

# Scholarship, Practice, and Leadership

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Throughout your program you will be introduced to the many challenges leaders face in managing complex individual and group dynamics. Leaders today must shape organizational culture, communicate value systems, model ethical behavior, engage and inspire followers, and manage diversity. To achieve these tasks effectively, leaders must be able to integrate scholarship and practice. Integrating scholarship and practice involves obtaining a theoretical understanding of core leadership principles through scholarly research and study. Integrating scholarship and practice also means that leaders convert their theoretical understanding into daily, observable leadership behaviors and practices. Leaders who integrate scholarship and practice are typically effective in both personal and professional arenas. Leaders who integrate scholarship and practice are also able to lead organizations during difficult and challenging times.

There is a difference between being a scholar and a practitioner. According to Winter and Griffiths (2000), a scholar possesses reliable and impartial theoretical knowledge. Scholars obtain this knowledge by studying theory and conducting research. Practitioners, conversely, possess application-based knowledge specifically geared toward the workplace. As University of Phoenix doctoral students, you will have the opportunity to obtain, enact, and create both scholar and practitioner knowledge.

## Leadership Practice

In his highly publicized book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins (2001) portrayed a Level 5 leader as an individual who displays a balance between humility and will. Level 5 leaders are self-aware individuals who are able to conduct honest, rigorous, and candid self-appraisal. They articulate their strengths and weaknesses and are able to integrate feedback from others and from the research they conduct. Level 5 leaders know how to integrate theory and practice; they have scholarly knowledge of leadership theory and can translate that theory into effective leadership behavior. Level 5 leaders transform theory into practice through their ability to create organizational discipline in three arenas: disciplined employees, disciplined thinking, and disciplined behaviors and actions. When organizations display discipline, leaders do not have to maintain a strict chain of command. When organizational members demonstrate disciplined thinking, leaders do not have to impose bureaucracy. When organizations display disciplined behaviors and actions, leaders do not have to exercise unnecessary control.

One critically important characteristic of Level 5 leaders is that they display internal consistency. In statistics, internal consistency means that test items measure the same idea or concept. For leaders, internal consistency means that leaders' actions and behaviors are consistent with or match their communication and intentions. For example, it is inconsistent to say you are a participative leader if you micromanage people. It is inconsistent to say you are a servant leader (Greenleaf, 1977) yet display egocentric, individualistic behavior. As doctoral students, it is important to convert the scholarship gained through online study and coursework into internally consistent leadership practice. It is only with this level of consistency and emotional maturity that leaders will gain trust and commitment from followers.

## Determining Your Strategic Fit

As doctoral students, your challenge is to assess yourself and determine your strategic fit. Determining your strategic fit means using critical thinking to evaluate how you will maintain a balance between your scholarly and practitioner experience. You must determine if you possess the 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies needed to lead organizations, how you will acquire the competencies you lack, and ways to add your own findings to the extant understanding of organizations and leadership. You must determine how you will balance the scholar/practitioner relationship - that is, how you will translate the theoretical knowledge you gain in each class into observable, leadership actions and behaviors. You must strive for internal consistency by having the courage to critically analyze, using available literature and data, your behaviors and actions to ensure that they match your words. If you notice inconsistencies, do not proceed with actions that do not successfully pass your assessment and mirror your desired state.

#### References:

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great - Why some companies make the leap . . . and others don't*. Harper Business.

Greenleaf, R. (1977). *Servant leadership*. Paulist Press.

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