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Are Social-Emotional Learning Focused Schools Deliberately Developmental Organizations?

[1]James A. Bailey

[2]Randy Weiner

Abstract

The call for social-emotional development for students has increased through the pandemic, but these calls also require educators to understand the complex nature of social-emotional development as adults. This research study aimed to explore how schools known for social-emotional learning (SEL) support adult SEL development toward flourishing within complex environments. For this study, we used Keegan and Lahey's (2016) framework of a deliberately developmental organization which has found certain organizations center adult development as a primary strategy. We utilized this framework to explore if any of these characteristics of a deliberately developmental organization (DDO) are readily evident in schools highly focused on SEL.

Keywords: *Social-emotional learning, adult development, deliberately developmental organizations*

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[1]**James A. Bailey**, PhD, Core Faculty Member, Richard Riley College of Education, Leadership and Human Sciences, Walden University, Minneapolis
Email: james.bailey4@mail.waldenu.edu

[2]**Randy Weiner**, M.A. Partner, Daily SEL Leader
Email: randy@DailySEL.com

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Introduction

One and half years since the inception of an historical global pandemic, today's world is far more challenging and complex than it was at the start of 2020. For schools, after a 2020-21 year that seemingly could not possibly have been more challenging, 2021-22 got off to an even worse start. Between the ever-increasing threats of climate change, equity, divisive politics and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, many educators are grappling with overwhelming complexity daily in their personal and professional lives. This growing complexity has led to calls for more social-emotional learning (SEL) and support for schools (Jennings et al., 2019).

However, the call for more SEL requires school leaders and teachers to understand the complex demands of student SEL development and also involves increasing adult SEL, which is also highly complex (Drago-Severson, 2016). Ultimately, SEL is about human flourishing, but with stress at all-time highs, burdensome accountability measures still in place, pandemic-related issues, and a long history of other failed reforms, schools may neither have the organizational design to manage higher levels of complexity nor the capacity to help adults develop their SEL skills.

The idea of complexity is used frequently to describe this part of the 21st century and is often defined from a systems perspective. However, understanding the complexity of a system is often impossible because one must first try and define all of the myriad elements of a system and understand how they interact. Concerning complexity, cause and effect relationships are often contingent upon contextual and dynamic conditions in which numerous variables occur, making outcomes often unknowable and unpredictable (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Because patterns are often unpredictable, actions to take often emerge and are contingent on the speed with which one can make sense of what is happening.

From another perspective, complexity is akin to what Heifitz (1994) labeled adaptive challenges, referring to situations for which the application of current knowledge or routines does not suffice. In such scenarios, a solution is not known or identified. Instead, individuals have to adapt to a new way of thinking, believing, and doing by learning their way through a problem through trial and error. To solve these types of complex, adaptive challenges, individuals often require greater cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities supported by the organization in which they work (Drago-Severson, 2016).

Complexity from either perspective is the opposite of certainty, which many people, including educators, prefer (Snowden & Boone, 2007). As institutions that seek to ensure their existence, schools prefer more known cause and effect relationships in which best practices or standard operating procedures can be applied. Unfortunately, when complex situations, like the pandemic, are added to all of the other complex demands, schools are often unable to adjust quickly to this new dynamic.

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According to Drago-Severson (2016, p. 59), "resolving these kinds of problems and challenges requires that we have the internal capacities to deal with incredible complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty…", but frequently there is a mismatch between the complexity of the demand and individuals' internal capacities to deal with or make sense of it. Keegan (1994) referred to this as being in over our heads. The idea of mental complexity originated in Keegan's (1994) constructive-developmental theory which theorizes that adults can, but often do not, develop more advanced ways of knowing or making meaning of the world. To advance into more complex ways of knowing or making meaning, people need appropriate forms of support and challenge.

As such, the call for more social-emotional learning, which has echoed throughout the pandemic, has added more complexity to the roster of reforms for schools. However, like so many reforms in education, the SEL movement assumes adults possess these skills themselves and are experts in how they develop in students. The grand assumption is that adults can easily understand the nature of social-emotional development and have reached a level of complexity in understanding these skills for themselves and others.

To deal with the complexity of SEL, educators must develop the capacity to first understand their levels of social and emotional development and second to manage the complicated nature of addressing SEL of students if they hope to meet their needs (Jennings, 2019; Jennings & Greenbeg, 2009). To achieve this goal, schools must rotate their professional development orientation by 90°, moving from horizontal development to vertical development (Keegan & Lahey, 2016), becoming more deliberate in their attention to adult development. This transformational view of adult development focuses on developing a different and more complex mental operating system to help make sense of the world. This development requires what Keegan and Lahey (2010, p. 18) refer to as enhancing our mental complexity or understanding ourselves and challenges at a “qualitatively higher level of mental complexity”. In short, schools need to focus not only on the key components of SEL for students but also on how adults can become more sophisticated to meet the increased complexity inherent in SEL in the 21st century.

