self-assessment and to make a choice; and this can be difficult without a context of what a leader and leadership means.

For example, an assessment of 'low on big-5 openness' is a useful fact, but abstract in terms of what behaviors one may want to change. The PLC framework points to skilled adaptive behaviors in leading. For example, how do I 'attend' to the participants in the action of leading? What 'attending' behaviors do I see (or not see) that I want to change? Then, further along the ITC process, the explorations of the framework's inner capacities can also aide the exploration of immunities and hidden assumptions about that specific area, such as exploring intuition or devotion to others or principles.

A third illustration addresses the hypothesis that the framework might help to better sort the good from the not-so-good from the leadership echo-sphere.

I recently watched a presentation from a high-profile practitioner on 'centering practices,' that was part of a new leadership development product from an established consultancy. It introduced some popular thoughts about neuroscience (cortisol, testosterone, oxytocin), asserted that leaders should build a habit of 'centering,' and spoke about (more than demonstrated) techniques "so that cortisol can be reduced and ("not too much") testosterone and oxytocin can be released" and finally included a fair amount of asserting that 'centering' should be more prevalent.

Anyone watching might experience a range of satisfaction or tension from the presentation, but few would be able to understand what they did not already know or believe about why it was included in a session on leading, or to understand or repeat the techniques so they can be transferred to behaviors and internalized. Of course, I have re-watched this segment a half-dozen times, wearing my best humble learner hat. Still, I find it wanting as a communication or a development experience.

How might walking through the framework help navigate this?

The simple answer is that having a persistent shared mental framework gives you a context to understand and evaluate some bit of content that may come your way. I can better understand criteria for quality. I can better think critically (logically) about what I am presented. I can better engage and ask questions. I can more quickly determine: Is this worth my time? Is this going to

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[11] Unpublished conversations with Deb Helsing Ed, Co-director, Minds at Work. Minds at Work are the authors of the ITC process and providers of certifications and consulting services using the ITC model.

hold up politically and experientially in my organization if I spread this content? Can I bring this to a better place? If not, I can feel good about walking away.

Finally, with the framework as a context, I can ask: How does the concept of 'centering' or 'mindfulness' fit in to this PLC framework?

Here is a quick summary of how we might 'connect the dots' with the PLC (with the strongest connections first):

(Z) LEAD RESULTS includes the skill of *framing*. A leader may choose to apply the 'centering' skills to prepare themselves or the group to be attentive to the dynamics at hand.

Capacities to BE, KNOW and LOVE are about what you (the leader) bring to (the action of) leading. 'Centering' practices (mindfulness, clearing) are leader-capacity practices. There is a direct relationship, with PLC subjects like self-experience, physical capacities, exploring, and presence.

(X) Engaging PEOPLE and (Y) Engage CHALLENGES are leader-member exchange skills and process leadership skills categories. This is a fine point of communication about traversing the framework. Yes, you bring your inner capacities as a leader to the action. So, yes, you may bring personal mindfulness capacities to this action. Yes, skills of mindfulness may be part of your affective development. But, these parts of the PLC highlight skills-based engagement. They are compartmentalized in the framework but exist as a whole in actual experience and practice. They are distinct in the PLC so that you can (remember to) (better) make the distinctions and can design learning and development at incremental (micro) levels.

Do these walkabouts illustrate that the framework has value for navigating?

We think that they do and that it does. A framework does not eliminate the complexities, paradoxes or subtleties of these subjects, nor does it eliminate the flaws that many encounters may include, but does help you walk-through them, make distinctions and contrasts, expose your learning edges and bound the scope of your collaborations.

Finally, consider the value of the framework with a group of like-minded peers. You may find some rise in enthusiasm and a new sense of alignment as you explore perspectives with this new framework. But also consider a group of participants from diverse backgrounds, and little common ground. Without the framework, this group could be quickly lost.

Discussion

Language

The framework is intended to help navigate the complexity of leadership and leadership development. It helps to answer these kinds of questions:

–   What part of leading are we talking about?
–   What part of leading are we observing?
–   What part of leading does this program address or not address?
–   What do executive leaders and front-line leaders have in common and what distinguishes their leadership capacity?

