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Working Paper

Managing Systems Leadership Organizations: Realigning Instituto Unibanco's Strategy for Strengthening Brazil's High School Education System (A Case Study)*

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Systems leadership is an emerging field of professional practice (Heath and Heath, 2011; OECD, 2017; Dreier, Nabarro and Nelson, 2019; Mulgan, 2019; Barker *et al.,* 2021). This field of practice is directed to furnishing and employing collective means to impact complex systems in ways that serve human dignity and sustainable development. Examples of such systems include supply chains for food and materials, mass education, oceans, and government. How to impact any such system through collective means is the overarching practical (but inevitably theoretical) question addressed by thought leaders in the field of practice of systems leadership.

This practical theory question is explored systematically in a report, entitled "Systems Leadership for Sustainable Development: Strategies for Achieving Systemic Change," published by the social responsibility program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government (Dreier, Nabarro and Nelson, 2019).[1] Speaking generically, the report characterizes *systems change initiatives* as collective means – i.e., community located undertakings and practices -- for positively impacting upon complex systems, however they come to be defined in the community. While *systems change initiatives* are the undertakings that impact systems, *systems leadership* may be thought of as a professional practice that contributes to their initiation, development, adaptation, and so forth.

The report by Dreier, Nabarro, and Nelson provides an elaborate statement about this professional practice. In particular, the document sets forth a five-fold framework of principles to be applied to the work of systems leadership, namely: (a) convene and commit; (b) look and learn; (c) engage and energize; (d) act with accountability; and (e) review and revise. For memory's sake, the five principles are referred to by the acronym, CLEAR. As a measure of depth and coherence, each principle within the CLEAR framework provides a hook for longer generic discussions of systems leadership practice and the requirements they address. For example, the "convene and commit" principle, together with the "engage and energize" one, point to the line of argument that systems change initiatives require widespread collaboration, alliance-building, and shared tests of progress. Along the same lines, the "look and learn"

[1] See Appendix A for the synopsis of the Dreier, Nabarro, and Nelson (2019) report.

principle points to an argument that systems change initiatives require gaining and sharing insights about the system which the systems change initiative is to impact.

The report went on to present a manifesto about systems leadership as a field of practice, stating that what's required is:

> "…a coordinated effort among proponents of Systems Leadership to further develop, study and refine the approach and encourage its mainstreaming. However, the nature of Systems Leadership is that it is not a theoretical or academic construct; it is a strategy and set of tactics to be applied and refined through real experience. As a result, a larger number and diversity of both systems leaders and Systems Leadership initiatives are needed to build critical mass and capture learnings that can benefit the field as a whole (p. 38).[2]

Just this year, a similar perspective has been advanced in the *Journal of Change Management: Reframing Leadership and Organizational Practice*, under the title of "leading social transformation." As characterized by John M. Bryson, Bill Barburg, Barbara C. Crosby, and Michael Quinn Patton (Bryson *et al.*, 2021), "Leading social transformation builds on strategic leadership of organizations and leading strategy management-at-scale initiatives by integrating and co-aligning the efforts of multiple organizations, collaborations, coalitions, and advocacy efforts guided by shared principles and animated by common purposes." Bryson, Barburg, Crosby, and Patton go on to call upon researchers to undertake longitudinal, comparative case studies on leading social transformation that would "help clarify what works, how, and why, and what specifically leadership for social transformation entails (p. 199)."

Consolidating the Dreier *et. al.* report on systems leadership together with the Bryson *et. al.* article on social transformation, there's a clear basis for arguing that case studies of systems change initiatives are apt as means of research to furnish practice-relevant knowledge for the practice of systems leadership. This paper accepts this specific implication, without any reservation. To wit, theory work undertaken to "refine the approach" of systems leadership

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[2]The report doesn't provide a framework for "capturing the learnings" that can benefit systems leadership as a field of professional practice.

(*pace* Dreier *et. al*.) is duly called for, just as is true for case study research work to "clarify what works, how, and why" (*pace* Bryson *et. al*.).

The present paper accordingly presents an in-depth (and longitudinal) case study resulting from a research project intended to furnish practice-relevant knowledge about systems leadership, where the setting is Brazil during the second half of the 2010's. Speaking schematically, the case's systems change initiative was directed at strengthening Brazil's high school education system. The initiative's strategy and tactics were designed to change the context in which teaching took place in schools, where the immediate context of teaching was largely defined as the how school principals performed their professional role and where the wider context was largely defined as how state-level education bureaucracies performed their institutional role. Thus, the systems change initiative was specifically directed at strengthening educational management in state governments and schools. Notably, the specific systems change initiative itself underwent considerable change during the "case episode" (2014-19). Its main feature, a program known as the *Jovem de Futuro* ("Youth with Future Promise"), was revamped, both in its strategy and tactics, while other long-standing features, such as grant-making, research, and policy advocacy, were scaled up.

While this case study project is wholly aligned with Dreier *et. al*. and Bryson *et.al.,* its thrust is nevertheless dramatically distinct. While we take a strong interest in the strategy and tactics of the systems change initiative in the case of strengthening Brazil's high school education system, we are even more interested in *how the systems change initiative itself underwent change*. While this focus is consonant with systems leadership as Dreier *et. al.* characterized it, the specifics are different. The specific difference is this: Dreier *et. al.* write about systems leadership practice as if the agents performing the systems leadership role are *individuals*, while in this case study the agent performing the same generic role is conceptually an *organization*. Further, Dreier *et. al.* write about adaptation of systems leadership initiatives almost as if this is to be done solely by including new elements, while in this case, by contrast, modifying in the systems change initiative also involved *abandoning* certain tactics and *retiring* the mechanisms involved in operating them. Linking these two points together, Dreier *et. al.* write about systems leadership as if problem-solving directed at improving systems change initiatives occurs outside organizational settings generally, and specifically, ones where there are incumbent structures, people, and practices.

In the case study at hand, what is absent from systems leadership practice as theorized by Dreier *et. al.* is front and center. The innovation in the systems change initiative directed at strengthening Brazil's high school education system resulted from problem-solving within an organization founded in 1982, Instituto Unibanco, that has worked in the education field since 2002, and whose main programmatic initiative, *Jovem de Futuro*, had been first introduced in 2007. Thus, this paper's case study is meant to furnish practice-relevant knowledge about (otherwise hidden) aspects of systems leadership practice that involve *realigning* the strategy and the specific mechanisms of an established organization in ways that innovate and adapt systems change initiatives. As a by-product, this study is meant to expand the circumference of theorizing about systems leadership and its practice, to include leading and managing what we call *systems leadership organizations.*

The substantive framing of this paper is around two distinct but interrelated practical questions about systems leadership. Stated colloquially, one is how systems leadership should deal with the imperative that systems change *initiatives* undergo *adaptation* over time, to be practically responsive to changing realities, changing intentions, and changing knowledge? The other is how should executives within systems leadership organizations undertake leadership interventions, which are aptly seen, generically, as practical imperatives for generating adaptation in systems change initiatives? While these questions are intertwined, we give more attention to the second one, as that fits with a motive to bring the established field of public management (Barzelay, 2019) into close contact with that of the emerging field of systems leadership.

PART I: Introducing the Case Study

Founded in 1982 as the social investment arm of one of Brazil's biggest banks, Instituto Unibanco is among Brazil's most established non-profit organizations. Over the years, its appointed leaders at board and executive levels have exercised considerable latitude in deciding how to apply the resources that its financial endowment generates. The Institute's 20th anniversary in 2002 proved a watershed moment, as IU shifted from being a funder of partners' initiatives to being an active force that implemented its own program ideas and plans, while education came to be targeted as Instituto Unibanco's main area of work. Two fundamental decisions were made: to act exclusively in the educational field and initiate the development of its own projects.

By 2007, Instituto Unibanco had pinpointed high school (secondary) education as its sphere of action. Its objectives came to be increasing the proportion of Brazil's youth that continues their education beyond primary school, improving students' learning while in high school, increasing high-school graduation rates, and reducing inequalities in public schools. While earlier generations of *Jovem de Futuro* had been premised on school-level management led by principals as being the essence of "education management", the third generation moved on from there in seeing schools and their principals as situated within a larger system that included state-level education departments. This shift to a systems level perspective on education management brought into question not only what means would be apt for shaping this larger system, but also how Instituto Unibanco would itself work.

This paper is a case study where the research topic is labeled as systems leadership. Figure 1 presents its basic conceptual outline in the form of a mind-map structured hierarchically (Buzan, 2018). The "root" of the map is the overarching concept of systems leadership. The map represents this concept's structure in terms of multiple "branches" stemming from the "root" concept of systems leadership. These branches represent three concepts which play specific roles within the systems leadership idea: (a) systems, (b) systems change initiatives, and (c) systems leadership organizations. The role of any of these branches involves its relation to other branches. For instance, *systems leadership organizations* are aptly considered as sources of *systems change initiatives*, which, in turn, are aptly considered as sources of conditions and trajectories of *systems*.

