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FINAL THESIS

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Educational leadership styles and its influence on students' engagement by building inclusive environment

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1. Introduction

Historical background of leadership in education

The study of leadership in education has a rich and evolving historical background, reflecting the changing societal demands, teaching approaches, and the growing recognition of the leaders and their role in shaping the educational field. From the 20th century to the present day, the conceptualization and practice of educational leadership have undergone significant transformations, shaped by various theoretical frameworks and empirical research (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017).

In the early 20th century, the predominant approach to educational leadership was heavily influenced by the principles of scientific management, which emphasized efficiency, standardization, and hierarchical control (Callahan, 1962). This era saw the rise of the "principal" as the primary educational leader, tasked with implementing top-down directives and ensuring the smooth operation of schools (Hallinger, 2018). The authoritarian leadership style, characterized by a high degree of centralized decision-making and minimal input from teachers and students, was the dominant model during this time (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017).

As the 20th century progressed, the field of educational leadership began to shift, drawing inspiration from the human relations movement and the emerging theories of democratic and participative leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). Scholars and practitioners began to recognize the importance of fostering collaborative environments, emphasizing the crucial role of teachers in the decision-making process, and developing a more inclusive and responsive approach to leadership (Hallinger, 2018). This period saw the rise of the "instructional leader," who focused on supporting and guiding the pedagogical practices of teachers, rather than solely on administrative tasks (Hallinger, 2005).

The 1980s and 1990s marked a significant turning point in the history of educational leadership, as the field began to embrace a more democratic and visionary approach (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). Influenced by the work of James MacGregor Burns and Bernard Bass, the transformational (democratic) leadership model emphasized the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower followers, rather than relying solely on positional authority (Burns, 1978;

Bass, 1985). This approach resonated with the growing emphasis on school-based management, shared decision-making, and the empowerment of teachers and students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017).

In the 21st century, the field of educational leadership has continued to evolve, reflecting the increasingly complex and diverse educational landscape (Northouse, 2019). The emergence of distributed leadership, which emphasizes the collective agency and shared responsibility of multiple stakeholders, has challenged the traditional hierarchical models of leadership (Harris, 2020). Similarly, the rise of instructional leadership, which focuses on the leader's role in directly supporting and guiding the teaching and learning process, has gained significant traction in the field (Hallinger, 2005).

Concurrently, the influence of global and societal trends, such as the increasing emphasis on equity, diversity, and inclusion, has led to the recognition of the need for culturally responsive and socially just approaches to educational leadership (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2015). This has given rise to the exploration of alternative leadership models, such as culturally responsive leadership and social justice leadership, which aim to address systemic inequities and empower marginalized communities (Khalifa, 2018). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the importance of adaptive and flexible leadership in education, as school leaders have been challenged to navigate the complexities of remote and hybrid learning, address the social-emotional needs of students and staff, and ensure the continuity of educational services (Leithwood, 2020). This has highlighted the need for educational leaders to possess a diverse set of competencies, including crisis management, technological proficiency, and the ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders.

As the field of educational leadership continues to evolve, scholars and practitioners recognize the need to engage in ongoing research, reflection, and professional development to ensure that educational leaders are equipped to meet the ever-changing demands of the 21st-century educational landscape (Northouse, 2019). The historical trajectory of educational leadership underscores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of this field, and the crucial role that leaders play in shaping the learning experiences and outcomes of students, teachers, and the broader educational community.

Importance and relevance of studying different leadership styles in education

The study of leadership styles in education is important, as the way educators and administrators approach leadership can have a profound impact on the learning environment, student outcomes, and the overall success of an educational institution. Among the three primary leadership styles in education - authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire - each one carries its own unique set of strengths, weaknesses, and implications for the educational setting.

The authoritarian leadership style, also known as the "autocratic" style, is characterized by a high degree of control and decision-making power vested in the leader (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010). In an educational context, this style is often employed by principals, administrators, or teachers who firmly believe in their own expertise and the need for strict adherence to policies and procedures. Authoritarian leaders tend to make unilateral decisions, provide clear directives, and expect immediate compliance from their subordinates (Hussain & Rehman, 2013). While this approach can foster a sense of order and structure, it can also lead to stifled creativity, decreased motivation, and a lack of autonomy among students and staff (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010).

