



# Pedagogy Convening

Share, explore, integrate, and generate learnings on how to teach, coach and practice leadership, organizing, action, and public narrative

**March 19-20th, 2022**

*Hosted by* CENTER FOR PUBLIC LEADERSHIP | LEADING CHANGE NETWORK

COVER ARTWOK: FONZY NILS FOR FINE ARTS



**HARVARD** Kennedy School  
Center for Public  
**LEADERSHIP**

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# Executive Summary

“Democracy is not something you have, but something you do. It is a verb. And we are creating it, or un-creating it, all the time.” – MARSHALL GANZ

Urgent crises confront us from all sides: political, economic, cultural, racial, and environmental. The most urgent crisis is, however, that our capacity to respond effectively as a democracy is at risk. Democracy promises its citizens—its people—equal, inclusive, and collective voice in the discernment of our common interests and exercise of public power on their behalf. This promise can only be realized in practice: building civic relationships; articulating our common purpose in shared narrative; strategizing transformation of individual resources into collective power; acting to create new realities on the ground; and structuring our commitments, deliberations, decision making, coordination, and accountability so as to strengthen our capacity for individual and collective agency, not diminish it. This requires mastery of the skills of effective campaigning (the rhythm of change) and effective organization (the rhythm of continuity).

For the last twenty years, Professor Marshall Ganz and his associates, collaborators, and students have been learning how to teach, improve upon, innovate, and adapt these practices across cultures, languages, faith traditions, politics, and institutions. They apply their learning through the development of leadership, building community around leadership, and power from the resources of that community. This is truly a pedagogy of practice: what is learned is embedded in how it is learned—like riding a bicycle.

On March 19–20, 2022, the Practicing Democracy Project of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) and the Leading Change Network collaborated to host the first online convening of 68 educators, practitioners and researchers of *Community Organizing* and *Public Narrative* from 13 countries to share, explore, and integrate methods of teaching, coaching, and practice—catalyzed recently due to the urgent need to adapt to online learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The convening also created an opportunity for the cultivation of deeper and diverse relationships.

In this report we compile key learnings from the five presentations on innovation in the *Public Narrative* practice, leadership development, and team-based organizing practice, namely:

- A micro workshop to teach the use of empathetic bridge and narrative in moments of disruptive challenge: Loss, Difference, Power, and Change;
- Exploring how Public Narrative training can be scaled using digital micro learning platforms;
- Adapting the *Organizing* pedagogy to build practice-centered programs for leadership development with the Formerly Incarcerated People (FIP);
- Using data analysis to learn how to facilitate a team-based organizing project in the HKS graduate course MLD-377; and
- Ahel's pedagogy for stronger teams and collective leadership in Jordan, Amman.

This report is also an effort to share some of the insights from the participants on their own learnings, what facilitated that learning and how such convenings could be of value in the future.

# **Practicing Democracy Project**

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The Practicing Democracy Project (PDP), led by Faculty Director Professor Marshall Ganz and housed at the Center for Public Leadership (CPL) at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), enables people to work together to develop the leadership; build the community; and create the power to fulfill the democratic promise of equal, inclusive, and collective agency. We do this by engaging educators, researchers, and practitioners across three interdependent domains of democratic practice: leadership development, pedagogical development, and development of organizational capacity. We develop leadership—accepting the responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty, practices of civic relationship building, values-based public narrative, constituency-based strategizing and mobilization of collective action, and the structuring of democratic organization.

# **Leading Change Network**

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The Leading Change Network is a vibrant, global non-profit network organization specializing in organizing practices and learning, developing leadership across borders and generations to build the power of the people towards a far more just, sustainable and democratic world.

A community with members from 38 countries with active communities of practice in 57 countries, leading trainings in 30 different languages; LCN emerged from the work of Harvard Kennedy School's Marshall Ganz. The work of Ganz, his collaborators and their students is rooted in community organizing, social movements and civic traditions. LCN is now led by executive director Mais Iqrsusi, a pioneer of community organizing who's been founding and growing community organizing entities across the world for 13 years

Through a theory of change centered around bridging the intellectual aspects and the relational work of organizing people, the organization is committed to a culture of craft, evaluation and learning across institutional and geographical boundaries, in the pursuit of building people's ability to lead sustainable, long-term change.