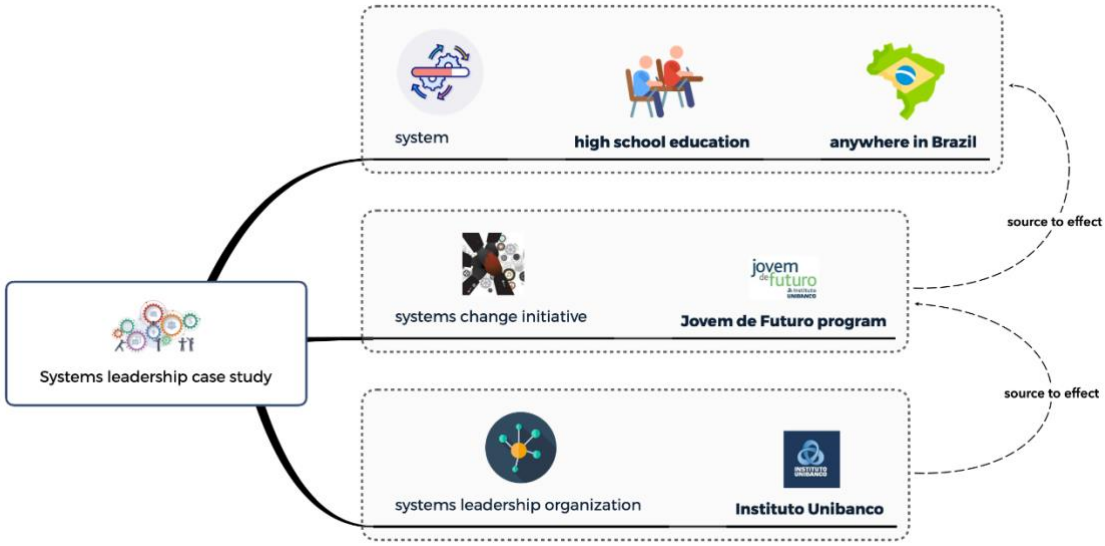

Figure 1. Matching Aspects of Systems Leadership to Case Particulars

In Figure 1, this highly schematic conception of systems leadership is matched with specific identifying features of this paper's case: high school education throughout Brazil, the *Jovem de Futuro* program, and Instituto Unibanco. Conceptually, high school education throughout Brazil is "the system"[3]; the *Jovem de Futuro* (which stands for "Youth with a Promising Future") program is the systems change initiative (SCI), and Instituto Unibanco is the systems leadership organization (SLO). As such, the Instituto Unibanco SLO, is considered as a source of the *Jovem de Futuro* SCI, which, in turn, is considered as a source of conditions and trajectories in the system of high school education throughout federated states of Brazil.

This study is conducted as a design-focused case study, a practice-relevant research approach that has gradually developed in the field of Public Management over the past 15 years (Bardach, 1998, 2004; Barzelay and Campbell, 2003; Barzelay, 2007) and that has matured swiftly in recent years, beginning with publication of *Public Management as a Design-Oriented Professional Discipline* (Barzelay, 2019) and followed up with a research handbook chapter (Barzelay *et al.*, 2022). Because design-focused case studies are genetically linked to Public Management, it should not be surprising that this case study of systems leadership, involving Instituto Unibanco and *Jovem de Futuro* is profoundly shaped by substantive concerns about management as it relates to public purposes and programmatic undertakings (Moore, 1995). This shaping of the case study is reflected in Figure 2.

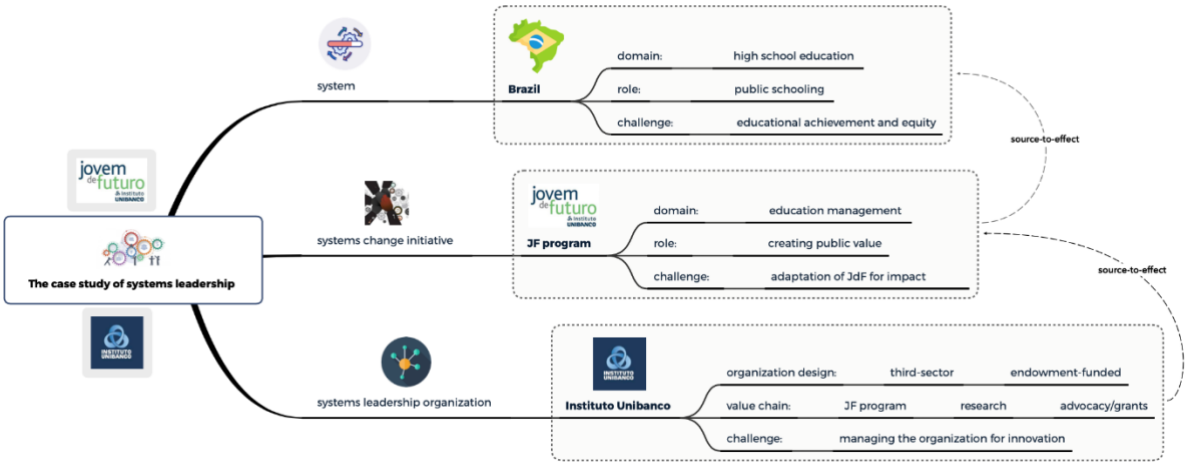

Figure 2. The Case Study of Systems Leadership at a Glance

[3] In 2020, 6.35 million pupils in Brazil were enrolled in public high schools.

As seen here, the general idea or "archetype" of a systems leadership organization incorporates three equally general concepts from the management field: organization design, value chain, and challenge. In this basic scheme, the general concept of *organization design* is matched with two perpetual aspects of Instituto Unibanco: (a) being a third sector (i.e., non-governmental, non-commercial, private) organization and (b) being resourced by returns earned from investing endowment funds obtained from the institute's founder and benefactor (the banking firm, Unibanco) when founded in 1982. The general concept of a *value chain* (Porter, 1985, 2001) is matched here with four facets of Instituto Unibanco's externally-facing value activities: (a) the *Jovem de Futuro* program (JF), (b) research, (c) advocacy work, and (d) grant-making. The general concept of a *challenge* is matched with the case-specific challenge of managing Instituto Unibanco for innovation. This way of labeling the challenge that faced Instituto Unibanco reflects a prime research issue examined in the case study: by what mechanisms did Instituto Unibanco bring about a substantial adaptation of the *Jovem de Futuro* program in the latter part of the 2010 decade?

The archetypal concept of a systems change initiative is slightly elaborated in Figure 2 by incorporating three equally general concepts from the public policy field: domain, role, and (again) challenge. In this basic scheme, the archetype concept of *domain* is matched to the case-specific concept of *gestão educacional* or "education management, which is the term Instituto Unibanco uses to encompass all of its work directed at Brazil's high school education system. Domain-wise, education management is inherently concerned with high school education as a system, as well as with the management of schools. Teacher training and classroom pedagogy, by contrast, is seen as a different domain from education management. The archetype concept of *role* is matched to creating public value (Moore, 1995), which here stands for providing policy advice and evidence to governmental institutions and leaders (such as secretaries of education at state level) and for helping to build up institutional and operational capacity to achieve policy purposes (Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock, 2017), namely through the work of public bureaucracies (such as state education departments) and its mechanisms of delivery (such as schools). The general concept of *challenge* is matched to adapting *Jovem de Futuro* for impact, an idea that includes strengthening the Brazil's high school education system.

While Figure 2 provides a broad perspective on this case of systems leadership, the paper itself is more concerned with Instituto Unibanco as systems leadership organization than

with the two other aspects. In respect to management, what deserves particular attention is innovation and organizational change, as these can justly be taken as practical imperatives, implied as they are by the view that systems change initiatives will only give rise to valuable system impact if they are adaptable (Dreier, Nabarro and Nelson, 2019). Insofar as systems leadership organizations are weak at innovation and change, system change initiatives will inevitably suffer.

The Case Study Research Project

This paper is the product of a research project that, in institutional terms, involved a working relationship among Instituto Unibanco (IU), London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and Brazil's National School of Public Administration (Enap).[4] The motivation for the study was reflected in the project title, "Learning from *Jovem de Futuro* about Systems-Change-Enterprises and their Management". That motivation has remained in place throughout; indeed, it has been reinforced by doing the case study.

In conducting the study, we relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Secondary sources include publications of IU, information from its official website, as well as internal reports and documents. Beyond that, to gain a more comprehensive and detailed picture of what happened within the main events, why and how, we have conducted interviews with all current and previous members within IU's senior leadership during the period of 2015 and 2019.[5] The selection of this sample was purposive, as the interviewees are those who had direct experience, as "insiders", with the SLO-transition and SCI-adaptation that is of interest of this paper. Interviewing them would thus help "yield the most relevant and plentiful data" given the topic of our study (Yin, 2011: 88). Consent of being interviewed was acquired from each interviewee before the interview, who was also explained the purpose of the research and the interview. Due to COVID-19-related restrictions, interviews were all conducted and

[4]The title of the project as proposed by LSE was: "Learning from *Jovem de Futuro* about Systems-Change-Enterprises and their Management." The mechanisms included IU providing a research grant to LSE to cover economic costs of time spent on the project by its principal investigator (the lead author) and those of the second author as a consultant to LSE. The mechanisms also included Enap's provision of in-kind support, which extended to interview transcription, hosting a training course on design-focused case study research, and the third author's time.

[5]All three authors participated in all the interviews. The lead interviewer in most instances was Patricia Vieira da Costa.

recorded on Zoom. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated accordingly. To encourage the honest and frank sharing of experience and perceptions, we assured the interviewees of their anonymity and have written the narrative report accordingly.

