

3 *Leadership education that intentionally addresses critical, creative, and practical thinking enhances significant learning for students and deepens the leadership practices of educators. This chapter explores specific applications in the areas of graduate leadership education, action research, service immersion program, and advising conversations. Additionally, it presents a framework of pathways to social change and suggests how such a framework can be useful to students and leadership educators.*

Navigating Leadership Complexity Through Critical, Creative, and Practical Thinking

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The six elements of Fink's (2013) Taxonomy of Significant Learning present a relational and interactive framework both to design learning experiences as well as to analyze those that have already occurred. This chapter specifically focuses on the domain of application knowledge, and even more specifically the three types of thinking—critical, creative, and practical—and how they foster leadership development, innovation, and effectiveness.

Leadership for social change requires an awareness of the complexity of both the issues at hand and the process of change itself. A deep exploration of thinking serves three purposes: it allows leadership educators to be more wide-awake in the practice of leadership both with students and in other spheres of influence; it assists learners in noticing and navigating leadership complexity; and guides educators in crafting learning experiences that meet desired learning and development goals. In other words, this chapter aims to deepen teaching-facilitating skills, and in doing so engage the self-reflective processes of leadership educators.

After an introduction to Fink's (2013) critical, creative, and practical thinking and their usefulness in leadership education, the chapter presents a microscopic, macroscopic, and mirror perspective of their application. The microscopic view explores specific applications in the areas of graduate leadership education, action research, a service immersion program, and

advising conversations. The macroscopic view presents framework of pathways to social change, explores how triarchic thinking is necessary in each (i.e., critical thinking, creative thinking, and practical thinking), and suggests how such a framework can be useful to students and educators. The third presents a mirror to leadership educators and asks what is required of ourselves in our pursuit of leadership for social change.

Application Knowledge, Thinking, and Leadership Education

Fink’s (2013) notion of “application learning” is categorized as critical, creative, and practical thinking, as well as managing complex projects and developing performance skills. Application learning is the process by which learners shift from acquisition of knowledge to developing the skills and capacities to do something new—and useful—with it. This type of learning can be intellectual (integration of new ideas), physical (embodiment practices), and social (development of group skills). For example, in an undergraduate leadership course, a student might learn about the differences between industrial and postindustrial models of leadership (Rost, 1993) and observe how these models are evident in daily leadership practices. The application of that knowledge occurs when a student attempts to operate differently in a leadership role, perhaps by being less hierarchical in her or his decision making.

While the main thrust of the scholarship of teaching and learning focuses on the notion of critical thinking, Fink (2013) invites educators to consider the merits of Sternberg’s (1989) triarchic view of thinking which includes critical thinking, creative thinking, and practical thinking. By adopting this categorization, Fink creates opportunities for leadership educators to become more specific in our approaches, both in study and in practice. Table 3.1 links the three types of thinking, learning goals described by Fink, and how learning goals are often labeled within leadership education.

Table 3.1 Triarchic Thinking and Leadership Education

	<i>Fink’s (2013) Learning Goal</i>	<i>Learning Goals Within Leadership Education</i>
Critical thinking	Fosters abilities to analyze, evaluate and critique; assess multiple interpretations; explain results; predict future outcomes	Leadership development
Creative thinking	Invites new ideas, questions, products, and perspectives; engages multiple forms of expression	Leadership innovation
Practical thinking	Develops problem-solving and decision-making capabilities; supports action-oriented choices	Leadership effectiveness

Triarchic thinking connected to leadership education is evident in the following example. Resident assistants on a campus recently galvanized a group of their peers to bring the unspoken challenges of low-income students on campus to consciousness. In preparation for their resident assistant position, the students had taken a leadership course framed in the social change model of leadership (Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009). They engaged in all three types of thinking in their exercise of leadership. First, *critical thinking*: Grounded in their knowledge of the social change model, the students evaluated the situation at the individual, group, and institutional levels. They named the problem of student poverty as they understood it and lived it. Second, *creative thinking*: The group developed a plan for a large-scale event promoted to students exclusively through social media and utilized grassroots organizing tactics to involve nearly two dozen faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees. Third, *practical thinking*: The students developed an effective strategy to invite the entire campus to a dialogue about student poverty. Through a world-café style event (Brown & Isaacs, 2005) for over 200 people, the group raised the profile of the issue of student poverty, created space for personal narrative sharing around the issue, and generated new ideas for supporting students.

