Developing Leader Candidates Using Transformative Learning Theory: A Clinical Research into a Small Mature Business

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Developing Leader Candidates Using Transformative Learning Theory: A Clinical Research into a Small Mature Business

by

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the *WILLIS CURTIS JARRELL* Dissertation Committee. It has been approved and accepted by all members of that committee, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration in the J. Mack Robinson College of Business of Georgia State University.

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ABSTRACT

Developing Leader Candidates Using Transformative Learning Theory: A Clinical Research into a Small Mature Business

by

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Small, mature businesses often struggle with leadership development due to limited time, skills, processes, and resources. This lack of leadership is a significant factor in the failure of these businesses. While extensive research exists on leaders' skills, behaviors, competencies, experience, and attributes, a notable gap remains in the literature regarding effective leader development processes within the dynamic yet flat organizational structures of small businesses. This clinical research study addresses this gap by exploring the effectiveness of a leader-led transformative adult learning process in developing leader candidates within a small, mature business. Transformative learning, which involves critical reflection, experiential learning, and perspective transformation, was examined for its potential to cultivate influential leaders efficiently.

Adopting a pragmatic research paradigm, the study employed a Leader Elevated Development Model (LEDM) grounded in transformative learning theory. This leader development program guided select candidates through transformative critical thinking skills and foundational emotional intelligence. The clinical research study adhered to the boundaries developed by Edgar Schein and employed guided and informed interventions. The effectiveness of the adult learning process was evaluated using emotional intelligence assessments at the

beginning and end of an eight-week program, as well as independent observations of engagement and behaviors, participant feedback, and leadership-level self-assessments.

The key findings indicate that participants improved their emotional intelligence, sustained enhanced engagement, and displayed positive behavioral changes. However, eight weeks was not enough time to transition leader candidates from a self-leadership level to a team or organizational leadership level. The leader-facilitated development program effectively fostered leaders who were more capable of ensuring long-term business success by overcoming antecedent habits of mind and enhancing critical thinking skills. It provides a model for small, mature businesses to emulate. Furthermore, the study found that as an adult learning theory, transformative learning theory is an effective tool for business education.

INDEX WORDS: Leader Development, Emotional Intelligence, and Transformative Learning Theory

I CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The current business landscape underscores the growing importance of leadership development as a strategic priority for organizations. While there is broad recognition among executives of the need for such initiatives, a disconnect remains between acknowledgment and action. A study by Giber et al. (2000) revealed that although nearly all surveyed organizations recognized the importance of leadership development, only forty-four percent had implemented a formal process to foster it. This gap suggests that many organizations might be ill-equipped to navigate today's dynamic and competitive world (Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Further, research finds a need for proactive leader development, which is essential for the survival and long-term success of small, mature businesses (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2017). The fact that fifty percent of small businesses fail within five years and sixty-five percent more will fail between years six and ten highlights the need for research to find answers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024).

Despite a plethora of information—a Google Search for ‘leadership development’ returns millions of hits—consensus on effective leader development remains elusive. Worse, there is a lack of research on leadership development processes that yield effective results within a practical time. Furthermore, research shows that sixty-six percent of small and medium businesses are dissatisfied or neutral with their training programs (Miller, 2025). Moreover, business leader development often overlooks many effective adult learning practices identified by educators, instead opting for lectures conducted by subject matter experts (Waldman et al., 2013). Researchers agree that further study is essential (Waldman et al., 2013). Key questions remain unanswered that could refine the understanding of leader development practices: (1) What attributes should be cultivated in leaders? (2) What are the mechanisms for developing leaders individually and in groups? (3) Which individuals should be selected for organizational

leader development? (4) What strategies can transform experience and knowledge into leadership skills? (5) What role do coaching, feedback, and self-reflection play in the leadership development journey (Day et al., 2021)? Overall, two pivotal questions are at the heart of this quest for effective leader development (Day et al., 2021):

- What should organizations develop in leaders?
- How should organizations do this development?

The first question is informed by literature that advocates for developing behaviors, skills, emotional intelligence, competence, and experience (Black & Earnest, 2009; Kjellström et al., 2020). Growing support shows that developing a leader's emotional intelligence (EQ) is foundational for developing practical leadership skills, behaviors, and competencies (Allen et al., 2022; Gardner et al., 2005; Goleman, 2000).

The second question draws insights from adult learning theory, a field of study that has evolved since John Dewey's work in 1938 (Cranton, 2023). This theory underscores the importance of education in leader development, whether through lectures by senior executives, business professors, or consultants. However, applying this theory in practitioner learning settings is often overlooked. This study, recognizing the need for empirical evidence, aims to select a framework informed by adult learning theory and provide data on its effectiveness in leader development.

Adult education researchers found four components of valid learning processes necessary for effective adult learning and development (Cranton, 2023). The first component suggests that the process must recognize that adult learning is *dynamic and voluntary* (Cranton, 2023). Sending candidates for training does not guarantee that the candidate is motivated to learn and will learn. The second component is understanding that adults engage in *formal and informal*

activities when acquiring new skills, beliefs, and knowledge (Cranton, 2023). The training process must include both activities to enable candidates to reflect, learn, and adapt through self-reflection, group discussions, and guided instruction. The third component suggests that *transformative events* (e.g., job loss and lifestyle changes) often trigger and motivate adult learning while helping to overcome habits of mind (Cranton, 2023). Ultimately, existing knowledge, skills, and beliefs serve as *building blocks* for growth and adaptation (Cranton, 2023). Effective adult learning requires reflective self-assessment to review one's knowledge, skills, beliefs, and experiences in response to transformative events.

Today, educators utilize five classic learning theories to inform their educational processes: behaviorist, humanist, cognitivist, constructivist, and social-cognitive (Allen et al., 2022; Chuang, 2021). Rather than focusing on only one of these theories, scholars increasingly argue for selecting practices from multiple theories based on learner characteristics, learner stage of development, and desired outcomes (Allen et al., 2022; Brieger et al., 2020). Furthermore, development extends beyond mere learning to encompass motivation, reflection, and social interaction as key contributors to effective outcomes (Leskiw & Singh, 2007; Maurer & London, 2018; Riggio & Mumford, 2011). With this in mind, this paper argues for transformative learning theory as an integrative process for learner development, considering elements overlooked by individual adult learning theories (Allen et al., 2022; Cranton, 2023; Mezirow, 2003). Transformative learning effectively operationalizes the four valid learning components discussed above (Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023). Learners exposed to transformative learning-based practices have been shown to challenge ingrained attitudes, views, and beliefs, commonly referred to as ‘habits of the mind’ (Christie et al., 2015).

In summary, this research aims to enrich small business leadership development discourse by (1) selecting emotional intelligence as the "what" for leader development and (2) selecting transformative learning as the "how." By enhancing emotional intelligence, this research provides a foundation for leader development that researchers and practitioners can use for subsequent inquiries. By applying transformative learning to develop leaders, this study aims to deepen and accelerate learning during training while laying a durable foundation for self-directed learning that will benefit both learners and small businesses in the long term.

The selected approach is a clinical research study (Schein, 1976). This is ideal because it requires the leader to intervene on behalf of the participants. Leader development candidates seek to improve their skill sets, and even in a qualitative study, the leader should not passively observe but use their expertise to aid the candidates. The study is conceptualized as two concurrent cycles that continuously feed data to each other (McKay & Marshall, 2001). The research cycle focuses on the transformative learning framework's effectiveness as a method for effective leader development, while the problem-solving cycle focuses on the mechanism of leader development.

The research setting is Manco (a pseudonym), situated within a small, mature business led by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO, as the key figure and author of this dissertation, plays a pivotal role in leading the development process and observing the effect of the process, the curriculum, and the style of engagement on candidate leader development. During the literature review, there was a notable lack of research examining the effectiveness of leader-led development programs in small and mature businesses. This is puzzling because the leader, who may have been the founder, is very visible and often leads through demonstration,

but not necessarily with intent; directly or indirectly, the leader has a significant impact on the development of leaders.

The anticipated benefits were a higher level of motivation and engagement by the candidates as they were being coached by the person who would make decisions that would affect their career and employment. The leader will likely have a clearer picture of the candidate's motivations, traits, behavioral history, situational awareness (including changes in work environment, productivity, and performance), experience level, knowledge of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, and prior organizational training. These are key development factors that an outside facilitator would not be aware of and would not use to adapt their training. These advantages positively impact development by removing obstacles associated with unfamiliar environments, people, and experiences. There can be drawbacks, such as weak relationships, a perceived threat of job loss, or lack of trust, that can make leader-led training less effective, but these concerns were addressed before the start of the study.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge by assessing the research question: ***How can an effective leader-led transformative learning process be designed and orchestrated to develop leader candidates within a small, mature business?***

Situating this study within the work environment and examining work engagement offers practical insights not typically found in outsourced training. The business's technical knowledge serves as common ground, enabling a developmental focus on leader learning, role modeling, experiential learning, and education (Waldman et al., 2013). While the clinical research study was intentionally limited to eight weeks—a reasonable time for leader development within a business context—it acknowledges that complete leader development requires more time.

Nevertheless, this study revealed the effectiveness of the transformative learning process, considered experientially based dialogue, and compared candidates' beliefs, behaviors, and skills to those of accomplished leaders. It assessed whether this training effectively triggers deep reflection and acceptance of new skills and behaviors and fosters a lifelong self-learning effort to adapt to the evolving realities of leadership. Furthermore, it clarifies the impact of a highly concentrated group of activities, engagements, and education on the speed and depth of foundational leader development.

The study contributed to the literature by applying adult learning theory in a leader development program, specifically focusing on how to develop leader candidates. Additionally, it addressed the question of what leader candidates should be taught in development programs by evaluating emotional intelligence as a fundamental component of a leadership skill set that supports the further development of leaders. This study contributed to practice by offering a model that practitioners can use to assess leader development in organizations with limited resources, but have both a critical need and a lack of development time.

The remainder of the dissertation is comprised of six chapters. Chapter 2, *Theoretical Background*, describes the current state of leader development research and the persistent knowledge gaps resulting from a lack of empirical research that informs effective leader development in small businesses. Chapter 3, *Clinical Research,* outlines how the study generates data to illuminate the research question. It describes the active role of the clinical research study design in developing leaders and observing and recording the effectiveness of development in work engagements. Chapter 4, *Leader Development Design,* presents the developmental concept model and the functions of the elements. Chapter 5, *Leader Development Orchestration,* introduces the process models and their instrumentation and execution within the clinical

research study. Chapter 6, *Leader Development Impact,* shares the self-assessed and measured findings relative to the research question. Chapter 7, *Discussion*, summarizes the study's contributions, discusses limitations, and shares ideas for future research.

II CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The demand for effective leaders has never been more pressing in the rapidly evolving business landscape, characterized by unprecedented complexity and speed of change. Organizations strive to develop leaders and leadership in the most efficient and effective ways possible, making it a crucial area of scholarly research with numerous unresolved queries (Day et al., 2014). The following sections discuss what is known and unknown about effective leader development, beginning with what should be developed in leader candidates. This is followed by a section discussing traditional adult learning theories on "how" to educate adults effectively. This section concludes with a discussion on utilizing the transformative learning process and its benefits for developing business leaders (Mezirow, 1997).

II.1 Leadership Development

Leadership education is founded on the fundamental principle that leaders must have a deep understanding of themselves to be effective (Day et al., 2014). This principle should serve as the foundation of any successful development program. In business practice, organizations operate under the assumption that self-aware, self-actualized, and mature leaders will outperform those without intrapersonal skills (Allen et al., 2022). By focusing on developing foundational intrapersonal leader behaviors, skills, and abilities, we enable a leader candidate to cultivate the personal and social awareness necessary for effective leadership (Goleman, 2000). Self-awareness is not just necessary; it is crucial for leaders, as it enables them to understand their strengths and weaknesses, their impact on others, and their role within the organization. This need for self-awareness underscores its critical role in effective leadership, compelling leaders to prioritize its development.

The leader development process stands out from other forms of professional development, such as managerial or executive programs. As Warren Bennis articulates in his book *Becoming a Leader*, the distinction is clear: Leaders are innovators, while managers are administrators. Leaders focus on people, while managers focus on maintaining systems and processes. Research indicates that the complexities of modern business environments necessitate leaders' foundational understanding of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and behaviors, which are deeply connected to their experiential learning and practice (Rawlings et al., 2022). This unique requirement of developing the intrapersonal skills necessary to lead at any level in the organization sets leader development apart, making it a crucial area of focus for business professionals and organizations (Bennis, 2009).

Finally, leader development differs from executive development in that executive development targets senior leader candidates, assuming developed leader skills and competencies based on high levels of experience (Lacerenza et al., 2017; Rawlings, Melody & Janson, Kimberly, 2022). Executive development often focuses on higher-level strategic and planning skillsets, while leader development focuses on intrapersonal skills and behaviors. This clinical research study focuses on developing foundational leader skills instead of managerial or executive development.

II.1.1 Leader Development and Leadership Development

There is confusion regarding the differences between leadership and leader development. Practitioners tend to use the terms interchangeably, but effective development processes require a clear distinction between them. Why is it important? Leader development seeks to develop foundational skills, while leadership is an effect. Leader development occurs when leaders understand their personality, intelligence, and emotional intelligence, and learn how to manage

and leverage their strengths and weaknesses (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2000). Essential leader development is the forerunner of the awareness and ability to deploy effective leadership skills and behaviors that inspire others. This distinction helps guide the development process.

Leader development is a lifelong process that combines education, experience, self-learning, reflection, and behavioral change to develop exemplary leadership skills, awareness, and effective behaviors, ultimately achieving results (Goleman, 2000). Leader development, a profoundly transformative process, is not merely about enhancing knowledge, skills, and abilities. It is about unlocking potential and enabling individuals to embody the qualities of leaders (Day, 2000; Wallace et al., 2021). This strategic investment can lead to an accurate self-model and a positive mindset, empowering leaders to excel in various organizational roles (Day, 2000). By cultivating a leader's skills, we lay the foundation for the interpersonal roles that are essential to effective leadership. It is imperative that leaders first acquire the ability to lead themselves (Kethledge & Erwin, 2019; Solansky, 2015). This transformative journey of leader development promises to unlock untapped potential and foster personal growth, inspiring leaders to reach new heights of leadership performance (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).

Leadership development, a strategic investment, fosters a different form of social capital (Day et al., 2014). Unlike structure-based human capital, social capital is defined by the function of social resources embedded in work relationships (Lacerenza et al., 2017). It strongly emphasizes fostering trust within the social network through leaders' acts of trustworthiness and commitment to the individual and the organization. The leader demonstrates a cognitive awareness of the organization's culture and the methodology necessary to build a shared vision. This unique focus on social capital underscores the distinct approach of leader development:

cultivating and utilizing interpersonal skills and competencies to inspire others and achieve the organization's objectives (Amagoh, 2009; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

II.1.2 Emotional Intelligence: What Leaders Must Have and Must Develop

Emotional intelligence serves as a cornerstone for understanding key leadership styles. In a study by consulting firm Hay/McBer, which surveyed 3,871 executives, six distinct leadership styles were identified, each rooted in various components of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000). These findings highlight that effective leadership is built upon specific elements closely tied to emotional intelligence. Research indicates that ninety percent of high performers are rated high in emotional intelligence, while only twenty percent of low performers are rated high in EQ (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Other research reveals that thirty-six percent of those tested can accurately identify their emotions as they happen. This suggests that their feelings drive the behavior of two-thirds of people who cannot recognize and utilize them to their advantage (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). EQ is the foundational host for many critical skills, so organizations and individuals must invest in developing these qualities in leaders. Businesses suffer when leaders react emotionally rather than respond based on self-control and rational thinking.

Intelligence, EQ, and personality are foundational qualities that all people possess. These qualities determine how we think and act. People can have varying amounts of each (e.g., having a high IQ but a low EQ is possible). However, EQ is the only quality that is flexible and able to change (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). This points organizations to EQ as the answer to the question, “What should be taught and mastered before developing behaviors, competencies, and skills that are leadership effects (such as communication, time management, and the like)?”

Mezirow (2023), the champion of transformative learning, says about EQ: “Qualities of emotional intelligence (self-awareness and impulse control, persistence, zeal and self-motivation, empathy, and social deftness (Goleman, 2000) are obvious assets for developing the ability of adults to assess alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourse.” Mezirow's statement highlights that EQ is comprised of four emotional intelligence skills that pair up into two primary competencies: personal competence and social competence (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Personal competence is comprised of self-awareness and self-management, while social competence encompasses social awareness of others and relationship management (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2000). Leader effectiveness is more than enacting the right behaviors; it is about deepening self-awareness and impacting others (Hernz-Broome et al., 2004). In summary, the literature suggests that developing emotional intelligence is a foundational skill set that all leaders must master to execute leadership skillfully.

II.2 Approaches to Leader Development

Researchers are calling for more business-related empirical studies that use adult education frameworks in leader development because they have been proven effective in leading to adult learning in other contexts (Allen et al., 2022; Day et al., 2021). In the following section, I discuss leader development in practice, provide an overview of various approaches from the adult education literature, and then focus on transformative learning theory.

II.2.1 Leader Development in Practice

Organizations, in the interest of development, often make developing leaders feel obligated to attend workplace learning activities. This may not be fruitful and leads to re-engaging learners in training and retraining (Cranton, 2023). Furthermore, this often leads businesses to conclude that specific training is ineffective, prompting them to pursue new training and initiate a cycle of

continuous training. Large companies embark on new yearly programs, and businesses often become frustrated with low returns on investment, leading them to discontinue training altogether. However, the problem also lies in the development process, not just the content or the candidates. It is worth noting that education and development are not the same approach. Education is the delivery of standardized knowledge, whereas development is focused on personal growth over time. Effective development is tied to building and sustaining effective relationships between the candidates and the instructor over time (Daisley, 2011). Businesses that hire training cannot apply adaptive and relational development due to the limited time allocated to their contractors, which further limits candidate engagement and developmental effectiveness.

In the corporate world, it is common for employees to advance to leadership positions without acquiring the leadership skills required to lead a mature business. This premature promotion can lead to a suboptimal interpretation of their experiences, representing a missed opportunity for meaningful development (Allen et al., 2022). Within such frameworks, business educators connect learners with seasoned professionals via lectures, guest speakers, internships, and community engagement. However, this training often lacks the structure and clarity needed, potentially leading to questionable learner motivation. The participants lack the experience to relate to the education. Most adult learning frameworks recognize this and promote a guided experience that aims to connect experiences and learning for a more effective outcome.

II.2.2 Adult Learning

Adult education serves as the repository that adult learners use to find relevant content that connects to their experiences or, often, to fill perceived gaps in leadership skills, awareness, and behaviors. Psychologists generally agree that adult learning is voluntary, that learners are

mature and socially responsible, and that they decide to participate in formal and informal activities that enable them to acquire new knowledge and experience (Cranton, 2023). Regardless of the context, they will build existing skills, knowledge, or values; they can revise their basic assumptions and beliefs, which can redirect their view of the work, their world, and themselves (Cranton, 2023). This often leads to the assumption that adult learners are interested in educational content and development relevant to their needs; however, researchers have found that this may not be the case.

Andragogy and adult learning theory further suggest that adults become ready to learn when encountering real-life challenges (Day et al., 2009). This motivation to learn, however, does not encapsulate the entirety of learner development. The reasons why people learn and the methods to motivate them are equally crucial. Businesses have discovered that a lack of motivation can significantly weaken the effectiveness of training programs. However, both motivation and competence are pivotal as they intertwine with the concept of leader development (Maurer & London, 2018). While a vast reservoir of leader development knowledge exists, adult education is not inherently transformative and does not, alone, cultivate leaders. This knowledge must also be integrated with competence, motivation, experience, and education within the development process to foster growth. As the father of Andragogy, Malcolm Knowles contended that adult development is a system comprising various elements that should be adopted or adapted flexibly (Day et al., 2009; Knowles et al., 1998).