On the other hand, the democratic leadership style, also known as the "participative" style, emphasizes collaboration, shared decision-making, and the active involvement of all stakeholders (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010). In educational settings, democratic leaders encourage open communication, solicit input from teachers, students, and parents, and strive to build a sense of community and ownership (Hussain & Rehman, 2013). This approach can foster a more positive and engaging learning environment, as it allows for the exchange of ideas, the development of critical thinking skills, and the cultivation of a shared sense of responsibility (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010). However, the democratic style may also present challenges, such as the potential for slower decision-making processes and the need for effective facilitation and conflict resolution skills.

The third primary leadership style in education is the laissez-faire, or "hands-off," approach. In this style, leaders take a more passive role, providing minimal guidance and allowing their subordinates to make their own decisions with little intervention (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010). In an educational context, laissez-faire leaders may delegate a significant amount of responsibility to teachers and students, giving them a high degree of autonomy and independence (Hussain & Rehman, 2013). While this approach can foster a sense of ownership and self-directed learning, it may also result in a lack of clear direction, inconsistent policies, and a potential decline in overall academic performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010).

Beyond these three primary styles, there are also several sub-styles that can emerge within the educational leadership landscape. For example, the "transformational" leadership style, which emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire and motivate their followers, has been increasingly recognized for its potential to drive positive change and innovation in education (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010; Hussain & Rehman, 2013). Likewise, the "instructional" leadership style, which focuses on the leader's role in directly supporting and guiding the instructional process, has been found to be particularly effective in improving student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010).

The relevance of studying these different leadership styles in education cannot be overstated. As educational institutions navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world, the ability of leaders to adapt their approaches and respond effectively to the diverse needs of their stakeholders is crucial (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010). By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different leadership styles, educators and administrators can better tailor their approaches to the specific context and needs of their school or district, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for students, teachers, and the broader educational community.

Moreover, the study of leadership styles in education can also inform the development of professional development programs, succession planning, and the recruitment and selection of educational leaders (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010). By identifying the key competencies and characteristics associated with effective leadership, educational institutions can better prepare and support their current and future leaders, ensuring the continued growth and success of their educational systems.

The study of leadership styles in education is a vital area of research and practice, with far-reaching implications for the quality of teaching and learning, the well-being of students and staff, and the overall performance of educational institutions. By understanding the nuances of authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles, as well as emerging sub-styles, educators and administrators can make informed decisions that optimize the learning environment and foster the development of engaged, empowered, and successful students.

<center>**Statement of the Problem**</center>

The existing literature on the impact of leadership styles in education has provided valuable insights into the various approaches that can shape the learning environment and student outcomes. However, there remain several gaps and issues that warrant further exploration and investigation.

One notable gap in the literature is the need for a more nuanced and contextual understanding of how different leadership styles impact student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). While the broad categorizations of authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles have been well-established, the ways in which these styles manifest in diverse educational settings and their subsequent effects on student engagement are not always clear (Northouse, 2019). Factors such as school culture, student demographics, and the specific challenges faced by individual institutions can significantly influence the dynamics between leadership styles and student engagement (Khalifa, 2018).

Additionally, the existing literature has primarily focused on the direct relationship between leadership styles and student academic performance, often neglecting the crucial aspect of student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). However, research has shown that student engagement is a multifaceted construct, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, all of which are critical for successful learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2016). By expanding the focus to include a more comprehensive understanding of student engagement, researchers can better understand the complex ways in which leadership styles can shape the overall learning experiences and motivation of students (Shernoff et al., 2017).

Another issue that emerges from the literature is the tendency to view leadership styles as static and inflexible, rather than dynamic and adaptable (Hallinger, 2018). In reality, effective educational leaders often employ a repertoire of leadership approaches, tailoring their style to the specific needs of the situation and the diverse stakeholders involved (Harris, 2020). The literature would benefit from a deeper exploration of how educational leaders navigate and balance in different leadership styles, and how they can develop the flexibility to shift between approaches as needed (Northouse, 2019).