In this example, the types of thinking of Fink's (2013) taxonomy of significant learning are applied post hoc, after the fact. The resident assistants were acting *after* their experience of the leadership course, and yet, their efforts are evidence of critical, creative, and practical thinking, of leadership development, innovation, and effectiveness. What would happen if these learning goals were intentionally named within the curriculum of that course? How might students' learning have deepened if they had a metaunderstanding of these learning goals? What might students learn about their exercise of leadership if given an opportunity for intentional reflection about their campus activism?

Leadership educators are well advised to be transparent with students about their learning goals and to integrate reflective questions that bridge theory-to-practice into planning and debriefing conversations. An integrative approach, while requiring greater intentionality for the leadership educator, serves to affirm and bring forward the complexity that students are already experiencing and enhances their learning.

Thinking and Leadership for Social Change

This section offers a detailed-level view of how application knowledge and triarchic thinking can be embedded in leadership education. Each example begins with a theoretical orientation, connects it to leadership for social change, and then dives in to specifics.

Graduate Leadership Education and Action Research for Social Change. Action research engages the researcher(s) with collaborative partners to create significant change in human systems. Three core

principles frame all of action research: it is change oriented, cyclical, and participatory (Reason & Bradbury-Huang, 2006). The action research family includes many forms and methods, including human inquiry, action inquiry, action learning, action science, and participatory inquiry (Brooks & Watkins, 1994). In its many manifestations, action research maintains the assurances of qualitative research while also pushing the boundaries through a consideration of the whole-person role of the researcher, multiple ways of knowing, expanded validity practices, and shared power in the research process.

Undergraduate and graduate leadership education benefits from the inclusion of action research for several reasons. First, as a research method, its values and practices are congruent with those of 21st-century models of leadership. Leadership content and the research process are mutually reinforcing. Second, if leadership is about creating social change, then this method is not only an academic exercise of applying knowledge, it is also a change-making opportunity. Third, when students engage in action research, the four core processes of planning, acting, reflecting and observing (Kuhne & Quigley, 1997) challenge them to slow down, disintegrate learning processes, and reflect upon them intentionally. The research process makes evident what is frequently invisible, both in the learning processes for students and the nuances of change itself.

For over a decade, Saint Mary's College of California has offered a graduate degree in leadership that provides an innovative and practical education in the theories, perspectives, and practices of leadership (www.smcleadership.org). The graduate program is a 19-month cohort model in which students spend approximately 40% of their time in person and the balance in a highly interactive online learning environment. The program is designed for for-profit and nonprofit managers, public service professionals, educators, community organizers, entrepreneurs, direct service providers, and people from all sectors committed to practicing leadership for social change. The International Leadership Association's (ILA, 2009) "Guiding Questions: Guidelines for Leadership Education Programs" influence the ongoing development of the content and process of the program.

The sequence of graduate courses include building a learning community; values, ethics, and decision making; postindustrial leadership theory; foundations of justice; action research theory and practice; systems theory; building cross-cultural capacities; policy, leadership, and systemic change; social movements; and personal and organizational learning. Core texts for the program include Hall (2006), Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009), Korten (2006), Rosenberg (2003), and Wheatley (2006). The students' culminating project is a leadership action research project. It provides an example of how Fink's (2013) notion of application learning is useful in leadership education—both in its scaffolding of knowledge and action that build to the culminating project and in its inclusion of critical, creative, and practical thinking.