In 1938, John Dewey published "Experience and Education," highlighting practical approaches to adult learning. Since then, educators and researchers have expanded the theory of adult learning (Dewey, 2015). These theories indicate that businesses must understand and actively link the best adult learning processes to their leader development methodology (Day et

al., 2021). Furthermore, effective trainers adapt the adult learning process to match the candidate's personality type and learning style, creating an effective learning experience (Daisley, 2011). Instead, many businesses promote skills and behaviors related to the trainer or organization's experiences without considering the adult learning theory (Hernz-Broome et al., 2004). This gap in application is a missed opportunity for small businesses to enhance their leader development programs, underscoring the need for a more proven framework.

The five orientations of adult learning theory —behaviorism, humanism, cognitivism, constructivism, and social cognitive —describe the process and context in which adult learning occurs and play a crucial role in guiding instructional design (Allen et al., 2022). These theories explain adult learning motivation and the processes adults use to make sense of information, thereby transforming it into new knowledge and understanding. This can result in informed instruction that leads to deeper learning and development. In other words, adult learning theories can provide a foundation to guide instructional design that should be incorporated into most leader development programs (Saunders et al., 2020). Adult learning theory can significantly enhance leader development, opening new avenues for improvement and growth. The following sections highlight elements of each of the five adult learning theories. Each section describes approaches, techniques, and educational orientations that enable the reader to differentiate between them and conceptualize elements that may be used to motivate and instruct leader candidates.

II.2.3 Behaviorist Learning

Educators adopting a behaviorist approach play a significant role in eliciting behavioral changes. They use rewards and reinforcements from the external environment as their primary tools for influencing and shaping their students' learning experiences. (Allen et al., 2022;

Watson, 1913). These educators' instructional methods include interactive learning games and problem-solving scenarios designed to help students develop advanced skills. Typically, these methods are implemented in a classroom setting, rarely replicating the real-world challenges that leaders encounter. While educators may strive to simulate realistic scenarios, students must internalize the lessons, apply their training to established standards, receive feedback, and undergo continuous refinement through iterative cycles until they achieve proficiency. Adding negative, positive, or neutral reinforcement processes influences desired behavioral changes (Skinner, 2019).

II.2.4 Humanistic Learning

At the heart of humanist learning lies the pursuit of self-awareness. Humanist educators tailor the learning experience, guiding learners toward autonomy and self-direction (Allen et al., 2022). They acknowledge that students are multifaceted individuals, with learning intricately linked to their emotional and cognitive well-being (Saunders et al., 2020). By addressing emotional needs and fostering self-awareness, humanist instructors help learners understand their motivations, strengths, weaknesses, values, skills, goals, and behaviors (Allen et al., 2022). This orientation in humanist development is not just an educational goal but a lifelong journey where self-awareness ignites a path of perpetual growth and self-improvement. The education process is built on experiential learning, also known as learning by doing, and educators act as guides and facilitators in the learning process (Dewey, 2015).

II.2.5 Cognitivist Learning

In cognitivism, learning is conceptualized as the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which are then encoded into memory to navigate future challenges and seize opportunities (Brown et al., 2014). Distinct from behaviorism, cognitivism acknowledges the influence of pre-

existing knowledge on new learning experiences (Allen et al., 2022; Merriam et al., 2007). Individuals interpret new information through the prism of their existing knowledge base. Cognitivist theory posits that people assimilate and retain knowledge in long-term memory, forming what is known as a schema. Cognitivist educators prioritize the development of knowledge retention and retrieval abilities, presenting material in a logical sequence (Smith, 1983). They advocate for problem-based learning, encouraging students to tackle problems without prior exposure to solutions, which can enhance learning outcomes even when errors occur (Brown et al., 2014). Education within the cognitivist framework is instructor-led, with educators playing a pivotal role in guiding students through the learning process.

II.2.6 Constructivist Learning

Constructivism underscores the learners' proactive engagement in shaping their understanding and knowledge. Learners construct schemas—frameworks for understanding—based on their experiences, environmental interactions, and existing knowledge (Piaget, Jean, Rosin, Arnold, 1982). Through ongoing interaction with their surroundings, learners integrate new information, modifying their schemas to incorporate fresh insights. (Freire, 1970) emphasizes that individuals are not mere receptacles for knowledge but actively engage with others, evaluate diverse beliefs and data, and collectively discern the essence of identity, knowledge, and reality.

New situations often create a sense of disequilibrium (Piaget, Jean, Rosin, Arnold, 1982). Recognizing the significance of this disequilibrium is crucial for educators and learners alike when working to change the habits of the mind. The instinct to shun discomfort can lead to the evasion of authentic learning experiences. Constructivist learning, being learner-centric, empowers instructors to support and steer the accommodation process. By acknowledging the

inherent challenges and fostering a secure environment, educators enable students to delve confidently into novel concepts (Saunders et al., 2020).

II.2.7 Social-Cognitive Learning

Social-cognitive theory posits that learning is inherently role-based, emerging through interactions. It ties together cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors for learning and leans on self-reflection and self-regulation for function (Bandura, 2001). This approach to education emphasizes mastering new roles and behaviors, typically under the guidance of more seasoned instructors.

Table 1 presents a comprehensive literature review, delineating each theory alongside its practical implications. The section on **Considerations for Adult Learning** distills the core tenets of each theory, providing educators with a focused framework for instructional design and planning. Meanwhile, **Practical Applications** outline the anticipated outcomes stemming from implementing these theoretical principles. **Table 1** compares and contrasts theoretical frameworks for adult learning that I reviewed for use in leader development.

Table 1: Approaches to Leader Development

Theories	Major Theorists	Considerations for Adult Learning	Practical Application
Behaviorism	John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner	Learning occurs as a reaction to external stimuli	Positive reinforcement of desired behavioral changes can lead to long-term change
Humanism	John Dewey, Carl Rogers, Maria Montessori, and Paolo Freire	Learning occurs best through self-learning, based on meeting both cognitive and emotional needs	In a supportive and guided learning context, students will engage in learning for self-actualization
Cognitivism	Noam Chomsky, George Miller, S. B. Merriam, and Ulric Neisser	Learning is active and relies on rational thought and participation	Learners consider new information in the context of their experiences and store it as a schema that can be used in future problem-solving
Constructivism	Jean Piaget	Learning is active and relies on rational thought, participation, and social engagement	When confronted with new information, learners experience disequilibrium and disorientation and look to resolve this experience.
Social Cognitive	Albert Bandura	Learning is achieved by observing, modeling, and imitating	Learners observe and imitate, engage in rewarded behaviors, and avoid behaviors that are punished. A function is based on self-reflection and self-regulation.

II.3 Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory is not merely theoretical but a practical development system that addresses motivation, competence, experience, and education. It weaves together key elements from the five adult learning theories to transform and develop leaders. It advocates for

the educator's direct intervention to nurture the development of skills, insights, and particularly the dispositions necessary for critical self-reflection of assumptions and for engaging effectively in critical-dialectical discourse (reflective judgment) (Mezirow, 2003). Its framework, similar to constructivism, utilizes the state of disequilibrium as a catalyst for learners to engage in critical self-reflection (Cranton, 2023). It relies on social-cognitive processes to reinforce self-reflection and self-regulation in response to catalyzing disorienting dilemmas and to make sense of these encounters (Cranton, 2023). This process serves dual purposes: it acts as a motivator and foundational element for enacting cognitive (aligned with cognitivism) and behavioral (rooted in behaviorism) changes. Transformative learning draws on the humanist orientation by guiding learners toward self-awareness, fostering a lifelong tendency to be aware, reflect, learn, modify, and apply their learning (Cranton, 2023).

Table 2 illustrates the critical concepts from the five adult learning theories that have practical applications and are used in transformative learning theory.

Table 2: Application of Adult Learning Theory in Transformative Learning

Adult Learning Theory	**Practical Application in Transformative Learning**
Behaviorism	Motivation through external stimuli and positive reinforcement
Humanism	Personalization of guided instruction (guided reflection) and assessments for self-awareness and marking the development journey
Cognitivism	Growth through self-awareness and cognitive sense-making
Constructivism	Adaptation, adoption, and modification are critical processes when encountering new learning experiences. Learning is often stimulated by challenging environments that induce a state of disequilibrium, also known as a disorienting dilemma, as posited by TL. This state of disequilibrium necessitates the development of skills to manage emotional responses effectively.
Social cognitivism	Learning and development through social discourse and behavioral modeling

Mezirow's transformative learning process is initiated by what he termed a 'disorienting dilemma', a concept introduced by the educator to kick-start the development process (Cranton, 2023). At its core, this framework encompasses disorienting dilemmas, critical reflection, social discourse, sense-making, and new ways of thinking and acting. While sequential in the description, these steps are not strictly linear but cyclic and iterative, facilitated and overseen by the educator (Cranton, 2023; Mezirow, 2003). The purpose is to create the motivation required for adult learners to recognize a need for change related to the learning.

These phases provide insights for those engaged in leader development. Moving beyond the limitations of conventional business training, which frequently depends on a simplified version of social-cognitive theory, educators are urged to adopt this more holistic approach. This method leverages the most powerful elements of adult learning theories to facilitate genuine transformation.

Facilitators can then guide learners through a journey of critical self-reflection and sense-making by presenting them with a disorienting dilemma, culminating in a rich discourse that encompasses diverse perspectives and viewpoints. This method allows leader development professionals to tailor their approach to individual learning styles and levels of comprehension, ensuring a more personalized and effective growth trajectory (Cranton, 2023; Mezirow, 2003).

The transformative learning process should be the "how" in the leader development process. However, it offers even more as it can influence the "what" should be learned element of leader development by developing a process of critical self-reflection when highly emotional situations impact leaders (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). The transformative learning theory emphasizes that highly emotional situations and disorienting dilemmas present opportunities for reflection, thereby motivating the self-management components of high emotional intelligence.

Scholars have called for an empirical study to demonstrate the application of adult learning theory frameworks in business leader development. The transformative learning process integrates essential and validated elements of adult learning theory, establishing a robust and well-understood foundation for such a study. I have selected the transformative learning theory as the framework for the adult learning theory to guide the clinical research study. Furthermore, I will refer to this as the transformative learning process. This is not merely a learning framework; it is a practical skill set that leaders can use for critical thinking when faced with dilemmas or new knowledge.

Chapter 3 explains the details of the clinical research study. It describes the setting, ethical considerations, and why pragmatism was chosen as the perspective. Finally, it describes the research and problem/intervention cycles and how these independent processes work together to present new knowledge and a practical approach to leader development.

III CHAPTER 3: CLINICAL RESEARCH

This clinical research study examines a leader-facilitated mature small business leader development program designed to guide candidates in developing high emotional intelligence. The study records and evaluates the interventions and outcomes as the program follows the adult learning theory framework as outlined in transformative learning theory. By systematically documenting and analyzing the experiences of the candidates and the leader, the research aims to assess the effectiveness of the transformative learning process in developing leadership candidates who can contribute to the long-term success of small and mature businesses. I explain both the process design and the orchestration of the Leader Elevation Development Model (LEDM).

The following sections describe the study method and the selected clinical setting. They then detail the LEDM implementation, paying special attention to ethical considerations used to protect the participants. They summarize the mixed methods used to collect data and describe the data analysis process.

III.1 Clinical Research Study

This study aims to answer the question: How can an effective leader-led transformative learning process be designed and orchestrated to develop leader candidates within a small, mature business?

As Manco's CEO, I led the clinical study and guided motivated candidates through an eight-week leader development program. The foundational leadership learning was emotional intelligence behaviors and skills, transformative learning-based critical thinking, and self-awareness to recognize leader-limiting habits of mind. The effectiveness of this process was measured by growth in emotional intelligence, modifications in leader thinking and behavior,

and improved self-awareness, which contributed to growth in the four levels of leadership assessment. Candidates were expected to improve their self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills and behaviors. Further, they were expected to learn the transformative learning phases, develop self-awareness, and apply emotional intelligence to overcome habits of mind that limited their ability to lead effectively. Finally, the methodology evaluated the program's ability to identify motivated leader candidates and develop them to address the needs for scaling and succession in both mature and small businesses.

This research study is a pragmatic qualitative investigation designed to observe the outcomes of implementing LEDM, a leader development process rooted in transformative learning theory. Precisely, it constitutes a clinical research study (Schein, 1976), wherein the researcher engaged with participants to evaluate their motivation to lead, their eagerness to learn leadership skills, their development in the four domains of emotional intelligence, and their level of leadership growth as defined by the four levels of leadership. Unlike an ethnographic study, this interaction observed the process, intervened, and actively guided candidates to cultivate essential leadership abilities (Schein, 1976). In a clinical study, the clinician responds to a request for help and is responsible for diagnosing and seeking to help the candidate (Schein, 1976). The researcher is a consultant who utilizes feedback data (generated through quantitative methods) to inform coaching adaptations, ultimately guiding the candidate toward a successful outcome (Schein, 1976).

This qualitative study combined the interaction of a clinical study with the fieldwork (participant observation) methodology and the explanatory strength of an active action research study. Integrating fieldwork, past work history, personal relationships, and participant observation with surveys enabled the researcher to hear from the candidates and observe their

actions over multiple and extended periods in an informal setting. This yielded deeper and richer data as the candidate was not performing on a stage or telling the researcher what they thought the researcher wanted to hear (Meyers, 2020). This data informed participant knowledge growth and enabled me to create teaching strategies to overcome existing habits of mind that prevent adult learning.

The methodology employed in this study holds significant importance for the research question for three key reasons. First, the study was conducted within a mature, small business. Real-world conditions play a role in both informal and formal development contexts. In this context, the participants learn how to skillfully balance daily business requirements while engaging with the LEDM development process. In many organizations, there are few resources to fund development processes, so engaging in both learning and active work enables participants to learn, observe, and grow.

Secondly, the chosen methodology included built-in feedback mechanisms, such as independent observation, surveys, and interviews, to assess each participant's progress. The facilitator then adapted the transformative learning phases to effectively develop leaders while meeting work obligations within a limited focus time. Compared to larger organizations, small, mature businesses lack the luxury of a long development cycle to prepare leader candidates. Consequently, the development process must focus on the foundations of leadership, motivating candidates to pursue personal growth and enhance their technical knowledge. Despite the similarity in time spans, the short development window must yield more impactful and powerful results than the typical outsourced educational process.

Lastly, involving the organization's CEO as the facilitator provided a deeper understanding of the participant's prior history. This approach enabled an accurate context for

comprehending the practical changes that the candidates underwent during the development program. As the leaders and candidates intertwined the development process with daily work activities, reactions were contextualized based on the candidate's work history, personality type, maturity, and experiences. Moderating these variables by using adaptive coaching and the transformative learning framework provided a clearer understanding of the program's effectiveness, consequential adaptations, and influences, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the candidate's developmental outcomes.

III.2 Clinical Setting

The study was conducted within the work environment of Manco (a pseudonym), a small, well-established business-to-business service company in Fairburn, Georgia. This enterprise, founded in 1997, currently employs approximately forty individuals. It is characterized as a mature business due to its consistent growth and profitability, supported by a well-defined business proposition and a broad customer base. According to the Small Business Administration guidelines, it qualifies as a small to medium-sized business. Additionally, the organization features a flat hierarchical structure consisting of teams and team leaders, with only three executive-level employees. This dynamic workplace functioned as a developmental clinical laboratory. Unlike traditional educational settings, where training typically occurs outside of work hours and in a separate environment, the developmental nature in this context ensured that learning was dynamic and influenced by interrelated work complexities. This work and learning environment continually fostered real-world interactions, reflection, feedback, and reactions. This context simulated the conditions many small businesses would encounter in an on-site development program.

Manco's culture is influenced by its unique focus on training. For example, the sales team underwent weekly Sandler online sales training for two years. Each employee undergoes DiSC personality training (Wiley, 2023), led by Everest Business Coaching, as part of the onboarding process. A primary focus of training is creating awareness of the differences and similarities among people and how to navigate positive personal interactions with customers, vendors, and colleagues. This training creates a culture of reading others, adaptive communication, and more unrestrained discourse.

As an academic and a practitioner, I have fostered a culture of learning and development at Manco. I have facilitated in-house servant leadership, derailment behaviors, and emotional intelligence training for supervisors and many employees. This culture positively impacted the LEDM training, thanks to the pre-existing level of trust and familiarity among the participants. They were also familiar with me and benefited from the past training I conducted in the company. They trusted my expertise and the training because they knew that our desired outcome was to help them grow their careers and to benefit the business. *Appendix 1, Dissertation Development*, details my reasoning behind this clinical research study.

III.3 Ethical Considerations

The primary objective of a clinical research study is to diagnose and treat human subjects for their benefit and well-being. In such studies, participants seek assistance, and clinicians must possess the requisite expertise to provide it (Schein, 1976). This type of study also necessitates an ethical safety net for the subjects, the study leader, and the organization.

The study participants were employees who expressed interest in joining a leadership development program. The principal instructor for this program was the organization's CEO, and the participants were closely observed during the workday and in training sessions. While most

subjects had prior experience working within the organization and interacted closely with the CEO, protecting them from job loss or threats was crucial if they did not emerge as leader candidates.

Foundational leader development is rooted in discussions of emotional intelligence, which may involve addressing EQ shortcomings. During training, participants may become upset when others recall instances where they did not perform well. In such cases, the trainer must maintain control and prevent emotions from escalating while managing the tension between the trainer, the participants, and the upset participant. Furthermore, in an on-site study, the organization must be safeguarded against any decline in job performance or failure to adhere to rules while participating in the research study. These issues were anticipated but did not materialize, as participants were candid and mutually supportive of one another's development.

To ensure the well-being of employees, they received a copy of the consent form, which had been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The consent form outlined the study process, described the assessments, and clarified their commitments. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Importantly, their participation and performance did not affect their employment unless they violated the guidelines outlined in the employee handbook. Participants' information remained confidential and was identified by a code rather than by name in any research documentation. Lastly, an independent ombudsperson was available to address participant concerns during the study. This ombudsperson was authorized to intervene and hold me accountable if a participant was offended during the study. A complaint would not trigger any retaliation from Manco or me. Fortunately, the ombudsperson's services were not required.

To safeguard the organization and the trainer, participants were reminded that they are employees and must adhere to the guidelines specified in the employee handbook. These rules for appropriate conduct and behavior were applied to their roles as employees and study participants.

In the context of this leader-led research, participants may be inclined to provide answers in group discussions and assessments that they believe will benefit them while avoiding discussions that could potentially harm their careers. This challenge is particularly pronounced in small companies, where strong connectivity and biases between participants and leaders can develop over time. These biases may influence participants' reactions based on prior experiences rather than thoughtful reflection on new knowledge during the development process.

To mitigate these biases, I encouraged participants to respond honestly by emphasizing that this clinical study aims to enhance career opportunities. Honest feedback leads to more significant growth and success. I acknowledged my pre-existing biases and employed open-ended survey questions to encourage more in-depth personal discussions. The course material was designed to be neutral, engaging, and sensitive to participant biases, and it was conducted in a peer environment.

The leader has longstanding relationships with many participants, which presents a challenge in recognizing that biases have formed over time in these relationships. To mitigate researcher bias, I worked diligently to remain objective, avoiding the temptation to interpret the data in a way that fit preconceived hypotheses. I maintained a neutral tone and environment during group discussions. An independent assistant observed and recorded participants' behavioral and conversational engagement. These observations assessed the process's effectiveness and the participants' emotional state. I looked for clues indicating that they were

not engaged due to a lack of interest (due to poor teaching skills) or a lack of trust in what I was teaching. Additionally, the Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Nannette P. Napier, interviewed me and reviewed the data at key points in the study to minimize any potential bias that may have formed, either consciously or unconsciously.

III.4 Clinical Perspective

I adopted a pragmatic orientation (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019) as a framework for this study and to inform my interpretation of the data. As a philosophical framework, pragmatism is uniquely positioned to address the multifaceted nature of leadership research by emphasizing practicality, contextual relevance, and the integration of diverse methodologies. Central to this orientation is the pursuit of practical solutions and real-world applicability, aiming to address specific challenges in leader development and adult learning in a manner that directly informs practice and theory. This approach aligns with the overarching goal of this study: to produce outcomes that are not only theoretically sound but also actionable and meaningful within the context of leadership and adult education.

