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A Comparative Analysis of Traditional vs. Modern Leadership Styles of 21st Century in Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study undertakes a precise comparative analysis of the traditional and contemporary leadership styles within learning institutions, its implications to the institution and learning outcomes. The article contrasts the traditional leadership characterized by a top-down organizational structure and authority-based decision making with the prevailing concepts in leadership that focus on collaborative, adaptive and transformational leadership practices than the traditional ones. The empirical study employs a mixed-methods research design that integrates a qualitative study with theoretical-methods in order to evaluate how the various paradigms of leadership have impacted crucial areas which include, but are not limited to organizational culture, educative efficacy, student achievement, and institutional innovations. The results show the different strengths and weaknesses of the different leadership styles, especially in addressing contemporary challenges in the education prowess like diversity, equity, and technology use, and rapidly evolving social needs. The paper concludes with the proposal of a hybrid leadership model that includes the most desirable elements of both traditional and modern styles, offering a sophisticated context to educational leaders that have the potential to enhance and maintain the performance and sustainability of an educational institution in a more complex international environment.

Keywords: Traditional Leadership, Modern Leadership, Leadership Styles, Educational Institutions.

Introduction

Leadership in learning institutions has been considered as one of the most vital aspects of organizational success, and not only does it affect administrative practices, but also methods of teaching, academic achievements and school culture. The leadership efficacy directly influences the ability of educational institutions to adjust to the environment and changing social needs, introduce new ways, and achieve their goal of establishing learning and growth. But as the landscape of learning across the world evolves drastically with the advent of new technologies, increased diversity, and altering cultural demands, the role of a leader has become much more challenging and varied. This complexity has fostered a heated debate as

to whether the old methods of leadership are appropriate in handling the modern challenges or whether the modern methods of leadership are capable of offering better solutions.

Conventional leadership practices, which have often used a hierarchic framework, with centralized decision-making, have brought a semblance of stability and clarity within the educational establishments. These models, with their bureaucratic and transactional concepts, focus on chains of command, standardization and order requirements and the necessity to maintain order and discipline. Such systems have been found to be very effective with regard to operational efficiency and accountability but now question is also being cast on its rigidity and resistance towards adoption of change. The critics argue that traditional approaches to leadership have discouraged creativity, restricted the involvement of stakeholders, and do not respond to the current and changing needs of the educational settings. Such as when innovation and personalized learning when applied with the integration of technology are deemed more and more essential, then the top-down leadership style will prevent adaptation and innovation.

Transformational, dispersed, as well as servant leadership styles have emerged as potential alternatives, which better suit the demands of the education that takes place in the 21st century. Such methods prioritize cooperation, empowerment, and flexibility and introduce the concept of shared governance and constant improvement. Transformational leadership, such as, is centered in terms of inspiring and motivating the stakeholders to achieve a mutual objective, whilst dispersed leadership is based on the wisdom of large numbers within the organisation. In a similar manner, the concept of servant leadership is based on the role of the leader in ensuring the development and the welfare of the team. Such approaches are especially effective in addressing such contemporary issues as equality and inclusion, integration of technologies, and the mastering of global competency.

The present management strategies have their boundaries in spite of the possibilities. Implementation of the ideas could often require a significant cultural change within institutions, which could not always be welcomed by people accustomed to the practice that existed. In addition, the organizational cohesion may be destroyed by this focus on cooperation and flexibility which create ambiguity in terms of duties and responsibilities. Such issues show the need in solving problems with a balanced approach to combining the advantages of the classical and innovative paradigms of leadership.

The ongoing discourse between the traditional and the contemporary leadership styles means that there is a need to identify their implications on the educational institutions. Although traditional models provide the stability and predictability, new methods provide the flexibility and innovation that is needed to control an ever changing environment. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of studies which quantitatively compare these paradigms in terms of their impact on such critical variables as organizational culture, educator efficacy, student success and institutional innovation. This gap in literature limits the ability of the educational leaders to make informed decisions regarding the leadership strategies to use or the combination of the strategies that can be effectively followed.

