

The EdD Consultancy Project: Social Justice Leadership Practice

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The College of Education is located at the system’s flagship campus, the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. This is an urban campus that serves many commuter students on the island of O‘ahu in the capital city of Honolulu. The design of the EdD program is based on the framework of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate. Of particular importance is a focus on education leaders becoming practitioner scholars in order to bring about change that improves the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

The University of Hawai‘i Doctorate in Professional Educational Practice (EdD) was developed by UH Mānoa College of Education faculty and educators in both independent and public schools in Hawai‘i, with the first cohort started in August 2011. The program runs on a three-year cycle for each cohort of approximately 25 people. The second cohort entered their final year in September 2016. As this chapter was being written, the members of the third cohort are being selected to enter the program in summer 2017. Doctoral students are chosen based on their skills as leaders in a variety of educational settings—pre-schools, K–12 public and independent schools, community colleges, and the two other University of Hawai‘i campuses on West O‘ahu and on Hawai‘i Island. The twenty-five members of cohort II live on three different islands and are school and program administrators, teachers, counselors, and consultants. Many work closely with Native Hawaiian communities across the state.

In 2015, five years after the launch of the program, the authors of this chapter—three faculty members and five doctoral candidates—developed a research study exploring the impact of the program’s group consultancy project on student and client learning. Our interest was sparked by comments often made by students, clients, and faculty in the regular course evaluations conducted for the project.

Final reports and oral presentations upon completion of the studies also emphasized the consultancy project’s value in positively influencing learning and leadership practice, which prompted us to evaluate its impact further.

The group consultancy is one of two key project outcomes in our program and, as such, is an opportunity for cohort members to bring their experience, research skills, and analytical ability together to serve the larger educational community. In this project, students are organized into consultancy teams to explore problems of practice submitted by external state agencies such as school districts, independent schools, post-secondary institutions, and philanthropic organizations. The submissions, arising from “Requests for Assistance” (RFAs), are screened for applicability, and a final set is prepared for the “consultancy” teams. Each student group provides a contextual analysis of their assigned problem, researches the problem, conducts data analysis (financial, operational, evaluative, and demographic, as the case requires), delivers program recommendations, considers ethical implications, and offers strategies or recommendations for implementation in a final written report that is submitted to the outside agency. Between 2011 and 2016, groups from cohorts I and II completed twelve consultancy projects that served public K–12 schools, public K–12 charter schools, independent schools, and community groups. All projects from the first two cohorts are listed in Table 1.

Leadership in Practice

As authors of this study, we are all educators, faculty, and practitioners involved in the conceptualization and delivery of this new doctoral program at the University of Hawai‘i (UH) to support and develop strong education leaders for our state. We suggest that for leadership programs in education to meet the complex needs of our communities, it requires an innovative mindset that can be responsive to

Public K–12 Schools	Formative Assessment through the Data Team Process Kauhale O Wai‘anae Youth Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Initiative The Mililani Complex Character Education Program Looping at Mililani ‘Ike Elementary School
Public K–12 Charter Schools	Defining Student Success in a Hawaiian Language Immersion Charter School Kikaha Nā Iwa (Exploring Post-Secondary Transitions) Papakū Makawalu and Brain Research Data-Driven Decision Making for Hawai‘i Public Charter Schools Network
Independent Schools & Community Groups	Transitions in Technology at Punahou School HAIS Accreditation Project Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy, Evaluation of Teacher Training Program Feasibility Study for a Charter School serving Micronesian Students

Table 1. Consultancy Projects: Cohorts I and II

a generative culture of leadership that fosters change. As a team of faculty and students we decided that we wanted to conduct a qualitative case study to understand the impact of the consultancy projects on student and client learning. We analyzed three community-based action research projects over two years (2014–2016) within a practice theory framework. Within these ecologies of practice, we were particularly interested in exploring the relationship between the communities we were conducting research in and within our own learning community at the University of Hawai‘i. This approach supports a theoretical framework that explores how new behaviors, phenomena, and properties can emerge within these practices.