The language used for the framework has to be pragmatic in a few ways; first, to be sufficient for consent by a wide spectrum of stakeholders; second, to allow for sensible use in everyday language in any context; third, to allow for flexibility and its evolution.

We have tirelessly worked to choose terms that can be used in conversation. In some cases, we found a great fit and in other cases learned that no single term is perfect. So, we think using these terms is important, but that there is room for alternatives, aliases and evolution. To borrow from Waterman and Peters (1982), the language of leading and development requires 'simultaneous loose-tight properties.' The right terms should fit the context, but without losing the rich meaning in the minds of the stakeholders.

An illustration of language differences that might be opportunities for opening communication is one practitioner we observed using the terms 'emotion and cognition' in a similar way that we speak about BE KNOW and LOVE. Our perspective is that, for a comprehensive framework that covers all the corners but also all the levels of maturity, we have correctly positioned the concept of emotion less prominently than this practitioner has. Emotional awareness and processing our emotional self-experiences are important capabilities, but they are only a part of what we see as the self-experience of the leader.

Terms Across Disciplines

We chose terms from the education profession that we realize may be confusing to some readers, as a central organizing criterion for the level 1 domains. We think this is worth addressing.

We recognize that many conflate the terms 'affect' and 'affective.' Affect is a term in psychology that aligns with the term 'emotion,' which is also part of the common dictionary use of the term. In the PLC framework, when we talk about the sub-domain of 'self-experience,' we are including what the psychologist would speak of as 'affect.'[12]

Affective is a term from learning theory (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia, 1962) to describe a specific class of learning outcomes. Affective learning outcomes are not emotions, per se. They

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[12] Affect is also a verb with two meanings. We use neither in the PLC. First is taking on a false persona or emotion, and we do not use the term in that sense. Second, as the pair to 'effect.' In the simple case 'affect' is the object in the sentence and 'effect' is the verb and would be the fair synonym of creating an outcome or result.

are internalized experiences of any content. A Jungian may talk about 'individuation' of experience or knowledge.[13]

So, the ABCs of the framework are grouped as such, because they all have affective learning objectives for leader development. Even commonly thought of cognitive subjects such as 'domain knowledge' define primary developmental outcomes for these areas of the PLC framework and as such are *affective,* in Bloom's sense of the word. In the case of domain knowledge, it is awareness of the capacity and commitment to building it, vs the gathering of specific knowledge content.

The Work of a Framework

To examine why leaders are failing to engage with the more rigorous leadership models, or why practitioners and consultancies continuously re-invent and reduce leadership into consumable bits, it is useful to turn to an older idea that is still true.

In Weick's (1979) observations of organization studies, he argued that there were three types of organizational texts.

1. Simple and generalizable, but not accurate (reductionist)
2. Simple and accurate, but not generalizable (narrow, un-contextualized)
3. Accurate and generalizable, but not simple

Any text that tried to be all three (simple, accurate and generalizable) tended to contain little useful advice and lots of regurgitated clichés. We suggest that leadership industry content in 2020 is in much the same state.

Leaders in 2020 are drowning in the complexity. In such situations, humans are biased towards reaching for simple stories that feel right and protect their sense of self, shutting out and closing down information coming from challenging or critical sources. Consequently, the aspiring leader of 2020 tends to be drawn towards simple stories that are inspiring, but either not accurate (e.g. Simon Sinek's (2009) *Start with Why*)[14] or not generalizable (e.g. leadership biographies). Cognitively and emotionally overwhelmed, they reject the more complex, accurate and generalizable texts and theories, and can regard those suggesting and producing them as threats or fools.

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[13] In contrast, knowledge/skill are in described by Bloom as 'cognitive' outcomes; where high-functioning outcomes might be described as 'evaluation' or 'synthesis.' Similarly, this concept is confused with the notion of 'cognition' in psychology and learning theory.

[14] Sinek's focus on purpose is appealing yet can leave many feeling unfulfilled. As well, balancing inspiration with access for implementation and worthiness of purpose is more complex than Sinek makes it out to be. Further, Sinek's approach has been critiqued as oversimplifying complex topics such as neurobiology and being overly selective in choosing evidence to support his claims, (such as the Wright brothers vs. Langley first to flight race, where Sinek focuses on the Wright brothers having a *why* while Langley is characterized as being after fame and riches. Yet evidence shows institutional constraints as well as a lack of sharing information from the Wright brothers were among the many factors involved).

