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Leadership Development Strategies for Enhanced Corporate Leadership Capability

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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M.B.A., American Public University

B.S., Radford University

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Some business leaders lack leadership development strategies to enhance corporate capability. Without these strategies, business leaders may be over or underspending on leadership training without clear or relevant outcomes. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore leadership development strategies used by businesses to enhance corporate capability. Participants comprised six business leaders from the state of West Virginia who developed leadership strategies for enhanced corporate leadership capability. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews as well as a review of public websites and program documents. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Four themes emerged: genuine care for others, leading with intentionality, investment in people development, and considering a broader context or impact. A key recommendation is for business leaders to establish leadership development programs for employees that are aligned with corporate capability. Implications for positive social change include opportunities for business leaders to facilitate professional growth through effective leadership, provide stable employment, and contribute to economic growth for local communities.

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Last, I couldn't end this without a nod to Taylor Swift and wine! Thank you for the company on long nights! *"Long live the walls we crashed through; I had the time of my life fighting dragons with you!"* -TS

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

In Section 1, I identified the business problem and established the foundation for my study. I provide context and background information, including the purpose and nature of the study. Section 1 also includes details regarding the population and sample, research and interview questions, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and a review of academic literature.

Background of the Problem

The business landscape worldwide is changing rapidly. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the Coronavirus (COVID-19) was a worldwide pandemic, which forced the world into lockdowns and isolation, driving the U.S. economy into the harshest recession since the late 1920s (Beharry-Ramraj & Ramlachan, 2021). COVID-19 changed economic and social norms and created a state that is uncertain (Beharry-Ramraj & Ramlachan, 2021). This global pandemic coupled with increased technological advancements and globalization has created a business landscape that is more challenging, competitive, and complex than ever before (Abid et al., 2020).

Rapid changes and resulting complexities magnify a critical business need involving leadership effectiveness. With increased demands on business leaders also comes increased pressure for business enterprises to solve social and global issues by operating responsibly, paying attention to their output and impact, and playing an active role in the welfare of communities and societies (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019). This rapidly changing environment calls for leaders who are prepared and equipped to lead during ambiguous, volatile, and uncertain circumstances. Leadership effectiveness is attributed

to increased business performance and overall competitive advantage and has become a strategic imperative (Maheshwari & Yadav, 2018).

There is still much to learn about leadership development and organizational leadership capability. According to Samuel and Durning, (2021), “Billions of dollars are spent annually on leadership training and development courses, unfortunately this training does not appear to consistently result in significant adult learning or organizational performance” (p. 191). Investments in human capital, specifically leadership and talent development, are substantial and continue to rise (Longenecker & Insch, 2018); however, outcomes are primarily uncertain or unknown. This uncertainty has led to knowledge gaps and a lack of understanding of return-on-investment and best practices for successfully building and executing leadership development strategies. This gap presents an opportunity to learn more about leadership development programming and explore tactics and methods that are currently employed for strengthening corporate leadership capability.

Problem and Purpose

The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack leadership development strategies to enhance corporate capability. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership development strategies used by businesses to enhance corporate capability.

Population and Sampling

The study’s target population was six business leaders who represent companies located in the state of West Virginia. These business leaders have used successful

leadership development strategies to enhance business capability. Participants included those who were in managerial and/or administrative roles and had self-professed knowledge regarding leadership development practice within. A purposive sampling method was employed to select eligible and experienced interview candidates. The purposive sampling method with case study research was used to select or eliminate participants based on their judgement. This sampling method was used to select and include people who contributed information that was related to the goal of the study. Supplemental resources and program documentation were also used to inform the topic. These secondary materials included program documents and resources, website material, and information available to the public. I hoped to establish a thorough understanding of leadership development strategies that are used to enhance leadership capability.

Nature of the Study

Three types of research methods were considered for the study: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. I used the qualitative methodology to openly explore participants' perceptions and experiences. Saunders et al. (2015) noted qualitative researchers identify emerging outcomes and themes from their data set. The qualitative methodology was suitable for this study to learn more about participants' individual experiences with organizational leadership development strategies. It does not include fixed variables, numerical values, or hypothesized outcomes.

Quantitative and mixed methods were considered for the study, but not suitable. The quantitative methodology is based on the development and testing of a hypothesis involving characteristics of variables and relationships between them to develop

quantifiable outcomes (Ellis & Levy, 2009). A mixed methods researcher uses both methods. Quantitative methodology and mixed methods research were not appropriate for this study because results were not represented by numerical values or quantified. Results involved participant experiences as well as similarities and differences in terms of leadership development strategies.

I considered four research designs for this study: ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, and case study. The Multiple case study design was suitable for this study to explore integrated leadership development strategies to improve business capability. As opposed to a single case study, a multiple case study design was chosen to address a variety of business tactics for comparative analysis. The Multiple case study design involves in-depth and empirical analysis to explore the topic and formulate well-rounded views (Yin, 2018).

Several alternative study designs were considered, but not selected. Researchers who use the ethnographic design explore specific cultures or social groups, while researchers who use the narrative design develop and explore participants' personal stories through a sequence. Ethnography, narrative, and phenomenological designs were considered and could further inform this topic, but the multiple case study was better aligned with study objectives.

Research Question

What leadership development strategies do business leaders use to enhance corporate capability?

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your experience with leadership development strategies?
2. What strategies or tactics does your organization use to train and develop employees to assume current or future leadership roles?
3. What strategies proved successful in developing and implementing leadership development within your organization?
4. What strategies are currently employed to recruit employees for leadership development?
5. What strategies have you used (or are currently using) to align leadership development with organizational strategy?
6. How are leadership development strategies and program/experience outcomes assessed to understand the overall impact on employee development?
7. How are leadership development strategies and program/experience outcomes assessed to understand the overall impact on organizational development?
8. What strategies did you use to demonstrate the value that leadership development offers employees and/or the organization?
9. What recommendations do you have for other organizations for developing leadership programs/experiences?
10. How are leadership development opportunities shared or offered within the structure of your organization? Is this an open opportunity for all employees, or an exclusive opportunity only for a select few?

11. What else can you add to the topic of leadership development strategies and strategic business alignment within your organization?

Conceptual Framework

The transformational leadership theory (TLT) was the conceptual framework for this study. This conceptual framework was used inform study results. Effective leadership can transform people and organizations.

The TLT was championed by James McGregor Burns in 1978 and later expanded by Bernard Bass in 1985. It characterizes leadership as a set of skills, capabilities, and behaviors leaders use to motivate followers for moving beyond self-interest and focusing on collective goals of organizations. Through four tenets (inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration), transformational leaders activate the maximum potential of followers in organizations, ultimately leading to achievement and advancement of their performance (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019). The TLT was a theoretical lens for exploring and understanding how leadership development strategies can contribute to overall performance of organizations.

Operational Definitions

Human capital: Inherent value that resides in people in terms of skills and accumulated experiences or wisdom. It includes cumulative skills, abilities, and knowledge that is developed through formal and informal training experiences (Shea, Alemu, & Visser, 2020). Human capital can also be described as the collective human capability of businesses.

Leadership development: Development of employees for organizational purposes.

Leadership development includes developmental experiences that organizations can work deliberately to introduce or enhance (Kjellstrom et al., 2020).

Leadership education: Pedagogical practice that involves building human capability, where facilitators teach leadership learning based on theory and research. Leadership education is facilitated in both curricular and cocurricular settings.

Transformational leadership: Style of leadership that empowers employees to look past their own interests and focus on achievement of a collective mission (Harb & Sidani, 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

There are assumptions, limitations, and delimitations to consider as part of this study. Assumptions reflect beliefs of researchers, influencing the direction of research (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Limitations are issues that are beyond the researcher's control, and by default, weaken the study. Delimitations are conscious choices made by researchers or imposed boundaries (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Assumptions

There were three assumptions in this study. The first assumption was that participants were truthful when describing their leadership development experiences, and they openly shared those experiences. I also assumed participants adequately and thoroughly articulated their experiences. A third assumption was that data accurately reflected experiences of participants.

Limitations

There were three limitations in this study. The first limitation is related to the time

it takes to engage and interact with participants. Correspondence, interviews, and member-checking procedures for participants were determined by their schedules.

The second limitation was reliance on technology. Access to the Internet, digital communication tools, and various systems are critical to the study. Technology risks are typically mitigated through use of alternative devices or alternate sources of internet connectivity. It was reasonable to assume participants had access to multiple devices.

The third limitation involved generalization of study results. Reader interpretation could create confusion or misinterpretation.

Delimitations

This study included five participants which represented a variety of businesses with varying sizes, structures, and overall purposes. I did not include samples from every business segment, size, and sector. The project included a small sample that was not representative of all business models.

Participants were located in West Virginia. While there are specific regulatory practices at the state and local level, as well as economic, political, and cultural considerations, West Virginia businesses are not considerably different than those operating in other states.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

This study may help business leaders rethink their leadership development strategies to enhance leadership capability. Developing and maintaining leadership strength and depth remains a top priority for management in many organizations, and

businesses worldwide continue to invest in training and development to strengthen their leadership teams to evolve and compete (Akdere & Kirchner, 2017; Samuel & Durning, 2021). Leadership development programs are common, yet businesses take varied approaches to develop leaders, with mixed results and uncertain outcomes (Baur et al., 2019; Galli et al., 2012). This lack of consistency has led to ambiguity in terms of identifying successful strategies, making it challenging for some organizations to develop and sustain effective leadership development programming; therefore, there is an opportunity to contribute to business practice by identifying successful strategies to enhance overall leadership capability. This study could provide current business leaders with strategies and a guiding framework for building intentional leadership development programs.

Implications for Positive Social Change

High-impact leadership development is a critical need for championing and sustaining business success. Development of leaders plays a critical role in the advancement of individuals, local communities, and societies. Leadership programming can be dynamic, holistic, and transformative, elevating everyday people into agents of positive change in terms of promoting the growth and advancement of others. This presents businesses with opportunities to advance in their industry by contributing leaders who are well-rounded contributors to society through applied leadership practices. Benefits include reduction of poverty, protection over natural or planetary resources, gender equality and human rights, and improved quality of living (Rant, 2020).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore leadership development strategies used by business leaders to enhance corporate capability. This literature review includes findings from recent literature and historical research related to leadership development strategies, transformational leadership, organizational leadership, talent development and management, and organizational strategies and leadership practices within the business sector. This review of literature contributes to existing research and knowledge related to leadership development practice.

For this literature review, I retrieved peer-reviewed articles from the following databases: Walden University Library, Business Source Complete, Emerald Insight, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. I used the following keywords: *leadership*, *leadership development*, *leadership development strategies*, *leadership program*, *talent development*, *talent management*, *manager development*, *management training*, *transformational leadership*, *transformational leadership theory*, *lean management*, *charismatic leaders*, *leadership theories*, *mentoring*, *coaching business performance*, *human capital*, *social capital*, and *organizational strategy*. Due to the extensive body of research involving this topic, the search process included many combinations of topics and terms. I used terms and keywords interchangeably to address subject matter that was directly related to the topic of this study. There is a substantial body of literature related to this topic, with new and emergent research.

Table 1

Literature Review Matrix

	Number	Percent (%)

References	78	–
Peer-reviewed Articles	73	94%
Recent peer-reviewed articles (within the last 5 years)	62	80%

This literature review begins with an overview of the TLT, followed by an explanation of the role of business in society and roles of business leaders. Leadership development as a concept is addressed in terms of training and competence, technology and innovation, and leadership education. The literature review concludes with information about corporate leadership development as a practice.

TLT

Training and development practices vary but are necessary to optimize and mobilize human resources. Business leaders play a critical role in training and development (Hernandez & Porraspita, 2020). Organizational productivity and culture are prominent within leadership development studies and research in terms of exploring both positive and negative side-effects of leadership.

Transformational leadership as a concept is traced back to 1970s and was a major focus in the work of James McGregor Burns. His work was focused on roles of leaders and followers, specifically how leaders could influence or motivate followers to better achieve goals (Kehr et al., 2023).

Transactional leadership style refers to leader-to-follower exchanges leading to goal attainment, and can be seen via basic systems of reward. The laissez-faire style refers to hands-off approaches, with little or no directives. Transformational leadership is a style which motivates employees to go above and beyond in terms of achievement of

goals. Leaders who build relationships with their followers raise levels of motivation and morality for themselves and for followers (Shea et al., 2020).

Transformational leadership as a theory was coined by Bernard Bass in the 1990s. The TLT is based on four tenets: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Shea et al., 2020). Leaders who are successful employing these tenets, can help organizations achieve collective success by leveraging individual employee efforts, skills, and motivation. Transformational leadership is grounded in intrinsic motivation and development of followers, empowering employees to meet both self and organizational needs.

Organizations need transformational leaders. Motivating people to transcend self-interests for a larger or collective benefit is a core element of the TLT. Development of transformational leadership behavior is associated with positive business outcomes, particularly in terms of sales, customer satisfaction, and profitability (Afriyie et al., 2020). Especially during times of crisis, organizations need leaders who can make tough decisions and give direction as well as address growing and healing (Dobre, 2020).

Businesses, especially with a reliance on technology, seek employees who are creative and can drive innovation to help achieve competitive advantages (Azim et al., 2019). Confidence to display creative talents relies on open and trusted environments where leaders inspire and encourage employees to work beyond stated expectations. Azim et al. (2019) claimed small and mid-size businesses should employ the TLT and associated attributes to inspire supportive organizational cultures in order to increase creative efficacy and in turn yield broader outcomes and impacts.

Lin et al. (2022) claimed transformational leadership qualities had a significant influence on teacher development.

The ability for healthcare professionals, especially nurses, to inspire others to achieve outcomes while also working to develop themselves is a key skillset.

Green innovation is a recent term that is used to refer to enterprises that are doing less damage to the environment through mindful practices. Green transformational leadership is the business practice of providing inspiration and clear motivation to achieve environmental goals which lead to minimizing industrial pollution (Begum et al., 2022). Transformational leaders have the ability to mobilize people in the pursuit of larger sustainable development goals (Cui et al., 2023). This involves freedom of employees to leverage green creativity and innovation in the workplace, which is nurtured by transformational leadership (Riva et al., 2021).

Transformational leaders are assets within organizations. Due to vast complexities and uncertaintues in the business realm, competent transformational leaders have become more w sought after. The ability to minimize negative outcomes is important in rapidly changing business environments. Leaders face uncertainty, increased competition, frequent restructuring, downsizing, budget cuts and layoffs (Harb & Sidani, 2019). Leaders can play a significant role in terms of the wellbeing of their employees, either enhancing feelings of wellbeing or undermining them (Kim & Cruz, 2022). Leaders who possess transformational leadership skills can help to minimize negative emotions and behavior, lessen fear, and influence overall acceptance of change. Those with the ability

to successfully navigate change, articulate visions and strategies, and elevate workforces are valued as business assets (Harb & Sidani, 2019).