Literature Review

To support educators in navigating the complexity inherent in the current educational environment, we are increasingly coming to understand that the sophistication of our internal capacities must grow (Drago-Severson, et al., 2013; Drago-Severson, 2016). Learning can encompass a horizontal dimension (gaining more informational type knowledge) or vertical development (gaining a more expansive way to understand the world). Both are necessary, but only vertical development may help us better understand and deal with growing complexity (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano 2020).

Some research also shows that only focusing on the horizontal dimension of SEL may not be not enough to handle the complexity of dealing with the ongoing SEL needs in our schools (Keegan & Lahey, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano 2020). Therefore, to better understand and support the growth needed for SEL, we anchored our study in three interrelated

theories: adult development, horizontal and vertical development, and deliberately developmental organizations focused on vertical growth. We explore these topics below.

Horizontal Development and Vertical Development

Schools in the 21st century are being asked to grapple with more complexity than ever before, including calls to focus on the social-emotional wellness of students and educators. This exponential growth in complexity requires more than additional informational knowledge or what experts call technical or horizontal development (Drago-Severson, 2016). Horizontal development prevails as the frame through which most schools or districts disseminate new skills, knowledge, or information. This form of development, while still needed in many cases, seeks to produce subject matter experts by adding to an existing knowledge base. The prevalence of this type of development views educators as static in their overall adult development and requiring more information or knowledge to grow as professionals.

Horizontal development is typical of many professional development opportunities. Professional development, in most cases, focuses on the technical challenge of imparting more knowledge to practitioners compared to helping teachers develop more complex ways of knowing. Based on the prior explanation of complexity and adaptive challenges, schools often attempt to simplify complex situations to find a solution within existing paradigms and the typical horizontal professional development model. In one sense, adults may grow (their knowledge base) in this model yet continue to perceive challenges and opportunities through an unchanged meaning-making system (Keegan & Lahey, 2016).

In contrast, vertical development relates to the various dimensions of adult development and suggests that people need a different mode of learning to grow into more complex stages (Keegan & Lahey, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano 2020; Jones, et al., 2020). This form of development is so named because it helps individuals gain new perspectives and mindsets and gives them a broader and more dynamic view of situations and ideas they encounter. Essential to adaptive situations (Heifitz, 1994), vertical development acknowledges, *a priori*, that there are not yet readily available solutions to some of education's problems. Because of this lack of solutions, individuals must develop more dynamic views and update mental models more quickly as new ideas are designed and tested.

Vertical development expands our capacities to think, feel, and act in more complex and adaptive ways (Drago-Severson et al., 2018). We grow out of the previous meaning-making system through vertical development into a new, more expansive and spacious way to perceive the world. This new and expansive meaning-making system shapes how leaders and educators engage and interact with and interpret the world. In addition, the higher levels achieved through vertical development lead to a more sophisticated sense of the self concerning others through a broader perspective.

People at these higher levels are more willing to question their assumptions and beliefs and are more willing to accept paradoxes and tolerate ambiguity (Helsing & Howell, 2014). In addition, studies comparing leaders' adult development stage with data on leadership

effectiveness show that later stages of vertical development predicted higher leadership effectiveness (Keegan & Lahey, 2016).

With the demand for student SEL increasing, data suggest that many schools view this demand as a problem to be solved horizontally rather than vertically for adults (Jennings et al. 2019; Jennings, 2019). Teachers continue to receive countless hours of professional development regarding how to teach students an SEL-type curriculum with little focus on the adults themselves (Jennings, 2019). School leaders and educators receive little vertical development or preparation on growing their capacity to make sense of SEL complexity, yet we know that the inner development of what these SEL skills means and looks like across the diversity of human experiences will influence how they manage to deploy and teach these skills to students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). SEL vertical development has not been widely integrated into professional development or leaders' training concerning supporting teachers' own SEL development.

Deliberately Developmental Organizations

The third theoretical area that provides a separate but interrelated lens for this study regards developmental organizations (Keegan and Lahey 2016). This line of research suggests that work is an essential context for personal development, especially social-emotional learning. Keegan and Lahey found organizations across various industries that have created an intentional culture that departs from the traditional perspective on developing people. Each of these organizations, labeled as Deliberately Developmental Organizations (DDOs), has an immersive focus on growing every member of their organization, including top leadership.

From this research, Keegan and Lahey (2016) suggest three important ideas:

1. These organizations follow what the science of human development recommends for adults.
2. The organizations scaled those human development concepts so that everyone has daily opportunities to develop.
3. These organizations intentionally support blending organizational outcomes and adult development rather than seeing them as a trade-off to be made.

In these organizations, an individual's inadequacies are not viewed as weaknesses but as potential assets for continual growth, and root causes of problems are almost always connected to how people think and believe (Keegan & Lahey, 2016).

Keegan and Lahey (2016) refer to the conceptual structure of a DDO in geometrical terms, where the height indicates the organization's developmental aspirations (sometimes referred to as the organization's edge); the width indicates the organization's range of developmental practices, and the depth indicates the relative strength and presence of the organization's developmental communities. These dimensions help us see how human capital development in a DDO works as an integrated system and how the development of people in an organization can look different.

