INTERNATIONAL CURRICULUM AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO DOCTORAL PROGRAMS IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose  
This study explores the various teaching and learning approaches, curriculum design, and program requirements for 70 doctoral programs in leadership.

Background  
Early research indicates that few studies have addressed learner-centred and process-based approaches to leadership studies among doctoral programs in leadership worldwide. This study is the first complete review of programs in the interdisciplinary field of leadership.

Methodology  
A qualitative method approach through internet-mediated research was employed to identify explicit and implicit textual data on learning approaches of doctoral programs in leadership. The sample represents a list of 70 doctoral programs in leadership studies and organisational leadership (62 programs are in the United States and eight in Europe, Canada, Philippines, and South Africa).

Contribution  
This study provides an overview of doctoral program characteristics, delivery methods, coursework and research requirements, discipline-relevant teaching and learning approaches, and process-based approach to leadership. It may serve as a resource and a roadmap to assess teaching and learning approaches of doctoral programs in leadership for program reviews and improvement.

Findings  
The significant findings of this study are:

(a) 91.4% of doctoral programs are coursework-driven, leaving little room for original research.

(b) 46% of programs show lack of evidence to context-based approaches to learning (learning as a social activity served outside of classroom environment where learning tools and the context intersect with human interactions).

(c) Various teaching and learning approaches, including those prescribed to constructivist, interactionist, situated, and action-based learning approaches.

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Recommendations for Practitioners: Leadership cannot be understood or learned without social interactions in context. In order to produce experts and “stewards of the field,” a clearer learner-centred strategy to doctoral education, including context-based experiences, should be considered. This pedagogical approach needs to be explicitly articulated (on the public website) to enable students to make an informed decision about doctoral programs in leadership.

Recommendations for Researchers: In order to produce theoreticians and “stewards of the discipline” (Golde & Walker, 2006), doctoral curricula design and implementation should seek a balance between coursework, independent research, and creation of collaborative learning environment between students and faculty. Further, due to the shift from the leader-centred to the process-based understanding of leadership, doctoral programs in leadership should consider the relationship process between leaders and followers as one academic inquiry or continuum.

Impact on Society: Doctoral programs in leadership that utilise more learner-centred and context-based approaches for knowledge acquisition (epistemologies) as well as studying the leadership phenomenon as a relationship process are more likely to become more impactful and sustainable in society.

Future Research: More research seems necessary to identify the extent to which learner-centred approaches within doctoral programs in leadership positively impact on doctoral students’ motivation for learning, program completion, retention, and personal and professional development.

Keywords: teaching and learning approaches, doctoral programs, leadership, organizational leadership, learner-centred approach

**INTRODUCTION**

Doctoral research in the interdisciplinary field of leadership has become an international phenomenon in the last 20 years (International Leadership Association, 2018). Academic institutions around the world invite students to explore and examine leadership frameworks and concepts through in-depth studies over a sustained period to find their solutions to the leadership crisis in the world today. There are 346 such doctoral programs in leadership worldwide: 312 in the United States, and 34 in the following countries: Belgium (1), Canada (22), France (1) Ireland (1), Philippines (1), Portugal (1), South Africa (1), the United Arab Emirates (1), and the United Kingdom (5).

Each program displays unique design features, producing graduates based on the pedagogical and andragogical design of the program. To date, however, little is known about the nature of the teaching and learning approaches, curriculum design, program requirements, how programs teach leadership at the doctoral level (leader-centric vs process-based approach) and anticipated outcomes of doctoral programs in leadership. Given the number of doctoral programs in leadership and the number of graduates consequently earning doctorates in leadership, it is essential to review teaching and learning approaches, program requirements, and theoretical approaches in the field of leadership to examine how doctoral students are engaged in building interdisciplinary knowledge in leadership.

A growing body of literature points to the importance of student- or learner-centered approaches and adult learning methodologies for graduate programs (Avella, 2016; Fitch, 2017; Stevahn, Anderson, & Hasart, 2016; Troop, Wallar, & Aspenlieder, 2015). Explicitly, in the field of doctoral students, student-centered approaches are advocated because they foster co-creation of knowledge through collaborative research and learning experiences between students and supervisors or faculty. Student- or learner-centered approaches also view the doctoral student as a partner rather than a “byproduct” of the education process (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008, p. 35). Although there
is growing awareness of the importance of designing graduate programs that are learner-centered, the extent to which doctoral programs in leadership actually apply this approach remains unknown.

Additionally, up until the second half of the 20th century, the concept of leadership was grounded in notions that privilege the leader themselves: the traits, skills and characteristics that distinguish leaders from others. However, more recent approaches to the question have displaced the centrality of the person-as-leader to view leadership as a relationship process (Hollander, 1992; Kelley, 1992). The former tends to promote hierarchical leadership structures and relationships between the leader and followers, while the latter advocates for democratic organizational structures and peer participation in the leadership process. As is the case with the movements towards the learner-centered pedagogical approach described above, there is currently a limited understanding on which conception (leader-centered or process-based) underpins doctoral programs in leadership.

As leaders become weaker and followers stronger in organizations (Kellerman, 2012), it becomes necessary to answer the question “Are there alternatives to the existing models [leader-centeredness] – ways of teaching [and learning] leadership that take into account the vicissitudes of the twenty-first century?” (the front flap page).

Therefore, this study selected and analyzed the most prominent doctoral programs in leadership across the U.S. and around the world that offer primarily Ph.D. degrees (for the full list of 70 institutions and degrees, see Appendix A). These doctoral programs in leadership are housed in schools or colleges of business and management, leadership, education, doctoral programs, graduate programs, advanced or professional studies, and psychology departments. In order to investigate the pedagogical approaches and concepts of leadership shaping the next generation of leaders, this study posed three research questions:

1. What are the current teaching and learning approaches, curriculum design, and program requirements adopted in doctoral programs in leadership around the world?
2. To what extent do doctoral programs in leadership utilize learner-centred approaches in their curriculum design and program requirements?
3. From what perspective is leadership being taught – the leader-centred or process-based perspective?

LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN DOCTORAL STUDIES

There have been extensive studies of doctoral programs with a focus on teaching, program design, writing and research methods, employment and career, relationships between students and doctoral supervisors, faculty competencies, and experiences of doctoral students (Barnes & Austin, 2009; Card, Chambers, & Freeman, 2016; Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 1997; Fenge, 2012; Hyatt & Williams, 2011; Hargis, 2012; Jones, 2013; Thune, 2009). In an analysis of 995 publications across 45 of the most prominent journals on doctoral studies from 1971 to 2012, Jones (2013) highlights that research on doctoral education has focused primarily on understanding the reason for high attrition rates among doctoral students (30%–70%) as the result of isolation and lack of socialisation, results that aligned with earlier research (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Barnes, 2010; Gardner, 2008; Jairam & Kahl Jr, 2012). Although Jones (2013) did not specifically investigate learner-centred approaches to doctoral education, he does recommend examining “what works, and what does not, in training and developing doctoral students” (p. 99) by exploring alternative approaches to research, group supervision, and collaborative learning between peers and faculty. Jones (2013) also identifies some articles discussing and recommending the adoption of collaborative approaches to writing and research. The benefits expounded for this are increased productivity and quality, peer support, and socialization. Further, these approaches can increase access to industry and create interdisciplinary exposure” (p. 90).

In the last 20 years, the purpose, role, and engagement of students in the design of doctoral education have been brought to the fore (Association of American Universities (AAU), 1998). For example, in 1998, the Association of American Universities (AAU), in its committee report on doctorate
education, recommended that “student interests should also be paramount in designing a graduate curriculum” (1998, p. 3). According to the report, initial coursework for Ph.D. programs is designed to facilitate apprenticeship activities of teaching and research between doctoral students and faculty (Association of American Universities, 1998). The report indicates the need for faculty–student collaboration for learning and knowledge acquisition.

At a similar time and also focusing on examining learning experiences of students in doctoral education, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducted a 5-year research project (2001–2005) to investigate whether or not the doctoral programs prepare scholars “who can be trusted with the vigor, quality, and integrity of the field” (Walker, et al., 2008, p. 161). The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID) in 2001 adopted a cross-disciplinary sample of doctoral programs in chemistry, education, English, history, mathematics, and neuroscience. The researchers discovered that doctoral students want to be treated as partners rather than products in the learning process.

Engaging students as partners in the learning process “may well be the secret weapon for change” of graduate education (Walker, et al., 2008, p. 35). The report by Walker, et al. (2008) found a need for a shift from the perspective of “dependent student” to a “professional colleague,” capable of conducting original research at the beginning rather than at the end of their doctoral programs. This report is consistent with earlier research reporting that doctoral students are more likely to initiate program reform if they are fully engaged as “stewards of their disciplines” (Golde & Walker, 2006) by “heeding their voices and acting on their suggestions” (Taylor, 2006, p. 61). Walker, et al.’s (2008) findings also find support in the findings of Bagaka’s, Badillo, Bransteter, and Rispinto (2015) on the power of mentorship and research engagement as student success indicators, as well as those regarding the equivalent function of learner-led activities such as group discussions, projects, presentations, and hands-on activities (Poll, Widen, & Weller, 2014).

At a university level, there is growing evidence of institutions moving to learner-centred approaches to doctoral education by utilising not only physical but also virtual learning communities, online learning methods and web-based learning communities such as DC Network, to overcome personal isolation and increase doctoral retention (Ames, Berman, & Casteel, 2018). The student-centred pedagogy for online classrooms that anticipates a shift in the role of teachers from “umpires and judges” to “coaches and counselors” (Knowlton, 2000; Shriner, 2015) support the early finding of Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (2001).

The above movement in the doctoral space, both physical and virtual, as a means of enhancing learner-centred experiences represents an endorsement of student learning communities on university campuses, both physical and virtual. These communities typically fall under three categories: (1) cohort, class groups, small peer groups, and study groups, to draw academic, social, and emotional support (Berry, 2017); (2) technology-enhanced student-centred learning environments to overcome deficiencies in direct instructor approaches and research design processes (Land, Hannafin, & Oliver, 2012); and (3) organic collaboration as a “naturally-formed dynamic peer to peer support group, built on individual strengths and differences” for peer to peer academic, professional, and personal support (Littlefield, Taddei, & Radosh, 2015, p. 129). The above student learning communities appear to indicate that student-centred learning opportunities are expanding worldwide and that more than one academic department, institution, or country may be involved in reaching the goal for student-centred doctoral education (Fung, Southcott, & Siu, 2017).

**STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACHES TO LEARNING**

There are various ways in which to design and implement a doctoral program curriculum. These design choices are underpinned by certain epistemologies or approaches to knowledge and inquiry that shape students’ experiences. Given the movement described above towards more learner-centred doctoral programs, this section aims to provide a brief overview of the various approaches that may be grouped under the umbrella of learner- or student-centred. Ten approaches universally understood to be student- or learner-centred learning approaches are summarised and presented below.
These 10 approaches seem most relevant to leadership studies as an interdisciplinary inquiry and echo earlier study recommendations for building collaborative learning communities in order to minimize attrition and increase retention among doctoral students (Jones, 2013; Walker, et al., 2008).

1. The interdisciplinary approach to learning describes a complex educational endeavour, necessitating “disciplinary grounding,” “integration,” “teamwork,” “communication,” and “critical awareness” (Borrego & Newswander, 2010, p. 80). It requires collaborative efforts among faculty and students to eliminate institutional barriers and expand eligibility for dissertation/thesis advisers to operate beyond home departmental faculty (Boden, Borrego, & Newswander, 2011).