TLT and Development Practice

Without a calculated ROI, it becomes problematic to justify and explain funding year over year, especially during difficult financial or political changes (Abner et al., 2020).

The first tenet of transformational leadership is idealized influence, or the idea that leaders are authentic, credible, trustworthy, and bound by integrity and ethics, and work toward goals that are larger than themselves or organizations (Barbinta & Muresan, 2017). Leaders demonstrating idealized influence are seen as respected role models for employees. These leaders are already working toward collective goals and good of organizations and demonstrate this to others. The second tenet is inspirational motivation, which is the ability to successfully communicate shared visions and inspire others. Inspirational motivation leaders are enthusiastic and optimistic about the future (Shea et al., 2020). The third tenet, individualized consideration is when leaders treat followers as individuals equitably on a one-on-one basis, developing higher levels of potential. This involves first ascertaining individual needs, then creating the right environment for growth (Shea et al., 2020). The last tenet, intellectual stimulation, is how leaders encourage followers to question old ways of thinking and think of new ideas for the future good. This type of innovation is achieved by having employees look at problems and challenges as obstacles to overcome. Leaders who stimulate this type of thinking empower employees to think toward the collective good.

There is a strong correlation between team leaders in China who displayed transformational leadership and employee self-efficacy, which in turn was attributed to overall team performance (Lu & Li, 2021). Transformational leaders can help to elevate individual people within systems, as well as larger systems which influence development of organizations (Tan et al., 2023). Transformational leadership can be and is currently taught or encouraged through intentional training efforts. Radi Afsouran et al. (2022) noted there is still a need for further inquiry regarding the extent to which these trainings influence organizational development, specifically as they influence types of employees and cultural factors.

Trainee characteristics, work environment, and training design skew research outcomes (Radi Afsouran et al., 2022). Wilson et al. (2020) explained transformational leadership involves aspiring to an ideal, which may skew overall assessment and long-term results related to program success.

The TLT remains prevalent as a strategy and framework for the implementation of training and development. This demonstrates leaders could influence followers to shift their dispositions to align with leaders. Training leaders who assume transformational styles could elevate organizations, as well as achieve more broad outcomes.

Role of Business in Society

Organizations need strong leaders to meet needs of competitive business landscapes. Businesses, especially large enterprises, face new and increased pressure to look beyond simple financial returns, with expectations to make positive contributions to society. The business community is responsible for addressing issues such as climate

change, loss of biodiversity, income inequality, education, chronic hunger, stress/disengagement at work, and personal wellbeing (Laszlo & Tsao, 2019). In addition to these expectations, businesses must have leaders who can ensure internal practices for day-to-day operations are healthy, thriving, and moving in the right direction.

To achieve the UN's sustainable development goals, there is a need for coordinated global efforts. Rant (2020) described complex adaptive systems (CAS) as compilations of businesses across many industries. These systems trickle down to individual businesses and individual leaders. According to Pless et al. (2021), "integrative leader trait configuration (or stakeholder perspective, socialized motivation, high degree of care and compassion)" were more likely to approach societal problems than those with "instrumental leader trait configuration (or shareholder perspective, personalized motivation, or low degree of care and compassion) (p. 535). From this perspective, leadership development can produce more aspirational and transformative leaders.

Business has traditionally been focused on increasing the bottom line and profits, while also managing their reputation through practices of CSR, altruism, or the reduction of their negative footprint on the world (Borges & Ramalho, 2023). CSR is a policy that explains that companies can operate freely if they work within the laws, and when possible, will minimize environmental damage and social injustices (Laszlo & Tsao, 2019). While CSR is a notable effort, it is criticized, as many social and global problems have grown and gotten worse—not better since its inception (Laszlo & Tsao, 2019.) Given that corporate leaders significantly influence organizational choices, Zhou et al (2022) studied the prevalence of growing research on the topic, concluding that it has

grown increasingly over three decades and continues to be a focal point and interest for development.

There are many examples of corporations and business leaders who have conducted business without concern for the well-being of others, putting profits and greed first. Companies like Enron, Volkswagen, Federation Internationale de Football Association, and United Airlines are well-known companies that have experienced long lasting and negative consequences due to errors in leadership (Akiyoshi, 2018). These well-known enterprises were formerly known for their financial successes, entrepreneurialism, and innovation, until lapses in leadership exposed major issues in leadership—triggering a massive downfall (Akiyoshi, 2018). In these instances, and many more, leadership failures can be attributed to failed vision, miscalculated strategies, lack of specialized experience, lack of ethics or conduct, and/or a lack of board oversight (Akiyoshi, 2018). These companies, and their leaders, continue to face media scrutiny and pressure to make immediate changes.

Greed and profits are not the only major issue plaguing business environments, deeply embedded social and cultural bias continue to create issues in the workplace—and society-at-large. Leaders must eradicate areas of bias to eliminate inequity, chiefly as it relates to systematic racism. Healthcare is a critical example, where equity-centered trainings are part of preventative healthcare leadership (Fernandez et al., 2022). This type of multifaceted training helps build leaders who can link underlying issues and health disparities with the structural issues in society that caused them (Fernandez et al., 2022).

This awareness can help leaders operate within the workplace context, but also translate into their everyday life.

Critical methodologies that challenge systems of power and oppression are part of leadership education dialogue—with a goal to challenge the status quo. Social justice researchers have called for a revolution in leadership education, using a critical lens to examine structural barriers rooted in whiteness, patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia (among others) (Chunoo et al., 2020). Revolutionary leadership education must include an acknowledgement of a current system that is unacceptable, and a process forward to study the leadership styles and talents of marginalized communities (Chunoo et al., 2020). Revolutionary leadership education research is called upon to propel the practice and establish equality in the field. Many organizations are championing efforts and creating business strategy focused on generating or producing positive impacts, and many of these organizations are outperforming their peers economically (Laszlo & Taso, 2019). Non-profit companies, like B-Corps and Conscious Capitalism, have been established to create standards for businesses to follow, making sure all stakeholders' interests are considered. These business standards help consumers understand the difference between a good company and simply companies using good marketing tactics (Laszlo & Tsao, 2019). These standards and accountability measures for businesses have been established to help guide businesses toward new long-term strategies, which take into consideration a larger scope of stakeholders and their well-being.

Well-being is discussed in studies related to social responsibility, primarily related to business impact on society (Newey, 2019). Well-being problems include

chronic disease, disempowerment, gross inequality, environmental degradation, poverty, terrorism, and civil unrest, which cross disciplinary lines and professional fields (Newey, 2019). Newey asserted that for society to flourish many facets of society must come together, to include economic, social, cultural, environmental, psychological, spiritual, physical, and material components. That said, the well-being of many is directly proportionate with leadership success.

Role of Business Leaders

Business leaders play a vital role within organizations. Alrowwad, Abualoush, and Masa'deh (2020) explained, speedy technological changes, progressively complex customers, and the prominence of innovation have shifted the foundation of competition from conventional physical and financial resources to the development of intellectual assets—or developing people. These people leaders are expected to provide a vision, direction, and guidance; as well as act ethically, equitably, and create purposeful engagement within an organization (Akiyoshi, 2018). Not only that, but business leaders are also in a role to lead and support others working toward goal accomplishment. Organa and Sus (2023) defined "Leadership 4.0" a critical phenomenon in the current economic environment, explaining that leaders make critical decisions and generate motivation for organizational employees. Peter Northouse (2016) described leadership as a complex process with multiple dimensions, and notes that organizations recruit and train leaders who will bring something special to their business—including improvement to the bottom line. Within the academic research, there is no single definition of leadership—but many descriptions.

Leadership as a topic of academic inquiry is challenging due to these varied definitions, and evolving thought about the variables that relate to leadership as an overall practice. This evolution of the definition has been attributed to changes in world affairs, politics, and seminal work on the topic (Northouse, 2016). Twenty-first century adaptations to the definition and conceptualization of leadership describe four areas of further inquiry: leadership is a process, leadership as influence, leadership that occurs in groups, and leadership that has shared goals (Northouse, 2016). All four areas, in tandem, lead to the successful creation, execution, and realization of business strategy.

Business strategy creation, execution, and realization differ from organization to organization and are a direct result of business leaders—or a collective leadership capability. In a business context, these roles are focused on building wealth or profits through successful leadership. In that sense, organizational leaders must make decisions, and lead their people on a path toward the achievement of mission and vision. An effective and successful manager will evaluate their management plans to ensure it promotes a healthy and safe environment, building upon a company's culture of quality (Dobre, 2020).

Well-being is not only referenced in the literature with relationship to output (or CSR), but also referenced in studies related to emotional intelligence. Leadership and emotional intelligence (EQ) have been studied broadly (Chaudhary et al., 2022). With respect to current affairs, specifically the impact of COVID-19 on many working environments, leadership studies have pivoted to consider e-leadership skills, traits, and impact at-a-distance—with employees working in different geographic locations and in

different time zones. This adaptation to the traditional business environment leads to questions about leadership skills in a virtual space, and how attributes like EQ are successfully transmitted. Chaudhary et al (2022) studied leader e-competencies on employee well-being in virtual teams during COVID-19 and found a significant association between leader e-competencies rooted in emotional intelligence and the well-being of their following, noting specifically that management and leadership skills were critical and included: e-communication, e-change management skills, and e-technological skills.

Leadership and management are similar in many ways, as both involve influence over other people and the achievement of organizational goals. The differences between management and leadership are explored in depth in academic literature, but both are deemed critical to organizational success. Management is a function of an organization concerned with order and consistency, whereas the function of leadership is to produce change and movement (Northouse, 2016). Alternatively, managers tend to transfer information and direction downward within an organization; whereas leaders at all levels within the business transmit culture through their behavior, what they say and do (Hernandez & Porraspita, 2020).

Leadership studies have looked across industries to examine the innate and natural traits of people assuming leadership roles; as well as developmental experiences, educational programs, and training that lead to leadership competency and success. Many studies point to a variety of leadership styles which influence leaders; while others point to a variation of styles to lead in different scenarios. Because there will always be

differences in individual leaders, due to unique factors such as personal lessons learned, experiences, learning, and situations; Hernandez & Porraspita (2020) stated that leadership training and development must be dynamic and geared toward the collective goals of the organization. Recalling TLT mentioned above, transformational leaders are skilled at working simultaneously to impact the collective goals of the organization and inspire the achievement of personal and professional development in their protégé—but developing a culture of transformational leadership requires strategy.

Organizational development consultants exist and are helping business become more intentional. Organizational development consultants have recently influenced positive changes with various corporations by focusing on a formal process and strategy for leadership development, creating methods that are more focused on long-term impacts and less focused on addressing immediate or urgent needs (Cabler, 2018). This approach emphasizes systematic changes and getting to the root of organizational development. Organizational development is a practice to increase effectiveness through planned intervention and directly related to the reinforcement of organizational strategies, processes, and structures to improve outcomes—including investments in human capital (Cabler, 2018). With organizational development in mind, the consultants have focused on leadership development methods as overall business success.

Leadership development requires work, time, attention, and most of all support from the highest level. High-performing organizations are not a matter of luck or chance—they are built (Insch & Longenecker, 2018). The relationship between leadership development training design and delivery, specifically focused on the role of

senior level leaders, has been studied. For example, Insch and Longennecker (2018) assert that for training and development to be successful; senior level engagement, leadership, and support, are critical for success. The authors observed ten practices within their study that were critical to leadership program success:

- Senior leaders must demonstrate a commitment to leadership development and its overall importance to the organization.
- Senior leaders must be actively engaged in the creation of the enterprise-wide skill set; senior leaders must challenge the organization to create multifaced development processes that are clearly defined and transparent.
- Senior leaders must provide financial and personnel resources to manage the program properly.
- Senior leaders must make leadership performance and continual learning a real priority.
- Senior leaders must role model desired behaviors and leadership practices; senior leaders must provide ongoing feedback, coaching, and mentoring to their people.
- Senior leaders must provide time for leadership learning and development.
- Senior leaders must create and reinforce accountability for effective leadership practices.
- Senior leaders must demonstrate care in hiring, promotions, and succession plans that reflect the values of organizational leadership (Insch & Longenecker, 2018).

For organizations starting their leadership development efforts, senior level leaders must be involved so that efforts are streamlined and reinforced from the bottom of the organization to the top. For organizations working to improve or make changes, senior level buy-in and support will help to further accelerate and propel leadership development as a top priority.

Leadership development and training play an important role in the preparation of business leaders. In addition, learning and competence management are also studied in relationship to leadership and growth. According to business research, organizational learning, innovation, and transformational leadership are positively correlated helping to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Bashir, Farooq, & Verma, 2022). Bashir, Farooq, and Verma (2022) posed that regardless of industry, organizational learning and innovation are perpetuated with transformational leadership style; as transformational leaders can encourage creativity, promote intellectual stimulation, and to provide the right environment for the sharing and transfer of knowledge. Training and development can build and elevate leadership competence, transforming organizations.

Leader Development Learning and Competence

Leader development and leadership development differ. Leader development, by definition, is the development of an individual, which can happen by chance or through life situations/experiences; in contrast and referenced in this study, leadership development is the development of the employee for the organization's purpose. Leadership development includes developmental and learning experiences that organizations can work deliberately to introduce or enhance (Kjellstrom et al., 2020). The

ability to introduce intentional leadership development mechanisms and methods is critical for organizational advancement, and businesses who can leverage and maximize their leadership resources can work to realize their strategic goals.

Adult learning theories play a role in the curriculum design of leadership training. Adult learning theories include cognitivist, behaviorist, humanistic, social cognitive, and constructivist orientations (Allen, Rosch, & Riggio, 2022). Allen, Rosch, and Riggio (2022) explain that cognitive training delivered through lecture is overused in the preparation of businesses leaders and should consider the other orientations. Sameul and Downing (2021) assert that while many adult learnings participate in developmental programs for reskilling or retraining that both an organizational and university level, they do not appear to result in better organizational performance (or that organizations do not see a consistent return on investment.) Samuel and Downing (2021) echoed that the problem lies in the area of program design that is a one-size-fits-all approach. Differentiated learning and a variety of tactics, or experiences, could enhance business leader learning and development.

Leadership development tactics and experiences vary, with a multitude of program designs. Leadership development is recognized by many top organizations as a top priority (Akdere & Hickman, 2017); and developmental competencies related to leadership are built into a myriad of learning experiences—from formal classroom trainings to experiential opportunities. Leadership learning can be offered synchronously or asynchronously, and in-person or using various technological systems. Fernandez et al (2022) lists webinars, book clubs, self-directedly online learning modules, directed

personal reflection, program readings, consultations, and individual and group coaching as common learning tools used to develop leadership competence and skills.

Narrative storytelling was mentioned as a tactic in one study with a specific and measurable outcome. Narrative storytelling is the ability to make sense of information and relationships; and to them organize it into a sequence. Narrative sense-making and storytelling is important to leadership development, especially between the ages of 18-25 as young adults are constructing their identities (Armstrong & McCain, 2021). In a traditional college setting, and in a professional environment, narrative storytelling can be employed to help further learning objectives and achievement.