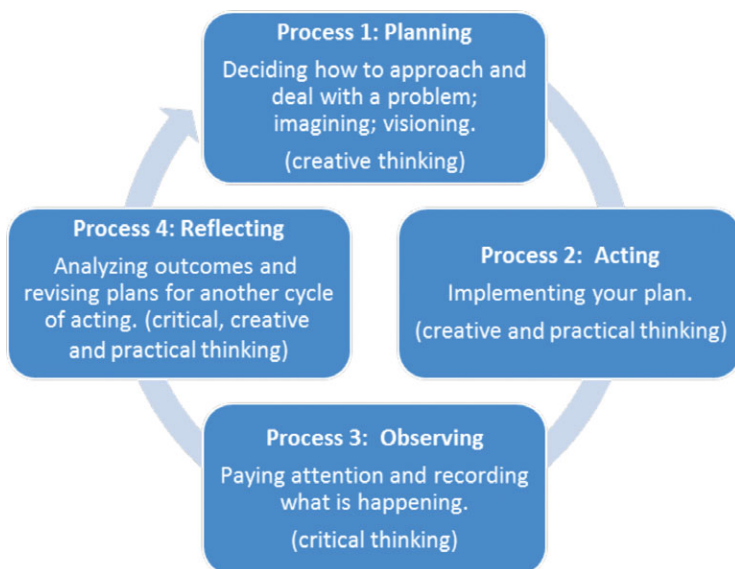
Graduate students are introduced to action research early in the program by reading action research articles in courses, listening to their peers in older cohorts discuss their projects, and by engaging in a series of reflective journal questions that slowly help the students determine a focus for their action research. These early explorations reflect triarchic thinking: What problem or opportunity do you see in your environment (critical thinking)? What people would be good collaborators with you in exploring a change strategy (creative thinking)? What is the timeline and stepwise planning for your research implementation (practical thinking)?

One third of the way through the graduate program students take a course focused on action research theory and practice. In the course, students acquire knowledge of action research methods and social change, design and implement a participatory change strategy, deepen library and research skills, and craft a strong draft of a literature review for their project proposals. The foundational texts for the course include *Participatory Action Research* (McIntyre, 2008) and *Handbook of Action Research: Concise Paperback Edition* (Reason & Bradbury-Huang, 2006). After this course, students then have several months to complete their proposal (and receive human subjects approval, when applicable), several months for implementing three cycles of the action research project (during which they are assigned to a faculty advisor for coaching and feedback), and then several more months to write the final project. The project guide and faculty advisors provide very specific guidance throughout the process.

Leadership development, innovation, and effectiveness—critical, creative, and practical thinking—are all challenged and strengthened by the action research process. Figure 3.1 identifies these four core processes (Kuhne & Quigley, 1997) and identifies when triarchic thinking is evident throughout.

As stated early in this chapter, application learning (Fink, 2013) is not only about critical, creative, and practical thinking, it is also about managing complex projects and developing performance skills. Action research reflects the full scope of application learning. Not only are students engaged in triarchic thinking, they are managing a multistakeholder project that spans several months and relies upon their affective, behavioral, and cognitive skills, and developing the performance skills such as group facilitation, presentations, and coalition building.

Saint Mary's College leadership graduate students have produced solid scholarship and lasting change through their action research projects. Recent foci have included developing a leadership curriculum for formerly incarcerated mothers, initiating a human rights antitrafficking campaign on a college campus, designing a sex education curriculum for developmentally disabled youth, addressing inequalities for female police officers, and exploring public policy options to reduce bullying. Through these efforts, students widen and deepen their leadership capacities, develop confidence in their ability to collaborate with others to create change, and foster the

Figure 3.1. Core Processes of Action Research and Thinking

Source: Adapted from Kuhne & Quigley (1997).

humility to learn from unsuccessful attempts. Ultimately they can apply that which they have learned in the program to a practical need and desire in the real world. A similar outcome is also possible in cocurricular programs.

Service Learning and Leadership Learning. Service learning and community service are increasingly linked to leadership education. Sometimes, service is an element of leadership education, and other times service programs are designed with leadership development as an outcome. High-quality academic and cocurricular service-learning programs have clearly defined learning objectives, intentionally designed service experiences that meet community-identified needs and goals, and intentional reflection and meaning making (Jacoby, 1996), and some models (e.g., Billig, 2009) incorporate youth voice throughout the process. Service learning follows the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) and can produce significant learning outcomes (Eyler & Giles, 1999). The term service learning is frequently reserved for credit-bearing academic experiences; it can be appropriately applied to cocurricular experiences when they meet the criteria (Jacoby, 1996). As such, service learning is the preferred term in this discussion.