A core tenet of pragmatism is its inherent flexibility. This philosophical stance encourages the combination of methodologies and techniques to best address the research question rather than adhering rigidly to a single paradigm (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Such methodological pluralism is particularly valuable in exploring leader development and adult learning, where diverse variables and individual differences often necessitate adaptive strategies. By employing a flexible approach, this study integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the research problem while remaining responsive to the evolving needs of these fields.

Another critical aspect of pragmatism is its emphasis on contextual relevance (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This study recognizes the importance of situating research within the practical realities of leader development and adult learning, ensuring that findings are applicable and impactful in real-world scenarios. Pragmatic research prioritizes the lived experiences of leaders, educators, and learners and the dynamics of organizational and learning environments. Such an orientation fosters the development of interventions and insights that resonate with practitioners, educators, and researchers alike.

Outcome-oriented inquiry is also a defining feature of pragmatic research (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Unlike more traditional paradigms that prioritize theoretical rigor in controlled experimental conditions, pragmatism foregrounds the effectiveness and utility of interventions in practical, applied settings. Accordingly, this study places significant emphasis on evaluating meaningful outcomes within the context of leadership practice and adult learning, offering evidence-based recommendations that can enhance leader development programs and educational strategies.

Pragmatism's capacity to bridge methodological divides is epitomized by its endorsement of mixed methods research. By combining qualitative and quantitative data, this study achieves a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, leveraging the strengths of both methodological traditions. Qualitative data provide rich, in-depth insights into individual leadership experiences and learning processes, while quantitative data offer measurable, generalizable evidence. Together, these complementary approaches enable a robust and nuanced analysis that addresses the complexity of the research question and produces continuing feedback data.

Adopting a pragmatic orientation in this study reflects its suitability for addressing the intricate, multifactorial challenges inherent in leader development and adult learning. Traditional, rigid research designs may falter in such contexts due to limited adaptability and narrow focus (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). In contrast, pragmatism offers a dynamic and integrative framework that prioritizes practical relevance, methodological flexibility, and real-world impact. By adopting this perspective, the study aims to provide actionable insights that bridge the gap between theory and practice, thereby advancing the fields of leader development and adult learning theory.

III.5 The Dual Cycles: Research and Practical Development

This clinical research study aims to advance leader development through two complementary purposes: (1) the practical enhancement of leader candidates via targeted interventions and (2) the empirical research of theoretical frameworks, addressing what to develop, how to implement development, and the selection of participants and facilitators. These two purposes, practical leader development and the research of the effectiveness of the transformative learning's theoretical framework, occur simultaneously. A single process map that attempted to capture both the practical and research studies was unsuitable due to the overall complexity.

This study conceptualizes these purposes by adopting a dual-cycle model inspired by action research (McKay & Marshall, 2001). The first cycle relates to this study's problem-solving interests: improving self-awareness, building emotional intelligence, and increasing leader-level skills (McKay & Marshall, 2001). This cycle is called the problem-solving cycle and is focused on studying the developmental process, development orchestration, and leader outcomes. The second cycle, the research cycle, focuses on the contribution of new knowledge from using adult

learning theory to develop business leaders (McKay & Marshall, 2001). These cycles are interlinked as there is a constant data flow between the two cycles. The surveys, semi-structured interviews, and observations, instruments in the problem/intervention cycle, supply the data related to the effectiveness of the transformative learning theoretical framework studied in the research cycle (McKay & Marshall, 2001). These interlinked cycles enable iterative flow and refinement of ideas, experiences, and data. **Figure 1** highlights the two individual cycles at the top of the figure and illustrates how they link together at the bottom of the figure.

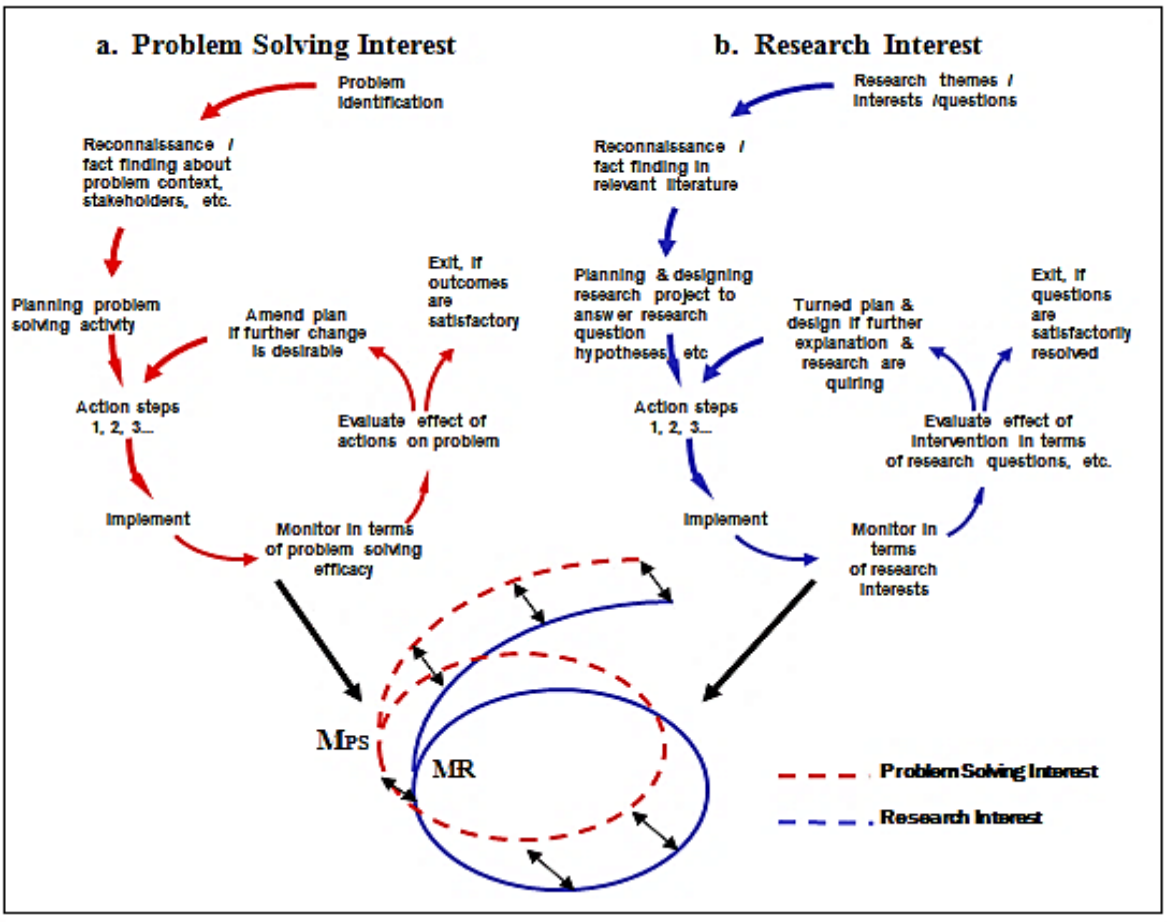


Figure 1 Dual Cycle Model by McKay and Marshall (2001)

III.5.1 The Research Cycle: Theoretical Framework Effectiveness

The literature reveals a lack of empirical evidence of effective leader development and candidate selection (Day et al., 2021). The primary focus of the research cycle is to supply empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the theoretical frameworks in selecting and developing leader candidates. In the context of this study, the outcomes are to answer the following questions:

- Is the motivation to lead assessment an effective instrument that can be used to determine who should be selected for leader development?
- Is the transformative learning framework an effective mechanism for developing leader candidates?
- Is emotional intelligence a foundational skill that leader candidates must develop (what)

Based on the answers to the questions, researchers have empirical evidence to apply adult learning theoretical frameworks to leader development (Day et al., 2021). The research cycle supplies empirical evidence on the effectiveness of using theoretical frameworks in a real-world problem setting that adds knowledge that can be used in policy (Day et al., 2021).

III.5.2 The Problem-Solving Cycle: Leader Development Design

LEDM is the practical framework used to orchestrate the participants' development in the problem-solving cycle. LEDM's process models (see **Figures 3 and 4**, detailed below in Chapters Four and Five**)** supply the details of the practical frameworks and the practical methods used in the leader development interventions. The problem-solving cycle continuously provided data, information, and findings supporting and informing the research question. Furthermore, data collection and analysis were crucial in measuring developmental outcomes and informing the theoretical frameworks' effectiveness throughout the research cycle. The role of the

problem/intervention cycle is to provide practical methods for developing leader candidates. The very practical methodology orchestrates the complex process of developing leader candidates.

In Chapter 4, Leader Development Design, I describe the theoretical and practical LEDM concept models, context, design, and instrumentation used in leader development. I also describe the elements of motivation, assessment, adaptation, intervention, and follow-up, and explain how they work together to yield the desired leader outcomes.

IV CHAPTER 4. LEADER DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

Having established emotional intelligence as the central learning being taught to participants and transformative learning theory as the preferred pedagogical foundation, the next step involves operationalizing these concepts into a functional framework for leader development (**Figure 2)**. The Leader Elevation Development Model (LEDM) was formulated to address this need, offering an innovative and integrative approach that synthesizes the theoretical underpinnings of motivation to lead, transformative learning, and emotional intelligence.

LEDM accounts for antecedent conditions, including personality traits, habits of mind, past experiences, leadership background, and educational attainment, which are foundational inputs for adaptive and tailored instruction. One of the barriers to adult learning and leader development programs is a lack of motivation to consider new knowledge or input (Mezirow, 1997). Often, training participants do not want to change but lean on their past experiences, habits of mind, and critical assumptions to guide their decisions (Christie et al., 2015).

LEDM utilizes the transformative learning theoretical framework to overcome antecedents and critical assumptions. Transformative learning proposes ten steps a facilitator should guide participants through during the educational intervention (Cranton, 2023). LEDM has simplified those steps into four categories: Motivation, Reflection, Sense-making, and Change. The first process step is motivation. The motivation step is accomplished by introducing a situation, data, or information that challenges the participant's critical assumptions about leading others and their effectiveness at leading others. The facilitator then guides the participants into the reflection step. The purpose is to get participants to reflect deeply about the challenge they are considering. In the sense-making step, the facilitator continues introducing new emotional intelligence knowledge and EQ ways of acting so that the participants can

discover, discuss, and make sense of their development compared to leaders with high EQ and self-awareness. The final step of the process is for participants to change and develop.

These changes are the study's focal leader development outcomes: increased emotional intelligence, leader-level growth, and improved self-awareness. In LEDM, the development process guides participants through the TalentSmart EQ training, which consists of four EQ learning cycles, in pursuit of the leader development outcomes. Development is incremental, with focal outcome proficiency increasing as participants complete each EQ learning cycle. The initial EQ learning cycle theme is self-awareness. The second learning cycle's theme is self-management. The next cycle theme is social awareness, and the final cycle theme is relationship management.

At the end of each EQ learning cycle, increasing proficiencies (or barriers) are measured and fed to the facilitator. The facilitator reviews each individual's process feedback in light of their antecedents. The facilitator then adjusts the content, style, and discussions so the participants remain motivated, reflect, and maximize their leader development. Participants are guided through the LEDM development process four times as they are taught the four areas of EQ. **Figure 2** is a graphic representation of the LEDM Conceptual Model.

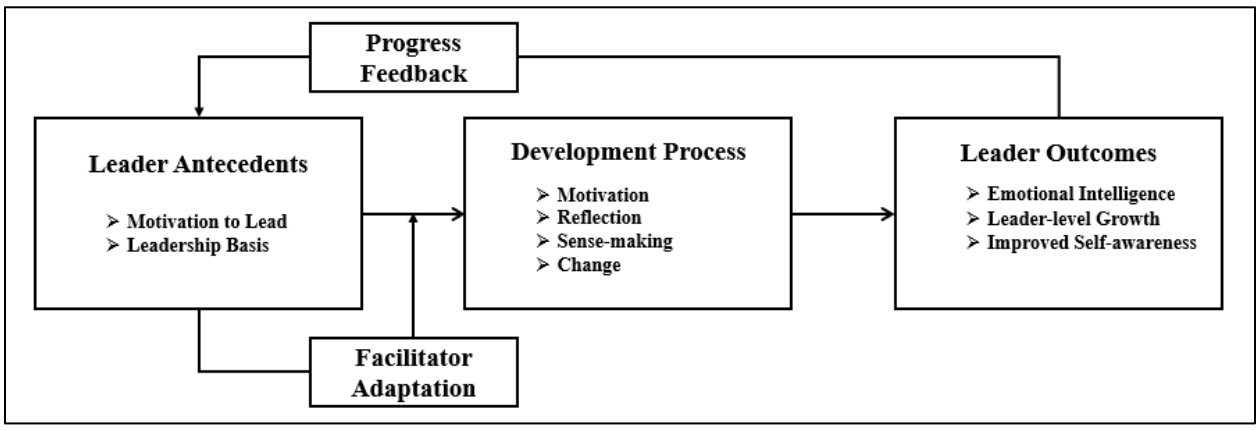


Figure 2 LEDM Conceptual Model

The following sub-chapters explain LEDM more deeply, detailing its design rationale within Manco's leader development program.

IV.1 Leader Antecedents

There are two antecedent categories, Motivation to Lead (MTL) (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) and Leadership Basis. In LEDM, using an MTL assessment, an element of the Motivation to Lead theoretical framework, (Chan & Drasgow, 2001), selects participants with the highest leader motivation. By categorizing participants' MTL into three categories (Chan & Drasgow, 2001)— total, affective, and social-normative — the facilitator gains insights that help guide adaptive interventions. These participants begin the process as highly motivated and energized to develop as leaders. If their engagement drops, or they do not learn, or they develop negative responses, then this is an indication that the process is not working (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). However, continuous feedback data from the intervention cycle trigger coaching adaptations to maintain the participants' learning motivation and address lagging areas of development.

Leadership basis is the second antecedent category. This is a collection of the participants' experiences, education, personality, gender, and work history. These are formed over time and shaped by social, self, and work experiences (Cranton, 2023). Jack Mezirow referred to these clues as habits of mind (Cranton, 2023). The role of LEDM is to assess and overcome these habits, enabling participants to gain new knowledge and engage in new ways of acting (Cranton, 2023). Participants are often unaware of these habits, yet they frequently react in a predetermined way when triggered. Understanding which behaviors are negative and need to be changed and which are positive and need strengthening is key to leader development. Without

participant self-awareness, their growth will be impeded. This basis also assesses the participants' starting point, which is then used to measure their progress at the end of the study.

IV.2 Development Process

The LEDM development process is the mechanism (how) for developing leader candidates using the transformative learning theoretical framework. At a high level, LEDM overcomes antecedents by motivating participants to reflect on their current leader skill set, confronting them with their current state, and showing them a highly developed leader EQ and self-awareness future state. This reflection is coupled with an intervention (formal and informal) that includes discourse and educational cycles, enabling them to make sense of their developmental dilemma. If this process is effective, participants will improve their leader thinking and behaviors. In **Figure 3**, the LEDM detailed development process is mapped into two streams. The first stream, “How,” details the facilitator's steps to move participants through the five leader development cycles, which are comprised of one disorienting dilemma cycle and four EQ learning cycles. The second stream, “What,” describes the instruments or methods used by the facilitator in that leader process step. The purpose of **Figure 3** is to move from the conceptual map to a more detailed map of the practical steps involved in leader development and development orchestration in this clinical research study. This design acts as the model I used to as a practical orchestration model in guiding the participants to reflect, make sense, and change as they went through each of the five leader development cycles. The instruments supplied feedback on the participants’ engagement and development level as they went through the five leader development cycles.

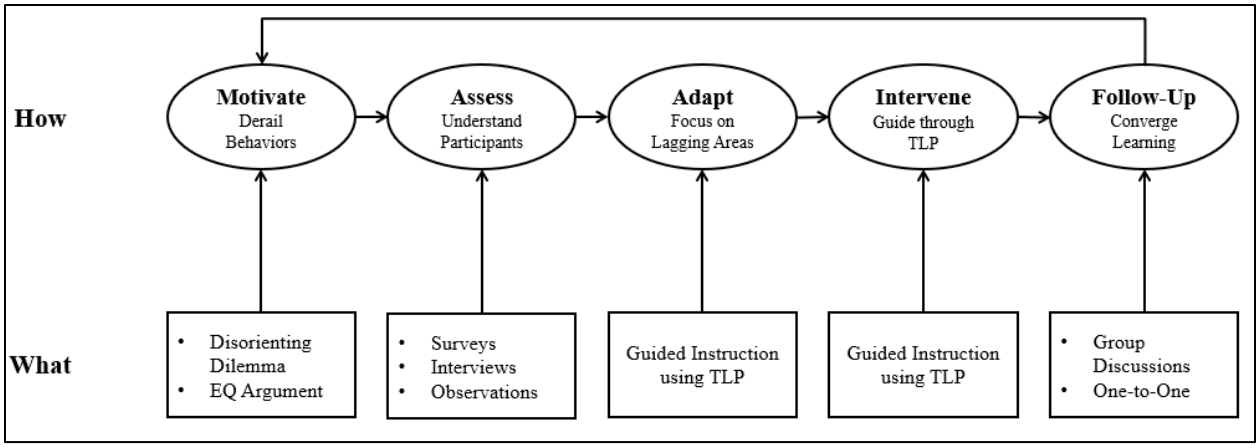


Figure 3 LEDM Five Process Components: Detailing How and What

The five process components of LEDM, as shown in the "How" layer of this component model, are motivate, assess, adapt, intervene, and follow up. These process elements are the practical mechanisms (the how) the facilitator uses to guide the participants through the five leader development cycles. The facilitator's first action is to formulate a disorienting dilemma based on the need to create a motivating step. In this study, the plan started with a disorienting dilemma that exposed participants to videos of derailer behaviors that limit leader effectiveness. This, coupled with the EQ argument for self-awareness and self-management as a solution, generated the initial motivation for participants.

The second component is assessing the participants' engagement and development. Initially, this assessment involves reviewing their antecedents, but after the EQ learning cycles begin, the focus of the survey, interviews, and observations is on assessing the participants' level of engagement, change, and knowledge acquisition (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

The third component is facilitator adaptations to the EQ material and sessions based on the adaptation plans formed in the second component.

The fourth component is the EQ learning cycle, which is modified by the facilitator's adaptations. The study did not depart from the TalentSmart EQ training materials. However, I added deeper post-training discussions that were adapted from the feedback instruments and used to overcome lagging development areas.

The final component is continuous follow-up based on the participant's knowledge convergence noted in the post-session discussions and informal conversations. This data shaped the next motivation and adaptation strategies used in the next EQ learning cycle.

The “What” level also lists the instruments and methods used in the related process component. These instruments stimulated participant reflection and sense-making as they studied the educational element of the four EQ learning cycles. They generated the data used to measure progress, guide adaptations in facilitation, and measure the effectiveness of the transformative learning theoretical framework.

IV.2.1 Motivate

The transformative learning theory says that adults must be motivated to learn. Adult learning is voluntary, and learning motivation is triggered by a disorienting dilemma, such as a job loss or failure to be promoted (Cranton, 2023). The facilitator triggers this motivation by developing an appropriate disorienting dilemma. In LEDM, the disorienting dilemma consists of a derailer behavior session that shows participants videos of leader-derailer behaviors, followed by a group discussion. The second instrument was a review of their initial EQ assessment. The evaluation highlights strengths and weaknesses in the four areas of emotional intelligence. The scores and the desired impact of improvement on key relationships and leadership provide additional motivation for development. The results handbook highlights strategies for improvement based on their scores. This creates a positive outlook as they believe they can

improve and see a plan that has helped others. These two instruments motivated participants to engage and learn through the four EQ training cycles.

IV.2.2 Assess and Adapt

The assessment process is an iterative and ongoing process designed to evaluate the participants' knowledge growth, areas in which they struggle, and progress in leader skill development. A frequent data feedback and response loop is generated through anonymous post-session surveys, semi-structured interviews, and independent observations. The data generated, usually within 48 hours, guided the facilitator in adjusting the teaching and discussions to moderate old habits or overcome lagging areas. This assessment and adaptation set LEDM apart from traditional business training, which is delivered through an experienced educator who assumes that participants want to learn and will apply their teaching without any verification.