Some organizations are even using creative and fun opportunities to accomplish training objectives—and to promote learning. One example is of an Escape Room activity. Escape Rooms facilitators use a pre- and post-test to rate participant learning; with a range of results related to verbal communication, listening, advocating for a point of view, and conflict negotiation (Banter, Egan, & Sorgen, 2021).

Personality assessments and their practical application are widely used for leadership training and development. Over 40 years of empirical research exists related to life-span personality, which has helped to frame conversations about emotion regulation, social dynamics, and behavior (Shorey & Chapin, 2018). Personality assessments help employees understand themselves in relationship to their workplace and work colleagues, and in turn help to identify areas for growth and development. Many personality and leadership assessments exist and are readily available (some free online through a simple search), to include: the Myers Briggs test, the DISC assessment, and the BIG 5

Personality Traits. To translate results, certifications are available to help interpret results in a more meaningful and personalized way. In an organizational and career context, researchers suggest that there is much to explore further and learn (Shorey & Chapin, 2018.)

Employee learning and development is largely specific to the needs of the business, industry, and overall context of the employee's working environment. In some instances, on-going employee learning and development practices are required to maintain licenses or meet standard working requirements. In other business contexts, learning and development may be a 'nice to have' and driven solely by the employee's desire or self-motivation to become more skilled. Learning and competence in many organizations is deemed critical to success and driven by human resource goals and objectives.

Human resource development includes multiple theories that suggest that education and learning contribute to a competitive advantage that is not easily imitated for competitors, closing skill and ability gaps in the areas of efficiency and effectiveness (Havera et al., 2018). Organizations and business leaders who work with intentionality to build dynamic and interesting leadership development mechanisms can develop individuals in a specific context/way, as well as address some of the most pressing global challenges related to leadership. These international challenges or deficiencies include areas like employee development, inspiring others, managing efficiency, leading innovation, directing teams, and managing politics or a variety of stakeholders (Sarfraz,

2017). Through the alignment of personal and organizational experiences business leaders can capitalize on training to create a stronger leadership skillset (Sarfraz, 2017).

Employee learning, competence, and professional development are shared responsibilities with employees working toward their own goals—and other stakeholders supporting and benefiting from their growth. This can be especially true when it comes to leadership skills and abilities—which can be transferred to personal and professional areas. The benefits vary and are broadly recognized and understood, with some ambiguity around the best practices for leadership development—and tracking the success of leadership development programs, tactics, or models.

Leadership development strategies can be complex to understand in the scope of a business role. Research on leadership development strategies point to both deep work within an individual's identity and belief systems, rather than a single focus on external observable skills, actions, and behaviors (Akiyoshi, 2018). Given this dynamic of self-growth, leadership programming has been noted as more effective over longer periods of time—and regular and sustained practices of assessment for growth and learning. Short-term achievement within leadership development programs is not always indicative of long-term growth or success. Much of the academic literature reflects short-term program analysis, which is hard to attribute to long-term successes—especially as it relates to the strategic realization of long-term business objectives (which may be an indirect result of a single, or collective, group of leaders).

While long-term outcomes are not widely known, some research does exist to link leadership development to changes in behavior. In a 2019 study, the American

Organization for Nursing Leadership paired new professionals with expert faculty to develop leadership over a one-year period to improve performance (Friedman, Handcock, & Thompson, 2021). The intention of the study was to teach new professionals the skill of self-awareness, to lay a foundation for future reflection and leadership learning during and after the experience (Friedman, Handcock, & Thompson, 2021). Outcomes of the study suggested that leadership learning can result in long-term improvements in organizational leadership.

Additional studies related to leadership development point to distributed leadership models and are less narrow with respect to individual leadership contributions. Many organizations have flattened their structure, eliminating excessive leadership positions and/or hierarchical models of leadership. This type of flattened organization relies on leadership within team structures, and people's ability to work collaboratively to achieve goals and demonstrate leadership within their organization. This organizational structure is used widely and discussed within academic literature to improve organizational capacity (Fu & Liu, 2018). Distributed leadership outcomes are largely specific to the organization in which they operate, and are specific to the context within the work environment (i.e., the leaders, the team members, etc.) This specificity makes it hard to determine collective outcomes, creating a gap in knowledge related to its overall efficiency or success rate.

Leadership development, learning, and competence require organizational leaders to work with intention to prepare future leaders and talent for success. While training methods and tactics vary from organization-to-organization, leadership education as a

field of study and body of knowledge are growing quickly (Aguilar & Philip, 2022). Organizational leaders must be able to develop themselves and others to meet the needs of a complex and challenging business landscape.

Virtual Leadership, Technology, and Innovation

Advancements in technology have led to innovation within organizations, particularly through virtual leadership. Virtual leadership allows people and teams to communicate and carry out transactions from a distance (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). This type of leadership generates a capable workforce through use of the Internet, video/telephone conferences, emails, text messages, smart applications, text messages, blogs/vlogs, social networks, and more. During the global COVID-19 pandemic, a large percentage of the U.S. workforce relied on remote working capabilities for social interactions, collaboration, innovation, and the assessment of risk (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). One example, social networking, has transformed organizations' ability to disseminate information and helped heighten mass communication, economy, and support (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). This capability and others help organizations connect people from across the world, in different time zones, and across borders/boundaries.

COVID-19 changed the business landscape. The global pandemic accelerated virtual leadership and teleworking practice—creating an immediate need for organizations to adapt and transform their work methods (Abid, Baykal, & Contreras, 2020). This change created a new global norm, with flexible working arrangements and a new call for leadership—virtual leadership (Abid, Baykal, & Contreras, 2020). Virtual

leadership or electronic leadership is characterized by concepts of traditional leadership, only advanced through emergent information and communication technologies (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). It has been classified as a promising research field of interest and one that is growing rapidly, calling for leaders who are knowledgeable in information and communications technology—with the skills and abilities to engage, manage, and lead a virtual workforce (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022).

Virtual leadership is new and still being understood. Virtual leadership has no single approach to study or theorize the phenomenon, as it is multidimension and fragmented crossing over different disciplines (Abid, Baykal, & Contreras, 2020). It can be looked at from both a macro level (virtual leadership and organization) and a micro level (virtual leader skills and leading virtual teams) (Abid, Baykal, & Contreras, 2020). Researchers who have studied virtual leadership suggested looking at it apart from traditional leadership, and through a specialized lens. Successful virtual leaders should have the ability to establish a presence, execute the mission/goals of the organization, and create a collaborative work culture among people who are separated by physical distance, time, or organizational boundaries (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). A leader who can successfully manage virtual teams, can help their organization benefit through cultural, knowledge, and experience exchange (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022)—as well as transform an organization with regional/global talent options and workplace flexibility as a benefit for employees.

Globalization and technology are changing rapidly and also new in the sense that leaders are still learning. These business dimensions pose challenges and opportunities

for business leaders (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). Virtual leadership plays a role in the advancement of organizations, helping to support human interactions and enhance work systems (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). Organizations and institutions equipped with the tools and training to elevate leadership beyond the scope of traditional management science, will be able to transform companies and meet the needs of a contemporary work environment—even with constant change and innovation (Aguilar & Philip, 2022).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an interesting advancement in the world of training and development. With respect to leadership training, AI platforms like SkillGym.com provide a space for individuals to practice and use self-reflection in AI generated role-playing scenarios. These scenarios are based on real world scenarios leaders might face and allow them to practice with various leadership skills and approaches. Examples of leadership-specific resources from the SkillGym site include topics like optimizing performance, delegation, encouraging teamwork, and boosting motivation. In a single case study on the effectiveness of AI digital role playing to train employees in specific soft skills, administrators reported a high level of satisfaction with the practice-based approach (rather than a purely knowledge-sharing approach) and the efficiency of a methodology based in neuroscience (Matteo & Ciani, 2022).

Technology and innovation play an important role in training and developing leaders, both in a physical and virtual workspace. Information and instructional systems are used in the facilitation of leadership development training—specifically in reference to digital leadership (McKay & Jamaludin, 2020). Education and training technology have transformed learning, both complementing and replacing traditional face-to-face

classroom experiences. Today, learning options have become more accessible with ePedagogy (McKay & Jamaludin, 2020). ePedagogy, or the virtual methods and practice of teaching, has shifted away from teacher-centered classrooms into learner-centered experiences (McKay & Jamaludin, 2020). Instructional systems and design elements have been integrated into virtual platforms, systems, and digital experiences to motivate and elevate learning.

Leadership Development in Higher Education

Leadership training in a corporate environment and leadership education within the higher education sector use a variety of training modalities to facilitate learning. Learning management systems (LMS) serve as a foundational space for e-learning and e-learning operations (both synchronous and asynchronous), using sophisticated software to provide access to learning materials and resources (Alharthi, Smirani, & Yamani, 2022). The LMS provides learners, teachers, and administrators with the capability to engage in virtual learning experiences that are dynamic, and include functionalities like training, skills management, product catalogs, management administration, management of teaching resources, and more (Alharthi, Smirani, & Yamani, 2022). Examples of off-the-shelf LMS products within the Higher Education sector include Blackboard, Anthology, Brightspace, and Moodle (Alharthi, Smirani, & Yamani, 2022). These tools help facilitate relationships virtually with learning as the center. These LMS platforms are dynamic and can yield insight into successful development strategies.

Leadership education programs have become standard on university campuses, both formally and informally. In some instances, they include leadership education and

developmental opportunities through formative partnerships across university divisions, leveraging both experience from Academics and Student Affairs. According to The Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards for Student Leadership Programs (SLPs), “programs must be designed with a learning framework, and should center on the learner and the learning that can occur individually and in a group context” (CAS, 2023).

Leadership development is prominent in higher education. Many education-based organizations are focused on the creation and development of leaders, as leadership is both implicitly and now explicitly an expectation of higher education (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). Past rhetoric assumed that students who demonstrated proficiency within a discipline were automatically effective and efficient in leadership training, however institutions today are taking a multidisciplinary approach to integrating leadership studies into various fields of study (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). Leadership is no longer seen as merely positional, but rather focused on a process of developing oneself, learning skills, collaborating with others, fostering ethical relationships, and demonstrating a commitment to social responsibility (Dawson et al., 2020). Once academics and educators agreed that leadership could be taught and learned, formal programs developed quickly within higher education and have grown as a field of study (Cavagnaro & van der Zande, 2021).

Higher education has evolved. Inspired by the 1987 work of Chickering and Gamson, higher education moved beyond passive learning through instructor lecture and towards a more active style of learning and directly engaging in structured, student-

centered activities (Bagriacik & Banyard, 2020). These activities relied on higher level thinking skills and problem solving. This type of instruction was not limited to the classroom—but included in-classroom and out-of-classroom opportunities to help students personalize the learning (Bagriacik & Banyard, 2020). With the advent of online learning, new technologies, and virtual learning came updated theories related to engagement. This engagement was considered multifaceted as a concept and included three interrelated types of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Bagriacik & Banyard, 2020). Many recent and adapted learning theories include the phrase "engagement", both related to in-person learning opportunities and distance opportunities.

Leadership language is often found in university mission statements. Contemporary institutions of higher learning frequently include leadership in their mission and purpose statements, with language written to promote the ideals of engagement and citizenship in a complex and global society (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). These mission and purpose statements are in some cases tied directly to institutional learning outcomes, which are assessed and part of accreditation standards. Gaps in the achievement of stated outcomes continue to garner attention within academia, as the attainment of skills related to leadership, citizenship, and community engagement are areas college presidents and trustees foresee students will need in the future (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). These gaps come from stated learning outcomes and the alignment with intentional programming to meet said outcomes (Cavagnaro & van der Zande, 2021).

The term ‘leadership’ is prevalent in higher education. While the term ‘leadership’ in higher education is widespread, there is lack of clarity and understanding around the term and how to develop leaders (Dawson et al., 2020). With this lack of understanding comes issues in developing a uniformed pedagogical approach—and the means to develop students and graduates to meet the needs of employers’ post-graduation. This type of employability is an important goal within higher education institutions (Cavagnaro & van der Zande, 2021).

Leadership development as a prioritization varies from institution to institution. Within the landscape of higher education, some institutions are prioritizing leadership at the top level, while others approach leadership at the unit level, classes, and individual program with specialized outcomes (Dawson et al., 2020). Specialized leadership experiences and roles include student government, fraternities/sororities, mentorship, ambassadorship, committee work, and tutoring.

Institutions of higher learning approach leadership development tactics and education differently. These tactics and education are either with direct alignment to an academic discipline and required by professional accrediting associations; or through more leadership-related opportunities intended to advance students’ ability to exhibit leadership for the good of their families, communities, careers, and the world (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). Komives and Sowcik (2020) note differences in leadership *studies* and leadership *development*, explaining that studies are the examination of leadership as a disciplinary field of study versus leadership development as programs that intentionally develop skills, capability, and inform a leadership identify in participants.

Within the field of higher education, leadership studies and leadership development come together in many instances. To meet the growing need for prepared business leaders, institutions of higher learning across the globe have integrated leadership studies and developmental programs to help prepare students for the complex challenges ahead of them (Reinhard, Soria, & Snyder, 2015). The 2018 U.S. News and World Report showed that the Top 50 universities in the United States offered a leadership development experience at the undergraduate and graduate level (Dinh et al., 2019). These leadership programs (over 1,500 programs registered with the International Leadership Association) vary and are also largely part of academic discourse on leadership development—to include program design, assessment, and outcomes (Leupold, Lopina, & Skloot, 2020). What many of the leadership development programs in academia have in common are formative preparation for the real world, assisting students with their transition from a university setting to leadership positions post-graduation (Frantz, Marais, & Du Plessis, 2021).

Leadership is desired as a professional skillset. In a 2018 Job Outlook survey by the National Association of College and Employers (NACE), leadership was a top attribute that employers were looking for in graduates, along with many leadership-related competencies including teamwork skills, initiative, strong work ethic, problem-solving, and verbal communication (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). This alludes to an increased focus on leadership preparation and training within higher education, both from a discipline- and career-specific lens—and through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary

experiences housed within Student Affairs offices intended to bring students together from different backgrounds and areas.

Leadership development is a key priority. College and university administrators are paying close attention to leadership-related learning and High Impact Processes (HIP) related to student development (Leupold, Lopina, & Skloot, 2020). Participation in extra- and co-curricular programs continue to prove impactful, with students sharing a variety of outcomes that are transformational and transferable into the workplace (Leupold, Lopina, & Skloot, 2020). Similarly, learning that happens occurs outside of the traditional classroom, including prior learning, is being recognized as some institutions as part of a critical learning dimension—especially among non-traditional and adult student learners (Allain et al., 2020).

While many of these programs point to positive outcomes, little is known about the overall impact and long-term value of student leadership development programs within higher education. After a comprehensive examination of leadership competencies in higher education, further research is needed to understand assessment methods and to come to a consensus around learning outcome consistency (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). Komives and Sowcik (2020) posed that a consensus would help to establish effective methods for developing leadership competencies; would help with program design and delivery; and would successfully preparing leaders for future leadership roles (Komives & Sowcik, 2020).

