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EdDs and MBAs: Exploring Leadership Graduate Education for Collaboration in the Workplace

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EdDs and MBAs: Exploring Leadership Graduate Education for Collaboration in the Workplace

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Abstract

The rise of high technology has reshaped leadership, necessitating collaborative cultures for organizational success. This paper explores the impact of leadership styles developed within Educational Doctorate (EdD) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs on collaboration, contrasting EdD and MBA graduates' approaches. The study reviews literature on leadership styles, collaboration, and the influence of educational background. Employing a qualitative meta-synthesis approach, the study analyzes articles to gather qualitative insights to reveal trends and challenges in fostering collaboration, aggregating the findings into a narrative format. Findings highlight the significance of leadership styles in shaping collaborative cultures and offer practical implications for leaders in the high-tech era.

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Developed nations are experiencing continuous industrial revolutions with the pervasive integration of high technology into business and manufacturing systems (Fu, 2017 as cited by Lestari & Santoso, 2019). Automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are influencing education, changing the workplace, and redefining the skills required for success across the organization charts of modern corporations (Muro, et al., 2019; Yamashita & Cummings, 2021). Leadership roles are not inoculated against changes within 21st century organizations.

Leadership is multidimensional, requiring leaders to adeptly manage an array of complex challenges: rapid technological advancement, intensifying global competition, and the growing importance of social responsibility (Li et al., 2022). As the workplace evolves, cultivating a collaborative organizational culture is increasingly crucial (Cote, 2023). Collaborative cultures, cultivated by leadership, are associated with enhanced innovation, superior problem-solving capabilities, heightened engagement, and improved organizational performance (Li et al., 2022). Leadership and collaboration styles range from autocratic leadership, characterized by centralized decision-making and strict control, to transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and empowering employees (Cote, 2023; De Smet et al., 2024). Some leadership styles are more collaborative than others (Cote, 2023; Li et al., 2022). This study aims to explore collaboration taught in leadership-focused graduate programs, examining curricula and content related to creating a coactive organizational environment.

A key aspect of this exploration was the examination of how graduate education develops leadership styles, particularly between leaders who have earned Educational Doctorates (EdDs) and those with Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees. Both degrees are designed to prepare individuals for senior leadership roles, but they do so with different emphases and

pedagogical approaches (Banagan et al., 2024; Currin et al., 2023). The EdD is traditionally associated with leadership in educational and social contexts, with a focus on ethical leadership, community engagement, and the promotion of social justice (Currin et al., 2023). Graduates of EdD programs are trained to lead with a cognizance of the social and cultural contexts in which they operate, emphasizing collaboration, equity, and inclusivity (Currin et al., 2023).

Conversely, MBA programs, typically tailored for the business world, emphasize strategic thinking, financial acumen, and operational efficiency (Banagan et al., 2024). MBA graduates are minted with a comprehensive understanding of market dynamics, fiscal management, and competencies for running a successful enterprise (Banagan et al., 2024). While these programs also address leadership, the emphasis is often on driving results, optimizing processes, and achieving business objectives (Banagan et al., 2024). Such divergence raises notable questions about how a leader's educational background influences organizational collaboration.

This study includes a thorough review of the existing literature on leadership styles and collaboration. Following the literature review is an outline of the methodology and data analysis that highlights key constituents of a broader narrative related to the research question. Finally, the conclusion includes a synthesis of the data points discussed in the paper and has suggestions for potential areas for future research. The purpose of this research was to contribute to leadership education discourse by describing differences in graduate program leadership content within EdD and MBA programs to interpret how educational preparation influences leadership behavior.

Research Question

1. How does MBA and EdD program emphasis, curriculum, and content influence the development of collaborative cultures within organizations?

This study was significant because there is currently limited consolidated research related to the differences in executive leadership collaboration approaches based on the degrees held by those with terminal degrees, specifically leaders with MBA degrees compared to those with EdD degrees. Further, the digitalization of the workplace has elevated collaboration as a core feature of leadership within 21st century professional organizations (Markauskaite et al., 2022). The addition of new teamwork paradigms in professional environments increases the value of exploring the graduate studies pathways that universities create for training future leaders.

Literature Review

Leadership remains a pivotal factor in shaping organizational culture and facilitating collaboration within teams (Cote, 2023). The relationship between leadership and organizational culture is both dynamic and interdependent, as evidenced by the following topics covered in the current literature on the subject (Cote, 2023).

Leadership and Organizational Culture. Leadership plays a critical role in shaping and defining organizational culture. Cote (2023) posits that leaders are instrumental in establishing the norms, values, and behaviors that constitute an organization's culture. This cultural framework subsequently influences employee interactions, engagement, and the extent to which collaboration can thrive (Cote, 2023). Leaders that actively engage in shaping organizational culture and are cognizant of how leadership influences motivation and effectiveness create

environments conducive to collaboration (Ellahi et al., 2022). Intentional leadership leads to improved organizational outcomes by fostering a supportive, collaborative environment (Ellahi et al., 2022). Further, De Smet et al. (2024) argue that traditional models of leadership must adapt to contemporary challenges, emphasizing the need for leaders to foster a thriving culture that embraces flexibility, innovation, and collaboration. Successful leaders must navigate complex organizational dynamics and leverage cultural influence to promote a collaborative ethos (De Smet et al., 2024). Nudurupati et al. (2022) contribute to this discussion by examining performance measurement, highlighting the critical role of leadership-enabled resources and capabilities in decision-making processes. Effective leadership is essential for managing organizational dynamics, reinforcing the link between leadership, culture, and collaboration (Orien et al., 2024).

