Professional Development for Staff Members:

Building Collaboration and Resilience in Higher Education Institutions

by

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ABSTRACT

The operations within universities have become increasingly complex and challenging for various reasons. Notably, some of those challenges have been combated by developing talent within the organization. Although many professional development opportunities abound at Arizona State University and within the ASU Foundation, the options for developing competencies such as collaboration and resilience were lacking. Thus, the purpose of this action research project was to develop several specific competencies for my team to be successful in their current roles and to develop skills affording success in future roles. The setting for this study was Arizona State University, a four-year, public institution. The specific unit under examination was the Arizona State University Foundation, the unit dedicated to raising resources for the university through philanthropy. The intervention consisted of four professional development workshops including the topics of collaboration, resilience, leadership, and a concluding workshop to debrief the three topics and how participants' new understandings had been incorporated into their professional roles. Prior to each workshop, participants observed a professional development video specifically associated with the topic of the workshop. During the workshops, participants were actively engaged through facilitated discussion on the topics, proposed scenario narratives, and guided participant activities. Following the workshops, participants reflected on their understandings and use of the skills as they engaged in nine weeks of reflective journaling based on standardized prompts. The prompts alternated among the topics of collaboration, resilience, and leadership. I used a concurrent mixed-method action research approach for this study, where I gathered quantitative and qualitative data over the course of the intervention and at its conclusion.

Results centered around the themes of collaboration, resilience, leadership, and meta-topics, which included theme-related components such as asking for help, having a shared goal, locus of control, resilience in the workplace, leadership styles, leadership qualities, comfort zone, learning and growing, relationships, and so on. In the discussion, I explained the outcomes relative to theoretical perspectives and previous research that guided the study, presented limitations, proposed implications for practice and for future research, and reviewed personal lessons learned.

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CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

When you get personal evolution right, the returns are exponential.

—Ray Dalio, *Principles*

It's a typical Wednesday afternoon. Having worked at the university for the last twelve years, one staff member was questioning whether they were ready for the next step in their career. As an executive director in their department, they were driving great results and had built a cohesive team that was able to tackle any challenge. Throughout their career, they had sought various types of professional development including trainings, workshops, mentorships, and had even achieved an advanced graduate degree that helped them promote from their entry level position to their current leadership role. They were up for a promotion to become an associate vice president. Although they were holistically confident in themself, they were unsure whether they had the skills necessary to lead at the next level because of the continuous evolution of the higher education industry. They were questioning if the professional development opportunities in which they engaged had given them the skills and had developed the competencies necessary to flourish in their future roles.

Larger Context

Organizations, both public and private, have been in a period of rapid change due to increasing competition and globalization. Educational markets have been becoming ever-more competitive due to reductions in direct and indirect public funding, the entrance of new private institutions due to deregulation, and greater internationalization, because institutions have been competing in their national arena *and* in the global arena

as well (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; Amagoh, 2008; Khalid, 2019; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2006). Thus, external forces have been requiring organizations to adapt to survive and grow (Karlsson & Ryttberg, 2016). Organizations, particularly higher education organizations, have been an open system, being interdependent on the social structure and the external environment and advancing through the process of input, throughput, and output (Amagoh, 2008). In knowledge formation enterprises such as universities, information has been the main input, coupled with the operations of throughput, yielding the output, the outcomes useful to society (Crow & Dabars, 2015).

The operations of public universities have become increasingly complex due to expanding stakeholder demands, decreasing state funding, growing enrollment competition, and escalating industry and government partnerships (Mitchell & King, 2018). Complex systems like universities contained micro-level parts affecting the overall outcome at the macro-level through interactions and the accompanying feedback loops. As the complexity of a system increased, the ability to plan and predict within the system became increasingly difficult, which led to more change within the system (Amagoh, 2008). The coupling of open systems, being influenced by their external environments, with the internal complexity of the system itself, afforded opportunities for the organization to be able to learn from its environment and change its internal structure and its functioning over time. One way that institutions have changed their internal structure to attain institutional success was through implementing greater levels of employee professional development (Khalid, 2019).

Professional development has also been referred to as talent development, continuous learning, lifelong learning, staff development, and adult learning. Friedman

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and Phillips (2004) defined professional development as "the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skill and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner's working life" (p. 363), whereas Canon (1981) defined professional development as "general professional growth, refinement of existing skills, and acquisition of new skills to meet changing needs" (p. 447). Professional development of staff members has provided important advantages to higher education institutions. These programs helped to improve staff members' performance, which has the potential to add value to enhance organizational performance. Also, by developing the talent of employees, organizations have ensured they had competencies in the future to remain competitive and meet strategic objectives (Khalid, 2019; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2006). The training of university staff members has been critical to ensure continued success of those attaining senior positions (Shattock, 2010).

Increased chances of attracting, securing, and retaining personnel was another benefit to institutions for providing professional development (Mulvey, 2013; Rosser, 2004; Academic Impressions, 2017). Although costs were associated with providing professional development opportunities, organizations viewed them as an investment for the future of the organization. An oft-quoted saying demonstrated the importance of professional development, "What if I train my employees and they leave?" which was followed by "What if you don't train them and they stay?" Investment in professional development has led to a number of outcomes such as increasing organization capacities, dealing with variable environments, and helping universities execute their role as strategic actors (Karlsson & Ryttberg, 2016).

McKee et al. (2013) performed an analysis of professional development research conducted from 1976 through 2010. Results indicated institutions of higher education were increasing the use of professional development on campus. Nevertheless, the authors suggested more work needed to be done to achieve a campus-wide culture that enabled consistent attainment of professional development for all those needing it. In a survey conducted on professional development in higher education, Academic Impressions (2017) found that a departmental culture that is supportive of professional development is extremely important for achieving the many benefits of professional development. The need to develop and 'upskill' employees has become more crucial for institutional success (Khalid, 2019). The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology named meaning and purposeful work as one of the top workplace trends for 2020 (Haynes, 2020). Notably, meaning and purpose were shown to be connected to organizational culture. Thus, organizations will need to rethink their human capital strategy to evolve with the thinking of their employees. Arizona State University (ASU) has been one institution that was rethinking its human capital strategy.

Local Context

ASU has become one of the largest institutions of higher education in the United States, with over 140,000 students enrolled in the fall 2022 semester (ASU News, 2022). The four-year, public institution was located on multiple campuses in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area. ASU exemplified a new prototype for the American public research university, coined the New American University by Crow and Dabars (2015):

> The New American [University] model combines accessibility to an academic platform underpinned by discovery as a pedagogical foundation of knowledge

production, inclusiveness to a broad demographic representative of the

socioeconomic diversity of the region and nation, and, through its breadth of

functionality, maximization of societal impact commensurate with the scale of

enrollment demand and the needs of our nation. (pp. 7-8)

The New American University served as a new type of higher education

institution design, intended to be a uniquely adaptive and transdisciplinary university

committed to producing master learners. Michael Crow, the 16th and current president of

ASU, has been championing the design concept and necessity for the New American

University since his arrival at ASU in 2002. Arizona State University as a New American

University has been viewed as part of the Fifth Wave of higher education institutions,

which focused on scalability, sociotechnical integration, and societal impact as a national

service university (Crow & Dabars, 2020). One aspect of Fifth Wave institutions was that

they were complex knowledge enterprises that adapt continuously to both internal and

external pressures.

The management of these complex knowledge enterprises required personnel

management which promoted cohesion without punishing unorthodox ideas (Crow &

Dabars, 2020). This personnel management approach employed a distinctive approach to

leading the modern university compared to previous university structures; and it required

a unique approach to developing the talent necessary to run the modern university.

Structurally, professional development within ASU has been located within

multiple units at the university. Like most organizations, most of the talent management

and professional development processes have been housed within Human Resources

(HR). Leadership and Workforce Development, a unit within ASU HR, supports the

professional development of ASU staff and faculty members by providing a variety of resources and consulting to help employees grow; learn new skills, tools and approaches; and to thrive at ASU and in their careers. These resources included an online lending library with access to more than 300 books on management and leadership, 360-degree feedback tools, behavior assessment tools, custom team training for departments and groups, and an online training portal called Career EDGE. Career EDGE included job-related training and ongoing professional development opportunities offered by ASU and LinkedIn Learning and has been accessible for all ASU employees. The platform contained sessions on a multitude of topics, including communication, behavioral health, leadership, marketing, project management, application development, and time management.

Another area within the university that has offered professional development initiatives was the University Design Institute, a part of the University Affairs department located within the Office of the President. The University Design Institute has served as a catalyst for transformation in higher education, engaging diverse stakeholders to design and advance innovative, scalable, and sustainable solutions. Two of these solutions, the Leadership Academy and Advanced Leadership Initiative, served as professional development programs intended to develop middle management leaders within ASU. Middle management leaders typically supervised those in entry-level positions. Notably, middle management leaders have moved up the ranks from positions they currently supervise and have potential for larger leadership roles.

The Leadership Academy has served as a year-long series of trainings, including offsite workshops, 360-degree assessments, leadership seminars, and an individualized

leadership activity. The focus has been to develop leadership skills to help advance the ASU Enterprise. By comparison, the Advanced Leadership Initiative was a six-month immersive, high-level leadership initiative that consisted of executive coaching, 360-degree feedback, facilitated leadership sessions, and engagement with various ASU leaders. The overall purpose of these programs has been to develop the type of leader that was needed to aid in running the higher education institute of the future, the New American University.

As Associate Director of Foundation Initiatives, my role at the university has been to lead a team of project directors within the ASU Foundation, the division that helps advance the success of ASU through philanthropy. Technically, the ASU Foundation has been a separate organization from ASU and was a registered 501(c)3 non-profit institution. Nevertheless, it was still a part of the overall ASU ecosystem. I have led the Foundation Initiatives team, which managed large-scale, pan-university strategic initiatives. Our work consisted of the typical project management functions such as planning, organizing and directing the completion of projects, but also had the added component of being a thought partner and strategy partner for the fundraisers with whom we work. The Foundation Initiative team's work has required cross-unit collaboration for successful completion of the various projects that we own. Moreover, due to the ambiguous nature of the work conducted by the team, team members must have been resilient because projects have been extremely fluid and changed at a moment's notice. A metaphor that was often mentioned describing what we do for the university was, "We are building the plane as we are flying the plane." This highlighted the culture in which we worked that required the ability to be flexible and adaptable as priorities and

workloads changed. Aside from the professional development opportunities offered at ASU, my unit also had access to Workday Learning, an online platform that housed professional development, peer learning, and required trainings. Similar to CareerEDGE, Workday Learning also contained various LinkedIn Learning offerings.

Previous Professional Experience

Prior to working in higher education, I had professional experience working with professional development in the private sector. As an assistant store manager for a large, national retailer, I had various management roles overseeing different aspects of store processes. Depending on the role, I had anywhere from two to seven direct reports and led teams of upwards of 100 individuals. In these positions, I had responsibility for the talent development of my teams through the annual performance review process, mentorships, developmental feedback conversations, and by providing challenging stretch assignments. My final role at the retailer was as Human Resources Manager, owning the talent acquisition, talent development, and overall talent culture within the store, including succession planning for key store roles and all hourly supervisors. As I served in these roles, I developed my passion for talent development. Moreover, I learned about the importance of developing the full potential of my team members to be the best possible versions of themselves. I saw how professional development had such a positive influence on individuals' personal and professional lives, making the company culture a place where people enjoyed coming to work every day and giving their best efforts.

Following my stint in retail store management, I pivoted to working in the higher education sector as a support specialist in the office of the president at ASU. As a support staff member to the university president and chief of staff, I served as a strategic thought

partner, built, developed and maintained executive-level relationships, managed various office processes including high-profile external visits to campus, and participated in meetings with executive-level leaders and various constituents from throughout the university to assist in advancing ASU's highest priorities. This role provided me with intimate knowledge about the complexities of running an institution the size of ASU due to the competing priorities of various university stakeholders and due to the nature of scarce resources. Nevertheless, I also saw how professional development helped to drive the institution forward by affording people with skills to contend with these complexities. After working in the office of the president, I took on my current role leading the Foundation Initiatives team within the ASU Foundation.

Action Research Cycle 0—Reconnaissance

In an earlier cycle, Cycle 0, of this action research work, I conducted reconnaissance interviews with various administrative leaders at ASU. The purpose of the reconnaissance interviews was to explore the competencies needed to run future institutions of higher education, from the perspective of current administrators who were on a trajectory to have senior leadership positions. Notably, two important concepts were identified from the interviews. First, these individuals held common beliefs about the competencies needed to run higher education institutions in the future, which included (a) collaboration and (b) resilience. Second, the administrative leaders thought that universities will evolve their human capital management in the future, placing more emphasis on human resource development that would be achieved through being agile in university design. The ideas of collaboration, resilience, and developing human capital are threaded throughout the dissertation study.

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Intervention--A Brief Introduction

The intervention consisted of four professional development workshops, each

with a different emphasis. The focus of the workshops were collaboration, resilience,

leadership, and concluded with a workshop to debrief the topics discussed and how

participant learnings have been incorporated into their professional roles. Prior to each

workshop, the participants watched a professional development video specifically curated

to the topic of the workshop. The videos were part of the LinkedIn Learning library that I

had access to through my status as an ASU Foundation employee. During the workshops,

I facilitated discussion on the respective topic, including scenario narratives and

participant activities. The workshops were followed with nine weeks of reflective

journaling based on standardized prompts alternating between the topics of collaboration,

resilience, and leadership.

Problem of Practice, Purpose Statement, and Research Questions

The operations within universities have become increasingly complex for a

multitude of reasons. Notably, difficulties that arose due to the complexities of

organizations have been combated by developing talent within the organization.

Although various professional development opportunities were available at ASU and

within the ASU Foundation, the options for developing the competencies of collaboration

and resilience were not adequate. The current options included either a 6- or a 12-month

leadership program, which were unavailable to my team based on their current positions.

Alternatively, single-session, 45-minute webinars were not engaging and did not offer the

kind of professional development needed by the team. The most effective value-added

professional development programs have been those that took place face-to-face with an

interactive component and also had an extended element of support rather than occurring just one time (Brinkley-Etzkorn & Lane, 2019). Having an ongoing process where learning continues outside of the professional development session helped participants incorporate the new learning through practical experience (Friedman & Phillips, 2004). Thus, the purpose of this action research project was to develop the necessary competencies for my team to be successful in their current roles and to develop skills affording success in future roles.

In particular, in this study, I investigated the effectiveness of professional development workshops intended to enhance collaboration and resilience skills among staff members. The following research questions (RQ) guided the study.

RQ 1: How and to what extent does participation in the Building Potential Workshop Series influence staff members' perceptions of their ability to collaborate?