In this study, the researcher intends to fill this gap by conducting an in-depth comparative study of traditional and contemporary leadership in learning institutions. The paper tries to provide us with in-depth information about how each approach affects institutional efficiency by examining its literature, practice and results. In addition, it examines the prospects of an

integration of the features of both models with the view to coming up with a powerful yet sensitive leadership model depending on the emerging requirements of the education world.

Statement of the Problem

The twenty-first-century educational institutions are struggling with massive challenges and the rapid technical advancements, greater multiethnicity, and social transformation, all of which require versatile and inclusive leadership. The hierarchical, authoritative, centralized decision-making patterns of leadership have come to be associated with stability and comprehension over the years but they are recently facing criticism of their obstinate and change resistant stance. In as much as these practices have been effective in ensuring order and accountability, they most of the time frustrate innovation, reduce stakeholder engagement and cannot meet the evolving needs of current education settings.

Transformational leadership, distributed leadership and servant leadership are the aspects of modern leadership approaches that stress the importance of cooperation, empowerment, and flexibility, and which correspond better to recently emerging expectations. However, the changes may not be easy to implement as those changes require extensive cultural changes and could likely to end up in a vacuum towards some form of duties and responsibilities. The weakness in this area shown by the contrast between traditional and contemporary leadership paradigms is the basic lack of comprehension as to which approach is more effective in some areas, and how their distinct advantages can be integrated with one another.

Although studies in educational leadership have grown immensely, no paralleled systematic comparison of conventional and modern leadership styles has ever been done on the implications of such essential elements of education as organizational culture, instructor efficacy, student achievement, and innovation in an institution. Moreover, the empirical evidence on the feasibility and benefits of the hybrid leadership style that merges stability of traditional systems and flexibility of the new ones is lacking. This gap in the literature does not provide educational leaders with any guidance on how to navigate in the complexities of the contemporary situations. The present research addresses this gap by developing a comprehensive comparative analysis of traditional and contemporary leadership styles, and the aim of the study is to present scientifically based ideas of their different attributes and drawbacks. Through the exploration of the potential of a hybrid leadership paradigm, the research aims to equip educational leaders with the practical methods of creating institutional resilience, innovation, and performance in an ever more complex international environment.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the theoretical foundation and key issues about classic and contemporary leadership aspects in education establishments.
- To compare the impacts of traditional and contemporary leadership approach to the organization culture, educator achievement, learner outcome and innovation in institutions.
- To determine the advantages and weaknesses of contemporary and traditional approaches to leadership in addressing the existing educational challenges.
- To Introduce an hybrid leadership strategy that integrates ancient and the new leadership strategies.

Research Questions:

1. What are the differences between the traditional and the present leadership paradigm in learning institutions and what are the theories behind this?
2. What is the impact of conventional and modern leadership style on organizational culture, the performance of teachers, their workforce and institutional innovation?
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of traditional and contemporary leadership methods to address present difficulties in education?
4. How can an integrative leadership model interlink the elements of the traditional leadership style and the more modern styles of leadership?

Significance of the Study

Educational administrators, researchers, policymakers and practitioners are some of the stakeholders that will find this research critical in the field of education. The comparative analysis between the traditional and the modern leadership styles presented in the study will offer critical context concerning the strengths and weaknesses of both concepts as well as an in-depth appreciation of their implication on the organization culture, efficacy of educators, performance of students, and institutional innovativeness. This study can help leaders to overcome these challenges by establishing resource efficiency techniques based on evidence that can help them to handle each of these issues effectively.

The study also offers educational leaders some practical suggestions as to which leadership approaches are to be implemented in their institutions on the basis of adopting methods that best suit the particularities of their institutions. The study assists leaders to build adaptive and innovative environments due to its focus on the potential of a hybrid leadership model that demonstrates the stability of the traditional methodology and flexibility of the new one. To policymakers, the study preconditions the implementation of policies that encourage the adoption of effective leadership practices, which will ultimately result in an improvement in the educational outcomes and the performance of the institution.