The interdisciplinary approach to learning has been successful not only in addressing national and global challenges such as poverty, environmental sustainability, energy, healthcare, and globalisation (Boden, et al., 2011), but also in studying leadership phenomena, which requires integrative knowledge from social and behavioural sciences, communication, historiography, organisational studies, and more. Today’s environmental, social, and global challenges demand solutions that stem from integrated knowledge across disciplines, diverse teams, cultures, and organisations (Schmidt, et al., 2012). Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration brings together the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Engineering to create new forms of interdisciplinary knowledge to resolve real-world problems (Taylor & Medina, 2013). For instance, philosophers and environmental scientists have created a new interdisciplinary field of ‘environmental philosophy’ that enables communities to address complex problems such as sustainable development in a competing economic, environmental, and socio-cultural environment (Davison, et al., 2013; Frodeman, 2008).

2. The learner- vs teacher-centred approaches to learning. In the teacher-centred approach to learning, the teacher is the source of knowledge and takes control over how knowledge is acquired, conveyed, absorbed, and evaluated (Kain, 2003). In the student- or learner-centred approach to learning, on the other hand, knowledge is constructed through students’ engagement and shared experiences (Hannafin, Hill, & Glazer, 2011; Kain, 2003; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006). Learners as partners and co-creators have choices over what and how they learn by contributing to the design and implementation of curriculum for knowledge acquisition and diffusion. Furthermore, learner-centred learning is often perceived as experience-based learning (Estes, 2004). It is also self-directed learning that necessitates open learning environments and requires contexts for learning objectives and means (Hannafin, Hill, Land, & Lee, 2014). However, it is important to note that learner-centred learning does not undermine the importance of the teacher’s facilitation process for knowledge acquisition and dissemination, but rather ethically and responsibly opens new opportunities for participative learning between the teacher and the learner (Hansen & Stephens, 2000; Mascolo, 2009; Perry & Smart, 2007).

3. The context-based approach to learning is grounded in the notion that learning as a social activity must be served outside of the classroom environment to understand how the mind acquires and produces knowledge. Adult learning, according to Hansman (2001), “takes place in a context where tools and the context interact with interaction among people” (p. 43). Bolger, Balass, Landen, and Perfetti (2008) propose an “instance-based learning approach” to “both contexts and definitions” of “new word meanings” and “learning from context” (p. 122). Leadership studies require context because every leadership behaviour or function is situational and always takes place in context. Thus, one of the foundational variables to understand and conceptualise the leadership process is the context in which leaders interact with followers to achieve the desired outcome.

4. The critical inquiry approach to learning aims to raise the teacher’s conscious self-awareness and her or his critical understanding of complex social issues through critical pedagogy and andragogy, cultural inclusiveness, and social justice (Taylor & Medina, 2013). This method, which seeks to acquire knowledge or provide insight into social circumstances, ideals, and institutions (Bohman, 2005), may foster teachers’ creative reasoning about designing curricula and assessments that are more student-centred, culturally sensitive, community-oriented, and socially responsible (Taylor & Medina, 2013).
In other words, the critical inquiry approach to learning views the teacher as a learner in practice who critically aligns the tools of teaching with the learner in context (Jaworski, 2006).

Taylor, Taylor, and Luitel (2012) propose an epistemologically pluralistic and hybrid research method for social and cultural studies that integrates multiple research paradigms such as interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodernism toward students’ transformative professional development. Thus, teaching presence must be combined with the social presence (Bangert, 2008). The critical inquiry approach is particularly important in leadership studies because the “truth” of the leader must always be critically examined to understand assumptions and behavioural patterns of those who take a responsibility to lead (Lather, 2004).

5. The problem-based approach to learning aims to achieve learning through problem-solving and induction. During the learning process, students and teachers collaboratively engage in investigations about open-ended and authentic problems in communities (Fly, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997). Sternberg (2008) argues that in today’s complex and interconnected world, few social and global problems will be confined to one single field of inquiry. Problem-based learning (PBL) is both an instructional and a curricular learner-centred approach that enables learners to “integrate theory and practice and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem” (Savery, 2015, p. 9). For instance, doctoral students may select real problems relevant to their profession or context, independently explore the selected problem, and by using the relevant research discuss their newly found understanding or knowledge with their group members, and recommend solutions to the problem at hand (Turner & Triezenberg, 2010).

6. The constructivist approach to learning views learning as an active process of constructing knowledge by questioning what one understands and experiences. It is a construction of knowledge that is relevant to one’s experience, which focuses on the learner’s learning, not on the teaching of a subject or a lesson. The constructivist approach generates knowledge that is dependent on the meaning attributed to experience (constructed) by the learner, or community of learners (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004; Duffy & Cunningham, 1996; Ertmer & Newby, 1993; Huang, Rauchb, & Liaw, 2010). In other words, constructivist learning takes the learner from experience to knowledge acquisition. During this active learning process, the learner’s performances give meaning to abstract concepts (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004; Jenkins, 2006). As Ertmer and Newby (1993) put it, “As one moves along the behaviourist–cognitivist–constructivist continuum, the focus of instruction shifts from teaching to learning, from the passive transfer of facts and routines to the active application of ideas to problems” (p. 58).

Interestingly, few studies discuss the constructivist approach as it applies to doctoral education. McCulloch (2013) proposes the use of the “quest” metaphor (as opposed to the “journey”) for the Ph.D. experience. The “journey” is when Ph.D. students’ constructs knowledge through interactions with the context (Ortony, 1993) while facing cognitive and emotional encounters (Haynes, 1975; Haynes, 2009). In other words, learning becomes a quest for knowledge through intellectual inquiry and emotional processes (Brown, 2009; McCulloch, 2013).

