Crisis Management in Education: Influence of Innovative Leadership Towards Academic Administration In The Management Of Hybrid Learning During Covid-19

*Muhammad Syukri bin Abdul Halim[1], Khairil Asyraf bin Roslan[2] & Afareez Abd Razak Al-Hafiz[3]

[1,3]Kulliyah of Education,
International Islamic University Malaysia
Jalan Gombak,
53100 Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia

[2]Faculty of Social Science and Humanities,
Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology
Jalan Genting Kelang, 53300 Kuala Lumpur. W.P Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Corresponding author's email: khairilasyraf3690@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of academic administrators regarding the role of innovative leadership styles in facilitating the implementation of hybrid learning at the university level, focusing on the leaders' contributions to adopting such styles for effective implementation. The recent pandemic prompted significant changes in the methodologies and frameworks of formal education, requiring the comprehensive application of hybrid learning to address the circumstances effectively. The qualitative study design involved targeted informants who were heads of departments chosen from several kulliyyahs at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The accumulated data were then transcribed using thematic analysis, and themes were obtained to answer all the research questions. Research has demonstrated significant support for the specified leadership style in relation to the efficacy of hybrid learning.

Keywords: Educational Leaders, Innovative Leadership, Hybrid Learning, Crisis Management

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Global educational systems have been significantly impacted by the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, resulting in the near-total closure of institutions, universities, and schools. The Malaysian government has made the decision to temporarily close educational institutions in an attempt to stop the spread of COVID-19 (UNESCO, 2020). As of January 12, 2021, around 825 million pupils were impacted by pandemic-related school closures (Berita Harian, 2021). Over half of all students worldwide are impacted by the countrywide closures in 23 countries and the local closures in 40, according to UNICEF's (2021) monitoring.

Shutdowns of higher education institutions affect not only students, teachers, and families but also the economy and society as a whole (Aristovnik et al., 2020). Most institutes responded to the closures by promoting the use of open educational resources and platforms that teachers can utilize to connect with students remotely and minimize disruptions to instruction, as well as distance learning programs (UNESCO, 2020). Higher education institutions have been driven by the circumstances to come up with creative ways to teach students in-person, but socially isolated, online, or in a hybrid style (Newlin, 2021). Furthermore, a new normal has emerged as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has severely disrupted daily life and continues to have an influence on society in 2022. In order to maintain flexibility and resilience in unpredictable circumstances, organizational leaders have adjusted by putting strategies into place. Human resource departments have implemented hybrid work models in response to employee well-being, aiming to protect workers from the pandemic, promote work-life balance, manage mental health issues, and reduce stress caused by difficult commutes. Accordingly, a positive work environment significantly enhances employee loyalty. This indicates that a conducive and supportive workplace helps retain staff (Brown et al., 2023). "Workplace happiness" positively influences employee engagement and enhances innovative work behaviour, which leads to higher productivity (Fadila et al., 2025).

Hybrid learning is a combination of face-to-face and online learning (Niyomves et al., 2025). Due to its blending method, which combines the characteristics of both online and face-to-face situations, the hybrid format is also referred to as the best of both worlds (Lamport & Hill, 2012). Hybrid learning offers substantial benefits to students, teachers, and institutions when it is well-executed. The researchers found that learning outcomes were superior to those of traditional and in-person counterparts, and that blended learning courses were highly sought after because of their increased flexibility and convenience.

Recent studies showed that hybrid learning has become the preferred method of teaching and learning in tertiary education institutions. Among the reasons is that hybrid learning provides better instruction and improves learning outcomes (Bakolo, 2024). Hybrid learning also provided flexibility and accessibility to students. This helps work-oriented or non-traditional students who cannot attend classes as usual, given their restrictions. Besides that, hybrid learning also proves to be cost-effective (Wang, 2023), allows a more learner-centered pedagogy (Mohammadi et al., 2025), and can help reach a wider audience (Wang et al., 2023).

Given that the recent pandemic has caused a significant shift in the norms of daily life in general, it has also changed the approaches and designs used in formal education. This study necessitates the full implementation of hybrid learning to address the state of society, which is constantly terrified of contracting the infamous virus that could have deadly consequences. In order to positively impact the learning environment and structure through responding, making decisions, carrying out, and guaranteeing the efficacy of implementing hybrid education, the researcher was motivated to gain a thorough understanding of the field of educational administration regarding the role and components of innovative leadership style

in proactively responding to the dire situation mentioned. Such leadership qualities are thought to be somewhat necessary while facing the new issues that have affected and continue to affect the world. Additionally, the literature on this particular topic is sparse and limited; therefore, without being arrogant, our study would help to partially close the gap in the field.

The aim of this study is to investigate how innovative leadership influences academic administrators' management of hybrid learning during Covid-19.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 LEADERSHIP
Leadership is an area of study or a skill that covers an individual's, group's, or organization's ability to lead, influence, or direct other people, groups, and organizations. In an academic setting, the notion of leadership, which was once thought to be the exclusive domain of those in positions of power, has significantly changed in the modern era. It is now widely acknowledged that influence is a complicated, dynamic, and socially created process (Uhl-Bien, 2021). This overview of the literature summarizes the most recent studies on leadership, tracking the development of its prevailing theories, analyzing the crucial role of context, investigating the rise of shared and ethical leadership models, and suggesting future lines of inquiry. This review's main argument is that, in the twenty-first century, effective leadership is more about fostering psychological safety, adaptability, and a sense of shared purpose inside complex organizations than it is about using formal authority.

Leadership has been researched in relation to various traits (Kirkpatrick et al., 1991), contextual interaction, function, and behavior (Goldsmith, 2016), power, vision, and values (Richards & Engle, 1986), intelligence, and charisma, among others (Chin, 2015). It has long been believed that effective leadership is essential for the administration of any organization, regardless of its size. (Irma et al., 2021).

2.2 ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN MALAYSIA'S TERTIARY EDUCATION
Educational leaders oversee, plan, coordinate, and execute structures to carry out an educational system by merging human and material resources (Connolly et al., 2017). In Malaysia, the role of educational leaders in tertiary education is shaped by several key frameworks and trends. Educational leaders in Malaysia's tertiary education are influenced by the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), Global Ranking and Internationalisation, the post-pandemic shift, and the financial stability of the institution.