Consistency around the definition of leadership and corresponding outcomes could help leadership education evolve, both within the realm of academia and in a

corporate context. Cavagnaro and van der Zande (2021) posed that alignment between higher level leadership goals as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, could help to broaden and focus leadership development around the areas of responsibility and sustainability—increasing concern with issues bigger than simply ensuring economic success. This focus could help program developers and curriculum designers marry leadership competencies and tactics for skill development, bringing uniformity to leadership education in the context of a variety of academic areas and fields of study.

While curriculum design may seem straightforward, there are many nuances and critiques of leadership development at a fundamental level. Leadership ideology can be framed and explained in different ways depending on the context. One example and critique within higher education is that leadership development design is largely guided by political and/or economic thoughts and motivations. One researcher suggested that higher education's political, social, ecological, moral, and economic purposes have become confused with democratic aims for common good—and plagued by the governing logic of democratic institutions (Kliewer, 2019). The dynamics between leader, follower, and shared goal purpose are flawed in a higher education setting according to Kliewer (2019), who references the National Leadership Education Research Agenda (NLERA) as an endorsement for what he calls "the triad ontology" (leader, follower, shared purpose.) Additionally, Kliewer (2019) shared that this triad is flawed in the areas of individual power and choice, focused less on self and more on complex organizational systems—leaving out areas that are critical to developing leaders, like power within (identity), power to (agency), and power with (collection action.)

Another example and critique of leadership development within the context of higher education has to do with readiness and the selection of participants. Dinh et al (2019) explained that not everyone could or should be a leader. Leadership is highly contextual and should only be offered to the right people at the right time (Dinh et al., 2019). This suggests that leadership development programming must be highly intentional in both design and delivery to achieve and to understand desirable outcomes.

Arguments exist on whether leadership is a result of nature or can be nurtured. Some argue that leadership is simply innate, and people are born with natural leadership tendencies. Research suggests leadership can be developed and taught through experience—increasing leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (Dinh et al., 2019). By understanding the goals and intended outcomes of a leadership experience, as well as the needs of the participants, program designers can use many methods or a mixture of methods to design the experience. If leadership experiences, at any level, can be used as a mechanism for learning and growth, then these programs have a high potential to add value beyond the current state.

Predictive analysis is currently used in higher education to identify vulnerable and at-risk populations, and to offer more timely and better support services. These predictions look at student behavior through various data points in aggregate. In 2022, this type of data analysis was studied to understand leadership competencies, looking at student behavior and student grade point averages (GPA's) to see if student leadership was predictable (Pongpaichet et al., 2022). Results of the study indicated that leadership efficacy was predictable and could be traced after graduation back to behaviors

demonstrated in the first or second semester of the student journey (Pongpaichet et al., 2022). This insight and model are beneficial to tracking a variety of leadership educational activities. Beyond creative design methods, leadership development programs within higher education need to work with intention in the delivery and execution of their experiences. The University of Iowa's Student Success Team (2017) notes that HIP practices within the area of leadership development include considerable time and effort to the pursuit of learning, allowing participants to transfer learning across contexts and to received frequent feedback (Ashby & Minter, 2017). A problem they identified on their campus was that students were not able to articulate their learning across multiple contexts, creating a gap and opportunity within the realm of design (Ashby & Minter, 2017). Through coordinated efforts, a cross-campus leadership program was created to leverage and support student success.

Leadership development program design and delivery are important considerations. Program design and delivery can help to optimize and strengthen educational program outcomes, especially when paired with High Impact Practices (HIP) experiences like mentoring, coaching, and problem-based frameworks (Dinh et al., 2019). Creative design concepts like the inclusion of gamified training and development concepts continue to rise in prevalence, particularly in educational systems (Rueckert et al., 2020). Rueckert et al (2020) shared that gamification capitalizes on human motivation through digital experiences that increase motivation and incentive systems. While little is known about the impact of nongaming contexts, researchers and educators continue to explore the benefits, challenges, and long-term impact to gamification (Rueckert et al.,

2020). Examples of gamification within the higher education context include the idea of badging, reward systems, or using technology to track progress toward goals.

Leadership competency and capability are critical within both academia and in complex work environments. Firmshave called upon universities and educational institutions to help prepare students for the workforce (Mayoral & Santos, 2017). The skills firms are looking for relate to learning, reflecting on choices/actions, and critical thinking for decision-making (Mayoral & Santos, 2017). The ability to learn is transferable from the classroom to the workplace, and the ability for individuals to self-regulate their own learning is a key leadership skill among others that can be taught. Mayoral and Santos (2017) mentioned goal setting, controlling cognition, motivation, and behavior as areas for development and transfer.

Best practice in leadership development, within the context of higher education, are based on the pre-supposed needs of the participants, which vary from program to program. Within the realm of higher education, learning is at the core of leadership educational outcomes, which typically means outcomes are assessed to understand the knowledge before and after the experience—through testing and assessment practices. Within a corporate setting, program goals become less clear in relationship to the desired outcome.

In 2019, representatives from eight national organizations dedicated to leadership education (American Association of University Women (AAUW), College Student Educators International (ACPA), Association of College Unions International (ACUI), Association of Leadership Educators (ALE), International Leadership Association (ILA),

National Association for Campus Activities (NACA), Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA), and National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs (NCLP)) came together to discuss critical challenges facing local and global communities, with critical conversations designed to address problems facing higher education. The Inter-Association Leadership Education Collaborative (ILEC) serves as an advocate and champion for leadership education and works to establish consistency in design, development, and integration of leadership theory and practice into courses, programs, and experiences across all institutional and organizational spaces.

Through critical dialogue, priorities emerged. These three priorities were identified for the advancement of leadership studies with a sub-field of leadership education, both in formal and informal settings ("Collaborative priorities", 2018).

- Building Inclusive Leadership Learning Communities
- Expanding Evidence-Based Practice through Assessment and Evaluation
- Enhancing our Community of Practice through Professional Development and Resources

Each of the three categories were explored through the lens of learning design, capacity creation, and critical considerations; allowing experts to weigh in on the future of leadership development practice in higher education. The ILEC resources and materials are public information, and available to help further and advance leadership practice within higher education.

Many studies and ongoing research continue to explore the effectiveness of leadership development programming, both from an educational stance and through a corporate lens. A central theme that emerges from this large quantity of research is in reference to the overall investments organizations and institutions are making in leadership education, leadership studies, and leadership development; as it is largely unclear how these programs are designed and assessed—and what they yield in terms of long-term success (Dinh et al., 2019). In both areas, the value proposition is problematic with outcomes unknown.

Corporate Leadership Development

The need for effective leaders is universal. In 2019, the Coronavirus pandemic placed communities, organizations, and populations in uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments with devastating results ranging from high morbidity and mortality, political unrest, and extensive economic damage that lasted for an extended period (DePorres, Long, Shufutinsky, & Sibel, 2020)—illustrating a time when leadership was critical in the United States and around the globe. This type of leadership was one that required quick, yet informed thinking, to navigate during an immediate time of crisis. It continues to call upon leadership who are informed, adaptable, strategic, and driven to overcome the long-term impacts sustained through a global pandemic—emerging stronger and positioned for future success in an uncertain world.

Recognizing and realizing potential is an important part of organizational capability and creates a business advantage over competitors. Talent development and the management of human potential is becoming more prevalent as a corporate strategy

related to enterprise leadership (Hernandez et al, 2020). Corporations worldwide have identified leadership development as a key priority, recognizing the potential for heightened competitive advantage (Samuel & Durning, 2020; Abner, Valdez, & Perry, 2021). In a rapidly changing business environment, with fast-paced technological advancements, businesses need leaders to nurture and promote innovation and knowledge sharing for organizational development and overall sustainability (Afriyie, Du, & Abdul-Aziz, 2020). In this sense, leaders can make or break a business.

The need for these well-equipped organizational leaders has led to increased investments. This increased investment has in turn led to questions about how much organizations are spending and the return-on-investment (Abner, Valdez, & Perry, 2021).While organizational leadership capacity has been attributed to success in many key areas including increased agility; change management capability; employee trust, commitment, satisfaction; employee effort; creative talents; interdepartmental collaborations; and reputation (Akdere & Hickman, 2018), the specific value of leadership development efforts remains in question.

Linking organizational outcomes to leadership development practice is tough. Very little theoretical or empirical research exists linking organizational outcomes with leadership development practices—as much is concerned with the influence of leadership development programs and individual outcomes (Chadwick et al., 2018). Leadership development programming is widely acknowledged as successful in helping managers become better leaders (Chadwick et al., 2018). This has led to significant investments in leadership development worldwide (Chadwick et al., 2018). The importance of great

leadership can be seen in stock market reactions to CEO appointments for ex-managers who are known for systematically developing their leaders (Chadwick et al., 2018). Yet, while there seems to be consensus that great leaders contribute to the business bottom line, the development of those leaders is far less understood. The same ambiguity that exists within the realm of educational programming, creates dissonance in the corporate training and development area. Without a clear understanding of desired success outcomes, leadership development strategies lack prominence and conformity.

Return-On-Investment (ROI) is hard to understand. Because larger organizational outcomes are harder to assess, reflective of collective efforts, and take longer periods of time to understand; research is still limited for understanding returns (Chadwick et al., 2018; Phillips & Phillips, 2020). Chadwick et al (2018) explored the effectiveness of leadership development practices on organizational outcomes through a study focused on understanding leadership program impact in the areas of human capital and social capital. Human capital is defined as a shared organizational construct emerging from the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics of individuals; social capital is the collective impact of social networks within an organization—which results in increased efficiencies, reciprocity, and lack of disruption during challenging situations (Chadwick et al., 2018). Findings of this study found a positive correlation within both areas (human capital and social capital) in relationship to organizational capability and linked to economic returns. Chadwick et al (2018) highlighted this using a variety of experiences and/or practices to facilitate and elevate leadership capability as a best practice, for

example integrating more than one lesson or experience (formal training, mentoring, action learning, etc.)

With much to be discovered, organizations can benefit from looking at leadership development in new ways. Ali and Geok (2021) defined these times as the Quantum Era, where organizations need to focus on an organization as a human-oriented living system that is sensitive to energy and influence. Quantum leadership researchers define organizations as chaotic, complex, and uncertain; with a need for leaders with creative capabilities and who can work beyond mechanistic operations in a congruent paradigm (Ali & Geok, 2021). This paradigm is focused exclusively on the people as a life force, and the potential to transform organizations through leader development.

Best practice in leadership development can be found primarily in management, psychology, and education publications—as well as within specific industry and job-related contexts. Professional organizations like the American Leadership Development Association (ASLDA), International Leadership Association (ILA), Global Leadership Institute (GLI), and the Association of Leadership Programs (ALP) provide corporations with the resources and information exchange that is pertinent to the practice, study, and execution of leadership education. Like the aforementioned education-based organizations, networks of professionals with an interest in leadership development continue to work towards solidarity and understanding. While there is no global set of leadership competencies or standards, researchers continue to show how high impact processes can lead to impactful transformations and yield impressive business returns (Chadwick et al., 2018).

Opportunities exist to research leadership development practice further. The ROI for organizational leadership development is largely missing from academic literature, with a lack of empirical studies and information linking leadership development strategy with the achievement of corporate leadership capability. This study will explore the topic.

Transition

In Section 1, the issue that some business leaders lack leadership development strategies to improve leadership capability was identified. Through the literature review, the need for organizations to capitalize on employee talent and potential as it relates to leadership was addressed to further understand the business problem. I addressed use of a qualitative method with a multiple case study design. The research questions, conceptual framework, significance of the study, and literature review were addressed in of Section 1. Section 2 includes the purpose statement, my role as the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, data collection instruments and techniques, organizational techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity. Section 3 includes findings of the study with recommendations.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore leadership development strategies used by business leaders to achieve desired business outcomes. The study's target population was five business leaders located in West Virginia who used successful leadership development strategies to achieve improved business outcomes. Results may contribute to social change by providing a basis for future leadership program development, including intentional and actionable strategies to prepare and develop next-generation leaders.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers play an important role in qualitative research. I served as the primary data collection agent during this study. As a qualitative researcher, I collected and analyzed data, striving to maintain ethical guidelines and represent data as collected.

My experiences as a professional primarily involve secondary and higher education, specifically extra and cocurricular program design and implementation. One of these programs, which I helped pioneer, is a campus leadership program that was designed to recruit, train, and develop future leaders. This program is relevant to my study as it furthers my knowledge and understanding of best practices in the field of leadership development.

I have nearly 20 years professional experience working in education, training, and development. I have never been employed by organizations in my study. I did not know any participants personally or professionally.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research published the Belmont Report to establish ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of humans. My study adhered to the three basic ethics of research involving human subjects: protecting autonomy of participants, following the informed consent process, and treating all participants equally. Per the Belmont Report and Walden University guidelines, I protected participants' identities using pseudonyms.

I avoided and mitigated bias in this study by triangulating multiple data sources and using member-checking to verify meaning (see Appendix E). Researchers must reduce the potential for bias, setting aside emotion sand adhering to a strict set of study protocols, particularly during collection and presentation of data.

Using interviews to conduct research can lead to unintended bias. This bias can result from lack of standardization or specificity, both in terms of selection of participants and their experiences (participant bias) and the researcher's inquiry and input (researcher bias; Saunders et al., 2015). Essentially, the researcher should avoid thoughts that are based on their own knowledge and ideas about the topic of study. This allows participants to speak about their own experiences.

Participants

Participants were business leaders from five West Virginia organizations who implemented successful leadership development strategies. These participants came from organizations with a formal commitment to leadership development.

To select participants for this study, I acquired a list of local and state businesses participating in Leadership West Virginia (LWV) or Leadership Jefferson (LJ). LWV and

LJ are two leadership development programs that are offered exclusively to West Virginia residents who are employed within the state.

LWV and LJ participants are nominated and sponsored by their respective organizations. Companies sponsoring participants show a formal commitment to the growth of their employees by making financial investments in their leadership development.

Candidate selection was a two-part process. First, I contacted LWV and LJ program managers to ask for recommendations or leads within their databases (see Appendix B). Second, I sent email requests to potential candidates asking for their participation in the study. Candidates who responded with interest were provided with additional information, along with general expectations (see Appendix C).

Research Method and Design

Research Method

There are three research methods that are primarily used by researchers: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. I used the qualitative method to enable open exploration and discussion of participant perceptions and experiences. I interviewed a variety of candidates with varied experiences from different businesses to assemble a data set for further inquiry. My goal was to inform program administrators and business leaders about the topic of leadership development in order to enhance organizational leadership capability. The qualitative method enables open exploration of a topic in order to provide new thoughts and insights regarding leadership development practice.