Furthermore, the existing research has primarily focused on the experiences and perspectives of administrators and teachers, often overlooking the voices and perceptions of students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). Gaining a more comprehensive understanding of how students themselves experience and respond to different leadership styles can provide valuable

insights into the nuances of student engagement and the factors that contribute to their overall learning and development (Fredricks et al., 2016). Another issue that emerges from the literature is the lack of attention paid to the potential intersections between leadership styles and other contextual factors, such as school climate, teacher-student relationships, and parental involvement (Hallinger, 2018). By examining these interconnections, researchers can gain a more holistic understanding of how leadership styles shape the broader educational ecosystem and its impact on student engagement (Khalifa, 2018).

Additionally, the existing literature has tended to focus on traditional school settings, neglecting the unique challenges and opportunities presented by current emerging educational models, such as online and hybrid learning environments (Leithwood, 2020). As the educational landscape continues to evolve, it is crucial to investigate how different leadership styles can be effectively applied and adapted to these new contexts, and how they may impact student engagement in these settings (Harris, 2020).

Finally, the literature would benefit from a more diverse and inclusive approach to the study of educational leadership, incorporating perspectives from underrepresented and marginalized communities (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2015). This could lead to the identification of culturally responsive and socially just leadership approaches that address systemic inequities and empower students from diverse backgrounds (Khalifa, 2018).

While the existing literature on the impact of leadership styles in education has provided valuable insights, there remain several gaps and issues that deserve further exploration. By addressing these gaps, researchers can deepen our understanding of the complex relationships between leadership, student engagement, and the broader educational ecosystem, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective and equitable educational practices.

Current problems in leadership in education:

1. Need for more nuanced and contextual understanding of how different leadership styles impact student engagement.
2. Tendency to view leadership styles as static and inflexible, rather than dynamic and adaptable.

3. Lack of examination of the intersections between leadership styles and other contextual factors, such as school climate, teacher-student relationships, and parental involvement.

4. Neglect of emerging educational models, such as online and hybrid learning environments, and how leadership styles can be effectively applied and adapted to these new contexts.

Hypothesis

There are two hypothesis that the research work will investigate:

Hypothesis №1: Students perceive democratic leadership styles as more conducive to fostering student engagement compared to authoritarian or laissez-faire styles
Null hypothesis: There is no significant difference in perceived student engagement across different leadership styles

Hypothesis №2 : Students who report experiencing supportive and inclusive leadership behaviors demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their educational activities
Null hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between perceived leadership inclusivity and student engagement levels

Objectives of the research work :

1. To examine the relationship between different leadership styles and student engagement.

2. To investigate the impact of leadership inclusivity on student engagement.

3. To compare and contrast findings with existing literature.

Questions of the research work:

1. What are the specific attributes of democratic leadership that students believe contribute to higher engagement?

2. How do authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles impact students' motivation and involvement in learning activities?

3. Are there differences in student engagement in classrooms led by teachers with different leadership styles?

4. How do student demographics (age, grade level, field of study, country origin) influence their perception of leadership styles and engagement?
5. What behaviors do students identify as indicative of supportive and inclusive leadership in educational environments?

2. Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The study of educational leadership is lying on a lot of theories and models that offer insights into the complex dynamics of leadership, organizational behavior, and their impact on different educational results. At the core of this theoretical foundation have several works that have shaped the understanding and practice of educational leadership over the past decades.