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Edge or Developmental Aspirations

The edge dimension in a DDO defines the height of the organization's developmental aspirations or the level it wants to raise adult development (Keegan & Lahey, 2016). This dimension contains what are known as four discontinuous departures from familiar organizational practices or structures for adult learning. These departures include:

- The first departure in this dimension is the principle that adults can and need to keep growing as employees and as humans.
- A second departure speaks to seeing weaknesses as assets and using errors as opportunities for growth.
- The third departure from typical organizational practice is the development, use and adherence to a set of principles focused on the development of adults.
- Last, instead of choosing between organizational outcomes or adult development, the final departure of the edge dimension does not assume this tension but states that the bottom line is all one thing (Keegan & Lahey, 2016).

Groove or Developmental Practices

The second dimension of a DDO is the width of their developmental practices or groove. The groove consists of any practice or structure in which developmental principles are experienced and practiced. As was the case with Edge practices, there are four intentional departures from traditional development.

- The first departure is the notion that destabilization can be constructive by stretching people's current capacities.
- Minding the gaps in the second departure seeks to close the gap between intent and actual practice.
- Not limiting time growth by not prematurely closing opportunities is the third departure in this dimension.
- The fourth departure in the groove dimension suggests that interior life (how people feel, believe, and act) can and should be managed (Keegan & Lahey, 2016).

Home or Developmental Communities

The third dimension Keegan and Lahey (2016) describe in their DDO description is home, or showing membership in a workplace community can encourage adult development. Again, there are four key departures from traditional human capital development in the Home dimension.

- The first notable Home departure in DDOs is the belief that rank in a DDO does not have its usual privileges.
- Another major departure in the home dimension of a DDO is the idea that everyone does people development- not just managers or human resource departments.

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- A third departure in the home dimension centers around giving people the support they need if they are being asked to be vulnerable to grow through acknowledging everyone needing a crew.
- The fourth and final departure from typical organizational practice is that all employees are expected to build and develop the culture by questioning all aspects (Keegan & Lahey, 2016).

Taken together, these three dimensions and 12 departures from typical organizational routines and habits help shape a deliberately developmental organization focused on ongoing and substantial adult development. These interdependent conditions are created to simultaneously increase human flourishing and bottom-line outcomes in these organizations.

Research Design and Methods

Although no K-12 organizations have been designated as deliberately developmental organizations, there are schools across the United States known for their SEL approach in developing students *and* adults simultaneously. Some schools, public, charter and private, have developed systems to expand the social and emotional competencies of all community members. These schools, in essence, believe that SEL development and adult development are synonymous. For the current study, we carried out a secondary analysis using the conceptual ideas discussed above by utilizing previously collected data around how adult SEL development is supported in these schools. In addition, we explored if schools known for their SEL focus with students and adults encompass the dimensions of a DDO as they focus on SEL for their entire community.

Considering the phenomenon of this study is adult development and schools as deliberately developmental organizations, the overarching purpose of this study was to explore if schools known for their SEL focus with students and adults encompass the dimensions of a DDO as they focus on SEL for their entire community.

Since this is a relatively new phenomenon of interest, this study utilized a case study approach to examine schools known for their SEL approach in developing students *and* adults simultaneously. The case study method is useful when a need exists to understand a phenomenon of interest in a natural context such as a school. This particular study is considered an intrinsic case study in that it is being used to learn about a unique phenomenon- schools as deliberately developmental organizations for adult SEL development.

The Problem for the Research Study

Above, we described the theories of adult development, horizontal and vertical development, and deliberately developmental organizations that help us ground our study of adult SEL development in schools. Using these three theoretical frames, the main problem this research sought to address integrated two ideas in the affective world of educators:

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- Research literature today does not describe any relationship between educator SEL development and adult development, and
- Research literature today does not consider if or how the concepts of a deliberately developmental organization can help us understand how adults are supported to develop SEL skills in schools.

This study is relevant and significant to the field of educational leadership because if we acknowledge the complexity of developing SEL in our students, adult development theory suggests that adults will need more complexity in their meaning-making systems to deliver on this need (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings, 2019; Keegan & Lahey, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano 2020; Jones, et al., 2020). This need may require schools to support educators as they develop more complex ways of thinking about SEL for themselves and their students. As there has been a lack of attention given to the social-emotional learning of adults in schools, this study can build upon the current movement and interest in SEL and give leaders the knowledge to better support adult development around SEL in schools.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was:

RQ: How do schools known for their social-emotional learning focus with students and adults encompass the dimensions of a deliberately developmental organization as they focus on social-emotional learning for their entire community?

Recruitment and Sampling of Participants

Although many schools use various forms of social-emotional learning, only recently has the focus on this broader set of outcomes become more prevalent. Specific models of schools have made the development of social and emotional skills the primary focus of their schools. Schools with this primary aim, and their leaders, were the primary participants in this study.