Leadership education and service learning are mutually reinforcing educational strategies. In an analysis of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) data, Vogelgesang and Astin (2000) concluded that academic and cocurricular service learning can lead to growth in leadership

outcomes, which they defined as leadership ability, leadership activities, and self-perceived growth in interpersonal skills. Recent findings from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (Dugan, Kodama, Correia, & Associates, 2013) reveal that participation in community service is strong predictor of increasing students' leadership capacities including group-related skills, the development of personal commitment, resiliency in complex systems, and disrupting assumptions.

Dugan et al. (2013) extend best practices for service learning to include considerations of leadership education. For example, the manner of the service should be cohesive with the leadership theories being taught; critical reflection provides the link between acquired knowledge, direct experience, and meaning making; and the service experience must be processed in the specific context of leadership education (Dugan et al., 2013). The authors also suggest guiding questions for leadership educators related to professional development, program development, and applying a critical lens to service-leadership education. Many of these concerns are met in the following example.

The Catholic Institute for Lasallian Social Action (CILSA; www.stmarys-ca.edu/cilsa) at Saint Mary's College of California offers multiple community service and leadership development opportunities grounded in the theory and practice of service learning, the social change model of leadership, and Catholic Social Thought. Each year approximately 65 students commit to 300 hours of service and leadership development in CILSA programs and nearly 30% of the student body is enrolled in community engagement courses. One of CILSA's programs, the Micah Summer Fellowship Program, is the unit of analysis for this discussion of leadership education and application learning through critical, creative, and practical thinking.

The Micah Summer Fellowship Program provides undergraduates the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and practice of spirituality, leadership, social justice, community, and simple living. For eight weeks, Micah Fellows live together in a modest apartment in a housing development for formerly homeless families, work full-time at nonprofits in the Bay Area, share a modest food budget, participate in twice-weekly seminars and reflections with staff, and write an ongoing blog and papers linking their readings, seminar conversations, and living and serving experiences. The Micah Fellows curriculum includes *The Rich and the Rest of Us: A Poverty Manifesto* (Smiley & West, 2012), *Leadership for a Better World: Understanding the Social Change Model of Leadership Development* (Komives et al., 2009), and excerpts from texts such as *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (hooks, 2000) and *Globalization, Spirituality and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace* (Groody, 2012). The program is designed to advance students' vocational and professional development and a growing awareness of their relationship to contemporary social problems.

As a tool for program or course review, leadership educators can utilize Fink's (2013) Taxonomy of Significant Learning as a set of evaluation

benchmarks placed on a matrix. We could then ask ourselves to what degree and when and how do the different types of learning occur? Table 3.2 summarizes the broad learning outcomes of the Micah Program and offers specific examples of questions and activities that foster leadership development (critical thinking), innovation (creative thinking), and effectiveness (practical thinking).

The Micah Program is intentionally a complex leadership development experience. It involves students in all four of the high-impact learning practices that the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership recommends for building leadership capacity (Dugan et al., 2013). Students engage in:

- sociocultural conversations with peers—both emergent and initiated by readings and conversations with staff facilitators,
- mentoring relationships—with supervisors and staff,
- community service—both direct service and capacity-building projects at local nonprofits, and
- membership in an off-campus organization—by becoming full-time staff members at their nonprofits.

Students are immersed in challenges and surrounded by support. The experience is also reflective of other elements of Fink's (2013) taxonomy of learning, particularly caring, integration, and human dimension.

Beyond Courses and Immersive Programs. In addition to teaching credit-bearing courses and facilitating long-term experiences, leadership educators operate with various time constraints, in more and less structured environments, and with varying group sizes. The key to applying the action research and service-leadership immersion examples to other contexts is to consider how they reveal something new about application learning, tri-archic thinking, and leadership development, innovation, and effectiveness. With this new knowledge in mind, opportunities for infusing these ideas in leadership education will emerge.