One of the most influential theories in this industry is the **transformational leadership theory,** proposed by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and later expanded upon by Bernard M. Bass (1985). This theory states that effective leaders possess the ability to inspire and motivate their followers by articulating a compelling vision, fostering a sense of purpose, and encouraging them to transform their self-interests for the greater good of the organization. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to challenge the traditional states, stimulate intellectual curiosity, and provide individualized support and consideration to their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

In the context of education, transformational leadership has been found to play a pivotal role in driving positive change, fostering a collaborative and innovative school culture, and enhancing student outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Transformational leaders in educational settings are adept at articulating a shared vision for the school, promoting professional growth among teachers, and empowering stakeholders to embrace and contribute to the school's mission (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Another influential theoretical framework in educational leadership is the path-goal theory, developed by Robert J. House (1971). This theory suggests that effective leaders are adept at identifying the motivational needs of their followers and providing the necessary support, guidance, and resources to help them achieve their goals. According to the path-goal theory, leaders can adopt different leadership styles – directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented – depending on the situational factors and the characteristics of their followers (House & Mitchell, 1974).

In educational settings, the path-goal theory has been used to examine how different leadership styles can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of teachers, students, and other stakeholders. For instance, a directive leadership style may be more appropriate in situations where

tasks are complex or ambiguous, while a participative approach may be more effective when dealing with highly motivated and skilled individuals (Wofford & Liska, 1993).

The **theory of distributed leadership** has also gained notice in the field of educational leadership in recent years. This theory challenges the traditional notion of leadership as a top-down, hierarchical process and instead conceptualizes leadership as a collective endeavor involving multiple stakeholders within an organization (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership recognizes that leadership expertise is not solely vested in formal leadership positions but can be found throughout the organization, and it encourages the sharing of leadership responsibilities and decision-making processes (Harris, 2013).

In educational contexts, distributed leadership has been embraced as a means of empowering teachers, students, and parents to actively participate in the leadership process and contribute their unique perspectives and expertise. This approach has been shown to foster a sense of ownership, enhance collaboration, and promote sustainable change within schools (Hairon & Goh, 2015).r Furthermore, the concept of culturally responsive leadership has gained development in recent years, particularly in addressing the needs of diverse student populations and promoting equitable educational practices. Culturally responsive leadership involves acknowledging and embracing the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of students, families, and communities, and using this understanding to inform leadership decisions and practices (Khalifa et al., 2016). This theoretical perspective emphasizes the importance of educational leaders developing cultural competence, fostering inclusive environments, and challenging deficit-based thinking and biases that may perpetuate systemic inequities (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). By adopting a culturally responsive leadership approach, educational leaders can create learning environments that celebrate diversity, empower marginalized groups, and promote academic success for all students (Khalifa, 2018).

While these theories and frameworks have made significant contributions to the understanding of educational leadership, it is important to note that **no single theory can fully capture the complexity and multifaceted nature of leadership in educational settings.** Effective educational leadership often requires a synthesis of multiple theoretical perspectives and a nuanced understanding of the unique context, challenges, and stakeholders involved in each educational institution.

Additionally, as the educational landscape continues to evolve, with the increasing influence of technology, globalization, and changing societal dynamics, new theoretical frameworks and models may emerge to address emerging challenges and opportunities in educational leadership. Ongoing research, critical reflection, and the integration of diverse perspectives will be essential in advancing the theoretical foundations of educational leadership and informing more effective and inclusive leadership practices

Leadership Styles and Student Engagement

The relationship between leadership styles and student engagement has been extensively studied, as it holds important practices for the overall learning experience and academic outcomes of students. Researchers and educators have contributed efforts to understanding how different leadership approaches can shape the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of student engagement.

One of the most commonly explored leadership styles in this context is the authoritarian or autocratic style, characterized by a high degree of control, centralized decision-making, and a clear power hierarchy (Northouse, 2019). Studies have found that this leadership style can have a mixed impact on student engagement, with both potential benefits and drawbacks. On one hand, the structured and disciplined environment fostered by authoritarian leadership can provide a sense of order and clarity, which may resonate with some students and promote their engagement in academic tasks (Sayeed & Hamid, 2018). However, the lack of autonomy and limited opportunities for student input can also lead to decreased intrinsic motivation, stifled creativity, and a diminished sense of ownership over the learning process (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). Consequently, this leadership style may negatively impact various aspects of student engagement, particularly emotional and cognitive engagement.