IV.2.3 Intervene and Follow-Up

After completing the assessments, candidates are faced with certain realities. The participants have heightened self-awareness and want to fix or defend their revealed antecedents. At this point, LEDM guides participants through the intervention frameworks of reflection, sense-making, and change, key processes in transformative learning (Cranton, 2023). The goal is to move the participants from overt reflection on their shortcomings to focusing on becoming better leaders. This process begins with focusing on their current leader state and comparing that to their future state (higher EQ and leader level skill development). This reflection is jump-started by facilitated interviews and group discussions that help participants reflect and make sense of why they think and act as leaders and how they should think and behave. Often in these group discussions, participants have an opportunity to see others' perspectives on their issues,

and this dialogue stimulates new ways of thinking about their leader level and how it affects others (Mezirow, 1997).

When the participants reflect and make sense of their assessments, it opens up opportunities to share new knowledge that they would have previously rejected in lieu of using their past experiences (antecedents) to guide their leader decision-making (Mezirow, 1997). This intervention process is built into each coaching session as participants confront new knowledge presented in the four EQ progressive learning cycles of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Essentially, the intervention motivates the candidates to acquire the necessary knowledge and creates an argument to develop their emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and leader-level growth.

Following these sessions, which include both formal and informal group discussions, one-on-one sessions, and post-session surveys (another form of guided reflection), the participants' learning converges and informs the facilitator on how to conduct coaching in the following emotional intelligence learning cycle. This data guides the coaching adaptations and sets progress measures that keep the facilitator and participants moving effectively from self-awareness to the ability to manage relationships. Furthermore, it motivates progress through the steps of leader-level growth. If the intervention and follow-up work are effective, the data will show higher levels of participant engagement, knowledge acquisition, and positive change (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

IV.3 Leader Outcomes

The LEDM developmental outcomes are emotional intelligence growth, leader-level improvement, and self-awareness development. These outcomes are designed to address the area of concern, selecting and developing leader candidates. Furthermore, the level of developmental

outcomes serve as data points that measure the effectiveness of the research cycle's theoretical framework. The outcomes provide the data that answers the question of the effectiveness of LEDM in light of both the interventions and the process design.

Chapter Five, Leader Development Orchestration, describes the detailed process models used to orchestrate candidate selection, candidate assessment, the development process, and data collection and assessment. It also describes the practical Manco implementation in more detail.

V CHAPTER 5. LEADER DEVELOPMENT ORCHESTRATION: IMPLEMENTING LEDM AT MANCO

The preceding chapter delineated a conceptual framework for LEDM, presenting a theoretical basis that underscores the model's applicability to diverse leader development endeavors. Each component within the framework was carefully examined, providing a rationale grounded in scholarly and empirical perspectives. As a result, the prior chapter established a foundational understanding of LEDM as a versatile and theoretically robust construct.

In contrast, this chapter transitions from theoretical exposition to practical application, focusing on the specific organizational context of Manco. Here, LEDM is explored through the lens of practice, detailing the actual activities and processes implemented within Manco's leader development initiatives. An orchestration process model has been developed to guide this examination, offering a structured depiction of the dynamic interactions and operational steps integral to LEDM.

Implementing and orchestrating LEDM required building the model to integrate the assessments and TalentSmart EQ knowledge sessions while creating the instrumentation for progress measurement. *Appendices 7.1 and 7.2* graphically represent a detailed timeline of these activities. LEDM's orchestration model consists of three processes and corresponding developmental outcomes: candidate selection, candidate assessment, developmental cycles, and leader development outcomes. See **Figure 4** for a graphical representation of the LEDM Orchestration Flow Map.

Candidate identification and selection were the first processes. The candidate selection process aimed to use the MTL theoretical framework to select participants who were highly motivated to lead. The second process step, candidate assessment, measured the participants' baseline emotional intelligence and antecedent conditions. The EQ assessment scored the

participant’s overall EQ and their scores for self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship management. None of the participants had EQ training, and their initial scores were consistent with the starting scores measured by TalentSmartEQ in their twenty years of training. The participants' EQ was assessed four weeks after the program concluded. The EQ growth reflected the influence of the LEDM processes and is presented as a leader development outcome.

The antecedent assessment was based on employee records, including gender, military background, educational levels, work experience, starting leader level, and DiSC profiles. This informed me how to adapt coaching to meet participants' developmental needs and ensure continued engagement.

The Developmental or Learning Cycle process consisted of five iterative cycles. The first cycle, the Disorienting Dilemma, was designed to confront participants and cause them to reflect on their current level of leader development. The second cycle used TalentSmartEQ materials to guide participants through self-awareness. The third cycle guided participants through self-management learning. The fourth and fifth cycles also utilized TalentSmartEQ materials to coach participants on social awareness and relationship management.

Participants’ development (outcomes for self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and leadership) was constantly measured throughout the stages using feedback from independent observations, surveys, discussion sessions, and semi-structured interviews. This data was shared with the facilitator and then provided to the candidates to facilitate adaptive coaching and offer progress feedback to the participants. The following sections provide detailed descriptions of each process.

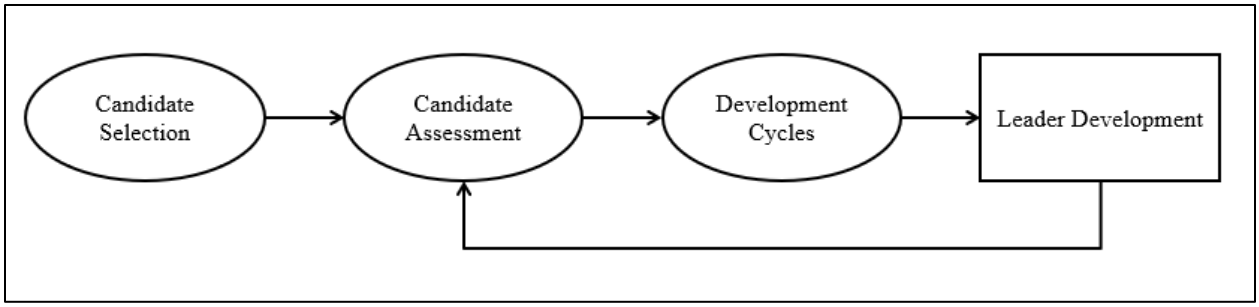


Figure 4 LEDM Orchestration Flow Map: Manco Implementation

V.1 Candidate Selection

Consistent with the IRB protocol, the candidate selection process commenced in September 2024 with an email invitation to participate sent to all Manco employees. Twenty candidates, or roughly half of all employees, responded via email and requested admission to the program. Each candidate was emailed and asked to complete and return the MTL assessment (*Appendix 3)* via email. Initial data collection consisted of three scores from the MTL assessment, determining candidate eligibility for the study. Candidates scoring below seventy-five were disqualified. Only candidates scoring above seventy-five in total MTL, Affective, and Social-normative MTL were accepted, ensuring high leadership motivation. Every candidate had an overall score of seventy-five or higher. So, I refined the MTL process further.

Data was collected from the individual scores generated by the Chan and Drasgow Motivation to Lead (MTL) assessment. The scores were further categorized based on the three first-order categories of MTL: Affective, Social-normative, and Non-calculative (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Candidates scoring high in the Affective MTL category demonstrated self-efficacy and a strong desire to lead. Those in the Social-normative MTL category felt a sense of responsibility to lead, often driven by the expectations of others. Candidates in the Non-calculative MTL category were less concerned with titles or rewards and more focused on positively impacting those they lead. Once they calculate the costs of leadership, they become

disinterested. Candidates were ranked based on their Affective and Social-normative MTL scores, as these are more durable and desirable motivations. Understanding each candidate's MTL category enabled tailored instruction and interactions that were more closely aligned with the candidate's motivational type. Five candidates scored seventy-five or above for total MTL, Affective, and Social-normative; these were selected to participate.

Table 3 summarizes each participant's profile. Data on age, level of education, gender, years of experience, supervision experience, DiSC type, EQ assessment scores, and EQ growth were recorded and used in cross-case analysis. For privacy, participants' information was logged under a code.

Manco includes DiSC training as part of the employee onboarding process. This training includes discussing the candidate's assessment in one-to-one sessions with a certified trainer. They are taught the meaning of DiSC and how their personality relates to the other profiles. These sessions are followed up with group or refresher sessions to enhance understanding of their personality and improve collaboration with different types. These candidates were fluent in DiSC, which helped them understand some of the root causes of their reactions in the clinical research study. This further enabled them to be more self-reflective when reflecting on their derailment behaviors and levels of emotional intelligence. Having the DiSC profiles and work-related interactions enabled some measure of individual behavioral prediction and coaching adaptations in the training sessions.

Table 3: Participant Profiles

Case	Age	Gen	DiSC	Education	Military	Work: Years	Leader: Years	Leader: Level
W1S	**25-30**	**M**	**DC**	**BBA**	**N**	**4**	**4**	**Self**
P1B	**60-65**	**M**	**D**	**Tech**	**Y**	**40**	**30**	**Team**
H1K	**30-35**	**M**	**S**	**BBA**	**Y**	**8**	**6**	**Self**
J1J	**30-35**	**M**	**DC**	**BBA**	**Y**	**8**	**6**	**Self**
K2L	**30-35**	**F**	**IS**	**Tech**	**N**	**10**	**2**	**Self**

V.2 Candidate Assessment

The candidate assessment of the initial EQ assessment results (*Appendix 4*) evaluated candidates' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management levels. These scores provided insights into each candidate's competencies in these EQ domains and identified areas for improvement. The initial scores served as a benchmark, helping to understand the effectiveness of the leadership development process. This assessment was administered privately by TalentSmart after the selection of candidates and before the commencement of the program. TalentSmart, a leader in the field, has been providing EQ solutions for over 20 years. The Manco CEO and clinical research facilitator, a TalentSmart-certified trainer, facilitated the assessment before training to ensure that the results accurately reflected the candidates' actual EQ levels, unaltered by subsequent training.

V.3 Development Process

LEDM was an eight-week leader development process facilitated by the Manco CEO, utilizing the transformative learning process as a teaching methodology and emotional intelligence as the target knowledge. Data collected assessed growth and engagement, deepening understanding of each case’s progress. I facilitated five learning cycles, one initial disorienting dilemma cycle and four emotional intelligence learning cycles using industry-leading training

materials from TalentSmartEQ. Their training program, *Mastering EQ Level* 1, encompasses all the necessary materials to teach and develop emotional intelligence. The study, as designed, takes about eight hours. I divided it into four EQ learning cycles, each lasting approximately two hours, with a one-week interval between sessions. This design provided participants with a more focused learning experience, allowing them more time to reflect and discuss concepts (both formally and informally) with the cohort and facilitator.

Table 4 summarizes the EQ learning cycles. Each lasted about an hour and was followed by a forty-five-minute group discussion. Independent observations (*Appendices 5, 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3*) were conducted during the cycle to assess candidate engagement and behavior during sessions. An independent assistant observed the candidates during training sessions, noting their level of engagement, body language, and behavior. These observations were recorded and scored on a 1-5 Likert scale (1: no engagement, 5: highly engaged), providing data on the candidates' involvement, engagement, and responsiveness. Reviewing these sessions over time indicated if engagement, confidence, and learning were waning, growing, or fluctuating.

At the end of each EQ training cycle, I led participants through themed group discussions, creating guidance questions (*Appendix 6)* to keep the discussions focused. These discussions were recorded, transcribed, and later coded into the first-order deductive codes. Knowledge progress and roadblocks were identified and utilized to adapt coaching and provide participants with feedback.

After each cycle, candidates completed independent and private surveys via SurveyMonkey (*Appendices 8-11)*. These surveys included questions on engagement, growth, and leader effectiveness. The responses were coded in NVivo 15 and analyzed to assess the program's impact and identify areas for improvement both during and after its completion. The

questions measured effectiveness, growth, engagement, and progress. Data emerged over time, with questions asked in different ways to measure the coherence of individual candidates' feedback and learning.

Table 4: Schedule of Emotional Intelligence Training Sessions

EQ Session	Topics Covered	Related Instruments
October 7, 2024	Disorienting Dilemma: Derailer Behaviors	○ Eleven Hogan Derailer Behaviors videos on YouTube ○ Post-session survey ○ Group observation ○ Recorded, transcribed, and coded into NVivo 15
October 14, 2024	EQ learning cycle 1: Self-awareness	○ Group observation ○ TalentSmart material ○ Post-session discussion (recorded, transcribed, and coded into NVivo 15) ○ Post-session survey
October 31, 2024	EQ learning cycle 2: Self-management	○ Group observation ○ TalentSmart material ○ Post-session discussion (recorded, transcribed, and coded into NVivo 15) ○ Post-session survey
November 4, 2024	EQ learning cycle 3: Social awareness	○ Group observation ○ TalentSmart material ○ Post-session discussion (recorded, transcribed, and coded into NVivo 15) ○ Post-session survey
November 15, 2024	EQ learning cycle 4: Relationship Management	○ Group observation ○ TalentSmart material ○ Post-session discussion (recorded, transcribed, and coded into NVivo 15) ○ Post-session survey

Note: There are five learning cycles. The first cycle, Disorienting Dilemma, is not an emotional intelligence session.

The Disorienting Dilemma is the first phase of the transformative learning process and is followed by four EQ Learning Cycles. Transformative learning theory suggests that adults will be motivated to learn if confronted first with a disorienting dilemma (Cranton, 2023). In this

clinical research study, we adapted Hogan's Eleven Derailer Behavior Videos as the catalyst. (Hogan, 2015). The eleven derailer behavior videos in past training motivated employees to reflect on their behaviors as they watched the actors role-play. As the participants watched the videos, their body language and conversations reflected the negative behaviors they struggled to understand and manage. Each employee identified with negative behaviors and wanted to learn how to overcome them. During the post-video discussions, they learned that EQ supplies a deeper personal understanding (self-awareness) and methods for managing personality traits (self-management). The success of these prior experiments encouraged me to use these derailer behavior videos in the study's disorienting dilemma.

EQ Learning Cycle Two (*EQ Self-Awareness)* is the first EQ learning cycle, and it aligns with the second phase of the transformative learning process, which is *critical reflection*. After the motivating impact of the disorienting dilemma, participants are anxious to learn more about self-awareness. Self-awareness involves recognizing and understanding one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations. It teaches awareness of how emotions influence their thoughts, behavior, and impact on others. Self-awareness is foundational to emotional intelligence, as it enhances individuals' ability to manage their emotions, make rational decisions, and foster key relationships. It highlights opportunities for personal growth and development. The participant book (*Emotional Intelligence 2.0, Bradberry and Greaves*), handbook, training guide, videos, and training presentation are supplied by TalentSmart EQ.

The EQ Learning Cycle Three (*EQ Self-Management)* session focuses on learning how to manage emotions and behaviors in the moment and to deliver a positive outcome. Participants learn about the neuroscience behind the natural tendency for the brain's emotional center to hijack its activity and act without rational reflection. Leaders often rely on these habits of mind

when making decisions under stress, acting without thinking. The initial EQ assessment identifies areas where participants need improvement. It also contains sections that provide them with the necessary tools and training to recognize triggering activities and develop effective self-management strategies.

EQ Learning Cycle Four (*EQ Social Awareness*) is designed to help participants recognize and understand the emotions and moods of individuals and groups. These are not always obvious; participants learn to read others who feel differently, have different values and backgrounds, or are in various emotional states. They learn to listen to what is said and how it is said, observe body language and behaviors, and ask clarifying questions (instead of reacting without thinking).

EQ Learning Cycle Five (*EQ Relationship Management*) is the final cycle in the TalentSmart EQ program. It focuses on learning and applying the three core EQ skills to create constructive relationships and achieve positive outcomes. Participants learn to mentally construct a relationship needs analysis to understand what is required, the participant's needs, and the other person's needs in a given situation. This analysis is the foundation for developing targeted and intentional strategies for interacting with others and achieving healthy outcomes.

Within each leader development cycle, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and discussions employed similar questions that converged to build a rich and in-depth understanding of the training's effectiveness while seeking feedback on improving future training. Additionally, these cycles highlighted the participants' growth in emotional intelligence and their level of leadership development. Since level three (organizational) and four (strategic) leaders possess highly developed core EQ skill sets that are consistently applied and positively utilized,

participants learned about these highly developed skills and measured themselves against these accepted standards.

V.4 Leader Development

Midway through the EQ training, candidates participated in one-to-one thirty-minute sessions with the leader. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth qualitative data on the candidates' experiences, learning, and perspectives as they participated in the LEDM. These interviews employed a flexible set of open-ended questions, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the candidates' thoughts and experiences. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded in NVivo 15 for thematic analysis. Participants completed post-session surveys (*Appendix 10*), administered through SurveyMonkey.

A second one-to-one session was conducted four weeks after completing the EQ training. These sessions followed a similar framework to the first session. However, the guidance questions and ensuing discussions primarily focused on the level of growth and its impact on their workplace interactions. Participants also described their growth plans and identified their mentor choice. These sessions, guided by semi-structured interview questions, were recorded, transcribed, and coded to gain insight into the candidates' perspectives on their development, the program's effectiveness, and their future growth plans. Participants completed a post-session survey (*Appendix 11*).

A second EQ assessment, administered by TalentSmartEQ four weeks after the last training session, enabled a comparison of participants' growth through the LEDM. Post-session surveys, session transcripts, and semi-structured interviews assessed participants' understanding, growth, and changes in their thinking and behavior. These were aggregated with the assessments to measure actual development compared to candidates’ perceived development.

The outcomes, EQ growth, and leader-level development were measured using the EQ assessments, participant self-assessment, and the leader's experience as a CEO and EQ trainer. TalentSmartEQ's clinical psychologist also evaluated the assessments and supplied insights into the developmental scores. In the final one-to-one session, candidates discussed their leader level at the beginning of the program and after its completion. I considered these self-assessments and found that the skill levels they developed were consistent with their leader level in the workplace. Finally, observations, interviews, and survey questions were designed to measure learning and engagement to validate the LEDM process (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

V.5 Data Collection Summary

This research study examined the development of leadership candidates, focusing on both the 'what' and 'how' aspects of leadership. The TalentSmart EQ assessments and curriculum provided the framework for identifying the specific competencies to be developed in these candidates. The LEDM was the chosen methodology for the 'how' component, guiding understanding of how well leader competencies were developed. This study aimed to test a method for selecting candidates, evaluate the effectiveness of LEDM, investigate the influence of a leader as a facilitator, and assess the resultant level of leader development in motivated candidates. Data collection considered antecedent conditions, such as habits of mind, personality, experience level, age, gender, and education, as well as the influence of mediators, including guided instruction, the transformative learning process, an intensive timeframe, and adaptive leader-led facilitation. The study's outcome was measured by the levels of leadership and EQ development achieved by each participant. Data was collected to measure the effectiveness of the candidate selection process and the LEDM. **Table 5** summarizes the instrumentation of the clinical research study.

Table 5: Clinical Research Study Instrumentation

	Candidate Selection	Candidate Assessment	LEDM	Development Outcomes
MTL Assessment	Y			Y
EQ Assessments		Y	Y	Y
Interviews			Y	Y
Surveys			Y	Y
Observations		Y	Y	Y
Antecedents		Y	Y	

V.6 Data Analysis

The study aimed to gain participant insights and feedback regarding LEDM as a learning process guided by leading adult learning theory, examining the effect of EQ knowledge within LEDM, assessing the impact of having the CEO facilitate the development program and intervene like a coach, and evaluating the level of leader development and EQ obtained as resultant outcomes. Five post-session discussions and two one-to-one sessions were recorded, transcribed, summarized, and loaded into NVivo 15 for coding. The coding process consisted of two phases. During the first cycle coding stage, I completed deductive first-order coding. During the second cycle coding stage, I completed pattern coding. Each stage is further elaborated below.