Educational leaders in Malaysia's tertiary education are expected to establish a compelling vision that corresponds with national goals and global trends. They must navigate their institution through rapid change, often changing traditional academic structures into agile, innovative establishments. According to a recent study, the successful implementation of the MEB-HE's strategic changes in Malaysian public institutions is closely related to good leadership. The study highlights the need for leaders to take on the role of "change agents" in order to promote an innovative culture and get beyond opposition in academic institutions (Wan et al., 2020).

Educational leaders have a responsibility to ensure the quality of education and to instigate innovation in the field. This entails transcending conventional curricula to develop programs that are industry-relevant, interdisciplinary, and incorporate digital skills. Post-pandemic era research highlights that educational leaders in Malaysia's tertiary education can now be considered as "digital learning architects." Their role

is essential in institutionalising the blended learning models that arose during Covid-19. It is their duty to ensure that the learning models are pedagogically sound and sustainable, rather than reverting back to purely traditional methods (Daud & Harun, 2014).

Educational leaders in Malaysia's tertiary education sector act as the drivers of research, innovation, and commercialization. The reputation of a university and funding are heavily linked to its ability to produce a high amount of impactful research. Leaders are required to create a supportive research ecosystem, which is achieved by attracting grants, fostering high-impact publications, building research clusters, and incentivising knowledge transfer and commercialization. A 2023 study on research productivity in Malaysian research universities found that leadership support was the most significant factor. This encompasses offering seed financing, diminishing administrative teaching responsibilities for active researchers, and fostering a collaborative and supportive research environment (Daud & Harun, 2014).

2.3 INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP

The cornerstones of innovative leadership are a distinct leadership style that explicitly focuses on catalyzing and sustaining innovation at every organizational level. Innovative leadership moves beyond merely managing change to actively creating it by developing cultures, structures, and processes that systematically generate new and useful ideas (Garcia-Morales, Jiménez-Barrionuevo, & Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, 2022).

Innovative leadership is not a single theory but an integrative construct that blends elements from transformational, servant, and authentic leadership paradigms and directs them explicitly toward the goal of innovation. It is defined as: "The ability to influence and motivate followers through a shared vision, while creating a climate of psychological safety, intellectual stimulation, and strategic support that is conducive to the generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas, products, processes, or services" (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019, p. 45).

Innovative leadership is more suited than other styles for three primary reasons. First, the phases of innovative leadership include (1) ideation, (2) assessment, and (3) execution. According to the administrators in control, the educational system may therefore differ in style depending on the location, time, facilities, and other elements. Due to the lack of standardization in the system, academic administrators will have a great chance to experiment and determine what works best for their institutions.

The second is that the framework is creative and does not solely concentrate on administrators or upper management. Individual and team creativity are the two categories into which the innovative leadership's creativity is divided. As each member's inventiveness develops, this could support the organization's further progress. The team has little opportunity to become innovative under charismatic and transactional leadership, as the leader must make all the decisions alone. The fundamental tenet of both leadership philosophies is that possessing ideal leadership traits is a must for success, even though the team may have had a little more opportunity under transformational and visionary leadership, as they collaborated on ideas.

2.4 HYBRID LEARNING

A form of education known as hybrid learning combines online learning resources and opportunities for online engagement with conventional in-person classroom instruction. It involves the teacher's and the student's physical presence in addition to a certain amount of student autonomy about time, location, path, or pace (Friesen, 2012). The primary distinction from "technology-enhanced" courses is that the online

elements are intended to supplant a substantial amount of in-person attendance, resulting in an integrated, restructured educational experience (Graham, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a significant motivator, necessitating a swift and widespread adoption of hybrid models worldwide. Prior to the pandemic, hybrid learning was frequently seen as an innovative option; subsequent to the pandemic, it has evolved into a prevalent expectation and a strategic necessity for numerous institutions (Hodges et al., 2020). This transition has elevated hybrid learning from a marginal teaching method to a fundamental element of institutional resilience and educational accessibility. According to recent research, hybrid models are now ubiquitous, moving from emergency remote instruction to more carefully planned and sustainable ecosystems (Müller & Wulf, 2022).

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this discussion, innovative leadership is used to comprehend the efficacy of hybrid learning. By integrating various leadership philosophies, innovative leadership inspires others to develop original concepts, products, and services. In the application of innovative leadership, the inventive leader is essential (Gliddon, 2006). As an organizational development strategy, innovative leadership can assist a group or organization in achieving its goals. Entities must be innovative in their thinking when it comes to new technologies and processes to sustain ongoing success and remain competitive (McEntire, 2011).

Understanding the idea of innovation is a prerequisite for understanding what innovative leadership comprises. According to the literature, it can be characterized as new concepts for workable products that are put into practice, despite the fact that there is much disagreement over how to define it (Hunter & Cushenbery, 2011). It is broken down into three phases, each of which is iterative and dynamic:
     1. Generation of Ideas
     2. Assessment
     3. Execution