In contrast, the democratic or participative, transformative leadership style, which emphasizes collaboration, shared decision-making, and open communication, has been found to be more conducive to fostering student engagement (Sayeed & Hamid, 2018). By actively involving students in the decision-making process and encouraging their input, democratic leaders can cultivate a sense of ownership and investment in the learning experience, thereby enhancing students' emotional and cognitive engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). Studies have also highlighted the positive impact of democratic leadership on creating a supportive and inclusive

learning environment, where students feel empowered to express their ideas and perspectives (Khalifa et al., 2016). This sense of belonging and psychological safety can contribute to higher levels of behavioral engagement, as students are more likely to actively participate in classroom activities and discussions (Fredricks et al., 2016).

The laissez-faire or hands-off leadership style, characterized by minimal guidance and intervention, has been found to have a complex relationship with student engagement (Sayeed & Hamid, 2018). While this approach can foster a sense of autonomy and self-directed learning, it may also lead to a lack of clear direction, inconsistent policies, and a potential decline in overall academic performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017). Research suggests that the laissez-faire style can be detrimental to student engagement, particularly in situations where students require more structured guidance and support (Northouse, 2019). Without clear leadership and direction, students may struggle to stay motivated and engaged, resulting in lower levels of cognitive and behavioral engagement (Fredricks et al., 2016).

It is important to note that the effectiveness of leadership styles on student engagement can be influenced by various contextual factors, such as school culture, student demographics, and the specific problems faced by the educational institution (Hallinger, 2018). Some studies have found that a combination of leadership styles, tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the school, can be more effective in fostering student engagement than a rigid adherence to a single approach (Sayeed & Hamid, 2018). Furthermore, researchers have begun to explore the impact of emerging leadership styles, such as transformational and distributed leadership, on student engagement. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to transcend their self-interests for the greater good of the organization, has been associated with increased student engagement and academic achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017).

Democratic leaders in educational settings are skilled at articulating a compelling vision, fostering a collaborative culture, and empowering teachers and students to embrace and contribute to the school's mission (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Distributed leadership, which recognizes the shared nature of leadership responsibilities and encourages the involvement of multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes, has also been linked to increased student engagement (Harris, 2020).

It is important to note that the methodological approaches employed in studying the relationship between leadership styles and student engagement have varied across studies. Some researchers have relied on self-report measures, such as surveys and interviews, to assess student engagement and perceptions of leadership styles (Fredricks et al., 2016). Others have employed observational methods, such as classroom observations and analysis of school documentation, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between leadership practices and student engagement (Hallinger, 2018). While these methodologies have contributed valuable insights, there is a need for more rigorous and innovative research designs that can capture the complex and dynamic nature of the relationship between leadership styles and student engagement.

Leadership Inclusivity and Student Engagement

Inclusive leadership is rooted in the principles of culturally responsive and socially just educational practices, which acknowledge the diverse experiences, perspectives, and needs of students from various cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Khalifa et al., 2016). By recognizing and celebrating this diversity, inclusive leaders create learning environments that cultivate a sense of belonging, respect, and psychological safety for all students (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Research has consistently demonstrated that students who feel valued and supported in their educational journey are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Fredricks et al., 2016). When students perceive their unique identities and experiences as being appreciated and represented within the school culture, they are more inclined to invest their efforts, aspirations, and energy into the learning process (Khalifa, 2018). Inclusive leadership practices can take various forms, such as incorporating diverse perspectives and cultural references into the curriculum, promoting equitable access to educational resources and opportunities, and fostering open and respectful dialogue on issues of diversity and social justice (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Studies have shown that students who experience inclusive leadership practices exhibit higher levels of emotional engagement, characterized by a strong sense of belonging, positive attitudes towards learning, and a willingness to take academic risks (Fredricks et al., 2016).

Moreover, inclusive leadership practices have been found to enhance cognitive engagement among students by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the ability

to consider different opinions (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). By exposing students to a range of cultural viewpoints and encouraging them to engage in respectful dialogue and debate, inclusive leaders create opportunities for students to expand their intellectual horizons and develop a deeper understanding of complex social and global issues.