RQ 2: How and to what extent does participation in the Building Potential Workshop Series influence staff members' perceptions of their resilience in the workplace?

RQ 3: How and to what extent does participation in the Building Potential Workshop Series influence staff members' perceptions of their leadership?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT

Talent is at the heart of the higher education enterprise.

—Alvin Evans and Edna Chun, *Creating a Tipping Point*

In the previous chapter, I provided material about the larger context, local context, and problem of practice for my study, including a discussion of my previous professional experiences, a brief introduction to the intervention, and my research questions. In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical perspectives informing my research and I have provided information about previously conducted research that guided my project.

In action research, it has been important to consider how theoretical frameworks were applicable to address or solve a particular issue one was studying (Ivankova, 2015). The theoretical perspectives that have informed my research included constructivism, sociocultural theory, and the theory of reflective action. "Grounding professional development in a theoretical framework is not only important in revealing the process of development itself but also for devising plans that contribute to the effectiveness of professional development programs" (Eun, 2008, p. 135).

Constructivism

Constructivism, a prominent perspective of learning, has been focused on how individuals' come to understand and know their world. This perspective has the view "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Proponents of this paradigm stated individuals were actively engaged in

knowledge acquisition and the cognitive operations of learning. For example, learning was considered to be a constructive process where individuals created their own knowledge and understandings within social contexts. Stated succinctly from the constructivist perspective, "Learning is the construction of meaning from experience" (Merriam & Bierema, 2013, p. 36).

Further, Savery and Duffy (1995) claimed learning in a constructivist perspective depended on our understandings of our interactions with the environment. Notably, what we learned was not separated from how it was learned, as different experiences led to different understandings. Therefore, context has helped to shape what we understand. Further, cognitive conflict, or "puzzlement," served as the stimulus for learning and determined the nature of what was learned (Savery & Duffy, 1995). Learner's purposes for being in the learning environment were to achieve goals. These goals were a primary factor to which learners attended along with prior experiences they brought to the learning situation that influenced knowledge construction and hence, the understanding that was eventually constructed (Savery & Duffy, 1995). Knowledge that was constructed developed through social negotiation and through the evaluation of individual understandings (Savery & Duffy, 1995). The social environment was critical to the development of knowledge because other individuals were a primary way to enrich and expand individuals' understandings of particular issues. For example, facts have emerged as 'truths' because of widespread agreement; concepts that we called knowledge were not ultimate truths, rather the most viable interpretation of our experienced world.

Applied to the learning context, constructivism has demonstrated multiple applications that led to various principles of learning (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). First,

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learning was not the result of development, rather, learning was development. Invention and self-organization were required on the part of the learner. Second, errors facilitated learning and therefore they should not have been avoided. To learn, challenging, open-ended, and realistic problems needed to be explored. Third, reflection was a driving force of learning because humans organized and generalized various life experiences. Last, community dialogue through activity, reflection, and conversation helped groups to arrive at collective truths.

Using a constructivist approach, Thornton (2020) examined the effectiveness of professional development programs for higher education school directors. The study was focused on identifying multiple values and perspectives through qualitative methods. Due to the lack of available support for academics taking on middle-level leadership roles, participants went through various professional development programs, including workshops and seminars, networking opportunities, mentoring, and access to online training resources. The varying aspects of the program were well received by participants who developed knowledge and skills as well as receiving support in what had typically been a challenging and unclear role.

Implications from Constructivism and the Constructivist Literature

Constructivism had implications for the format of my intervention. With learners co-constructing knowledge based on individuals and the social context, I structured my intervention as group workshops. These group workshops were not formatted as a content specialist lecturing at workshop participants, rather workshop participants engaged in dialogue with the instructor and each other. This was imperative for the co-creation of knowledge on the discussion topics.

Sociocultural Theory

Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky placed a strong emphasis on the sociocultural context and its role in learning and development. Vygotsky (1978) examined the relation between humans and their environment, the forms of activity relating to humans and nature, and the relation between the use of tools and development. His work led to the emergence of sociocultural theory (SCT), which described learning as a social process and posited social interaction played a fundamental role in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky viewed development as moving from the external to the internal; he rejected the distinct internal versus external separation that many psychologists espoused at the time (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Development occurred first at the social level between individuals, the external level, and then at the individual level, the internal level, meaning that "all the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

Three specific concepts of sociocultural theory relevant to the current work included the zone of proximal development, the more knowledgeable other, and the transition from interpersonal to intrapersonal (Vygotsky, 1978). The zone of proximal development has been viewed as the gap in knowledge or performance between what an individual can accomplish or know by themselves as compared to what they could potentially do or know with the guidance of more knowledgeable others. The more knowledgeable other has been viewed as someone who was more capable, such as a teacher or instructor, but it could also have been a peer with more expertise.

Finally, Vygotsky maintained new understanding that resulted in development moved from being interpersonal to being intrapersonal. That is to say, development of

new knowledge proceeded from being between two individuals to being within the one individual. Notably, dialogue has been viewed as playing a critical role in the development of new knowledge because it fostered the exchange of ideas among participants and the hence the emergence of understanding at the interpersonal level. For example, in Vygotsky's SCT, dialogue between peers, one of whom may have had more experience with a topic or a different perspective, was viewed as a means to provide information for the latter peer to build on previous understanding and develop a new, more comprehensive, better articulated understanding of the topic.

Eun (2008) suggested grounding professional development (PD) in SCT was appropriate because of the emphasis on social interaction in SCT, which was a main source underlying human development and knowledge extension. In training situations, such as workshops, there were substantial numbers of social interactions among the facilitators and participants as well as among participants. In such workshop opportunities, more knowledgeable individuals may have guided less experienced individuals to a higher-level understanding or development. Eun (2008) recognized the importance of mutual beneficial interactions when he noted the role of collaboration among peers was crucial in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills during any professional development opportunity.

During collaborative activity, novices teach and learn from each other (Shabani, 2016). A group of individuals can come together, none of whom are an expert, and collaboratively create a zone of proximal development where all participants contribute to the interaction. Further, group members can provide a collective scaffolding for each other to help with their respective professional situations (Shabani, 2016).

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Implications from SCT and the SCT Literature

Sociocultural theory had several implications for this study. In the case of my workshop intervention, bringing the group together for the collaborative discussions created the environment for all to learn something from the discussion and take back to their respective practice. The group setting of the intervention workshop created a collective scaffold where all participants were able to learn from each other related to the competencies being discussed and expanded. Vygotsky's approach to professional development incorporated theory into practice by situating the learning process into actual social contexts.

Theory of Reflective Action

American philosopher Donald Schön (1983) argued that in professional work, too much emphasis was placed on technical rationality, a positivist epistemology, that argued problem solving occurred through rigorous application of science, whereas, not enough emphasis was placed on knowledge-in-action, the mode of ordinary practical knowledge. He theorized that practitioners solved problems through *reflection-on-action*, considering what individuals could have done differently after the fact, and *reflection-in-action*, reflection on individuals' actions while doing them (Schön, 1983). Practitioners don't draw much on espoused theories, those which are seen to formally guide action in a profession. Rather, the real behavior of practitioners is characterized by theories-in-use which are learned and developed within the day-to-day work of the professional (Moon, 1999). Within reflection-in-action, reflection is on both the anomaly that occurred outside of expectations and the relevant knowledge that contributed to the situation (Moon,

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1999). Reflection-in-action was at the core of professional artistry, which Schön (1987) claimed individuals used in situations of uncertainty when he said,

> I have used the term *professional artistry* to refer to the kinds of competence practitioners sometimes display in unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice. Note, however, that their artistry is a high-powered, esoteric variant of the more familiar sorts of competence all of us exhibit every day in countless acts of recognition, judgment, and skillful performance. What is striking about both kinds of competence is that they do not depend on our being able to describe what we know how to do or even to entertain in conscious thought the knowledge our actions reveal. (p. 22)

Boud et al. (1985) posited that reflection is an important human activity, where people "recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it" (p. 19). This important human activity does not need to wait until the end of a project or end of the semester; it may occur daily in more modest reflective activities. In the context of learning, reflective activities are those where individuals explore their experiences to gain new understandings and appreciations (Boud et al., 1985). A model of reflection in the learning process starts with the totality experiences of learners, including behaviors, ideas and feelings. This could be a singular event or a multitude of experiences over a period of time. This is followed by space for reflection, with elements including returning to the experience, attending to feelings, and re-evaluating experience. This leads to reflection outcomes, which can include a new way of doing something, issue clarification, problem resolution, skill development, or the emergence of a new set of ideas (Boud et al., 1985). See Figure 1 for a diagram of the model of reflection in the learning process.

Figure 1

A Model of Reflection in the Learning Process

Experience(s)   Reflective Process   Outcomes
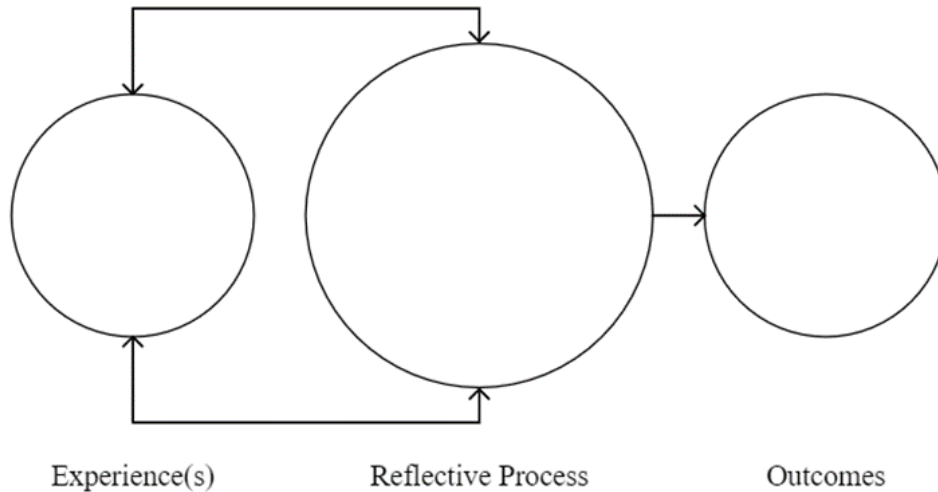
Note. Adapted from "Reflection, Turning Experience into Learning," by D. Boud, R. Keough, and D. Walker, 1985

According to Finlay (2008), professional practice has been shown to be complex, unpredictable, and messy and in order to cope, professionals have had to be able to work in an environment that required more than following a preset list of rules and procedures. They had to be able to think on their feet and improvise while drawing on both theory and practice. Using both reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action has allowed professionals the ability to refine and improve their expertise and their practice (Finlay, 2008).

Implications from the Theory of Reflective Action

The theory of reflective action had implications for my study. In my research questions, I examined how reflection activities influenced participants' perceptions of their collaboration and resilience.

In the intervention, participants engaged in reflection on multiple occasions during the weeks in which they were engaging in the study as they conducted their professional activities. This reflection work was informed by the reflection-in-action concept of the theory of reflective action. Participants reflected on their actions in real-time, as they were actually conducting those actions. One of the difficulties of incorporating reflective practice was that it was highly context specific and different contexts demand different sorts of reflection (Finlay, 2008). To make the reflection context specific, I structured the reflection prompts throughout the intervention to focus on professional responsibilities related to the workshop topics. Further, it was important that individuals were given enough time and support as they engaged in reflection (Finlay, 2008). Over the course of the intervention, participants had structured time for reflection throughout the course of the study.

Finally, reflection was a "process through which the learner can construct new understandings and new meanings from past experiences" (Faller et al., 2020, p. 251). Thus, it was also connected to the constructivist approach, which was considered earlier in this chapter. Workshop participants constructed new meaning throughout the intervention, which were fostered by reflection prompts interspersed at strategic points throughout the study.

Research Guiding the Project

Along with the theoretical perspectives that informed my study, I also reviewed previous research on professional development, reflection in the workplace, and research about two competencies that I planned to develop during the intervention, collaboration and resilience.

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Professional Development

Professional development (PD) has been viewed as a broad term with multiple designations including, for example, professional learning and development (Thornton, 2020), leadership development (Gmelch & Buller, 2015; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2020), talent development (Khalid, 2018), talent management (Evans & Chun, 2012), continuing professional development (Coomber, 2019; Corrall, 2010; Friedman & Phillips, 2004), human resource development (Swanson & Arnold, 1996), employee development (Jacobs & Washington, 2003) and adult learning (Knowles et al., 2012). Although the terms varied, the common denominator in all the definitions was harnessing the power of individual contributions.

Many types of PD have been made available for university staff members. PD opportunities have either been internal to the university or facilitated by an external organization. Corrall (2010) created an extensive list of multiple routes to PD, showing the breadth of both internal and external opportunities. For example, Corrall claimed knowledge exchanges with colleagues, mentoring and coaching programs, and reading logs and reflective journals represented internal opportunities. By comparison, Corrall suggested professional networks, formal education programs, and conferences and seminars exemplified external opportunities. See Table 1 for a complete list of these types of opportunities. Another way to view PD opportunities was whether they were formal learning opportunities or informal ones that occurred outside of a predetermined function. Further, opportunities also exhibited different modalities such as in-person or online. The most preferred modality of professional development was the face-to-face, in-person option (Corrall, 2010).

Table 1

Professional Development Opportunities

External activities	Internal activities
Committees and meetings	Task forces and working groups
Multi-institutional/cross-sectoral projects	Cross-departmental/multi-professional projects
Establishing new formal partnerships	Negotiating new internal collaborations
Professional networks/special interest groups	Knowledge exchange with colleagues
Formal education programs	Mentoring and coaching programs
Training courses	Action learning
Conferences and seminars	Training courses
Study visits	Testing new products and services
Job exchange	Work shadowing
Presenting talks for professional meetings	Job rotation
Peer support groups	Reading professional literature
Writing for publication	Learning logs and reflective journals

Note. Adapted from "Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning," by S. Corrall, 2010

   Regardless of the formality, type, or modality of the professional development opportunity, survey respondents indicated many benefits were derived from participating in the activities (Corrall, 2010). Institutions that placed a larger emphasis on staff development typically had higher retention and lower turnover for their staff (Academic Impressions, 2017). In a survey of professional development specific to the higher

education sector, 88% of respondents indicated access to new PD opportunities was very important. Further, 71% of respondents said their likelihood of staying at the institution increases if they had more access to PD and learning opportunities (Academic Impressions, 2017). The overall intent of PD was to "provide a systematic path for increasing the employees' competence, regardless whether that increased competence would be used for doing present or future work" (Jacobs & Washington, 2003, p. 344).