As an inventive leadership model, a multilevel procedure model of innovation has been proposed, which employs both direct and indirect leadership on the aforementioned innovation processes to improve the innovation process (Hunter & Cushenbery, 2011). In this paradigm, indirect leadership impacts both team (evaluation phase) and individual (creation phase) creativity (see Figure 1). Both organizational innovation (in the implementation phase) and team creativity (in the evaluation phase) are directly impacted by leadership. The individual creativity (generation phase) box in the model illustrates how a person generates and presents fresh ideas to their team. The team's process of refining and adjusting that concept to the point of creating formalized sketches, simulations, or prototypes is shown in the team creativity (evaluation phase) box. The organizational innovation (implementation) box illustrates the testing, evaluation, and potential mass production of prototypes, sketches, or simulations.
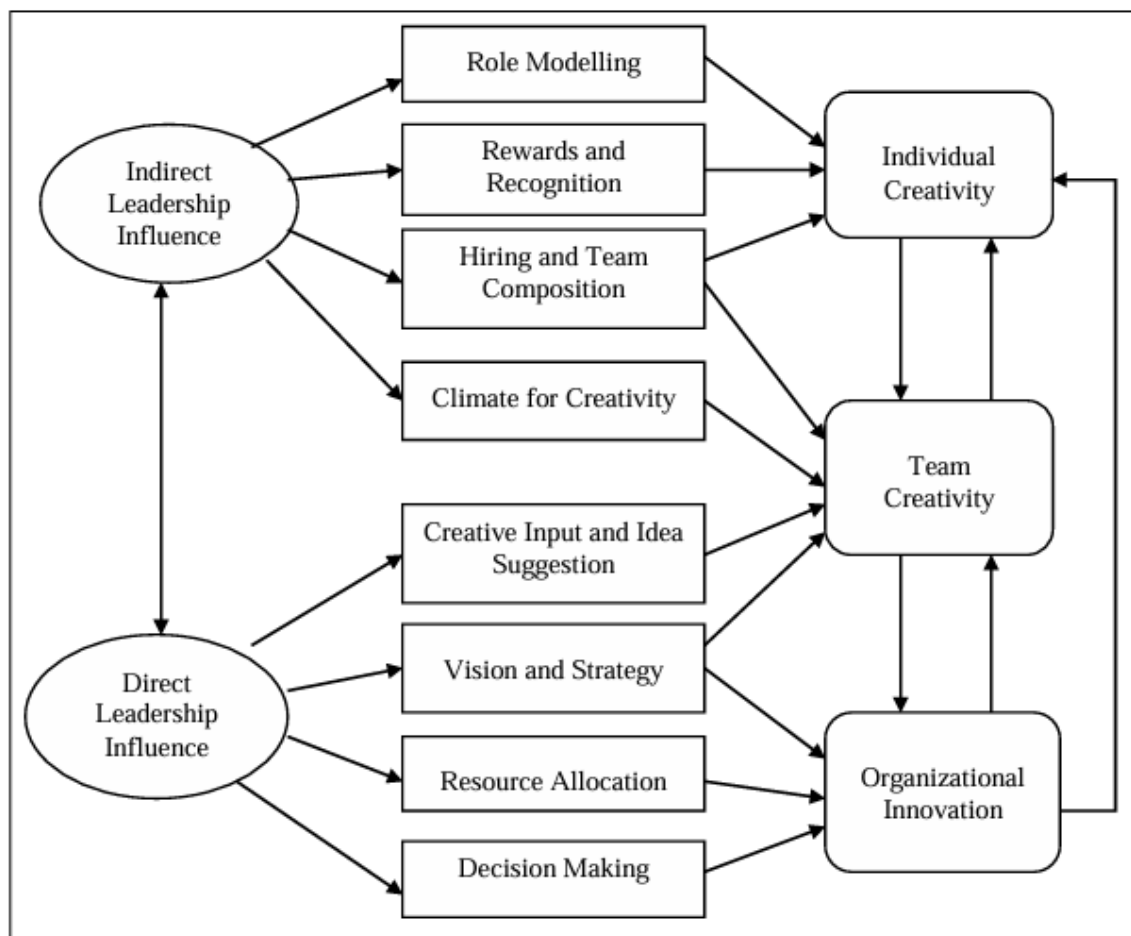
Figure 1: Model of Direct And Indirect Leadership Influences on The Process of Organizational Innovation

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected using qualitative research methods. The qualitative method was selected because it is effective in capturing the in-depth views of the phenomenon. The data was obtained through semi-structured interview sessions. A semi-structured interview is chosen because it facilitates an open yet guided discussion with industry professionals (Kallio et. al. 2016). This allows researchers to study predetermined topics while being flexible enough to dig deeper based on the sample's responses. By focusing on the perspective of academic leaders, it can capture the complexity of the situation and provide insights that are often overlooked in quantitative research. Open-ended questions were used in the interview sessions. The instruments for the interview were reviewed by an associate professor from the Faculty of Education in IIUM. The samples of the study were five academic administrators from the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). Data saturation was achieved after 5 samples were interviewed. Purposive sampling was used in the selection process for the participants. This method was chosen to select samples that are data-rich. The sample size of five was deemed adequate based on the principle of data saturation. The samples are academic leaders who have held positions such as Dean, Deputy Dean, Program Leader, and Course Coordinator. All of the samples are senior lecturers who possess more than 10 years of experience. Figure 2 provides the background information on the samples, including their positions and length of service. To ensure the anonymity of the samples, their names were hidden, and a label was assigned to each sample.

Samples	Position	Length of Service
Associate Professor A	Dean	15 years
Associate Professor B	Head of Department/Former Dean	20 years
Dr. S	Program Leader	10 years
Dr. J	Program Leader	11 years
Dr. M	Program Leader	13 years

Figure 2: Samples' Details

Before the data were collected, consent and permission were obtained from the faculty to conduct the interview. The consent form was given to the samples before the interview.
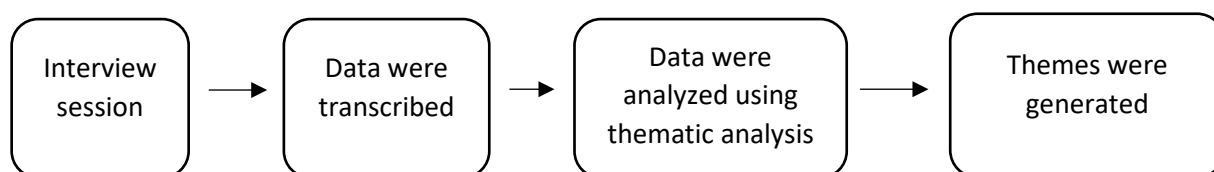

Figure 3: Data Collection Process

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This segment presents the analysis of interview findings, summarizing key themes on the role of innovative leadership in affecting the application of hybrid learning. This study addressed the following research questions in order to fill in the gaps left by other studies that had already talked about the concerns:

      1. How does innovative leadership affect the effectiveness of the implementation of hybrid learning?
      2. Why is innovative leadership important in the mentioned implementation?