Throughout this paper, we employ the concept of ‘practice architectures’ (Kemmis 2012) as a key social learning theory within a communities of practice framework. Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the term “community of practice” to signal an important shift in learning theory that privileged learning as “in integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (31). John Dewey’s (1919) understanding of schooling’s role in developing democratic citizenry established the importance of socio-cultural elements of learning. Communities of practice, also called professional learning communities, have become synonymous with teacher

learning. Within communities of practice, practice theory has developed the term ‘learning architecture’ as a useful analytic tool to examine situated learning theory within a community of practice. Practice theory as an analytic lens for professional learning encourages a deeper level of understanding of the dynamic, evolving, and emerging elements of change that happen within living systems of practice. Kemmis et al. (2014) have reconfigured Wenger’s ‘learning architectures’ into ‘practice architectures’ to support a theory of educational change that focuses on the interrelated ecologies of practice: sayings, doing and relating, across living systems of schools.

Practice Theory as an Analytic Lens to Understand Organizational Leadership

Although the term ‘communities of practice’ implies “participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (Lave and Wenger 1991, 98), the need to deepen understanding about how these communities actually operate is important for how leadership can support such practices. The study employed four forms or dualities of learning architectures to support the analysis of how communities of practice

operate. These forms can also be thought of as sayings, doings, and structures that are analyzed as interrelated sets of practices, rather than ideals or ways people connect up together. Significant in the findings from this study was the ‘messiness’ of organizational learning despite the influence that leaders can have in responding to and making sense of this messiness in a nuanced manner within communities of practice (36). The notions of shared leadership and relational trust have become important factors in supporting teachers in a time of high accountability practices and school restructuring and reforms. Learning architectures highlight concepts that helps us understand how participants learn with and from each other within communities of practice.

Purpose and Research Questions

As stated earlier, the purpose of this research is to explore the impact of the program’s consultancy project within the communities of Hawai‘i. To do this, we analyze three projects conducted by groups of cohort II students over two years (2015–2016). Our findings suggest that as students and clients work together, they act to create transformative learning as a form of leadership practice. Kemmis et al. (2014) describe the practices between students and clients as practice of architectures, where sayings (e.g., language-discursive spaces), doings (e.g., activities that participants undertake), and relatings (e.g., relationships that occur in the practice) can enable and constrain learning that emerges. Some structures may be pre-existing and others may be new (e.g., developed when a certain practice unfolds), but through exploring the structures that develop and hold them together, we are able take a closer look at how they work together.

These questions drove our analysis:

1. How does the form and content of the practices of student learning influence the form and content of clients’ practices?
2. In what ways did student learning and client learning act together to create transformative learning as a form of leadership practice?
3. What role did practice architectures play in supporting transformative learning?

We now outline the projects that were part of our case study analysis.

The Projects

Educational Looping at Mililani ‘Ike Elementary: A Report on Faculty Perspectives

This consultancy project was a collaborative process between Mililani ‘Ike and the EdD student consultancy group. Upon accepting the consultancy proposal, the University of Hawai‘i students met with the client to discuss the scope and goals of the project. A timeline was established and email correspondence and meetings were set up for questionnaire distribution, deadlines, and scheduling of focus groups. Within months of collecting and analyzing data, the consultancy group put together a report to share their findings. This was shared via email and then a face-to-face meeting with the staff at the school.

Looping in education is a teaching practice of keeping students together with the same teacher for two or more years. It is also referred to as multi-year placement or multi-year grouping. While Mililani ‘Ike espouses education looping, this trend was being questioned as to its efficacy and its impact on faculty workload and staff morale.

The goal of the consultancy project was to report perspectives, including gathering data from faculty through questionnaires and in focus groups, to determine if the educational practice of looping supports the school’s mission and future direction.

Feasibility Study for a Charter School Serving Micronesian Students

The purpose of the study was to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a Micronesian culture-based charter school or other educational program in the state of Hawai‘i. Community partners representing four organizations came together with this common goal. There are a growing number of Micronesian families living abroad, specifically in Hawai‘i. Micronesian students and families have expressed an on-going dissatisfaction regarding their negative experiences at school and work.

In the last twenty years, Hawai‘i has seen an exponential increase in the number of migrants from Compact of Free Association (COFA) countries: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau. These students have suffered low graduation rates, high behavior referrals, and insufficient academic progress. While the Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE) has tried a

number of strategies, including hiring bilingual part-time teachers to help English Language Learners (ELL), the strategies have not led to widespread student success. These small island countries share many cultural values, but are also quite diverse.