The quantitative method involves testing a hypothesis and examining relationships between variables via outcomes that are quantified using mathematical formulas (Ellis & Levy, 2009). The mixed methods approach involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative and mixed method approaches were not appropriate for this study because results were not quantified or represented by number values. There was no tested hypothesis. For this topic, qualitative analysis was used to explore perceptions and experiences.

Research Design

Three qualitative research designs were considered for my proposed study: case study, phenomenology, and ethnography. The case study design was selected. It is a strategy that is used to study a phenomenon, or interactions that are grounded in views of participants; it is based on data that are collected during a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2009). A multiple case study design was used to explore leadership development strategies that organizations are using to achieved desired business outcomes. This research design was chosen to explore a contemporary phenomenon or case in depth, and in a real-world context. The multiple case study design, as opposed to a single study, can be used to account for a variety of business leaders and businesses. It involves comparing and contrasting findings from a variety of sources.

The other designs considered within qualitative research include ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology research. These alternative designs were not selected. Researchers who use ethnography design explore specific cultures or social groups, while researchers who use the narrative design develop and explore participants' personal

stories through a sequence. Researchers who use the phenomenology design provide the meaning and insight participants attribute to experiencing a particular phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). Ethnography, narrative, and phenomenological designs are not appropriate for this study because culture or the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences are not the focus of this study.

For this study, I will interview a minimum of five participants. Data saturation will be achieved once no new information is obtained, or no new data or themes can be identified in the data set. I will work to collect data from a minimum of five interview participants. Using thematic analysis, I will code and analyze the data set. I will increase the number of participants until there is data saturation.

Population and Sampling

One business leader from at least five businesses located in West Virginia will represent a sampling population for this study. The selected business leaders will represent an organization with a formal commitment to leadership development and have experience with leadership development strategies. The selection process will include the willingness of the organization’s leadership to allow time for participation, as well as an individual’s self-assessed adherence to the guidelines for participation. Each participant will be asked to explain their qualifications and experience and identify whether they meet the criteria for participation. If they meet the criteria, interviews will follow. There will be no monetary benefit for participating.

Researchers use purposive sampling as a technique for selecting and/or excluding study participants (Saunders et al., 2015). This sampling method allows a researcher to

use their own judgement to identify the sample population. That sample is selected based on the goals and objectives of the study. Purposive sampling does not statistically represent an overall population, and it is typically used to select a small population for case studies (Saunders et al, 2015). In this instance, researchers are typically looking for a sample that is well-informed and knowledgeable about the study topic.

I will work to achieve data saturation by interviewing a minimum of five business leaders with expertise in leadership development. Using a thematic analysis to code interviews, I will ensure data saturation is achieved when no new themes emerge and there is redundancy in the data set. Additional candidates will be added until there is saturation within data set.

If available, supplemental leadership development materials, including documents/resources, website material, and public information will be used to inform and add context to the study. Supplemental materials will be used for general reference, and to fill in gaps in knowledge or understanding.

Ethical Research

Conducting and contributing ethical research is vital, as it plays a role in the larger practice and overall universal scheme of knowledge. Ethical research also protects the well-being of participants and maintains the integrity of the researcher and representing organizations. The role of the researcher is to eliminate bias as much as possible, working to represent others fairly and objectively—without harm. This practice requires researchers to adhere to the standards for ethical research, which protects participants without jeopardizing the quality of the research. I will seek the permission

and wisdom of Walden University's IRB to administer and approve this multiple-case study. Once approval is granted to conduct the study, I will abide by the Office of Research Ethics and Compliance, the Institutional Review Board for Ethical Standards in Research, and Walden University's ethical standards practice. To fulfil Walden University's requirements, each participant in the study will sign an informed consent (see Appendix C) prior to their interview.

Participants who sign the consent form can withdraw from the study at any time by notifying me through email. Consent for the study will include the risks, benefits, and consequences of participation; to ensure that participants are aware of what they are consenting to and how their information will be used to support the study. Details related to participation, including that participation is voluntary and does not include incentives or compensation, will also be transparent and included (see Appendix C).

Participant information will be kept confidential and coded to protect the identities of each participant and their respective organization. Coding for the study will begin with selecting the business and the participant. Each organization will receive a numerical identification, and the names of the participants will also receive a numerical identification. Identities will not be assigned to any piece of evidence relating to the study results. Study data will be stored securely on the researcher's hard drive. The research will be stored securely for 5 years, only accessed by the researcher for the premise of study validation.

Participant validation is necessary to ensure the respondents are who they say they are, and that information included in the study is credible. The participants in the study

will present evidence of their professional credentials, and their association with leadership development strategy within their organization. Participant and researcher transparency and trust are critical to this study, from start to finish. The consent form and expectations upfront allow for a strong foundation and partnership throughout each phase of the study process.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are tools that assist researchers in collecting data, identifying themes, and properly coding evidence (Saunders et al., 2015). There are several instruments used to collect evidence to support qualitative studies. These instruments include interviews, documentation analysis, and general observations (Saunders et al., 2015). To further study leadership development strategies, semi-structured interviews will be used to collect responses. Recording device(s) and Zoom (due to in-person COVID-19 restrictions) will help to capture and transcribe interviews, helping to capture comprehensive narratives. If additional information is needed to support the study, I may also rely on company documents/resources, website materials, and public information to fill in gaps of relevant information.

In this study, I will serve as the data collection instrument. Great interview skills and technique are critical to the collection of elaborate and comprehensive explanations, with questions and prompts that are easy to understand, well organized, and open ended (Saunders et al., 2015). I will conduct at least five semi-structured interviews with leaders from various organizations, and will review supplemental leadership program documents/resources, website material, and public information to add context to the data

set. Using multiple data sources help to eliminate bias and achieve data saturation through triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018). Yin (2018) further explains that proper interview protocols will ensure reliability and guide the data collection process, reducing the researchers own bias within the research. Post-interview, I will ensure the information is accurate by sending a summary of each interview to the participants for review and approval. Once I have received their approval, I will organize and analyze the data. The interview protocol and interview questions are included in Appendix A.

Data Collection Technique

Semi-Structured Interviews

I will use semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection in this study. This technique was selected to gain insight and uncover strategies used by organizations to develop leaders to achieve desired business outcomes. I will use 10 open-ended questions through face-to-face recorded interactions. Each participant will sign a consent form before the interview process begins. I will coordinate interview details (including date, time, and access to technology) through phone calls and email with each participant. These details will prepare and keep participants informed on the process. I will video record the interviews upon receipt of their general permission and comfort. Discomfort with the recording may result in interview delays, substitution of audio interviews (without video capability), and/or dismissal from the study.

Additional Information from Company Documents and Resources

As a secondary means of data collection, I will review supplemental leadership development materials to include documents/resources, website material, and public

information. Data collected from these resources will further inform the study, by filling in information gaps and adding additional depth to the material. Much like the interview participant experiences supplement what is outlined in a company document or resource, secondary data sources will help to enhance what the interview collection lacks. Fusch et al (2018) described this triangulation is data sources metaphorically as crystal refraction (many points of light) which extrapolate the meaning inherent in the data, mitigating one's bias.

Once I have completed the data collection, I will use member checking to give participants the opportunity to provide comments on the accuracy of my interpretation of the data collected. This process will allow a participant to review my summary of the data collected. All participant approved data will be included as data in this study. The protocol for member checking is outlined in Appendix E.

Data Organization Technique

Data management is critical to the success of a doctoral study, as it allows a researcher to work efficiently and with ease—as well as protects the assets and experiences of the participants and organizations represented. Organizing and maintaining data with specificity and precision adds value to the research process (Yin, 2018). My technique to manage data will include storing data on a password-protected computer. I will use secure spreadsheets and an electronic database to organize data.

Once the data is collected, the use of an electronic case study database will be used for organizing and maintaining data. Using a database should help me find, reference, and share the primary and secondary, or supplemental, material. Supplemental

material can be saved and stored as electronic files but should be noted in the database under major subject headings for ease of reference (Yin, 2018). All pieces of data will be categorized and saved according to theme and/or perceived relevance, creating a chain of alignment.

The ability for the researcher to keep a chain of alignment between the initial research question and findings is critical to referencing and presenting material. The chain creates footprints that link the project from start to finish, helping others understand the findings and draw conclusions based on the researcher's thought process. The chain includes case study questions, protocol, citations to specific evidence, database usage, and study findings (Yin, 2018).

All pieces of data, primary and secondary, will be coded with pseudonyms and a number convention. Additionally, data entries will include an associated date of collection and research notes. Research notes may include emergent understanding, relevance to study, reflective thoughts, and/or location within the document. For primary data from semi structured interviews with participants, I will include notes, the recording details, and my general observations of the participants. Yin (2018) suggested that researchers keep detailed and comprehensive notes related to the activities employed during the data collection and analysis process. That said, the organization technique must allow for participant data sets, researcher observation/notes, and a general summary of placement and logistical information.

All the information collected will be stored securely on my personal computer and only accessible by me. I will pass code and store all documents and materials in a secure

file, destroying the records after 5 years. I will use a password-protected flash drive as a backup device for saving copies of the study materials. The flash drive will be deleted after five years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a unique, yet informed, process related to individual study. Yin (2018) explained that the challenge of data analysis lies in the responsibility to attend to all evidence collected, investigate rival interpretations, address the most significant aspects of your case study, and to demonstrate familiarity with prevailing thought and literature about the topic. The process for analyzing data is largely reliant on the creation of individualized strategies informed by previous and similar studies and/or grounded in general philosophies (Yin, 2018). There is a large body of literature related to data analysis, and many schools of thought aligned with management research and science (Saunders et al., 2015).

Max van Manen asserted that a researcher should strive to gain a deep meaning of phenomena and to describe them using a single modality or through a combination of modalities—which help to question, reflect, and write about a topic (Heinonen, 2015.) For the purposes and intention of this multiple-case study, I plan to use an ontological phenomenological approach, which through semi-structured interviews and data collection will aim to reveal the nature of being a leader (or the state of being as it relates to organization's collective leadership capability.)

The analytic technique for this study is pattern matching, with coding themes associated with the TLT. Primary coding will include basic association with the theory,

with codes for Transformational Leadership (TL), Transactional Leadership (TAL), and Laissez-Faire (LFL). The secondary codes for identifying themes or patterns in the data set are the four tenants of TLT, Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational Motivation (IM), Individualized Consideration (IC), and Intellectual Stimulation (IS). All data included in the set will be hand-coded and organized with Microsoft Word.

I will employ a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software system, NVivo, to help organize and manage the data set. As a final step, I will use a cluster or matrix of ideas to reflect on the data set and determine emergent answers to the general and specific research questions. NVivo will provide codes and subsequent themes that will be interpreted by the researcher. All transcripts will be in the right format to include, but not limited to, the correction of any spelling errors and mistakes. It may also include code identification and notes related to code-association.

During the assessment of the data, I may find I may have the exact data needed to answer the research question. If I am not able, I will collect more data. Either way, the data tools for assessment and organizing software will be helpful during this phase. Using data and source triangulation, I will attempt to strengthen and validate the information through various sources of information, including key topics and points presented in my literature review, participant data collected from semi-structured interviews, and supporting program documents or web materials. This data triangulation will help eliminate bias by converging data and sources into a single body of research.

While the research study is in progress, new publications will be introduced as part of the literature review. Data analysis could be impacted by new or emergent

information, with additional themes or ideas included to explain findings. This multi-case study aims to contribute to a well-rounded view of the topic and to contribute findings to the broader scope of academic research concerned with leadership development practice.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Qualitative research methods have been questioned for issues related to reliability and validity (Diefenbach, 2008). Reliability is the ability to replicate findings and to be consistent—and dependable. If a researcher can replicate an earlier research design and obtain the same or similar results, then the research would be deemed reliable (Saunders et al., 2015). In this qualitative study, several preemptive strategies will be used to ensure the findings are reliable although they may not fully replicate other studies due to the study's overall context. Strategies used to ensure the study is reliable include a focus on the overall quality of the findings and adherence to research ethics.

To ensure dependability, I will track and record all changes throughout the process so that the results can be understood and evaluated by others. Qualitative research evolves as the research progresses, and results rely on interpretation (Saunders et al., 2015). The ability to recall information and trace it back to its origin will help to validate the outcomes, making the study more reliable overall—and the results dependable.

Validity

Validity refers to validating the study results against the methods used to collect them, ensuring that the study findings are authentic. Saunders et al (2015) explains that validity occurs when the measure that is used to assess the phenomenon measures what

the researcher intended to measure. Data triangulation is a valuable tool to assist in strengthening the construct validity in a case study; as it allows a researcher to use multiple means to explain an end (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation will be used to strengthen the validity.

Credibility

Qualitative researchers should strive to ensure their overall study and the results presented are credible. This credibility can come from a variety of methods, but to achieve credibility in this study, I will spend a prolonged amount of time with the data set to further understand the meaning behind the transcripts, taking the time to reflect and understand the information. I will also triangulate data sources to tell a complete and objective story. Last, I will implement member checking to validate the information, asking participants to reflect and review my interpretation of the data. This process will ensure I am accurately representing the information from the participants and proving insights and findings that are trustworthy.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability to generalize or transfer the results of the study to other contexts or settings. The researcher's role in making sure their study findings can be transferred or relate to other contexts should be considered in the construct of the study, and the details accurately described for replication. These details include: The organizations and people participating; the methods and rationale used for the study; and the overall context of the study in general. Elements of transferability will give way to subsequent research and aid and assist in further studies.

Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with a researcher's ability to remain neutral and objective within the scope of a research study. It is the ability for other researchers to confirm study findings, therefore eliminating bias. Bias is natural; however, a researcher should work to explain themselves and their identity within the study. This level of transparency provides additional context and allows study details to be understood more broadly in relationship to the topic. To ensure confirmability, the use of triangulation and member checking will be employed. Reflexivity and revision will also be employed to understand areas of potential bias. Through these processes, I hope to remain as unbiased and objective as possible. This will allow the study to be confirmed.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I described purpose and process details regarding this study. I addressed my roles and experiences as the researcher, research method, details about the population, ethical considerations, process of managing data, and information related to reliability and validity.

In Section 3, I present results and how findings related to professional practice. I also explain the potential impact on positive social change as it relates to leadership development. I also answer the research question.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This qualitative multiple case study involved exploring leadership development strategies that enhance corporate capability. Participants were six business leaders representing West Virginia businesses. These business leaders represented a variety of corporate business sectors, but all had knowledge and experience using leadership development strategies. The research question for this study was: What leadership development strategies do businesses use to enhance corporate capability? I conducted six recorded semi-structured interviews via Zoom. Member-checking was used to confirm accuracy of data. In order to maintain confidentiality of the participants, I referred to participants in the study as P1, P2, P3, etc. Along with study findings, I applied results to professional practice, addressed implications for positive social change, and provided recommendations for further research. Finally, I reflect on research.

