Leader Development

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* 1. Create a 350-word original discussion paper (with cited sources) during the week of the residency. Be prepared to discuss and engage with other students during the live sessions. Post this document in DIAL.

One thing of note concerning the study of leader development. This concentration seems relatively new, considering the amount of scholarly and peer-reviewed material available within the last five to ten years. There is a sparse amount of academic work related to this topic due to the majority of material dedicated to “leadership” development. It wasn’t until recently that the Academy dedicated scholarly research and business organizations began to develop material to make a distinction between the two terms. With the information available, I present my research on leader development.

Leader development is a critical focus area within organizations that concentrates on behavioral studies and practical management strategies. Its essence lies in enhancing the skills, capabilities, and confidence of leaders and emerging leaders within organizations (Day, 2000). According to Northouse (2018), leader development encompasses a wide range of practices, including formal education, mentorship, and hands-on experience, to foster leader qualities such as strategic thinking, effective communication, and ethical decision-making.

A pivotal aspect of leader development is its emphasis on experiential learning and reflective practice. Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) argue that transformative experiences, when adequately reflected upon, significantly contribute to the development of an effective leader. These experiences help individuals to understand their inherent leader styles, strengths, and weaknesses (or areas for improvement). Peer-reviewed research suggests that leader development programs incorporating demonstrable learning components, such as simulations, role-playing, and project-based assignments, are more effective in enhancing leader capabilities (McCauley et al., 1994).

Mentorship is another cornerstone of leader development. According to Higgins and Kram (2001), mentorship provides emerging leaders with the guidance, feedback, and support necessary to navigate complex organizational landscapes and leader challenges. Effective mentorship relationships contribute to a deeper understanding of organizational dynamics, enhanced leader skills, and increased career satisfaction for mentees.

Furthermore, technology integration in leader development programs has become an emerging trend, especially post-COVID-19. Some years before COVID-19, however, Bingham and Conner (2015) highlighted the role of digital platforms and social media in facilitating continuous learning and peer collaboration. These technologies offer leaders flexible opportunities to engage with content, connect with mentors and peers, and apply knowledge in real-time contexts.

In conclusion, leader development is a multifaceted process that requires a combination of formal education, hands-on learning, mentorship, and the strategic use of technology. By focusing on these areas, organizations can cultivate leaders adept at navigating current challenges and prepared to lead effectively in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

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