Implications from the Professional Development Literature

Multiple implications for my study arose from previous research on professional development. First, I referenced the term "professional development" throughout my study, but what I was really investigating was "staff talent development." To create distance between my research and professional development research that is typically in the K-12 setting, I referred to "staff talent development" in my intervention. Second, I incorporated face-to-face components into my workshop, because this was typically the most preferred modality of talent development (Corrall, 2010). Nevertheless, I also incorporated asynchronous pre-workshop involvement to make the most out of the in-person time I had with my participants. Third, benefits related to talent development suggested my intervention will lead to a more engaged team, even after the completion of my study.

Further, successful professional development activities provided experiences through immersion and distancing (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007). Participants that were immersed in active learning made meaning through ongoing interaction between what they previously knew and what they experienced in the workshop setting. Then, stepping back from the experience and temporarily distancing themselves for space to engage in

reflection helped provide deeper understanding and insights (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007). This is the approach that I took with my workshop intervention and reflection prompts.

Reflection in the Workplace

Reflective practice has been defined as "the process of learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and/or practice" (Finlay, 2008, p. 1). Notably, reflective practice has typically involved examining assumptions, critically evaluating responses in situations, gaining new understandings, and engaging in it as part of the life-long learning process (Finlay, 2008).

Reflection has had several applications within the workplace. By reflecting on how their skills have been improving, staff members have discovered new ways to incorporate these skills into their regular working practice. Such an application has been viewed as reflective practice, or the "application of reflection to professional work for the purpose of decision making, problem solving, and development" (Faller et al., 2020, p. 250). By engaging in reflective practice, staff members have become more aware of their values, through processing their strengths and weaknesses (Gmelch & Buller, 2015) and improved their work practices through a deeper understanding of their work (Corrall, 2010). More specifically, related to the academic workplace, university staff members have found ways to apply theory to their practices through reflection on conceptual understandings (Gmelch & Buller, 2015).

Gmelch (2013) created the Academic Leadership Forum, a professional development program for academic leaders like faculty members taking on management level roles such as Director or Dean. The program consisted of three spheres of development: conceptual understanding, skill development, and reflective practice.

Having a conceptual understanding of roles and appropriate skills was a prerequisite for professional success, but it was not sufficient to carry them out. Notably, PD also had an inner journey, requiring reflective practice (Gmelch, 2013). Throughout the Academic Leadership Forum, participants were provided with opportunities to reflect on their experiences to encourage learning from past experiences. Results indicated that creating time and space for reflection was imperative, because it was central to dealing with uncertainty, instability, and uniqueness (Gmelch, 2013; Schön, 1983). Although this particular context, academic leadership roles, was different from university staff members' roles, the opportunities for reflection were extremely beneficial and seemed to be useful in this applied setting and were considered relevant and informative.

Important to reflection in the workplace was that no large structural changes were required to incorporate reflection. Even with limited time and resources, organizations have been able to introduce reflection interventions producing strategic and long-lasting effects (Faller et al., 2020). Further, Eun (2008) asserted, "Teachers need to be provided with sufficient time and opportunities to reflect on what they have learned through their engagement in professional development programs" (p. 147).

According to Walker and Oldford (2020), risks of reflecting in the workplace included risks related to social acceptability, risks in job security and livelihood, and risks to individuals' senses of self-identity. For example, if staff members were asking difficult questions that arise from reflection, they could potentially have been perceived as standing in the way of innovation or being too rooted in the past. Further, taking a critically reflective approach to new initiatives could have ruffled the wrong feathers and led to job loss. On the other hand, individuals' sense of identity could have been

challenged if reflection led to thoughts of futility related to work that has been done or if some work has pushed forward an agenda with which individuals did not agree (Walker & Oldford, 2020).

Implications from Reflection in the Workplace Literature

I incorporated aspects of research on reflection in the workplace into my intervention. It was imperative that employees had the time and resources for reflection (Eun, 2008). Understanding this importance, during the intervention, I included multiple weeks between the intervention workshop sessions to allow time for reflection. I also provided the reflection prompts to give participants a place to start as they engaged in reflection on their efforts. To combat the reflection risk of one's sense of identity, I incorporated multiple check-ins and a wrap-up discussion into the intervention to create space for these conversations, if participants had interest in discussing these topics.

Collaboration

Collaboration was an extremely important competency in the workplace because it helped drive innovative ideas and new solutions (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2020). As defined by Rowe et al. (2020), "collaboration requires promotive relationships in which individuals behave interdependently in order to collectively innovate and problem-solve" (p. 2). A unique difference between cooperation and collaboration has been that cooperation involved teams working separately toward a common goal whereas collaboration, which has been done collectively, generated complex, innovative ideas including diverse perspectives as the team worked simultaneously (Rowe et al., 2020).

Rowe et al. (2020) investigated how teaching practices affected student experiences related to collaborative tasks. Through mixed-methods studies on students'

experiences of small-group projects and classroom observations combined with qualitative interviews with 12 teachers in various disciplines, they designed a transdisciplinary framework for teaching collaboration. Rowe et al. found five concepts that helped teachers enhance their teaching of collaboration included (a) enhancing explicit metacognition, (b) scaffolding socialization, (c) animating symmetry, (d) animating pluralism, and (e) embedding value. First, teachers must teach the meaning and expectations of collaboration so that students have better understandings of its use and explicit metacognitive knowledge of the subject. Second, teachers must integrate small, collaborative tasks that occurred outside of large, graded group projects that allowed students to recognize and reflect on collaboration in their discipline. Third, teachers must have animated symmetries of actions, status, and knowledge, recognizing that collaborative leadership can be flexible and distributed, not always following a rigid hierarchy. Fourth, the best ideas emerged when collaborators had a difference of perspectives so teachers must be cognizant about creating groups with diverse thought partners. Finally, teachers must have evaluated the collaborative process, not just groups' productivity. Incorporating these concepts into collaborative pedagogy helped educators be more deliberate in the teaching of collaborative dexterity (Rowe et al., 2020).

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2020) examined how to reframe collaboration as a context for growth, exploring ways that collaborative spaces provided opportunities to engage in inquiry, exchange feedback, and generate new ideas. First, the authors suggested setting the stage by designating time and space to prioritize its value among competing demands. Second, they noted connections must have been extended by investing time into developing trusting relationships. Third, communication must have

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been enhanced by creating space for listening and feedback. Finally, the authors advised the use of asking the big questions about collective and individual values aimed at making the world a better place through actions (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2020).

Implications from the Collaboration Literature

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2020) highlighted the importance of prioritizing time, connections, and communication related to developing collaboration. By emphasizing collaboration as one of the competencies for the intervention, I prioritized the opportunity for growth in this important area. To enhance this opportunity for growth, I focused on metacognitive aspects of collaboration as part of the respective workshop. Understanding that the best ideas emerge when collaborators have differing perspectives, I valued and encouraged differing opinions while facilitating the intervention.

Resilience

Resilience has become an imperative among those in the current workforce because there have been increasing demands for greater output from increasingly fewer workers, so those individuals must be able to deal effectively with the accompanying stressors (Winwood et al., 2013). Although some workers have been able to cope with these increasing demands quite readily, others have difficulty with the ambiguity and adversity of their positions. Beltman and Mansfield (2018) defined teacher resilience as,

> Teacher resilience refers to the process of, capacity for, or outcome of positive adaptation and ongoing professional commitment and growth in the face of challenging circumstances. Resilience is shaped by individual, situational and

broader contextual characteristics that interrelate in dynamic ways to provide risk

(challenging) or protective (supportive) factors. Individuals, drawing on personal,

professional and social resources, not only "bounce back" but are able to thrive

professionally and personally, experiencing job satisfaction, positive self-beliefs,

personal wellbeing and an ongoing commitment to the profession. (p. 4)

Resilience has been conceptualized as a dynamic and interactive process, suggesting that

instead of a fixed quantity, it was malleable and capable of development and being taught

(Winwood et al., 2013). In a large-scale questionnaire study of 355 participants,

Winwood et al. (2013) found seven components of resilience that have the ability to be

developed including living authentically, finding one's calling, maintaining perspective,

managing stress, interacting cooperatively, staying healthy, and building networks. In

Table 2, I have presented a list of the components and the accompanying interpretations.

The complex adaptive challenges present in higher education today require

leaders adapt to changing situations (Moss Breen, 2019). In order to thrive despite

adversity and learn through the process, higher education leaders have developed

resilience strategies, including getting into nature, talking with a trusted friend, seeking

out peers with whom they can tackle challenges together, meditation, and reflection

(Moss Breen, 2019).

Implications from the Resilience Literature

Resilience was a competency that could be developed through specific

interventions. The resilience components on which I focused included maintaining

perspective, managing stress, interacting cooperatively, and building networks. The focus

on interacting cooperatively also worked synergistically with my emphasis on building

Table 2

Resilience Components and Interpretations

Resilience component	Interpretation
Living authentically	Knowing and holding onto personal values, deploying personal strengths, and having a good level of emotional awareness and regulation
Finding one's calling	Seeking work that has purpose, a sense of belonging and a fit with core values and beliefs
Maintaining perspective	Having the capacity to reframe setbacks, maintain a solution focus, and manage negativity
Managing stress	Using work and life routines that help manage everyday stressors, maintain work life balance, and ensure time for relaxation
Interacting cooperatively	Workplace work style that includes seeking feedback, advice, and support as well as providing support to others
Staying healthy	Maintaining a good level of physical fitness and a healthy diet
Building networks	Developing and maintaining personal support networks

Note. Adapted from "A Practical Measure of Workplace Resilience: Developing the Resilience at Work Scale," by P. Winwood, R. Colon and K. McEwen, 2013

collaboration as part of the intervention. Taking this a step further, I also focused on metacognitive aspects of resilience by having a discussion about the meaning of resilience as part of that respective workshop.

Previous Cycles of Action Research

In the spring of 2021, I conducted a cycle of mixed-methods action research to examine how implementation of a self-reflection exercise influenced participants' perspectives with respect to collaboration, resilience and curiosity. Five participants

completed a self-reflection form intervention. I used purposeful sampling, selecting participants who were typical of the site (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). All of the participants were mid-career professionals, with titles ranging from Support Specialist to Director overseeing an entire department.

The self-reflection form had questions centered on past successes, the use of curiosity, collaboration, and resilience to achieve those successes, and their objectives for the upcoming quarter. The questions pertaining to the competencies under investigation were, "In what ways have you exhibited curiosity/collaboration/resilience over the last quarter?" I had created the form, basing the format and structure on a formal self-review document that I had used in previous roles.

I gathered both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously through pre-intervention surveys, post-intervention surveys, Zoom video-conference interviews, and responses on the Self-Reflection Form also provided text for analysis. The data collected were associated with helping staff members become better professionals, building professional competencies (resilience, interdisciplinary collaboration, and curiosity) and general professional development.

Quantitative data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, including means and SDs. Qualitative data analysis consisted of multiple rounds of interpretive work including initial coding, building categories, and deducing themes. I used a grounded interpretive approach consisting of systemic, yet flexible guidelines for analyzing qualitative data to construct themes from the data themselves (R. Buss, personal communication, Jan. 15, 2022).

Analysis of the data showed the mean for the curiosity remained unchanged. By comparison, means for collaboration and resilience increased following the intervention. See Table 3 for the means and SDs.

Table 3

Professional Competency Means and SDs for Three Constructs on Two Occasions

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-Survey Curiosity	5.60	0.54
Post-Survey Curiosity	5.60	0.54
Pre-Survey Collaboration	5.00	0.71
Post-Survey Collaboration	5.20	1.10
Pre-Survey Resilience	5.17	1.30
Post-Survey Resilience	5.40	0.89

Analysis of qualitative data showed although participants had informally engaged in reflection processes at work, they had never had the opportunity for formal reflection in their professional workplace setting. Participants suggested barriers preventing them from engaging in reflection included time constraints and having no easy avenues for reflection. Nevertheless, participants wanted the opportunities and resources to reflect at work. They mentioned various benefits of reflection, including helping them think more strategically, helping them get out of the weeds on the day-to-day tasks, and helping them improve processes. Participants also offered insights about collaboration and resilience, for example one participant stated, "[the reflection activity] made me realize I think even more sort of like how siloed some of our work is." Another suggested, "I don't think you

can do a lot of other things unless you have exercised the resilience 'muscle' to understand that there are many things outside of our control."

By synthesizing the qualitative and quantitative data, several findings emerged. First, staff members believed participating in self-reflection activities helped them become better professionals. Second, self-reflection increased participants' confidence in their ability to demonstrate resilience and collaboration, but it did not affect confidence in the ability to be curious. Third, participants viewed curiosity, collaboration, and resilience as being quite different. Curiosity was perceived as being extremely important with respect to strategic decision making because it helped with information gathering that was not ordinarily obtained by staff members in the normal course of communication and daily work. Notably, participants regarded collaboration as an area of opportunity because they viewed the majority of their work as being 'siloed,' so they did not have many opportunities to collaborate with other teams. Resilience was deemed to be important, especially during the pandemic because the old way of doing things became outdated during the 'new-normal' in which they found themselves working.

Implications from Previous Action Research

There were several implications for the research project arising from the previous cycle of mixed-method action research. First, because the reflection activity did not have an effect on a participants' confidence in their ability to be curious, I focused on collaboration and resilience for my dissertation study. Second, participants considered formal reflection as beneficial, but they did not have any formal opportunities to engage in reflection processes in their professional roles. This study provided participants with a formal process for reflection in their professional roles. Third, there were two specific

questions from the reflection form that did not provide much information. The two questions pertaining to previous successes and upcoming goals and objectives did not add value to the work, so I adjusted the reflection questions accordingly.

Summary of Implications from Theoretical Perspectives, Related Literature, and Previous Action Research

The theoretical perspectives, related literature, and my previous cycle of action research suggested several specific implications. First, I focused on the development of collaboration and resilience among participants. Both competencies were imperative for future work in higher education and demonstrated some minor increases in my previous cycle of action research. Second, I structured the intervention to include an important reflective component. Third, I designed my intervention based on findings from previous literature. I had group workshops that focused on group dialogue, instead of individual sessions or lecture-based format. Also, I employed immersive, in-person workshops that were distributed over multiple weeks, which provided the participants with time and space to reflect on their personal efforts at work.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

It is not the curriculum, not courses, but people who matter in education.

—Frank Rhodes, *Creation of the Future: The Role of the American University*

In the previous chapters, I provided an overview of the context surrounding staff professional development in higher education, including discussion of my previous professional experiences related to the subject and a review of theoretical perspectives and research guiding my study. In this chapter, I have focused on the methods I used to conduct my research project. First, I have discussed the setting, participants, and the role I played as the researcher. Second, I have discussed the intervention that I implemented to drive local change. Last, I have discussed the data collection procedures I used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention.