Academically speaking, this paper does much to fill a large gap in existing literature by a comprehensive comparison of both conventional and modern leadership styles and the implication that are emerging out of them in terms of existing educational challenges. It contributes to the larger debate of leadership in education since it offers a blueprint to further research as well as the study of hybrid leadership forms further. Additionally, the mixed-material research method leads to enhancing the scientific quality of the research and serves as a valuable guide to researchers that study the leadership dynamics in the field of education. Lastly, as to the practitioners like teachers, administrators and other stakeholders, the research finds leadership in the production of the educational quality and atmosphere. The occurrence of cooperation, creativity, and inclusion as a result of the leadership role is highlighted in the study in an attempt to enhance the continuing professional growth and capacity building of leaders in the field of education.

Finally, the study is worth noting as it is allowed to fill the existing gap between theory and practice through practical information that may contribute to enhancement of effective leadership within educational facilities. With the focus made on the problems and the opportunities associated with the traditional and the new leadership styles, the research is

likely to contribute to the creation of more flexible, inclusive, and creative education systems, which are useful both to students and educators and the society, on the whole.

Literature Review

The role of leadership within educational organisations has been regarded as a significant contributor to the organizational culture, method of teaching and even student outcomes. Conventional leadership models have always ruled comprehensive learning institutions with strong emphasis on hierarchies and centralization of decision making. These theories, which are based on bureaucratic and transactional schools of thoughts, give focus on stability, orderliness and accountability (Weber, 1947; Bass, 1985). Leadership such as transactional involves concentrating on maintaining order using rewarding and punishing, compliance and performance checking (Bass, 1985). Equally, bureaucratic leadership relies on processes that have been institutionalized and the chain of command is well formulated, which have been found quite helpful in ensuring there is efficiency in operations and accountability, particularly in large and complicated organisations (Bush, 2008). Still, due to such suitability of the models, these models often hinder the involvement of stakeholders and the occurrence of innovations, and are thus not appropriate in addressing the contemporary issues such as the deployment of technology and utilizing diversity (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Hallinger, 2003). Indicatively, Hallinger (2003) established that the traditional models of leadership would not be able to meet the ever-changing needs of the 21st century education, in terms of fostering innovation and diversity.

New leadership styles like transformational, dispersed leadership as well as servant leadership have emerged as a leader that fits more into the demands of the contemporary school. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership is the act of inspiring and motivating the stakeholders towards achieving a communal goal, in a climate of institutional fixing and non-stop improvement. The use of this approach has been discovered to increase teacher motivation and student achievement particularly in heterogeneous and dynamic teaching and learning environment (Leithwood et al., 2008). As opposed to this, distributed leadership lays strong stress on the utilisation of the experience of various individuals within the organisation and cultivation of cooperation and shared choice (Spillane, 2006). Harris (2011) has discovered that dispersed leadership can be specifically useful in addressing the contemporary issues which include equity and inclusion through the culture of collaborative governance. Similarly, Greenleaf (1977) established servant leadership, which emphasizes the leader's position as a facilitator who promotes the growth and well-being of their team. This paradigm has received accolades for its capacity to foster inclusive and supportive school settings (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002).

The effectiveness of the conventional and modern leadership techniques is a subject of debate. Conventional models are stable and clear, but, at the same time, they often hamper flexibility and innovation (Bush, 2008). The contemporary leadership styles are, however, more flexible and open to change although they may have implementation barriers, such as reluctance among stakeholders used to hierarchy type of organisations (Harris, 2011). According to Day et al. (2016), environment is a significant factor in the effectiveness of the leadership styles, which means certain leadership approaches cannot be used across the board. As an illustration, traditional leadership can be more effective during more structured settings, whereas the latest approaches can be more effective in unstructured and different

scenarios. This indicates the necessity of a dual leadership style, which integrates the aspects of the two paradigms to create the balance between the sturdy and adaptive styles (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2008).

The growing sophistication of education environments has made hybrid leadership frameworks easier to find interest in, which are equally poised to match the stability of traditional approaches to the responsiveness of the new approaches. These models aspire to exploit the advantages in each paradigm to the full, and avoid the limitations in each paradigm. An illustration is that a hybrid style can be a combination of transaction leadership, which is known to be quite accountable and efficient, together with transformational leadership, which is collaborative and creative (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Spillane, 2006). Harris (2011) discovered that hybrid models to be very useful in overcoming the contemporary challenges like technological integration and diversity in the sense that it produces a culture of collaborative governance and continuous improvement. There is more necessary research on designing and introducing such models and how they affect organizational culture, educator efficacy, and student outcomes (Day et al. 2016; Leithwood et al. 2008).

