

Exploring the Impact of Leadership Programs on Student Support: A Qualitative Approach

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual study investigates the vital role that successful leadership programs have in fostering the growth and achievement of students. The study explores how well-designed leadership initiatives might improve students' academic achievement, career preparedness, and personal development by drawing on current leadership theories and educational frameworks. The study emphasizes important components of effective programs, including inclusive leadership techniques, emotional intelligence training, experiential learning, and mentoring. This study intends to give educational institutions strategic directions for developing leadership skills that enable students to navigate complex, dynamic environments both during and beyond their academic journey by incorporating insights from the body of existing literature and putting forth a comprehensive model. This study concludes that Students having experienced effective leadership as part of their education are likely to commit to making changes in society since the institutions in which they were trained inculcated in them this commitment.

Keywords: *Leadership skills, Leadership Development Programs, Students, Education*

INTRODUCTION

Developing leadership skills and abilities among students takes pride of place in many college mission statements as an important aspect of creating vocationally trained individuals (Clark, 1985; Roberts, 1997). To pursue this goal community colleges, need to pay more attention to the development of their students as leaders by offering specific leadership programs. Boatman (1999) proposes student leadership development be considered a relational model of empowerment and transformation rather than a formal program, activity or course. Within the campus community several leadership development opportunities exist for students to identify, enhance and reflect leadership abilities in numerous institutional programs, courses, or activities (Boatman, 1999).

Colleges offering credit-bearing or co-curricular programs will help students more fully develop their understanding and practice of leadership. Colleges need to prepare graduates to deal with major economic, societal, and environmental issues by developing their leadership ethos and skills for effective civic involvement. Colleges have become sluggish in responsiveness to societal needs as educational programming today is primarily oriented to the operational needs of business, industry and the marketplace. (Levin, 2002) Community colleges have an institutional commitment to meet the needs of under-served communities. Only a portion of the learning can take place in the classroom. Even if the classroom does offer opportunities to practice aspects of leadership, it is not the same as truly being in the thick of a difficult leadership challenge. Likewise, leadership development needs clearcut objectives, a sound learning methodology, and a powerful learning environment for the participants. Program architects struggle to define clear and realistic learning objectives and as a result do not choose learning interventions (sources of learning) that fit the objectives for development. Moreover, program architects may choose interventions that do not match how students want to learn about leadership. Of course, one feels the need to cite an authority or some piece of research to support these assertions, but we suspect that you have experienced this challenge firsthand. Brungardt (1996) suggested leadership development activities are not well documented, and researchers often do not explain or understand the impact the activity has on students. He also indicated leader development and education could be more deliberately implemented if research moved from descriptive studies into those that prescribe specific models of intervention. In addition, several leadership studies have discussed the value of classroom and direct experience as a means for leader development, but this research is often distal from practitioners or is too polarized in its viewpoint to be practically relevant

IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

A growing body of research has indicated that the college years are a critical period for students' personal, social, and professional growth. Involvement in the college environment is positively related to developmental outcomes. Astin (1985) suggests that the amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in the process of learning, including participation in leadership experiences and activities. As suggested by Chickering (1969) and Tinto (1975), student development is a function of four sources of influence: student background; the organizational characteristics of the institution attended; social integration and academic integration. Students involved in leadership activities have higher levels of educational attainment and openly demonstrate personal change than do students who do not participate in these activities. Cousineau and Landon (1989) confirmed that academic skills and satisfaction are affected positively by increased involvement in college life. In their study investigating the impact of leadership programs on students' college experiences, Cress et al. (2001) reports students acknowledged personal changes, such as enhanced conflict resolution and commitment to civic responsibility. The positive influence of campus-wide interactions on students' attitudes, interests, and values has been documented for decades.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student leadership programs have emerged as vital contributors to the development of essential skills such as empathy, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration among students. These programs, often involving student councils, project-based learning, and initiatives to prepare students for future leadership roles, are designed to cultivate a positive school culture by imparting self-leadership and integrity, potentially influencing students' personal and professional trajectories (Lee & Walker, 2018). Notably, programs like the Kosovo Transformational Leadership Program go beyond the school setting, aiming to train a new generation of leaders capable of driving significant changes in economic, political, and social priority areas (Chen et al., 2022). In recent years, demand for leadership programs within educational institutions has witnessed significant growth, mirroring the dynamic landscape of the global educational system. A comprehensive study conducted by Google for Education, in partnership with the research entity Canvas spanning 24 countries, underscored the importance of enhancing learning environments, empowering educators with data, and reassessing student progress. Simultaneously, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) initiated the "The Future of Education and Skills 2030" project, seeking answers to pivotal questions about education. This initiative aims to equip learners with the agency, purpose, and competencies required to shape their lives and meaningfully contribute to the lives of others (OECD, 2018). Day and Sammons (2014) emphasized the key role of school leaders, particularly principals, in setting directions, creating a positive school culture, and supporting staff motivation. Effective school leadership, encompassing instructional/pedagogical and transformational leadership, was identified as crucial, but insufficient in isolation.