To solicit participation for this study, we focused on purposive sampling reaching out to various networks of which we are members and solicited nominations of schools with SEL as a focus and have had this focus for three years or more. As a result, we received 11 school nominations and interviewed 9 out of 11 of these leaders.

Data Collection

For this study, we used semi-structured interview data as the primary form of data to see how school leaders understand and use SEL with the adult learners in their schools. Thus, the primary form of collected data was what Charmaz (2014) refers to as intensive interviews, which defines a way of generating data that explores participants' perspectives and experiences on the research phenomena.

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Initial data collection began with developing an initial interview guide based on sensitizing concepts. A sensitizing concept is a broad term without definite characteristics and helps researchers determine ideas to pursue and questions to ask (Charmaz, 2014). We used the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotiojnal Learning (CASEL) framework and competencies as the sensitizing concepts for our first analysis of these data. Our initial data collection centered on how school leaders define and make sense of SEL competencies for themselves (see Bailey & Weiner, 2021). Our secondary intent for data collection centered on how school leaders support the development of SEL skills for their staff. We used Keegan and Lahey's dimensions of a DDO as the sensitizing concepts for this part of our study (see Table 1).

Data Analysis

For the secondary analysis of our data, we used only responses to questions that asked leaders how they helped adults develop and use SEL skills, used parallel processes between students and adults, or employed separate development processes for adults.

From these responses, we first applied the larger categories from Keegan and Lahey's model of a DDO to whole responses as initial codes, including 1) Edge or developmental aspirations of a DDO 2) Groove or developmental practices and 3) Home or communities for adult development. Next, secondary coding was done to phrases and sentences using more refined sub-dimensions of their model within each dimension. These dimensions are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

DDO Dimensions and Sub-dimensions Used for Data Analysis (Keegan & Lahey, 2016)

Dimensions of a DDO	Edge or developmental aspirations	Groove or developmental practices	Home or developmental communities
Subdimensions	Adults can and need to keep growing	Destabilization can be constructive	Rank does not have its usual privileges
	Weakness is an asset, error an opportunity	Mind the gaps	Everyone does people development
	Run on developmental principles	Set the time scale for growth	Everyone needs a crew

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The bottom line is all one thing	The interior life is part of what is manageable	Everyone builds the culture

Findings

As the social-emotional needs of students and adult educators have moved to the forefront over the past 18 months due to Covid-19, the purpose of this study was to explore if schools known for their SEL focus with students and adults encompass the dimensions of a DDO as they focus on SEL for their entire community. We used Keegan and Lahey's (2016) dimensions of a DDO to help understand and organize our findings presented below through our data analysis.

Edge or Developmental Aspirations

As discussed above, the edge dimension in a DDO defines how high an organization's developmental aspirations are or the level it wants to raise the focus of adult development (Keegan & Lahey, 2016). This dimension contains four sub-dimensions which we coded for in our data, and we describe below which of these subdimensions best aligns to how these schools are supporting adult SEL development and which are least aligned.

Sub-Dimensions Most Aligned to Developmental Aspirations

A common refrain from many of the leaders we interviewed supported the sub-dimension that articulates adults can and need to keep growing. Some of the leaders in our study strongly stated the need for this dimension to centering SEL in their schools. For example, one school leader stated that:

> … our theory, or framework really hinges on the adults growing as a whole humans as well, like, I think it's, I mean, a super concrete example is you can't really like teach a student about integrity if like, the adults are not like practicing and learning about integrity as well.

Another leader stated, "And so our model really works on students and adults growing in those dimensions working to become more whole human beings." Still another articulated, "...we try as much as possible to parallel what we're expecting students to do with what we're expecting adults to do."

However, other leaders suggested that getting adults to embrace their growth was not always straightforward. For instance, one leader stated,

> ...And then there's the secondary thing of kind of low self-efficacy of staff to actually implement it (SEL for students) if it's not part of who you are and what you do every day.

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> How do you help staff have confidence and self-efficacy, even if that's not how they've been trained to play?

A second sub-dimension of a DDO aligned with how adult SEL development is supported in these schools is the notion that the bottom line is all one thing. This sub-dimension in the DDO research centers around how certain organizations integrate adult development with other important organizational outcomes like profit versus choosing one over the other. In the world of schools, the bottom line in these schools focused not only on academic success for students but also on SEL skills that would serve them across their lives. In some cases, leaders discussed how they attempted to bring in adult support as part of the bottom line.

For example, one leader suggested a whole ethos around this integration, "...And the school culture's perspective on social and emotional learning is about how to be human in connection with others." Still, another alluded to supporting both students and adults as part of the role of a school leader, saying, "... kind of create that safe environment for them to feel like they're cared for and supported."

Another pointed to the role of educators supporting that bottom line suggesting:

> If you meet an English teacher who's like, wait, I have to teach my kids about theme, but they don't know about theme themselves, it's like, it can be hard to do. Right? I actually think the same is true for this. And so the biggest difference is that this (SEL development) is just from the beginning has been baked into the school model.