This working paper is a step in a larger process where the intent is to "recover the design" (Barzelay *et al.*, 2022) that worked in favor of the *adaptation* of the case's systems change initiative, consisting in the evolving third generation of JF and IU's associated initiatives such as grant-making and policy and practice advocacy. The step taken here, in the main, is to present a narrative report – more specifically, a chronicled account (Polkinghorne, 1988) -- of the "case episode". This report provides what can be taken as facts about the events that relate substantively to the paper's case research interest in management, innovation, and change at Instituto Unibanco between 2014 and 2019. The case commentary following the report is a formative step toward "explaining the design rationale" (Fischer *et al.*, 1991) within the case; it focuses on, and is limited to, the overarching, mission-like idea stated as "education management for continuous advancement."[6]

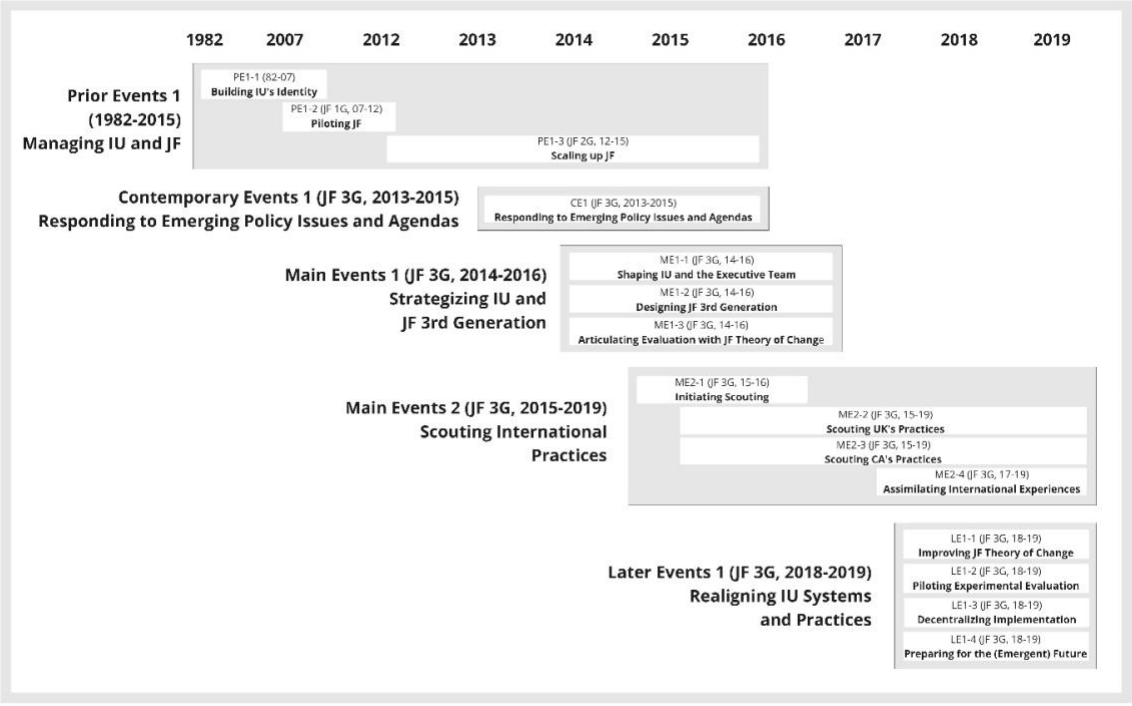

Figure 3. The Case Study's Event Structure as a Timeline

[6]It is envisioned that a chapter based on the present paper will be published in a book provisionally titled, *Leading Systems Change in Government: Learning from Public Management Research.*

Constructing a narrative report such as this one always involved adopting a scheme whereby the events constituting the main episode are distinguished from the "surrounding" events that lie outside the main episode (such as those that took place before or after it) and whereby the main episode's events are further distinguished from one another by reference to specialist conceptual frameworks, whether from an academic discipline or professional domain knowledge (Barzelay *et al.*, 2003). The structured list of events within the case is aptly termed the case's "event structure". The event structure that resulted from reflecting on the interviews in the light of our research interests is presented as Figure 3, couched within a timeline.[7]

As can be seen from Figure 3, the main episode began in 2014. The two large units of events within the Main Episode (ME) are titled "ME1: Strategizing IU and JF's 3d Generation" and "ME2: Scouting International Practices." (The main international cases studied by the Institute were England within the United Kingdom and Ontario Province within Canada.) The narrative report also includes detailed reporting about surrounding events: Prior Events took place before the main episode; Later Events have taken place since; Contemporary Events took place concurrently. Prior Events are included for understanding the context and history of the Main Episode. Beyond this general necessity is a specific reason, namely that this is a case of a systems leadership organization that was hardly a start-up: it was established about 30 years before the Main Episode. It is a case involving change, not initiation. The Later Events can be seen as providing insight into the content of changes in the systems change initiatives, specifically, *Jovem de Futuro.* Those changes are not central to the research interest of this paper, even as they are fully relevant to studying Instituto Unibanco as case of a systems leadership organization.

Figure 4 presents the same information as the previous one, but in a more eye-friendly manner. It also serves as a guide to the narrative report in Part II, which is organized precisely in accord with this event structure.

[7] This report can be compared with a book published in both Portuguese and English by members of the management team at Instituto Unibanco (Henriques, de Carvalho and Bittar, 2020).

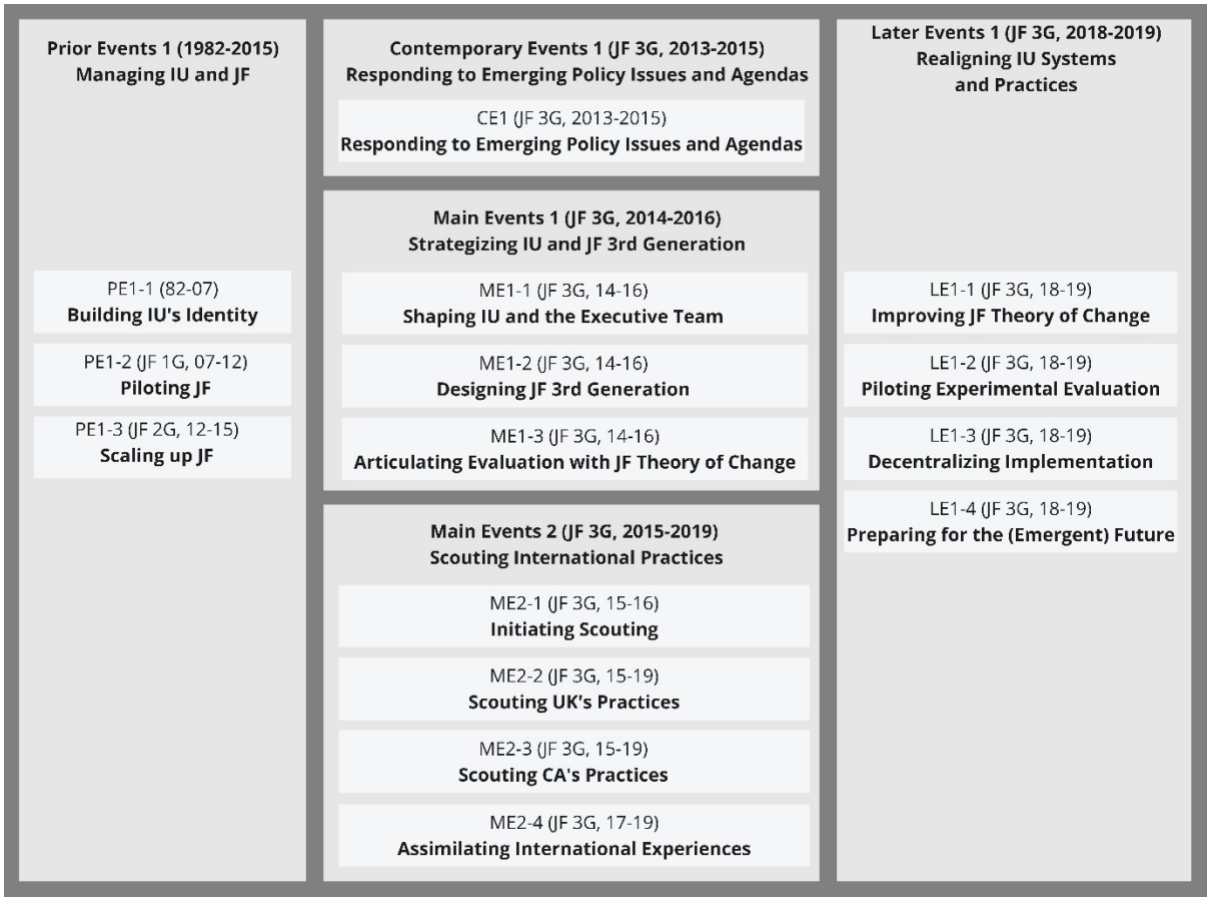

Figure 4. The Event Structure for the Narrative Report

PART II – The Narrative Report about the Case

Background to the Third Generation of Jovem de Futuro

IU piloted its *Jovem de Futuro* (JF) program in 2008. JF aimed to improve students' learning, increase the number of high-school graduates, and reduce inequalities in public schools. With a scheduled duration of six years, JF offered diverse instruments to support the management of schools, such as technical advice, training, data analysis, technological-based management systems, as well as actions that fostered the sharing of knowledge and experiences among the professionals in the network (Instituto Unibanco, 2008). The first generation of JF served as a live test of a new social technology in a demanding environment, as educational achievement in many schools was low by national standards.

A pilot project was launched in three schools in the state of São Paulo in 2007. The project grew rapidly, so that by 2010 it included some 80 partner schools in São Paulo and expanded to the states of Rio Grande do Sul (46 schools), Minas Gerais (44 schools), and Rio

de Janeiro (30 schools) (Henriques, Carvalho and Bittar, 2020). After the three initial years of what came to be called the pilot project's laboratory period, JF entered a consolidation and expansion phase, running until 2015.