4.1 FINDINGS

After the data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, two themes were identified, along with five sub-themes.

      Research Question 1: How does innovative leadership affect the effectiveness of the implementation of hybrid learning?
      Theme 1: Leader creativity enhances the hybrid learning implementation
            Sub-theme (a): Facilitating the complexities of the new learning environments
            Sub-theme (b): The flexibility for the lecturers
      Research Question 2: Why is innovative leadership important in the mentioned implementation?
      Theme 2: Changes in education style
            Sub-theme (a): The evolution of educational settings
            Sub-theme (b): Willingness to welcome something new
            Sub-theme (c): Highlighting the temperament of openness

RQ 1: How does innovative leadership affect the effectiveness of the implementation of hybrid learning?

4.1.1 Theme 1: Leader's creativity enhances the hybrid learning implementation

The first theme covered the creative leadership component that would improve the adoption of hybrid learning. Three out of five respondents agreed on this notion.

Informant #L1/DU14 said:

> "If we want to make sure that hybrid learning might have an impact on the students, the lecturer must be creative. Kalau lecturer tu tak kreatif, macam mana student nak bagi attention dalam kelas online? (If the lecturer is not creative, how would students want to pay attention in online classes?) So, a creative lecturer or someone with this innovative leadership style might have an impact on the whole class and the management of hybrid learning."

Informant #L3/DU10 said:

> "Due to the fact that innovative leadership focuses on the mindset and approaches to appeal to everyone involved in an organization to produce creativity, let it be ideas, products, or services, thus hypothetically if a concept prioritizes honing in the elements that are assumed to be need to address the situational demands, obviously, through innovative leadership it will be more effective in comparison to the other."

While informant #L4/DU12 said:

> "It can be said that innovative leadership might give a new vision in hybrid learning, as the leadership involves a creative element as the core of the style. I always believe that an educator, on whatever level, should be creative in the classroom. Furthermore, with the hybrid learning condition nowadays, it should be compulsory for the lecturer to be more creative."

4.1.1.1 Sub-Theme (1a): Facilitating the complexities of the new learning environments

They also emphasized the fact that the aforementioned execution will expedite the complexities of the new learning environment.

Informant #L1/DU16 said:

> "As a lecturer, we must admit that online learning, or hybrid learning, is the new learning system that needs to be facilitated by the lecturers. Innovative ways and creative ways of thinking might help the lecturers in facilitating the learning process."

Informant #L3/DU10 said:

> "Innovative leadership will be more effective in comparison to the other end of the spectrum of perpetuating a certain classical or traditional approach, which perhaps are seen as not facilitating the complexities of the learning environments that are dynamically changing, specifically in the domain of technological usage."

4.1.1.2 Sub-Theme (1b): The flexibility for the lecturers

Several informants mentioned the flexibility for the lecturers.

Informant #L1/DU20 said:

> "The university had given us the flexibility in our own ways of conducting classes. This helps us a lot in planning our own style of hybrid learning as the lecturer can use whatever method as long as the learning happens following the course outline."

Informant #L4/DU14 said:

> "While the hybrid learning is new, it is important to have the freedom of choosing ways of teaching in this new method of teaching. And yes, in this university, we were given the option whether to make the class synchronous or asynchronous. We can also select the software we want to use, such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams. It all depends on the lecturer's choice, which is good for us to pick the one that we are familiar with."

RQ2: Why is innovative leadership important in the mentioned implementation?

4.2.2 Theme 2: Changes in education style

Four out of five respondents concurred that the shifts in educational approaches make innovative leadership crucial.

Informant #L2/DU18 said:

> "As educators, we must admit that this time around of education is different than before. We cannot conduct the class in the same way as before. We needed a new strategy, a new method to handle this type of learning. Hence, the innovative leadership might be the answer for us."

Informant #L3/DU20 said:

> "I think innovative leadership is essential in this matter because the orientation of hybrid learning is on the basis of creativity, acceptance of technological development and change, and most importantly, the social and environmental shifts in the evolution of educational settings."

Informant #L4/DU16 said:

> "What we can say is that the changes in education have already happened. So, it's up to the educators for them to work their way within these new settings. And right now we are still facing the pandemic, so innovative leadership might suit us."

Informant #L5/DU26 said:

> "Innovative leadership is always related to the critical situation. We can say that right now is a critical situation."

He #L5/DU28 then added:

> "Almost all of the administration cannot conclude which type of way to handle the current situation. So, adopting this leadership style can at least

help us in solving the problem and deciding what the best for each own situation."

4.2.2.1 Sub-Theme (2a): The global evolution of educational settings
They also discuss the evolution of educational settings, which affects both Malaysia and other countries.

Informant #L3/DU20 said:
> "…most importantly, the social and environmental shifts in the evolution of educational settings."

Informant #L4/DU18 said:
> "We cannot ignore the evolution of educational settings; it happens globally. If we still stick to the old mechanism and traditional way of education, universities in our country will be left out as other overseas institutions already have several steps changes in front of us."

4.2.2.2 Sub-Theme (1b): The flexibility for the lecturers
Several informants also noted that the foundation of educational advancement must correspond with a willingness to explore anything new.

Informant #L2/DU20 said:
> "Changes happen, this is the new norm. With the IR 4.0, educators must welcome something new. It seems this leadership style is in line with the future of education."

Informant #L3/DU22 said:
> "With due intelligence having the propensity to appreciate creativity and the willingness to welcome something new, and… then obviously looking from the opposite end of things, that is being adamant to perpetuate the classical style of the learning setting would be assumed to hinder or slow down the progress of the implementation for hybrid learning."

4.2.2.3 Sub-Theme (2c): Highlighting the temperament of openness
Two of them mentioned the point of openness.

Informant #L3/DU22 said:
> "It seems like innovative leadership is highlighting the temperament of openness."

Informant #L5/DU32 said:
> "A lecturer who doesn't communicate or discuss with the students can be categorised as selfish. As a good educator, we should be more open to discussion. For the time being, a lot of the decisions should be made together with the students to facilitate them in learning. So, yes, the openness quality should be within someone with the title of educator."