Another school leader, however, questioned how to create this integration of adult and student SEL development, stating, "How to build that in as naturally and authentically as possible would probably be the biggest challenge."

Sub-Dimensions Least Aligned to Developmental Aspirations

In contrast, two other subdimensions were not as aligned for developmental aspirations. First, seeing weakness as an asset and opportunity was not well supported. In the high accountability environment in which most schools exist today, focusing on weaknesses and errors as opportunities from which to learn and improve is often resisted due to many institutional barriers. In contrast to the DDO research (Keegan & Lahey, 2016), most educators tend to protect themselves from the intrusion of newer evaluation systems. In our study, leaders only indirectly addressed this sub-dimension as essential for developing adults. For instance, when asked about supporting staff to teach SEL to students, one leader suggested their role was to "coach staff to make sure that their interactions with young people sort of follow along that framework and incorporate and take into account."

On a more systemic level, one leader alluded to moving data away from the student level to look at weaknesses in SEL at the whole system level versus individual adults:

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> They were using SEL assessments to look at what was wrong with the kid and how to target interventions toward the kid. And what I'm working with a lot of school leaders across our county right now to use data to figure out what's not working in the system.

Similarly, recognition of using adult development principles for educators was not apparent in our interviews. Running a school on developmental principles for students is commonplace, especially for younger students. However, understanding and using developmental principles for adult learners was also missing an explicit focus in most of the leaders we interviewed. A few leaders alluded to the notion of overall developmental principles saying, "... that the culture of our adults, professionals, mirrors that of what we do with our young people." While another alluded to adult learning that "...some of it is also connected to sort of issues around identity and how we want to show up for our community, you know, in light of the Black Lives Matter protests and all of those pieces."

However, most leaders still discussed development in terms of student SEL. For instance,

> I think we got crisper with like how we wanted to translate that into specific competencies that we wanted to see kids grow in. So I think a lot of the work that we've been doing the last two years is like kind of building more authentic buy-in among the staff and terms of what those competencies are.

Groove or Developmental Practices

As discussed previously, the groove or use of developmental practices dimension in a DDO consists of any practice or structure in which developmental principles are experienced and practiced (Keegan & Lahey, 2016). This dimension contains four sub-dimensions which we coded for in our data, and we describe below which of these subdimensions best aligns to how these schools are supporting adult SEL development and which are least aligned.

Sub Dimensions Most Aligned to Developmental Practices

Certain practices schools used in service of developing SEL were similar to DDOs. For instance, minding the gaps in a DDO concentrates on paying attention between the expressed intent of adult development and what actually happens. In these schools known for their SEL development, minding the gap suggests that alignment exists between what they intend to teach students about SEL and teachers' understanding and development of those same ideals.

For example, one leader whose school takes a deliberate approach to develop adults and students' SEL simultaneously discussed what minding the gap can look like in practice:

> We had our coaching conversation, and we were working on her annual reflection… And I'm in the coaching conversation that she and I were having. There was something I did that made her feel like I didn't trust her. And so afterward, I sent her a message about a follow-up step from the meeting… And then she said like hey, I actually think we need to talk, I think that we need to do relationship work about our coaching meeting today. And

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> I was like, Oh, okay. Um, and so, um, that relationship work, we have, like a protocol or a structure that we use to do the relationship work...then at the end made commitments, our coaching relationship to sort of correct some of them, you know, some of the things that had made her feel the way that she was feeling… It's like one specific example when a relationship or when someone feels like a commitment isn't being honored or lived out.

Other leaders pointed to these parallels between intent and practice pointing out, 'So we definitely have sort of cultural habits that we use with our staff, and we provide them a lot of opportunities for mindfulness. When we do professional development, we always open with either physical activity and mindfulness activity or reflective activity."

Another leader also pointed out this parallel between adult and student learning, indicating that "we do a lot of professional development around adolescent development in all areas of adolescent development, especially social-emotional development so that we can coach teachers."

Many leaders discussed the second sub-dimension that the interior life is manageable, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of these leaders alluded to their teachers' social and emotional needs over the past 18 months and how they structured and made managing one's interior life important. For example, one leader stated,

> ...that it's an often revisited conversation for how do we enact and embody the ways of being with each other that we want our students to, you know, bear witness to as they're developing their own methods and habits

Another explained the parallel work that adults do around SEL development that is similar to student SEL development:

> And yes, people bring their work and share their work within a circle. And then there's like, routines and structures for how someone shares and then there's like routines and structures for how, um, how people respond or resonate with the work that you've shared, so that it's done in like, a safe and affirming… And we also have, through our work, like shared language. So we have like a set of organizational commitments that we all commit to and recommit to, and at several points throughout the year.