The JF pilot phase produced demonstrable results. Impact evaluations found that the students attending the JF partner schools gained a significant educational benefit compared to those attending institutions that were not involved with the program (Henriques, Carvalho, and Bittar, 2020). The main learning results were in Portuguese Language and Mathematics, which compose the Brazilian Basic Education Index - IDEB.[8]

Scaling up JF

With the first impact evidence, JF gained visibility. In 2009 the program was certified as an educational technology by the Ministry of Education – MEC (Instituto Unibanco, 2009), and, in 2010, it was included in the "MEC Technology Guide", a menu of educational solutions directed to school managers (Instituto Unibanco, 2010). These events initiated a long and sensitive negotiation process, aiming to integrate JF with federal high-school educational policies, in what would eventually be seen as the second generation of *Jovem de Futuro* program.

As discussions between Instituto Unibanco and the Ministry of Education (MEC) proceeded, a complex governance arrangement was conceived, involving them as well as state departments of education, aiming to integrate JF within an existing "Innovative High School Teaching Program" (*Programa Ensino Médio Inovador* – ProEMI) (Instituto Unibanco, 2011). In this new arrangement, state departments of education were to provide infrastructure and staff to administer the program as well as to supervise and monitor the participating schools. Participating schools were to receive a financial grant from MEC. The schools that developed their "Curriculum Redesign Project" (*Projeto de Redesenho Curricular*) within ProEMI were to have their expenses covered by funding available through MEC's Direct School Funding

[8] The Basic Education Development Index - IDEB was launched by the Ministry of Education in 2007 to measure the quality of learning and set goals for improving education. IDEB components are the students pass rate (approval), obtained by the annual school census, and the average performance in national exams. The goals established by the IDEB are differentiated for each school and educational network.

Program ("*Programa Dinheiro Direto na Escola*" – PDDE), in accordance with the number of students enrolled at the school. Instituto Unibanco's role in ProEMI-JF was broadly to transfer knowledge and support the implementation process.

The planned second generation of JF was hugely ambitious. MEC and Instituto Unibanco agreed on a year goal of partnering with 2,500 schools to reach 2.8 million students, an amount equal to two-thirds of all students enrolled in the Brazilian public high school system (Instituto Unibanco, 2012). Pursuing the goal involved plans to work with schools in five states where JF hadn't operated before: Ceará, Goiás, Mato Grosso do Sul, Pará, and Piauí (in alphabetical order). These states – in the center-west, north, and northeast regions -- were to be additional to a program that continued to work in the four "first generation" states (mainly in the center-south and south). JF was to be concurrently implemented in highly diverse socioeconomic and political realities across vast distances.

As the chief executive ("Superintendent") of Instituto Unibanco, Wanda Engel had been responsible for JF's design, development, and implementation during the first generation. One year before the formal establishment of the partnership with MEC, Engel started to prepare the institute for the second generation and its challenges (Instituto Unibanco, 2011), such as replicating the program in additional states. Executive teams, support units and a dedicated area for training were created. Administrative and legal issues related to the implementation of ProEMI/JF were inventoried for each state, resulting in integrated implementation plans. A cooperation agreement with the Federal government was put into place, giving the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs (a central agency) responsibility for evaluating the JF program in the second generation (Instituto Unibanco, 2012).

The agreement with MEC was signed on 12 February 2012. Six months later, Wanda Engel relinquished her executive role at Instituto Unibanco, moving onto the Board of Directors (Instituto Unibanco, 2012). Engel was succeeded by Ricardo Henriques. The new superintendent's most significant prior role was as vice-minister ("*secretário executivo*") of the Ministry of Social Development, where his responsibilities included overseeing the planning and implementation of the *Bolsa Família* program of cash transfers to needy families

during the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.[9] Henriques's other executive experience in the Federal government was as a secretary of the Ministry of Education responsible for continuing education, literacy, and diversity. Prior to those executive positions, Henriques's profile was that of an applied economic researcher, working as a presidential advisor at the Federal government's National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) and as a deputy director at the Federal government's Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea), though he served for a time in the state government of Rio de Janeiro as Secretary for Social Assistance and Human Rights.

During its second generation, the number of schools involved with the JF program doubled year on year, starting from a base of 581 in 2012 to reach 2,109 in 2014. As such, the program came to cover 13% of the total student enrollment in Brazil's public high school system (Instituto Unibanco, 2015).

Along with the growth in scale came modification in the program's mechanisms as well as in Instituto Unibanco's own organization. As for the latter, Henriques established a Project Management Office (PMO) mainly for JF, to overcome the challenges associated with grouping units in distinct functions at a time when the program was scaling up quickly. Funding was re-prioritized, as well. JF-related expenditures grew to almost 50% of Instituto Unibanco's annual budget between 2011 and 2014, compared to a 10-year moving average of 20%.

As for the program mechanisms, JF's second generation involved the development of what would aptly be considered a management system that reflected a commitment to incremental learning and continuous improvement. A hallmark of this system was for program participants at all levels to proceed systematically – and repeatedly -- through four differentiated phases of a single management cycle ("*circuito de gestão*"): planning, doing, checking, and adjusting.[10] Instituto Unibanco also developed new mechanisms for use in

[9]The Bolsa Família Program – PBF is an income transfer program of the Brazilian Federal Government that unified and expanded previous income transfer programs. The program was instituted in the first Lula mandate by the provisional measure 132/2003 and converted into the Federal Law n. 10.836/2004.

[10]For basics about this approach to continuous improvement, sometimes referred to as PDCA, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PDCA.

monitoring the implementation of the collaborative initiative, as well as a project management system for use by schools and state education departments (Instituto Unibanco, 2012)

Despite the advances in the program design and expansion, ProEMI/JF implementation experienced difficulties. In particular, payments from the Ministry of Education to schools were delayed or not received. Participating in the program was procedurally demanding, taking up time that schools principals might have spent otherwise, such as develop their analytical skills for school management or redesigning the curriculum. As an outcome, fewer schools had reached the planned targets in comparison to JF 1st generation (Henriques, Carvalho and Bittar, 2020).

Responding to Emerging Policy Issues and Agendas

The political context surrounding the collaborative initiative between government and Instituto Unibanco during JF's second generation was also difficult. In 2013, Brazil entered a period of severe contention. Protests against governmental corruption swept across the country, with demonstrators numbering hundreds of thousands. The demonstrations destabilized the government headed by President Dilma Roussef. This situation led to repeated turnover at the top of the Ministry of Education, in particular (Wikipedia, 2021).

In this environment, the partnership with the Ministry of Education was effectively scaled back; it then ended in 2015. As it underwent consolidation, the number of schools involved in JF was progressively reduced, from 2,100 in 2014 to 1,400 in 2015, and then to 900 schools in 2016 (Instituto Unibanco, 2016).

During this turbulent period, the Ministry of Education issued a revised ten-year National Education Plan *("Plano Nacional de Educação, PNE"*). The PNE set out 20 goals concerning participation and learning in the educational system. The PNE's goal #3 was to universalize schooling for all youngsters and expanding access to high school. The plan indicated three strategies specifically aimed at improving the high school curriculum model: a) institutionalizing a national high school renewal program, b) developing learning and development objectives and rights for high-school students, and c) creating a national common curricular base, through the common agreement between the Federal government, the states, and municipalities. The plan also called for establishing a minimum common curriculum for all school stages, referred to as a Common National Curriculum Base - BNCC (Brasil, 2014).

The intent was for BNCC to be the basis of more curricula and pedagogical methodologies suited to preparing for citizenship and professional life.

Strategizing IU and JF 3rd Generation (2014-2016)

Reshaping IU and the Executive Team

To tackle the challenges implied by the new directions set for the Brazilian national education policy, Henriques initiated major transformations at Instituto Unibanco and JF. As observed by one of the interviewees, Henriques's administration had the ambitious intent to "reconfigure the collaborative networks of the IU to change the trajectory of Brazilian educational policy." Along these lines, a new strategic plan was developed. A feature of this plan was to characterize the institute as playing three distinct roles, only one of which (i.e., the first) related specifically to JF:

- Intervention projects, involving the design, implementation and evaluation of solutions applied to educational management projects;
- Think tank activity, involving the production and dissemination of knowledge about solutions in the education field, through research, studies, and debates; and
- Grant-making, involving financial support for initiatives to overcome challenges in high school education (Instituto Unibanco, 2014).

Following through on the strategic plan, the institute's departmental organization was adjusted, with the result being a structure of five major units:[11]

- The Knowledge Management area, responsible for knowledge development, curating, and dissemination;
- The Development and Content area (later called the Solutions area), responsible for transforming the knowledge into such services as training programs and such products as methodological guides and instructional materials;

[11] In addition to the departments, the structure held dedicated staffs for Strategic Affairs, Communication and Volunteering (Instituto Unibanco, 2014).

- The Project Implementation area, responsible for JF's implementation through collaboration with state education departments and through conducting the institute's own operational activities, such as sending out documentary material to schools.
- The Planning area ("planejamento e articulação") area, responsible for monitoring the institute's projects and activities and grant-making.
- The Finance and Administration area, responsible for administrative support activities and information technology.