The recent studies have highlighted the role of leadership in enhancing fairness and inclusion within the learning institutions. Indicatively, the study by Theoharis (2007) shows how one can use inclusive leadership methods as a way of mitigating structural imbalances and foster more egalitarian school environments. In the same breath, Khalifa et al. (2016) explored the role culturally sensitive leadership plays to support marginalized students to gain academic success. These results find great importance in the issue of leadership to address the various needs of students and teachers in a highly globalized world. Moreover, technology in education introduced additional opportunities and challenges to the leaders. Dexter (2018) concluded that technology-savvy leaders can use digital technologies to elevate teaching and learning and at the same time tackle such issues as digital fairness and data privacy.

Lastly, educational leadership literature presents the advantages and limitations of traditional and contemporary approaches to leadership, and the potential of integrating two into one providing a set of positive aspects of both. Although standardized models are quite stable and clear in their structure, they are often not flexible and creative. Modern approaches to leadership are more flexible and open to change, though perhaps harder to put into effect. The rising complexity associated with the educational environments is a further reason why balanced approach with the strengths of both paradigms should be taken. Studying these issues, the given research aims to contribute to the overall discussion of the educational leadership topic and provide practical recommendations to those who have to write on educational administrative challenges of the 21 st -century.

Research Methodology

This paper provides a qualitative approach to the analysis of effective methods of leaders in comparisons between traditional and contemporary models of leadership in schools. The qualitative methods are very suitable in this study as it will give a clear understanding of the complexities, nuances, and contexts that influence leadership practices and performance. The methodology used is a case study approach whereby it focuses on various learning institutions in order to gather valuable detailed data concerning styles of leaderships and their effect.

Data Collection

The collection of data occurred through partially structured interviews, analysis of documents and observations. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method, and this practice enabled flexibility in the consideration of the perspective of the participants yet staying focused on key concerns that were related to leadership styles. The 20 people were identified through purposive sampling comprising principals in five schools, head of department, teachers and administrative officers. In order to provide a reasonable perspective, the sample has leaders who have been practicing in both traditional and modern settings.

The themes of eliciting the perceptions of the participants in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of leadership were used as interview questions that sought to elicit the participants perception of the impact of leadership on organizational culture, efficacy of educators, and student outcomes. The duration of interviews was 45-60 minutes and all of them were audio-recorded by the agreement of the participants. Besides interviews, relevant materials like school policies, leadership patterns, and performance report were discussed to provide context-related information. A triangulation of the data with the aim to increase its validity was also observed so that the leadership procedures, which are in effect such as employee meetings and decision-making process could also be observed regarding the leadership techniques undertaken.

Data Analysis & Findings

The data were analyzed by the method theme analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interviews were recorded and their recordings were transcribed verbatim and the transcript along with the field notes and documents were loaded into qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to be classified and analyzed. The investigation was initiated with open coding where the information was disassembled into small thoughts and marked using descriptive codes. These codes were then grouped as a result of common patterns and themes into superordinated categories.

Thematic analysis was performed to identify key themes, which relate to the research questions: the distinctions between a traditional and contemporary leadership style, their effects on the organizational culture and performance, and the availability of a mixed form of leadership. Throughout the research, the process was iterative, with the emergence of a theme, comparing it with the data to make sure it is correct and consistent. The participant verification was also done where participants were provided with summaries of each finding to make sure that they were accurate and also to give them some insight that they have not had before.

The findings of the study are presented in terms of four important themes identified due to the data analysis process: (1) nature of both traditional and modern styles of leadership, (2) their contributions to the organizational culture and effects, (3) challenges and opportunities of the implementation of the modern leadership styles, and (4) the hybrid model of leadership.

- Participants considered traditional leadership practices as those that are organizational, authority-based and focused on bringing order and stability. These methods were often associated with hierarchical chain of command, standardization of processes, and top-down management of decision-making. On the contrary, there was cooperation, flexibility, and focus on empowerment in modern leadership

approaches. The participants highlighted various opportunities such as transformative and dispersed leadership in fostering innovation and diversity.