# Overview and Highlights

## Why did we host the Convening?

*“Democracy is not something you have, but something you do.”* Our community of educators and practitioners have been learning how to teach democratic leadership practice. For the first time, we convened members to share, explore, and integrate learnings on how to teach, coach, and practice leadership, organizing, and action. We had three goals: (1) exchange the depth and range of pedagogical innovations, (2) create an experiential learning experience, and (3) cultivate relationships at the heart of our work.



## Who joined the convening?

Sixty-eight educators, practitioners and researchers joined from 13 countries (Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, India, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Sweden, UK, USA) representing 31 organizations and universities. Our invitation list was carefully curated to convene a small group of active community organizers, trainers, and researchers from our pedagogy of practice. The majority of participants identified themselves as teachers or trainers of Community Organizing or Public Narrative; about 20% of the participants also reported that they directly organize others.

## Highlights from the participants

The sense of a grand reunion, rejoicement, and new connections on a personal level was palpable in the Zoom room. The convening offered innovations in pedagogical design as well as an opportunity to celebrate the leadership demonstrated by the community and its many achievements over the past few years.

From the evaluation we conducted to gain a richer understanding of expectations and takeaways, we learned that participants' hopes for the Convening included inquiry around teaching in universities, building organizational capacity, and developing leadership, including the following questions:

- What is the pedagogy behind leadership development, especially in the context of organizational strategy?
- How can organizers and movement trainers develop leadership and coach a network of facilitators and local organizers?
- What are some new insights on teaching leadership that can be useful for courses on student leadership and public service in higher education?
- What are the latest innovations in the pedagogy of practice to help build a state organizing network?

This report outlines key takeaways from each session and ideas on creating a community of practice for pedagogical developments. Some highlights from participant takeaways include:

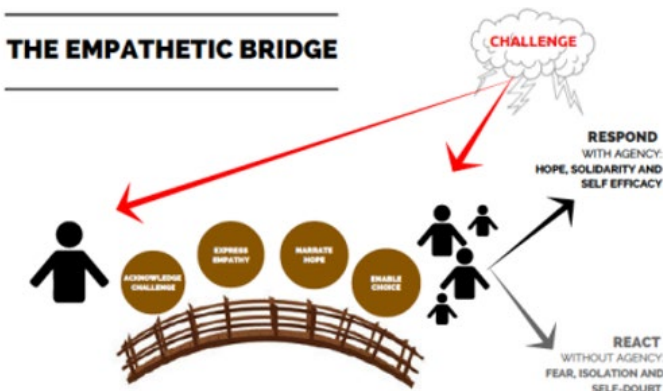
- Discovering the range of pedagogical innovations and how they can be adapted to different contexts and cultures.
- Experiencing a new depth of learning in the convening with each other.
- Learning from the diversity of experience in the network, including witnessing leadership development in practice given the proportion of new members to experienced members of the trainer and practitioner community.
- Engaging with specific leadership challenges, including: how to make a “campaign” out of leadership development and base formation; teaching accountability in leadership teams vs. individuals, especially in authoritarian contexts; and creative use of real world WhatsApp exchanges in coaching sessions to facilitate reflective learning.

# Programming

Over two days, the convening featured five presentations on innovations across our five practices of democratic leadership: building civic relationships, public narrative, strategy, action, and structure. The presentations enabled learning across three themes: innovations in leadership practices of Public Narrative, leadership development of constituencies, and team-based organizing. We have captured the key learnings for each session in the following pages.

# Innovations in the Leadership Practice of *Public Narrative*

## *Narrative* in moments of disruptive challenge: Loss, Difference, Power, and Change



This two hour micro-workshop, presented by Aditi Parekh, Anita Krishnan, Noor Masoud and Sarah ElRaheb, introduced a leadership practice of using public narrative to enable others to respond to urgent challenges of loss, difference, power and change. In this session, participants experienced a workshop version of a semester-long course on *Public Narrative* at HKS.