7. Interactionist approach to learning. This form of cooperative and collaborative learning is accomplished through a semiotic approach to complex interactions (Enfield, 2011). Because humans inhabit the results of actions from previous generations and human activities are uniquely cooperative, learning requires mutual understanding and cooperation for social and collective actions (Goodwin, 2013). Interactionist theorists believe that leaders are both born and made. Thus, leadership is perceived to be a combination of personal and situational forces that are inseparable from each other (Seyranian, 2010). Using the symbolic interactionism framework (Blumer, 1986), Paul (1996) posits that leaders’ behaviours may influence followers’ meaning-making process through the creation of shared, equifinal, and idiosyncratic meanings. Thus, the interactionist approach to learning may empower doctoral students if they embrace principles of progressive development, integration, collaboration through student–faculty and peer interactions, and collaborative learning communities (Walker, et al., 2008).
8. The situated approach to learning, or the theory of situated cognition, unlike cognitivist theories, connect human thoughts or perceptions with social environments or workplaces (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004), situated primarily outside of a classroom, with specific learning tasks to construct knowledge (Clancy, 1997; Handley, Clark, Fincham, & Sturdy, 2007; Korthagen, 2010). Lave and Wenger (1991), who originated the situated learning theory, argue that any learning is situated in a community and thus requires participation and practice through “legitimate peripheral participation” (p. 14). Furthermore, in the situated approach to learning, unlike the teacher-centred approach where conceptual knowledge is often conveyed to students with a notion that knowledge can be abstracted from situations, cognition is situated in daily activities, context, and cultural experiences (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). The situated approach to leadership has been well researched and documented in the theory of situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1979; Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993).

9. Systems thinking, or the systems approach to learning, assumes collective thinking and collective contributions to any social or organisational functioning through an input, output, and feedback loop (Kaufman, 1980). One individual’s point of view is insufficient to understand the current interconnected and interdependent world. Complex problems require deep and persistent learning to integrate multiple perspectives to address organisational or social issues (Senge, 2006, 2018). The systems approach to learning argues that people and environments are interrelated and that actions of the collective emerge from actions of the individuals. Thus, it is vital that individuals and groups contribute to collective learning for problem-solving through learning organisations and communities (Montuori, 2000; Senge, 2006; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002). The systems approach to learning is relevant to leadership studies due to the complex, multivariable, and multidisciplinary nature of the inquiry. Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) acknowledge the complexities of relationships and communication challenges between leaders and followers involved in organisational systems.

10. The action-based approach to learning assumes individualised or collaborative group-based learning activities toward the achievement of an individual or a common goal (Naidu & Bedgood, 2012). This learning approach puts more emphasis on one’s experience while involved in a task than it does on curricular issues. It shapes the learner’s perception of the observed phenomena through the real-life experiences of knowledge construction (Van Lier, 2008). Action-based approaches apply to leadership studies because every leadership process and experience is unique and requires constant actions and reflections for conceptualisation and construction of knowledge. Some argue that action learning in a group setting may serve as a gateway to collaborative leadership by reflecting on real-life difficulties and dealing with unfamiliar problems (Raelin, 2006).

**Leader-centred and Process-based Approaches in Leadership Studies**

In the middle of the 20th century, in the industrial era of North America, a wave of studies of leaders and phenomena associated with leadership began to investigate the characteristics of people who are leaders. Known as the leader-centred approach, scholars of this period were interested in learning about what differentiates leaders from non-leaders (Stogdill, 1948, 1974), and what traits, characteristics, and skills leaders possess that makes them unique (Bass, 1981; Katz, 1974; Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986; Stogdill, 1974). However, in the last three decades, leadership studies have shifted from the leader-focused approach to one more concerned with leadership processes, which involves situational contingencies (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979), leader–member exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), leader–follower relationships (Hollander, 1992; Kelley, 1992; Rost, 1993) and contextual considerations and followership studies (Chaleff, 2008; Kellerman, 2007, 2008). As Hollander (1992) states, “Leadership is a process, not a person” (p. 71).
Since the early 21st century, the process-based approach to leadership has dominated discussion on leadership and followership in the post-industrial era (Collinson, 2005, 2006; Hollander, 1992; Larsson & Lundholm, 2013; Lord & Brown, 2004; Rost, 2008; Shamir, 2007, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007; Uhl-Bien & Osipina, 2012). Unlike traditional theories of management that view leadership and followership as distinct processes that “run in parallel lines or in different, more or less opposite directions” (Rost, 2008, p. 55), the process-based approach views leadership and followership as relationship processes (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010).

That is, leading-following is an exchangeable behaviour that functions in relationships (Malakyan, 2014). Collinson (2005) admits that “mainstream leadership studies tend to privilege and separate leaders from followers,” and calls for, instead of this, a “dialectical relationship” between leaders and followers as a new paradigm for leadership studies (p. 1419).

Although leadership philosophy and scholarship have embraced this processual movement, the degree to which the curricula of doctoral education programs around the world are grounded in the process-based leadership paradigm is currently unknown. In order to explore the question of which philosophical camp graduates of doctoral programs in leadership might enact and align with, the conceptual approach advertised by institutions offering doctoral programs needs to be investigated.

**METHODS**

This study reviewed and analysed electronic documents (MS Word and PDF) of 70 doctoral programs worldwide using a qualitative method approach through internet-mediated research (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Seneider, 2013; Hewson, 2013; Hewson & Stewart, 2016; Lovegrove & Brailsford, 1995). The selected programs represent a sample of doctoral programs in leadership studies and organisational leadership (see Appendix A). The study sought to identify explicit and implicit textual data (Brown, 2009; Rossman & Wilson, 1985) on the program features in order to understand departmental or school/college affiliations, geographic locations (i.e., country, state, and region), residency requirements, program delivery modes (i.e., classroom-based, online, hybrid, and executive format), program requirements (i.e., total number of academic credit hours or duration), and ratios of coursework to independent research. The study aimed to detect the teaching and learning approach for each doctoral program in view of the following methods of learning and inquiries: interdisciplinary approach, learner- vs teacher-centred approaches, context-based approach, critical inquiry approach, problem-based approach, constructivist approach, interactionist approach, situated approach, systems approach, action-based approach, and process-based vs leader-centred approaches to leadership studies.