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership particularly influences collaborative culture within organizations (Cote, 2023). Visionary leaders create environments with collectively shared values and foster a culture of cooperation and mutual support (Cote, 2023). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate teams, enhancing collective effort (Cote, 2023). Ellahi et al. (2022) further elaborate on this concept by exploring the role of servant leadership, a style closely related to transformational leadership. Servant leadership empowers and supports team members, significantly enhancing team motivation, collaboration, and effectiveness (Ellahi et al., 2022). Developing a collaborative culture through servant leadership drives program success and organizational performance (Ellahi et al., 2022). De Smet et al. (2024) build on this by discussing the need for leaders to adapt their approaches to meet the demands of contemporary workplaces, arguing that managers must embrace adaptability and innovation to sustain collaborative efforts and respond effectively to changing conditions.

Challenges in Shaping Collaborative Cultures. Despite the potential benefits of transformational and servant leadership in promoting collaboration, several challenges exist (Cote, 2023). Cote (2023) and Orieno et al. (2024) acknowledge that not all organizational cultures are equally supportive of collaborative efforts. Ellahi et al. (2022) Challenges like navigating cultural complexities, overcoming resistance, balancing collaboration with individual accountability, maintaining motivation, and ensuring effective team dynamics highlight the importance of continuous engagement and support to sustain a coactive culture (Cote, 2023; Ellahi et al., 2022; Orieno et al., 2024). In addition, De Smet et al. (2024) posit that modern leaders must confront evolving challenges related to workforce dynamics and technological advancements. Nudurupati et al. (2022) add challenges related to performance measurement that underscore the need for leaders to align performance metrics with organizational goals and cultural values to support effective decision-making and collaboration. Sustaining collaboration long-term is also a difficulty (Gino, 2019).

Leadership is vital for organizational culture and collaboration (Cote, 2023; De Smet et al., 2024). Effective leaders must cultivate a collaborative, effective organizational culture while navigating and addressing numerous complexities and challenges (Cote, 2023; De Smet et al., 2024; Ellahi et al., 2022; Nudurupati et al., 2022; Orieno et al., 2024; Velankanni et al. (2024); Wasserbauer, 2024; Gino, 2019).

Methodology

The qualitative meta-synthesis methodology originated in the realm of social science (Thorne, 2022). Qualitative meta-syntheses are conducted to gather disparate reports from the field to generate big picture understandings of phenomena (Thorne, 2022). Such studies define a

framework and use it to systematically analyze existing research while acknowledging the frames of reference and theories underpinning the assessment of the literature on a topic (Thorne, 2022). The qualitative meta-analysis research method has been “best managed by interdisciplinary teams of experienced scholars” (Thorne, 2022). Considering the interdisciplinary lens of the research in this study, the qualitative meta-analysis method fits well with this study.

To begin, the researchers determined literature topics that were within the scope of the study and then gathered material related to Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs, Education Doctorate (EdD) programs, organizational leadership, business leadership, emerging impacts of generative artificial intelligence on the workplace, and executive technological literacy in modern professional organizations. Research databases, search engines, generative artificial intelligence, and journal websites were searched using keywords related to the in-scope topics. The literature was read, reviewed, coded, and annotated for analysis and synthesis (Thorne, 2022). Key components of an overarching idea were pulled together, and a narrative was developed (Thorne, 2022).

The limitations of the study included the bounded availability of research related to comparing and contrasting leadership skills brought to organizations by MBAs and EdDs. With few articles explicitly addressing the topic, a broad set of articles from multiple regions that address EdD and MBA programs and outcomes were utilized to find emerging themes. Certain delimitations were also considered. First, the graduate programs explored were limited to EdD and MBA programs. Research focused on program content, outcomes, and emphasis primarily.

Data Analysis

A systematic literature search and review of studies related to the research question resulted in an interpretive narrative that aggregates and builds on qualitative findings from recent studies. The researcher began the analysis by reading all data collected and wrote general notes in the margins (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Next, the researcher began coding, which is the process of interpreting participant descriptions to attain accurate meaning while organizing data sets. Coding allows the researcher to break down the collected data into manageable parts, categorize responses, and identify patterns, themes, and emerging insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method is essential in qualitative research as it helps to systematize the vast amount of data gathered, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect participants' experiences and views (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