Learning to tell a story of Self (communicating the values that call you to leadership), Us (communicating shared values that anchor your community and are your sources of hope), and Now

(communicating an urgent challenge you are calling on your community to join you in acting on now) equips leaders to enact their moral resources to motivate others to choose collective action. The Empathetic Bridge focuses on the link between the Self and the Us in response to four forms of challenges Now: Loss, Difference, Power, and Change. The micro-workshop introduced the craft of public narrative to access the motivational resources we need to enable others to respond to urgent challenges with agency.

### **What is the Empathetic Bridge?**

*The Empathetic Bridge is a way we can engage others in recovering their capacity to make mindful choices. It has four elements: acknowledge the challenge, offer empathy but do not claim it, narrate hope, and offer a choice.*

### **THE SESSION INCLUDED:**

1. Upfront teaching on the Empathetic Bridge using Jacinda Ardern's speech at the Christchurch Shootings Memorial Service as an example of enabling agency of New Zealand citizens in the face of loss;
2. Live model of a case for participants to observe the pedagogy of drawing upon specific moments (cases) of leadership challenges in our own lives; and
3. Small group practice for participants to diagnose, analyze, and learn from specific moments of leadership challenges in their own lives. Participants had the opportunity to role play using the empathetic bridge for a real-time case.

This micro-workshop offered deeper understanding of Public Narrative as a leadership practice to enable others in the face of uncertainty; an introduction to the framework of Loss, Power, Difference, and Change as lenses and not boxes; and the wide applicability of the empathetic bridge to family, work, politics and organizing.

### **SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANT LEARNING**

**“How as leaders the way we deal with moments of loss can have a huge impact on empowering people and strengthening community.”**

**“The biggest practical takeaway is structure for how to approach such difficult moments as a leader; this knowledge makes me more likely to respond to such moments by acknowledging them rather than attempting to move on without addressing them.”**

**“The value of having real concrete cases to reflect on.”**



# Can we scale *Public Narrative* training using digital microlearning platforms?

Pedja Stojicic and Nikola Ilic shared the strengths and limitations of introducing public narrative via a microlearning platform called EdApp, based on an asynchronous course offered to more than 100 immunization professionals in Africa and South Asia. The trainers posed the question: how can we make Public Narrative skills more accessible to organizers and community leaders who use narrative in their everyday work, have limited access to the internet especially in remote areas and the developing world, and lack the resources to participate in full length workshops?

## ***What is microlearning?***

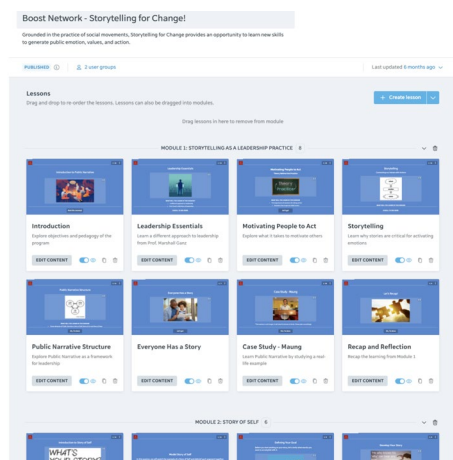
*Microlearning is the process of acquiring knowledge/skills through small chunks of information that address a specific learning outcome. Delivery methods can be videos, articles, ebooks, audio clips, or any other form focused enough to meet an immediate need.*

The trainers used the EdApp platform (tested with BOOST Network, GWC, Climate Change Now, and Commonwealth Fund) to create distilled content with a focus on tacit knowledge and targeted delivery through:

1. micro-lessons of 10 to 15 minutes;
2. interactive scenarios;
3. using questions to teach;
4. modeling stories with real time cohort feedback; and
5. peer-to-peer connection via Telegram and Signal.

From their experience, the trainers highlighted the following learnings:

- The team trained more than 200 participants and found microlearning useful in hybrid teaching settings and for identifying committed participants in whom to invest for leadership development.
- A key challenge of this approach included the lack of depth in the practice of storytelling. While the tools were effective for instruction on the Public Narrative framework, they fell short in creating a shared learning experience and practice critical for the pedagogy.
- Overall, the team found the microlearning course better than videos and articles or manuals (i.e. pre-course readings), and especially effective in hybrid models with live Zoom coaching and discussion.