- Classical leadership methods provide stability, and definiteness particularly in structured environment. Nonetheless, their inflexibility often stifled creativity and limited the involvement of the stakeholders. However, in comparison, the new forms of leadership have been celebrated as the ones that can create the culture of cooperation and constant evolution. Respondents have indicated that the practices had increased the level of motivation among teachers, campus involvement in the students, and innovation in institutions.
- Although the leadership methods that are in use today were considered effective in addressing the issues that have become modern, it was not easy to accomplish them. The issues identified by the participants were resistance of the workers that had been used to the old methods, ambiguities in the roles and responsibilities and the necessity of the significant cultural change. They, nevertheless, believed there was a possibility of using the new trends of leadership in issues such as diversity, equity and technological fusion.
- Based on the findings it can be suggested that a blended model of leadership that will comprise the features of both traditional and contemporary approaches may offer an equilibrium and effective model to educational organisations. The respondents should drive the point of determining the balance between stability and responsibility that traditional leadership has, and versatile and innovative that the new leadership should be. Such a strategy could enable institutions to address the challenges of the education of the 21st century and be consistent and strong.

Discussion

The findings of this research help to comprehend the intricacy and nuances of leadership in the educational institutions giving valuable lessons of the comparative effectiveness of the traditional and new leadership styles. The conventional leadership styles, hierarchical models and centralized leadership dynamics turned out to be very stable and clear, which in highly structured organisations is of paramount significance. This conforms to the literature that states that bureaucratic and transactional leadership is essential in ensuring operational performance and accountability (Weber, 1947; Bass, 1985). Time and again, the inflexibility of the older models has inhibited innovation and stakeholder involvement, and are thus not appropriate to address contemporary issues, including technology infusion and diversity (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Hallinger, 2003). The people who participated in this poll pegged their concerns on the same note saying that traditional leadership styles could suffocate innovation and also could not address the dynamic needs of modern educational environments.

The innovative leadership styles, including transformational, dispersed, and servant leadership, should be credited with the ability to foster collaborative, flexible, and empowering culture. These results are in line with those of Bass and Avolio (1994) who indicated the relevance of transformational leadership in stimulation and motivation of stakeholders to achieve a shared goal. On the same note, Spillane (2006) argues that dispersed leadership is relevant in utilisation of experience of numerous people within the organisation hence promoting collaboration and collective decision-making. The participants

in this research stated that the contemporary styles of leadership have made teachers more motivated, students more engaged and the institution more innovative especially where there is a diversity and dynamism. These results underscore the capability of new-fangled management forms with regard to addressing the present worries like equity, inclusiveness and use of technology. This is because these are the 12 months of the year during which the mother is not able to work (Harris, 2011; Day et al., 2016).

New leadership styles, nonetheless, are not without issues when it comes to being implemented. Included among the challenges pressed by participants are that of resistance to old way of doing things by staff, confusion of the positions and responsibilities, and that of immense cultural changes. Such issues have a lot of literature coverage, and, according to Harris (2011), the transition to distributed leadership often requires a complete reconsideration of structure and processes in the organization. On the same note, Greenleaf (1977) points out that embracing servant leadership requires that trust be established, and that a culture of collaboration be fostered. The results of the conducted research show that, although the new forms of leadership have significant advantages, introducing them and ensuring their efficiency indeed requires planning, sustained support and a desire to rebuff resistance and insecurity.

This is because of the potential of the development of a hybrid model of leadership into possessing the best of both the traditional and contemporary methods, which became a significant topic in this research. The participants also noted the importance of striking the right balance between stability and responsibility of traditional leadership and flexibility and creativity of modern one. It is in line with the findings of Hallinger (2003) who argues that effective leadership during these complex educational situations requires a balanced combination of the strengths that are available in numerous paradigms. On the same note, Leithwood et al. (2008) stresses the importance of environment as a factor that defines the success of leadership styles, meaning that leadership approaches are not universal. Based on the results of the research, the hybrid model can offer an educational institute a convenient and effective system that would enable them to address the realities of the 21 st century learning without losing resilience and coherence.