Goleman and Menkes (2014) and Maccoby (2017) highlighted the significant impact of leadership initiatives on the classroom environment, broader school policies, student learning outcomes, and overall educational environment. Effective leadership practices, such as modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart, contribute to positive learning experiences. "Leadership for learning" is described as a distinct form of educational practice guided by moral purposes, emphasizing a focus on learning, fostering conducive conditions, and embracing shared and accountable leadership. Leadership practices play a vital role in motivating students, facilitating professional development, fostering trust among colleagues, and improving driving (Nye 2012).

Westerberg (2013) reviewed significant research literature to write about leadership incorporating relevant experiences from his work as a principal to create a list of ten behavior that separate successful leaders from the irrelevant. According to Westerberg, effective leaders clearly articulate a vision of effective instruction and assessment and provide precise examples of what this vision looks like. Also important, a common language and terminology is established and used by all to communicate instructional and assessment concepts. Westerberg asserted that every principal must remain intimately familiar with the technical core of teaching by reading professional literature, attending conferences, and working with a professional learning network. Additionally, leaders must be willing to share what they have learned with teachers as colleagues and partners with a common goal. Effective principals can utilize faculty meetings as a place to model high-quality instruction and should take an active role in planning, implementing, and evaluating quality professional development for teachers. Administrators must be viewed as a partner in collaborative productive relationships and be able to demonstrate knowledge and skill in pedagogy.

The Student Life Department (SLD) provides a unique context for students to assume leadership roles in the school community. This student-led community encourages shared leadership, the development of social and academic skills, and the cultivation of a strong moral purpose, benefiting both student leaders and the broader school community (Taysum & Iqbal, 2012).

DuFour and Marzano (2011) examined how district, school, and classroom leaders are able to improve student achievement in Leaders of Learning. DuFour and Marzano named a major section of this work, "Leadership is an Affair of the Heart," to discuss the significance of leading by example and helping individuals develop a sense of self-efficacy through actually becoming more capable. DuFour and Marzano asserted that leadership's dispositions and attitudes are contagious and will spread throughout an organization if the leader addresses the issues within an individual's control and then holds the individual accountable for growth and improvement. Through broad polling on leadership, people were asked to think about the best leader they have known and the correlating relationship; respondents concluded that the best leaders take actions that made individuals feel competent and capable.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite the fact that leadership development programs are frequently used in educational institutions, little is known about the precise elements and modes of delivery that work well for a variety of student demographics. Without separating out the crucial elements that propel student leadership development, such as mentoring quality, experiential learning opportunities, or cultural relevance, a large portion of the material currently in publication tends to concentrate on program outcomes in broad strokes. Furthermore, no longitudinal study has been done to examine the long-term effects of these programs on students' educational, private, and professional paths. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge exists regarding how leadership programs can be tailored to various institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts in order to optimize their efficacy, as the majority of studies mostly represent viewpoints from Western contexts.

OBJECTIVE

- To study on Effective Leadership Programs to support Students.
- To understand the importance of Effective Leadership Programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research has been based on conceptual research work. A depth study was carried out. This paper discusses the Effective Leadership Programs to support Students to understand the depth of Effective Leadership Programs to support Students, the values that Effective Leadership Programs holds and to understand the Effective Leadership Programs to support Students.

Secondary data has been used and studies from the previous researchers to identify various aspects related to the topic. Literature review and introduction has been preparing with the help of research paper publications, article, and other internet sources.