## **SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANT LEARNING**

**“Microlearning is competing with articles and videos—not with in-person training.”**

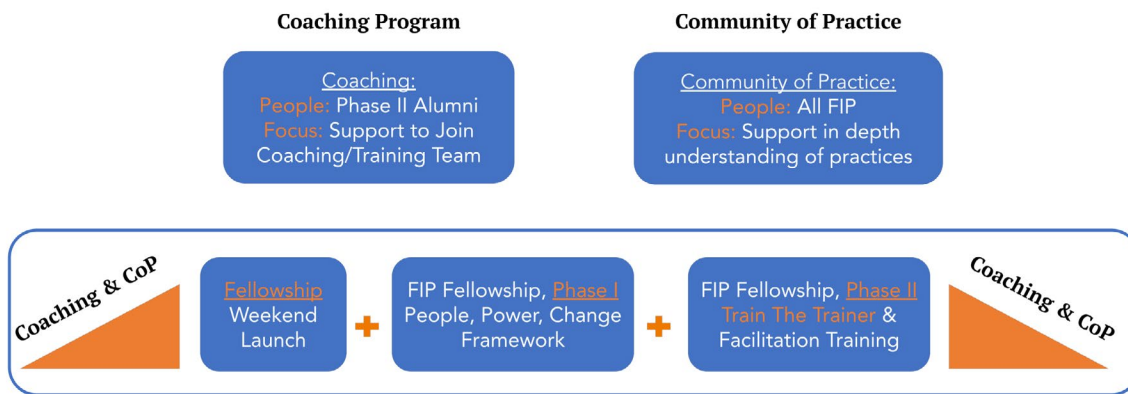
**“How we can creatively use technology to support learning—especially to make it more accessible where there are perhaps challenges in terms of internet access and time.”**

**“Seeing the difference between ‘head’ learning and ‘heart’ learning.”**

[Check out this demo](#)

# Leadership Development of Constituencies

Adapting the *Organizing* pedagogy to build practice-centered programs for leadership development with the Change to Formerly Incarcerated People (FIP)

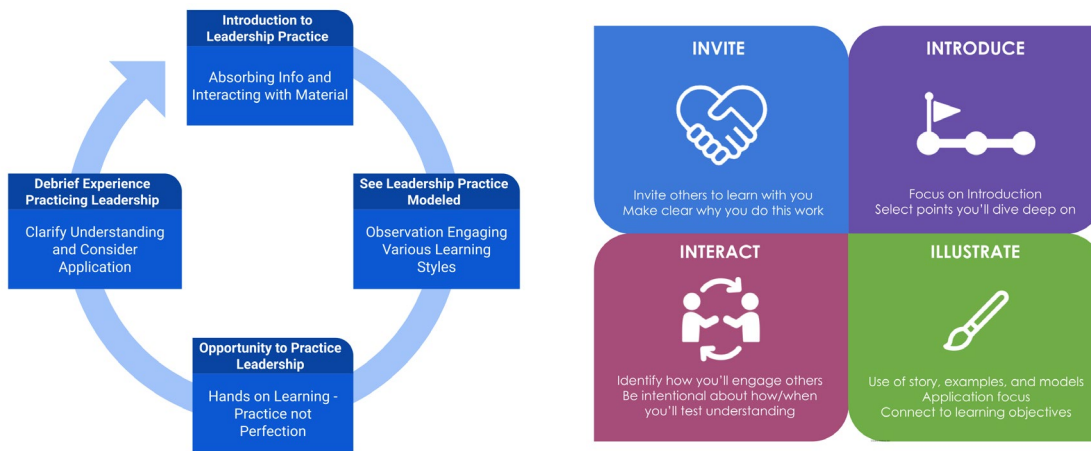


Kortni Malone and Nneka Akubeze presented a model for the creation of a learning ecosystem cycle developed through their work with the Formerly Incarcerated People (FIP).

The FIP Organizing Training Fellowship consisted of practice-centered programs developed in community with leaders from FIP. A team of 13 experienced coaches and seven coaches from Phase I of the program conducted three months of intensive training on leadership and organizing for 142 leaders who were formerly incarcerated or system impacted.