**SAMPLE**

Criteria for inclusion in the sample were as follows: (a) doctoral programs that offer Ph.D. or other doctorate degrees in leadership studies and organisational leadership; (b) programs that use words such as “leadership” or “organisation” in their degree titles; (c) have an official website page; (d) are research-based or knowledge-generating programs with more than 50-credit hours degree requirement. The sample represents an integrative and likely exhaustive list of doctoral programs in leadership available through the International Leadership Association (ILA) database as well as Google and Yahoo search engines. The following steps were taken to finalise the sample size for this study:

Step 1: Through the Google and Yahoo search engines, nearly 40 doctoral programs were identified.

Step 2: After searching the ILA database, 115 Ph.D. or other doctoral programs in leadership were identified in the United States and 17 international programs, for a total of 132.

Step 3: After the initial review of the program websites, all non-research-based programs with 50 or fewer credit hours requirements were eliminated from the sample. As a result, the sample size was reduced to 70 doctoral programs in leadership. Doctoral programs in *Education*...
tution Leadership and Management have not been included, with few exceptions, due to the scope of this study.

**PROCEDURE**

The selected doctoral programs in leadership were catalogued alphabetically on a spreadsheet according to each program’s academic institution, degree title, URL address, the departmental/school/college affiliation, geographic location, and program requirements such as residency, delivery methods, and credit hours or years of completion. The spreadsheet also stored data on whether or not each program demonstrated any evidence of the following learning approaches described above.

The website information about each program was copied into an MS Word file or downloaded as a PDF document, reviewed for indications of learning approach, and catalogued to find explicit data on the above-named learning approaches. Information and documentation included: program overview, requirements, learning outcomes, program philosophy and goals, mission statement, curriculum design, target audience, course descriptions, program delivery methods, and any other information that was publicly available and not limited to syllabi, program brochures, graduate catalogues, and doctoral handbooks. The “Advanced Find” engine for MS Word and “Find” Acrobat Reader were used to identify keywords or terms associated with each learning approach. Data for each doctoral program was tabulated, coded, recorded, thematically analysed, and interpreted in the spreadsheet for all learning domains.

For implicit data, systematic axial coding was employed to confirm whether any learning approaches were represented in the body of the collected documents. First, the entirety of the website information about each program (e.g., program description, course description, program brochure, academic catalogue, degree requirements, delivery methods, and any other available data) was copied into MS Word or downloaded as PDF documents. Then, each program document was read and reviewed to identify and code the concepts and categories of learning approaches defined in the Student-Centred Approaches to Learning. For instance, to find evidence for the constructivist approach to learning, the obtained documents were analysed for evidence of alignment with the constructivist approach which constructs knowledge and meaning through experiences by a learner or community of learners. Finally, the data for each learning approach was tabulated, coded, and recorded on a spreadsheet.

The study also sought information on university websites beyond the introductory summaries of the program descriptions. For instance, all available curriculum and program documents were accessed to find implicit or explicit data on the 10 student-centred learning approaches and leader-centred or process-based approaches to leadership studies. Programs that restricted access to curriculum or program information had been eliminated from the study sample. Nonetheless, this study is limited to available information shared by each doctoral program on its website. Thus, the reliability of findings is contingent upon whether or not the website information conveyed the most recent program updates.

**FINDINGS**

The study showed that out of 70 programs, 58 offer Ph.D. degrees and 12 other doctoral degrees in leadership. Thirty-eight programs offer doctoral degrees in leadership studies in the areas of change, value-driven leadership, Christian leadership, global leadership, administration, strategic leadership, learning and service, strategic leadership, management, human resources and leadership development, ethical and creative leadership, leadership policy, executive leadership, and leadership psychology. Thirty-two programs offer doctoral degrees in organisational leadership and studies on organisational theory, science, behaviour, learning, performance, change, workforce, development, management, policy, and systems.
Figure 1 shows college, school, or department affiliations of the 70 doctoral programs worldwide.

Among the 70 doctoral programs, eight programs are international (four from Europe, two from Canada, one from South Africa, and one from the Philippines). Sixty-two programs are in the United States.

Figure 2 indicates the number of doctoral programs internationally and in five geographic regions of the United States.

Thirty-three doctoral programs require a year-round residency. Thirty-two programs require partial residency during the fall and spring semesters or summer institutes. Only five online and international programs require no residency.

Twenty-nine programs offer cohort and classroom-based residential doctoral programs. Three programs are fully online; five programs are hybrid or blended (face-to-face with an online component). The remaining 33 programs explicitly state on their website pages that their delivery methods have a mixture of online, hybrid, distance learning, or executive (weekend classes) components to their partial residency requirement.

Most doctoral programs have well-defined credit hour requirements. For instance, 29 programs require 60–65 semester credit hours of coursework, original research, and dissertation writing. Eight programs require less than 60 semester credit hours. Thirteen programs require between 66 and 78 semester credit hours. Only five programs require more than 78 semester credit hours for their doc-
torate. Six programs require 3–4 years for their degree completion. The remaining nine programs need 4–6 years for their degree completion.

Figure 3 indicates the number of credit hours or academic year requirements for all 70 doctoral programs in leadership:

![Figure 3: Number of doctoral programs per credit hour or academic year requirements](image)

Fifty-one doctoral programs state that their program is interdisciplinary. Seven programs explicitly claim their program to be multidisciplinary (knowledge acquisition from more than two academic disciplines or fields). The remaining 12 programs show no evidence for an interdisciplinary approach to learning in their curriculum design and course offerings.