The coding process began with deductive first-order coding, which involved creating a set of codes that covered reactions and feedback related to the instruments and the study development areas. Based on Mezirow's ten transformative learning components, a deductive coding framework was employed to analyze the data related to the areas of interest defined by the research question. Rather than the four simple elements of motivation, reflection, sense-making, and change, I used these ten components to see if there was more detailed data than I had anticipated. The ten elements created enough detail to ensure I was not overly broad in my first analysis. **Table 6** lists the first-order codes and their corresponding subcodes. I also show

the number of case files and references that contained narratives coded into that category or subcategory.

Table 6: First Order Deductive Code Table

Code	Description	Files	References
1.0	Disorienting Dilemma	4	5
1.1	Motivation to Change	5	8
1.2	Motivation to Learn	3	3
1.3	Derailer Behavior	2	8
2.0	Self-Examination	6	17
2.1	Habits of Mind: Knowledge	3	4
2.2	Habits of Mind: Self	7	15
2.3	Habits of Mind: Social	7	8
3.0	Critical Assessment	7	15
3.1	Alienation from Self	0	0
3.2	Internalized Assumptions	4	11
4.0	Relating Discontent with Others	8	12
5.0	Exploring Options	6	18
6.0	Competence and Self-Confidence in New Roles	1	1
7.0	Planning a Course of Action	5	12
8.0	Acquiring New Skills & Knowledge	3	6
9.0	Testing and Assessing the New Roles	0	0
10.0	Reintegrating with the New Perspective	3	5
11.0	Effectiveness	5	7
11.1	EQ Behavior and Self-Efficacy Effectiveness	13	39
11.2	Facilitator Effectiveness	10	28
11.3	Leader Development Skills & Behavioral Comp	11	18
11.4	Leader Development Skills & Self-efficacy	2	3
11.5	MTL	1	1
11.6	TLP Effectiveness	9	48
12.0	Habits of Mind Changes	4	7

I reduced the first-order coded narratives into emergent themes based on affective coding themes, including participants' emotions, values, and evaluations. The emergent data was collected, coded, and themed to analyze the LEDM process, the effectiveness of the leader's involvement, and the EQ developmental impact on building a leadership foundation based on the

candidates' interpretations and responses. This process identified data gaps or changes in research or training, which were then addressed during the study's ongoing phase.

Emotion coding labels the emotions or feelings the leader recalls, experiences, or infers when observing the candidates. Emotion coding is particularly suitable for studies that examine intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions (Miles et al., 2014). It is appropriate for grouping observations, feedback, and data related to the candidates' disorienting dilemma, deep reflection, adoption of new ways of acting, and the impact of leader guidance. This study used emotional labels such as engaged, surprised, angered, excited, hated, hopeful, bored, and happy to analyze the candidate responses to the interactive elements of the transformative learning process. Throughout the data analysis, positive or negative symbols were included with responses. This reflected the tone of the feedback and the overall physical reactions we observed. This coding revealed candidates' emerging feelings about LEDM and the leader-led impact. I collected and coded this data within forty-eight hours. This helped guide my understanding of the effectiveness of what we were doing in almost real time. Furthermore, it provided a comprehensive understanding of how the adaptive teaching approach and consequential and purposeful interventions helped candidates develop leadership skills.

The final phase in data analysis was creating pattern codes during the second cycle coding stage. (Miles et al., 2014). Pattern codes distill the first cycle coding into more precise and meaningful units of analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Pattern codes utilize four distinct summary categories to reduce the data into meaningful units of analysis. These categories, which can be interrelated, are devised as follows: categories or themes, causes or explanations, relationships among the candidates, and concepts or theory constructs (Miles et al., 2014). By employing these

summary categories, the analysis process was streamlined, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the data and facilitating the identification of significant patterns and insights.

I used this process to develop cross-case groupings based on the survey data collected at the end of each session. This analysis measured participants' growth relative to one another and linked the data to the cases' antecedents, such as personality, experience, education, and background. Although it is challenging to attribute causal relationships in a small qualitative study, this analysis recorded the case's beliefs about the study's influence on EQ and leadership growth.

Chapter Six examines the findings related to the LEDM's impact on the participants. The participants' narratives articulate the influence of the LEDM process on key leader development outcomes. Data collected from surveys, independent observations, and interviews are analyzed in conjunction with these narratives to assess and contextualize the overall effectiveness of the model.

VI CHAPTER 6: LEADER DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

This section presents the data analysis results and examines how these results answer the research question: How can an effective leader-led transformative learning process be designed and orchestrated to develop leader candidates within a small, mature business?

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the LEDM by measuring participant growth in three key areas: leadership level development, self-awareness growth, and EQ knowledge acquisition. Additionally, the CEO's role as a facilitator was evaluated based on the participants' perspectives. The ensuing subsections describe the findings concerning these development outcomes.

VI.1 Leader Levels

I organized leadership development into four distinct levels: self-leadership (Level 1), team leadership (Level 2), organizational leadership (Level 3), and strategic leadership (Level 4). This structure enables participants and me to analyze their developmental growth within LEDM. During the final one-to-one sessions, candidates were asked to assess their leadership level at the beginning and end of the LEDM. **Table 7** summarizes their growth assessment.

Table 7: Participant Leadership Level Growth Self-Assessment

Case	Pre-LEDM	Post-LEDM
W1S	Low 2	High 2
P1B	Low 3	High 3
H1K	Low 1	High 1
J1J	Low 2	High 2
K2L	Low 1	Med 1

The data collected from these assessments indicate that candidates perceived a significant improvement in their leadership competence due to LEDM. They remained within the leadership level they initially identified with at the start of LEDM. Participants assessed their leader levels

as remaining within the same level, but expressed that they were more effective within that level. For instance, P1B rated himself as a level 3 organizational leader before and after the LEDM. P1B said, “More effective number three.” W1S assessed his leader-level development outcome: "While still in that second phase, I've made leaps and bounds.” Finally, J1J assessed his growth: “I would say I was probably a two. I mean, just from experience, but probably a lower two. If it were a spectrum, it would be more towards the one side, but in two, and now I think I'm more of a two to not quite into three yet, but I think I'm moving more towards being a three.” Participants reflected on this in our one-to-one sessions and were pleased with their growth.

However, it is essential to note that while LEDM effectively enhanced self-leadership and team leadership skills, it did not sufficiently address the development of organizational and strategic leadership skills, primarily due to its focus on growing emotional intelligence (EQ). Participants did not bring strategic and organizational perspectives into our discussions despite several candidates holding business degrees.

Notably, individual improvements were observed when candidates faced challenging situations. As Mezirow noted, effective training will lead to changed behaviors. For behavior to change, the training must moderate the habits of mind. For example, before LEDM, P1B often became angry, and the conversation ended when his ideas met resistance. Afterward, he proposed an expensive service, and when I began to seek clarification, he sensed resistance and became angry. However, he caught himself, managed his emotions, and we could continue a productive conversation. In the post-session discussions, conversations regarding the role of leaders evolved away from long-held beliefs and practices. Participants began to shift away from entrenched habits such as command-and-control approaches, which often justified poor communication. H1K said, “Explaining my thought process to people is also one of my problems

with relationship management; it is explaining why I did something or how I am feeling about it that I must improve."

Instead, they started to think and act in terms of teamwork and fostering a culture of emotional intelligence. W1S described the growth, "Just making sure that regardless of what is going on, whether it is low stress, high stress, when I walk in, I can smile at somebody and greet them appropriately rather than just bombarding them." K2L described the change this way, "I have been working on asking. If I notice someone upset or off, I ask them about it or ask, Hey, what did you mean by that?" Finally, H1K described his new way of thinking, " how it is important to be prepared before you talk to somebody. Or the things you can do if you are unprepared for that situation, like use self-talk, so manage what you will say or how you will deal with social situations." This shift was evident in their behavior and interactions, which others noticed, initiating positive cultural changes within their teams.

Organizations aiming to elevate candidates to higher leadership levels would need additional interventions and time. The LEDM, in its current form, may not stimulate the requisite growth for organizational and strategic leadership without incorporating the specific knowledge and skills required to operate effectively at these advanced levels.

VI.2 Self-Awareness Growth

LEDM enables leaders to process new knowledge or dilemmas effectively and logically without reverting to persistent, emotionally driven habits of mind. Leaders often rely heavily on these habits when encountering new dilemmas, rejecting a logical approach due to perceived time constraints or situational stress. Furthermore, habits frequently develop during low-level leadership experiences rather than during Level 3 or 4 leadership, which involves more complex knowledge and critical thinking. Nevertheless, these skills are necessary for business scalability

or competitive positioning. The leadership skills at levels 3 and 4 require inspiring others to accomplish the organization's goals. The path to these higher-level skills begins with self-awareness—the ability to identify habits that hinder development and growth, and then to develop the capacity to manage negative habits and learn to consider the needs of others and the organization. In this study, a desired outcome was to trigger and grow self-awareness.

Following the lead of other researchers, I condensed transformative learning's ten phases into four key phases: Disorienting Dilemma, Reflection, Sense-Making, and Change (encompassing new ways of thinking and acting). I simplified these to reduce complexity and increase retention as a critical thinking tool for candidates. Significant effort was invested in integrating these phases into the four EQ learning cycles and discussions. I monitored the candidates to ensure they completed the phases as they developed their EQ skills. During the final one-to-one session, we discussed the process as a tool and the level of participant adoption. Participant J1J explained the effectiveness of this process: "I think it is beneficial because it is helping you move from just managing yourself and knowing yourself to knowing others and helping manage those relationships, and so it is making you more well-rounded as a leader. If you give me a task, I can complete it and stay focused, but it does not always translate to helping others get on board to accomplish the task, or reading their body language to get them on board. As a leader, considering what is happening in their world greatly helps. And so, as a leader, I think you need to be aware of yourself, others, and what has to be accomplished and move everyone towards that goal." This narrative illustrates how LEDM helped candidates shift from a low awareness of their own needs to considering the needs of others and the organization's needs more holistically. This is a foundational skill found in leaders at levels 3 and 4.

Table 8 illustrates the participants' self-rated awareness level at the beginning and end of the program. The development of higher self-awareness was a key focus of LEDM in leader skill development, serving as a key measure of the intervention cycle's effectiveness and contributing data regarding the theoretical framework in the research cycle. Participants rated their growth in self-awareness as very high.

Table 8: Participant Self-Awareness Growth

Case	Awareness: Start	Awareness: End
W1S	Somewhat	High
P1B	Not aware	High
H1K	Somewhat	High
J1J	Somewhat	High
K2L	Somewhat	High

LEDM relies on a disorienting dilemma (learning cycle 1) to motivate candidates to explore new ways of thinking and acting. It is a confrontational situation, experience, or knowledge that challenges persistent negative leader habits and stimulates critical reflection. In LEDM, the candidates' first group session explored Hogan's eleven derailer behaviors using Hogan's YouTube videos. After viewing and discussing the videos, participants were highly motivated to identify which behaviors applied to them and to learn EQ regulation methods, specifically self-management. Participant K2L captured the group sentiment and said, "It definitely motivated me. I do not want to be a hindrance to anybody. I want to be my best self so people around me say that I am an asset, fun to work with, or helpful to work with. I felt like becoming aware of the derailer behaviors was like meeting someone with a weird car, and you never noticed the car before. Once you see it, you see it everywhere. It is like I knew about it (derailer behaviors), but I saw it daily once it was pointed out to me. Oh, there is that behavior I need to improve." In the post-session survey, the most popular response to the question "How

did the case studies affect you?" was that the training caused candidates to reflect on their behaviors.

The disorienting dilemma prompted the candidates to engage in self-awareness taught in the first EQ session (Learning Cycle 2). The research found that the transformative learning process, a method for adult learning, complemented the EQ training by creating a higher level of motivation and an initial understanding of their gap in leadership skills. In addition to creating a powerful stimulus, the candidates moved through reflection, sense-making, and change as they discussed and learned more about EQ and themselves. W1S observed: "But I think the one thing that I could unpack a little bit better is trying to understand my derailment behaviors better and where I sit in that spectrum." Perhaps I am asking for more feedback, but gaining a better understanding of it would be really helpful, as I have struggled with where exactly I stand." All of the candidates made similar comments as they reflected on the impact of low self-awareness and the lack of self-management. As an adult learning process, transformative learning's effectiveness in conjunction with EQ learning suggests that utilizing it for other business training would effectively motivate candidates to learn and adopt new behaviors. Furthermore, it supports the theoretical framework argument in the research cycle.

The group discussions that followed the videos revealed that the first LEDM learning cycle successfully motivated candidates to learn and prompted a rapid transition into the reflection phase. This phase, which is characterized by critical thinking, begins with self-reflection. If the facilitation is successful, the participants will not reject the new knowledge or rationalize their behaviors. Instead, they reflected on and assessed the new knowledge to make sense of it and determine how to apply it. In all cases, the surveys, discussions, and interviews

demonstrate that participants recognized their need for emotional intelligence and adopted new knowledge, as well as the new leader and relational approaches.

A week after Session 1, I facilitated the first EQ learning session on self-awareness. The idea was to connect this training with the recent disorienting dilemma and utilize it to promote new knowledge, reflection, sense-making, and group reflection. During the post-session group discussion, W1S, a Level 1 leader with a business degree, highlighted this activity: “I have done some of these or at least struggled with them. I am like, Oh my gosh, I caught the derailer behavior bug. I got all of them. That is exactly what I was dealing with when thinking through all this. And, as you said, my goal is not to make it a focal point, but I think it's almost like a base where I can take these new pieces of knowledge I am getting and relate them to myself and see them in my day-to-day. That is what has really allowed me to do most of my critical thinking. It is just the time in between and having that knowledge connection.” K2L described the reflection, “It definitely causes much reflection about why, why is this my reaction? I have had a really bad temper a lot, and I have worked on it a lot as an adult. And for a long time, why is this my reaction? I just want to get mad immediately. And, doing that, analyzing as to why you do it, I think, helps me improve.” Self-learning and self-reflection conversations revealed weaknesses, but importantly, candidates openly discussed their strengths and weaknesses. These discussions and instructions on how to self-manage moderated many of the antecedent leader habits. Throughout the group discussions, candidates continued conversations they had initiated during and after work to understand and improve their emotional intelligence (EQ) shortcomings, which affected their leadership.

The post-session survey focused on self-awareness and asked candidates about their planned next steps. The most popular responses were to learn more and to spend time reflecting.

Clearly, the process had the desired effect, and candidates moved from the motivating disorienting dilemma to the reflection phase. Candidates were given the first EQ assessment after the disorienting dilemma phase but before the first EQ training session. The idea was to prompt candidates to consider their emotional intelligence as they reflected on their negative leadership habits and behaviors. I suggested to them that EQ would be a solution to help them learn to manage their derailer behaviors. A week later, I facilitated the first EQ session, discussing self-awareness. A group discussion and a post-session survey followed this. The first goal was to help them gain a deeper understanding of self-awareness and compare their current state to the first assessment results. They had a week to process the assessment results while reflecting on their derailer behaviors. During the self-awareness session, my assistant observed that all participants were engaged, reflective, and exhibited positive body language throughout the learning session. They were motivated to learn. Candidates connected the practice of derailer behaviors to a lack of self-awareness. P1B remarked, “Emotional intelligence is understanding how I am projecting and how people are receiving my communication. And I can see that my derailers are definitely involved with that. When I have already upset somebody, they are not listening to anything I say anyway, so I am wasting my time with them.” This quote reflects the cohort's processing and iteration through the Assessment Phase and the disorienting dilemma experienced during the first two weeks.

Listening to the candidates share their critical reflections helped me guide them into the next phase of sense-making discourse. The purpose was to encourage iterative discussions about the new learning related to their experiences so candidates could make sense of their thinking. In these discussions, they learned that others shared similar perspectives and related experiences that helped inform their interpretation. Here is an example of a discourse between candidate J1J

and me. J1J, yes, anytime you can get outside perspectives that are different ways of thinking, I think it is beneficial."

I continued this by facilitating discussions after each of the four EQ training sessions, allowing candidates time to reflect and incorporate their reflections into the next session or engage in offline discussions with the other candidates. These iterative and reflective discussions deepened their awareness of ineffective, long-held beliefs and behaviors that had become habitual in many leadership situations. As the candidates reflected, they were receptive to learning EQ as a more effective way of thinking and acting and a replacement for ineffective habits of mind. Candidate P1B explained it this way: "I definitely need to know more because that is what I was saying. I felt like everybody else was younger. They are probably much more aware of it than I am. So, if anything, I need to know more about this. It piqued my curiosity and made me want to change. I want to continue because I want to be effective at work and in personal relationships. Because I sometimes try to control the conversation or speak over people, because I have to get this done. Just let me get this done. And that does not make it right; even at work, that does not make it right. And that is just the way I learned to do it, and not that it is right. So, I think that everything that was discussed was important. And that even though I may not like some of it, it was probably the ones that applied to me the most."

The surveys, interviews, and independent observations confirmed that they learned and implemented the learning due to LEDM. In the independent observations, the participants rated engagement over the sessions as 4.9 out of a possible score of 6 (highly engaged). This score confirms that the process effectively motivated the candidates to engage in the learning process. They identified problematic habits and behaviors that affected their leadership effectiveness. H1K described a habit that he changed in this way: "If you do not see somebody doing well, you

tend to write them off sometimes, and, well, they are just lazy, or they are just a bad worker. However, everybody has value. I have learned from this program, as well as the goals of the organization." P1B, a thirty-year supervisor, said, "Normally, I would just put it out there straight at them. However, now I think more about how the person will receive what I must tell them. Finally, W1S observed, "And I had to continually adjust and change as we went on through the course."

The transformative learning process was an effective framework in this clinical research study. It demonstrates that this framework can be utilized by small businesses to enhance the effectiveness of business training and leadership development. Even participants with diverse antecedent conditions, personalities, experiences, education, genders, and ages were able to progress through all the phases of transformative learning. In the group sessions, I had to moderate the discussions to prevent participants from focusing too much on their old, ineffective habits and not advancing to the next level, such as developing social awareness. In all discussions and one-to-one sessions, candidates remained engaged, reflective, and considerate of others' perspectives. I never observed anyone rejecting the transformative learning phases or the EQ information. Instead, their motivation was to improve their leadership abilities and become more aware of their role in positively influencing those they lead.

VI.3 Emotional Intelligence Knowledge and Behaviors

After the initial disorienting dilemma session, we progressed through each of the four weekly EQ learning cycles, which covered self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Each session began with a discussion of the prior week's content and the candidates' success in understanding and applying the EQ knowledge. This was followed by a short teaching session lasting fifteen to twenty minutes. We then watched illustrative video

clips that often highlighted others' failures in EQ. Candidates were grouped to discuss the videos and relate them to their own experiences. They presented their thoughts to the group and discussed their perspectives on observing demonstrations from individuals with low emotional intelligence. These vignettes resonated in two ways. Either they had worked for someone with bad habits, or they had personally demonstrated their version of these bad habits. Since these participants were motivated to seek higher-level leadership responsibilities, they began to understand that there is a learning benefit from observing or discussing others' bad habits. However, their direct reports could also say the same about their leadership. Often, they began to relate how their low EQ affected important relationships outside of work, and they started working on improving their EQ and eliminating habits that resulted in poor relational outcomes.