Designing JF's 3rd Generation

In parallel, IU started preparing and implementing JF's next generation (Instituto Unibanco, 2015), one that involved state governments but not the Ministry of Education. The so-called governance model was modified to include field offices within state education departments responsible for regional areas. The program's standard length was increased to eight years, to accommodate the addition of a "sustainability stage." The PDCA-inspired management cycle was modified with new procedures serving to connect professionals and coordinate plans and activities among schools. The modified program was specifically enhanced by raising the frequency of routine visits by supervisors from regional offices of state education secretariats to schools needing the most improvement, to the point where the visits were weekly in many such cases. (Instituto Unibanco, 2015). To implement JF 3rd generation, the Institute also scaled up training and knowledge exchange efforts among the network members.[12]

The 3rd generation implementation began in the state of Espírito Santo by the end of that year, in a gradual manner. On the following year, JF was upgraded to the 3rd generation in the states of Goiás and Ceará. In 2017, Rio Grande do Norte was the first state in which the JF 3rd generation was fully implemented from the start.

[12] In 2015, IU conducted more than 150 face-to-face training for more than 4,000 principals and pedagogical coordinators, as well as four state seminars on school management topics, which were attended by more than 1,800 managers (Instituto Unibanco, 2015).

Matching Evaluation with JF Theory of Change

The new vision and the new program configuration implied that the Institute's evaluation processes be reconsidered and modified. Up to that point, impact assessments and randomized controlled trials – RCT had been responsible for producing important evidence that proved JF's effectiveness, increasing its legitimacy. However, one of the interviewees observed that these evaluations, tagged as "black boxes", were not capable of isolating and assessing the mechanisms that generated the program impact, nor explain how they worked.

The first step towards changing evaluation processes in the Institute was constructing JF's 3rd generation logic model. The logic model connected the determinants of good school management, represented by JF components, to the students best learning outcomes (Instituto Unibanco, 2015). Following the premises of the new model, two experimental impact evaluations were developed in 2015: the first explored in which extent leadership, focus and management methods impacted JF results, and the latter investigated in which extent JF contributed to schools' infrastructure, relationships, class attendance, among other variables (Instituto Unibanco, 2015). In addition to traditional and experimental impact assessments, the Institute invested in alternative research methods (ethnographic studies in schools and interviews with SDE managers) to acknowledge stakeholders' perception, alignment, and engagement with the program (Instituto Unibanco, 2015).

Yet these changes were taking place, the creation of the Transdisciplinary Center for Education Research (Centro Transdisciplinar para a Pesquisa em Educação – CPTE)[13] sent a strong message reaffirming IU's commitment to high standard evaluation practices. Part of the efforts that were being made to strengthen the new think tank identity, the CPTE's membership was drawn from researchers from various academic fields and the Institute's executive team. CPTE met every two weeks.

Consolidating the changes in evaluation practices, the Institute held in March 2016 its 2nd international seminar, themed as "Impacts and Evidence". The seminar presented a

[13] According to CPTE's homepage on the Internet, its mission is "to generate and to disseminate relevant and applicable knowledge from the JF program, focusing on the management of schools and state departments of education, as well as to produce recommendations based on analyses and evidence that lead to the continuous improvement of the Brazilian public educational program" (Instituto Unibanco, 2021).

publication with the same title, which recognizes the role of traditional impact assessments but, still, advocates for the use of experimental impact evaluations, capable of isolating the impact of each solution component on the overall achievements. By the same token, the publication expressed support in favor of evaluating implementation and stakeholder's perception and engagement through ethnographic and qualitative methods of observation. Finally, it highlighted the importance of constantly inquiring and reviewing the logic model and its theory of change in the light of the evaluation results (Instituto Unibanco e Fundação Santillana, 2017).

Exploring Educational Practices through International Scouting

The combination of a redesigned JF, a new institutional think tank identity, and the changes in the evaluation practices prompted significant change in IU's knowledge management processes. These innovations were delivered from inside-out, and from outside-in the organization. From inside-out, the innovation consisted in gathering, curating, and making available, on the Internet, all the information accumulated in the Institute throughout the years. In turn, the outside-in innovation consisted in the development of scouting practices at the Instituto Unibanco. The scouting practices aimed at exploring knowledge from new sources of information to discover future trends, new technologies, and promising innovations in the field of educational management.

The scouting activities would be conducted by the Knowledge Management Department, headed by Mirela de Carvalho. A PhD sociologist with a background in economics, Carvalho had joined the Institute a few years earlier, after a period working for Rio de Janeiro's Department of Education as a Special Advisor.

During that period, Carvalho became acquainted with the British Council's activities in Brazil, reputable for offering, in partnership with governments, teachers, and education professionals, programs and services to foster quality education (British Council, 2021) Mirela connected formally with the British Council in 2014. In parallel, the Knowledge Management Department initiated a research effort aimed at identifying successful international cases in educational management. The effort established relations with contacts from Canada and Australia's educational sectors, which resulted, in 2015, in the 1st international seminar held by the Institute. The seminar "Paths to the Quality of Public Education" (Caminhos para a

Qualidade da Educação) was themed after "School Management"[14]. Besides national cases, the seminar presented three well-known foreign educational management systems[15] developed in England, in Canada's Ontario province, and in Australia.

After being exposed to these cases, participating Institute staff members grasped that the Ontario, Australian, and English educational systems shared many attributes: the adoption of a single basic curriculum and universal minimum learning standards; massive investment in principals and school managers' training and certification; evaluation systems tied to career-related incentives; mentoring mechanisms (best performing principals supporting his/her peers in low performing schools); in cases of low performance, the central bodies intervened using a predefined set of pedagogical practices, which lasted until good results were shown (Instituto Unibanco, 2020). However, there was one important distinctive attribute among those models: in England, the schools had more autonomy, with their managers held accountable for achieving results, while in the Australian and Ontario models, the responsibility was shared among the schools and the central and regional offices.

According to one of the interviewees, considering the preceding experience of scaling up JF 2nd generation, standardization and control were still predominant characteristics of JF. The English case, more focused on data transparency and accountability posed attractions at that time for the Institute's leadership.

Scouting England's Practices

In November of that year, the 3rd international seminar, named "High School Curriculum Challenges" (Desafios Curriculares do Ensino Médio), channeled the educational policy agenda of that period. The discussion on the new curriculum model engaged representatives from MEC, State Departments of Education, schools, multilateral agencies, and

[14] The seminar was developed in partnership with Instituto Insper and Folha de São Paulo, one of the largest newspapers in Brazil. It was attended by the Minister of Education Renato Janine Ribeiro and by more than 1,000 people representing the state education departments, the academy, and education professionals (Instituto Unibanco, 2015).

[15] Ontario's (Canada) experience was presented by the Deputy Minister of Education Mary Jean Gallagher; the Australian experience was presented by Barry McGaw, former Council President of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority – ACARA; and the UK educational system was presented by Anthony McNamara, representing the National College for Teaching and Leadership – NCTL, and by Sir Michael Wilshaw, representing the Office for Standards in Education – OFSTED.

universities. The international speakers were, again, the representatives from Ontario, as well as representatives from Finland, Germany, Australia, and Switzerland.

Over that period, IU intensified the dialogue with the British Council. In partnership with the UK's National College for Teaching and Leadership, the Institute conducted training programs for state education managers and for principals from Rio de Janeiro partner schools. In a joint initiative with the British Council and the Itaú Social Foundation, it promoted workshops and discussions that informed the report "The Development of School Leadership in England – Possible Options for Brazil."[16]

Having established a close relationship with the British, the Institute started the arrangements for its first international mission. The 15 mission team members represented the British Council, the Institute, and the state departments of education. The mission was planned to explore three main topics of interest: the functioning of the OFSTED and the UK school supervision system, the schools' collaboration network, and the skills and requirements for school management positions.

The mission departed to London/UK in December 2016. In London, they spoke with experts and education consultants from the British Council and OFSTED. They also visited different schools, assessed with high and low performances, as well as regional education offices, which coordinated the collaboration networks within the British educational system. During these visits, the mission team members noted that British schools had a much higher degree of autonomy and flexibility than public schools in Brazil. At the same time, these schools were conformed to the strict accountability standards settled by OFSTED. OFSTED, in addition to inspecting schools, provided formative feedback for low-performing school' principals and managers. According to one of the interviewees, this situation generated enormous stress on school managers, who felt pressured to deliver results, but lacked support from their regional offices.

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[16] To build an educational leadership policy for the JF, the report indicated the following paths: a) whole system leadership development, including principals, teachers and situational leaders, linked to peer-to-peer development; b) professional development based on national standards for school leadership, focused on teaching and learning, linked to career opportunities and to national qualifications; c) early-talent spotting; d) national system of school inspection; e) abundant availability of school performance data, to drive school improvement and to help families to choose their schools (Instituto Unibanco, 2020).

After the mission, Carvalho, and her team organized workshops to share the learnings among IU, state departments of education and the British Council staff members. In addition to the British high-level standards of performance and accountability, the mission team members highlighted the qualification called National and Local Education Leaders, granted to school managers who stood out for their good results. Along with the qualification, the leaders were entrusted with the mission of developing other managers, supporting, on site, the low performing schools (Instituto Unibanco, 2020).

Scouting Ontario's Practices

The mission to Ontario was to involve more topics, meetings, and staff, compared to the earlier one to England. On-site meetings were held with the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers, the Ontario Board of Principals, the Toronto School District, and four provincial high schools. The mission team was 26 strong, comprising Institute staff, state education secretaries, and representatives of partner organizations involved in debates over Brazil's national high school curriculum reform.

Aware of this complexity, Carvalho and her team initiated a careful preparation process. To deepen understanding of the Canadian experience, Carvalho commissioned a literature review and a field study on the Ontario educational system (Segatto, 2017). These studies were shared among IU's staff members and supported the development of the mission briefing, containing the mission objectives, a glossary and documents related to the mission. These documents were then discussed in preparatory meetings with the mission team members. Since most of group members did not speak English language, interpreters were hired and joined the team.