Sub-Dimensions Least Aligned to Developmental Practices

School leaders in our sample tended not to utilize certain other developmental practices. For example, one large contrast emerged around the idea of destabilization. In a DDO, destabilization is a way to expose needed areas of growth by placing people into positions that stretch their current capacities. Given that schools cannot typically promote people other than to different teaching positions and that schools are mainly conserving institutions (Bidwell, 2001), destabilization usually does not occur in a similar way to a DDO. However, educators can often feel destabilized during the Covid-19 crisis and in other change efforts like SEL. One leader said it succinctly:

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> And it can be a challenge to try to sense what folks' comfortability is when talking about this because there are some that will open up right away, and they're very comfortable; you get a sense that this is work they've been doing for a while. It's important to them, and there's others who you get the sense, let's not talk about this, this is uncomfortable.

Other leaders pointed to how they work to handle this destabilization, with one pointing out, "So I think there's like, modeling of doing it, then, like explicit sort of naming of how you're doing it." Another pointed out how her school focused the adults when the school began to feel unsettled during the pandemic:

> Like I think it would, it would remain a student-centered conversation and that these are the issues our students are facing. Instead of being like, wow, our school really has to do things differently. Because our community is different. And our community isn't matching who we are. So we have to make that work first, then we can start talking about these non-academics.

Similarly, another stated about trying to reestablish more stability stated:

> And I think like some of those have had to do with just like, self-awareness of how we're managing our own stress, right, like during the pandemic, and like how we're finding sources of sort of resilience and joy during this time.

Another sub-dimension of developmental practices not well aligned between the DDO research and these schools was setting the time scale for growth and not closure. Schools are notorious for protecting and using the little time they have available to them and tend to try and solve problems rapidly and efficiently with quick closure. As a result, students' school day, year, and career are marked by constraints that limit adults' ability to uncover root causes of problems or group limitations easily. In contrast, the DDOs studied conceive time differently, considering first and second-order consequences of decisions and the role of individuals' beliefs and thinking on decisions.

During our interview, leaders did discuss the use of time for supporting educators suggesting certain practices like, "... one of the ways that we are able to do that most successfully on a consistent basis right now are through our weekly check-ins with all of our faculty." And, "So I think that we, for instance, since the pandemic has started, we've been setting aside like sacred time each week to do constructivist listening dyads."

Still another leader articulated,

> "But I think that the things that are more important, some ways are like the things that repeat that you have the rhythms and rituals around that, like I think that with that kind of repetition, what you give time and attention to is what your staff like recognize as being valuable, right?"

However, no leaders expressly explored the nature or differentiation of time around solving adult development issues.

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Home or Developmental Communities

As explored earlier, the home or developmental communities dimension in a DDO consists of how membership in a workplace community can encourage adult development (Keegan & Lahey, 2016). This dimension also contains four sub-dimensions which we coded for in our data, and we describe below which of these subdimensions best aligns to how these schools are supporting adult SEL development and which are least aligned.

Sub Dimensions Most Aligned to Developmental Communities

One sub-dimension in the home or developmental communities dimension similar between DDOs and the schools we reviewed is that everyone builds the culture. Rather than relying only on formal leaders to build a culture of adult development, schools in our sample also discussed how teachers helped build a culture of adult SEL. For example, one principal explained:

> And we hold Staff Council circles pretty frequently, which just follows a kind of a Native American reflective process. … , but also really allowing our adults to have a space where they can share their voice around. Decisions that are being made around what's happening in the school around what they're seeing, etc.

Another principal discussed how staff and leaders build the culture together:

> And so I think we try to both explicitly and implicitly, like convey our values as a staff around like people being very socially aware and self-aware and being self-reflective, right, I think we try to model that with our leadership and the way that we sort of frame dilemmas to staff and like, bring humility, as well as just like self ordinary awareness and reflection, always like willingness to improve.

Similar to the idea that everyone builds the culture, the sub-dimension that everyone does people development was also somewhat evident in these schools. For example, one principle expressed, "SEL (at the adult level) creates a need and infrastructure for social-emotional learning." Another implored, "Like, I think that, but I think we are, we work really hard to establish a culture of where like collegiality where it's infused into all the ways we interact with each other, right?" Last, another principal discussed the need for different structures to support adult development, saying, "And we kind of meet in different configurations as part of, you know, those staff meetings."

Sub-Dimensions Least Aligned to Developmental Communities

Two other sub-dimensions under the home or developmental communities dimension showed little noticeable evidence in these schools. First, the idea that everyone needs a crew to help with adult development was not conspicuous in these interviews. Most leaders referred to the structural dimensions of grouping teachers but not the purpose of adult development in these groups. For example:

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> The only thing that doesn't apply to our adults is we're not grouped in mentor groups, just because that doesn't make sense for us to do that, but we do. And so you meet with, there's different groupings, but you meet with your whole school, one week, you meet with your upper school, lower school one week, and then the next week, you meet with your core team, which is a smaller team, usually your grade level team.

Specifically to leaders, no crew mentality was evident either. One school leader lamented:

> I think number one, it would be, there's no real institutional structure or support for leaders to kind of develop that. So you know, where you're on your own, I think, for the most part, you know, this is work that's pretty personal and private, that you kind of have to do and not rely on work to provide it for you.