The unique opportunity that this consultancy project presented was that there were four different clients that on three islands. The Hawai‘i-based non-profit organizations—Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE), Micronesian United-Big Island (MU-BI), The Learning Coalition (TLC), We Are Oceania (WAO)—commissioned the feasibility study for the establishment of a Micronesian culture-based charter school or other educational program. Though each organization has their own mission and vision, their interest to better serve the Micronesian community at large was the same. One of the first exercises for students in this project was to bring the four clients together to better understand their individual needs as well as their collective voice. Each client answered questions to help orient the consultancy group direction while providing important information about their values and vision for the project.

The primary mode of data collection came via focus groups, from six to fifteen participants. From the onset of the project, the consultancy group chose to conduct qualitative research to better understand the needs of the Micronesian community. Focus groups provided the study with a wide variety of perspectives and voices to broaden our understanding of the clients’ needs.

Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy: Evaluation of a Teacher Training Program

The Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy (KVA) project was a collaboration with the organization’s director aimed at evaluating a teacher training program, a service provided by the non-profit community organization. Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy provides learning experiences for students using a canoe as a living classroom. In order to facilitate further exploration of concepts presented during those experiences, KVA provides professional development for teachers.

The student consultancy group met with the client several times before beginning research to become familiar with the organization and define the scope of the project. Developing a relationship with the client was vital to the consultancy group’s ability to gain access to information

necessary for our team to provide quality feedback to the client. The first two meetings with the client were purposefully not focused on the project, but on the client, finding out more about the client’s background and goals. Once the group had a better understanding about the client and organization, it began to work on defining the scope of the project. The process of defining project goals was a collective effort between the client, consultancy group and faculty mentors. The agreed upon goal was to evaluate Kānehūnāmoku’s teacher training program and identify areas for improvement.

Questionnaires completed by teacher participants and interviews with individuals from four stakeholder groups (employees, community organizations, administrators, and other canoe organizations) provided the data for the study. The EdD consultancy team analyzed the data collected as a group and identified themes that emerged. The themes suggested that areas for improvement could be grouped into four categories: curriculum, marketing, networking, and funding. The results were presented to Kānehūnāmoku leadership and staff during their annual staff retreat. Client feedback indicated that the information from the final report was valuable for future work and many of the themes we discussed prior to the final report were actually put into action before the project was completed.

Methods

Both existing and new data were analyzed for this qualitative study. Consultancy project data from final reports and program evaluation questionnaires completed by both previous and current students, mentors, advisors, and community partners were collected. Questionnaires asked about the proposal submission and review process, project and consultancy constructs, consultancy team interactions, and overall value of the consultancy project component of the EdD program. Students were also asked to respond about the roles that emerged for team members and time spent on various project components.

New questionnaires were completed by current students from three identified consultancy groups who expressed interest in contributing to the research and evaluation process. The new questionnaire asked students on the research team to reflect on their learning as part of the consultancy work. Questionnaires were also distributed to the clients for the same three identified consultancy

projects. To investigate how the ecological arrangements composing the practice of educational leadership enhanced transformative learning in student and client landscapes, the respondents were asked to describe the new ways students, faculty, and clients related to each other (*relatings*), the activities taken to complete these projects (*doings*), and the existing and new forms of understanding (*sayings*) that emerged in the consultancy process. Utilizing practice theory, the questionnaires were designed based on the research questions and then distributed to current students and community partners of the three identified consultancies.

Data were analyzed through a practice theory framework, including the concepts of ‘ecologies of practices’ and ‘travelling practices (Kemmis et al. 2014). Phase I analysis involved deductive coding based on themes that arose from our research questions and theoretical framework. Phase I codes included *student learning*, *client learning*, *transformation of practice–architectures that hold practices*. Both existing and new data from the questionnaires were coded inductively in phase II of our analysis. Three interdependent, interconnected, and intersubjective architectures of transformation emerged through the sayings, doings, and relatings described in the data (Kemmis et al. 2014): *collaboration* and support within consultancy project groups and at clients’ sites, new experiences leading to *mindset* transformation, and identity development as *scholars* and professionals (e.g., a climate of individual and professional growth). These new codes in phase II we labeled new *mindsets*, *collaboration*, and *support for identity and growth as scholars*. We have submitted the full report of our analysis for publication, but would like to highlight only one of our findings here, *growth as scholars*. We end with a discussion about the implications of this work.