In November 2017, the mission landed in Toronto, Ontario's capital city. Daily, after the visits, the mission team members met to reflect on the conversations they had had with the Canadians. Comparing to England, Ontario's education system was more collaborative, based on trust and mutual adjustment between the actors that operated in different levels of the system. There was substantial support and investment in the development of teachers and school managers, and the schools' annual planning goals were focused on few collectively agreed objectives.

According to another interviewee, the mission highlight was the Canadian mentoring model. Like in the British National and Local Education Leaders program, high-performing

school principals devoted part of their time to mentor the low performing ones. However, in the Canadian case, the collaboration was voluntary, guided by common objectives defined by the network members. Also, these principals were supported by an apparently robust leadership program, called Leading Students Achievement: Networks for Learning – LSA[17]. During the mission, a discussion on how to adapt the Ontario's leadership model to the Brazilian context was initiated. One of the interviewees said that IU's approach was extremely focused on control at that time, to the point of being "disrespectful" with the schools' principals, and that would be hard to achieve, in Brazil, a similar level of trust and collaboration found in Canada.

These sorts of reflections continued in the mission's balance meeting, on its last day, and in two more meetings held in São Paulo after the mission. The participants of these meetings reported as "lessons that should be transferred to the Brazilian school system": emphasize trust and collaboration, develop systemic leaders, promote equity within the (educational) system, and foster collaboration and joint knowledge building (Instituto Unibanco, 2020).

Assimilating International Experiences

These international cases were used as reference points to discuss important topics in the Institute's agenda: the new high school curriculum, the leadership system, and the national system of education. After the internal discussion, IU initiated a systematic process of dissemination and debate of the British and Canadian missions within the Institute's networks. The material produced was presented and discussed with the Council of State Secretaries of

[17] Leading Student Achievement (LSA): Networks for Learning was a project developed by the provincial principals' associations, the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario - CPCO, and the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), in partnership with and funded by the Student Achievement Division, Ontario Ministry of Education (EDU). The project began in 2005 and continued until 2019. The LSA was constituted by a network of interconnected and mutually supporting networks, the Leadership Networks, The Innovation Networks, The Main Learning Teams and The Professional Learning Communities. LSA also developed main processes for Leadership Learning, using a concept of Teaching Learning Critical Pathways – TLCP and resources as Inquiry Collaborative tools, Learning Conversations Protocols and Knowledge Building, Knowledge Creation and Knowledge Forum. Throughout the years, LSA also developed content and training solutions on a wide range of Leadership themes, including Collective Efficacy, Instructional Leadership / Learning Leadership, Leadership of Math Learning, High Impact Leadership, Leadership as Influence, Leadership Problems of Practice, Collaborative Professionalism, Equity, Family Engagement, Monitoring, School Improvement Planning, Deeper Learning & Coherence (Creativity, Innovation and Design), Well-Being, Mental Health, Mindfulness And Voice, Conditions for Learning, Trust, and LSA (Ontario Principals' Council, 2021).

Education – CONSED, and in the 6th international seminar, “Management and Leadership for the Continuous Advancement of Education” (Instituto Unibanco, 2020).[18]

After the seminar, the discussion continued in a workshop with experts and IU staff. In the workshops, the group summarized their findings in six new imperatives to be developed within IU’s initiatives: a) listen to different actors and use evidence to develop solutions collectively; b) inclusion of equity, well-being and students engagement as additional targets for the educational policies; c) systemic relationships based on ethics, respect and trust; d) leadership development and professionalization of school managers to enable the mediation of collaborative learning processes; e) integration and coordination of multilevel system components (whole-systems approach); f) implementation of a flexible and diverse high school curriculum (Instituto Unibanco, 2020).

In parallel, a group of approximately 20 people, among them the Institute’s executive team, middle-managers, and external specialists, met twice a month to debate education trends. One of the interviewees observed that "the meetings were very collaborative", and “even if there was frequent disagreement, the diverse combination of points of view was always recognized as a powerful institutional asset.”

After assimilating the international experiences, the relationship with the British Council and contacts in England continued to be strengthened. Beyond that, new scouting missions were launched to Portugal, Estonia, Poland, and Chile (Instituto Unibanco, 2020), enabling the further expansion and consolidation of IU’s international knowledge networks.

Realigning IU Systems and Practices

Improving JF Theory of Change

As the learning obtained from the UK and Canada missions was being disseminated among IU staff and networks, the systems and practices at the institution began to be modified. In 2018, the former concept of “Educational Management by Results” was refashioned in a new concept called “Management for Continuous Advancement” (Instituto Unibanco, 2018). In practice, this concept would mean more experimentation, continuous practical learning, and

[18] Besides the national speakers, at the seminar were Linda Massey, head of the Leading Students' Achievement (LSA) program of the Ontario Principals Council, Sean Headford, from the British OFSTED, and Jose Weinstein, representing the Centro para el Desarrollo del Liderazgo Educativo, from Chile (Instituto Unibanco, 2020).

internal coherence of actions within schools, regional offices, and state departments of education.

Later that year, IU published new research to support the alignment between the Management for Continuous Advance concept and JF's logic model. To discuss the practical implications of the new logic model, a working group within the Institute's executive team was constituted (Instituto Unibanco, 2020). Subsequently, in another round of internal workshops, new features were introduced in JF to match the improved logic model (Instituto Unibanco, 2020). These features aimed to strengthen the mutual agreement on goals, the sharing of practices, and the coherence and systemic integration of educational actions, focusing on collaboration and support to the schools.

To ensure the alignment and coherence among multilevel educational plans and actions, IU supervisors' role became more strategic - besides the traditional tasks of monitoring and tutoring schools, they were now responsible for supporting and connecting school managers, regional offices, and the state departments of education (Instituto Unibanco, 2020).

Piloting Experimental Evaluation

Aiming at developing critical thinking and generating learning within the system networks, JF evaluation processes were reshaped based on the concept of "continuous processes of learning by practice". This concept would imply major changes not only in the evaluation processes, but on how solutions were developed and implemented at the Institute.

According to one of the interviewees, in 2018, the Solutions Development Department was still struggling to adapt to the 3rd generation model. At this point, César Nunes was appointed to take charge of this department. Nunes's background was as a researcher and professor of education at the prestigious University of Campinas (Unicamp). He had worked with the education sector in Ontario. As an external researcher for the Institute, Nunes had led an experimental evaluation project in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, which was supported by methods and instruments developed in Canada (Vinha *et al.*, 2019). After moving into the executive role within the Institute, Nunes decided to replicate Ontario model of JF communities

of practice for JF.[19] By the end of 2019, the first communities of practice had been created in the JF. Face-to-face meetings were held to initiate communities in Ceará, Espírito Santo and Goiás. In total, 21 communities were activated, involving the participation of more than 1,000 people, among students, regional managers, and pedagogical coordinators (Instituto Unibanco, 2019).

Decentralizing Implementation Activities

The process of decentralization of implementation activities was initiated in 2018. An interviewee observed that the educational plans began to be prepared in collaboration with the states, in a customized way, to meet each individual need. Likewise, management information systems were adapted to each one of the states. The results were monitored through multilevel indicators and targets, capable of attributing the performance to each one of the bodies involved in JF's implementation. However, to implement these new practices, the Institute had to change the implementation's staff mindset from the "control approach" to "support approach." To overcome this challenge, IU's staff began to be hired locally, considering that these individuals had greater knowledge on the local reality. The staff members were then instructed to develop their own "work microprocesses," and act with initiative within their "responsibility fields." Within the implementation teams, "micro training" was performed weekly, in small groups and in webinars broadcasted over the Internet. Also, twice a month, the program's supervisors organized wide open meetings with representatives of schools, regional offices, and the state education managers. To support schools that were facing enduring adversities, IU began to contract with specialized consultancies, which were to help them to solve their key problems and then transfer back management knowledge and practices.

Preparing for the (Emergent) Future

In Brazil, 2018 was an election year for president and state governors, with the political debate marked by a strong ideological polarization. Controversial questions about gender and

[19] Communities of practice are "collaborative environments aimed at promoting the sharing of challenges of practice and fostering the exchange of ideas, allowing each participant to learn from their peers and contribute to a collective construction of knowledge".

race equity, and scientific denialism advanced towards the field of education. The leadership changes in the national and state governments would also require the renegotiation of JF's partnerships in new contexts. In Henriques's words, "the election year required a clear position on issues essential to public education and the consolidation of partnerships with organizations that shared the same objectives" (Instituto Unibanco, 2018).

In December 2018, the National Council of Education – CNE approved the high school Common National Curriculum Base, creating flexible learning trajectories for these students (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira - INEP, 2018). Also, in that year, IDEB results (from 2017) were disclosed, and exposed the Brazilian high school system fragilities: more than 70% of the students were evaluated with insufficient learning level in Mathematics and Portuguese (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira - INEP, 2019). At the same time, the results demonstrated JF's transformation potential: Ceará, Espírito Santo, Goiás, Piauí and Rio Grande do Norte grew in the index, and the first three were among the four best ranked states in IDEB (Instituto Unibanco, 2018).

The inability of the Brazilian governments to organize the educational system set the stage for another movement in the Instituto's strategy, marked by its engagement in the educational policy debate. In this period, the Institute led many important educational forums in Brazil[20] and kept expanding its grant-giving activities, partnering with dozens of non-governmental organizations, research institutions and social justice funds to promote diversity and equity in the educational system.[21]

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[20] In that period, IU participated actively in forums such as All For Education (Todos Pela Educação), the Group of Institutes Foundations and Companies (Grupo de Institutos Fundações e Empresas – GIFE) and the Movement For the Base (Movimento Pela Base). IU also led the consortium of civil society entities that supported the Front of New High School Curriculum within the Council of State Secretaries of Education, the High School Working Group of the Movement For the Base, and participated in the Collaborate Movement (Movimento Colabora), which advocates for the institution of a national educational system. (Instituto Unibanco, 2018, 2019).