Pictures from FIP organizers and their campaigns in 2020 & 2021



The Pedagogy: the Learning Process (left) and the 4Is approach to teaching the framework (right)

Innovations on adapting the Organizing pedagogy and enabling new trainers to teach the curriculum included:

- **Explain, Model, Practice, Debrief:** adapting the learning process used in training and courses on Community Organizing for an approach to teach the framework (see image above).
- **The 4Is approach:** inviting others to learn together as practitioners who focus on interaction and recognize that the experience in the room informs what we can translate into a learning experience.
- **Intentional and relational recruitment:** the presenters shared an assessment rubric that mapped in-section observations of student relationships with coaches during Phase I and Phase II of the Fellowship.

## SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANT LEARNING

“How do we teach teaching to someone who has never taught?  
**1) Help them get in the teaching mindset. 2) Important to model it. 3) And the people try it themselves. 4) Permission to not have to know everything and invite others to learn with you.”**

“Constituents are key to organizing and how they impact the feel of a leadership team! In other words, when you believe in someone they believe in the cause. The FIP phase I and phase II + underground are a testament of that. In addition, adapting the curriculum in a way where it honors the teaching AND is accessible to THIS community in particular.”

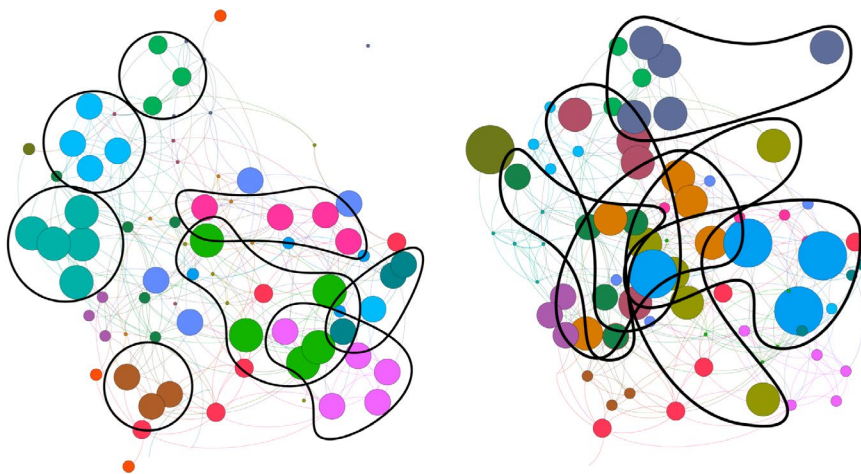
“Teaching can happen in community— just like organizing happens in community.”

# Team Based Organizing

Using data analysis to learn how to facilitate a team-based organizing project in the HKS graduate course MLD-377

Maggie Hughes, Toni Kokenis, Emily S. Lin, and Caleb Schwartz shared data on team formation and functioning from the 2021 Harvard Kennedy School course MLD-377—Organizing: People, Power, Change. They showed how they designed specific relational activities to scaffold team formation among students, measured relational activity, and tracked team performance over time.

The formation process for teams of three to five students included different forms of meet-ups facilitated by the teaching team, including speed dating, one-on-ones based on domains of interest, and stories of Self.



The teaching team presented a network analysis of the one-on-ones held during this team formation process. In the network analysis, each dot or node is a student and each color is a unique team. On the left image, the larger the dot, the better the team was rated at the end of the class. On the right image the larger dots had the lowest rating for team functioning. This rating was based on how well the team worked together, the quality of their teamwork assignments, and how aligned they were as rated by their teaching fellows.

**The teaching team highlighted the following takeaways:**

- **Network Analysis:** the image on the left shows the high network density for effective teams revealing strong ties. The image on the right reveals more centrality in the nodes with less network density and lower levels of clustering.
- **Effectiveness of coaching teams:** how a team kicks off can be predictive of how they then perform moving forward and offers rationales for future curricula to put more instructional and coaching effort into the launching of teams.

## SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANT LEARNING

“Network density/1:1s in advance leads to more effective teams. How teams start is quite predictive of how they keep going or will end up. Harder (though not impossible) to turn a team around if it gets off on the wrong foot.”

“Data can inform teams in real time.”