Action Research

I used an action research approach for this study. Action research is used by researchers to address a specific problem of practice, dealing with practical issues, and the research is seeking local solutions to a local problem (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Mertler, 2020). Those conducting action research would do so when they have a specific educational problem within their context that needs to be solved. Action research is not conducted to advance knowledge for knowledge's sake, rather it is used to solve a local, applied problem (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) and can be characterized as research that is done by educators for their own benefit and/or for the benefit of those whom they serve (Mertler, 2020).

Multiple steps are involved in conducting action research. First, action researchers must identify a practical problem that needs to be solved within their local setting. Next, action researchers should explore resources to study the problem, such as existing literature or through reconnaissance interviews. Third, action researchers design and implement an intervention intended to initiate a desired change in the context. Next, action researchers collect and analyze data following the implementation of the intervention. Last, action researchers reflect and re-evaluate the problem of practice to determine whether further cycles of research are needed. Taken together, action research is a dynamic process that involves multiple iterations, or cycles, of research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Although action research has a clear beginning, it does not have a clearly defined endpoint (Mertler, 2020).

For the study, I have extended the action research process to include a mixed methods component, which makes the study a mixed methods action research (MMAR) project (Ivankova, 2015). Notably, I used a concurrent MMAR approach. Specifically, as I used the concurrent MMAR approach I gathered quantitative and qualitative data over the course of the intervention and at its conclusion. These multiple data sources were used to triangulate data to determine whether the quantitative and qualitative data exhibit complementarity, pointing to the same conclusions (Greene, 2007). Further, by using a MMAR approach, I had the potential to use qualitative data from interviews to explain outcomes from the quantitative data, which is a strength of using a MMAR approach.

Research Questions

I used action research to answer three research questions:

RQ 1: How and to what extent does participation in the Building Potential

Workshop Series influence staff members' perceptions of their ability to

collaborate?

RQ 2: How and to what extent does participation in the Building Potential

Workshop Series influence staff members' perceptions of their resilience

in the workplace?

RQ 3: How and to what extent does participation in the Building Potential

Workshop Series influence staff members' perceptions of their leadership?

Setting

The setting for this study was at Arizona State University, a four-year, public

institution located in Arizona with multiple campuses in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

The specific unit under examination was the Arizona State University Foundation

(ASUF), the unit dedicated to raising resources for the university through philanthropy.

As previously mentioned, I was the Associate Director of Foundation Initiatives, a team

that supports large-scale university initiatives through project management and strategic

partnerships. Similar to the university as a whole, ASUF had staff members located on all

of the ASU campuses, including individuals at regional hubs in California, Hawaii, and

Washington, DC. Work completed by ASUF was rarely based on the efforts of

individuals. Rather, ASUF efforts usually required collaboration between central

functions and units or interdisciplinary collaboration among units. ASUF staff members

were positioned in all academic units across all the campuses, but central support

services, including the Foundation Initiatives team, were located at the Fulton Center on

the ASU Tempe campus.

Participants

The participants in the study were all centrally located, full-time staff of the Arizona State University Foundation. All participants were part of the overarching Development Services umbrella, on either the Foundation Initiatives, Foundation Events, Foundation Operations, Research and Prospect Management, or Writing Services teams. The participants had various position levels, ranging from Manager, Assistant Project Director, Director, Coordinator, etc., but an important shared characteristic related to their workload. The workload of all participants was collaborative in nature. Although the core roles and responsibilities of the participants varied, none of their work was conducted on an individual effort basis.

I selected the research participants through purposeful sampling, where I intentionally selected participants who could provide rich detail and best help me understand my phenomenon under study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I had ten participants for this research project from my team, Foundation Initiatives, as well as the centrally located teams with whom we interact most closely, based on both workload and physical proximity. Participants were solicited through a formal solicitation email that I sent to their work email addresses. Prior to solicitation, I had partnered with my peers to seek their approval in inviting their employees to join the research project. It was imperative to me to have supervisor buy-in prior to solicitation to maintain positive relationships with my peers.

Role of the Researcher

As a scholarly practitioner, I both collected and analyzed data. In this role, I facilitated the professional development workshops that occurred throughout the study.

Gmelch and Buller (2015) recommend the use of expertise located within the university to facilitate workshops because these facilitators have intimate knowledge of the local context, university culture, and those who comprise the institution. Although I was not an expert on the content knowledge per se, I had combined experience with my local context, culture and participants, making me the ideal facilitator for the workshops. I was a full participant in this research project because action researchers are deeply involved in every stage of the research process (Henderson, 2018).

My positionality in regards to my setting and participants was that of an insider, where I conducted research in my own professional setting. Insider practitioner research is most common in educational settings (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Being both a researcher and practitioner, the competencies that I was trying to improve through my intervention were necessary for participants as well as me.

I acknowledge that I brought with me to this research my epistemological and ontological perspectives. My overarching goal in life is to develop me and my teams to be the best possible version of ourselves. This is a never-ending quest involving twists, turns, pivots, roadblocks, barriers, peaks, and plateaus. Notably, as I work with colleagues, I will remain cognizant that everyone has a different "best" they pursue. This philosophical belief feeds my constructivist epistemological stance that everyone has a different "truth" based on their particular history and context. Thus, what individuals learn is not separated from how it is learned because different experiences lead to different understandings. This perspective about the construction of knowledge informed my approach to my research on staff professional development. I believed that different

staff members would conceptualize the professional competencies in different ways, which were aligned to their previous experiences and thinking.

Intervention

The intervention had multiple components, including pre-workshop videos, in-person professional development workshops, and journaling requirements throughout the intervention. This was a customized professional development intervention, tailored to the needs of my team and organization. Organizations that want to develop talent as a source of strategic strength and future competitiveness should introduce customized interventions (Khalid, 2019).

Pre-Workshop Videos

Participants received, via email, specially curated videos to watch the week leading up to the professional development workshops. All of the videos were through the LinkedIn Learning library, located in Workday Learning, an online learning portal that all participants had access to through their status as an ASU Foundation employee. The week prior to the collaboration workshop, the participants received a LinkedIn Learning video about collaboration titled "Become a Super-Collaborator." The week prior to the resilience workshop, the participants received a LinkedIn Learning video about resilience titled "Building Resilience." The week prior to the leadership workshop, participants received a LinkedIn Learning video that discussed how collaboration and resilience relate to leadership titled "Leadership Foundations." The purpose of having the participants watch the videos prior to the workshop was to introduce the topic, prepare participants, and to ensure the time in-person was spent engaging in dialogue instead of watching videos.

Professional Development Workshops

The intervention consisted of four in-person workshops that I facilitated. The workshop outlines are provided in Appendix A. Professional development events that occur in-person have been deemed more valuable for participants compared to those that are solely asynchronous (Brinkley-Etzkorn & Lane, 2019).

Workshop 1. The first workshop started with an introduction to the current study and then focused on collaboration. After introducing the study and thanking participants for joining, I recapped the pre-video, "Become a Super-Collaborator," and then discussed the definition of collaboration being used in the context of the study. Following collaboration metacognition, I discussed the benefits of collaboration and three pillars that make up collaboration: building trust and relationships, building an environment of psychological safety, and having a shared goal. Through the discussion, there were various interactive questions and activities. I ended the workshop with a discussion of key takeaways.

Workshop 2. The second workshop focused on resilience. I started the workshop with a recap of the pre-video, "Building Resilience," and then discussed the definition of resilience being used in the context of the study. Following resilience metacognition, I discussed the benefits of developing resilience and three pillars that make up resilience: positivity, mindset, and building a network. Through the discussion, there were various interactive questions and activities. I ended the workshop with a discussion of key takeaways.

Workshop 3. The third workshop focused on leadership. I started the workshop with a recap of the pre-video, "Leadership Foundations," and then discussed how

collaboration and resilience are key components of leadership. I then discussed various aspects of leadership competencies, incorporating interactive questions and activities. I ended the workshop with a discussion of key takeaways. I ended by reviewing the journaling format for the remainder of the study.

Workshop 4. The fourth workshop was a debrief session. There was no pre-video for this workshop. I started by reviewing the main points of the three previous workshops followed by a discussion about how the participants had, or had not, collaborated or been resilient since the beginning of the study. Having professional development experiences that are extended over multiple encounters are more value-added than one-and-done professional development experiences (Brinkley-Etzkorn & Lane, 2019).

Journaling

Participants had specific journal prompts throughout the intervention, asking them to reflect on collaboration, resilience, and leadership. The reflection prompts are provided in Appendix B. Incorporating reflection into professional development is imperative for the continuous process of learning (Friedman & Phillips, 2004). See Table 4 for a timeline of the intervention implementation.

Data Collection

As noted previously, in this research project, I conducted a concurrent mixed-method action research study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I simultaneously collected quantitative and qualitative data through various collection methods. By utilizing both methods, I was able to capitalize on the strengths of both methods, which produces stronger and more credible studies (Ivankova, 2015).

Table 4

Intervention Steps and Timeline

Intervention Step	Week Beginning
Pre-workshop video related to collaboration	July 25, 2022 (1)
Collaboration workshop	August 1, 2022 (2)
Pre-workshop video related to resilience	August 8, 2022 (3)
Collaboration cycle of reflection	August 8, 2022 (3)
Resilience workshop	August 15, 2022 (4)
Pre-workshop video related to leadership	August 22, 2022 (5)
Resilience cycle of reflection	August 22, 2022 (5)
Leadership workshop	August 29, 2022 (6)
Leadership cycle of reflection	September 5, 2022 (7)
Collaboration cycle of reflection	September 12, 2022 (8)
Resilience cycle of reflection	September 19, 2022 (9)
Leadership cycle of reflection	September 26, 2022 (10)
Collaboration cycle of reflection	October 3, 2022 (11)
Resilience cycle of reflection	October 10, 2022 (12)
Leadership cycle of reflection	October 17, 2022 (13)
Debrief workshop	October 24, 2022 (14)

Qualitative Data

I collected qualitative data using three different data collection instruments. First, I conducted interviews with the participants following the intervention to collect deep, rich data. The interview questions are provided in Appendix C. Second, I gathered observation data during the intervention workshops. Third, I kept notes in a researcher reflective journal throughout the research project which were analyzed as well.

Quantitative Data

I collected quantitative data from the two surveys conducted throughout the research project, both occurring after the intervention. I conducted a post-intervention survey directly following the last workshop. I also conducted a retrospective, pre-intervention survey one week following the post-intervention survey. The survey questions are provided in Appendix D. This quantitative data, when analyzed in conjunction with the qualitative data, helped answer my research questions.

Research Project Timeline

This research project was conducted in the summer and fall of 2022. In June and early July, I obtained permission to conduct the study by submitting IRB materials and receiving approval. See Appendix E for the IRB approval letter. Shortly thereafter, I invited participants to be involved in the study by sending email invitations. The intervention occurred from July 25 through October 24, inclusive of all workshops and cycles of reflection. In November, I conducted the post-intervention survey, shortly followed by the retrospective pre-intervention survey. I also conducted interviews in November and started data analysis in December. See Table 5 for a timeline of the research project.

Table 5

Dissertation Timeline

Time Frame	Action
June 2022	Prepare consent form, submit IRB materials, and work with IRB on any required edits
July 2022	Send formal solicitation emails to the invited participants
July 25, 2022 - October 26, 2022	Intervention
November 2022	Post-intervention survey Retrospective pre-intervention survey Post-intervention interviews
December 2022 & Early 2023	Data Analysis
Early 2023	Dissertation writing
Spring 2023, prior to May	Dissertation defense

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Innovation occurs when a ripe seed falls on fertile ground.

—Walter Isaacson, *The Innovators*

In the previous chapters, I provided a synopsis of the larger and local context for

staff professional development in higher education in my context, the purpose of this

research, the theoretical perspectives and research that guided the project, and detailed

information about the setting, participants, intervention, and data collection procedures

for my research. In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the data analysis

procedures and then described the results obtained in the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

I analyzed all quantitative and qualitative data after completing the data collection

procedures. To prepare for quantitative analysis, I exported the retrospective, pre-

intervention and post-intervention survey results from Qualtrics into separate Excel

spreadsheets. I combined the spreadsheets into one master file and cleaned up the data by

removing unnecessary data columns to expedite the analysis process. With the prepared

master Excel spreadsheet, I loaded the file into SPSS statistical software to conduct the

quantitative analysis. To prepare for qualitative analysis, I downloaded all the Zoom

audio recordings and the automatically created transcripts from the interviews I

conducted. I personally reviewed all recordings and corrected the automatically

transcribed Zoom transcripts to ensure accuracy of the transcripts. I then uploaded all the

transcripts into HyperRESEARCH qualitative analysis software to enable me to conduct

of the qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

To begin the quantitative data analyses, I conducted internal consistency reliability analyses followed by paired-samples *t*-tests. I conducted the paired-samples *t*-tests for the three primary constructs being considered in the research questions.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Prior to conducting quantitative data analyses, I conducted internal consistency reliability analyses to determine the adequacy of the assessment of the constructs. Specifically, I analyzed the reliabilities using Cronbach's alpha. The reliabilities ranged from 0.79 to 0.93 for the constructs, as seen in Table 6. In research studies, the minimum reliability desired has been 0.70, which indicated an adequate level of internal consistency reliability. The reliabilities in this study all exceeded this acceptable level of reliability.

Table 6

Quantitative Data Internal Consistency Reliabilities

Construct	Retrospective, Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
Collaboration	.79	.80
Resilience	.93	.89
Leadership	.93	.93

Paired Sample t-Test Results

I conducted paired-samples *t*-tests to determine whether there were differences between the retrospective, pre-intervention and post-intervention means related to the collaboration, resilience, and leadership constructs. All the constructs increased following

participation in the intervention, however, the difference was not significant. For collaboration, the paired sample test was not significant, $t(9) = 1.45, p < 0.18$. For resilience, the paired sample test was not significant, $t(9) = 0.95, p < 0.37$. For leadership, the test was not significant, $t(9) = 1.07, p < 0.31$. As shown in Table 7, the increases in the means were minimal, being 0.15, 0.22, and 0.22, respectively.

Table 7

Means and SDs for the Two Times of Testing by Construct

Construct	Retrospective Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Collaboration	5.22	0.52	5.37	0.40
Resilience	4.80	1.03	5.02	0.65
Leadership	4.80	0.98	5.02	0.87

Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative data analysis, I used a grounded interpretive approach (R. Buss personnel communication, January 11, 2023), a process that involved initial coding, collecting the initial codes into theme-related components, and determining themes from these components. I have used these interpretations of the data to aid in answering my research questions.