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research seeks to explore the influences of innovative leadership on educational leaders in the management of hybrid learning. The subject of this study was how creative leadership influences the implementation of hybrid learning. Identifying the reasons why innovative leadership is essential for the aforementioned implementation was another objective.

5.1 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Critical expected findings that aligned with the conceptual framework were seen as a result of the study's research questions. There is little literature on academics' perspectives on the innovative leadership influence of educational leaders in managing hybrid learning at the beginning of the study. However, after conducting the study, it was found that the results support several key themes.

5.1.1 RQ1: How does innovative leadership affect the effectiveness of the implementation of hybrid learning?

The majority of the informants emphasized how innovative leadership's creative component influences how well hybrid learning is implemented. As stated by Roqobih et al. (2019), in the fourth industrial revolution, learning can occur anywhere and at any time, necessitating the application of creative thinking. We can therefore draw the conclusion that a leader must possess creativity in order to pursue more successful hybrid learning.

While welcoming innovative teachers is a great place to start, it is insufficient to foster innovation throughout the organization. Being adaptable is one of the most active roles that leadership must play to achieve this. Hughes (2025) asserts that forward-thinking executives prioritize both short-term success and long-term objectives. Innovation-driven leaders move swiftly. Indeed, the study found a direct association between the level of innovation and execution speed, with the top 10% of quickest leaders also ranking in the top 1% for innovation effectiveness. Organizations that place a high priority on innovation are more inclined to embrace leaders who exhibit the traits and behaviors mentioned above.

5.1.2 RQ2: Why is innovative leadership important in the mentioned implementation?

Without fully present leadership, innovation cannot succeed at the organizational level. The element of modifications in teaching style is primarily highlighted by the informants. This is similar to Richard (1992), an American organizational theorist and professor of management, who argues that organizations must remain open to ongoing innovation in order to thrive, as change is now commonplace in today's world. Therefore, in order to succeed in hybrid learning, leaders are advised to embrace innovative leadership.

There are structural and motivational aspects to being open to new experiences (McRae, 2004). Individuals who are highly open are more inclined to engage in self-reflection and actively seek out novel experiences. Given that hybrid learning is relatively new in Malaysia, educators and leaders should be open-minded. Due to their structurally flexible way of thinking, individuals can create new connections between seemingly unrelated concepts. Conversely, closed individuals feel more comfortable in familiar and comfortable settings, which makes the hybrid learning approach less suitable.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS

The study's conclusions can be applied to expand the usage of hybrid learning in higher education. One of its essential implications is gaining a comprehensive understanding of the role and components of innovative leadership styles in proactively responding to the current situation to positively impact the learning environment and structure through responding, making decisions, implementing, and ensuring the efficacy of hybrid education.

Many different groups can benefit from this research, especially individuals who are curious about how higher education functions in society or within an organization. These include the following:

a. Policymakers in higher education can enhance their institutional hybrid learning practices by using the study's findings. Institutional or administrative policies can be used to implement the idea of hybrid learning.

b. New themes and ideas in hybrid learning may be supported and understood by higher education stakeholders who want to improve university environments for hybrid learning.

c. One strategy for bringing about constructive change in Malaysian higher education settings is hybrid learning, especially when it comes to the issue of new norms in areas where events similar to Covid-19, such as natural disasters, pose a threat to people's lives.

d. Higher education leadership seeking a hybrid learning model, the importance of innovative leadership in hybrid learning, the challenges and expectations of hybrid learning, and suggestions to enhance hybrid learning can support and comprehend emerging themes and sub-themes of hybrid learning.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the current study focuses only on the extent of hybrid learning deployment in higher education at IIUM, it would be beneficial for future research to broaden this study and set additional boundaries to realize the significance in a broader domain that can be justified for all Malaysian higher education institutions. The study's conclusions lead to the following recommendations:

a. Advice for academic leaders on how to implement innovative leadership in hybrid learning. Most informants concurred that the hybrid learning environment is ideally suited for innovative leadership.

b. Advice for academic administrators and lecturers on the foundation of hybrid learning that will be used, since different institutions may employ various learning strategies based on the circumstances and students.

c. It is advised that the government take the initiative to provide technology, particularly internet connectivity in some areas, as this is crucial for the implementation of hybrid learning.

d. Higher education institutions are recommended to establish a support group and guidelines for teachers and students to help those who are unable to keep up with the technological advancements in the hybrid learning process.

e. Suggestions for how students and learners should change the way they think about hybrid learning as the way that higher education in Malaysia would be conducted in the years to come.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Investigating academics' perceptions of educational leaders' creative leadership influence in hybrid learning management was the aim of this qualitative study. The study was effective in raising the awareness of academic administrators regarding the need for creative leadership in implementing hybrid learning. Additionally, it is evident that the creative component of innovative leadership is crucial to hybrid learning management.

The results of the study are detrimental in providing educational leaders in Malaysian universities with a framework to develop alternatives to teaching and learning during a crisis. Although Covid-19 is unlikely to happen again in the near future. Other occurrences, such as natural disasters, could halt the teaching and learning process. This is made more relevant by the frequent occurrence of floods in Malaysia, which halt several universities on the east coast of Malaysia every year.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies
This work was prepared using Quilbot for language enhancement.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, F., & Ghavifekr, S. (2023). Leadership practices and research productivity in Malaysian research universities: A PLS-SEM approach. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*.

Adair-Toteff, C. (2005). Max Weber's Charisma. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 189–204.

Afsar, B., Badir, Y. F., Saeed, B. B., & Hafeez, S. (2017). Transformational and transactional leadership and employee's entrepreneurial behavior in knowledge–intensive industries. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 307–332.

Antonoglou, L. D., Charistos, N. D., & Sigalas, M. P. (2011). Design, Development and Implementation of a Technology Enhanced Hybrid Course on Molecular Symmetry: Students' Outcomes and Attitudes. *Chemistry Education Research Practice, 12*, 454–468. doi: 10.1039/c0rp90013c

Aristovnik, A., Kerzic, D., Ravselj, D., Tomazevic, N., Umek, L. (2020). Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Life of Higher Education Students: A Global Perspective. *Sustainability*, 8438. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12208438.