This state of affairs is not helped by business schools tending to employ simple and accurate case studies that leave students with little access to the deeper more complex meta-frameworks that do provide accurate and generalizable models of leadership. Leadership development providers tend to be locked into simple and generalizable theories of leadership that, while perhaps contextually appropriate to the time they were written (e.g. transformational leadership in the 1970s and 1980s), fail to accurately address the challenges of the real world. Finally, the "business guru" publishing phenomenon, initiated by Tom Peters' solo career after *In Search of Excellence*, has resulted in a completely deregulated market of simplistic, silver bullet "solutions" that do more harm than good.

We hope our framework will allow the aspiring leader, the humble practitioner and the researcher, to develop the capacity to critically determine the value of a leadership text or development program, and appropriately categorize it, while simultaneously being able to extract valuable ideas that are contextually relevant to their specific leadership situation and developmental state.

Collective, or *Spiky* Leadership

To be effective, universal and adaptive, leadership strategies will maintain three complementary but distinct practices: long-term and just-in-time *development* and a flexible leadership *deployment* strategy.

Short-term *development* strategies will focus on more easily adopted and integrated subjects, which pragmatically means they focus on the XYZ skills domains, on leveraging individual strengths in the ABC domains and set those development experiences in a context where they can be real-world applied and socialized.

Long-term *development* involves the life-long navigation of individuals with the potential goal of reaching the higher levels of leadership outlined in stage-based models. For this to be useful, three things need to happen.

− The locus of long-term development cannot only be with the organization.

− Members must be able to plan their own developmental journey and take it with them as they change organizations.

− Lastly, objectives for development need to encompass an assumption of flexibility and agility about leadership itself.

A just-in-time *deployment strategy* relates to the possibility of being able to select and rapidly deploy contextually appropriate co-leadership teams to emerging leadership challenges. Implementing these co-leadership teams requires a change in the concept of leadership (that we have dubbed *spiky leadership)* where a much greater emphasis is given to collective leadership capacity realized through the aggregation of individual 'spikes' of talent or competency into co-leadership alliances that are creatively selected, deployed and dissolved as and when needed, a variation on the idea of lead-with-the-leaders-that-you-have – co-lead-as-you-need.

The notion of *spiky leadership* is already visible at a popular consciousness level. From children's cartoons, such as *Paw Patrol* and *Teen Titans*, to the deeply drawn fantasy of the *Game of Thrones* books and TV show and the comic-inspired *Marvel Cinematic Universe* and *The Walking Dead*, we see exceptionally talented but flawed people come together in teams to solve problems beyond the capacity of any single one of them. Within the long narrative arcs, we also see significant character development as individuals wrestle with their flaws, such as Tyrion Lannister's poor sense of self-worth and deep cynicism in *Game of Thrones* to Tony Stark's ego, self-interest and hubris in the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*.

This notion of flawed leaders is not a new concept, being a core element of ancient Greek tragedies (as explored in, for example, Knox, 1998; Engle, 2008). Unfortunately, in recent times, we have had a tendency to forget such ancient insights thanks to the dominance of what Western (2019) terms *The Leader as Messiah*, with models such as transformational and authentic leadership, and the gushing profiles of leaders in business media, having the tendency to paint rosy pictures of great people with special talents that pay no attention to any darker, shadow sides.

Flawed leaders have received some attention in the realms of psychoanalysis and clinical psychology. Manfred Kets de Vries has spent decades analysing the darker side of leadership (e.g. in de Vries, & Miller, 1985; de Vries, & Balazs, 2010; de Vries, 2010). The awareness of derailers in one's psychological make-up plays a significant part of Ron Warren's 360-degree leadership personality model (Warren, 2017) as well as Anderson and Adams' (2016, 2019) mapping of creative competencies in opposition to self-limiting tendencies such as complying, protecting and coercive control.

Spiky leadership occurs when tragic flaws are overcome by a group of leaders undertaking mature teamwork that enables their collective intelligence (Wooley et al., 2010), capacities and talents cover for their weaknesses, biases and blind spots in an environment of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999).