During all qualitative data analyses, I had my research questions posted nearby to ensure I was focused on capturing concepts specifically related to my research questions. Keeping research questions nearby helped to keep me focused and helped with coding decisions (Saldaña, 2021). I coded inductively, beginning the coding process without a

predetermined codebook. This approach prevented me from forcing the data into preconceived categories and has been used by most researchers (Saldaña, 2021). I completed the first round of initial coding in HyperRESEARCH qualitative analysis software while also writing analytic memos in a notebook. After the first round of initial coding in HyperRESEARCH, I stepped away from the data and then conducted a second round of initial coding on paper printouts of all the transcripts. Conducting multiple iterations of coding with two different modalities helped me see new pieces of information when I revisited the data. Saldaña (2001) stated, "Coding is a cyclical act" (p. 12). It takes more than one pass at coding to meaningfully interpret the data. Of the original initial codes, I modified a number of them that I had originally created during my first round of coding in HyperRESEARCH following the second round of initial coding on paper. I realized some of the initial codes were not imperative and others actually blended with other initial codes. For example, I combined the initial codes "goal" and "shared goal" into "shared goal" as well as combining "lack of direction" and "limited instructions" into "limited instructions." Following this revision of my initial coding, I gathered the codes into theme-related components, and those into themes based on representative properties and dimensions (Saldaña, 2021). With these themes, I was able to formulate answers to my research questions. See Table 8 for exemplars of codes, theme-related component, and themes.

Qualitative Analysis Results

Results from the qualitative analysis have been provided in this section. I have discussed the themes and theme-related components and I have provided supporting quotes from interview participants. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 8

Qualitative Data Analysis Showing Exemplars of Codes, Categories, Theme-Related

Components, and Themes

Theme-related Components*	Themes
Asking for Help	Collaboration
• Others with More Experience	
• Supportive Supervisor	
Having a Shared Goal	
• Communication	
• Defined Roles	
• Puzzle	
• Shared Goal	
Locus of Control	Resilience
• Unexpected Situations	
• Accepting the Situation	
Prioritization	
• Personal Life vs Professional Life	
• Within Workload	
Resilience in the Workplace	
• Dealing with Adversity	
• Bouncing Back	
• Pivoting	
Leadership Styles	Leadership
• Authentic Leadership	
• Introverted Leadership	
• Servant Leadership	
Leading by Example	
• Setting the Tone	
• Dedication to the Organization	

Leadership Qualities
- Context Dependent
- Empowering Others
- Decision Making

Comfort Zone   Meta-Topics
- New Experiences
- Uncomfortable Situations

Learning and Growing
- Learning from Others
- Lifelong Learning
- Growing

Reflection
- Group Debrief
- Self-Reflection

Relationships
- Building Relationships
- Nurturing Relationships
- Utilizing Relationships

Reinforcing Previous Understandings
- Previous Professional Development
- Past Experiences

Note. *—Theme-related components have been presented in italic font. Representative exemplars of codes have provided to illustrate the nature of the codes.

Collaboration. The first theme, collaboration, was comprised of two theme-

related components (a) asking for help and (b) having a shared goal.

Asking for Help. Several participants discussed the importance of asking for help

related to collaborative efforts, both as they provided past examples as well as how they

intended to employ collaboration moving forward. As she discussed a past example of

collaboration, Patsy highlighted the importance of asking for help while working with others who may have had more experience when she said,

> There's [sic] so many different factors, and so by working collaboratively with a group of people, we get to work together to make sure that we're on the same page to ask for help from one another. So, we're not doing the same work and it has really been a positive collaboration experience.

Asking for help had taken place previously but was also something that would be a focus moving forward. Peyton understood the importance of asking for help and collaborating because it led to an improved work output when she claimed,

> I have a tendency to not ask for help when I need it. And the past few months, I feel like working in this job, and also like participating in this study, has made me realize it's important to ask for help when you need help. And I've been trying to be more comfortable with asking for help because I know ultimately, it's gonna result in better work.

Tanner described being new in his position and how it helped him to be successful by having a supportive supervisor whom he could ask for help as noted when he stated,

> I'm still kind of in the learning phase of my position. So, one thing that I have been working on is to actually ask for assistance when I don't know an answer, and that could be like something from this past week where a professor needed to know the name of someone who could help him with putting a link on a philanthropic website. I didn't quite know the answer, so I reached out to my supervisor to provide me an answer and I then used that to assist the professor in what he was looking for, and I feel like in the past, I might not have done that for

different reasons. So, that aspect of collaboration is really important, just having that support.

Having a Shared Goal. A common perception among the participants was having and achieving a shared goal was the primary outcome of collaboration. Diana defined the work she did as collaborative in nature indicating individual, "siloed" efforts would not be sufficient when she suggested,

> I think that a lot of what we do is all based around collaboration, and we all have to collaborate, to advance all of our shared goals. I don't think that one area can work in a silo without all of the other entities that we need to collaborate with to get our jobs done.

Patsy concurred that achieving a goal was best done while working with others saying,

> When I think of collaboration, I think of working with others in an effective and meaningful way. I think collaboration can be something that's work related, but I think it goes much deeper, like getting to know your coworkers, understanding their lives, understanding their roles, but also finding different ways to work together, and to bring great minds and great ideas to the table and discussing roles, discussing how to achieve a problem or how to achieve a goal.

Different nuances of having a shared goal were discussed, including the importance of communication, having clearly defined roles, and ensuring that the clearly defined roles were understood, which was referred to as different "pieces of the puzzle." Christy discussed how her team was able to execute their plan due to frequent communication updates when she claimed,

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To even make this event, and multiple events happen … it definitely takes a team

of collaborators. So, I work with about five to six different individuals on a

variety of different things leading up to each [event]. So, I deal with collaboration

every single day, actually. So, [this event] is a main collaborators' project, where

I work with, you know the five to six individuals coming together, expressing our

ideas, sending updates to each other frequently, and then coming together to

execute said plan that we've been preparing for.

For communication to be effective in fostering collaborative efforts, it was imperative

that there were clearly defined roles, as demonstrated by Patsy's comment about how she

intended to employ collaboration moving forward when she said,

When I think about collaboration moving forward, I think about the different

ways that each person plays a part in this puzzle that we're all trying to solve. And

I think that recognizing what other people's roles are, offering assistance, but

trying not to overstep, is one thing that I think I can work on and grow in as far as

being a positive collaborator.

In addition to having clearly defined roles, individuals needed to understand what those

specific clearly defined roles were as Diana noted, when she stated,

[Collaboration] is essential to what we do. It's not even something that we think

about because we just do it, day in and day out, and so really just stressing the

importance of working well with others and making sure that everyone is on

board, and that all stakeholders have the knowledge that they need to be able to

come through on their end with whatever piece of the puzzle they are working

with.

Collaboration was summed up succinctly by Diana when she claimed,

> When I talk to my team about being collaborative with others, it's imperative. If we don't have collaboration, if we're not communicating with one another, we're not going to have a good end product, I think the more communication that we can have and [the] more conversations that we can have with our partners to really make it clear what the end goal is, and what everyone involved is doing, the better product that we have at the end.

Resilience. The second theme, resilience, was comprised of three theme-related components including (a) locus of control, (b) prioritization, and (c) specific types of resilience in the workplace.

Locus of Control. Several participants provided examples of being resilient in which they relied on their locus of control. Christy gave an example of working through the Covid-19 pandemic on a project that had ever-changing responsibilities where she focused her energies on what was within her control. She also illustrated her understanding of locus of control with another example of handling a difficult situation created by unexpected weather, something she acknowledged was outside of her control. Diana discussed how there were always issues that arose during her work that were outside of her control when she said,

> There's always something that maybe doesn't go as planned during an event, whether it's in your control or whether it's out of your control. And a lot of times these things that come up are out of your control. So, I think understanding that going into an event is really important.

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Diana also shared a powerful illustration of this concept when she discussed an example

of one her employees making a mistake that was outside of her control where she

couldn't do anything in that moment,

> That's something recently that I have had to be resilient with. And it's been very
>
> much out of my control. So, I think a lot of things that we do [we] have to be
>
> resilient with, these are things that are out of your control, and that you couldn't
>
> have really done anything about in the moment.

Acknowledging there were issues that are outside of your control was important, but it

was also imperative to accept these situations when they arose as Randy highlighted

when he said,

> The most effective way to incorporate resilience into my day-to-day is going to be
>
> constant reminders of the practice of resilience, which is kind of just like
>
> mindfulness, like you have to go back to it, and also, accepting what is within
>
> your control and what is not within your control.

Prioritization. Participants suggested prioritization was another critical aspect of

resilience. A unique characteristic of prioritization was represented in the holistic nature

of the prioritization process and its effect on individuals. Ashley offered an example of

how she would demonstrate resilience going forward by not being on email all day, every

day, and stated if she received an email outside of business hours, she would wait until

the next business day to respond. In this instance, she prioritized her private life over the

need to be available at all times via email. This sentiment to one shared by Velma who

stated,

Resiliency as a topic needs to come first internally as a person, and then as a professional. So, what I mean by that is, say I have a bad day at work, I need to be okay, first as a person internally, and then the professional personality of me would follow. I need to be okay that the day didn't go as planned or I didn't close the project in the particular deadline. I, as a person need to be okay, and then, I, as the professional, it will then follow.

Along with prioritizing one's personal life, it was also discussed that prioritization needed to occur within one's workload. Ashley said, "I think in order to be resilient you have to not take things personally and you have to prioritize …" Further, to employ resilience moving forward, Ashley said,

I will continue by doing what I'm doing, but when things get very hectic and I have ten people coming at me at once, to really take a deep breath and to tell myself I don't have to complete it all right then. I think we're both similar. We feel the need to get it done because so much is happening, but really to take a deep breath and prioritize is really the best way for me to handle my resilience.

Resilience in the Workplace. All participants discussed different ways to demonstrate resilience in the workplace. Infrequent examples included accepting difficulties, being authentic, being vulnerable, having a growth mindset, letting things go, accepting that one is not an expert, not taking things too personally, staying positive, and dealing with uncertainties. Nevertheless, there were more frequently described commonalities that emerged about demonstrating resilience in the workplace such as bouncing back, dealing with adversity, persevering, practicing mindfulness, and pivoting in response to work demands.

The ability to bounce back was imperative, according to Diana, who said, "I think being resilient is super important in events, because you can't improve and you can't bounce back from things without resilience." This was echoed by Patsy who said, "I think that resilience, it kind of reminds me of bouncing back, but also pressing forward." Velma also agreed, saying, "I think and reflecting, you know, in my work in the Foundation I see resilience as not giving up or not throwing in the towel easily. Being able to just bounce back."

Demonstrating resilience at work also involved dealing with adversity. Patsy said, "I think of facing adversity or problems and moving forward from those, like taking those experiences, learning from them, and trying to get past it." Christy also thought being resilience is critical, as it has helped her in dealing with adversity when she said,

> I know personally, when I've gone through hardships, at the time it can feel very heavy, but I know that I've become such a better person from going through these hardships and it gives me a better understanding of where I've come from, to give me a better feeling of where I currently am at.

Similar to dealing with adversity, but distinctly different, was preserving through those difficult situations. Patsy said, "It's important to work through those [problems] and continue to persevere." Christy went further and claimed,

> Resilience is one of those very critical things to have just as an individual … I mean your ability to overcome an obstacle or just something unexpected, but it definitely allows you to grow from that and persevere through the hardships to kind of escalate you.

Tanner summed up preserving by saying, "Resilience is persevering through challenging times."

Another way to demonstrate resilience in the workplace, according to Peyton, was to practice mindfulness when feeling overwhelmed. She said, "Whenever I start feeling overwhelmed, remembering that I am resilient. And that I've probably faced bigger challenges in the past. Kind of practicing mindfulness and trying to stay in the present, focusing on the task at hand." Moving forward, Randy said that he would focus on bringing mindfulness to his workplace, stating, "The most effective way to incorporate resilience into my day-to-day is going to be constant reminders of the practice of resilience, which is kind of just like mindfulness."

A common characteristic of resilience mentioned by participants was the ability to be able to 'pivot' while working on tasks. Ashley mentioned how she had to pivot frequently, saying, "In the position that I have, I don't view it as being a resilient, but it is. I pivot; you've seen me. I mean all the time." During the Covid-19 pandemic, Tanner had to do a complete pivot with the programming he was working on, moving events from in-person to virtual. Similarly, Christy had to pivot mid-project on one of her work responsibilities because restrictions were changing on a daily basis.

Leadership. The third theme, leadership, was comprised of three theme-related components including (a) different leadership styles, (b) leading by example, and (c) different examples of leadership qualities.

Leadership Styles. While discussing their thoughts on leadership, nearly all the participants mentioned the leadership style they typically employed. They gravitated toward certain leadership styles based on their previous experiences and their current

professional roles. For example, Ashley described herself as an authentic leader, having gone through various difficult life experiences that helped her grow into the professional she currently was and helped to define her leadership style. Tanner described himself as a behind the scenes leader. He did not like to be in the limelight and led by offering back-end support. Diana viewed herself as a collaborative leader, explaining, "I think leadership and collaboration kind of go hand-in-hand for me. The way I lead is through collaboration with my team." Peyton did not specifically see herself as a leader per se, and had previous experiences with a leader who was a disciplinarian. However, she described herself as an introverted leader, saying, "I've experienced many types of leadership so I do know that there's quiet leaders, there's introverted leaders, which I would align with if I had to define my own type of leadership style." Patsy viewed herself as a servant leader by having a "voice for other people" because she thought, "As a leader, it's not really about you or me. It's really about others." Servant leadership was also the approach that Velma discussed, explaining that her perception of leadership has changed over the years and that she now believed "You put your team first, … ensuring that they have their needs [met]." Two participants, Christy and Randy, did not discuss their specific leadership styles nor did they reference any specific leadership styles during their interviews.

    Leading by Example. Participants offered a common descriptor of leadership when they referred to leading by example, including describing current instances of how they lead by example, as well as providing examples from the past. When discussing their overall thoughts on leadership, Diana and Ashley specifically mentioned "leading by example" as an important aspect. Patsy agreed, saying, "When I think about leadership, I

think of someone who sets an example, who paves a path," and that leaders set the tone for those around them. Christy went a bit farther saying, "In my opinion, a great leader is the one at the front line, physically leading the group." Along with overarching thoughts about how it was important to lead by example, several participants offered examples of how they have led by example. Tanner described his specialty of leading by example related to ensuring everything runs smoothly regarding underlying processes and operations. In Diana's response, she indicated she modeled leadership by assisting with all tasks associated with an event in which she was involved, noting that by being in the trenches with her team, they would learn how to handle the various situations that occurred at those particular events. Patsy said, "I think that my dedication to my organization is without saying it, I think I lead by example, like being dedicated to the organization, passionate about it, and excited to be here." This response illustrated how she was aware that how she acted was setting an example for others. Velma led by example by being involved, both inside and outside the organization in various community initiatives and with other teams in the Foundation.