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this doctoral study is to explore leadership development strategies used by business leaders to enhance corporate capability. All six participants had knowledge and experience using leadership development strategies.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Industry	Organizational Role
P1	Sales	Vice President
P2	Nonprofit/Business	Director
P3	Education	Vice President
P4	Healthcare	Director
P5	Finance	Manager
P6	Marketing	President

Data sources for the study consisted of 112 pages of interview transcripts. I collected and sorted documents using hand coding. Using smaller units of words and phrases, I sorted material by theme. Once I finished the coding process, I sorted themes to identify patterns in the data set. Patterns allowed me to draw conclusions and answer my research question.

Table 3

Theme Overview

Theme	No. of Data Sources	No. of References in the Data	Alignment with TLT Constructs
Genuine Care for Others	6	48	Idealized Influence
Leading with Intentionality	6	67	Inspirational Motivation
Investment in People Development	6	73	Individualized Consideration
Considers a Broader Context or Impact	6	24	Intellectual Stimulation

Theme 1: Genuine Care for Others

The most frequent theme that came from data analysis was genuine care for others. This involves the ability to care for people, which in turn can help influence behaviors and attitudes in the workplace. Care was described by participants as a daily practice and intentional.

P6 said:

> When you reach your goal, did everyone feel included? They may not agree with you 100% of the time, but were you respectful and did you treat people the way

> you would have wanted to be treated throughout the process? Win or lose, that's leadership.

All six participants in the study mentioned concepts associated with care as a leadership development strategy. Through their testimonies and responses, participants used positive examples and challenges they had to overcome due to problematic leadership or lack of leadership. Subthemes included setting a strong example for others to follow and influencing others.

Genuine care for people equates to experiences, attributes, and mindsets related to wellbeing. Authenticity was noted several times in the data set with relationship to demonstrating care for others, with respondents cautioning that inauthentic leadership is a detriment to teams and organizations. P3 said, "when people understand that you don't really care about them, or you don't roll up your sleeves to help them, it's very hard to be effective—or respected for that matter!"

P3 described genuine care for others as showing up without expecting anything in return and said:

> I think the leadership that jumps out the most are the people that show up; and show up for different reasons than self-gain. Most people won't show up for things unless it's part of their own vision or about what they have going on. True leaders show up for others, and that's something that has made all the difference for me. You have to want to show up for people.

P4 recalled a formative leadership experience and disappointing someone he respected long ago, and said, "I let someone down once; and now, every employee I lose,

whether they resign or move to another organization, I still get that same feeling [that I have failed them]. A good shepherd does not lose sheep."

Caring for people was illustrated and explained in terms of emotional intelligence, general kindness, transparency, honesty, and adherence to ethical and workplace standards. P6 said, "even if you have to share bad news with employees, leaders must bring those issues or concerns to light." This type of care is important in terms of building trust in the workplace.

Trust was also mentioned by several participants. Participants explained how authentic, accountable, and reliable leaders work to establish and build trust with employees and among teams. The ability to garner trust, as well as trust others, was associated with a healthy work environment. Several strategies for building trust within the workplace were offered. P1 said, "I have seen a supervisor berate and belittle new professionals, either because they didn't know enough or because they made mistakes. I had an experience like this that was handled poorly, and I still remember it vividly many years later."

Setting an example for others was mentioned as a theme and critical business strategy. Setting an example is a mechanism to model desired behaviors. P6 said, "role modeling is the number one form of workplace communication! Even more than what you say, people are paying attention to what you do."

Attention to leadership presence or influencing others as a developmental strategy was also mentioned several times. P4 stressed the importance of "staying actively engaged in the agency of your business, keeping a finger on the pulse of everyday

operations." P3 referenced visibility and accessibility and said, "the only way employees are going to believe in your vision is to see you putting in the work." This type of role modeling can help eliminate negative or unhealthy behaviors in the workplace, as leaders are present and demonstrate values of organizations and empower others to do the same.

The themes here directly align with Transformational Leadership Theory's Idealized Influence tenant. Idealized Influence (II) is the idea that leaders are authentic, credible, trustworthy, and bound by integrity and ethics (Barbinta et al. 2017). Leaders, working for the collective good of the organization, are seen as role models for others within their organization demonstrating care and concern for employees. They drive their organization forward by ensuring that people follow company policies and rules—but they also show respect for people. A person with qualities associated with II is someone others can look up to and choose to follow.

"Genuine Care for Others" is woven throughout the academic literature, underpinning many studies as a critical element to workplace well-being and organizational success. Within each section of the literature review care and compassion for people is prevalent describing in detail how effective and influential leaders mobilize people and teams in the achievement of organizational goals. There are a variety of instances in the Literature Review where "care" is described as authenticity, trustworthiness, and setting a strong example for others to follow. Laszlo and Tsao (2019) noted that "solid leaders are those who can ensure internal practices for the day-to-day operations are healthy, thriving, and moving in the right direction". Healthy and thriving workplaces are a result of leaders who care about people. Dobre (2020)

explained, “organizational leaders lead their people on a path toward achievement of mission and vision, [they] ensure that management plans promote a healthy and safe environment.” Dawson et al (2020) added that leadership is not merely positional, but it is a process of developing oneself, learning skills, collaborating with others, fostering ethical relationships, and a commitment to social responsibility”.

Theme 2: Leading with Intentionality

Leading with intentionality was the second theme that emerged from the data set, to include thoughtfulness, a focus on building a positive workplace culture, and leading with vision. Leading with intention was largely focused on communication tactics and organizational effectiveness; however, sub-categories included areas of self and professional development, building confidence, and having a driving personal philosophy or personal purpose. The ability to lead was attributed to working with thoughtfulness (cognitive) and intention (behavioral). This thoughtfulness and intention were referenced in several participant interviews, participants felt leaders could and should be nurtured and developed as a leadership development strategy. Participant 6 (P6) noted, “leaders have to be able to communicate a vision and the outcomes you expect to achieve, so people understand where you’re going.” Participant 5 (P5) echoed this sentiment adding, “it’s important as a leader to be very, very clear about your ‘why’—about who you support and the work you do!”

Many have expressed the importance of personal and professional development as it relates to organization strategy, specifically organizational design, leadership, talent, and culture (Shea, Alemu, & Visser, 2020). Strategy creation and realization are a result

of organization leaders—often a result of a collective leadership efforts. Paired with effective communication, leaders mobilize and equip people with the information necessary to achieve individual and organizational goals. Participant 3 (P3) explained that leaders can be visionary, but still fail to execute the plan successfully because they fail at strategy execution. “Being strategic doesn’t mean you go out saying immediately we’re going to do this big thing, because what if you don’t…or what if you can’t? This isn’t wise and it’s a poor example of leadership!”

Communication, mentioned extensively with relationship to the theme of intentionality, is the art of expression and the art of delivery. Leaders should be skilled in both arts and working with intention to ensure people have what they need to achieve. Participant 6 (P6) noted:

> “If I’m not really, really clear about what it is that we’re doing and why we’re doing…well, I’ve seen organizations crumble under that kind of disarray. They become less effective because they are trying to do too many things for too many people. Communication is absolutely critical!”

Thoughtfulness, also mentioned extensively in relationship to the theme of intentionality, can be nurtured through self and professional development, confidence building, and a clear understanding a driving personal philosophy or personal purpose. “Leaders are not always the loudest person in the room, sometimes it’s simply about articulating things well”, P3 shared. Through preparation and training, all interview participants explained, that people can develop stronger leadership skills. Participant 3 (P3) followed up with a tactic for building leadership in his organization:

> "Up front, I work with employees to develop a personal philosophy for themselves. This statement tells me if they have integrity and high standards for themselves. It also tells me their driving purpose. I think it's important for people to know their purpose and speak to their "why"!"

Participant 2 (P2), recognized that there are many different types of leaders and opportunities to transform workplaces and communities:

> Whether you are a leader within your company, you're a leader within your state, maybe you work a 9-to-5 job, but they you also volunteer in the community…you could be a stay at home mom and be the CEO of your household…leadership training should be offered to people to enrich their lives and teach them the skills to uplift others.

This sentiment, which was a popular response among interviewees, is consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT). Leaders working with intention, not only help build strong individuals, but can impact the greater good. Participant 5 (P5) quipped: "I would argue that most companies don't have a formal leadership development process in place—but should! Without great leaders, companies face high turnover and may not be as effective as they could be."

A subtheme, "A Focus on Culture", was directly stated in almost all interviews and is also a pillar of TLT research and literature. Participant 3 (P3) boldly stated, "Culture trumps strategy!" He followed up explaining that businesses likely know how to reach a gool, but they first need the buy-in and trust of their workforce. "[Business leaders] need to make sure their unit is cohesive and uniform before they hit the ground!"

Hernandez and Porraspita (2020) referenced the transmission of workplace values and culture, noting it starts from the top and then permeates throughout the organization at all levels. Participant 3 (P3) recalled his first job working for an upscale fast-food restaurant:

> "They were amazing at implementing strategy from the corporate level to the floor. They put the customer first and had different standards for the back of the house (food handling and preparation) to the front of the store (sales.) One I remember distinctly was to care for the customer, to listen and think about their need."

This was an example the interviewee used to define his success as a leader, noting that the impact of that experience transcended his role.

Several leaders spoke to the process of hiring and the identification of leadership characteristics as an organizational strategy. Participant 5 (P5) mentioned, "You can teach people just about anything, but you must hire for culture!" When asked whether leadership was nature versus nurture, all respondents admitted that certain personalities were more inclined to be leaders but that leadership skills/techniques could be sharpened. One respondent (P1) stated, "There are certain people who I don't believe, even with prodding and poking, would be equipped to lead others. It doesn't mean they won't be successful, but their personality may not simply allow them to be in a situation to bring others along!" Another respondent (P5) explained, "The leader isn't always the highest performer or the superstar, sometimes it's a team member of influences everybody in a positive way. The team trusts and appreciates them!"

Personality and charisma are an important part of TLT, influencing morale. Collaboration was a keyword in the "A Focus on Culture" strategy. The willingness and ability to collaborative in a workplace environment was associated with a stronger culture. Participant 3 (P3) shared:

> "Strengthening culture starts with people who have a collaborative mindset. When I'm sitting on an interview team, my antennas go up when a person is saying I-I-I! If we're a team, whether it's 20 or 200, we're all working toward one common goal."

Also, prevalent in this theme, leadership inefficiencies and examples of poor leadership illustrated how important a focus on culture was to the overall discussion of leadership development strategies. One participant (P6) commented, "I don't care how effective you are as a leader, if people feel you have disrespected them through the process, you are not a good leader! You are someone who is good at injecting fear into the workspace." This type of fear diminishes a healthy and safe environment, leading to unintended or negative consequences.

Another respondent (P5), "bad leaders decrease morale and affect the whole mood of an office. These are people who are constantly negative!" Participant 6 (P6) also shared, "I don't think you can be an effective leader if you are constantly throwing temper tantrums, and that's a hill I'll die on!" And echoed simply by P2, "poor leaders can't communicate well with people on their team."

Participant 1 (P1) referenced the parameters and standards he set with his leadership team about talking to their teammates. He emphasized being respectful and professional to build that culture:

> I am very cognizant of the way we talk to our staff, and I have a very respectful leadership team by my side. We might not always be happy with something, but we never use aggressive language or profanity. We don't allow profanity. We always try to communicate in a professional way. I see plenty of people out there who don't act like that with their teams and that's sad and embarrassing.

Positivity in the workplace was attributed to individual and collective successes, impacting the overall culture of an organization. Participant 5 (P5) said, "I think when you're in a good mood, you typically tend to do better at just about anything! I think anything that takes away from a positive, encouraging, or focused mood is a detriment to organizational culture."

A healthy and uplifting workplace culture was attributed to a variety of positive outcomes. Participant 6 (P6) noted, "every person on my staff can tell you why we work specifically with the population we do. It shows up in their work and in their tenacity. It is the type of culture leadership is born in! Developing that culture is really important!"

"Is Visionary" as a leadership characteristic was the second sub-theme in "Leading with Intentionality". The idea that leaders should be visionary, and successfully transmit vision, was described by several study participants as a mechanism for building a strong corporate capability. Participant 6 (P6) explained, "it is my job as the leader to know what our North Star is, then to help my staff understand that!" She continued, "I do

the work I do because there is a bigger goal or purpose. Leaders with that kind of vision have been incredibly influential to me."

Visionary leaders are those who can see beyond the short-term. They can link operations to a larger cause or belief. Leaders with vision can inspire others. Participant 6 (P6) expressed:

> "I have probably read Thinking Grow Rich more times than I care to admit! That book does a really, really good job of talking about the process of building out your vision, how to treat people, and how to remain committed to your goal."

Participant 3 (P3) shared that leadership without a vision, or a clear vision, can be dangerous, as short-term objectives can negatively impact an organization. "Sometimes you have to say, hold on! This isn't just about making money or numbers. Leaders have to ask themselves if their team can actually take this on and be successful. This all leads back to culture."

Transformational Leadership's Inspirational Motivation (IM) tenant is the ability to communicate a shared vision and inspire others. Transformational leaders can motivate people to do more than they expected to do (Kehr, Graff, & Bakaç, 2023). Understanding employee motives and articulating a shared vision is a skill that is steeped in emotional intelligence, relying on the emotional needs of each individual and the leader's ability to motivate them to achieve. The theme "Leading with Intentionality" links directly to IM and the ability to articulate a clear vision and build a strong organizational culture.

"Leading with Intentionality" connects to the academic literature in almost every section of the Academic Literature Review. In a business context, building wealth and

profits for an organization is a driving force, but many negative or poor examples of leadership (self-interest, greed, etc.) have exposed the need for thoughtful (cognitive) and intentional (behavioral) leadership. Organa and Sus (2023) called this "Leadership 4.0" or "a critical phenomenon in the current economic environment, where leaders make critical decisions and generate motivation for organizational employees". Rant (2020) again describes a higher order thinking for leaders, where "competencies are leveraged from "a sensory body (a feeling of exuberance) and a sense of inclusive identity (being one with many.)" Leading with intention as a theme for this study is about a leader's ability to craft and communicate a vision and to build a positive workplace culture.

Theme 3: Investment in People Development

Investment in people development was the third theme identified, with sub-themes or topics related to the ability to champion others, demonstrate empathy, and value diversity in the workplace. Responses in this section described "investment" as giving time, resources, energy, and attention to others. Several participants mentioned formal processes led by the Human Resources function that required employees and leaders to rate their performance and satisfaction. Participant 3 (P3) appreciated the opportunity to sit down with his employees and have a conversation, rather than focus on numerical ratings. Participant 1 (P1) recommended taking employees off-site, if possible, "instead of sitting in the office, I go off site monthly to talk about what's going on in the world, what they have in the work pipeline, and what they need from leadership to be more successful."

Beyond formal of scripted processes, leaders in the study mentioned spending time, resources, or attention to elevate employees. Participant 3 (AP3) stressed, “Go in listening! Say, okay, I know what I already know and understand what I understand. What do you see?” Spending time with employees and listening to their thoughts and feedback can help steer and guide the direction of the team. Another participant (P4) added, “I try to meet one-on-one with all my employees. This allows me to coach and build confidence in each individual.”