Ashland University. (2014). The new definitions to the course offerings. *Aspire Public Schools* (2014). Blended Learning 101.

Asmanto, P., & Fachrunnisa. O. (2024) The Role of Employee Well-Being and Work Resilience in Supporting Career Satisfaction.

Basye, D. (2014). Personalized vs. Differentiated vs. Individualized Learning. *ISTE*.

Bass, B.M. (1996). A New Paradigm of Leadership: An Inquiry into Transformational Leadership. US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Alexandria, VA.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology : Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544–559.

Ben, J. (2010). *What Teachers Want: Better Teacher Management*. Grattan Institute: Carlton, Victoria.

Bersin, J. (2004). *The Blended Learning Book: Best Practices, Proven Methodologies, and Lessons Learned.* Wiley.

Besemer, S. P., O'Quin, K. (1999). Confirming the Three-Factor Creative Product Analysis Matrix Model in an American Sample. *Creativity Research Journal*, 287 – 296.

Blainey, G. (2004). *A Very Short History of the World.* Allen Lane, London.

Blier, H. M. (2008). Webbing the Common Good: Virtual Environment, Incarnated Community, and Education for the Reign of God. *Teaching Theology and Religion, 11*, 24–31. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9647.2007.00393.x

Bonakdarian, E., Whittaker, T., & Yang, Y. (2010). Mixing it up - More Experiments in Hybrid Learning. *The Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges, 25*(4), 97–103.

Bonk, C.J. & Graham, C.R. (2006). *The Handbook of Blended Learning Environments: Global Perspectives, Local Designs.* Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, San Francisco.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Supporting a Grounded Theory with an Audit Trail: An illustration. International *Journal of Social Research Methodology, 12*(4), 305–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570802156196

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods.* Oxford University Press Inc, New York:

Bush, T. (2018). Educational Management Administration & Leadership. *SAGE Journals, 46* (6): 883–887. doi:10.1177/1741143218795731.

Bycio, P., Hackett, R. D., & Allen, J. S. (1995). Further Assessments of Bass's (1985) Conceptualisation of Transactional and Transformational Leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 80*(4), 468–478.

Chemers, M. (1997). *An integrative theory of leadership.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Chin, R. (2015). Examining teamwork and leadership in the fields of public administration, leadership, and management. *Team Performance Management. 21* (3/4): 199–216. doi:10.1108/TPM-07-2014-0037

Choosri B. (2014). Enhancing Students' Language Skills through Blended Learning. *Electronic Journal of E-Learning.* 14.

Winch, C. & Gingell, J. (2008). *Philosophy of Education: The Key Concepts* (2nd edition). London: Routledge, 2008.

Collis, B. (2003). Course Redesign for Blended Learning: Modern Optics for Technical Professionals. *International Journal of Continuing Engineering Education and Lifelong Learning, 13*, 22–38.

Connolly, M., James, C., Fertig, M. (2017). The Difference between Educational Management and Educational Leadership and the Importance of Educational Responsibility. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership. 47* (4): 504–519. doi:10.1177/1741143217745880.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2nd Edition). Sage Publications, Inc., California.

Daft, R. L. (2015*). Organization Theory and Design*:12th. CENGAGE LEARNING, INC,

Dal Bello, A., Knowlton, E., & Chaffin, J. (2007). Interactive Videoconferencing as a Medium for Special Education: Knowledge Acquisition in Preservice Teacher Education. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 43*(1), 38–46. doi: 10.1177/10534512070430010501

Daniel, Gartrell (2013). *A Guidance Approach for the Encouraging Classroom* (6th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Belmont, CA.

Daud, M, & Harun, M. (2014). Top Leaders' Attributes in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions.

David & Sandy S. (1984). Plato Rising. Atarimagazines.com.

DeNisco, A. (2014). Different Faces of Blended Learning. District Administration.

Dziuban, C. D., Hartman, J. L., and Moskal, P. D. (2004). Blended Learning. Center for Applied Research: EDUCAUSE.

Edith E. (2014). Blended Learning: How Brick-and-Mortar Schools are Taking Advantage of Online Learning Options. Connections Learning. Educational Technology and Mobile Learning (2014). The Four Important Models of Blended Learning Teachers Should Know About.

El Mansour, B., & Mupinga, D. M. (2007). Students' Positive and Negative Experiences in Hybrid and Online classes. College Student Journal, 41, 242–248.

Finke, R. A., Ward, T. B., & Smith, S. M. (1992). *Creative Cognition: Theory, Research, and Applications.* MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Finnish National Agency for Education (2014). Curricula 2014. www.oph.fi.

Friesen, N. (2012). Report: Defining Blended Learning.

García-Morales, V. J., Jiménez-Barrionuevo, M. M., & Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, L. (2022). Transformational leadership influence on organizational performance through organizational learning and innovation. *Journal of Business Research, 148*, 314–328.

Garrison, D. R., & Heather, K. (2004). Blended Learning: Uncovering its Transformative Potential in Higher Education, *The Internet and Higher Education 7*: 95–105.

Giesbers, B.; Rienties, B.; Tempelaar, D.; Gijselaers, W. (2014). A Dynamic Analysis of the Interplay between Asynchronous and Synchronous Communication in Online Learning: The Impact of Motivation. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning. 30* (1): 30–50. doi:10.1111/jcal.12020.

Gliddon, D. G. (2006). Forecasting a Competency Model for Innovation Leaders using a Modified Delphi Technique.

Goldsmith Marshall (2016). Leaders Make Values Visible.

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R.E., & McKee, A. (2003). *The New Leaders: Transforming the art of leadership.* Sphere, London.

Graham, C. R. et al. (2019). Blended Teaching Readiness: Model and Instrument Development. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, No. 3, 151–165.

Graham, C. R.; Woodfield, Wendy; Harrison, J. Buckley (2013). A Framework for Institutional Adoption and Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Education. *Blended Learning in Higher Education: Policy and Implementation Issues*. 18: 4–14. doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2012.09.003.