Leadership Qualities. A number of leadership qualities emerged from the responses of the participants. A prelude to the specific qualities discussed was that several participants emphasized how leadership was context dependent. Tanner described a previous supervisor who he thought demonstrated effective leadership by understanding each employee's holistic abilities and making appropriate adjustments to each individual. Velma also described a situation where a previous supervisor adjusted their leadership style based on what different employees needed. Specifically, she said the previous leader, "Adjusted their leadership style, or how they worked with them based on what

they needed at that particular moment." Whereas Tanner and Velma described how they had seen other leaders adjust based on context, Ashley described how she had to determine the level of involvement of her team in decision making based on the situation. She explained how she included her team in decision making in some situations it was appropriate, but in other situations she did not where it was not appropriate.

Leadership qualities discussed by the participants included decision making, empowering others, having self-awareness, and having tough conversations. Diana and Patsy each discussed decision making and how it was imperative to be decisive and make the best decision possible. Although leaders needed to be good individual decision makers, several participants also discussed the importance of empowering others as well. Diana maintained,

> I don't like to micromanage. I don't really like to tell people what to do. I think it's really important for the team to be able to build their skill sets by doing, and of course I'm there guiding them the entire way.

Ashley demonstrated a similar mindset when providing an example of how she empowered her team to solve problems and included them in decision making. Specifically, she noted, "I will work with my team to set them up for success, to give them the tools they need to be successful when I leave the organization. That's really important to me."

Another quality that was described in participants' responses was self-awareness. For example, Diana identified when she needed to step back so that she didn't burn out and Velma recognized how her upbringing affected what she brought to the table. Additionally, Peyton was aware of her internal dialogue and made a conscious effort to

give herself more slack, whereas Christy understood how her previous experiences affected her outlook today. Part of self-awareness was understanding there were times when leaders need to have tough conversations. Ashley commented, "People say they're leaders, but it really comes down to making the hard decisions, to really stand up and be the leader ..."

As they discussed leadership, two participants mentioned a specific book that they read about leadership. Both Patsy and Ashley mentioned *Leaders eat last*, a book by Simon Sinek in which he discussed the importance of prioritizing human capital within an organization. Patsy's main takeaways from the book were the importance of having humility as a leader and the responsibility that comes with the role. The book resonated with Ashley because she saw many different types of leadership in the organization and thought that the best leaders were those that prioritized employees over results.

Meta-Topics. The fourth theme, meta-topics was comprised of five theme-related components including (a) comfort zone, (b) learning and growing, (c) reflecting, (d) relationships, and (e) the reinforcement of previous understandings.

Comfort Zone. Several participants discussed getting out of their comfort zone related to collaboration, resilience, and leadership. When discussing leadership, Tanner provided an example of getting out of his comfort zone while working at a previous employer,

> The last year of working at [a previous employer], I actually had a small team
> with me. Not a lot, but I did something out of my comfort zone, and I actually led
> a class session. So, in the seven years I was working in the nonprofit, I never had

led any of the educational programming, even though we were an educational

nonprofit in a way. So, I kind of went out of my comfort zone to lead a class.

Peyton and Randy discussed how they would focus on getting out of their comfort zones

moving forward, following the intervention. Peyton planned to be better at asking for

help related to being collaborative, something she had a tendency not to do because it

made her uncomfortable. Randy discussed putting himself into uncomfortable situations

to help him become more resilience, saying, "I want to like practice, that, like resilience,

and doing something that is totally out of my comfort zone" was a way to move toward

that goal.

     Learning and Growing. Multiple aspects of learning and growing were

mentioned by all participants. As they discussed learning, some participants focused on

learning related to themselves as individuals. For example, Tanner mentioned he was new

in his role and he recognized he was still in the "learning phase." By comparison, Velma

had been in her role for several years, but she still considered herself a learner by digging

in to learn about other business processes. Christy considered herself a lifelong learner,

saying, "I understand that the job is never done, and the learning is never done. So being

[sic] a lifelong learner." Diana focused on learning from issues arising in her role so that

they were not repeated, and Patsy was focused on taking on new opportunities,

recognizing they would lead to new understandings. Nevertheless, other discussions were

related to learning specifically from other individuals. Patsy sought feedback from others

in the hopes of continuing to grow as a professional, and Ashley stressed the importance

of growing with her team through their collaborative efforts. Using a learning

perspective, Patsy, Randy, and Christy all planned to learn from others on how to be a better leader and demonstrate leadership in their work.

Along with learning, all participants referenced holistic growth. To illustrate, Tanner mentioned, "Hopefully I continue growing in my roles here and I take any opportunity I can for professional development." He continued that he wanted to be someone on whom others can rely, which will require additional development in his role. Patsy maintained she attempted to grow after every major project at work, which was illustrated when she commented, "There is always something that I take away after the [project] is over … something that I could do better, something I could grow in." Peyton provided several examples of how she hoped to grow moving forward. For example, she has been focused on not crying at work during emotional situations, growing in her delegation related to leadership, and growing in her self-confidence. Going forward, Randy wanted to lead at work as noted when he stated,

> Helping my teammates with stuff that they might need that are in areas of competency that I have, as well as doing stretch assignments to try to grow skills that I'm good at, and also grow skills that I want to improve on.

Christy wanted to develop additional resilience by growing through difficult situations when she described,

> Taking what life is throwing at you, turning it around into a positive situation, and understanding that I will grow from this, maybe not into a completely changed individual, but allowing myself to experience the good and the bad gives me an overall greater understanding of where to go from there.

Tanner expressed a sentiment echoed by all participants, "My goal is to continue growing with the organization and learning new things."

Reflection. Several participants discussed reflection, either related to post-project reflection or inward self-reflection. Diana discussed how there were always issues that occurred during events and how it was important to keep the issues behind the scenes. For example, she described how she took "mental stock" of the issue and then following the event you talked about improvements and how to prevent the issues from occurring again. Christy expressed a similar thought, where she stressed the importance of group reflection following a project, saying, "Coming together as a group after the project has concluded … kind of debriefing, collecting everyone's thoughts and opinions." Patsy discussed the importance of reflecting on both projects and herself, saying, "Being able to reflect on all that has happened" and "Afterwards thinking what could be better … thinking what we did well … what I didn't do well … what I could grow in …" Velma also discussed the concept of self- reflection, focusing her mental energy on reflecting on the type of leader she was and on what she wanted, long-term, both personally and professionally.

Relationships. Participants frequently responded with another meta-topic on relationships including building relationships, nurturing relationships, and utilizing the resultant network of individuals. Building relationships included getting to know colleagues, informal team building, being part of a team and building connections with the team and putting oneself into networking situations outside of business hours. To illustrate, consider what Patsy said, "Getting to know your coworkers, understanding their lives, understanding their roles," illustrated the importance of focusing on

relationships that are deeper than work tasks. Velma extended the matter of building relationships when she discussed the importance of nurturing those relationships. Velma provided an example of building a relationship with a colleague that led to success of a particular project, but then stressed the never-ending process of ensuring that the relationships were maintained on a continuing basis. Along with building relationships and nurturing relationships, utilizing relationships was also discussed. Tanner discussed how he has turned to his network for assistance with various tasks and questions. Moreover, Christy employed her network to "pick their brain" when she encountered a challenge. Diana provided an example of how she utilized her network outside of her direct colleagues to solicit volunteer support for her event, stating that the event would not have been successful if she had not been able to utilize her network. Diana also described the importance of " lean[ing] on others to help us in the area that they are experts in."

Velma discussed respect and trust as two precursors to building, nurturing, and utilizing relationships. In particular, Velma noted,

> I think respect's the key ingredient. If I trust you that you respect me as a colleague, understand where I'm coming from as a person, and then as a colleague or an employee, I feel like I can trust you enough to collaborate with you.

She also went on to mention that it was important that she felt accepted as a person and did not feel judged if she was having a bad day. Velma described how she taught one of her previous employees that trust was a key component of leadership, saying, "I had to teach my full-time professional, it also comes down to trust."

Reinforcing Previous Understandings. Participants also discussed how previous understandings related to collaboration, resilience, and leadership affected their participation in the intervention. As he discussed his thoughts on collaboration, Randy mentioned, "I think this [intervention] was kind of just recapitulating what I learned a while back, and it was a really good way to test some of the strategies that you taught." He connected the intervention to a course he took about small group communication, highlighting how he was able to use what he learned about how groups tended to interact with each other. Ashley also discussed previous understandings related to collaboration when she said, "I had some leadership training a couple of years ago with [a leadership consultant] and she taught me a lot about collaboration, and you know the things that you're doing just kind of helps build on it." This sentiment was also shared by Velma, who noted,

> I think the workshops and the discussions that you lead definitely solidified what I've learned throughout my years of experience. I think, it's definitely kind of a refresher to read about those things, and also like watch the LinkedIn videos about it. If anything, I think, it's just an affirmation of how I see collaboration as to where I am right now in my current, like in my tenure, so to speak.

Peyton described how her previous experience working in a different department had made her more resilient and she connected that experience to her understandings throughout the intervention. Christy connected past leadership experiences to how she had gotten to her current role and the leadership she demonstrated now.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Learning stuff is less important than learning about oneself.

—David Epstein, *Range*

In the previous chapters, I provide leadership context and the purpose of the study, theoretical perspectives and research guiding the project, detailed information on the study method, and the data analysis and results. In this chapter, I offer a discussion on the alignment of data analysis and results to the theoretical perspectives and previous research that guided the study, limitations of the study, implications for practice and future research, and personal lessons learned.

Understanding the Results: Theoretical Perspectives and Previous Research

In this section, I connect the results of the study to theoretical perspectives and previous research guiding my study. First, I discuss the results as they are related to the theoretical perspectives of constructivism, sociocultural theory, and the theory of reflective action. Next, I discuss the results relative to previous research on professional development, reflection in the workplace, collaboration, and resilience.

Understanding the Results Using Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspectives that align with my results include constructivism, sociocultural theory, and the theory of reflective action. Proponents of constructivism posit that experience helps individuals understand their world and make meaning in an active manner rather than passively receiving information (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Throughout the intervention, participants are building meaning based on their previous experiences and current encounters and events. This is consistent with the constructivist

principle that different social contexts lead to constructing diverse meanings (Savery &
Duffy, 1995; Crotty, 1998). Previous experiences, one social context, and current
encounters, are each assessed and contribute to how participants construct reality. Taken
to its logical next step, future experiences will likely lead to an even further array of
different contexts resulting in different constructed realities.

All participants discussed learning and growing in some capacity, whether it is
internal and is related to themselves as individuals or external influences based on
interactions with others. This outcome is consistent with Crotty (1998) who claims
meaningful reality is constructed both during and subsequently as a result of interactions
between individuals. Moreover, proponents of constructivism also maintain that errors
facilitate learning and should not be avoided (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). In the study, one of
the participants describes a situation in which an employee makes a mistake, and the
participant uses it as a learning opportunity for the employee because they understand
that mistakes facilitate learning. From a different social context, this is analogous to the
participants who demonstrate resilience in the workplace by dealing with adversity and
preserving through difficult situations. Specifically, errors can cause adverse situations
through which employees preserve that again highlight those situations, which appear to
be adversative should not be avoided and can foster important learning and development.

The results are also closely related to sociocultural theory, which places a strong
emphasis on social interaction and internalization of learning, so learning is 'owned' by
the learner (Vygotsky, 1978). During collaborative activity, individuals learn from each
other, regardless of whether they are novices or experts (Eun, 2008; Shabani, 2016).
Throughout the intervention, the workshops create space for participants to learn from

each other, due to the active dialogue and social interaction among participants. Vygotsky suggests the more knowledgeable other, an individual who is more capable than another, fosters growth of the less capable person during interaction between the two, such as a parent and child. In this study, the more knowledgeable other is exhibited in a number of different ways. For example, several participants asked for help from others who had more experience, who were their direct supervisor, or who could add value to a collaborative project in some way. Similarly, several participants claim they learned from more knowledgeable others on how to be a better leader at work.

With respect to internalization in sociocultural theory, Vygotsky (1978) suggests development of new knowledge moves from being between two individuals, interpersonal understanding in Vygotsky's view, to being internalized within the individual, intrapersonal understanding for Vygotsky. Participants clearly demonstrate interpersonal understanding as they work together, ask for help, and when they were gathering or taking in information from others. Intrapersonal understanding is represented as they share their newly constructed perspectives, intrapersonal understandings, with the group. Frequently, these newly developed understandings include reflective components, which I discuss in depth in the next section.

Schön's (1983) theory of reflective action is also helpful in understanding the results of this study. Schön theorized that practitioners solved problems through reflection within two distinct timeframes, after the fact, *reflection-on-action*, and during an actual experience, *reflection-in-action*. These reflective processes help individuals gain new understandings and appreciations as well as refine and improve their expertise and practice (Boud et al., 1985; Finlay, 2008). Participants in the study discuss reflection-

on-action more frequently than reflection-in-action. Reflecting after the fact includes, for example, group debriefs following collaborative work as well as taking "mental stock" of any issues that occurred after managing an event. Only one example of reflection-in-action is discussed; the participant describes her reflective process during an adverse situation that she is managing. This discrepancy in the rate of reflection after the fact may be explained by Boud et al. (1985) who discuss a model of reflection in the learning process where experiences occur, followed by a space for reflection, which leads to reflection outcomes. In this study participants specifically discuss experiences they had and the affordance of reflective space (and time) to engage in reflection after the fact. Nevertheless, participants only talk indirectly about reflective outcomes. Specifically, in the data from this study, they touch on reflective activities and indicate a new way of doing something or the emergence of a new set of ideas, but they never directly refer to these outcomes as resulting from reflection.

Understanding the Results through Previous Research

Previous research results can also help to explain my results. In particular, results from this study show strong connections to the research in areas such as professional development, reflection in the workplace, collaboration, and resilience.

Results from previous research suggest the most preferred modality of professional development (PD) is in-person delivery (Corrall, 2010). In this study, I structure the workshops as in-person events, but participants, if they had the need or desire, could join the session remotely by using technological capabilities. In fact, participants in this study overwhelming endorse the in-person approach to PD. Although a few participants joined one of the sessions virtually, this was always due to illness, not

a specific preference for the virtual modality. I did not have any participants join remotely because they did want to join in-person. Further, participants indicate in-person PD is the delivery mode for their previous PD experiences as well.

In their work on PD, Jacobs and Washington (2003) indicate the intent of PD is to provide a systemic path to increase employee competence. In that respect, the workshop helps increase participants' perceptions of their ability to collaborate, their resilience in the workplace, and their leadership, which is consistent these earlier findings.