Second, there was no mention of the idea that rank does not have its usual privileges in a DDO. In the DDOs study, Keegan and Lahey (2016) discovered that leaders in these organizations were held to the same expectation of adult development as all other employees. In these DDOs, leaders were expected to have their thinking and skills challenged for their development. In the schools studied, no examination of leaders' expectations for their continued adult or SEL development was evident. Some leaders did express the need for collegiality for school improvement, "... we are explicit in sort of using structures for conversation and structures for decision making, like all of those things, I think we are modeling how we sort of work in collegiality with each other," but no mention of leaders' growth in tandem with staff was discernible.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

When comparing the dimensions and sub-dimensions of a DDO with how schools known for their SEL focus with students and adults encompass these dimensions, we uncovered some degree of consonance and, by definition, dissonance, as well (see Table 2). This variation between a DDO in practice and schools trying to develop SEL in students and adults simultaneously suggests a range of important implications. Although some previous work has been done with adult development theory for school leaders (Drago-Severson, 2016), we did not locate any studies that examine the intersection of SEL development of adults, adult development theory and DDOs. This combination of perspectives has not been widely integrated into leadership development and practice or adult SEL development in schools. Although these theoretical areas helped ground the analysis in this study, our findings suggest specific challenges that make it difficult for leaders to develop adult SEL in the current iteration of schools and schooling. We use the DDO dimensions again in this section to discuss these challenges.

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Table 2

DDO Subdimensions Most and Least Evident in SEL Focused Schools

Dimension	Most Evident	Least Evident
Edge (developmental aspirations**)**	Adults can and need to keep growing	Weakness is an asset, error an opportunity
	The bottom line is all one thing	Run on developmental principles
Groove (developmental practices)	Mind the gaps	Destabilization can be constructive
	The interior life is part of what is manageable	Set the time scale for growth
Home (developmental communities)	Everyone builds the culture Everyone does people development	Everyone needs a crew Rank does not have its usual privileges

Challenges at the Edge of Adult Developmental Aspirations

In all the schools and school leaders we interviewed, there was a clear sense that all had developmental aspirations for their students and educators around social-emotional development. In addition, all the school leaders we interviewed discussed the need for adults to understand their own social and emotional growth to help support students in theirs. Leaders saw these parallels as necessary to help people in their schools find personal satisfaction and meaning either as a student or teacher.

However, in the dimension of developmental aspirations, we find two challenges in schools becoming a fully deliberately developmental organization. First, all these schools still exist in a broader environment which only acknowledges one bottom line: the scores and grades of students as a way to prove their success as a school. The DDO research, in contrast, sees the development of people and profit not as an either-or proposition but as a single whole that depends on each other. This single whole for schools requires a tighter learning integration between academics and SEL to show how they support one another (Cantor et al., 2021).

Second, DDOs help people challenge the common narrative of hiding weaknesses and managing people's perceptions of us. Errors in these organizations, while still errors, help people

to "overcome and manage forms of self-protection that can otherwise be barriers to personal growth" (Keegan & Lahey, 2016). In contrast, due to strong accountability and evaluation requirements and the norm of privatization of practice, the challenge for leaders in these schools is to use errors as opportunities for adult SEL development. Schoolwide issues or errors did force some of these schools to address some challenges head-on, but there was little indication that using errors was done as a practice to help adults deepen their SEL. In many cases, teachers will tell students that errors are growth opportunities, but doing this with adults counters many prevailing norms of the teaching profession.

Third, while all these schools considered adult SEL development as valuable as student SEL development, few of these schools had considered the role of the larger organization as support by itself for adult development as was found in the literature on DDO's. In contrast to a DDO, almost all these schools seemed to silo the work of adult SEL development rather than see it as an element of everything they do.

Challenges in the Groove of Developmental Practices

Schools like the ones we interviewed, and many others have used various practices for developing teachers around many different topics for generations. Likewise, DDOs use practices to hone the development of adults including, "how meetings are structured, how employee performance is monitored and discussed, and how people talk to one another about their work and the challenges they face personally... "(Keegan and Lahey, 2016, p. 38). In addition, many of the leaders we interviewed talked about various practices or protocols they used to check on teacher mental health, staff decision-making, or learning about SEL. Many of these practices again parallel their educators' work with students. For instance, in one school, the leader discussed how teachers used Restorative Justice Circles with students, which the school leader also used in whole staff meetings.

However, we also see some primary challenges for schools using some of these practices. A small example centers around teacher feedback and evaluation. In the era of high accountability, instructional rubrics have become the de facto guide for monitoring teaching practice with only a slight nod to SEL growth, often labeled as professionalism. The focus only on instructional rubrics in feedback discussions may decenter the focus on adult SEL development.