“If a team is poorly structured, you can coach and coach and coach them, but nothing sticks. You often hear that if people just get along, they will work well together. But the thing is: How a team is structured will define how the team members get along.”

# Ahel's pedagogy for stronger teams and collective leadership

Farah Halasa shared the Ahel organization's Leadership & Team Program, which was developed as a coaching intervention dedicated to teaching collective leadership in collective action in authoritarian countries. She demonstrated how pedagogical support could link leadership development, organizing, and strategy on a sustained basis and also the potential challenges.



Ahel a nonprofit created in 2011 lead by Nisreen Haj Ahmad and mentored by Professor Marshall Ganz of Harvard Kennedy School and is an affiliate of the Leading Change Network. Ahel partners with community groups and organizations that lead collective action for freedom, justice and human rights. Ahel helps leaders pursue change and organize communities in active citizenship. While Ahel's office is located in Amman, it operates in many Arab countries. The Leadership & Team Program was developed after ten years of Ahel field experience working with Community Organizing campaigns. This led to a design based on real-life scenarios and common challenges faced by campaigns across the Arab world. The program originated as a response to the lack of collective leadership in campaigns, especially within the context of the Arab world marked by authoritarian regimes, patriarchal culture, lack of critical thinking in educational systems, a culture of deference, and limitations on freedom of speech and organizing. Strategies and tactics are necessary for a Community Organizing campaign; however, if the team is unable to overcome team challenges, the campaign may not be sustainable. For a sustainable

campaign, the collective power of the constituency for on the ground action is a particular requirement.

Since 2020, this program has trained 114 participants, 17 campaigns, and 21 teams from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen.

The pedagogy was developed with the goals of redefining and practicing leadership that is collective, distributed, and deliberate; simulating real life scenarios from previous campaigns; enhancing practice through fishbowl examples and group work; behavioral change over multiple weeks; and connecting participating campaigns through shared challenges and takeaways.

## Examples of the module include:

- Accountability in collective leadership: sessions with probing questions on accountability as a role distinct from blame, reflecting on individual emotions, and practicing accountability through scenarios modeled in live WhatsApp conversations or video models.
- Collective decision making: sessions allow participants to explore their understanding of decision-making processes, present and evaluate a bad model, introduce the Hackman-Wageman framework for collective decision making, and invite participant teams to practice the framework with a real life example.

As the program continues its pedagogical development, a key challenge is how to make learning last within teams in the long term so participants can continue practice beyond their time in the program.

## SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANT LEARNING

“Inspiration on how to model bad and good leadership practices with made up video and text message scenarios.”

“Developing a systematic method for evaluating the leadership team challenges (in or outside specific contexts) and how to address them while coaching, training, or supporting campaigns.”

“So practical, so transferable across context, so rooted in lived experience and reflection.”



# Launching the LCN Resource Center

With the wide dispersion of *Organizing* and *Public Narrative* pedagogy globally, every day more educators and practitioners are innovating, teaching, and using the material to create change in the world. Now more than ever, in our world grappling with backsliding human rights and democracy, more people organizing in the field need these leadership practices, and time is their most essential resource. In 2021, the Leading Change Network launched a listening drive with the community, and the most frequent request was the development of a more accessible and searchable Resource Center. LCN partnered with the Commons Social Change Library to rebuild its old resource center and expand it in a new systematic and accessible way. After an intensive nine months of work, and built with generous contributions from the community, we launched the Resource Center in January 2021 and a presentation on its conception and progress was given at this Pedagogy Convening. The Resource Center has more than 300 resources available in 16 languages from 33 countries and more than 204 contributors.



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  - ADVANCED\_DETAILED\_RESEARCH
  - INTRODUCTORY\_OVERVIEW\_PRACTICAL
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  - CATALAN
  - DANISH
  - ENGLISH
  - PERSI-PERSIAN
  - FRENCH
  - ITALIAN
  - JAPANESE
  - KOREAN
  - PORTUGUESE
  - RUSSIAN
  - SERBIAN
  - SPANISH
  - SWEDISH
  - TURKISH
  - VIETNAMESE

You can visit the Resource Center and add your contributions at: <https://leadingchangenetwork.org/resource-center>