Behavioral engagement, which encompasses active participation in classroom activities, attendance, and overall involvement in the school community, has also been positively associated with inclusive leadership practices (Fredricks et al., 2016). Additionally, further research is needed to understand the intersectionality of various identities and how inclusive leadership practices can be tailored to address the unique needs and experiences of students from diverse backgrounds.

As educational institutions continue to grapple with the challenges of an increasingly diverse and globalized world, the importance of inclusive leadership cannot be overstated. By embracing and celebrating diversity, promoting equity, and empowering all students, inclusive leaders have the potential to create transformative learning environments that foster engagement, academic success, and personal growth for every student.

Emerging Trends and Challenges

One of the most significant trends shaping the future of educational leadership is the rapid integration of technology into the learning environment. The proliferation of digital tools, online platforms, and virtual learning spaces has transformed the traditional classroom model, offering new opportunities for personalized and collaborative learning experiences (Sheninger, 2019). However, this technological revolution also presents leaders with the challenge of ensuring enough access to the resources, uniting digital products, and providing enough amount of training and support for both educators and students (Harris & Jones, 2020). Educational leaders must not only embrace the potential of technology but also develop a deep understanding of its effective implementation and integration into the curriculum (Sheninger, 2019). This requires a strategic approach to technology integration, fostering a culture of innovation, and empowering teachers and students to leverage digital tools in meaningful and transformative ways.

Another emerging trend impacting educational leadership is the growing emphasis on global citizenship and cross-cultural disciplines. In an increasingly interconnected world, students must develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to navigate diverse cultural contexts and engage with complex global issues (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). Educational leaders

play a crucial role in promoting a curriculum that fosters global awareness, intercultural understanding, and the development of essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and collaboration (Rassele & Friedenberg, 2022).

This trend presents educational leaders with the challenge of creating learning environments that are culturally responsive and inclusive, while also preparing students to thrive in an increasingly globalized society (Khalifa et al., 2016). Leaders must navigate complex conversations around diversity, equity, and social justice, while also equipping educators with the necessary tools and resources to support the development of global competencies.

The rise of personalized and student-centered learning approaches is another significant trend transforming educational leadership. This shift towards tailoring instruction to individual needs, interests, and learning styles has been facilitated by advancements in technology and a deeper understanding of how students learn (Bray & McClaskey, 2015). Educational leaders must embrace these innovative pedagogies and create supportive environments that foster student agency, self-directed learning, and a growth mindset (Rickabaugh, 2016). However, implementing personalized learning approaches at scale presents challenges, such as ensuring adequate resources, providing ongoing professional development for educators, and developing effective assessment and progress monitoring systems (Bray & McClaskey, 2015). Leaders must navigate these complexities while maintaining a clear vision and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making.

The increasing emphasis on social-emotional learning aka. SEL and whole-child development is another emerging trend shaping educational leadership. Recognizing that academic success is intrinsically linked to students' emotional well-being, mental health, and overall sense of belonging, educational leaders are tasked with creating learning environments that support the holistic development of students (Mahfouz, 2018). This involves integrating SEL into the curriculum, providing targeted support services, and fostering a positive school climate that promotes resilience, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence (Mahfouz, 2018).

Educational leaders must navigate the challenges of allocating resources, providing professional development for educators, and developing effective evaluation and assessment strategies for SEL (Mahfouz, 2018). Additionally, they must foster strong partnerships with families and community organizations to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to supporting students' social-emotional needs. Furthermore, the ongoing disruptions caused by

crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted the need for educational leaders to be agile, adaptable, and resilient in the face of uncertainty (Harris & Jones, 2020). Educational leaders must be adept at crisis management, effective communication, and the ability to navigate complex decision-making processes in rapidly evolving situations (Harris & Jones, 2020). They must also prioritize the well-being and safety of their staff and students, while ensuring continuity of learning and support services.

As the educational landscape continues to evolve, emerging trends and challenges will inevitably arise, testing the adaptability and vision of educational leaders. However, by embracing a growth mindset, fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, and leveraging the collective expertise of their communities, educational leaders can navigate these complexities and create learning environments that are responsive, equitable, and empowering for all students.