Graham, C. R. (2006). *Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs.* Pfeiffer Publishing, San Francisco, CA.

Hanna, D. E.; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle & Conceicao-Runlee, Simone (2000). *147 practical tips for teaching online groups.* Atwood Publishing. Madison, Wisconsin.

Hansen, J. A., & Pihl-Thingvad, S. (2019). Managing employee innovative behaviour through transformational and transactional leadership styles. *Public Management Review, 21*(6), 918-944.

Harter et al. (2003). Well-being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes: A review of the Gallup studies.

Haynie, D. (2015). Experts debate graduation rates for online students. U. S. News & World Report.

Ho, C.-H. & Swan, K. (2007). Evaluating Online Conversation in an Asynchronous Environment: An Application of Grice's Cooperative. *Internet and Higher Education, 10* (1): 3–14.

Hodges et al. (2020). The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning.

Howell, J. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Locus of Control, and Support for Innovation: Key Predictors of Consolidated-Business-Unit Performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*(6), 891-902.

Hrastinski, S. (2008). Asynchronous and synchronous e-learning. *Educause Quarterly*, 51–55.

Hrastinski, S. (2019). What Do We Mean by Blended Learning?. *TechTrends*, 564–569.

Huberman, M. A. & Miles, M. B. (2002). *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Hughes et al. (2025). Leadership, Creativity, And Innovation: A Critical Review And Practical Recommendations.

Hunter, S.T., Cushenbery, L. (2011). Leading for Innovation: Direct and Indirect Influences. *Advances in Developing Human Resource, 13*, 248–265.

Hycner, R. H. (1985). Some Guidelines for the Phenomenological Analysis. *Human Studies, 8*, 279–303. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00142995

Idaho Digital Learning (2014). 6 Models of Blended Learning.

IIEP-UNESCO (2014). Teacher Management.

Irma, et. al. (2021). A Pilot Study on The Influence Of Headmasters Leadership On Workload And Job Satisfaction Of Special Education Teachers In Johor, Malaysia. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education, 12*(11), 5157–5171.

Jazzar, M. (2012). Online Student Retention Strategies: A Baker's Dozen of Recommendations. Faculty Focus.

Jenna Lähdemäki-Pekkinen(2017). Could compulsory education last a lifetime?

Jessica K., Brittan H., & Lucas W. (2014). Blended Learning Defining Models and Examining Conditions to Support Implementation, Philadelphia Education Research Consortium (PERC).

John Arul, Phillips. (2021). Hybrid-blended learning: The new normal. The Star.

Johnson, H. M (2007). Dialogue and the Construction of Knowledge in Elearning: Exploring Students' Perceptions of their Learning while using Blackboard's Asynchronous Discussion Board. European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning.

Jon, S. (2008). The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills. Research for Better Teaching Inc.

Joosse, Paul. (2014). Becoming a God: Max Weber and the Social Construction of Charisma. Journal of Classical Sociology, 266–283.

Kaleta, R., Skibba, K. and Joosten, T. (2007). Discovering, Designing, and Delivering Hybrid Courses. Blended Learning: Research Perspectives, edited by A. G. Picciano and C. D. Dziuban, 111-43. Sloan Consortium: Needam, MA.

Kallio et al. (2016). Systematic Methodological Review: Developing A Framework For A Qualitative Semi-Structured Interview Guide.

Kamarlis et al. (2025). Examining the Influence of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance: A Case Study of the Dungun Municipal Council.

Kashyap, V. & Rangnekar, S. (2014). Servant Leadership, Employer Brand Perception, Trust in Leaders and Turnover Intentions: *A Sequential Mediation Model. Review of Managerial Science, 10* (3): 437–461. doi:10.1007/s11846014-0152-6.

Kebritchi, M.; Lipschuetz, A. & Santiague, L. (2017). Issues and challenges for teaching successful online courses in higher education: A literature review. *Journal of Educational Technology System 46*(1) doi:10.1177/0047239516661713.

Khan Academy (2012). *In the Real World*. Coach resources.

Kirkpatrick, S. A. & Locke, E. A. (1991). Leadership: Do traits matter?. Academy of Management Executive, 5 (2).

Lamport, M. A., & Hill, R. J. (2012). Impact of Hybrid Instruction on Student Achievement in Post-Secondary Institutions: A Synthetic Review of the Literature, *Journal of Instructional Research*.

Lieblein, E. (2000). Critical Factors for Successful Delivery of Online Programs. *Internet and Higher Education,* 161–174.

Lothridge, Karen; et al. (2013). Blended learning: efficient, timely, and cost effective. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 407–416.

Management Study (2013). Henri Fayol's 14 Principles of Management. Management Study HQ.

Marion, M. (2014). *Guidance of young children* (Ninth ed.). Boston.

Martyn, M. (2003). The hybrid online model: Good practice. *Educause Quarterly*: 18–23.

Matthew, Taylor (2017). Flexibility at Work can be a Liberation. Royal Society of Arts.

Maxwell, J. A. (2009). *Designing a Qualitative Study. The Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods.* California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mazliham, M. Su'ud (2022). Malaysia Set To Enter A New Phase Of Hybrid Learning. Business Today.

McEntire, L. E., Greene-Shortridge, T. M. (2011). Recruiting and selecting leaders for innovation: How to find the right leader. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 13*, 266- 278

McRae, T. R. (2004). "Openness to Experience". Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology. 2. Elsevier.

Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K. (2010). Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies. U.S.Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development: Washington DC.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, M. a, & Saldana, J. (2014). Drawing and Verying Conclusions. In Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook.

Mommsen, P. (2019). The Community of Education. Plough Quarterly.

Moskal, Patsy; Dziuban, Charles; Hartman, Jole (2012). Blended learning: A dangerous idea?. Internet and Higher Education. 18: 15–23.doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2012.12.001.

Müller, C., & Wulf, T. (2022). Blended learning environments and learning outcomes: The mediating role of flow experience. *The International Journal of Management Education, 20*(3), 100694.