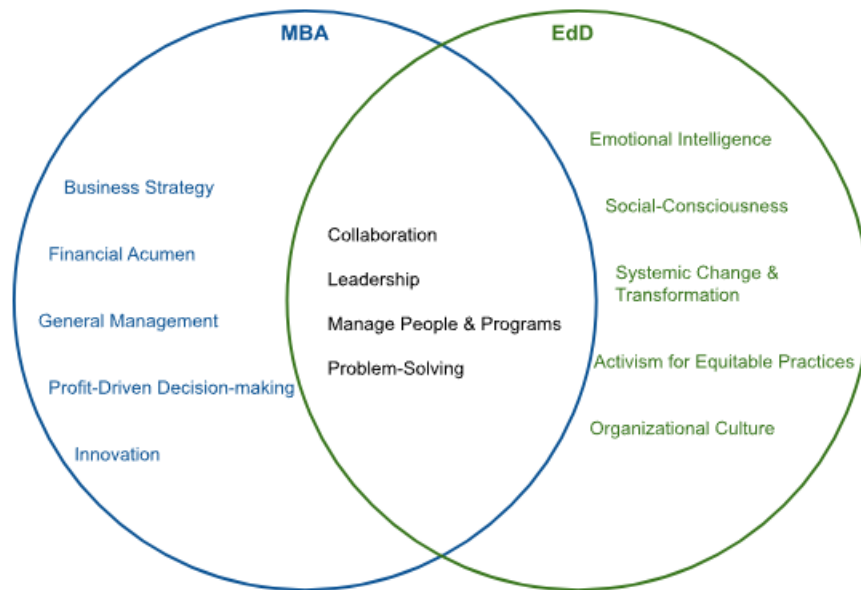
In this study, the coding process focused on leadership behaviors, collaboration initiatives, and the educational influences of EdD and MBA graduates within professional workplace environments. By carefully coding responses from survey and interview data, the researcher identified several emerging themes. These themes were related to how EdD and MBA graduates approach leadership and collaboration, particularly in sectors that are heavily influenced by technology. The themes drove new interpretations stitched together in a unified narrative.

Findings

Several narrative streams emerged from the current literature that covers the leadership and collaboration content in MBA and EdD programs. Some key themes were unique to each program and others overlapped between degree programs.

Figure 1

Overlap & Divergence of Collaborative Leadership between MBA & EdD Programs



Collaboration is emphasized as a crucial leadership skill for both MBAs and EdDs.

First, the cohort models and content for EdD and MBA programs are designed to form students into collaborative leaders (Banagan et al., 2024; Currin et al., 2023; Goodman, 2023; Kitchlew, 2020; Sellers, 2024; Wortzman, 2020). Both degree programs emphasize collaboration as an important skill for leaders, regardless of whether they are preparing for work in nonprofit, public, or private organizations.

MBAs and EdDs are taught different aspects of collaboration for leadership. MBA programs have group projects that include elements of negotiation, addressing conflict, professional communication, and strategic & efficient teamwork (Banagan et al., 2024; Kitchlew, 2020; Lešer & Berginc, 2023; Sellers, 2024). EdD programs teach collaboration for improving organizational effectiveness, change management, and transforming workplace culture (Currin et al., 2023; Goodman, 2023; Wortzman, 2020). The financial and business focus

of collaboration in MBA programs differs from the disruption and change emphasized in EdD programs.

Finance, innovation, and success drives MBA leadership, organizational change typical of activism fuels EdD leadership. MBA programs train leaders as general managers, maintaining balance sheets, turning over staff when needed, and growing revenue through innovation and market position (Banagan et al., 2024; Kitchlew, 2020; Lešer & Berginc, 2023; Sellers, 2024). EdD programs develop socially conscious, emotionally intelligent leaders that actively build learning communities, drive equity, and challenge systemic issues within society and organizations (Currin et al., 2023; Goodman, 2023; Wortzman, 2020).

Conclusion

MBA and EdD programs train collaborative leaders to manage people and programs in workplaces across the globe (Banagan et al., 2024; Currin et al., 2023; Goodman, 2023; Kitchlew, 2020; Lešer & Berginc, 2023; Sellers, 2024; Wortzman, 2020). MBA programs train business leaders and collaboration is taught from the perspective of for-profit business leadership (Banagan et al., 2024; Kitchlew, 2020; Lešer & Berginc, 2023; Sellers, 2024). EdD programs prepare leaders for nonprofit, government, education, healthcare, and corporate human resources and training & development roles. (Currin et al., 2023; Goodman, 2023; Wortzman, 2020). Differences in organization types account for the varying emphases regarding collaboration and leadership skills reinforced throughout the content and curriculum of graduate programs.

Professionals educated in MBA and EdD programs will interact in the workforce, creating opportunities for co-learning and complementing each other for the benefit of society and the organizations they serve. Lešer & Berginc (2023) note the need for increased focus on

emotional intelligence for MBA programs, highlighting future opportunities for in-depth studies that look for opportunities to compare and enhance MBA and EdD programs with crossover content that maintains the unique aspects of the fields related to each discipline. Considering the interwoven network of EdD and MBA-trained leaders distributed across the diverse array organizations that interact to keep public and private segments of society working, additional research reviewing MBA and EdD programs and outcomes side-by-side would benefit the body of knowledge that includes graduate education.

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