Previous research on reflection in the workplace is helpful in understanding the results of this study. By reflecting on their skills, employees can discover new ways to incorporate these skills into their work practice (Faller et al., 2020). This is demonstrated when participants talked about how they would incorporate what they learned during the intervention and from the reflection process into their future practice. Notably, in the interviews, participants discuss ways they would demonstrate collaboration, resilience, and leadership in the future. Reflection in the workplace also helps employees process their strengths and weaknesses (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). Several participants posit that reflection helps them think about what went well and how they could utilize those strengths as well as what did not go well and how they could further develop those weaknesses. Although reflection in the workplace has many benefits, there are potential risks that need to be considered, including risks to social acceptability or risks to individuals' senses of self-identity (Walker & Oldford, 2020). Based on the participant interviews and by engaging with the participants in my capacity as their colleague, they do not demonstrate any of the potential risks of reflection in the workplace.

Outcomes of the study are also informed by previous research on collaboration. In collaborative efforts, the best ideas emerge when individuals have differing perspectives (Rowe et al., 2020). The importance of having a shared goal in collaborative efforts is essential because of the with diverse thoughts among those individuals in a group. Different individuals have their own piece of the collaborative puzzle, where their diverse thoughts and opinions are added to the mix to help attain the more holistic goal. Further, collaboration is framed around developing trusting relationships and having enhanced communication with space for listening and feedback (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2020). Participants discuss the importance of relationships being necessary for building, nurturing, and utilizing them as part of developing and maintaining effective collaboration. They also describe the importance of communication in executing collaborative efforts. Taken together, this indicates that building relationships and having enhanced communication are synergistic processes facilitating collaborative efforts.

Finally, the results are closely related to previous research on resilience. Various components of resilience include maintaining perspective, managing stress, interacting cooperatively, and building networks (Winwood et al., 2013), which help to explain the results of the study. First, an important aspect of maintaining perspective is the ability to maintain a solution focus, which directly relates to participants focusing on what is within their locus of control during adverse situations. Second, in this study, participants discuss several ways they manage stress that are connected to Winwood et al.'s work. For example, participants speak of managing stress by using prioritization to maintain their work life balance and by taking appropriate rest breaks to prevent burnout. Third, interacting cooperatively includes seeking advice and support, which participants

emphasize when they discuss asking for help. Finally, building networks relates directly to building and nurturing relationships. One of the strategies for developing resilience includes seeking out peers to aid in addressing challenges as noted in participants responses, which is consistent with the research work of Moss Breen (2019). This also relates to relationships, because seeking out peers is an example of utilizing relationships.

Limitations

There are several limitations to my study including the sample size, sample composition, duration of the workshops, duration of the study as a whole, and the impromptu modality changes utilized by various participants throughout the workshops. I invited 27 individuals to participate in the study, 10 of them accepted resulting in a 37% participation rate. I am satisfied with the participation rate, but I would like to have had more representation from the various teams asked to participate. Given the participation numbers, there is not sufficient power to detect differences in the means during the quantitative analysis. Also, with more participants, I could potentially explore the data based on demographic characteristics including how long the participant has worked in higher education or how long the participant has worked at the ASU Foundation.

Another issue that may contribute to the limited sample size is the inconvenient timing of the intervention compared to various work priorities. Some of the invitation rejections could have been due to the fact that immediately prior to inviting the participants to the study, I asked some of the same individuals to dedicate time to a major project related to our professional work. This timing was less than ideal, but I was unable to avoid the cross-over in timing between the professional project and the study

intervention. This is a good example of how the study intervention does not occur in a silo; it occurs in conjunction with my role as a practitioner.

Another limitation relates to the sample composition. All invitees are employees who work under the Development Services umbrella within the ASU Foundation. Development Services consists of five areas including Foundation Initiatives; Events; Research and Prospect Management; Foundation Operations; and Writing Services teams. Each team under the Development Services umbrella is represented by at least one participant, however, my local context is not indicative of the typical ASU Foundation employee. The typical ASU Foundation employee is a fundraiser who seeks financial support to help advance ASU. The job characteristics of a fundraiser compared to someone who works in development services differ substantially, meaning this intervention could have different applicability across the differing groups of employees as well as resulting in different outcomes. A further limitation is sample composition because only two managers are involved with the study.

There are also two limitations with respect to the duration of the study. First, the duration of each workshop throughout the intervention was only 30 minutes. I had scheduled the workshops for only 30 minutes to respect the time of all the participants. Nevertheless, the dialogue was so engaging during the workshops that we did not have time to watch videos I had incorporated into the workshop. If I had scheduled the workshops for longer than 30 minutes, this could have afforded deeper discussions and more thorough consideration of the topics. Second, due to the timing of IRB approval and when the workshop was implemented, I had to reduce the number of cycles of reflections

from the original intervention schedule. Instead of four cycles of reflection, as was the original plan, I adjusted down to only three cycles of reflection.

A final limitation is related to impromptu modality changes for a few of the participants for the workshops. The intervention is specifically structured as pre-videos followed by in-person workshops. However, there are multiple occasions where participants reached out to me the morning of the workshop, asking to join remotely for various reasons. It is great that we had the technological capabilities to satisfy these requests, however, it defeated the purpose of having everyone attend the workshops in person.

Implications for Practice

Results of the study indicate participants perceive an improvement in their ability to collaborate, their resilience in the workplace, and their leadership following completion of the intervention. Interview responses signal several implications for practice that are applicable to managers with supervisory responsibilities as well employees as a whole. It is important to note that although the implications for managers specifically relate to roles for those who supervise other employees, the implications could be for everyone in the organization.

Implications for Managers

Implications for people managers relate to providing challenging assignments, creating a collaborative work environment, insights into developmental conversations, and the need to empower team members. First, it is imperative that managers provide challenging work assignments to their employees. Participants in the study understood you do not need a formal leadership title to demonstrate leadership. As a supervisor, it is

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critical to provide challenging assignments that require employees to utilize and demonstrate their current skills including those related to leadership. This provides employees the opportunity to demonstrate leadership and lead by example, even if they do not have a formal title of "manager," "director," or some other title that denotes formal management of others. Second, by providing challenging work assignments, supervisors encourage employees to step out of their comfort zones. Asking staff members to engage in new experiences and uncomfortable situations outside of their comfort zones can lead to growth and development.

A second implication for managers relates to creating a collaborative work environment. To do so, managers should focus on ensuring employees feel a sense of psychological safety in the workplace. This collaborative work environment, enabled by employees feeling psychologically safe, involves demonstrating that mistakes are okay, and it is okay to not know everything. Employees should feel safe to take risks at work and managers can even celebrate failures as learning opportunities. This will help create a culture of asking for help, which has the potential to lead to more collaborative efforts between and among teams.

A third implication is insight relates to what managers should incorporate into their developmental conversations with their team. While coaching employees, managers should tailor discussions to focus on what is within an employee's locus of control. Framing the discussion on what is within their control, instead of what is outside of their control, will help the employee develop resilience and focus their energies on what they are able to influence, while avoiding wasting time and energy about those over which they do not have control. Managers should also incorporate discussions around each

employee's leadership style into developmental conversations. Nearly all participants talked about their leadership approaches in the interviews, even though it was not specifically prompted, demonstrating that this was a topic of interest. Focusing discussions on leadership and approaches taken by staff members can help employees be cognizant about how they demonstrate leadership and where they could develop as a leader. As part of these discussions, it is also important to emphasize that leadership is context dependent, so different leadership approaches might be needed in different scenarios.

A final implication for managers relates to the importance of empowering employees, specifically in terms of making decisions and taking advantage of learning opportunities. Both supervisors who participated in the study discuss empowering their employees. Notably, when employees are involved in decision making, they develop their ability to solve problems and incorporate data into decisions. From personal experience, as employees grow, develop, and attain promotions, they receive fewer specific instructions on how to complete their tasks, so they need to be able to make their own decisions. Employees should also feel empowered to take advantage of learning opportunities, whether those are within or outside the organization. Ownership of personal and professional growth through empowerment will pay dividends in future development.

Implications for All Employees

Implications applicable to all employees within the current organization include understanding and applying the relationship continuum, the importance of having shared goals, and the importance of incorporating reflection into professional practice. First, all

employees should understand and apply the relationship continuum, which consists of building relationships, nurturing relationships, and utilizing relationships. To be most effective the relationships should span the range of possible internal connections, including within one's own team as well as with other units, and then those relationships should expand to connect with those outside the organization. Employees should strategically prioritize time to network, whether that is coffee meetings, lunch meetings, attending networking activities outside of business hours, or some other means to network. If an employee is interested in learning more about another unit or team, they should ask their supervisor to facilitate a connection if they are uncomfortable reaching out for the first connection.

Once employees build relationships, it is important to nurture those relationships on a continuing basis. After the relationships are built and nurtured, it is imperative to utilize those relationships when assistance is needed and those with whom the employee is connected might help. For example, a leader might facilitate a networking activity, where each team member brings a printed copy of their work calendar from the last six months. Then, they could review each week and individually determine how many networking meetings or events they attended. The intent would be to discuss the importance of prioritizing networking and the value that relationships bring to our work roles.

A second implication for all employees relates to the importance of having shared goals. Shared goals should be considered at multiple levels within the organization, ranging from individual teams, whole units, all the way to the entire organization. For example, I facilitated the creation of a "vision document" for my team, where we ideated,

and came to agreement on, our shared vision, mission, values, and the strategic role that we play within our organization. Having goals that are aligned helps facilitate collaborative efforts, ensuring that everyone's energy is working toward the same end. An important factor related to having shared goals is that it is critical to have clearly defined roles. If there is not clarity on who is doing what, there is potential for duplicative and wasteful efforts.

A third implication for all employees is the importance of incorporating reflection into professional practice. Reflection could be incorporated at the individual level, through self-reflection, or at the group level, such as post-project debriefs, both of which exemplify Schön's (1983) reflection-on-process. It is imperative that structured reflection time is built into the schedule, otherwise it is easy to forgo this important activity due to the endless other tasks.

Implications for Future Research

This study indicates several implications for my current professional practice, but there would also be various ways to build on this research in future cycles of action research. For example, future research could focus on more in-depth work on each specific competency I examine in the current study. The synergy among collaboration, resilience, and leadership is one approach, but another tactic would be to examine each competency individually. For leadership, participants are highly interested in considering their leadership style, even though specific leadership styles are not mentioned throughout the intervention. Understanding this desire to consider and label a specific leadership style, a future intervention could be conducted to discuss specific leadership styles in-depth and then assess perceptions of the value of those styles, the use of those

styles, and so on. For collaboration, a study could be designed to examine potential differences between intra-team and inter-team collaboration. In such a study, one could explore whether these differences have any effect on how individuals collaborate with others. One way to incorporate intra-team collaboration and compare it to inter-team collaboration would be to involve participants in a future cycle of action research who are in a reporting hierarchy outside of the Development Services umbrella. With respect to resilience, the intervention could be implemented directly after a large change within the organization. This potentially adverse situation and ambiguous state of affairs could create an environment in which to examine resilience in-depth.

Future cycles of action research could incorporate research questions that focus on dimensions of the intervention that are not the main focus of this study. For example, research questions could be tailored around the reflection component of the intervention. This would require minimal changes to the intervention itself; it could be incorporated through adding questions about reflection to the data collection instruments. Another example could be research questions related to either the demographics or the professional characteristics of the participants. Potentially there could be differences in perceptions of the competencies based on age, gender or ethnicity, or how long participants have been working, how long they have worked in higher education, or how long participants have worked at the ASU Foundation. However, such a study would require many more participants so that the quantitative analysis could be used to tease out the influence of these variables on the outcome measures.

Another option for future research could be to incorporate an online community of practice (OCoP) component. Wenger (1998) describe a community of practice as a

group that has a shared practice and identity, a shared history of learning, and exhibits mutual engagement. "We all belong to communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 6). These communities can meet in-person, but they also have the option to meet virtually, as part of an OCoP, which are increasing in popularity (Brooks, 2010). I did not incorporate an OCoP component into my intervention because in my local context, I would argue, we already have too many communication platforms. Introducing another communication platform would have been detrimental to my professional relationship with the participants. However, in a different local context, focusing part of the intervention on an OCoP could be an interesting approach.

Personal Lessons Learned

Throughout the action research dissertation process, as well as the Leadership and Innovation program as a whole, I have grown in many ways. Mertler (2020) cogently argued that action research leads to professional growth, with which I concur completely. I have grown as a scholarly practitioner, in how I deal with ambiguity, in how I prioritize my network, and in my self-awareness of my epistemological and ontological views.

At the beginning of the Leadership and Innovation program, I felt like an imposter. I felt that my doctoral colleagues in the program had professional trajectories more in line with the subject matter for our classes. I was nervous that the professors would see through my façade and realize I wasn't a good fit for the program. In the first few classes, discussions centered around how we would become scholarly practitioners throughout the program. I engaged in these conversations, but simply put, I did not think this growth would apply to me because I was an outcast who didn't belong. However, as I progressed through the program, I started to notice that the way I viewed and solved

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problems, understood systems and structures, and approached complex situations started to change and that I was a valued member of the cohort who added a unique perspective to our diverse mix of opinions. There wasn't a specific "aha" moment that I realized I had developed into a scholarly practitioner, but as I was nearing the end of this dissertation journey and reflecting back on my path to this point, I can state with confidence that I am a scholarly practitioner. One way I have noticed this development relates to the way I read articles, whether they are scholarly journals or from a practitioner publication, such as *Harvard Business Review*. As I am reading articles, I am assessing the methods used in respective studies, analyzing how the researchers answered the research questions, and determining applicability to my local context. I am reading with a new lens as a scholarly practitioner. Another way I have noticed my development as a scholarly practitioner is how I am now more apt to use iterative approaches in my work. Throughout the program, I conducted multiple iterations of action research, each cycle building on the previous cycles, leading me to the final dissertation. I have brought this iterative approach into my professional role in the projects that I manage. I do not aim for perfection in the first attempt at an idea, presentation, or asset that I am creating. As I develop multiple iterations of the product, I solicit feedback and my thinking advances, which leads to a better end-product. This result is due to my development as a scholarly practitioner. Although I do not foresee conducting any formal studies analogous to my dissertation in the near future, I will be able to utilize the skills I have learned to continue growing as a professional.

The dissertation journey has also helped me develop my ability to deal with ambiguity. I was accepted into the in-person cohort in February 2020, with the first in-

person classes scheduled for May 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic in Spring 2020 necessitated the university pivot in its class delivery modality to synchronous video meetings rather than in-person meetings. I learn best in face-to-face situations, so I was nervous about attending classes virtually. An added stressor was the uncertainty that emerged semester by semester about which class delivery modality we would use. As the program progressed, I became more confident working within this ambiguity and uncertainty. This growth in working with ambiguity served me well during the data analysis portion of the dissertation. After transcribing all the interviews following the intervention, I had a treasure trove of qualitative data ready to be analyzed. I did not know exactly where to start. Thankfully my growth throughout the program in dealing with ambiguity helped me be confident in starting the process, although I did not know exactly where the process would lead or what the qualitative data would tell me. My ability to deal with ambiguity will serve me well in my current professional role as well as in future professional roles.