Synthesis of Literatures

As it was mentioned before, researchers have explored the impact of various leadership approaches, such as authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire styles, on fostering student engagement across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2017; Northouse, 2019). While democratic and transformational leadership styles have been found to be more conducive to promoting student engagement, the effectiveness of these approaches is influenced by contextual factors and the unique needs of the educational setting (Sayeed & Hamid, 2018). Moreover, the concept of inclusive leadership, which emphasizes valuing diversity, promoting equity, and empowering all students, has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing student engagement and academic success (Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). As it was stated before, studies have shown that when students feel their identities and experiences are affirmed and represented within the school culture, they exhibit higher levels of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement (Fredricks et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2018). Again, inclusive leadership practices, such as incorporating diverse perspectives into the curriculum, promoting equitable access to resources, and fostering open dialogue on issues of diversity and social justice, can create a supportive and empowering learning environment for all students.

Additionally, the literature has highlighted the importance of addressing emerging trends and challenges in educational leadership, such as the integration of technology, the emphasis on global citizenship and cross-cultural competencies, the rise of personalized and student-centered

learning approaches, the increasing focus on social-emotional learning, and the need for agility and resilience in the face of crises (Bray & McClaskey, 2015; Harris & Jones, 2020; Mahfouz, 2018; Rassele & Friedenberg, 2022; Sheninger, 2019). Educational leaders must navigate these complexities while maintaining a clear vision, fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, and leveraging the collective expertise of their communities.

Cross-cultural perspectives on educational leadership

Cross-cultural perspectives on educational leadership styles and student engagement have garnered increasing attention in recent years, as the world becomes increasingly globalized and educational institutions become more diverse. Recognizing the influence of cultural dimensions on leadership approaches and student engagement is crucial for fostering inclusive and effective learning environments that cater to the diverse needs and backgrounds of students. One of the seminal theoretical frameworks that has shaped the understanding of cross-cultural leadership is the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) study, conducted by Robert J. House and his colleagues (House et al., 2004). This extensive research project investigated the cultural values and practices related to leadership across 62 societies, revealing significant variations in leadership expectations and preferences across different cultural clusters. The GLOBE study identified nine cultural dimensions, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. These dimensions have been found to influence the perception and effectiveness of various leadership styles, as well as the manifestations of student engagement (Dorfman et al., 2012). For instance, in cultures with high power distance, where hierarchical structures and centralized decision-making are more accepted, authoritarian or directive leadership styles may be more effective in engaging students than in cultures with low power distance, where participative and democratic approaches are preferred (Dorfman et al., 2012). Similarly, in collectivistic cultures that emphasize group harmony and loyalty, transformational leadership styles that foster a shared vision and collective identity may resonate more strongly with students than in individualistic cultures (Aycan et al., 2013).

Research has also explored the impact of cultural dimensions on student engagement itself. A study by Yin (2020) investigated the role of collectivism and individualism in shaping student engagement across different cultural contexts. The findings suggested that in collectivistic

cultures, where group cohesion and interpersonal relationships are highly valued, students were more likely to exhibit higher levels of behavioral and emotional engagement when they perceived a strong sense of belonging and support from their peers and teachers. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, where personal achievement and autonomy are emphasized, cognitive engagement and intrinsic motivation were more prominent drivers of student engagement. Furthermore, studies have examined the influence of cultural values and norms on the perception and manifestation of different dimensions of student engagement. For example, Lam et al. (2012) explored the role of self-construal (independent vs. interdependent) in shaping student engagement among Chinese and American students. They found that interdependent self-construal, which is more prevalent in collectivistic cultures, was associated with higher levels of emotional and behavioral engagement, while independent self-construal, more common in individualistic cultures, was linked to higher cognitive engagement.

Beyond cultural dimensions, researchers have also explored the impact of specific cultural contexts on leadership styles and student engagement. For instance, a study by Moswela and Gobingca (2020) investigated the challenges faced by school leaders in implementing inclusive leadership practices in Botswana. They found that cultural beliefs and traditional gender roles posed barriers to fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment, highlighting the need for culturally responsive leadership approaches that address these contextual factors. Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2016) explored the concept of culturally responsive school leadership in the United States, emphasizing the importance of educational leaders developing cultural competence, fostering inclusive environments, and challenging deficit-based thinking and biases that perpetuate systemic inequities. Their work highlights the significance of understanding and considering the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students to promote engagement and academic success.