Analysis

Growth as Scholars

The results from the architecture of growth as scholars draw on comments from both clients and students. Clients gained professional knowledge that allowed them to enhance their own educational practice. For example, one client wrote, “We started out having a vague idea of what information we were looking for that could support the work that we were doing in our school. Given that and the overall complexity

and dull subject matter of the brain and cognitive function, the group did an excellent job in providing a well-thought out and functional product with recommendations on how their research could support our current & future efforts. If they were available to contract for a second year of consultancy work, we would definitely jump at that opportunity!” Another client identified “the need for consistent self evaluation.”

Students leveraged consultancy projects as initiation into the practice of conducting research towards individual dissertations. For example, “This was an extremely helpful process in preparation for the research done for our dissertations. Doing this project as a group provided support needed for novice researchers like us,” and “I learned the process to create a project/dissertation. It helped prepare students with a similar approach to work individually on his/her dissertation.” Students expressed “this was a great experience in helping me get ready for my individual dissertation,” and “this gave me good practice to focus on a topic and create applicable and effective survey questions.”

Students also described affective experiences that pointed towards learning, “I had many uncomfortable moments doing different parts of the research (interview – can we diverge from the script?; transcript – what do I leave in?; analysis – how do we know we coded consistently? Does it make sense to exclude an outlier participant?) and still wonder if we did it “right.” This means I learned.” One student commented, “[it was] not so much what we learned, but how we learned” that led to transformation.

The student participants in the Micronesian consultancy project learned a lot about the role of indigenous protocol in conducting researching. Focus groups ranged in size from six to fifteen participants and were approximately two hours in length. All Micronesian jurisdictions were represented in at least one focus group: Chuuk, Kosrae, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Pohnpei, and Yap. Three focus groups represented women and two represented men. In addition to including an additional women’s focus group, the participant numbers were also larger in the women’s groups. The gender breakdown was 37 women and 13 men. In general, the focus groups included participants with a diverse background of educational attainment, English language skills, and socio-economic status. The participants represented a wide range of education and socio-economic backgrounds. The

indigenous research protocols that were respected and practiced yielded authentic and reliable data as participants in their own voices shared powerful stories of their life experiences living in a new land and raising their children.

For students of Native Hawaiian ancestry, the Voyaging consultancy project affirmed the importance of research that can privilege knowledge that is rooted in a long history of cultural practice within the local community. The consultancy group selection process enabled students in the EdD program to select a topic and group members that aligned with individual professional and academic interests. The students reported that prior to selecting potential projects, clients shared proposals with the cohort and gave a brief overview of the project purpose. Each member of the consultancy group had a strong desire to work within the Native Hawaiian community and the project proposal presented by KVA's director resonated with each of them. The participants in this student group commented that they felt fortunate to be assigned a mentor with a strong connection to Native Hawaiian education, which was instrumental in their learning process throughout the project. The relationships developed before even beginning the project enabled the team, along with the mentor and advisor, to have a shared vocabulary related to Native Hawaiian education and program evaluation.

Discussion and Implications: Social Justice Leadership Practice

There are several implications within our study: living systems, traveling practices, reciprocal transformation and growth, and community benefit. Living systems conceptualizes the practice of our consultancy projects in the present but are part of a living system that draws from both the past and the present while looking to the future. Community benefit extends the importance of consultancy projects well beyond the personally significant dissertation defense and graduation. As students and faculty, we saw evidence of development as intellectuals and scholars across sites with a common goal of advancing professional knowledge and equity in the educational landscapes of Hawai'i. The impact of the consultancy project was significant for both consultancy group and client. Feedback from one of the clients gives evidence of the future impact of the project:

KVA's experience working with the consultancy project was awesome. They were very patient and professional with us. Pushing us when we needed to be pushed for info and interviews. They stayed on top of things and kept us engaged. Not easy to do! Their presentation to us and final report was an amazing review of all we have accomplished and what we hope to accomplish in the coming years. As we enter a new season of grant writing we will surely draw upon this work as we seek new funding.

As revealed in this statement, the consultancy studies made visible the ecological relationships that were pre- and post-existing in the local connections between practices of various natures, described by Kemmis (2012) as "different kinds of subsidiary practices" (887). The three examined projects show how new 'ecologies of practices' in the consultancies were shaped not solely by knowledge and steps taken by the participants within the structure of the projects but also by previous and future accomplishments comprising a living system of doings, sayings, and relating that will continue to function after the projects' end. Even though pre-existing, internal actions and knowledge that held the arrangements in the projects became part of their living constructs where practitioner students, clients, faculty, and other local actors come into interdependent relationships making the practice of leadership a continuum of interactions, knowledge-construction, and transformative learning enhancing local community benefit.