The four EQ sessions are typically taught over one or two half-day sessions. However, I divided each EQ area into one session lasting about two hours, spaced a week apart. Additionally, I incorporated post-session discussions, surveys, and two one-to-one sessions in weeks 2 and 5. I believed that the additional reflection, sense-making discourse, and depth of study in the LEDM version of the EQ training would result in a statistically significant improvement in the second EQ assessment. In LEDM, we spent significantly more time in formal and informal discussions. I spent much time answering questions and discussing work and personal incidents that bothered them as they reflected on how emotionally intelligent leaders think and act. As they compared themselves to these standards, their engagement and reflection increased, and they spent considerable time discussing this within the cohort and with family members. When TalentSmart supplied the second assessment results, I was surprised by the findings in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Cohort Cumulative EQ Scores Comparison

Skill	Assess 1	Assess 2	T-statistic	P-value	Significant
SA	75.8	72.2	0.795495129	0.44945429	No
SM	76.6	75.4	0.266206953	0.79783006	No
SO	75.0	78.0	0.63245553	0.54502281	No
RM	74.2	76.2	0.37742568	0.71576873	No
EQ	75.2	75.4	-0.0511310	0.96066418	No

The TalentSmartEQ report indicates that the group's EQ scores, as measured by assessments before and after the LEDM, did not show much change in the cohort's total score. However, the cohort's higher-level social awareness and relationship management scores did increase. According to TalentSmart's clinical psychologist, this lack of significant change is not unusual. Her data review revealed that the candidates were engaged and actively learning. She suggested examining the individual scores and their impact on the cohort scores. Upon examining the individual participant scores, it became evident that antecedent conditions had influenced the overall cohort scores. For example, highly Dominant personality types rushed (overconfidently) through the first assessment. In the second assessment, their scores dropped as they had increased their self-awareness, reflection, and sense-making. Talking to others had changed their perspectives, as they learned that their old ways of leading were not as effective as they would be if they assessed others more carefully and accurately. **Table 10** analyzes the individual EQ assessment scores and shows their impact.

Table 10: Individual Scores and Antecedents

CASE	Overall	Self Aware	Self Mgt	Social Aware	Rel Mgt	DiSC		AGE	GEN	ED	MIL	WRK EXP	LDR EXP
W1S1	82	85	81	87	77	DC	Implementor	25-30	M	BBA	N	4	2
W1S2	71	69	67	80	69								
Change	**-11**	**-16**	**-14**	**-7**	**-8**								
P1B1	75	78	79	74	69	D	Conductor	60-65	M	Tech	AF Flt Engr	40	30
P1B2	66	66	69	64	65								
Change	**-9**	**-12**	**-10**	**-10**	**-4**								
H1K1	73	75	79	70	69	S	Relator	30-35	M	BBA	ARM NCO	8	4
H1K2	79	72	81	80	83								
Change	**6**	**-3**	**2**	**10**	**14**								
J1J1	77	75	77	70	87	DC	Implementor	30-35	M	BBA	ARM NCO	8	4
J1J2	85	85	87	83	85								
Change	**8**	**10**	**10**	**13**	**-2**								
K2L1	69	66	67	74	69	IS	Relator	30-35	F	Weld Tch	N	10	2
K2L2	76	69	73	83	79								
Change	**7**	**3**	**6**	**9**	**10**								

Note: The first three digits of the first column identify the case. The final numerical digit represents the first or second assessment. Mil is an abbreviation for Military Service. WRK Experience is the number of years as a professional. LDR is the number of years as an official leader. NCO is a non-commissioned officer.

Table 10 shows that three of the five participants' overall scores improved. However, the scores of two out of the five candidates decreased in the second assessment, consequently lowering their overall and cohort scores. According to TalentSmartEQ, such occurrences are observed approximately twenty percent of the time. The two candidates whose scores declined in this study possess a high D (Dominance) in their DiSC Profile. This phenomenon may be

attributed to their initial assessment being conducted without much reflection and knowledge of Emotional Intelligence (EQ). However, after acquiring a deeper understanding of EQ, these candidates demonstrated greater reflection during the second assessment. Furthermore, research comparing pre- and post-intervention results refers to this phenomenon as beta change and is seen in nonequivalent control group studies. (Millsap & Hartog, 1988).

W1S scores dropped in the second assessment. In the second one-to-one session, W1S said, “I saw my scores drop significantly and realized that I now know much more than I did before, and I could answer those questions much better.”

Despite the initial surprise of the two participants’ scores declining, it is evident that the participants developed and enhanced their understanding and behaviors related to Emotional Intelligence (EQ). In the final survey, candidates were asked to rate their level of EQ improvement resulting from the training. The rating scale was as follows: 1 = a great deal of improvement, 2 = some improvement, 3 = moderate improvement, 4 = slight improvement, and 5 = no improvement. The cohort's average rating was 2.25.

The second level of measurement for training effectiveness is the extent to which candidates acquire the intended knowledge, skills, competence, confidence, and commitment as a result of their participation (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). The assessments and candidate surveys indicate that LEDM effectively motivates participants to learn and develop their leader EQ skills. Throughout the study, candidates frequently revisited the concept of self-awareness. My interventions emphasized that leaders inspire others to achieve the organization's goals. While managing oneself is foundational, it does not represent the highest level of EQ. They enhanced their EQ knowledge and developed effective methods for applying it in work and personal relationships. According to TalentSmartEQ, the highest level of EQ utilizes core skills,

self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness to effectively manage oneself and one's relationships (relationship management) that generate positive organizational outcomes. However, in the final survey, candidates expressed that their primary focus was improving their self-awareness. The second priority was self-management, and the third was improving social awareness; this focus fell short of developing and executing relationship management at the highest EQ level. The LEDM process developed participants' self-awareness and self-management knowledge and skills, and increased their understanding of social awareness and relationship management.

VI.4 Effectiveness of Leader-Led

The literature debates the merits of institutional professors, professional trainers, consultants, and in-house trainers as effective leaders' developers. However, it rarely examines the impact of the CEO or corporate leader as a formal facilitator or mentor. In small businesses, the managing partner typically sets the strategic direction and organizational structure, either explicitly or implicitly. This leader is responsible for the organization's success and is highly motivated to identify and develop leaders who can contribute significantly. In daily business interactions, they influence employees' views on leadership in most small, mature businesses. Their effect on the leaders, intended or not, is impactful and shapes their development positively or negatively. However, they are focused on daily activities and developing leaders with whom they are comfortable. They are not proactively considering the long-term selection and development of leaders who can scale the business several years into the future.

However, because the leader has worked closely with the employees, they often possess intimate knowledge to understand each participant's unique antecedents. They may know how to adapt and guide their interventions accordingly. They frequently know how to motivate them

based on past work interactions. In this study, I examined the impact and advantages of a leader-led program. Businesses may not have the resources to hire an outside firm, and these findings would be instructive for a company pursuing in-house options.

I primarily relied on participant feedback to measure my effectiveness and any perceived benefits. The findings revealed that the leader was not as crucial as long as trust was established. They suggested that there are advantages to having the business leader facilitate training. If trust is already established, then candidates will move more quickly toward transparent discourse and open discussions. I learned firsthand that when a leader is actively involved with participants in the workplace, there are informal opportunities for observing and coaching in the moment. This positively reinforces the key LEDM knowledge and behaviors being taught. This happened often between sessions. I performed planned and unplanned interventions when walking through the facility. I would ask participants to explain their feelings on what we were learning and how these impacted them and those they were leading. These opportunities enabled me to assess the participants' progress and their reflections on our LEDM work. This often led to clarifying conversations or assessments of EQ work interactions. This would not happen, especially for eight weeks, in practitioner-based training.

In the two one-to-one sessions, I interviewed the participants to determine what they believed a good facilitator must possess or do to make the LEDM effective. The first point that most of the participants highlighted was trust. In open discussions, they said trust enabled them to be transparent. W1S described it this way: "From the perspective of being in the course and attending, I think having someone inside the organization is the best, in my opinion." I think it is person-to-person. I debated this with one person, going through the pros and cons. However, I think it allows us to be more open and comfortable right from the program's start. If it were

someone outside the organization, I think you would become more comfortable with them through the program. Nevertheless, initially, there would be some hesitancy to be as open or unfiltered as you need to be to be beneficial in the program." W1S also shared, "I think it depends on the culture at the company because I feel that we all have a good enough relationship and a high enough level of trust to be pretty open in these conversations." Moreover, the training would not have been very effective without that. You must be transparent; even if some people are less than others, you must have that communication." Finally, P1B shared, "We need guidance, not just education and leader development. However, there also has to be a huge element of trust."

Participants revealed that an established trust would enable important and transparent conversations, but they also emphasized that expert-level subject matter knowledge is a crucial requirement for facilitation. J1J described the need as follows: "Unless the leader of the organization lacks experience with emotional intelligence, I think it needs to be someone within the organization who possesses it, and it doesn't necessarily need to be someone's direct boss." It needs to be higher up than that, if possible." In the one-to-one session, K2L said, " I was always comfortable. I feel like you are educated and articulate. And so, if it was like Joe Schmo leading it, maybe. However, I think you or someone equally educated, someone specializing in this field, would be fine. When asked what was important in recreating this training for the next group, L2K said, "If this was recreated and that person did not have that same skill level, it might be better to bring somebody in from the outside."

Participants stated that the impact of having a leader who was both vulnerable and invested in their success would be more effective than that of an educator. H1K said, "Somebody who really cares about the growth and success of the people, and that they learn something

instead of just coming and teaching it." H1K went on to talk about the leader's vulnerability and desire to make sure the participants grew was a positive, "I feel like if a leader is willing to be vulnerable with me to make sure that I learn this material and make sure that I know that everybody is going through a lot of these things, even someone that you think should have it all together. No, I do not feel that way at all. I feel like it is a positive." J1J discussed the role of coaching and education in the LEDM, stating, "You need to learn it on an educational side but also have someone who can help guide you through, show you how to implement it, and do the other parts." You needed both the theoretical and the practical." J1J related these thoughts: "My experience is that when you have outside people, it can feel like a workshop, basically, and you don't take it as seriously." Finally, K2L said, "I do not think the education would have had as much benefit without the coaching."

In each post-session survey, participants were asked about their comfort with the leader as the facilitator. They knew these responses were anonymous. My concern was that the candidates might feel coerced into participating or think their participation would earn them favors from the CEO. I added questions about their progress and the overall effectiveness of the LEDM. The average score for their comfort level with the CEO facilitating the training was 1.5. A score of one indicates the highest level of comfort, while a score of five indicates the most significant discomfort. These scores remained consistent across each session and over the eight weeks. The survey results suggest that participants were comfortable with the CEO as their leader and that I met their expectations, contributing to their growth and engagement.

A key finding from the study highlights the importance of trust in the facilitator in fostering meaningful discourse. Participants revealed that they would not be as transparent or open without this trust or until it was established. They believe that leader development requires

the facilitator or leader to act as an educator and a coach with subject matter expertise. They stated that much of the next-level knowledge is new, and they require guidance to process this knowledge and adopt new behaviors. They had no experience to fall back on and looked to me for guidance because they knew I had achieved what they wanted to achieve. The facilitator is a crucial component of the LEDM model. Furthermore, they are inspired when the leader is vulnerable and working to help them improve and succeed.

VII CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

Small, mature businesses often face challenges in leadership development due to limited resources, which can significantly contribute to their failure (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2017). Despite extensive research on leadership attributes, a gap remains in understanding the effective development processes for leaders in small businesses. This study addresses this gap by exploring the effectiveness of a leader-led transformative adult learning process in a small, mature business. Transformative learning, encompassing the phases of motivation, reflection, sense-making, and change, served as the theoretical basis for LEDM. LEDM was an intervention model used to develop influential leaders. Used in adult learning, I sought to understand its effectiveness in business leader development as an alternative to experience-based business education.

Key empirical findings indicated improved emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and leader-level growth. The leader-facilitated program effectively developed leaders who could influence long-term business success by enhancing their critical thinking skills and overcoming habitual mindsets, providing a model for small, mature businesses to follow. The theoretical frameworks (TLP and MTL) proved to be effective methods for selecting and developing leaders. LEDM contributed new empirical evidence through the research cycle. Applying a well-tested adult learning framework rather than experience-based business training demonstrated to business researchers that this is an effective development mechanism.

The key theoretical and practical contribution of this clinical research study is LEDM. This model synthesized theoretical candidate selection (MTL) with leader-led facilitation, adult learning theory (TLP), and foundational leader development (EQ). The constant feedback framework ensures coaching adaptations that build deeper learning and guide participants into next-level EQ and leader development. Improved self-awareness, coupled with an understanding

of how to inspire others, adds value to the business as it matures. The academic literature calls for empirical leader development studies examining who should be developed, how candidates should be developed, what skills should be developed, and who should develop the candidates (Day et al., 2021). LEDM modeled these requests and contributed a participant's positive perspective on the process's effectiveness.

VII.1 Empirical Findings

The findings cover the effectiveness of LEDM. The methods for evaluating the effectiveness of training include processes for measuring engagement and knowledge retention (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Furthermore, there should be a noticeable change in the way participants think and behave (Cranton, 2023). Finally, participants should be able to describe their new knowledge and ways of acting (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

I grouped the findings into categories designed to measure the effectiveness of "how" and "what." The desired outcome was to enhance the participants' emotional intelligence and leadership skills. Furthermore, I sought to determine whether the LEDM elements — leader-led, TLP, and EQ — positively influenced the outcomes from the participants' perspectives and displayed evidence of positive behavioral and cognitive changes. The following subchapters provide more details.

VII.1.1 Leader-Level Outcomes

LEDM was successful from both the participants' perspective and in terms of changes in behaviors and thinking, leading to improvements in leadership skills at their respective leadership levels. In the literature review, research advocates for EQ development as a foundational skill set needed for leaders (Black & Earnest, 2009; Kjellström et al., 2020). I created categories for leader levels: self, team, organization, and strategic to assess the

candidate's leader level at the start and the end of the study. During the study, participants suggested that within these levels are skill set spectrums from low to high. Since the educational component was EQ-based, they related leadership changes to EQ skill sets. *The participants revealed they had improved from a low-level to a high-level EQ skill set, yet remained at their starting leader level. They believed that LEDM had influenced these changes.* Their self-assessments revealed that they had moved from low-level to high-level skills. The skills they referred to were improvements in self-awareness, self-management, and work relationships. This finding implies that in a leader development program, the starting participant leader level should be at the level the small business requires, and focus on higher-level effectiveness within that level. In a time-constrained yet intensive development program, expecting participants to advance to a higher leadership level is unreasonable. It appears that a realistic expectation is a series of interventions (multiple LEDMs) that build on each other to move leaders to higher levels. Selecting highly motivated participants does not substitute for the experiences and dilemmas that development requires. Small businesses must initiate the process early in their life cycle and allocate sufficient time for growth.

VII.1.2EQ: Leader Skills and the Influence of LEDM

The Transformative Learning Process, a cornerstone of LEDM, was an effective methodology for motivating and developing the participants' emotional intelligence. The adult learning teaching model was effective for business education. Academics are asking for empirical studies highlighting the role of coaching, feedback, and self-reflection (Day et al., 2021). LEDM was developed with feedback mechanisms, including semi-structured interviews, post-session surveys, and observations. Their timing enabled the implementation of adaptive coaching interventions within group discussions and educational sessions. Furthermore, TLP's

second phase was designed for reflection, leading to sensemaking discourse and iterative reflections fueled by others' perspectives. This led to improved self-awareness and relationship management.

The disorienting dilemma (TLP phase 1) effectively motivated participants to engage and learn. Using the derailer behaviors as a dilemma, participants became aware of habits of mind hindering positive relationships in and out of the workplace. When candidates learned that EQ, specifically self-awareness and self-management, was a tool that could help them overcome their derailer behaviors, they were excited to learn more. All the feedback sources revealed a high level of engagement and learning new ways of thinking and acting. By the end of the training, they had become highly self-aware, effectively managing their triggers, and were working through their improvement plan. This feedback further highlighted areas that required emphasis and discussion in the subsequent training sessions, enabling adaptive facilitation to address these areas effectively. The implications for both researchers and interventionists are that they must carefully plan a disorienting experience that motivates adult learners to engage in what they intend to teach. Simply expecting employees to learn because they are sent for training and the company believes in the training is not a motivation, but an expectation.

A compelling, disorienting dilemma created momentum to move through reflection, sense-making, and discourse, leading to new ways of thinking and acting. This finding aligns with Mezirow's assertion that adult learning is a voluntary process, necessitating that learners be motivated by an event orchestrated by the facilitator; otherwise, adults may not engage in the learning process. (Cranton, 2023). Beyond instant motivation, it created momentum that helped participants learn the four phases and actively work through them while maintaining their commitment. Learning the TLP and developing their emotional intelligence (EQ) improved their

leadership skill set. TLP taught the candidates to reflect and make sense of/discuss before reacting with a HOM. This leads to enhanced leader decision-making, which is a key attribute for businesses at the third level.

Motivation, Reflection, Sense-Making, and Change are more than processes; they are critical thinking skills that leaders can use to overcome habits of mind. When participants completed the DD phase, they struggled to interpret their findings. Having a facilitator guide them through self-reflection and group discourse helped them unpack why these habits of mind existed and how to overcome them. Even with the guidance, they continued to engage in self-reflection. However, the group discussions, both formal and informal, helped them learn better ways of acting and methods for managing their derailer behaviors. Participants learned the value of considering other perspectives in making sense of their reflections.

The power of self-awareness and awareness of others as a tool for development cannot be overstated. LEDM would have been less effective if there had not been an awakening of the participants. When leaders recognize that they need to be more effective and that their relational habits and communication style limit their career advancement, they initiate the change process. However, self-learning and self-actualization are less effective than guided instruction and mentoring. Small businesses must combine formal and informal guided instruction with an effective adult learning framework that triggers an awareness that motivates change. Guiding candidates iteratively through the dilemma, into reflection, and then into sense-making creates improved leader outcomes and teaches them a critical thinking process.

VII.1.3Impact of Leader-Led

The impact of the facilitator is more about meeting certain expectations than it is about a specific facilitator or a particular title. Literature has little to say about the effectiveness of a

small business leader facilitating the leader development process. In this study, it seemed logical that the CEO would facilitate the training. Manco is a company that invests heavily in both internal and external training for its employees, creating a culture of learning. The CEO (me) has led numerous training sessions on servant leadership and practical leadership skills. Furthermore, I am a certified EQ trainer who works with the employees and has insights into their work history and DiSC profiles. Having served as a CEO for over thirty years, I have witnessed the outcomes of various types of training. This qualifies me to lead the training, given that I have the time. Although the participants' surveys and one-to-one interviews indicated that they were comfortable with my leadership and believed our level of trust facilitated transparency in the group session, I was surprised to learn that the participants also felt that the facilitator was not the most essential factor. *Participants stated that effective facilitation was fueled by the level of trust they had in the facilitator.* Trust is foundational to transparent discourse. Without it, they would not share openly with any facilitator. *Effective learning and development are based on the combination of education and coaching.* It is not enough to teach material; the facilitator must guide candidates in acquiring new knowledge and developing new ways of acting at levels where they have little or no experience to draw on. Participants needed to be shown the difference between habits of mind and new ways of behaving. Areas such as self-management and accurate social awareness require active participation, leader observation, and active feedback. Moving from one leader level to the next is not intuitive, and the participants were clear that knowledge, guidance, and feedback were critical to their growth.

Participants expect the facilitator to be open and vulnerable and to care about their success. Practitioner-based training often places a strong emphasis on learning and development. Besides the actual training sessions, there is little interface or activity to develop relationships

with participants. In this study, one of the motivations for learning, engagement, and development was that the participants believed I wanted them to succeed in their relationships and advance their careers. They highlighted that I was not just teaching and then leaving them to figure it out; instead, I guided them and spent a considerable amount of time with them, both informally and formally. They recognized that my time was limited, but the amount of time that I spent with them showed that I valued them, and they believed I wanted them to succeed. They noted that caring motivates them to learn because if the leader that they trust believes in the process and learning, then it is important.

The facilitator must have subject-matter expertise. The saying, "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care," should be amended to include that you better understand your stuff once they know you care. When learning involves development that impacts employee careers, they want to know that the facilitator is knowledgeable about the subject and can communicate it effectively.

Small businesses often parcel out training to different firms, but clearly, leader development is time-consuming and requires building leader levels one layer at a time over a long period. These participants highlighted skills, behaviors, and attitudes needed for effective development. In many businesses, the CEO lacks the time and teaching skills to lead development. However, it is also clear that development cannot be a collection of educational experiences. Leader selection and development is a long-term strategy that requires high-level leaders to monitor and assess programs that deliver participant feedback, measuring engagement, learning, and knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, they must monitor work encounters and look for signs that the development program is progressing as planned. If a business outsources the development, outside programs must be evaluated for their ability to foster trust, demonstrate

expertise, motivate participants, promote reflection, adapt instruction to overcome habits of mind, stimulate sensemaking, and achieve tangible and measurable outcomes. Their facilitator must understand their antecedents and have feedback frameworks that help them optimize the training. Participants want to feel valued and know their growth is paramount to the facilitators and business leaders. This requires time, as well as both informal and formal interactions. The business should use programs that coach and educate, rather than those that lecture and leave.