The data shows that 64 out of 70 doctoral programs fall under the category of a heavy coursework approach to learning with less room for independent research.

Figure 4 indicates the coursework requirements by percentages:

![Figure 4: Coursework requirements by percentages](image)

The above data shows that 91.4% of doctoral programs in leadership are coursework-driven. Only five doctoral programs offer less than 50% coursework, and one international program has no coursework requirement. Subsequently, only 7.2% of doctoral programs in leadership worldwide (half U.S., half international) require 22%–40% coursework. The rest of the requirements are original research, publications, and dissertation. In other words, 91.4% of doctoral students are primarily
driven by a coursework curriculum, whereas only 8.6% of students study under a flexible curriculum with more academic hours for original research.

Regarding learning approaches of the 70 doctoral programs in leadership considered, Table 1 indicates how many doctoral programs state or provide evidence in their web documents for their use of the eight identified learning approaches.

**Table 1: Number of programs utilising eight learning approaches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context-based</th>
<th>Critical inquiry</th>
<th>Problem-based</th>
<th>Constructivist</th>
<th>Interactionist</th>
<th>Situated</th>
<th>Systems</th>
<th>Action-based</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
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</table>

In summary, analysis of the data revealed the following:

- 54% of doctoral programs appear to utilise the context-based learning approach in their program delivery, while 46% programs show no evidence of being context-based.
- 70% of doctoral programs showed explicit and implicit evidence of the use of the critical inquiry approach to learning, while 30% programs show no evidence of using the critical inquiry approach.
- 57% of doctoral programs appear to utilise the problem-based approach to learning, while 43% showed no explicit or implicit evidence of doing so.
- 22.8% of doctoral programs showed explicit and implicit evidence of the use of the constructivist approach to learning, while 77.2% programs showed no explicit or implicit evidence of this.
- 32.8% of doctoral programs indicate that they employ the interactionist approach to learning in their program delivery, while 68.2% programs showed no explicit or implicit evidence of its use.
- 22.8% of doctoral programs show explicit and implicit evidence of the use of the situated approach to learning, while 77.2% programs do not.
- 70% of doctoral programs showed explicit and/or implicit evidence of the use of the systems approach to learning, while 30% did not.
- 34.3% of doctoral programs showed explicit and/or implicit evidence of the use of the action-based approach to learning, while 65.7% programs did not.

Finally, 54 doctoral programs appear to be leader-centred, with studies on followership having been omitted. Only 11 programs teach leadership from a process-based perspective, insofar as they either mention followership or leader–follower relationships in their study programs, or include a course on followership.

**DISCUSSION**

**STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACHES**

Many student-centred approaches have been observed in this study of doctoral programs in leadership that are worth highlighting here. First, nearly 83% of leadership programs, housed in more than 10 academic departments, offer Ph.D. degrees in leadership, which indicates that Ph.D. programs in leadership are indeed interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, as they are meant to be (Gale & Golde, 2004). This finding is consistent with the related literature that argues that leadership and organisational studies require interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to address complex leader-
ship and organisational issues such as ethics, teamwork, and organisational and climate change (Davison, et al., 2013; Eisenbeiss, 2012; McCallin, 2003; Schmidt, et al., 2012). It is also consistent with CID (2001) and John Hopkins University (JHU) (2013) recommendations for establishing more inter-departmental and -institutional collaborations, and designing more interdisciplinary curricula.

Second, 47% of programs continue to use a year-round residency and cohort model for program delivery. On the other hand, a significant number of programs, 45.7%, offer their degrees with a partial residency requirement, a combination of online learning, hybrid, distance learning, and executive delivery methods suitable for working professionals. Both findings are consistent with CID (2001) and JHU (2013) recommendations to not only create learning and collaborative communities (cohort groups) but also respond to the technological advancement for learning by creating virtual residency opportunities for students through information technology as a convenient compromise to residency requirements and on-campus resources (Shriner, 2015).

Third, since the majority of doctoral programs explicitly use critical inquiry (70%), problem-based (57%), and systems (70%) approaches to learning, it can be said that most doctoral programs in leadership acknowledge the multivariable nature and complexities of leadership and organisational studies. This finding is consistent with the current research on doctoral programs that suggest systems thinking strategies for doctoral programs. Designed primarily for medical education (Savery, 2015) and later adopted by business and legal education programs (Nathanson, 1994; Sas, 2009), the problem-based learning (PBL) approach is relevant to leadership education because organisational and community leaders continue to face enormous challenges in the areas of interpersonal and group dynamics, and socio-cultural challenges nationally and internationally (Kellerman, 2012). Thus, PBL fosters not only the ability to analyse problems but also the skills to take action to resolve real leadership problems in organisations and communities (Bridges & Hallinger, 2006).

Fourth, 70% of programs use a systems thinking approach to learning. This reinforces earlier findings that, due to technological revolution across national and international boundaries (Montuori, 2000), the integration of systems thinking and commitment to learning complexities of leadership (Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007) are necessary to maximise Ph.D. graduates’ contribution to organisational effectiveness and sustainability for today’s rapidly changing organisational culture. Doctoral programs in leadership indeed have moved to complex models of leadership that require interdisciplinary and systems approaches to address the complexities of leadership and organisational problems.