# Evaluation of the Convening and the Way Forward

## What was valuable for the participants?

**Measure 1:** *The extent to which participants said they were committed to attending—and inviting others—to future convenings.*

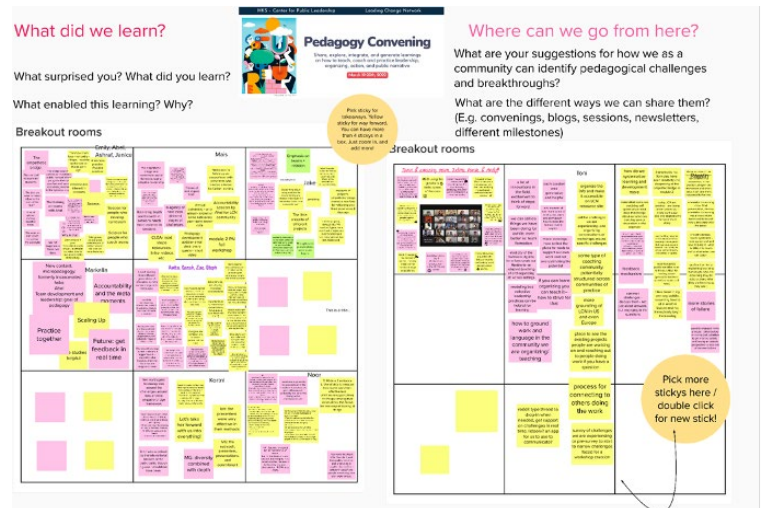
Although 77% of those who responded to the pre-event survey said it was “medium” to “hard” for them to commit to attending a weekend conference, 91% of post-event survey respondents said it was “somewhat likely” or “extremely likely” that they would attend such a conference in the future. More than 20 people were also nominated to either be invited to or attend the next convening.

“ I am re-energized about this approach to the massive problems we all face scaling up to address the sad state of the practice of democracy. As we discussed, this work could not be more important right now.”

**Measure 2:** *The extent to which participants said the Convening helped them meet specific needs they articulated coming into the event*

We compared pre- and post-event survey responses to questions wherein respondents rated their agreement with a series of statements.

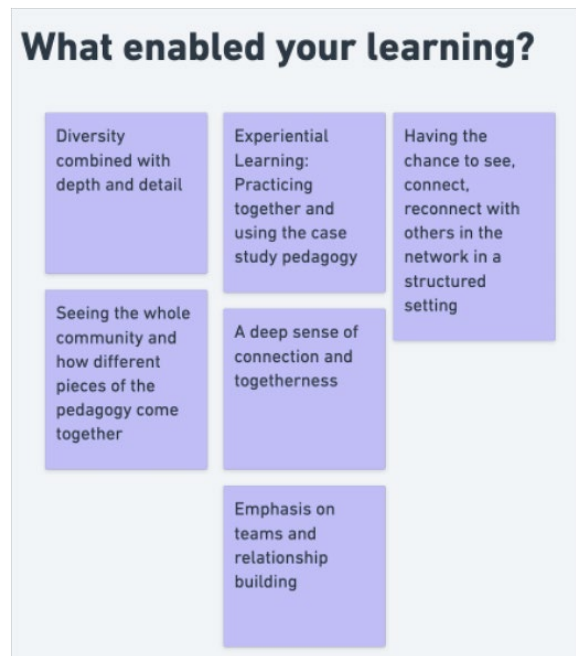
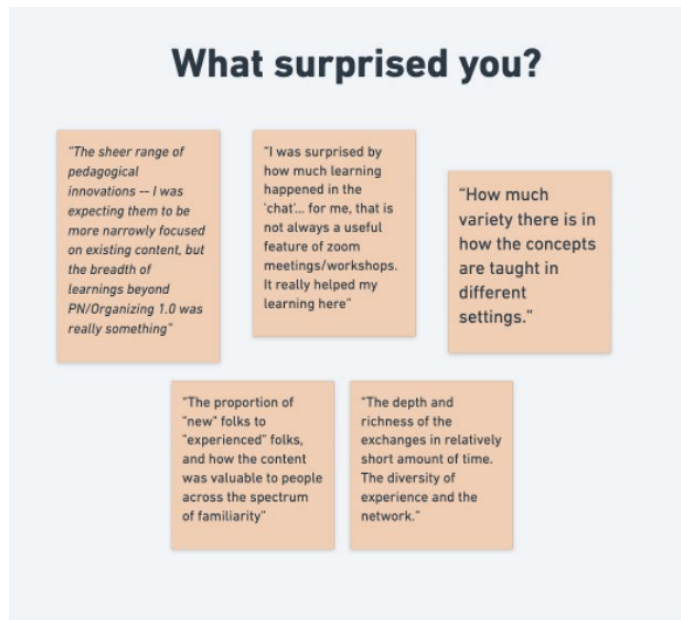
We found that the greatest gain was evident in “building relationships”: participants expressed feeling more confident, and more uniformly so, after the Convening when they knew whom they would contact when they faced challenges in the future. We also found that, after the Convening, participants felt less “stuck” in their teaching or training of Organizing and Narrative. Finally, in the pre-event survey, respondents prioritized wanting to make a deeper impact through teaching over increasing the breadth of their reach. Post-survey results showed that we were successful in meeting participants’ priorities, with strong agreement that the Convening would help respondents have a deeper impact through teaching.