Utilizing the PLC framework to unpack this, at the inner capacity level, this will involve:

− A deep understanding of their drivers and derailers, or light and shadow sides.

− Awareness of their level of understanding of a subject or situation, and where their gaps and biases might lie, and the appropriate way they can contribute to further exploration.

− An understanding of their motivational styles, and the situations in which they will and will not be appropriate.

At the skilled adaptive capacity level, this will involve:

− An awareness of how many people their leadership decisions will impact and the degree to which they can or cannot frame and communicate those decisions in culturally and situationally appropriate and engaging ways.

– Understanding the degree to which they can or cannot frame complex challenges in a manner that enables comprehension, ideation and effectiveness in others.

– An awareness of how well they can or cannot drive results without sacrificing opportunities to explore and experiment with other potential methods and practices, or to appropriately reward contributors.

We feel that this concept of spikey leadership captures something essential about this emergent phenomenon captured in popular media of a more realistically human, complex and even deliberately developmental understanding of the need for collective leadership in facing complex adaptive challenges.

Assessment and Orientation

The usefulness of a framework to develop leadership raises the topics of assessment and the following questions: How can a person find their location within the framework? How can they use it to determine how to further their learning journey?

The framework is a real-world example of Piaget's (1970) concepts of epistemological and cognitive structures and of the hierarchical complexity of task accomplishment (Commons, Trudeau, Stein, Richards, & Krause, 1998). In other words, the framework serves as the mental structure, enabling and enabled by resources such as coaching, feedback, psychometrics or 360s, to navigate your leadership objectives and to navigate the steps of learning-cycle paths:

a) Orient oneself in terms of the skill levels and capacities across the framework.
b) Prioritize specific learning goals or development intentions.
c) Gain relevant information, explore and observe.
d) Experiment through practice in context.
e) Reflect on experience to connect new knowledge gained.
f) Iteratively reset goals and repeat the cycle.

This type of learning is exemplified by the learning cycle model of Dawson and Stein (2011a, b), where this action-reflection process generates micro adjustments enabling a robust and agile acquisition of the new level of capacity or skill.

Recommendations

Additional Research

In our design, we did include sources and feedback from the leadership traditions of social-justice, political and community development, as well as business anthropology traditions. However, we see potential in a more comprehensive exploration and integration with the PLC framework. For example, social activists' distinction between community organizing and community leading is something where we see common ground with the PLC, but different language. We are curious to learn if these are only language differences or if exploration would illuminate more substantial distinctions.

The discipline of *business anthropology* has been focused on technology and innovation and we would extend this lens to explore the subjects of leadership and leadership development more with the anthropologists' eye.

We also see the subject of humor as under-appreciated as a leadership capacity and a skill that can reduce tension, open relationships, create safety and is rooted in lateral thinking and consciousness of mindsets and culture.

There is room for a stronger integration of the disciplines around lean and agile practices and leadership. The business community wants more agility but often does not understand the technologists' practices and principles. The leadership development community wants to appeal to the business sponsors so they adopt, co-opt and corrupt the idea of agile, and the lean and agile communities have been overly focused on the processes and practices while working to formulate how leadership skills are important and what they are. Empirically, there are lean and agile contexts, but not something unique that is lean or agile leadership.

Finally, some research can focus on the further delineation and exploration of the detail topics that we frame as level 3. As more of this detail is exposed and organized, there will be constructs for pedagogical sequencing and more resources for practitioners.

Community Engagement

Once there is a published PLC framework, that framework has to be discovered, understood, welcomed and applied to be useful and to affect the change it is meant to support. An adequate strategy will require substantive relationships with all classes of associations, institutions, commercial and benevolent organizations. Engagement should be through relationships across stakeholders in the process of leading and developing leaders, as well as across disciplines. With regard to this, we have initiated a broader set of engagement programs.[15]

Reciprocal Sensitivity

The PLC framework is sensitive to the inevitable diversity of knowledge in the globalized world. We are respectful of contemporary ideas and the depth of work using theories and models that pre-existed today's discourse. Unrecognized differences, personal tendencies to fix positions, familiarity or past contexts cannot and should not be discounted, even if they seem challenging, clumsy or outdated. Consequently, the evolution of the framework must strike an elegant balance between useful theories of the past and multi-cultural sensitivities and new knowledge of the present. From this, it is our recommendation (and a principle of operation for us) that the framework is not meant to dominate or over-take other constructs but align with them and increase approachability for them across the whole of the range of stakeholders.