**More Learner-Centred Approaches Needed**

Along with the acknowledgement of student-centred approaches to doctoral programs in leadership, this study has also identified room for improvement. Literature on doctoral programs’ success and sustainable scholarship, as well as the AAU (1998), CID (2001), and JHU (2013) reports, suggest that the future success of doctoral programs depends on developing more engaged students, creating collaborative learning communities, and providing supportive environments for students’ learning (Bagaka’s, et al., 2015; Olson & Clark, 2009). According to the findings in this study, more than 70% of doctoral programs in leadership seem to be on the teacher-dependent or coursework-dependent spectrum of the curriculum design based on what they report on their program websites. This finding reinforces the growing need for more flexible, engaged, and team-based learning experiences for students (Hansen & Stephens, 2000). Learner- or student-centred pedagogy and andragogy in academia “derive from constructivist views of education, in which the construction of knowledge is shared and learning is achieved through students’ engagement with activities in which they are invested” (Kain, 2003, p. 104). These approaches appear to address the above-discussed need for students who seek more student–faculty collaborative learning experiences (Perry & Smart, 2007).

Analysis of the data provides convincing evidence for the predominance of coursework approaches to knowledge acquisition and new knowledge dissemination in doctoral curricula in leadership, given the limited credit hours assigned to original and independent research. For instance, 91.4% of Ph.D.
programs in leadership, all except for six programs in the U.S. and abroad, are heavily prescribed coursework-driven programs. This finding is concerning. How much contribution can doctoral students make toward producing new knowledge in the field if 67% of programs require 70%–90% coursework for their Ph.D. degrees? It is hard to comprehend that these programs can create new knowledge or new theories in the field through emphasis on coursework-based curricula, a model that leaves little room for doctoral students to produce original research. Without space for independent studies, it could be said that these programs are unlikely to generate Ph.D. recipients who are experts and stewards of the field. Thus, according to two CID reports (Taylor, 2006; Walker, et al., 2008), this approach to doctoral-level learning may be seen as poor stewardship of the discipline.

Additionally, analysis of data demonstrated a significant number of doctoral programs in leadership (46%, nearly half of the selected doctoral programs in this study) still show lack of evidence for the context-based approach to learning in their program or curriculum design. Scholars and practitioners in the field of leadership have long agreed that leadership cannot be understood or learned without social interactions in context (Oc, 2018). The context is one of the foundational study variables for understanding and conceptualising the leadership process in organisations and society. Thus, learning leadership outside of students’ social context finds no support in leadership theory and practice. It could be argued that the use of case studies, field trips, internships, and workplace-related assignments seem insufficient for doctoral-level learning because students are expected to become experts in their organisational or community context. In other words, doctoral students’ contexts may be considered the central axel for their curricular inquiry. Thus, the selection and study of the leadership context requires faculty–student collaborative efforts.

Reflecting on the low percentage of learner-centred approaches to learning (22%–35% for constructivist, interactionist, situated, and action-based) among doctoral programs in leadership, it is argued here that there is a greater need for:

(a) A shift from passive instruction to active learning, where passive recipients of facts become active participants of intellectual inquiry and emotional processes of learning (Brown, 2009; McCulloch, 2013),

(b) Collaboration between doctoral faculty and students for the creation of new knowledge, which requires more than a classroom environment,

(c) Connecting human reflections or insights in social and organisational settings (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004), and

(d) Development of group-based learning activities where members of the group collectively address social or organisational challenges.

The constructivist, interactionist, situated, and action-based learning approaches require outside of classroom, hands-on, experiential, collective, and socially active learning tasks and research practices to create new knowledge (Clancy, 1997; Handley, et al., 2007; Korthagen, 2010). Since the study of leadership and followership processes are situational (Hersey & Blanchard, 1979) and can be observed and studied in the social context where relationships, interactions, and participation takes place between individuals or groups (Baker, 2007), the situated approach to learning is crucial for doctoral students of leadership. They are expected to immerse themselves in organisational and community practices to understand and address problems of real-life situations in organisational social contexts (Kempster & Stewart, 2010).

Finally, data clearly shows that only 15% of doctoral programs in leadership have made a transition from an industrial and leader-focused to a post-industrial and process-based leadership paradigm where studies on followership have been integrated with leadership process (Collinson, 2006; Rost, 2008). That is, 85% of leadership programs continue to provide leadership education with a leader-centred paradigm, where the process-based approach to leadership seems in its infancy phase. This finding has implications for doctoral graduates in leadership and their future applications of leader-
ship in industry. Perhaps it is time leadership conceptions and curricula are placed under the microscope and the implications of these leadership paradigms are investigated further.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study revealed that most doctoral programs in leadership are coursework-driven with significant curriculum restrictions for original research. Although authentic and “aha moment” experiences of doctoral students within courses are important and undeniable, heavily prescribed-coursework-based curricula restrict freedom and creativity of doctoral students to make significant contributions to their fields of study through independent research. Thus, it would be beneficial for doctoral programs in leadership to move from heavily structured and coursework-driven curriculum design to more learner-centred approaches by co-designing context-based curricula and co-creating new knowledge with faculty mentors or supervisors. CID scholars Walker, et al. (2008) call it “learning-centred” doctoral education, where every academic department is viewed as “a lively intellectual community, celebrating the advancement of learning and knowledge” (p. 116). The reconsideration of medieval apprenticeship, central to doctoral education (Cronon, 2006), may produce desired “stewards of the discipline” (Goldie & Walker, 2006). The learner-centred approaches to doctoral education in leadership are consistent with AAU (1998), CID (2001), and JHU (2013) findings that foresaw a need for more student engagement and collaborative learning between faculty and students for greater personal, organisational, and social impact.

Although each doctoral program requires at least two or more methods courses (how to know), little attention has been given to faculty–student learning styles (how to learn) where both parties are engaged in mutually beneficial learning activities through complementary learning styles to achieve their study goals. In other words, doctoral programs in leadership could extensively utilise some areas of the learner-centred approaches, such as constructivist, interactionist, situated, and action-based in leadership.

Learner-centred learning environments are rapidly changing around the world due to technological advancements and global interactions among teachers and students across cultures (Attard, 2010). Leadership programs form part of a global learning community and are uniquely positioned to embrace context-based and learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning (Bligh, 2011; Hansen & Stephens, 2000). In doing so, these programs will be more likely to become productive and impactful in society.