Additionally, DDOs also use destabilization as a common practice for development where, "if you can perform all your responsibilities to a high level, you're no longer in the right job" (Keegan & Lahey, 2016). However, in schools, conserving institutions by nature, fewer opportunities exist for destabilization unless teachers change grade levels or schools. Other opportunities for destabilization have emerged, such as instructional coaches or team leads, but these require ongoing support and development of teachers are to grow through these opportunities. Schools as organizations work to minimize destabilization so that it is not a threat.

Last, a major challenge for schools to become DDO's centers on time. Schools work on common time patterns- days, semesters, years- trying their best to be efficient with time.

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Improvement of schools and teaching is usually focused in nine-month chunks based on the school year and then on to something else. However, we know that SEL development for students takes time and is not finished when students walk away for summer. Similarly, we know adult development takes a long time and a sustained focus, but investing this time in SEL development for adults is an ongoing challenge for these schools and others.

Challenges in the Home or Developmental Communities

Having a home base or community for educators to help hold and sustain adult SEL development is not typical for most schools, including the ones known for SEL. While the advent of professional learning communities, grade level or departmental teams have become prominent in recent reform efforts, their purpose is much different from adult SEL development. In contrast, DDOs see, "growth can only happen through membership in workplace communities where people are deeply valued as individual human beings, constantly held accountable, and engaged in real and sustained dialogue" (Keegan & Lahey, 2016).

Many of the leaders we interviewed talked about various structures for organizing adults. However, two primary challenges for schools exist in this dimension. First, adults developing other adults in schools is not commonplace, and while coaching for instruction has emerged more recently, the role of coaching SEL or emotions is not as prevalent. Therefore, the nature of everyone does people development in these schools still relies on leaders or specialists.

Second, schools are hierarchical organizations where appointed leaders are granted authority over others. Although all of these leaders alluded to supporting and working collegially with their teachers and talking about the collective, none of the school leaders we talked to engaged with questions on their SEL development. Like most hierarchical organizations, more senior leaders are considered "completely grown, finished products" (Keegan & Lahey, 2016). However, in DDO's, the structures designed to protect leaders from challenges do not exist. The challenge in schools then becomes, how do leaders diminish those protective challenges to help advance their SEL development as they ask their teachers to do the same?

Conclusion

This research study emerged from our interest in adults' own SEL development and their efforts and capacity to develop those skills in the children they serve. We wondered what SEL meant for these educators and how they were supported in developing their own SEL skills. As we studied these schools, we also began to question the connection between SEL development and adult development, how they coexisted in schools known for their SEL focus, and how the school as an organization was structured to support adults. This path led us to the research on DDOs. Our guiding research question thus emerged: How do schools known for their social-emotional learning focus with students and adults encompass the dimensions of a deliberately developmental organization as they focus on social-emotional learning for their entire community?

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In the introduction, we argued that the call for more SEL requires school leaders and teachers to understand the complex demands of student SEL development but also involves increasing adult SEL- also highly complex (Drago-Severson, 2016) and not commonplace in schools. While not suggesting schools need to or should have the characteristics of a DDO, the complexity of ongoing SEL development probably does require a supportive context like those seen in a DDO, but our findings show that even schools known for their SEL focus still generally do not reflect the totality of a DDO.

To mirror a DDO, schools would require long-term, ongoing support to develop competency in each of the twelve sub-dimensions we presented, as any sub-dimension would necessitate a fundamental shift in how schools develop and support adults and compete against other reforms for time and attention. For example, obliterating a reliance on a traditional hierarchical management system (e.g., rank does not have its usual privileges as one of the sub-domains least in evidence above) would likely require an enormous shift in mindsets, beliefs, and resources to facilitate such a transition.

As a holistic model for supporting adult development, it would be unreasonable to expect a re-invention of our schools as DDOs along the 12 sub-domains with the emphasis on student growth taking precedence. The bottom line as it currently exists continues to focus on students' academic achievement and developing the instructional knowledge and skills of educators. But is that enough with the growing emphasis on SEL?

What, then, might be the prospects for identifying and implementing a subset of the 12 to enhance a focus on adult development? By removing any of the 12 sub-domains, we would suggest that, by definition, we are no longer talking about a complete DDO but rather something closer to a hybrid between a traditional school and DDO. Would that be better than the current state, the same or similar or possibly worse in supporting adult development? How long might it take to implement a cluster of sub-domains within a school, and which ones would fit best into the context of our K-12 schools? These are only a small sample of the questions our research raises.

Since adult development was never the intended purpose of schools, they quite simply do not meaningfully encompass the majority of the dimensions of a DDO. We find this to be largely true even within SEL-oriented schools that might be more given to valuing such an organizational culture and purpose. Although we did find evidence of some of the 12 sub-domains, the evidence was not overwhelming, and in some cases, not scalable to other school systems even if they are focused on SEL. There is, however, significant room for additional inquiry into defining more specifically both how schools could better encompass essential subdomains and how schools can better position themselves to support adult development for SEL with increasing demands for these supports. It is our sincere hope that our colleagues and we will continue to contribute to this understanding in the years to come.

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