Mumford, M. D., Scott, G. M., Gaddis, B., & Strange, J. M. (2002). Leading creative people: Orchestrating expertise and relationships. The Leadership Quarterly, 13, pg. 705 – 750

National Center for Education Statistics (2016). Digest of Education Statistics. U.S. Department of Education.

Newlin, T. (2021). How We Navigated a Hybrid Remote Learning Environment Using Wolfram Technology. WolframAlpha.com: Champaign, Illinois.

Nik Abdul Rahman, N. S. (2008). A Practical Guide to Interviewing in Educational Research. Gombak: Centre for Teaching and Learning, KOED.

Odumeru, J. A., & Ogbonna, I. G. (2013). Transformational vs. transactional leadership theories: Evidence in literature. *International Review of Management and Business Research*, 355.

Oliver M, Trigwell K (2005). Can 'Blended Learning' Be Redeemed?. *E-Learning, 2* (1): 17–26. doi:10.2304/elea.2005.2.1.17.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood,

K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 533–544.

Park, Hyunjoon; Shavit, Yossi (2016). Special Issue: Education as a Positional Good. Research in Social Stratification and Mobility. 43 (supplement): 1–70.

Parsons, P., & Ross, D. (2002). Planning a campus to support hybrid learning. Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction [Online]

Patton, M. (1990). Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods, 169–186.

Peercy, P. S. and Cramer, S. M. (2011), Redefining Quality in Engineering Education Through Hybrid Instruction, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 100 : 625-629.

United Nations (2020). Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and Beyond.

Radford, A.W. (2011). Learning at a Distance: Undergraduate Enrollment in Distance Education Courses and Degree Programs. nces.ed.gov.

ResourcEd (2018). School strategy: A guide to meeting strategic goals and challenges in schools.

Richard, L. D. (1992). Essential Organization Theory and Design

Robert K. Greenleaf (1970). Servant Leadership.

Robinson, K. (2006). Schools Kill Creativity. TED Talks, Monterey, CA, US.

Roqobih, F; Yuliani, and Rahayu, Y.S. (2019). Improving Student's Creative Thinking Skill through Blended Learning using Schoology. J. Phys.: Conf. Ser.

Rosing, K., Frese, M., & Bausch, A. (2011). Explaining the Heterogeneity of the Leadership-Innovation Relationship: Ambidextrous Leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 956-974

Saksen, S. G., Lauer, K. J., Ekvail, G., Britz, A., (2001). Perceptions of the best and worst climate for creativity: Preliminary validation evidence for the Situational Outlook Questionnaire. *Creativity Research Journal*, 171-184

Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 179–183.

Sarros, J. C., Cooper, B. K., & Santora, J. C. (2008). Building a Climate for Innovation through Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 15*, 145-158

Sendjaya, Sen; Eva, Nathan; Robin, Mulyadi; Sugianto, Lyfie; ButarButar, Ivan; Hartel, Charmine (2019). Leading Others to go Beyond the Call of Duty: A Dyadic Study of Servant Leadership and Psychological Ethical Climate. *Personnel Review.*

Sendjaya, Sen; Sarros, James C. (2002). Servant Leadership: Its Origin, Development, and Application in Organizations. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1998). Leadership as Pedagogy, Capital Development and School Effectiveness. International.

Siemens, G., Gašević, D., & Dawson, S. (2015). Preparing for the Digital University: A Review of the History and Current State of Distance, Blended, and Online Learning. Athabasca University.

Slay, Bre-Ann (2020). COVID-19 Will Intensify Education Inequities for Black Students. diverseeducation.com.

Stake, R. (1995). The Art of Case Study Research. In Thousand Oaks

Stewart, A. R.; Harlow, Danielle B. & DeBacco, Kim (2011). Students' Experiences of Synchronous Learning in Distributed Environments. *Distance Education*. 357–381.

Strauss, V. (2012). Three fears about blended learning. The Washington Post.

Summers, K. (2020). COVID-19 and the Future of Education. University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Tim, Litle (2013). 21st Century Learning and Progressive Education: An Intersection. International Journal of Progressive Education, 13-19.

Towler, Annete. (2020) How Charismatic Leaders Gain Commitment to their Vision and the Mission of the Organization. CQ Net.

Uhl-Bien, M. (2021). Complexity leadership and followership: Changed leadership in a changed world. *Journal of Change Management, 21*(2), 144-162.

UNESCO. (2020). Adverse Consequences of School Closures.

UNESCO. (2020). COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response.

UNESCO. (2020). UNESCO Releases First Global Numbers and Mobilizes Response.

Usman, H. (2009). *Manajemen, Teori, Praktik, dan Riset Pendidikan*. PT Bumi Aksara. Jakarta.

Vignare, K. (2002). *Elements of Quality Online Education: Practice and Direction.* Sloan Consortium: Needham, MA.

Wan, C. D., Sirat, M., & Razak, D. (2020). Academic Governance and Leadership in Malaysia: Examining the National Higher Education Strategic Initiatives.

Western, Simon (2019). *Leadership: A Critical Text.* Sage Publication, London.

Winters, M. (2012). *Teachers Matter: Rethinking How Public Schools Identify, Reward, and Retain Great Educator*s. Rowman & Littlefield.

Wolfe, R. (1994). Organizational Innovation: Review, Critique and Suggested Research Directions. *Journal of Management Studies*, 405-431.

Woodworth, P., Applin, A. G. (2007). A Hybrid Structure for the Introductory Computers and Information Technology Course. *The Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges*, 136-144. www.moe.gov.sg (2018). Organisational Structure.

Yi. L., Lin. E., Ling. V., & Tze-Yin. L. (2023). The Dance of Leadership: Unravelling the Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Engagement in Malaysia's Private Sector.

Yin, R. K. (2009). How to Do Better Case Studies. In D. J. Bickman, Leonard & Rog (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., pp. 254–282). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Yudko, E., Hirokawa, R., & Chi, R. (2008). Attitudes, Beliefs, and Attendance in a Hybrid Course. *Computers & Education, 50*, 1217–1227. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2006.11.005