As a leadership development strategy, Participant 1 (P1) focused significant time on new employees in the office. He stated:

> “I spend time helping them understand how the organization fits into the scope of their lives. What does it look like? How do they manage their time? How do they block their calendar for certain sections each week? I make suggestions and share how I navigate phone calls, Zoom meetings, or LinkedIn searches within our industry.”

All participants in the study had participated in at least one formal leadership training, most were sponsored and funded by their current employer. When asked about the value of the experiences and how they translated that back to business outcomes, participant responses varied. Participant 1 (P1) acknowledged:

> I had a session where we did the Myers Briggs assessment. I learned a lot about myself, but more importantly, I took it back to my office to better communicate with my office staff. It helped me be better in a much larger context!

Participants 2 (P2) added:

> The relationships I cultivated with other leaders professionally has benefitted my organization greatly. By networking with other leaders and professionals, my company has gotten speakers for events, plugged people into working groups or committees, and has gotten our company's name out there on a larger scale."

Participant 3 (P3) reflected on a recent leadership training, noting that it improved his ability to collaborate and understand the perspective of others.

> "My training included leaders from various industries. There were many personal philosophies and ideas about the goal of a class project. The biggest thing I learned was that I could disagree with certain points of view, but in order to truly work collaboratively, I needed to listen to different feedback and see where I could contribute in a meaningful way. The experience made me reflect on my leadership style and understand the value of being collaborative."

Participant 6 (P6) brought her leadership development experiences full circle. She shared, "I bring back things I learn from leadership trainings and take an introspective look at myself as a leader. This helps me be the most effective person I can be for my team."

Several candidates linked their training and developmental experiences to their success as a leader, inside and outside of the workplace. These experiences ranged from more focused and formal experiences for employees, to simply paying more attention to people in their day to day lives. One participant (P4) shared, "I try like hell to meet people where they are!"

Examples of attentiveness to individuals was mentioned many times in the interview process. Participant 5 (P5) shared, "I have a bi-weekly meeting with my

supervisor. He gives me the space to talk about whatever is on my mind. He helps think through the pros and cons, but I always feel supported by him and am fortunate to have his trust and attention." Participant 6 (P6) shared that she pays close attention to her employees and their own leadership development.

> "An important component of leadership getting to know the people who you are trying to develop into leaders. I have a young professional on my team who is extremely smart and loves sporting events. She was a collegiate athlete. That's not an interest of mine, but when I'm looking for event connections for my organization, I specifically look for opportunities that include sporting events or things like that. I know she will be invested in the community aspect of leadership and she's got buy-in to something she connects to."

"Champions Others" was a subtheme under the "Investment in People Development" category. Championing people is the ability to elevate and recognize individuals. Results point to positive outcomes include reinforcing desired behavior and making people feel valued/appreciated. Each participant in the interview mentioned how important recognition and appreciation was to their organization. Participant 6 (P6) said, "I work to give detailed and specific praise about what I appreciate and what initiatives someone put their personal spin on to enhance the team." Participant 4 (P4) shared, "I want to compliment employees in front of others, even if it's something small, I try to remember to compliment people for work well done." P4 also added another strategy he employed, to look for training opportunities or conferences and recommend or sponsor

employees. He concluded, “It is my job to protect and position people under me, to put them in the best position to succeed.”

Interviewees cautioned that leaders who were condescending, selfish, or treated people like they were beneath them, would likely lose employees. “Poor leadership is not caring about the people doing the work”, explained Participant 1 (P1). Participant 2 (P2) irked, “I’m not fond of leaders who always let you know their title or rank within the organization!”

“Values Diversity” emerged as a sub-theme showing a leader’s appreciation for differences in their employees. Differences included employee work styles, background, experiences, and diversity of thought. Participant 5 (P5) joked, “There’s more than one way to skin a cat! As a leader, I know I don’t know all the answers!” He went on to describe a situation where everyone approaches a situation in the same way, expressing how that can make a business environment stagnant. “To make sure we’re not left behind in our industry, we have to make sure we have generations and differences represented!”

Participant 4 (P4) added, “We can all be looking at the same picture and see it 3 or 4 different ways! We see it as we are in our life, but not everyone is like we are. Leaders should embrace employee differences.” Participant 5 (P5) suggested, “Diversity of opinion has to be accounted for! Businesses need a culture where people can speak up without being reprimanded.” Additional comments referenced the autonomy to explore areas of interest within a business setting, showcasing a variety of leadership styles to meet the needs of the workforce.

The final sub-theme that emerged was “Demonstrates Empathy”. This sub-theme included testimonials and stories about leaders who played a role in the development of study participants, and how they carry those lessons forward. Participant 2 (P3) recounts:

> “I have given people opportunities. They come back begging for second chances, third chances, and I think it’s important to empathize because we are all humans and make mistakes. I think it’s important to let people be themselves and meeting them where they are.”

Participant 2 (P2) reminds herself, “You have to try to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes, and never ask someone to do something you wouldn’t do!” Participant 6 (P6) attributes great leadership with “the ability to treat people that are choosing to follow you with compassion and understanding.” While all participants in the interview process stated that employees should be competent and equipped for their specific roles in the organization, all participants noted that empathy and compassion improved the workplace. “Nobody wants to be somewhere where they are not wanted or not treated well”, Participant 3 (P3) concluded.

Transformational Leadership’s Individualized Consideration (IC) tenant is a leadership tactic and belief that people should be treated equitably and on a one-to-one basis. Leaders who display individualized consideration for people on a team develop their team members based on particular strengths, skills, and interests. Leaders who demonstrate individualized consideration serve as mentors for others, demonstrate empathy/understanding in their decision-making, and spend time developing people for a higher purpose. Transformational leaders empower employees to achieve collective goals

through individualized consideration. The theme “Investment in People Development” included several sub-themes in relationship to TL’s IC tenant.

“Investment in People Development” is prevalent in the academic literature, with a focus on training and developing competence; investments in technology and innovation; leadership education; and corporate leadership development. Talent development and the management of human potential has quickly emerged as a corporate strategy for enterprise leaders (Hernandez et al, 2020), with many organizations recognizing people as a competitive advantage (Samuel & Durning, 2020; Abner, Valdez, & Perry, 2021). That said, a variety of tactics and strategies have been employed to train and develop people to assume leadership roles. Formal programs, opportunities, training, technology, and experiences for leadership development showcase how organizations are making investments in people.

Theme 4: Considering a Broader Context or Impact

Considering a broader context or impact was the fourth study theme, with sub-categories that included: empowering employees and including integrated opportunities for networking and engagement. The premise: leaders should encourage employees to look outside of the scope of their role and understand the larger picture. This broader context helped align employee purpose with their work goals. Leaders can encourage this type of thinking to achieve collective goals. Participant 2 (P2) explained that leadership development should be transformative in people’s lives and should be extend beyond simply a professional obligation. P2 shared:

> "Being part of a leadership program was so enriching for me. I wish there were programs out there for different types of leadership roles you might find yourself in. Leadership can help everyone better themselves, better their families, better their communities, and also better their business. Leaders have different circumstances and thus, lead in different ways. Leadership programs have the potential to bring people together. I am a big advocate of that! Leadership development should be holistic!"

Leadership strategies mentioned in relationship to this theme included "a process of identifying and looking for the people who can and want to do more" or "engaging employees who want to go the extra mile." One leader, P5, joked, "whether they are good at thinking innovatively or not, they are still thinking about the betterment of the organization!" Participant 5 (P5) attributes this level of thinking with the ability to "build people who are more well-rounded".

"Considers a Broader Context or Impact" was described by three participants as something they understood or that was nurtured at an early age. Candidates mentioned mentors, coaches, or specific life experiences that shaped their leadership and values. These attributes shaped their leadership style, with several participants sharing an affinity for empowering and leading others to understand their purpose—and align that purpose with their professional endeavors.

Employee empowerment was a sub-theme, leaning into leadership that recognizes and builds confidence in people. Participants shared a myriad of examples of leaders who had elevated and encouraged their development, but also how they worked to empower

others to think innovatively. Participant 6 (P6) offered a simple strategy she uses to employees, wanting her team members to feel safe in a space of innovative thinking:

> "I make sure my employees have a three-hour time block on their calendars each week for creativity. This time is for them to simply think about ways to move our business forward. I create this space for new ideas, and we talk about them in a space without fear."

This "space for new ideas" was reiterated by other leaders in the study. These leaders encouraged employees to pursue educational opportunities or training opportunities outside of their daily role. Participant 1 (P1) offered:

> "I don't think as a leader you ever stop learning. I read books on leadership, listen to podcasts, attend events. Afterwards, I consult with my team members on different leadership ideas and thoughts. Leaders should never stop trying to understand the people they are working with!"

Empowering employees to grow can be through meaningful interactions, where employees are challenged to think deeper. As a leader, this type of autonomy and space for critical thinking can stretch employees into a space of learning and growth. Leaders can empower their employees with individual learning opportunities and reinforcement of behavior. Participant 4 (P4) illustrated this in one of his examples. He recalled a member of his team asking him in front of his peers for "the right thing to do":

> "I told him, that question's not for me. I don't know the best way to do it. I don't do your job every day! Some of the employees didn't like that answer, but I don't just tell them the answer or what they should do. I am very clear about that! If I

> did tell him the answer, I would probably be wrong, because I don't do that job every day! As a leader, I want to empower others to step up as leaders. I think it's a huge developmental opportunity. They can consult with me. They can inform me of their intention, but I encourage them to be the expert on the job. I want to show members of my team that I trust them. They need the autonomy and space to lead from the front."

Establishing opportunities for meaningful and memorable interactions with leaders was a strategy several organizations employed to create learning and development within teams. Participant 3 (P3) shared, "every month, we have a leader in our organization who goes through the ins-and-outs of each department. It's a guided tour of each unit, where the leader can ask questions and meet other people in the organization. This helps prepare them for the roles they assume and helps to think outside the daily scope of their current role." This approach to leadership development was echoed by Participant 1 (P1) who worked with intention to craft new experiences for his staff to meet and learn from others in his organization.

"Integrated Opportunities for Networking" emerged as a sub-theme within the "Considers a Broader Context or Impact " category, with participants noting that these opportunities were a prominent strategy for encouraging employees to think outside of the confines of their specific role. Participants in the study who integrated networking as a leadership development strategy were able to see direct benefits and outcomes—both individual growth and business returns. Participant 5 (P5) comments, "networking

translates directly to new business connections, but it also helps in the overall growth of your company!"

Networking as a strategy for employee growth included examples of interorganizational connections (i.e. meet with other people in your organization), or external connections with a common interest. Participant 6 (P6) mentioned, "I always tell my people, you are one relationship away from a totally different life!" Participants in this study mentioned networking and mentoring simultaneously but emphasized the value of networking as a mechanism for higher level thinking in their organizations. Participant 5 (P5) recalled, "Through my own experience in a leadership program, I have a stronger professional network. I know several people in various industries and roles, who I can reach out to, ask questions, or offer support."

Transformational Leadership's Intellectual Stimulation (IS) tenant is the practice of encouraging people to question old ways of doing things, and to introduce new ideas for implementation. These ideas lead to improved outcomes and future good. This innovative thinking is motivated by leaders to stimulate and empower thinking for the collective good. In a working environment, intellectual stimulation can elevate knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer. The theme, considers a broader context or impact, is related to intellectual stimulation as it relates to higher and broader scope thinking.

"Considers a Broader Context or Impact" is prominent in the academic literature, linking leadership to the success of people, communities, and society-at-large. This theme explores deep meaning related to the purpose of oneself and linking that to others for the

achievement of collective success. This theme focuses on the alignment of employee purpose with their work responsibilities, and the idea that leaders can encourage this type of thinking in the achievement of collective and broader goals. Fernandez et al (2022) detailed this type of thinking in a study related to healthcare, where leaders train and development employees to link underlying health issues and health disparities with structural issues in society that may have caused them. This awareness can help leaders operate within a workplace context, but also translates into their everyday life.

Networking and purposeful engagement can drive collective outcomes, allowing employees to leverage other people and networks to stimulate higher levels of thinking, innovation, and outcomes. This idea relates to the business concept of social capital, which is detailed in the literature. Social networking and social capital is linked directly to economic outcomes (Chadwick, 2018), as noted in the study results.

Application to Professional Practice

The data collected and analyzed gave many insights into the leadership development strategy and practice. Study findings can serve as a road map for the development of leadership development programs and experiences, providing real-life context and examples. The themes that emerged in relationship to the research question included: a) genuine care for others, b) leading with intentionality, c) investment in people development, and d) considers a broader context or impact. Each theme included sub-themes and categories for expanded consideration.

Transformational leadership theory (TLT) is practiced widely and is well known among business leaders. Each TLT tenant, Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational

Motivation (IM), Individualized Consideration (IC), and Intellectual Stimulation (IS) describes how leaders can transform the workplace, elevating employees to achieve broader organizational goals. The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore leadership development strategies to enhance corporate capability. Transformational leadership theory (TLT) served as the conceptual framework, helping interpret and understand results. This study reinforced the prominence and impact of transformational leadership in relationship to the study topic.

Study findings yielded specific strategies used to develop business leaders, as well as concepts and ideas for deeper inquiry. Organizations looking to enhance or improve their leadership capability should consider the impact and value of transformational leadership. Using the four tenants of TLT and the specific themes detailed in this study, business leaders can benchmark and think critically about the learning and development of their employees. Leadership development strategies noted in this study serve as tangible examples and benchmarks for program development, delivery, and assessment.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study have implications for positive social change by improving individual leadership efficacy and in turn, organizational or business outcomes. Yet, leadership development also transcends a single role or professional position. Successful leaders can impact communities, cultures, and society by elevating people in a broader context. This was a sentiment echoed throughout the study, both in the leadership literature and from participant interview responses. Good leaders can elevate and inspire others to achieve broader outcomes in volunteer roles, community

leadership roles, and as a citizen of the larger society. While the impact can be hard to measure, poor examples of leadership can be understood in terms of harm to people, selfishness, greed, and even the dissolution of organizations, relationships, or one's mental health.

Positive leadership and outcomes often go unnoticed or underrecognized because it can equate to calm and steady environments where people simply feel supported. In some instances, businesses recognize and reward leaders who make a positive impact. Corporations who focus on leadership development as a strategic imperative are prevalent in the academic literature. This study considers leadership development strategies for larger and broader impact. Leaders with the skills and techniques to elevate others can create transformative experiences for others, making the world around them a better place.

Recommendations for Action

This study aimed to identify leadership development strategies that enhanced corporate capability. The study findings contain a variety of tactics and strategies leaders are currently employing to build and strengthen their workforce. The four primary themes that emerged from the data set included: a) genuine care for others, b) leading with intentionality, c) investment in people development, and d) considers a broader context or impact. These themes, which also align with Transformational Leadership Theory, create an interesting baseline for developing new programs/experiences, strengthening current programs/experiences, and assessing outcomes related to leadership development within the business context. Examples within the data and sub-themes are mentioned in the

study, providing a critical lens for examining one's own leadership ability, as well as strengthening collective leadership capability.