For example, faculty and staff are often in a position to assist students with resume development and interview preparation. Frequently, students have difficulty explaining the full significance of their leadership experiences because they have not had an opportunity to be reflective about them and may not have the language for that reflection. The following questions invite students to reflect with specific purpose: What content knowledge and education are necessary for this position, and how did you apply it? What have you learned about group development, problem-solving, creating change, and interpersonal skills through this work? How has your experience in this position influenced your developing sense of leadership? In conversation with students (or in a workshop setting), leadership educators can assist students to name their capacities and cultivate the ability to communicate their leadership development (critical thinking), capacity for innovation (creative thinking), and leadership effectiveness (practical thinking).

Table 3.2 Mapping Thinking in Micah Summer Fellowship Program

Micah Summer Fellowship Program			
Selected Learning Outcomes	Questions and Activities Designed to Foster Leadership Capacities Through Forms of Thinking		
	<i>Leadership Development and Critical Thinking</i>	<i>Leadership Innovation and Creative Thinking</i>	<i>Leadership Effectiveness and Practical Thinking</i>
Leadership	Choose two of the values (i.e., “7 Cs”) of the social change model of leadership and observe how they are enacted in your nonprofit site. In what ways is the social change model evident or not?	Design an experience for your coworkers to learn about and foster the 7 Cs value of “congruence.”	What practical steps will you take to encourage your Micah Fellow peers and yourself to engage in the 7 Cs value of “controversy with civility”?
Social justice	Apply the Catholic Social Thought principle of “preferential option for the poor” to a policy issue currently in the news.	How do we create social justice in a way that avoids a flip-flop of power (that avoids the oppressed becoming the oppressor)?	What are the implications of the principles of Catholic Social Thought for your own life?
Community	Compare and contrast the community(ies) in which you were raised and the ones where you are now living and serving.	Draw an image of your interpretation of King’s <i>Beloved Community</i> .	How will your community of six people live on a combined food budget of \$90/week?

Note: For more information on the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (the “7 Cs”) see Higher Education Research Institute [HERI] (1996) or Komives et al. (2009).

When leadership educators invest in understanding the complexity of the leadership learning, we take action, for example, staging assignments, creating culminating projects, or performing a program assessment using a matrix. Leadership educators are then in a stronger position to design and facilitate assignments and experiences that lead students confidently into increasing leadership complexity. Whether leadership educators operate in an academic or cocurricular setting, the need for such forethought and planning is critical.

The Macroscopic View: Pathways to Social Change and Triarchic Thinking

This volume assumes a theoretical orientation that posits that leadership, and therefore leadership education, is about social change. Leadership for social change is a “purposeful, collaborative, value-based process that results in positive social change” (Komives et al., 2009, p. xii). The model is premised on two foundations: that leadership is tied to social responsibility and the development of the common good, and that increasing individuals’ self-knowledge concurrently builds their capacities to work with others (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996). The connection between leadership and social change is also evident in Preskill and Brookfield (2009) whose nine ways of learning to support leadership for social justice include elements of critical, creative, and practical thinking, which are presented in more detail in Chapter 1 of this volume.

The University of California Berkeley’s Center for Public Service has developed *Pathways to Service and Social Justice* (Bishop, 2014) that maps six ways in which students’ can exercise social change both as students and in the future. The pathways include activism, community-engaged/community-benefitting scholarship, direct service, philanthropy, policy/politics, and social entrepreneurship. Table 3.3 offers examples of how critical, creative, and practical thinking are utilized in each pathway to social change.

While these categories and examples are not intended to be exhaustive, descriptors such as these have multiple applications. They can assist students in differentiating multiple social change strategies, invite students to build capacities in all three types of thinking, and provide a point of reference for vocational development conversations.