VII.2 Contributions to Theory

This study's literature review examined the prevailing adult learning theories, behaviorism, humanism, cognitivism, constructivism, and social cognitivism. It determined that transformative learning theory synthesized the benefits of these theories into a single model. Academics have worked with this model for over forty years, and it has retained its significance in the field of adult learning. In business training, little to no consideration is given to applying adult learning theory, which emphasizes that learning is voluntary and requires motivation. LEDM made this a focal learning theory and process because it exhibited the ability to motivate candidates to learn through a disorienting dilemma, followed by iterative phases that facilitators can use to guide participants into new learning and behavior. Educators have long applied these principles to adult learning. However, academics find that business training often falls short and ask for empirical evidence from studies examining adult learning to fill the void (Waldman et al., 2013). Furthermore, researchers asked these empirical studies to address what should be taught, how it should be taught, and who should be selected (Day et al., 2021). Further evidence was needed to understand the role of feedback, reflection, and coaching in leader development (Day et al., 2021). This clinical research utilized LEDM and contributed evidence to address each question related to leader development. *The findings from this study support the theory that*

transformative learning is an effective framework for business education that small businesses can use for leader development. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the framework has effectively improved learning and leader skill development due to its mechanism (how) and the learning outcomes (what). *It revealed that reflection, feedback, and coaching play crucial roles in leader development, even within an eight-week program.*

This study confirmed that antecedent conditions play a role in the learning process, and moderating them should be a strategic consideration. Mezirow believed that this was a benefit of TLP (Cranton, 2023). This study confirmed that belief and further showed how a carefully constructed disorienting dilemma can motivate and engage students in their development journey.

Finally, LEDM answered what should be taught in a leader development program. EQ is a useful answer to this question. The participants in this study concluded that EQ is a foundational leadership skill set. Throughout and after the program, participants engaged and worked to develop positive EQ behaviors and thinking. Following the end of the program, each had developed a growth plan and selected mentors to help grow their weak areas. Participants typically do not engage in self-development unless they embrace a process or knowledge they are interested in.

Beyond answering researchers' requests for more data to inform adult learning and theoretical selection frameworks, LEDM contributed a theoretical framework and process for leader development. It further modeled the combination of action research cycles, research, and intervention within a clinical research context. The dual cycle model shows how data from the intervention informs the effectiveness of a research theoretical framework and how the theoretical framework guides the intervention. I added feedback instruments that generated

constant data to improve instruction and mark progress. LEDM is a unique synthesis of effective theoretical frameworks used in a business context. Its contribution is to encourage academia to build upon this or develop other models that synthesize effective frameworks for practical applications.

VII.3 Contributions to Practice

This study was motivated by the lack of developed leaders in small to medium-sized businesses, which face the challenges of scaling and competition during the mature business phase. LEDM is a model that practitioners can use as a starting point for developing leaders in their organization. Although EQ was the primary focus of learning, LEDM is not limited to EQ studies and can be used to develop other leader skills. Furthermore, LEDM provides practitioner-based business education insights into increasing the success of their programs through a model that guides their planning and intervention, whether they utilize in-house resources or outsourced programs. Post-study reflection highlighted the components of LEDM and how they worked together to motivate, engage, and develop leaders in this clinical research study. I created **Table 11** to summarize the components and ordered them so practitioners can easily use LEDM.

Table 11: LEDM for the Practitioner

Elemental Steps of LEDM	**Instrumentation Examples**
Define a measurable outcome	Leader Level and EQ Assessments
Determine “what” to develop	EQ; TalentSmartEQ materials
Assess the candidate profile and the relevant selection tool	MTL selection tool (LEDM)
Determine participant antecedents	DiSC, employment history
Use LEDM criteria for facilitator selection	Trust, care, expertise, coaching, and educator
Select an appropriate Disorienting Dilemma	Hogan’s 11 Derailer Behavior videos
Lay out the LEDM Phases: Motivation, Reflection, Sense-Making, and Change	Timeline
Build feedback mechanisms for adaptive coaching and progress measurement	Discussion sessions, surveys, interviews, observation, and informal discourse
Monitor engagement behaviors and emotions	Independent observation

Practitioners and facilitators can use the motivation, reflection, sense-making, and change phases as a model to apply to business training, creating engagement and preparing candidates to develop critical skills. The phases provide a structured framework for designing and implementing training programs that are both engaging and effective. Planning what is taught and accurately selecting who is being taught is essential. Furthermore, the facilitator can use the process steps — Motivate, Assess, Adapt, Intervene, and Follow-up — coupled with the instruments as a model for planning their interaction with LEDM.

In this study, half of the employees volunteered to participate in the training. However, using the modified MTL as the selection process, only ten percent of the employee pool qualified. This selective approach ensures that the training is targeted at individuals who are most likely to benefit from it, thereby maximizing the return on investment. In the case of leader development, MTL is a wise assessment. However, other assessments may be more appropriate if the subject matter is not relevant to leadership. For example, substituting an assessment that measures a candidate's leaning toward strategic thinking might be more relevant to teaching leaders strategic skills.

LEDM is flexible and can be adjusted in several ways. Extending the duration of the program and incorporating phased learning can provide candidates with more time to internalize and apply strategic leadership concepts. Introducing specific modules focused on strategic leadership can help candidates understand the complexities of leading at an organizational level. Utilizing real-world case studies and simulations can enhance the practical application of strategic leadership concepts. Pairing candidates with experienced mentors and coaches can provide valuable guidance and support throughout their leadership development journey. Leaders can place candidates in cross-functional projects, which expose them to different aspects of the

organization and will deepen their understanding of strategic leadership. Establishing a continuous learning and development culture can ensure that candidates continue to grow and evolve into effective leaders. Adopting LEDM establishes a framework for training programs and a feedback loop that enables leaders, facilitators, and participants to monitor effectiveness in various business training programs.

VII.4 Limitations

This section examines the inherent limitations encountered throughout the research process, offering a transparent view of factors that may have influenced the study's outcomes. Addressing these constraints aims to provide a balanced interpretation of the findings and pave the way for future investigation.

Small sample size. With only five candidates in this clinical study, the findings may not represent the broader population of small and mature businesses, limiting generalizability. Additionally, the depth of analysis is constrained, and achieving data saturation is more challenging with a small sample size. Although this is an exploratory study, peers may argue that it does not capture the full range of perspectives or experiences, thereby reducing the validity and reliability of the findings. Despite these limitations, this clinical research study provides valuable insights into leader development within small and mature businesses. In this study, the real-world experiences of the participants and the leader serve as an empirical launching point for deeper investigations.

Variations in SMBs limit the generalizability of the findings. Starting with time and financial resources, several key differences between small and mature businesses significantly impact the success of an organizational leader development process. For example, a growing, mature business may lack the time to take candidates away from production or align schedules

for leaders and candidates to meet. The focus may be on goods and services production, customer service, and acquiring new accounts.

Small businesses often operate like families, with limited room to add new talent for development, as employees typically grow alongside the founder and the company. The organization's focus has frequently been heavily on technical competencies, lacking the skills and appetite to develop leadership from within. Other organizations may not be led by entrepreneurs but rather by second-generation leaders or hired executives. Each type of leader brings unique skills, experiences, and backgrounds that shape their perspectives on leadership and organizational management.

Ownership and leadership can vary from family members to proxies or venture capitalists, each with different organizational goals, time limits, views on leadership, and resources available for leader development. However, this study targets small business leaders who aim to scale their companies by offering unique business propositions that can sustain long-term success. Despite the differences among small businesses, this research can inform and aid leaders in developing leadership skills and accurately assessing the candidate skills needed for scaling and gaining a competitive advantage.

Complexity of the participants and their antecedents. The complexity of human subjects in any study raises concerns about the research's generalizability and validity. Motivation, experience, age, gender, education, bias, work relationships, social pressures, and financial situations all contribute to this complexity. To address these challenges, this study implemented several strategies:

1. **Pilot Testing**: Over the past several years, Manco has conducted pilot training to refine the research design and identify effective instruments, such as *Intelligence 2.0*, to

uncover and correct potential issues. Employee feedback, engagement, and workplace applications have helped refine the training protocol.

2. **Reliable Instrumentation**: The Motivation to Lead survey, the Transformative Learning Process, and *Intelligence 2.0* have all been tested and validated for reliability. These instruments have consistently produced reliable results despite the complexity of human subjects. TalentSmartEQ, for instance, has validated its tools and assessments with thousands of participants.
3. **Rich and Deep Descriptions**: Data coding facilitates the development of detailed descriptions and insights from the perspectives of both the subjects and the leader. All discussions were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to enhance the understanding of participants' feelings and progress. As this is a clinical research study designed to support participants seeking development, there is an urgency and transparency that enable detailed descriptions of the context, participants, and processes. Additionally, built-in feedback mechanisms in one-to-one sessions, group sessions, work interactions, and assessments provide more detailed and richer insights than typical surveys. Multiple sources and contacts within various contexts created triangulation for cross-checking the findings.
4. **Peer Review and Feedback**: In addition to feedback from the candidates, the Dissertation Advisory Committee, comprising experts in the field of study and qualitative research, engages in the study design, methods, and findings to ensure rigor and depth. Furthermore, the Dissertation Advisor reviewed the data and data coding to reduce bias. Meetings were held weekly to review the data and research process.

Leader nuances affect the attitude and approach to development. This clinical research study is crucial for small and mature businesses that need to develop leaders for business scaling, competitive positioning, or succession planning. The analysis assumes leaders will be actively involved in leader development because they better understand the business's unique proposition, inter-relational history, organizational culture, and resources than an external group that can only offer educational, not developmental, instruction. Leaders differ in their management styles, communication approaches, conflict resolution strategies, professional development methods, emotional intelligence, and more. This variability and complexity can impact the generalizability and validity of the study's findings, as well as their applicability to other businesses.

LEDM is a coalescing strategy that helps address this variability. Additionally, this study provides a transparent description of the leader who conducted the development process. This description enables leaders with high emotional intelligence to evaluate, understand, and adapt their approach within the TL process, thereby improving their effectiveness. The research findings offer a guide or path forward for leaders involved in development. The design, methods, and conclusions' depth, richness, and transparency enable small and mature businesses to discover a practical path for leader development.

VII.5 Future Research

Future research could benefit from utilizing LEDM as a developmental tool for enhancing small businesses' strategic and organizational skills. Expanding the LEDM to develop critical skills across the six areas of a business (not just leader development) would improve the academic understanding of how to build holistic and complementary training for enhancing SMBs. This study showed that candidates with recent business degrees did not rely on their

education to better understand the leadership skills required at all leadership levels. Their focus remained on self-awareness and self-improvement. The leadership goal should be to inspire others to accomplish the organizational goals and not stay in self-leadership. Future research should expand on what should be learned and when it should be learned so that SMBs can meet the challenges they face as their business grows and encounters new challenges in areas such as scale and competitive threats.

Future research could focus on transitioning candidates from emphasizing self-awareness and self-management to social awareness and relationship management, as required of Level 3 or Level 4 leaders. The LEDM methodology can be applied in the learning process. Still, a selection method should be refined to identify candidates with the competence to lead at Level 3 or Level 4 from within the ranks of the SMB. Given the candidate's competencies, the learning would be on what to teach, when to teach the subjects, and how long it should take. Undoubtedly, knowing the competencies needed would be foundational to a future study.

This study primarily consisted of Level 1 members selected from various leadership levels. Studying LEDM in an executive setting would help determine whether it is limited to self- or team leaders or is effective across all leadership levels. Further understanding the impact of the TLP phases on a seasoned group of leaders would increase the understanding of LEDM’s applicability across different leadership levels.

VII.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this pragmatic qualitative clinical research study successfully examined adult learning theory, specifically transformative learning theory, as a theoretical framework for teaching and developing emotional intelligence in specially selected leader candidates. Within eight weeks, five participants went from a self-assessed low level of EQ awareness to a very high

level. The four phases of transformative learning, as outlined by Jack Mezirow, informed and motivated participants to overcome habits of mind and develop higher-level leadership thinking and behaviors (Cranton, 2023). Specifically, when confronted with a dilemma, they are more likely to reflect, discuss, and seek new ways of thinking and acting rather than making emotion-based responses (Mezirow, 1997).

I synthesized the elements of motivation to learn theory, transformative learning, emotional intelligence, and leader-led facilitation into the Leader Elevated Development Model (LEDM), which answered the call from academia for more empirical studies using adult learning theory that is specific about what should be taught, who should participate, and how candidates are trained. This clinical research study also considered antecedent conditions, including personality, experience, leadership level, and education. It employed an adaptive coaching approach to moderate these conditions while enhancing candidates' leadership skills and emotional intelligence learning. As Schein suggests, the role of clinical research in a qualitative study is to assess, adapt, and intervene on behalf of the participants (Schein, 1976). My formal and informal interventions resulted in participants sensing how much I care and want them to succeed.

Using a modified version of motivation to lead theory, which only selected candidates who scored above seventy-five in the assessment areas of total, affective, and social-normative categories, effectively identified and selected participants who were engaged and motivated throughout the study. This highlights the effectiveness of training selection based on candidate motivation, avoiding candidates who are not motivated to lead and would gain little from organizational leadership development. This provides positive empirical evidence to support the

academic question of who should be selected, utilizing an established theoretical framework and assessment.

LEDM utilized TalentSmartEQ resources, which were couched in the transformative learning framework and led by the Manco CEO, a TalentSmartEQ-certified trainer. All candidates learned the core principles of emotional intelligence and how to apply them to lead at a mature level. Participants' feedback further validated the effectiveness of LEDM, as they rated both LEDM and leader-led facilitation as highly effective in their surveys.

The research implies that leader development training is more effective when it combines education (what) with guidance and intervention. How to train involves accurate candidate selection, motivation through a disorienting dilemma, guided reflection and sense-making, and critical discourse. Fundamentally, there must be trust between the participants and the facilitator. The facilitator must make the participants feel that their success is essential, be knowledgeable, and use a coaching style instead of a lecture-and-leave approach. The additions of guided discussion sessions, independent observations, semi-structured interviews, and anonymous post-session surveys are markers of knowledge progress and participant engagement. These enable the facilitator to adapt the training and recognize antecedent barriers that may disengage participants.

As a practical tool, LEDM provides small to medium-sized businesses with a model to emulate, enabling them to enhance their training and teaching. Leaders now have insights they can use to plan and implement in their organizational training. They have candidate feedback mechanisms and surveys that enable them to measure the effectiveness of internal or external trainers.

This study answered the call for empirical research that informs us about what, who, and how to develop. Furthermore, LEDM provides research data that practitioners and academics can apply to refine their development models and frameworks..

As a CEO, I find it incredibly satisfying to see leader candidates develop and utilize new EQ skills that enhance their personal and professional relationships. Helping them recognize limiting antecedent conditions and habits of mind, providing them with the tools to think critically, and developing new ways of thinking and acting will enhance our business culture and set examples for others to follow.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Dissertation Development

This dissertation development section describes my reasoning for pursuing this clinical research study. As the CEO and owner of a small, mature business, I face emerging challenges characteristic of the third phase of business growth. While the organization has achieved an impressive average annualized growth rate of seventeen percent since its inception, the demands of day-to-day operations have often precluded the proactive development of processes, assets, and leadership capabilities essential for sustaining growth over the next five to ten years. At critical junctures, the available options for addressing leadership gaps include hiring a leader, developing an internal leader, outsourcing the training of candidates, or neglecting the issue altogether. However, hiring external leaders with tacit knowledge and requisite leadership skills is rare. Additionally, my experience with external firms offering business training has revealed limited effectiveness; they primarily deliver instruction without facilitating meaningful, long-term development. Further complexities arise from managing competitive pressures, scaling growth, and planning an eventual exit strategy.

To explore solutions, I undertook an extensive literature review to identify best practices for addressing these leader development challenges. My initial focus on leader development yielded insights into the skills, cognitive approaches, behaviors, and attributes required for effective leadership. Recognizing the need for a systematic approach, I narrowed the focus to research addressing the leadership development process. This investigation led to an adult learning theory (Mezirow, 1997), which emphasizes strategies for motivating effective adult learning. As a business leader, I have not observed the application of adult learning theory in business training. Is it possible that this is why business training is ineffective? Could this be used to develop leaders more effectively and quickly than other options? The research further

explained that transformative learning (Cranton, 2023) has emerged as particularly relevant among various learning theories, integrating effective elements from multiple adult learning theories into a cohesive framework. Using this theoretical foundation, I developed a leadership development model tailored to the needs of small, mature businesses. Further examination of the literature revealed ongoing debate regarding practical leadership development, with researchers seeking empirical answers to critical questions, including how to develop leaders, what to teach leader candidates, who to select for leadership development, and who should guide the developmental process.

The motivation-to-lead theoretical framework (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) surfaced as a valuable tool for identifying suitable leader candidates. Consistent among researchers was the assertion that emotional intelligence—particularly self-awareness—constitutes a foundational attribute for leadership development, addressing the question of "what" to teach. Despite these theoretical advancements, the research lacked an integrated model encompassing all elements necessary for a comprehensive analysis. In response, I developed the Leadership Elevation Development Model (LEDM), a theoretical construct designed to provide the empirical data that researchers and practitioners require. To evaluate the impact of LEDM on developmental outcomes, Kirkpatrick and Phillips' training evaluation framework was employed (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Reflecting on identified gaps in the research, alongside my practical experience, I formulated the following research question: *How can an effective leader-led transformative learning process be designed and orchestrated to develop leader candidates within a small, mature business?*

The methodological approach was developed concurrently with the LEDM model. Key considerations included the distinction between development processes and educational events.

Participants sought support for their leadership growth, necessitating an outcome-driven program rather than a conventional study. Consequently, pre- and post-process analyses were incorporated to assess the program's effectiveness. Formal and informal interventions were integrated to stimulate motivation and enhance learning, recognizing that adult learning requires adaptable strategies. Given the constrained duration of the intervention, frequent feedback and iterative adjustments were essential to ensure efficacy. The action research and clinical research frameworks informed the methodology, incorporating diagnostic processes, problem identification, and targeted interventions (Meyers, 2020; Schein, 1976). However, as posited by Edgar Schein, clinical research creates a methodology that encourages active and adaptive coaching. It also requires the researcher to possess the necessary expertise and act as a consultant to the participants (Schein, 1976).

Appendix 2: Mathiassen 2017 Table Two

Component	Definition	Specification
Journal	The target journal defines the audience for the research and the conversation in which the work participates.	**The Leadership Quarterly.**
Title	The title effectively conveys the essence of the research design, with a particular emphasis on C.	**Developing Leader Candidates Using Transformative Learning Theory: A Clinical Research into a Small Mature Business**
P	The problem setting represents people's concern in a real-world problem situation.	Sixty-five percent of small businesses fail before their tenth anniversary. A primary cause is the need for exemplary leaders in the organization. Entrepreneurial founders often need more experience and skills to operate and grow a business in its mature life stage. Furthermore, they require additional resources to hire and develop exceptional leaders.
A	The area of concern represents some body of knowledge related to P in the literature.	Attracting, assessing, and developing exemplary leaders (Day et al., 2021)
F	The conceptual framing helps structure the collection and analysis of data from P to answer the RQ; FA draws on concepts from A, whereas FI draws on concepts independent of A.	Transformative Learning Theory (Day et al., 2021; Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023)
M	The method outlines the approach to empirical inquiry, specifically focusing on data collection and analysis.	This clinical research study examines a leader-facilitated program designed to develop mature small business leaders, guiding candidates toward high emotional intelligence (EQ). The study records and evaluates the activities and outcomes as the program follows the protocol outlined in Transformative Learning Theory.