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[15] For this we have opened a way to engage in stakeholders' collaboration through additional Prometheus Project initiatives of We Lead Global and The Clear Council, For more information please go to www.theprometheusproject.info

Governance

Deft choices of governance will be critical to establishing and attending to a common accessible leadership framework that serves its mission to open access and align quality across all stakeholders. The efficacy of the framework will be achieved as a collective ambition, and through collective influence. It has to be a part of the identity of a wide constituency. It cannot be dominated by one community, discipline, profession, economic class or culture.

We have an intention in our agency. We intend to establish a governance function that represents the best aspects of a purpose driven community, using collective intelligence, collective influence, and collective ambitions (*spikey leadership)* in the practices of framework innovation and the continued application of design-thinking principles and practices.

Cultural Assumptions

As in any substantive change initiative, there will be continuing attention to cultural adaptive change. These are a few of the changes that have more than a small immunity.

We have repeated experience speaking to executives who are impatient with program recommendations from mainstream leadership sources, yet they do not have an alternative frame of reference, advisors have investments in the status quo, executives hold personal immunities to changing accountabilities for leading. Many of those in the system are sustainers of the status quo.

Practitioners and experts are invested in their business and branding models, as well as in their identities and cultural assumptions around achievement, intellectual property rights, influence and dominance in the market.

The capabilities required to be an individual leader are idealized by both individual perfectionism and social norms.

The cultural component of leadership patriarchy is persistent and language is both a reflection and influencer of culture. Reserving the terms 'leadership' for the capacities of any role or position, 'executive' as the strategic authority of an organization and 'follower' as one of an array of choices *that leaders may take* would be progress.[16]

We assert that these and other, cultural assumptions are severely limiting as cause, not only evidence of effect.

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[16] We find some vestiges of patriarchy is actually preserved in the popular distinction of leader vs follower. This is one of the reasons we explicitly included 'followership' as part of the engagement level 3 details. Leading includes situationally following, versus an alternative to following.

Conclusion

Speaking about the demands of leading in today's complex contexts, John S. Kem, (Major General, U.S. Army War College, who led the US Army officer leadership development programs) says it well; "the environment rewards clarity and punishes those who wait for certainty" (in the forward, Gavin & Watson, 2019, np).

This quote epitomizes the imperative for leading change in complexity. It is the imperative of our profession, not of our constituencies, to create clarity in the real world. Therefore, our priority must be to create and invite consent to a clear framework of the very capacities that we want to develop.

At the same time, even as the framework has immediate value, we expect to collectively learn as a stakeholder community. Naturally, some are disposed to wait for more or gather more. Reiche (2019) writes of the phenomena of the Fear of Better Options (FOBO) that applies to leadership, where consent and action are withheld in deference to diffusion of efforts or paralyzing detail. But often, there is sufficient knowledge consent for action and attention to learning.

To reach the point of our collective ambition, where leadership is understood, accessible, normalized and even *professionalized,*[17] then we must engage in adaptive work that is fueled from collective knowledge and collective influence.

This is why we are initiating two continuing structures, the engagement of a larger circle of stakeholders through We Lead Global, and the open, diverse, independent governance for framework, aptly named The Clear Council.[18]

We foresee a day when leadership development sponsors and practitioners readily find a flexible and cohesive field of resources, committed executives and self-determining learners at all levels of leading and effective organization and community-wide intentional development.

We invite you to join us on this adventure!

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[17] Contributing to Kellerman's (2018) call for professionalizing leadership is part of the longer-term aspirations of The Prometheus Project.

[18] The Prometheus Project has a series of initiatives, including the Prometheus community forum of We Lead Global, The Prometheus Leadership Commons and its governance board, the Clear Council, and public events series related to all areas of The Prometheus Project mission. Learn more at www.theprometheusproject.info

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