Currently, service-learning professionals at the University of California Berkeley, Stanford University, and Saint Mary’s College of California are collaborating to devise educational materials and assessment tools that will help students explore these pathways of social change and build skills and capacities that will enable them to participate successfully in their chosen social change strategy. These institutions recognize that a long-term commitment to leadership for social change benefits from additional habits of being. These include a commitment to self-reflection and learning,

Table 3.3 Leadership for Social Change and Ways of Thinking

	<i>Leadership Development/Critical Thinking</i>	<i>Leadership Innovation/Creative Thinking</i>	<i>Leadership Effectiveness/Practical Thinking</i>
Pathways to social change	Fosters abilities to analyze, evaluate, and critique; assess multiple interpretations; explain results; predict future outcomes	Invites new ideas, questions, products, and perspectives; engages multiple forms of expression	Develops problem-solving and decision-making capabilities; supports action-oriented choices
Activism: Involving, educating, and mobilizing individual or collective action to influence or persuade others	Critiquing power and institutionalized oppression; doing social analysis of signs of the times	Building coalitions among diverse constituencies; employing various communication techniques	Maintaining focus and commitment; sustained engagement in a purpose and with a community
Public-benefiting scholarship: Connecting or producing scholarship with public and/or private sector resources that responds to community-identified needs or concerns	Analyzing formal and informal sources of data; building new models	Translating results into forms that are useful to a variety of audiences	Making scholarship real by acting on its implications
Direct service: Giving time, energy, and resources to address immediate community concerns or priorities	Working to understand assets, goals, and needs of individuals and communities	Developing new approaches; creatively engaging others in the work	Adjusting tactics as needed; monitoring progress

(Continued)

Table 3.3 Continued

	<i>Leadership Development/Critical Thinking</i>	<i>Leadership Innovation/Creative Thinking</i>	<i>Leadership Effectiveness/Practical Thinking</i>
Philanthropy: Voluntarily redistributing resources by individuals and institutions	Evaluating multiple funding opportunities in light of organizational and/or personal values	Increasing awareness of the issues at hand and expanding financial support	Partnering with grantees for ongoing project development and possible redirection
Policy/Politics: Participating in the processes of democratic self-governance	Assessing claims; researching issues; developing forecasts	Working across sectors to design solutions and agreements; questioning core assumptions	Crafting campaigns that engage and educate; balancing practical concerns with equity goals
Social entrepreneurship: Creating or expanding organizational structures that adopt ethical and effective business practices and/or generating market-oriented responses to solve social problems	Scanning the environment to capitalize on emergent opportunities; predicting needs and goals	Creating products and processes that equally value people, profit, and planet Earth; actively seeking multiple stakeholders	Maintaining open posture toward change and effectiveness of policies, products, and strategies

comfort with ambiguity, communication and coalition building, and the ability to be visionary in times of rapid change. These are values and practices that are core to 21st-century models of leadership.

Conclusion: The Leadership Educator as Praxis Mentor

Teaching and learning leadership for social change is a complex process that is ultimately about creating lasting change in students (Fink, 2013), and in the groups and systems in which they operate now and in the future. Freire's (1994) notion of praxis—"Reflection and action upon [and with] the world in order to transform it" (p. 33)—is a powerful orientation for leadership educators. Praxis reflects the theory-to-practice orientation of the study of leadership, the cycles of action and reflection in action research, the reflection that accompanies service, and the collaborative process of change. Through praxis, educators and learners strive together to name their condition and craft plans for moving forward.

Whether fostering critical, creative, and practical thinking, or nurturing other types of learning, leadership educators at our best are praxis mentors. Praxis mentors not only engage in the challenge and support necessary to foster students' learning and development, they model the leadership practices they hope to engender. Leadership educators take on the challenges of teaching with intentionality. They observe themselves and interrogate the biases and preconceptions that frame their sense of leadership and change. They consider how their educational practices support students' leadership development, innovation, and effectiveness. They identify as learners and seek ongoing professional development. They maintain at least three perspectives at once: the microscopic, the macroscopic, and the mirror. They wade into leadership complexity and remain committed to the cycles of action and reflection necessary for promoting social change in themselves, their students, and the world around us.

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