RQ	The research question relates to P, opens the door for research into A, and helps ensure the research design is coherent and consistent.	How can an effective leader-led transformative learning process be designed and orchestrated to develop leader candidates within a small, mature business?
	Contributions influence P and A and possibly also F and M.	CP: Lessons on how leaders in mature small businesses can develop leader candidates using a defined process that determines the "what" and "how" of a development program C_a: A detailed empirical account of a leader-led development program in a mature small business that describes awareness, sense-making, adaptations, and limitations of assessing and developing leader candidates C_a: Answers the call to apply adult learning theory to leader development rather than a practitioner-based methodology.

Appendix 3: Motivation to Lead Survey

No	Question	Score
1	Most of the time, I prefer being a leader rather than a follower when working in a group.	
2	I am the type of person who is not interested in leading others.	
3	I am definitely not a leader by nature.	
4	I am the type of person who likes to be in charge of others.	
5	I believe I can contribute more to a group if I am a follower rather than a leader.	
6	I usually want to be the leader in the groups that I work in.	
7	I am the type who would actively support a leader but prefers not to be appointed as a leader.	
8	I have a tendency to take charge in most groups or teams that I work in.	
9	I am seldom reluctant to be the leader of a group.	
10	I am only interested in leading a group if there are clear advantages for me.	
11	I will never agree to lead if I cannot see any benefits from accepting that role.	
12	I would only agree to be a group leader if I know I can benefit from that role.	
13	I would agree to lead others even if that role has no special rewards or benefits.	
14	I would want to know "what is in it for me" if I am going to agree to lead a group.	
15	I never expect to get more privileges if I agree to lead a group.	
16	If I agree to lead a group, I would never expect any advantages or special benefits.	
17	I have more of my own problems to worry about than to be concerned about the rest of the group.	
18	Leading others is more of a dirty job than an honorable one.	
19	I have a duty to lead others if asked.	
20	I agree to lead whenever I am asked or nominated by the other members.	
21	I was taught to believe in the value of leading others.	
22	It is appropriate for people to accept leadership roles or positions when they are asked.	
23	I have always been taught to volunteer and lead others if possible.	
24	It is not right to decline leadership roles.	
25	It is an honor and privilege to be asked to lead.	
26	People should volunteer to lead rather than wait for others to ask or vote for them.	
27	I would never agree to lead just because others voted for me.	

Appendix 4: Emotional Intelligence Assessment Example

	Please respond to each statement as it applies to you. The scale is 1 to 6. 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Usually, 5=Almost Always, and 6=Always	
No.	**Question**	**Score**
1	Are you confident in your ability?	
2	Do you admit your shortcomings?	
3	Do you understand your emotions as they happen?	
4	Do you recognize the impact that your behavior has on others?	
5	Do you realize when others influence your emotional state?	
6	Do you play a part in creating the difficult circumstances you encounter?	
7	Can you be counted on?	
8	Are you able to handle stress well?	
9	Do you embrace change early?	
10	Do you tolerate frustration without getting upset?	
11	Do you consider many options before making a decision?	
12	Do you strive to make the most out of every situation, whether good or bad?	
13	Do you resist the desire to speak or act when it will not help the situation?	
14	Do you do things you regret when you are upset?	
15	Do you brush people off when something is bothering you?	
16	Are you open to feedback?	
17	Do you recognize others' feelings?	
18	Do you accurately pick up the mood in the room?	
19	Do you hear what the other person is "really" saying?	
20	Are you withdrawn in social situations?	
21	Do you directly address people in difficult situations?	
22	Do you get along well with others?	
23	Do you communicate clearly and effectively?	
24	Do you show others that you care about what they are going through?	
25	Do you handle conflict effectively?	
26	Do you use sensitivity to another person's feelings to manage interactions effectively?	
27	Do you learn about others to get along better with them?	
28	Do you explain yourself to others?	

These questions are from the TalentSmart assessment, www.talentsmarteq.com. They are submitted to the IRB for evaluation and compliance. They will not be used independently for evaluation. The candidates will take the assessment through TalentSmart and TalentSmart will be paid for the assessments.

Appendix 5: Candidate Independent Observation Log: Self-Aware Session

Can	Emotion	Scale	Behavior	Scale	Notes
P1B	Interested	5	Engaged	5	Leaned back. Active listening. Active participation in the discussions. Open.
J1J	Interested	5	Conversational	5	Leaned forward, arms crossed. Active participation but is reserved. Highly responsive in discussions. Articulated core concepts of EQ.
K2L	Interested	4	Engaged	5	Conversational, active participant in exercises and group activities.
W1S	Interested	3	Reflective	5	Engaged but less verbal than others. Appears engaged in the content.
H1K	Content	3	Reflective	4	Contributed to content discussion. Articulated thoughts. Active listening.

Appendix 5.1: Candidate Independent Observation Log: Self-Management Session

Can	Emotion	Scale	Behavior	Scale	Notes
J1J	Content	4	Reflective	4	Seemed distracted during parts of the instructional meeting. Asked follow-up and qualifying questions during the teaching.
H1K	Curious	4	Reflective	4	Leaned forward. Intentional listening. More responsive during discussion. More reserved than last week.
K2L	Curious	5	Reflective	4	Took notes. Asked clarifying questions.
P1B	Curious	5	Conversational	5	Took notes. Asked about DiSC, engaged during video clips
W1S	Interested	4	Reflective	4	Reflective. Listening more than sharing. Engaged in video clips. Nodding in agreement when others speak.

Appendix 5.2: Candidate Independent Observation Log: Social Awareness Session

Can	Emotion	Scale	Behavior	Scale	Notes
J1J	Interested	5	Engaged	5	Pre-discussion: very conversational and reflective of past sessions. Engaged and reflective
H1K	Interested	5	Conversational	5	Pre-discussion: talked about automatic emotional responses and self-talk. Active note-taking during instruction
K2L	Interested	4	Reflective	5	The pre-discussion was very conversational and reflective of past sessions. Reviewing past notes.
W1S	Interested	4	Conversational	5	Reserved, as usual, engaged in the subject. Conversational when called on.
P1B	Interested	4	Reflective	4	Not as engaged and conversational as in the past sessions. Arms crossed, standing at the back of the room.

Appendix 5.3: Candidate Independent Observation Log: Relationship Management

Can	Emotion	Scale	Behavior	Scale	Notes
J1J	Content	4	Reflective	N/A	Seemed distracted during parts of the instructional meeting. Asked follow-up and qualifying questions during the teaching.
H1K	Interested	5	Engaged	N/A	Leaned forward. Intentional listening. More responsive during discussion. More reserved than last week.
K2L	Interested	4	Conversational	N/A	Took notes. Asked clarifying questions.
P1B	Content	3	Reflective	N/A	Took notes. Asked about DiSC, engaged during video clips
W1S	Content	4	Engaged	N/A	Reflective. Listening more than sharing. Engaged in video clips. Nodding in agreement when others speak.

Appendix 6: Group Session Guidance Questions

Disorienting Dilemma Session Guidance Questions

Questions for the participants:

- In the case studies, which derailer behaviors most profoundly impacted you today?
- Why were these behaviors impactful?
- Can you tell me which case study inspired you to want to change and why?

Questions for the observer to use in guiding the passive observations:

- Did the review of the case studies create aha moments for the candidates?
- Which candidates reflected, and which defended or did not respond?
- Which candidates recognized their DB and wanted a method to manage and grow?

EQ Group Session 1 Guidance Questions: Self-awareness

Questions for the candidates:

- Do you play a part in the difficult circumstances that you encounter?
- Do you recognize the impact your behavior has on others?
- Do you recognize the effect others have on your emotions?

Questions for the observer to use in guiding the passive observations:

- Which candidates defended themselves, refused to answer, or embraced the questions?
- Which candidates demonstrated enthusiasm for the program, which candidates were neutral, and which were defensive?

- What is the intensity level for or against self-awareness?

EQ Group Session 2 Guidance Questions: Self-management

Questions for the candidates:

- Do you do things you regret when you are emotional?
- Do you embrace change well?
- Do you resist the urge to speak or act if it will not help the situation?

Questions for the observer to use in guiding the passive observations:

- Which candidates defended themselves, refused to answer, or embraced the questions?
- Which candidates demonstrated enthusiasm for the program, which candidates were neutral, and which were defensive?
- What is the intensity level for or against self-management?

EQ Group Session 3 Guidance Questions: Social Awareness

Questions for the candidates:

- Do you accurately pick up the mood in the room?
- Do you hear what others are "really" saying?
- Do you recognize the effect your behaviors have on others?

Questions for the observer to use in guiding the passive observations:

- Which candidates defended themselves, refused to answer, or embraced the questions?

- Which candidates demonstrated enthusiasm for the program, which candidates were neutral, and which were defensive?
- What is the intensity level for or against social awareness?

EQ Group Session 4 Guidance Questions: Relationship Management

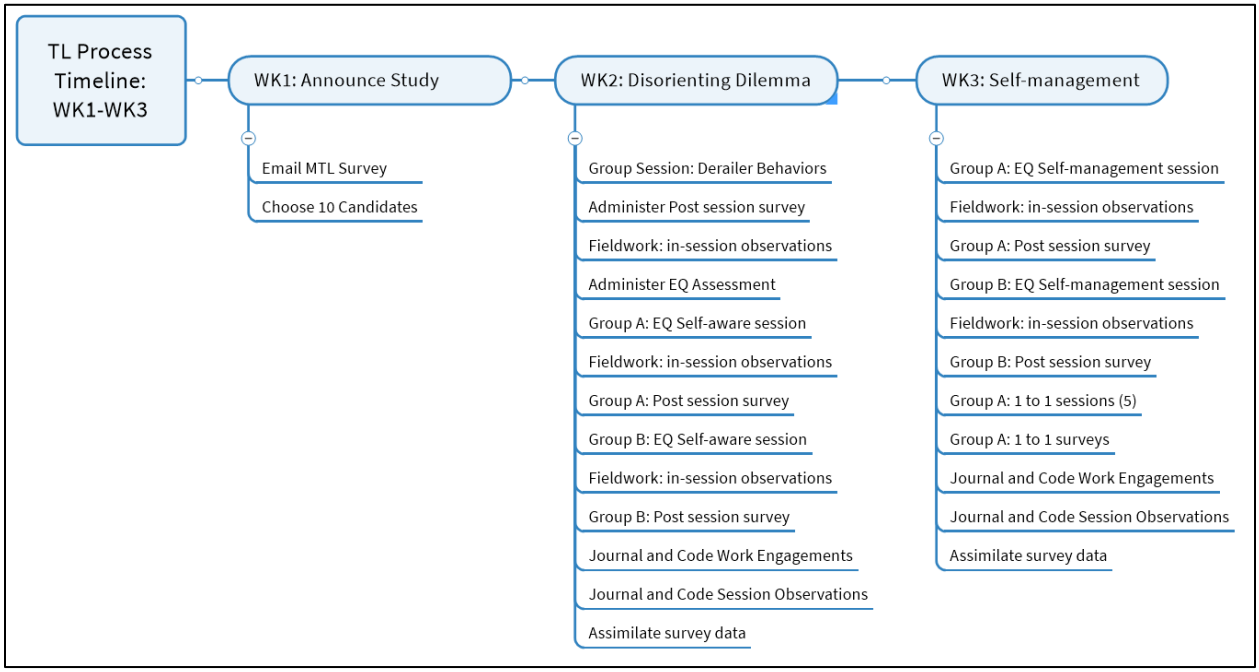
Questions for the candidates:

- Do you handle conflict effectively?
- Do you learn about others to get along better?
- Do you show others that you care about what they are going through?

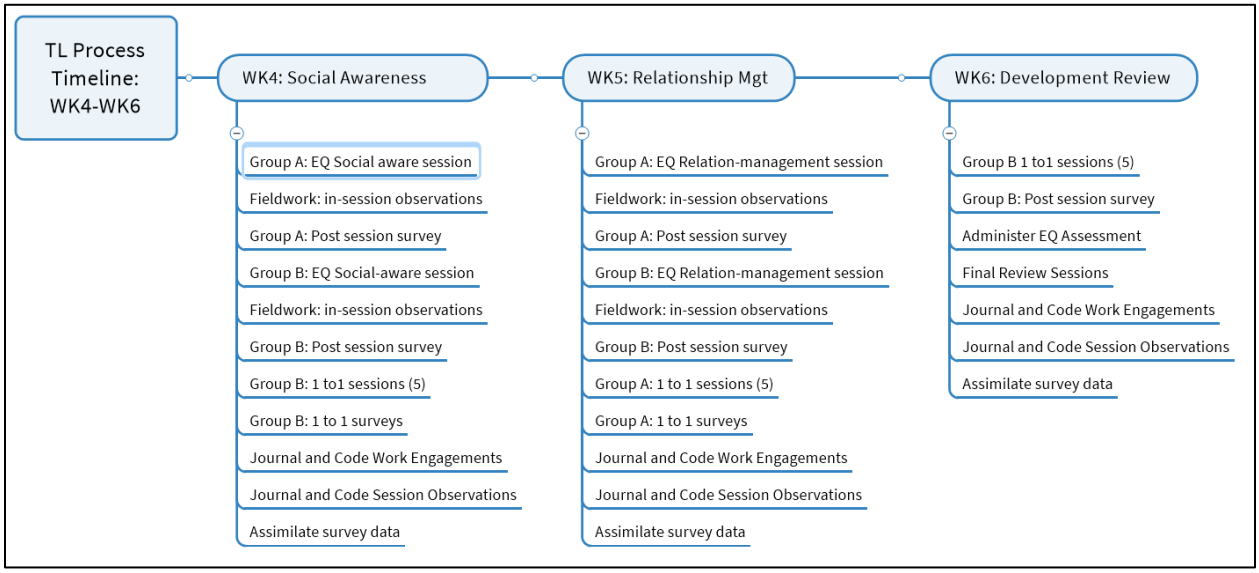
Questions for the observer to use in guiding the passive observations:

- Which candidates defended themselves, refused to answer, or embraced the questions?
- Which candidates demonstrated enthusiasm for the program, which candidates were neutral, and which were defensive?
- What is the intensity level for or against relationship management?

Appendix 7.1: Study Timeline Weeks 1-3 Planned



Appendix 7.2: Study Timeline: Weeks 4-6 Planned



Appendix 8: Derailer Behavior Post-Session Survey

	No Impact	I have seen these behaviors in others	It caused me to reflect on my behaviors	I identified derailer behaviors that I have
How did the case studies affect you?				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Too Much
How much has your derailer behavior(s) affected important relationships?				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Too Much
How much have derailer behavior(s) affected your career?				
	No next step	Reflection	Discuss with others	Learn a new way of acting
What are your next steps? Choose one or two options.				

Appendix 9: Emotional Intelligence Post-Sessions Survey

Please rate each question on a scale of 1 to 5. **1=not, 2=somewhat, 3=good, 4= very good, 5=excellent**	**Score**
How ***engaging*** were the EQ materials?	
How ***practical*** and ***applicable*** is EQ in leadership?	
How ***relevant*** was the training session to leader development?	
How ***practical*** were the examples provided by the trainer?	
How ***satisfied*** are you with the trainer's overall performance?	

Appendix 10: One-to-One Session 1 Survey Questions

We have covered self-awareness and self-management; how impactful are these for leading yourself?

No, I prefer to use experience and intuition	The concepts are reasonable but not practical	I do not have time to incorporate these behaviors	I am trying to use them and am having some success	They are impactful and help me to be more in control

How deeply did this study motivate you to reflect on your current level of self-awareness and self-management?

I rely on experience and intuition, not reflection	I am not a reflective person	The concepts neither motivated nor de-motivated me	Usually, I am not reflective, but this study motivated me	I am reflective, and it motivated me to lead myself better

How much did you discuss your reflections with others?

Not at all	A small amount when someone brought it up	I discussed it when it came up in our group session	I found myself engaging others both in and outside the sessions	I had deep discussions with others

How much did discussing these thoughts motivate you to adopt new ways of self-management?

Not at all	I thought about the discussions but was not motivated to change	I self-manage well, and I did not learn any new behaviors to manage through these discussions	These discussions helped clarify my thoughts, and I adopted some small changes	The discussions clarified my thinking, and I was able to adopt impactful ways of self-management

How effectively did the one-to-one discussion enable you to discuss ways to manage your derailment behaviors using Emotional Intelligence?

I did not identify any derailer behaviors to manage	The one-to-one discussions were not helpful	The one-to-one discussions were okay but not needed	I struggled to come up with a plan, and the discussions helped	The discussions helped me understand and chart a clear path

How much does having the company CEO facilitating the training make you feel engaged?

It was a distraction	I prefer a third-party trainer	The CEO is not a very good facilitator	Having a facilitator who knows me helped me engage	I felt engaged by the facilitator's skillset and our work relationship

Appendix 11: One-to-One Session 2 Survey Questions

We have covered social awareness and relationship management; how impactful are these for leading yourself?

I do not consider these critical for leading myself	These are good in theory but not very practical	I already lead myself better than other leaders do	I had not thought deeply about them, but now I see their usefulness	I found them to be very impactful and am integrating them into my leadership

How deeply did this study motivate you to reflect on your current level of social awareness and relationship management?

Not at all	I am still thinking about it	Somewhat	Deeply	Very deeply

How important is it for leaders to excel in these areas of emotional intelligence (EQ)?

Not	Unsure	Important	Very Important	Critical

How much did you discuss your EQ reflections with others?

None	Only if they brought it up	Only in the session	I reached out to others to hear their point of view	I reached out and actively discussed the implications on our leadership skills

How much did discussing the group's reflections on EQ motivate you to adopt new social awareness and relationship management methods?

None. I cannot entirely agree	Not much, I prefer to keep	There was little impact, and the discussions were	The discussions were interesting,	The discussions deepened my understanding,

with the concepts	my thoughts to myself	not insightful, but I agree with the concepts	and I adopted some changes	and I am adopting many changes that others are making

How effectively did the one-to-one discussion enable you to discuss ways to manage your derailment behaviors using Emotional Intelligence?

Not at all. I do not have derailer behaviors that affect my leadership	I acknowledge my behaviors, but I want to handle them myself; discussing them is not helpful	I recognize my derailer behaviors, and discussing them one-on-one is helpful, but ultimately, I do not need help	I liked discussing the derailer behaviors and gaining some perspective on managing them	The one-on-one discussions helped me with a problem that I have known about and did not know how to manage

How much does having the company CEO facilitate development motivate you to learn and adopt new EQ behaviors?

None; I prefer to learn on my own	It was a distraction	The CEO was not a competent facilitator; I prefer an outside facilitator	The CEO was competent, but work history was a distraction	The CEO was competent, and our work relationship made discussions richer

Appendix 12: Post-Retrospective Survey

Four weeks after completing the training, my emotional intelligence (EQ) level has positively impacted how I lead myself.

Disagree	I have been too busy	Somewhat agree	Agree	Big changes

This training has enhanced my ability to lead others.

Not at all	I am experienced; the training was not impactful in how I lead	It has improved my leadership somewhat	It improved my leadership	It improved my leadership, and others noticed it in a positive way

After this training, I am more likely to reflect on my thoughts and actions when encountering challenging social situations at work.

I lean on my instincts and intuitions, not my reflection	I use my experience to guide me	I will reflect if I have the time	I am now more likely to reflect before acting	I am reflecting before acting, and others have noticed

My EQ Action Plan is guiding my leadership growth and development.

I am not a plan follower	I am busy, and personal plans are not a priority	I followed the plan in the beginning, but not as much as before	I am following the plan and seeing some results	The plan is working, and others are seeing my leadership development

I am more aware of my derailer behaviors and can manage them better under stress.

I did not have issues with derailer behaviors	I was already aware of my behaviors and had them under control	I was not aware, but now that I am, I struggle with them despite the training	I am more aware before they are triggered and am improving in managing them	I am more aware and am managing them well; others are noticing

In future leader development, the facilitator could improve by being more:

Competent	Empathetic	Engaging	Skilled at listening	No significant changes are needed

After the training, I tend to reflect more deeply and seek to adapt positive new learnings that improve my leadership skills.

Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Agree: Very much	Agree: Emphatically

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