Traveling practices in the observation of these particular arrangements shows how two independent practices—those of students and clients—were able to 'travel' across practitioners' and clients' sites and to impact one another in a process of reciprocal transformative learning and growth. Student-student relationships, student-mentor relationships, and student-client relationships all worked interdependently in the development of the final project as well as in the development of "sayings, doings, and relating of practices" (Kemmis et al. 2014, 47). Conversations with client and mentors allowed the groups to practice the discourse for negotiating that is necessary for narrowing and defining the scope of a project. The application of academic "sayings," such as, theoretical framework, methodology, and themes deepened student and client understanding of each of these terms.

Reciprocal transformation and growth refers to consultancy projects that have the potential to design

ecological spaces of interrelated learning communities where groups of learners, which comprise doctoral students and clients, collaborate in an organic practice, generate new experiences provoking old mindsets, and engage in transformative learning that enhances social justice leadership practice. For the consultancy group, skills and practices were learned as part of the practice of completing the project. Group members felt much more prepared for the dissertation process as a result of completing the consultancy group project. This type of preparation may not have occurred through other coursework or projects. Kemmis et al. (2014) goes on to say, “Learning a practice entails entering—joining in—the projects and the kinds of sayings, doings and relatings characteristic of that particular practice” (58). While the Voyaging consultancy project were in the data collection phase of the project, their team participated in a workshop conducted by KVA. This experience gave the group an opportunity to experience some of the themes they found emerging from the data. “Doing” in this manner allowed for much deeper understanding of not only the organization, but also the data they were analyzing.

Conclusion

By examining how leadership relates to the educational practices of learning, service, and researching, we contend that consultancy projects design ecological spaces of interrelated learning communities where groups of learners comprising doctoral students and clients collaborate in an organic practice, generate new experiences provoking rethinking of old mindsets, and engage in transformative learning that enhances social justice leadership practice.

Our examination of three consultancy projects produced several commonalities in thematic structures. The projects offered interdependent, interconnected, and intersubjective architectures of transformation. These architectures shared an ecology of collaboration, developing new experiences leading to the transformations of old mindsets, and cultivated an atmosphere of learning together. The consultancy projects transformed into an evaluative process of the client as well as a self-evaluation of the researchers, themselves.

In the ecology of collaboration, researchers worked with mentors and advisors in seeking support, guidance, and direction, which enhanced the researchers own

communication skills and strengthened teamwork. In turn, the transformation of old mindsets were reflected by the opportunities offered through the consultancy projects, challenging the student researchers’ understanding about educational issues and the roles they play in social justice paradigms. As one student reported: “This was a journey of social justice more than a project” (student course evaluation, 2015).

Through the process of preparation and work on the consultancy project, students reported a sense of support from one another to lead each other and learn from one another, while navigating through the process together. Our findings show that consultancy projects, which are conducted a year before dissertations in practice in our EdD program, not only enhanced students’ and clients’ leadership practice while contributing knowledge and proposing solutions to local educational issues, but also functioned as organic ecologies of practices that both assisted the educational institutions (clients) they served and prepared student practitioners to design and conduct individual dissertation research later. This study gives evidence of how the University of Hawai‘i EdD program uses a design process of collaborative research projects that prepares and facilitates doctoral students’ knowledge beyond individual learning, toward learning that is viewed as a ‘living system’ (Capra 1996) of collaboration, interdependence, and reciprocity.

The practices of the consultancy projects occurred in the present, but are part of a complex living system that draws from the present and past as it looks to the future. This is a complex landscape in Hawai‘i’s educational system that continues to struggle for effective ways to support educational self-determination for Native Hawaiians as well as provide culturally responsive and equal access to education for all of Hawai‘i’s children. We assert that the consultancy project framework of our EdD program resulted in an ecological space of interrelated learning communities where groups of learners, comprising doctoral students and clients, collaborated in an organic practice that generated new experiences that provoked old mindsets and engaged in learning that enhanced one of the principles of the Hawai‘i EdD program: social justice leadership practice. We are so pleased to be able to contribute to this special issue to highlight the tremendous work the EdD program has accomplished over its six years of implementation.

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