Another lesson learned that will serve me well in both my current and future professional work relates to the importance of utilizing my network. I have always been good at building relationships and nurturing relationships, but I never fully understood the importance of the last step in the relationship continuum: utilizing relationships. I applied this lesson learned throughout the program in two ways. First, I utilized the relationships that I built with peers in this program, as well as doctoral students in other EdD programs around the country, to keep motivated during the difficult times that are inevitable in a doctoral program. I would connect with these peers regularly to discuss progress on our dissertations and any roadblocks that we were encountering. Second, I

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applied this learning in my professional context by prioritizing networking meetings with individuals both inside and outside of my team and organization. On my professional calendar, I code these networking meetings with the color red so that they stand out on my calendar and so that I can reflect back on previous weeks or months to visually see how I am utilizing my network. My growth in the ability to utilize my network was a surprise to me, based on the knowledge that I am an extreme introvert. I can act extroverted if the situation dictates the necessity, but it is never my preference and it leaves me exhausted. I have learned that even though I am introverted, I can still utilize my network.

A final lesson relates to self-awareness about my epistemological and ontological perspectives. In multiple classes throughout the program, we were challenged to reflect on, and clearly communicate, our epistemological and ontological views. More times than I would like to admit, I had to search for the meaning of these words to even understand what was being asked of me. Due to this constant searching, I will never forget that epistemology and ontology mean "ways of knowing" and "ways of being," respectively. I have been able to articulate my belief that reality is not static, most truths are socially constructed, and knowledge is co-constructed based on different experiences people bring to different learning situations.

Completing this doctoral journey has been the hardest challenge that I have completed in my life, to date. When starting the program, I did not realize how much this process would change me. The greatest change, which relates to all the personal lessons learned I have discussed, is that I am now more confident in who I am as a person. I am now confident that I have the agency to brave grueling undertakings.

Conclusion

The higher education industry and the operations of public universities have become increasingly complex and will continue to increase in complexity for a variety of reasons. To combat that increase in complexity, it is imperative that higher education institutions focus on the development of their internal, staff talent, especially as it is related to collaboration, resilience, and leadership. The Building Potential Workshop Series of this study was effective in helping participants increase their ability to collaborate, to be resilient in the workplace, and enact leadership skills. However, I acknowledge and understand that this intervention was one piece of the much larger puzzle that is staff talent development. An energizing aspect of staff talent development is that it is a never-ending process because there is always room for growth.

My intervention not only had a positive effect on my participants, but also on my development as a professional within higher education. Further, the progression through the whole doctoral program has directly helped me in my current professional role. My growth throughout the program has translated into better work performance thanks to improvements in systematic thinking, change management, and leadership development, just to name a few. Over the last few years during the program, my professional role has expanded in scope and responsibility, and my team is growing in size. I would argue that this professional growth is directly related to my growth as a scholarly practitioner.

Similar to staff talent development, learning is a never-ending journey. My leadership philosophy is to develop me and my team to be the best possible versions of ourselves. I am a life-long learner, and this study has been another step in this journey. I

will take what I have learned in this program and continue to build as a scholarly

practitioner as I continue along my trajectory toward whatever is next.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVENTION WORKSHOP OUTLINES

1) Collaboration

Become a Super-Collaborator (35 minutes)

> Want to take your career to the next level? Take steps towards mastering the art of collaboration. This course provides professionals with practical steps they can take to work more effectively with others. Join Debbie Danon, the cofounder and joint CEO of TrustLab, and Yasmeen Akhtar, the director at Alexander Haus, as they provide insights into the mindset and habits of super collaborators. Along the way, they share tips for implementing habits for successful collaboration into your workflow, as well as how to harness collaboration to power your career goals.

Workshop Outline:

Introduction

- Thank the participants for participating in this research study

- Introduce myself, my background, and the study purpose

- Discuss the study timeline

- Discuss the reflection aspect and the importance of reflection

Recap the pre-video

- What were some of your key takeaways or things that stood out to you?

Collaboration meta-cognition

- Question: Ask what the participants think of when they think about collaboration.

- Various definitions of collaboration:

  1) To work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor

2) The mutual engagement of a group or two or more in a co-creative effort that achieves a shared goal or vision

3) Having the culture, system, and tools in place to encourage and enable individuals and teams within an enterprise to work together and share information freely

Benefits to collaboration

- Improved results

- Better efficiency/speed

- Higher morale

- Better engagement

- More empathetic team

Building Trust and Relationships

- Building relationships is a never-ending process

- Strengthen relationships just a little bit every day

- Team building events

  o Doesn't have to be a "koombayah" activity; could be a team lunch

Environment

- Psychological safety

  o It's okay to have "stupid ideas"

  o Feeling safe to take risks

  o Celebrate failures as learning

  o Can speak up with questions, comments, concerns

- Question: Asking for examples of when people failed and what they learned from the situation

- Climate for a team to do their best work

Having a shared goal

- An act of co-creation

- Activity:

    o Give each person on the team a card and ask them to write their understanding of the team's goals on one side and the team's mission on the other. Then collect the cards and read the responses one by one, noting overall similarities and differences.

Key takeaways/challenges

1) (Benefits of collaboration) Collaboration isn't about more ideas; it is about stronger ideas

2) (Building trust and relationships) Approach others from a relationship standpoint

3) (Psychological safety) Intelligent failures can be a result of thoughtful risk

4) (Having a shared goal) Consider the shared goals of your projects, or if they are unclear, help develop shared goals. Reflect on the "what" and "why" of your team to determine if there is clarity

2) Resilience

Building Resilience (34 minutes)

> Have trouble getting by when the going gets tough? Everyone wants to perform
> well when the pressure's on, but a lot of us withdraw in times of stress or
> adversity. If you can build your resilience, you'll have an easier time facing new
> challenges and earn a valuable skill to offer employers. In this course, Kelley
> School of Business professor and professional communications coach Tatiana
> Kolovou explains how to bounce back from difficult situations, by building your
> "resiliency threshold." She outlines five training techniques to prepare for difficult
> situations, and five strategies for reflecting on them afterward. Find out where you
> are on the resilience scale, identify where you want to be, and learn strategies to
> close the gap.

Workshop Outline:

Introduction

- Thank participants, again, for participating in this research study

Recap the pre-video

- What were some of your key takeaways or things that stood out to you?

Resilience meta-cognition

- Question: Ask what the participants think of when they think about resilience.

- Various definitions of resilience:

  1) The ability to overcome adversity, turning negative experiences into positive
  outcomes

2) To be able to sustain energy throughout highly demanding tasks and to be able to quickly pull yourself together, bounce back even if you're experience a major setback

Benefits to developing resilience

- Improve well-being, innovation and performance

- Help you cope with challenges

- Helps people be more productive, engaged, and satisfied at work

Positivity

- Practice realistic optimism

    o Be careful to not reach "toxic positivity"

- Small amounts of stress are productive

- It's not about having "blind hope"

- Relates to confidence and self-belief in yourself

Mind set

- Resilience is not an end goal; resilience is a mindset, a way of life

- Resilience is not something you "achieve"

- Growth mindset

    o Doing things outside of our comfort zone

    o Learning from experiences

- The words you use internally and externally can influence your mindset

Building a network

- Activity: Have the participants write down 3-5 individuals that they would reach out to if they had a tough professional situation and needed an outsider's opinion.

- Seeking feedback

    o Seek support from others when you need help

- Having an advisory board

- Having a support system

- Seek "micro-mentorships" cultivating a "mentor board of directors"

    o Question: Does anyone have a "board of directors" or a network of

    mentors that they would like to share?

Key takeaways/challenges

(Benefits to resilience) Improve productivity and (most importantly, in my

opinion) is that resilience improves overall well-being

(Positivity) Practicing realistic optimism (without being toxically positive)

(Mindset) Having a growth mindset and understanding that resilience is not an

end-goal

(Building a network) Seeking feedback and having the support network where

you can seek feedback from others when you need help

3) Leadership

<u>**Pre-Video Title:**</u>

Leadership Foundations (40 minutes)

Leadership—the art of influencing and developing others to achieve their highest potential—is often identified as the most critical role in an organization. But what is effective leadership and how do you cultivate it? In this course, leadership consultant and global workforce expert Dr. Shirley Davis covers the basics of leading yourself and others. Along the way, she identifies the critical competencies and best practices for effectively leading today and in the future. Learn how to lead across differences and cultivate a more inclusive workplace; establish trust; build relationships up, down, and across the organization; lead change through agility and resilience; have difficult conversations; and more.

Workshop Outline:

Introduction

- Thank participants, again, for participating in this research study

Recap the pre-video

- What were some of your key takeaways or things that stood out to you?
  - o Collaboration
    - Build trust and resilience
    - Trust is the foundation of strong leadership
    - Establishing trust is a process, not an event
  - o Resilience
    - Coaching and feedback

- - Make mistakes but recover quickly
  - Engage in lifelong learning

First two workshops, we discussed collaboration and resilience

- Have you noticed anything the last four weeks related to collaboration or resilience in your professional work?

Discuss how leadership fits as an overarching topic to what we have watched/discussed throughout the workshops

- Collaboration
- Resilience
  - Foster an environment of constant learning

Leadership competencies:

- Building relationships
- Self-awareness
  - The journey of a lifetime
- Creating an environment for growth
  - Give people room to make mistakes
  - Focus on improvement instead of perfection

Leaving knowledge economy and entering the purpose economy

- When we have a sense of purpose, we perform at higher levels
- Relates to self-awareness

Key takeaways/challenges

- Leadership is a mindset, not a title
- Leaders help create an environment for growth

- Build a network of peers, seniors, and juniors

4) Debrief

Workshop Outline:

Review the main points of each workshop

- Collaboration

    o Building trust and relationships

    o Building an environment of psychological safety

    o Having a shared goal

- Resilience

    o Positivity

    o Mindset

    o Building a network

- Leadership

    o Commonalities with collaboration and resilience

        ▪ Building relationships

        ▪ Self-awareness

        ▪ Creating an environment for growth

Discuss how the participants have, or have not, collaborated or been resilient since the

   beginning of the study

Review the journaling expectations for the remainder of the study

Thank the participants for participating

APPENDIX B

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Collaboration:
1) Talk about your demonstration of collaborative efforts over the last week (for the first cycle of reflection)
   a) Talk about your demonstration of collaborative efforts over the last three weeks (for cycles 2-4)
2) Reflect on how you used the skills related to trust building, fostering psychological safety, and having a shared goal as you've collaborated with your team members.

Resilience:
1) Talk about your demonstration of resilience over the last week (for the first cycle of reflection)
   a) Talk about your demonstration of resilience over the last three weeks (for cycles 2-4)
2) Reflect on how you used the skills related to remaining positive, having a growth mindset, and building a network as you have been resilient.

Leadership:
1) Talk about your demonstration of leadership over the last week (for the first cycle of reflection)
   a) Talk about your demonstration of leadership over the last three weeks (for cycles 2-4)
2) Reflect on how you used the skills related to having a leadership mindset, creating an environment for growth, and being purpose oriented as you consider leadership.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Collaboration:
1) Tell me about your thinking about collaboration
2) Tell me about a time you demonstrated collaboration at work
3) From your perspective, what is/will be your ability to collaborate at work going forward?

Resilience:
1) Tell me about your thinking about resilience
2) Tell me about a time you demonstrated resilience at work
3) From your perspective, how will you employ resilience going forward?

Leadership:
1) Tell me about your thinking about leadership
2) Tell me about a time you demonstrated leadership at work
3) From your perspective, how will you lead at work going forward?

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Unique Identifier Language:

To protect your confidentiality, please create a unique identifier known only to you. To create this unique code, please record the first three letters of your mother's first name and the last four digits of your phone number. Thus, for example, if your mother's name was Sarah and your phone number was (602) 543-6789, your code would be Sar6789. The unique identifier will allow us to match your post-intervention survey responses and your retrospective pre-intervention responses when we analyze the data.

Survey Questions:

Using a Likert Scale:
> 1 = Strongly Disagree
> 2 = Disagree
> 3 = Slightly Disagree
> 4 = Slightly Agree
> 5 = Agree
> 6 = Strongly Agree

For the following questions please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements. Based on a six-point Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, and 6 = Strongly Agree.

Collaboration:
1) I am a good collaborator
2) I work effectively with others
3) I build relationships with my colleagues
4) I trust my colleagues
5) I actively engage in team activities
6) I work well with my team

Resilience:
1) I am resilient
2) I overcome adversity
3) I have a support network
4) I sustain energy through highly demanding tasks
5) I bounce back quickly when I have setbacks
6) I reframe negative experiences into positive experiences

Leadership:
1) I am a leader among my peers

2) I take the lead as necessary on projects
3) I lead during sudden, unplanned change
4) I make timely decisions as I lead my projects
5) I lead projects by focusing on top priorities

Demographic Questions:

1) What is your age?

2) Gender:
   a) Male
   b) Female
   c) Nonbinary
   d) Other _____
   e) Prefer not to answer

3) Race/ethnicity:
   a) Black or African American
   b) White
   c) African
   d) Native American or Alaska Native
   e) Asian
   f) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   g) Latino/Latina or Hispanic
   h) Two or more races
   i) Other _____
   j) Prefer not to answer

4) How long have you been in your current position? (months and years)

5) How long have you been working in higher education? (months and years)

6) How long is your total work experience? (months and years)

7) How long have you worked at the ASU Foundation? (months and years)

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Ray Buss
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - West Campus
602/543-6343
RAY.BUSS@asu.edu

Dear Ray Buss:

On 7/1/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Professional Development for Staff Members: Building Collaboration and Resilience in Higher Education Institutions
Investigator:	Ray Buss
IRB ID:	STUDY00016161
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Description of Videos, Category: Other; • Intervention, Category: Other; • Interview Questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Consent Letter, Category: Consent Form; • Reflection Journal Entry Prompts , Category: Other; • Survey 1, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Survey 2, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 7/1/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

REMINDER - Effective January 12, 2022, in-person interactions with human subjects require adherence to all current policies for ASU faculty, staff, students and visitors. Up-to-date information regarding ASU's COVID-19 Management Strategy can be found here. IRB approval is related to the research activity involving human subjects, all other protocols related to COVID-19 management including face coverings, health checks, facility access, etc. are governed by current ASU policy.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc:
      Travis Egbert