[21] In that period, IU supported initiatives like "Researchers Public School of Education: Challenges in the Production of Knowledge from the Peripheries" (Pesquisadores em Educação de Escolas Públicas: Desafios à Produção de Conhecimento das Periferias), "Racial Equity" (Equidade Racial), "Black Youth" (Juventude Negra), "Women Researchers in Public School Education" (Pesquisadoras da Educação em Escolas Públicas), "Women in Exact Sciences" (Elas nas Exatas), and "Afroscientists" (Afrocientistas), among others (Instituto Unibanco, 2018, 2019).

In 2019, the Institute built a new strategic plan, with the collaboration of IU staff and renowned specialists in the field of education. For the new cycle, the Institute structured its initiatives in four streams of action: a) implement sustainable and scalable management programs in heterogeneous contexts and develop sustainable management solutions, b) generate evidence-based and public policy-oriented knowledge, c) strengthen and articulate actors and networks for the advocacy of educational management, and d) occupy strategic positions and intensify relationships with the main actors of educational field (Instituto Unibanco, 2019).

By late 2019, JF was initiated in Minas Gerais, which had an extensive network of almost 1,300 schools and more than 400,000 students. After the inauguration of the new state governor's mandates, the partnerships with Ceará, Espírito Santo, Goiás, Piauí and Rio Grande do Norte were renewed (Instituto Unibanco, 2019). JF had evolved with new features and an improved theory of change. New evaluation processes were being implemented, and pilot projects were being designed and tested. The decentralization of implementation activities was showing the first results, and the Institute was leading and expanding important networks for creating the future of education in Brazil.

PART III: Case Commentary

The time has come to comment on the foregoing narrative report about the case involving strengthening Brazil's high school education system, the systems change initiative featuring the *Jovem de Futuro* program, and the systems leadership organization, Instituto Unibanco, in relation to practical theorizing about systems change initiatives and system leadership practice. For this purpose, we could use a handy term to refer to the case. A very informative option would be, "strengthening educational management in Brazil's high school education system through Instituto Unibanco's systems change initiatives including the *Jovem de Futuro* program." While informative, it's unwieldy. A more compact version is, "Brazil's high school-focused education management systems leadership case." However, it's inapt because all the terms, apart from Brazil, are abstract nouns, making it hard to remember (Heath and Heath, 2008). Given that our specific practical theorizing interest is centered on systems leadership organizations and their management, an apt title would be "the Instituto Unibanco case of education systems leadership in Brazil," a tag for which is "the IU Case."

The IU Case – with its multiple generations of the *Jovem de Futuro* (JF) program -- is consonant with major features of systems leadership theorizing. According to Dreier, Nabarro, and Nelson (2019), "The complexity and long timeframes of systems change initiatives mean that challenges and setbacks are inevitable. The question is not whether these will occur, but how the network will react to them, adapt and course-correct when necessary" (p. 31). Considering the troubles encountered during the second generation of the *Jovem de Futuro* program, the IU Case is specifically consonant with the statement that setbacks to systems change initiatives are inevitable. In the IU Case, JF's setbacks involved the Ministry of Education. Intense political contention and the removal of a president from office through impeachment was an important cluster of factors; its impact was felt in frequent changes at the top of education ministry. But other factors were more directly related to policy change processes (Barzelay *et al.*, 2003; Barzelay and Gallego, 2010; Kingdon, 2014), to wit: the "policy stream" reflecting debate about the what high school students should learn and how to make the education system work better through the combined action of the Federal and state governments. Thus, the process dynamics of politics and policy can be considered as typical context factors for cases where systems change initiative involves government partners.

Having said that, the specifics of the IU Case are also indicative of a pattern differing from inevitable setbacks: namely, surprise opportunities (Hirschman, 1963, 1984, 2015), such as occurred during transition from JF's first to second generation, when the Ministry of Education's introduction of new programs to aid states spurred the massive JF's scaling up. While opportunities for scaling up systems change initiatives are more fortuitous than setbacks, they are similar in that they pose challenges, as scaling up is tricky business. Accordingly, inevitable setbacks and surprise opportunities are two generic challenges that systems leadership organizations are bound to face.

Systems leadership theory holds that systems change initiatives must necessarily undergo course corrections and, more broadly, *adaptation*, in the face of setbacks and opportunities. The IU Case is consonant with this basic stance in two respects: the reconfiguring of JF, on the one hand, and the reshaping of the Institute's roles and activities within education management, on the other. As for JF, illustrative changes are numerous. One was to lengthen joint programs with state education departments to 8 years. A second was to partner with regional field organizations of state departments of education, to support

participating schools as they sought to deal with their issues through continuous improvement methods. A third was to add stage-like components to the previously standard management cycles ("*circuitos de gestão*") to favor knowledge sharing among schools and other participants and program sustainability. Finally, communities of practice were convened on a state-by-state basis where school principals were among the participating members. As for the reshaping the Institute's roles and activities, a variety of measures taken in the same period scaled up its role as a provider of knowledge, a policy advocate, and a grant-maker.

Examining systems leadership theory and features of the IU Case in this reciprocal manner implies that adaptation is a normal characteristic of enduring systems change initiatives. While that statement is fine as far as it goes, it would be helpful to clarify the idea of "normal characteristic." *Normal* could mean that cases of enduring systems change initiatives *typically involve measures* that reconfigure programs (such during JF's third generation) or bring about a new arrangement of systems leadership roles and activities (such as what developed in the IU Case around education management in the latter half of the 2010's). Alternatively, normal could mean that enduring systems change initiatives will presumably be *less adequate in practical terms* if measures, such as program reconfiguration or the rearrangement of roles and activities, do not come about, given that setbacks and surprise opportunities are to be expected. This alternative statement is different in being an unambiguously practical statement, as opposed to one that sounds like an empirical generalization. To our mind, it's no doubt better to be unambiguously committed to the idea that systems leadership theory is a body of practical argumentation (Walton, 1992), as distinct from either a scientific theory or connected empirical generalizations about the same phenomenon. An advantage about being clear about the role of a given aspect systems leadership theory, such as the one about adaptation, is that it allows for being clearer about what is to be gained from the reciprocal examination of theory and cases, when the purpose is to furnish and critically reflect on practical knowledge about systems leadership, or any other domain (Mashaw, 1983; White, 1985; Jonsen and Toulmin, 1988; Hood and Jackson, 1991; Moore, 1995; Arras, 2017; Barzelay, 2019; Barzelay *et al.*, 2022).

Statements to the effect that "adaptation is normal for systems change initiatives" are distillations of practical arguments (Hitchcock, 2002) about such undertakings, considered generically. Such statements are meant to be meaningful in relation to a *type of case*, but they

are *not specific to cases*, because *cases as such* are identified with conditions that are specific to place and time, while statements concerning a *type of case* are not. Drawing on rhetorical theory, statements about adaptation for a *type of case* are answers to practical questions of an indefinite nature, whereas statements about *cases as such* are answers to practical questions of a *definite nature* (Quintilian, 1920).[22] Accordingly, adaptation's role within a practical (or purposive) *theory* of systems leadership, concerned with systems change initiatives generically, is to claim a *practical necessity, or imperative,* for a type of case.[23]

Let us now return to the idea of examining practical theory and cases in a reciprocal manner. Analysis of the IU Case doesn't show that adaptation is normal. The case analysis examines how the *adaptation imperative* of systems change initiatives (generically) was specifically addressed in this case through arrangements of specific mechanisms. Examining how specific mechanisms in the IU Case addressed the adaptation imperative of systems change initiatives (generically) allows for learning about two related issues. One is how was the IU Case's systems change initiative "adapted" through the assembled mechanisms within this case? Another is what contribution did any specific mechanism within the IU Case make to the systems change initiative's adaptation?[24] If these questions are answered, what has been done is to have recovered the design within the IU Case (Barzelay *et al.*, 2022).

So, all in all, this case commentary can be seen as moving toward *recovering the design* within the IU Case of systems leadership, where the system is high school education in Brazil; the systems change initiative includes multiple roles including delivering the JF program, advocacy, research, and grant-making; and Instituto Unibanco is the systems leadership organization. Further case analysis will deliver on this promise.

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[22]Quintilian exemplifies an indefinite (practical) question as: should men marry? A contrasting definite question is: should Cato marry Marcia? (Quintilian's contrasting question was: should Cato marry?)

[23]There are plenty of precedents within academic literature on institutions, communities, and civilizations for thinking of adaptation as a practical imperative of a type of case (Selznick, 1957; Heifetz, 1994; Crosby and Bryson, 2005; Diamond, 2006).

[24] These questions track ideas about reverse engineering and, for that matter, forward engineering (Chikofsky and Cross, 1990; Fischer *et al.*, 1991; Boorse, 2002).

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Appendix A - Analysis of Report

Lisa Dreier, David Nabarro and Jane Nelson, "Systems Leadership for Sustainable Development: Strategies for Achieving Systemic Change," Corporate Responsibility Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School, September 2019. URL

General background: Many organizations, from companies to social entrepreneurs and nonprofits, are integrating systems-change goals and strategies into their programs or messaging. In response to growing interest, a number of organizations are working to build capacity, deepen knowledge and share experiences on leadership skills and tactics for advancing system change. This paper does not provide a comprehensive mapping of the field, instead seeking to present highlights and syntheses.