Finally, given the widespread allegiance to the teaching of leadership from a leader-centred perspective, it is time to intentionally integrate theories of followership and leadership as one continuum or one academic endeavour to more fully understand the leader–follower relationship process in a given situation and context. Moreover, due to a number of paradigm shifts within leadership studies, such as changes from the industrial model of “me” to post-industrial “we” and from leader-centred theories to process-based and relational approach to leadership (Larsson & Lundholm, 2013; Shamir, 2007, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012), it is the responsibility of academic institutions to promote less authoritarian and more democratic models of leadership for current and future organisational and community leaders and followers around the world.

**LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study was limited to available program resources shared by doctoral programs on their institutional websites. While this is an international study, interestingly, no data was available for China and other Asian countries. Ironically, Australian universities offer 28 Masters programs in leadership but none at the doctorate level. Further research is necessary to learn the reason why there is such a demand for doctoral education in leadership in the United States as opposed to other parts of the world.
Further, more research appears necessary to learn whether or not the extensive use of learner-centred approaches within doctoral programs in leadership may have a positive or negative impact on doctoral students’ motivation for learning, program completion, and retention. Research attention may also be devoted to the pros and cons of coursework-driven doctoral programs in the United States compared to research-based doctoral programs in Europe and elsewhere.

The aim of this study was not to undermine the central role of the teacher in the learning process but to seek a balance between teacher- and student-centred approaches to learning. For instance, would a hybrid approach to doctoral programs (either more original research and less prescribed coursework, or equivalent requirements of prescribed coursework and original research) address the high percentage of student attrition or burnouts (Golde, 2005; Lovitts, 2001) and motivate student engagement and improve retention (Walker, et al., 2006)? It may be beneficial to explore student preferences on coursework-driven compared to research-based doctoral programs and how each approach may positively or negatively impact students’ preparations for constantly challenging careers in leadership. In other words, if doctoral students in the United States were given more freedom to co-create their doctoral programs with doctoral faculty or committee, would that motivate them to not only bring their study to a successful completion but also to give them more confidence in their career aspirations? Alternatively, would hybrid doctoral programs, involving less coursework and more original research, make Ph.D. degrees in leadership more effective and impactful across the social and organisational spectrum? Should leadership scholars and practitioners show more concern for developing “stewards of [the leadership discipline]” (Golde & Walker, 2006) and hybrid leader–followers capable of trading their leading or following roles (Malakyan, 2014) than producing more positional leaders with Ph.D. degrees for the “leadership industry” (Kellerman, 2012)? Such questions and concerns remain current and challenging.

REFERENCES


International Curriculum and Conceptual Approaches


Shamir, B. (2012). Leadership research or post-leadership research: Advancing leadership research versus throwing out the baby with the bath water. In M. Uhl-Bien, & S. Ospina (Eds.), Advancing relational leadership theory: A dialogue among perspectives (pp. 477-500). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers.


APPENDIX

The study sample of seventy doctoral programs in leadership studies and organizational leadership in five regions of the United States and eight countries around the world:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Institution</th>
<th>Program name</th>
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<td><a href="https://www.saybrook.edu/areas-of-study/leadership-and-management/Ph.D.-organizational-systems/">https://www.saybrook.edu/areas-of-study/leadership-and-management/Ph.D.-organizational-systems/</a></td>
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<td>Shenandoah University</td>
<td>Doctor of Professional in Studies in Organizational Leadership</td>
<td><a href="https://www.su.edu/education/leadership-studies/dprof-organizational-leadership/">https://www.su.edu/education/leadership-studies/dprof-organizational-leadership/</a></td>
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<td>Southern Baptist Theological Seminary</td>
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<td>Stanford University</td>
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<td>Stanford University</td>
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<td>Ph.D. in Leadership and Mastery of Change</td>
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<td>Ph.D. in Leadership Studies</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uvic.ca/education/psychology/future/Ph.D_/leadership/index.php">http://www.uvic.ca/education/psychology/future/Ph.D_/leadership/index.php</a></td>
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<td>Ph.D. in Adult Education and Community Development Program</td>
<td><a href="https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/lhae/Adult_Education_and_Community_Development/Ph.D_in_Adult_Education_and_Community_Development.html">https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/lhae/Adult_Education_and_Community_Development/Ph.D_in_Adult_Education_and_Community_Development.html</a></td>
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<td>Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration Concentrations</td>
<td><a href="http://www.waldenu.edu/doctoral/Ph.D.-in-management/curriculum/leadership-and-organizational-change">http://www.waldenu.edu/doctoral/Ph.D.-in-management/curriculum/leadership-and-organizational-change</a></td>
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<td>70 William James College</td>
<td>Psy.D in Leadership Psychology</td>
<td><a href="http://www.williamjames.edu/academics/olp/leadership-psyd/index.cfm">http://www.williamjames.edu/academics/olp/leadership-psyd/index.cfm</a></td>
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**BIOGRAPHY**

Petros G. Malakyan, Ph.D. is the Department Head of Organizational Leadership in the School of Communications and Information Systems at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. Petros holds terminal degrees from the Graduate School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Dr. Malakyan served as Professor and Chair of Undergraduate Leadership Studies at Indiana Wesleyan University (2010-2015). He also served as Associate Professor and Program Director of Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership Program at Azusa Pacific University (2008-2010); Leadership Coach, Mentor, and Educator at National Leadership Institute in Yerevan, Armenia (2002-2008), and Assistant Professor at Yerevan State University in Yerevan, Armenia (1999-2004). Petros has created and taught leadership courses (international blended, online, and face-to-face) in Armenia, England, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Singapore, Ukraine, and the United States. Email: malakyan@rmu.edu