FINDINGS

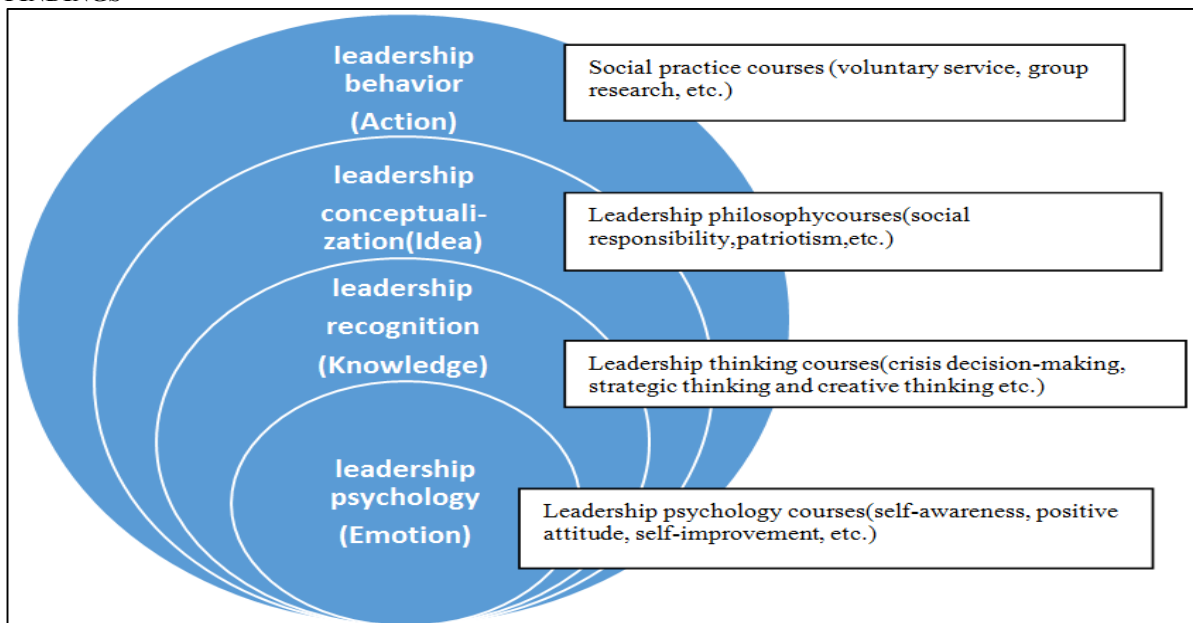


Figure 1: The Four-stage Values-based Chinese College Student Leadership Development Model

Source: Wenyan Weng and Wenfan Yan (2018)

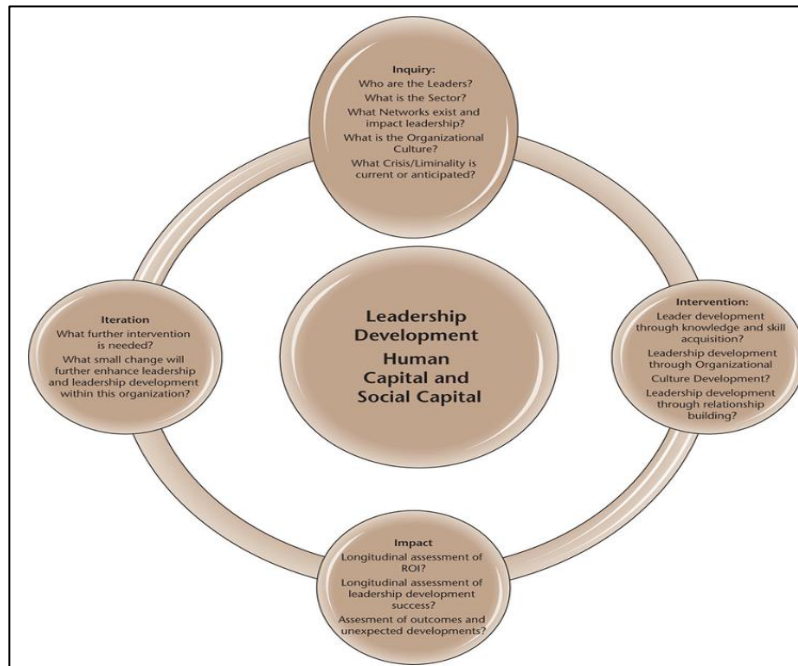


Figure: A Creative Leadership Development Model

Source: Elkington, Rob. (2015)

CONCLUSION

Since leadership potential exists in every student, colleges need to provide, promote and involve students in leadership training and education programs. These cocurricular experiences can increase their leadership skills, abilities and knowledge. According to Cress et al. (2001) student leadership participants cite increased confidence in their abilities, leadership skills, and willingness to serve in leadership roles. Also, compared to non-participants, leadership program participants were noticeably more cooperative and less authoritarian and held more ethical views of leadership. Implementing an effective student leadership development program will facilitate a more sustainable practice of leadership. Teaching students how to hone their internal leadership skills through a process where they identify their own beliefs, values, emotions and practices. Students having experienced effective leadership as part of their education are likely to commit to making changes in society since the institutions in which they were trained inculcated in them this commitment. The competencies of today's community college student should begin to include leadership studies. This will allow students to be more globally competent learners with added competencies. This ability will enhance their marketability and foster an attitude of affective competency. In turn, they become better able to sustain themselves as they direct their energies toward things that matter to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implementing an official campaign to raise awareness and encourage student participation in leadership programmes is vital. This campaign should highlight the value of leadership skills and the benefits of participating in the programme, fostering a culture of leadership within the school community.
- Offering practical support for students to engage effectively with staff is essential. This support can include mentorship programs, regular check-ins, and guidance on how to effectively collaborate with staff members to achieve leadership goals.
- Implementing specific support mechanisms and training for students with learning disabilities to ensure their inclusion and success in the leadership program. This can involve tailored training programs, accessibility accommodations, and dedicated support staff to assist students in their leadership roles.
- It is crucial to review and revise evaluation systems to accurately assess the effectiveness of leadership programs and identify areas for improvement. This can involve implementing regular feedback mechanisms, performance evaluations, and goal-setting processes to track the progress of student leaders.
- Fostering a supportive staff mentality that believes in the abilities of students is essential for the success of a leadership program. This can be achieved through staff training, awareness campaigns, and creating a culture of support and encouragement for student leaders in the school community.

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