Specific background: In 2017, the United Nations' Chief Executives Board identified Capability for Systems Leadership as a necessary core strength for the United Nations system. Since then, the UN Staff College has incorporated Systems Leadership into its curriculum, and individual agencies including UNDP have piloted systems-change approaches in select programs.

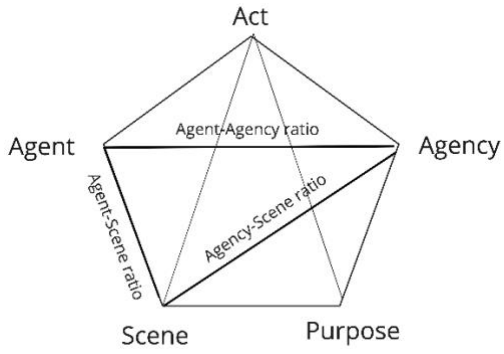
Recognizing the need for broader field-building for systems change and Systems Leadership, Darcy Riddell of the McConnell Foundation and Anna Birney of the School of Systems Change convened a group of Canadian and international stakeholders in a 2018 workshop on "Global Field-building for Systems Change." The group discussed key needs such as curating and connecting knowledge and networks; strengthening capacity through learning and support systems; engaging new voices; attracting funding; and stewarding field-building efforts. More and broader efforts like this are needed, ideally linking together major experts and initiatives and providing an easily accessible platform to share and access knowledge about systems change and Systems Leadership.

A vision for the desired future of Systems Leadership as it relates to supporting the SDGs would include:

- Widespread understanding of the concept and core principles of Systems Leadership among the international community, including global, regional and local leaders;
- Universal access and availability of information, tools and training programs to help develop and strengthen Systems Leaders;
- Robust and systematic evaluation and sharing of experiences and outcomes of Systems Leadership initiatives;
- High-level leadership support for the approach among respected individuals from diverse sectors and regions, clearly embracing it as a tool for empowerment and systems change.

Achieving these goals will require a coordinated effort among proponents of Systems Leadership to further develop, study and refine the approach and encourage its mainstreaming. However, the nature of Systems Leadership is that it is not a theoretical or academic construct; it is a strategy and set of tactics to be applied and refined through real experience. As a result, a larger number and diversity of both systems leaders and Systems Leadership initiatives are needed to build critical mass and capture learnings that can benefit the field as a whole.

Dramatistic Text Analysis



1.0 Agent-Agency ratio

1.1 Systems Leadership is a set of skills and capacities that any individual or organization can use to catalyze, enable and support the process of creating change on complex, systemic issues related to shifting systems toward sustainability.

1.2 A combination of knowledge, skills and mindset, create systemic transformation defines a Systems Leader.

1.3 A Systems Leader's ability to enable collective learning – and to help capture, articulate and share the resulting insights – is more important than their individual technical expertise.

1.4 If a Systems Leader is an expert in their field at the start of the process, maintaining an open mind and learning mindset is key.

1.5 Systems Leadership draws upon familiar skills – such as subject expertise, strategy development, program management, coalition-building, and collaboration.

1.6 Systems leaders require strong skills in process design and facilitation.

1.7 Systems Leaders who expect challenges and see them as opportunities for learning and growth are more likely to survive and thrive.

2.0 Agency-Scene ratio

2.1 Linking project activities to the goal of system transformation is increasingly common on projects related to the SDGs.

2.2 System change initiatives must be grounded in knowledge and insight about how the system functions.

2.3 Most often complex systems are viewed, understood or experienced differently by their various stakeholders. No single stakeholder has total knowledge of the system; the only way to gain a broader overview is to pool knowledge, insights and data from many sources.

2.4 The tactics of building and mobilizing multi-stakeholder coalitions and alliances have been refined over centuries, particularly through advocacy campaigns, social movements and community-based development programs led by civil society, faith-based organizations and political parties.

2.5 Developing collective understanding of the system involves debating its boundaries, mapping its elements and dynamics; and considering the environment around the system that influences and enables it, from institutional policies and incentives to personal choices and behaviors. Articulating the role of power dynamics within a system, and identifying who benefits or is disadvantaged by those dynamics, is an important aspect of the mapping and insight. Exploring potential avenues of action and their implications, based on analysis and stakeholder experience, is key to shaping pathways to action.

2.6 Systems change initiatives require strategies that are emergent, adaptive and flexible, because complex systems are always changing.

2.7 Individuals, coalitions and systems-change strategies will evolve and develop new capacities at the same time as an initiative unfolds. In this way individuals, institutions, networks, and a broader system can all experience change and growth in the course of a systems-change initiative.

3.0 Agent-Scene ratio

3.1 Diversity is essential to generating a collective understanding of the system, developing effective strategies for action, and perceiving and adapting to change as the initiative evolves.

3.2 Systems leadership involves widespread collaboration, innovation and action.

3.3 The explicit goal of alliance-building is broad and long-range system transformation.

3.4 Systems Leaders, which can include both individuals and institutions, serve as catalysts and enablers of this process – a role requiring optimism, flexibility and endurance, along with the ability to understand and empower stakeholders with very different viewpoints and incentives.

3.5 Systems leaders play a crucial role in facilitating reflective conversation, learning, and knowledge-sharing.

3.6 Individuals take risks in committing their influence, resources, trust, and reputations to engaging new partners, often using untested methods.

3.7 Systems leadership involves mutual accountability for progress to shift systems towards sustainability.

3.8 The complexity and long timeframes of systems-change initiatives mean that challenges and setbacks are inevitable. The question is not whether these will occur, but how the network will react to them, adapt and course-correct when necessary.

SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP ARCHETYPE

Domain

- *Systems-change* to fulfill SDGs and attain a sustainable future (purposive phenomena)
- *Systems-change initiatives*[25] (overall working phenomenon type)
- *Professional practice* involved with systems-change initiatives and directed at systems-change to fulfill SDGs ("*systems leadership*")

Functional-teleology

Theory of change – conceptual organization

- *Systems-change* makes causal contributions to fulfilling SDGs
- The *community-level* is the locus of systems-change
- Systems change *initiatives* are practical means to support the collective journey of systems change.
- *Practices* within systems-change initiatives are sources of community-level systems-change phenomena (including 'growth' during them)
- *Functional imperatives* for systems-change initiatives include developing initiative strategy, developing initiative practices and systems, and leading/managing initiative execution
- *Professional practice* makes causal contributions to fulfilling the functional imperatives of systems-change initiatives
- *Systems leadership* is professional knowledge about systems-change initiatives and their leadership/management
- Staff training colleges and universities have roles to play in developing and spreading *professional knowledge* about systems leadership within the community.

(Functional) Imperatives for System Change Initiatives

- Developing strategy
    - Pentad ratio statements: 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.8
- Developing practices and systems
    - Pentad ratio statements: 2.4, 2.5, 3.1 3.6
- Leading/managing execution
    - Pentad ratio statement: 3.7

[25]"A systems Leadership initiative" is a project, program or campaign which aims to contribute significant, lasting impact on one or more complex issues by mobilizing action among a diverse array of relevant stakeholders."

Design-practicality

Challenges

- Systems-change
  - Complex systems are always changing
  - The complexity and long timeframes of systems-change initiatives mean that challenges and setbacks are inevitable.
  - Recognizing inequitable power dynamics and seeking to transform systemic injustice
- Systems-initiative challenges
  - Value complexity/equivocality-ambiguity-uncertainty/frame rivalry
    - Most often complex systems are viewed, understood or experienced differently by their various stakeholders.
    - Stakeholders with very different viewpoints and incentives.
  - Deficits
    - Many practitioners currently lack the competencies to lead systems change initiatives
  - Traps
    - Demands for coordination spike as systems-change initiatives move downstream – risk of dependency upon key individuals
  - Personal risk-taking
    - Individuals need to take risks in committing their influence, resources, trust, and reputations to engaging new partners

Systems Change Initiative Design-references

- Functional-teleology statements
- Principles
  - Systems Leadership draws upon familiar skills – such as subject expertise, strategy development, program management, coalition-building, and collaboration. (Ratio statement: 1.5)
  - The system leaders' role requires optimism, flexibility and endurance. (Ratio statement: 3.4)
  - Adopting an agile, flexible, innovative and learning-centered approach allows for evolution and experimentation.
  - Individuals, coalitions and systems-change strategies will evolve and develop new capacities at the same time as an initiative unfolds. In this way individuals, institutions, networks, and a broader system can all experience change and growth in the course of a systems-change initiative. (Ratio statement: 2.7)
- Framework and Guidelines
  - CLEAR describes five key elements of the systems change process that may overlap or repeat in cycles throughout the course of an initiative.
  - **C**onvene and Commit
    - Key stakeholders engage in moderated dialogue to address a complex issue of mutual concern.
    - They define shared interests and goals, and commit to working together in new ways to create systemic change.

- **L**ook and Learn
  - Through system mapping, stakeholders jointly build a shared understanding of the components, actors, dynamics, and influences that create the system and its current outcomes, generating new insights and ideas.
- **E**ngage and Energize
  - Diverse stakeholders are engaged through continuous communication.
  - Incentives and milestones help drive progress and maintain momentum.
- **A**ct with Accountability
  - Shared goals and principles set the direction of the initiative
  - Measurement frameworks help track progress.
  - Coordination and governance structures can be developed as initiatives mature.
- **R**eview and Revise
  - Stakeholders review progress regularly and adapt the initiative strategy accordingly.