The first recommendation for action is for organizations to include the ability for leaders to focus on their own self-development and discovery as a conduit to improving organizational outcomes. Leaders must have the time, space, and support to develop traits of successful leaders. The second recommendation for action is for organizations to create leadership programs and/or experiences where leaders can influence the growth and development of others. This type of care, intentionality, investment, and vision transmit and serve as a tool for transformation. TLT is prevalent in leadership literature because it is mentioned again and again with regard to broader outcomes. Organizations should look to TLT as a way to self-sustain and grow their organizational capability.

The scope of this study was to better understand the leadership development strategies used to enhance corporate leadership capability. The results concluded that leadership development strategies are plentiful, yet the overall premise and underlying concepts are largely congruent from organization to organization. Some leadership development studies, focused on identifying a value proposition or ROI, purported that leadership development was largely contextual (based on a specific organization/business model/sector), and thus, hard to measure. The results of this study found that principles of leadership development and the strategies used by six businesses were similar in concept—but varied in size or scope.

This study could be replicated in a larger context and with additional businesses. I recommend the study method to understand individual experiences. The qualitative

multi-case study aided in my ability to research unique situations and various organizations, comparing, and contrasting results in my overall analysis. The results of the study were rich and illustrated the value and importance of leadership in a business context.

This study is useful for business professionals looking to strengthen and build upon their current leadership strata. Leadership programs administrators, or human resource functions, could benefit from the themes, examples, and results illustrated in this study. Examples include success stories and failures at the hands of organizational leaders—or people of influence. Results may also be helpful for professionals who wish to strengthen and develop themselves, improve their organization, or to simply step out into the world with an eye on uplifting others.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study documented the leadership development strategies used by six business leaders, representing six different companies, to enhance their corporate capability. The nature of my research study required an extensive amount of time to interview a variety of candidates. Early on, I considered a single case study and an in depth look at one organization, but ultimately decided to study multiple business models and a variety of people. I have zero regrets and learned a great deal from each leader. They were inspiring and candid.

In making recommendations for further research, I would build in a larger data set and consider a mixed method approach to better understand leadership program outcomes (retention of employees, workplace satisfaction, or through an employee success metric.)

I believe a quantitative analysis would allow for a larger sampling without the time constraint limitation and provide more insight into which tactics used by organizations yield a higher return on investment. I believe a mixed method approach would further inform this topic.

Additionally, I found that participants in my study spoke both to their experience being part of formal leadership experiences in the past, but also the way they instituted leadership experiences for their followers currently. At times, these were synonymous; but other times, there were discrepancies in the methods of other leaders and what was happening in the workplace currently. There were many points of clarity in the interview process to understand actual strategies their business (or they) invested time, energy, and attention to for the purpose of leadership development. Past experiences and influential people were included in study findings only to illustrate and give meaning (or rationale) to current strategies used. Further research on the topic of leadership development might consider using a snowball sampling method for identifying influential leaders (or those identified by current leaders as "great".) This could help explore the topic further.

Last, I focused my study on business leaders in the state of West Virginia—specifically those who had completed a formal state-wide program. This helped me identify a segment, as the leaders were sponsored by their employer. This showed a financial investment from their organization. While the participants ranged from small organizations to larger organizations and represented six separate entities; I believe additional research with a broader population could also help further inform the topic.

Reflections

I am proud of this doctoral study. I started with a question that underpinned and hindered the success of a work project. I had no idea how complex the answer would be, or how much I would grow as a person and professional in the process of doctoral study. The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) process started with a problem statement, followed by mapping out a prospectus. I felt exhilarated researching the problem and set out to completely flip the topic on its head with a fringe theory. I ran into issues finding peer researched studies to support the theory, and with my tail between my legs, went back to the drawing board. Looking back, it was a great thing I did! Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) contained tried-and-true research related to my topic and made it easy to triangulate data sources to extract meaning from the information.

This is my fifth year in the program. During that time, I got married, moved to another state, transitioned my kids into new schools, bought a house, lost a family member, dealt with a major professional transition, and held on tight to the purpose of this entire project—which was that I truly wanted to answer my research question. What was the answer? I wanted to know.

Leadership has always been a staple in my life. Like my participants, I have had coaches, teachers, and mentors around me helping push me to the next level. I decided early in my life that I wanted to do the same for others—lead. I began my career teaching high school students and coaching various sports. After a few years, I moved into higher education administration. I currently work in a Student and Alumni Affairs office, helping create, manage, and champion a variety of campus engagement initiatives. One

of the programs centers on community leadership and the growth and development of people. The program hosts over 400 volunteer leaders who support campus organizations, serve as mentors, contribute as social influencers, and remain involved in task forces, committees, and various initiatives.

Outside of my professional role, I am a parent to four children and three bonus stepchildren. These humans go out into the world every day and need guidance, love, attention, and leadership. In the past, I have underscored my role as a mom and the work it takes to raise healthy and productive children—but being a parent is the ultimate leadership role.

All that said, I am a people leader, an educational leader, and leadership program administrator. These roles all shape who I am as a person—and researcher. I tried to eliminated bias from my study as much as possible. This came from citing and referencing a variety of sources, as well as sticking to scripted messaging and dialogue. All of the participants I interviewed were strangers and working in different industries. None held the same or similar position as mine. I feel this made my analysis much more objective and straightforward. I was intentional to mitigate bias by understanding where/how bias might show up in my study.

Finishing the doctoral study was a massive effort. Conducting interviews was my favorite part of the process. I found myself truly inspired by the participants. All six were tremendous! The Data Collection and Analysis took far more time than I imagined. I used a hand coding process to parse through paragraphs, phrases, and words. With apprehension I worked through coding, worrying I would not achieve saturation in my

responses. To my surprise, although respondents came from very different backgrounds, industries, and experiences, their approach to leadership development came back to similar foundations and beliefs. This helped me with pattern matching and to ultimately identify themes. These themes aligned with the core tenants of Transformational Leadership, my conceptual framework.

I have changed because of this project. Not only am I able to contribute to my work-related projects and tasks through the practical application of research, but I can also see a much bigger picture. Leadership transcends the workplace and with programming that is dynamic, with focused leadership development strategies, leaders can apply those skills and strengths in their everyday lives. Leaders who demonstrate transformational leadership have the potential to be incredibly impactful within organizations and outside in the world.

Conclusion

By conducting this multiple-case study, I hoped to better understand the leadership development strategies used to enhance corporate capability. Business leaders and program administrators in the state of West Virginia shared their knowledge and expertise through six semi-structured interviews. The study findings contain a variety of tactics and strategies leaders are currently employing to build and strengthen their workforce. The four primary themes that emerged from the data set included: a) genuine care for others, b) leading with intentionality, c) investment in people development, and d) considers a broader context or impact. These themes, which also align with Transformational Leadership Theory (the study's conceptual framework), create an

interesting baseline for developing new programs/experiences, strengthening current programs/experiences, and assessing outcomes related to leadership development within a business context.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Guidelines

1.With the participants permission, I will conduct and record video interviews using Zoom software.
2. The interviews will consist of 45-60 minutes of uninterrupted time.
3. I will show interest, care, and concern for all participants.
4. I will prepare for interviews and employ interview techniques and skills so that participants may openly share their experiences.
5. I will take notes, document key information, and follow-up with a call transcript for the participants review.

Opening Script

Hello. My name is Amanda Wilson. The purpose of my qualitative multiple-case study is to explore the leadership development strategies used by business leaders to enhance organizational leadership capability. Today's interview will consist of a brief conversation about the purpose of my research project, and then getting your verbal consent to proceed with the remainder of this interview. It is important to me that you feel comfortable in the interview and can answer the questions openly. There are no wrong answers. Please re-review the consent form on the screen, which was sent by email. If you agree to participate, I will begin the interview and recording now.
(Wait for agreement or questions.)
BEGIN RECORDING

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your experience with the topic—Leadership Development Strategies?
2. What strategies or tactics does your organization use to train/develop employees to assume current or future leadership roles?
3. What strategies proved successful in developing and implementing leadership development within your organization?
4. What strategies are currently employed to recruit employees for leadership development?
5. What strategies have you used (or are you currently using) to align leadership development with organizational strategy?

6. How are leadership development strategies and program/experience outcomes assessed to understand the overall impact on employee development?
7. How are leadership development strategies and program/experience outcomes assessed to understand the overall impact on organizational development?
8. What strategies did you use to demonstrate the value that leadership development offers employees and/or the organization?
9. What recommendations do you have for other organizations for developing leadership programs/experiences?
10. How are leadership development opportunities shared or offered within the structure of your organization? Is this an open opportunity for all employees, or an exclusive opportunity only for a select few?
11. What else can you add to the topic of leadership development strategies and strategic business alignment within your organization?

Closing Script

Thank you for your time today! Findings and conclusions of this study could provide current business leaders with a guiding framework for meeting long-term, strategic business outcomes in a competitive marketplace. I appreciate your insights and willingness to participate in my research. Soon, I will be providing you with a summary of my own interpretation of your responses to the interview questions. This allows you to review the information for accuracy, and ensure I captured your responses correctly.

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

Letter to Leadership West Virginia (LWV) Program Sponsors:

[DATE]

Re: Doctoral Research Study and Potential Business Contacts

Dear [Program Sponsor],

I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University, pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) with a specialization in Organizational Leadership. I am researching leadership development strategies, specifically how business leaders build strategies to enhance organizational leadership capability.

I am contacting you to see if you could recommend at least 5 West Virginia businesses/organizations (who have sponsored participants in your program) and a point of contact with regard to leadership development. Specifically, I am looking for:

- Experience with organizational leadership development strategies
- Businesses located or headquartered in the state of West Virginia
- A willingness to participate.

To proceed, I would simply need to know the name of the organization they represent, their role within the organization, and their contact information (email preferred). I will send them information regarding the study, and if they meet the study criteria, an invitation to participate.

I appreciate your recommendations.

Amanda Wilson

Letter to Potential Candidates:

[DATE]

Re: Invitation to participate in a Doctoral Research Study

Dear [NAME],

My name is Amanda Wilson, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I was a graduate of the [Leadership West Virginia/Leadership Jefferson] program in [insert year]. I am pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) with a specialization in Organizational Leadership. My topic, and the focus of my research, is how West Virginia business leaders are enhancing their organizational leadership capability. I am inviting you to participate in a 45-60 minute audio recorded interview.

To learn more about the topic, I am looking for West Virginia business leaders, either executive-level leaders or managers/program administrators, with knowledge and experience directly related to the topic of leadership development.

The criteria to participate includes:

- You are a business leader who works for a company located or headquartered in the state of West Virginia.
- You have experience using successful leadership development strategies.

I appreciate your consideration. Participant and organizational names will not be displayed in the study. I plan to use pseudonyms in the final study and will work to keep identifiable information confidential. Individuals who are eligible to participate based on the criteria listed above and are interested in the study, can contact me through email at Amanda.wilson6@waldenu.edu. Please note, participation in this study is voluntary.

Please let me know if you have additional questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Amanda Wilson

Appendix C: Informed Consent

You are invited to take part in a research study about leadership development strategies for enhanced corporate capability. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand the study before deciding to take part.

This study seeks at least 5 volunteers with knowledge and experience with leadership development strategies. The study is being conducted by a researcher named Amanda Wilson, a doctoral student at Walden University.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership development strategies used by business leaders to enhance organizational leadership capability.

Study Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an audio-recorded interview for 45-60 minutes, answering questions about your current role;

Sample Questions include:

1. How is your organization currently training/developing employees to assume leadership roles?
2. What strategies proved successful in developing and implementing leadership development within your organization?
3. What strategies are currently employed to recruit employees for leadership development?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in the study is voluntary. You can either accept or reject the invitation. If you decide not to participate, there will be no consequences. If you begin the process and are not able to complete the process, you can stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Participation

This study does not pose a risk to your physical safety or well-being. It is based on the ability to share your experiences related to leadership development through a series of interview questions. This interview will take place through a video software system, Zoom. Through the interview process, you could experience fatigue, stress, or discomfort. If you are unable to complete the interview, we will stop the process.

The primary benefit of participating is to share your knowledge/expertise as part of a larger study that could contribute to future business practice, as well as contributions to the community and society at large.

Payment:

There will be no compensation of any kind for your participation in this study. However, your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Privacy:

Your privacy is important to me. Throughout this process, I will work to ensure your participation and information is private and confidential. This means I will conduct your recorded interview in a home office space with a closed door. The recorded session, transcription, and my notes will be saved in a password protected file on my computer. Study findings and reporting will not share the identities of the study participants and will

only be used for the purpose of the research study. I will work carefully to ensure details, such as the specific location of the study, will not be shared. Names of interviewees and the organizations they represent will be listed and reported using pseudonyms. For security reasons, raw data including names, contact information, and interview transcription/notes, will be kept saved on a password protected server. As required by the university, all data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years and then destroyed.

Contact Information and Additional Questions:

Please feel free to ask me any questions you have related to the study now. If questions arise later, you can contact me using this email: Amanda.wilson6@waldenu.edu or via phone at 304.240.0369. If you would like to discuss your privacy as a study participant further, you can reach the Research Participant Advocate at Walden University by calling 612.312.1210. This study's approval number is 08-10-23-0759498, and it expires on August 9, 2024.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision regarding participation, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words "I Consent".

If you consent to participation, please save a copy of your consent email for reference.

Obtaining Your Consent
If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by [date.]

Printed Name of Participant:
_____

Date of Consent:

_____

Participant Signature:

_____

Researcher Signature:

_____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your experience with the topic—Leadership Development Strategies?
2. What strategies or tactics does your organization use to train/develop employees to assume current or future leadership roles?
3. What strategies proved successful in developing and implementing leadership development within your organization?
4. What strategies are currently employed to recruit employees for leadership development?
5. What strategies have you used (or are you currently using) to align leadership development with organizational strategy?
6. How are leadership development strategies and program/experience outcomes assessed to understand the overall impact on employee development?
7. How are leadership development strategies and program/experience outcomes assessed to understand the overall impact on organizational development?
8. What strategies did you use to demonstrate the value that leadership development offers employees and/or the organization?
9. What recommendations do you have for other organizations for developing leadership programs/experiences?
10. How are leadership development opportunities shared or offered within the structure of your organization? Is this an open opportunity for all employees, or an exclusive opportunity only for a select few?

11. What else can you add to the topic of leadership development strategies and strategic business alignment within your organization?

Appendix E: Protocol for Member Checking

1. Take notes and record interviews
2. Transcribe recording
3. Analyze transcripts and notes critically
4. Synthesize interview responses by question; categorize
5. Member check interpretation with question/response paper
6. Record any additional data provided by participants