**Measure 3:** *The “X-factor” of surprise and takeaways from the Convening*

The final 75 minutes of the Convening offered an opportunity for the participants to process, reflect, and exchange their learnings as well as their ideas for how this community can convene in the future. Small groups facilitated by members of our network of trainers and practitioners explored what surprised the participants and what enabled their learning. Our post-event survey complemented this exercise with questions on what surprised participants in the Convening, what specific leadership or teaching challenges they were able to reflect on during the event, and how they might engage differently with challenges moving forward, as a result of their learning at the event.

“ Seeing the different innovations and developments over one weekend gave me a lot of inspiration to think flexibly and creativity! I also loved the chat - it gave us a channel to share out loud thoughts and questions, and hear what others were thinking, right away—almost a parallel conversation happening to the presentations.”





# What did participants suggest for the future of a community of practice on pedagogical challenges and breakthroughs?

In line with our shared values of continuous learning and collective leadership, we ended the Convening with a session in which facilitators from the network helped participants shift from articulating their learnings and evaluation of the event into ideas, possible structures, and commitments to help shape the next iteration of this community of practice. Some themes that emerged included: stronger communication channels to exchange learnings and challenges, a community to offer and receive peer coaching on pedagogical design, crowdsourcing areas of interest for a semi or biannual convening, and smaller deep-dive.



# Conclusion

“ Teaching can happen in community — just like organizing happens in community”.

The Pedagogy Convening was a testament to the value of synchronous venues for learning new ways to teach this pedagogy of practice as well as the adaptability of the pedagogy across cultures and contexts given its foundations in lived experiences. The Convening’s high turnout and energized participation on a weekend across multiple time zones revealed an eager need for a community of practice. An important takeaway for the way forward included making inter-generational gatherings of educators, researchers, and practitioners like the Pedagogy Convening a continuous ritual, especially for the community to interact regularly with new innovations in pedagogy. More specifically, participants found richness in reconnecting with their peers in an experiential and international learning environment.

# Appendix

## **Zoom Recordings**

[Convening Day 1](#)

[Convening Day 2](#)

## **Pedagogy Convening Planning Committee**

Vandinika Shukla, Mais Iqrsusi, Emily S. Lin, Alyssa Ashcraft, Sachiko Osawa, and Mariana Garza with special thanks to Marshall Ganz, Nisreen Haj Ahmad, and Sarah EIRaheb.

## **Pedagogy Convening Presenters**

Nneka Akubeze, Sarah EIRaheb, Farah Halasa, Holly Hammond, Maggie Hughes, Nikola Ilic, Toni Kokenis, Anita Krishnan, Emily S. Lin, Kortni Malone, Noor Masoud, Aditi Parekh, Caleb Schwartz, and Pedja Stojicic.

## **Pedagogy Convening Reflection Facilitators**

Tanvi Girotra, Mais Iqrsusi, Toni Kokenis, Anita Krishnan, Emily S. Lin, Markella Los, Kortni Malone, Noor Masoud, Jake Waxman, and Rawan Zeine.



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