Another important finding of the given study was the role of leadership in facilitating inclusion and equity. To address structural injustices and promote more welcoming learning environments, the modern leadership schools of thought will do the most good because they tend to lay stress on empowerment and collaboration. This is indicative to the study conducted by Theoharis (2007) who stresses the importance of inclusive leadership practices on promoting equity and social justice in schools. Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2016) articulate that culturally sensitive leadership can contribute to the academic success of the marginalized pupils. The findings of the study suggest that most notably in a world that is increasingly connected and internationalized, leadership is imperative to the fulfillment of the different needs of educators and students.

Finally but definitely not the least, another key issue where leadership can play a key role is the aspect of technology integration in education. Discussing such issues as digital equity and data protection, the participants have noted that tech-savvy leaders could exploit digital tools to enhance teaching and learning. This is in line with the research by Dexter (2018), which indicates that leadership is important in facilitating the fostering of an efficient use of

technology in classrooms. Based on the research results, technology and technology aware leaders can be very useful in catalyzing creativity and academic improvement.

Overall, the findings of the study contribute to wider discourse on educational leadership by mentioning the positive and negative aspects of both traditional and contemporary leadership philosophies and suggesting the potential hybrid model that would incorporate the best of both worlds. Besides giving valuable information to leaders seeking ways of enhancing institutional performance in the new-fangled and a more contracted educational context, the research finds the importance of context in helping determine the effectiveness of leadership styles. The study can be very informative through its attempt to address the problems that can inform the development of future research in not only the educational leadership field but also in policy and practice.

Conclusion

The study compares the traditional and modern leadership philosophies in educational institutions in great details, highlighting in their advantages, disadvantages, their impacts on the student outcomes, organizational culture as well effectiveness of the teachers. Traditional leadership models although stable and clear often lack the capacity to adapt to changing and diverse needs of present education being typified with hierarchies and centralized decision making. Conversely, some more modern leadership theories such as the transformational, distributed and servant leadership approaches emphasize a lot on empowerment, agility and collaboration making them best suited to address the twenty first century needs. However, when applying the modern leadership methods, barriers are to be managed, including the resistance of stakeholders and the necessity of large-scale changes in the culture.

The findings of this research reveal that there is no universal strategy, which can be applied universally and also points to the importance of context in establishing the effectiveness of leadership philosophies. Instead, the model of hybrid leadership incorporating the most positive aspects of both new and old paradigms can offer the educational organizations a balanced and effective model. Keeping resilience and coherence, such a model could contribute to institutions effectively passing the ordeals of contemporary education without losing stability and sense of responsibility as modern and familiar leadership can be combined in a process of adaptation and creativity. Addressing these issues, this research contributes to the overall discussion of educational leadership and provides valuable insights that could be pertinent to future-oriented studies, practice, and policies.

Recommendations

This is to propose ways through which there can be an improvement in leadership practices within educational institutions on the basis of the findings of the research:

- To the Educational Leaders and Policymakers: Unite the solidity and accountability of the traditional way of leadership and the versatility and innovativeness of the modern methods. This mixed-strategy can, as seen in the study, be effective in addressing the current issues such as technology integration and diversity without sacrificing the efficiency in operations.
- To Education Institutions and Policymakers: Offer the bespoke leadership preparation in such aspects as teamwork, flexibility, and the use of technology. The results indicate that the emergence of the opposition and the promotion of an innovation culture

require those in contemporary and hybrid leadership models to acquire new skills to ensure they counteract any resistance.

- To Principals of Schools and Department Heads: Facilitate shared governance and equity by using such tools as distributed and servant leadership. The analysis has found that inclusive leadership method of empowering the interested parties can enhance the culture and performance of the organization to the benefit of the teachers and students.
- To curricular leaders and technology coordinators: Apply digital technologies in your teachings, learning and governance. The results indicate that it is essential to provide technologically conscious leadership to solve the problem of digital fairness and data privacy as well as to promote institutional innovation.
- To School Administrators and Leaders: Schools should involve parent, teacher and student in decision making processes. The results suggest that stakeholder participation builds trust, cooperation, and makes sure that the practice of leadership cannot be conducted without relationships with the needs and goals of the school community.
- To Researchers and Academic Institutions: Study the development and treatment of hybrid paradigms of leadership in any learning environment.

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