In addition to cultural dimensions and specific cultural contexts, researchers have also examined the impact of cross-cultural interactions and multicultural educational settings on leadership styles and student engagement. A study by Omeje et al. (2020) investigated the role of intercultural competence in supporting effective leadership and fostering student engagement in multicultural classrooms. They found that leaders who demonstrated strong intercultural communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to manage cultural diversity effectively were better equipped to create inclusive and engaging learning environments for students from diverse backgrounds. Despite the growing body of research in this area, there remain gaps and

opportunities for further exploration. For instance, more cross-cultural comparative studies are needed to understand the nuances and variations in leadership preferences and their impact on student engagement across different cultural contexts. Exploring these intersections can provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments.

As educational institutions continue to become increasingly diverse and globalized, it is imperative that educational leaders develop cultural competence and adopt culturally responsive leadership approaches that acknowledge and consider the diversity of their student populations. By understanding the cross-cultural perspectives on leadership styles and student engagement, educational leaders can tailor their approaches and create learning environments that foster engagement, academic success, and personal growth for all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

The interplay between leadership styles, student engagement, and disciplines

The interplay between leadership styles, student engagement, and specific subject areas or disciplines is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has garnered increasing attention in recent years. While research has explored the broader relationships between leadership approaches and student engagement, delving into the nuances of how these dynamics manifest across different subject areas can provide valuable insights for educational leaders and practitioners. One area that has received considerable attention is the impact of leadership styles on student engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. STEM subjects are often perceived as challenging and demanding, requiring a high level of cognitive engagement and problem-solving skills from students. In this context, research has highlighted the effectiveness of transformational and instructional leadership approaches in fostering student engagement and academic achievement (Velasco et al., 2022; Ayob et al., 2020). Transformational leaders in STEM education can inspire students by covering a vision for the potential impact and significance of these fields. By serving as role models, providing intellectual stimulation, and encouraging creativity and innovation, transformational leaders can cultivate intrinsic motivation and cognitive engagement among STEM students (Velasco et al., 2022). Additionally, instructional leadership practices, such as providing guidance, support, and professional development opportunities for STEM educators, can directly impact the quality of instruction and pedagogical approaches,

thereby enhancing student engagement and understanding of complex scientific and mathematical concepts (Ayob et al., 2020).

In contrast, the arts and humanities disciplines often require a different approach to fostering student engagement. These subject areas often involve creative expression, critical analysis, and the exploration of diverse perspectives and cultural contexts. In this domain, research has highlighted the benefits of democratic and distributed leadership styles in promoting student engagement (Bolden et al., 2015; Garnett, 2019). By involving students in decision-making processes, encouraging open dialogue, and creating a collaborative learning environment, democratic leaders in arts and humanities education can cultivate a sense of autonomy, and intellectual stimulation among learners. This approach can enhance critical thinking skills, and the ability to appreciate and understand diverse cultural and artistic expressions (Bolden et al., 2015). Additionally, distributed leadership practices that empower teachers, students, and community members to share leadership responsibilities can foster a rich and inclusive learning environment that celebrates diversity and promotes engagement with the humanities (Garnett, 2019). In language education, both at the native and foreign language levels, the impact of leadership styles on student engagement takes on a distinct character. Language learning involves not only cognitive engagement but also significant emotional and behavioral components, as students navigate the complexities of communication, cultural nuances, and identity formation (Gao et al., 2021).

Research has highlighted the importance of adopting culturally responsive and inclusive leadership practices in language education settings (Khalifa et al., 2016; Gao et al., 2021). By fostering an environment that values and accepts cultural diversity, and by challenging deficit-based thinking and biases, inclusive leaders can create a safe and supportive space for language learners to actively engage in the learning process without fear of judgment or marginalization. This approach can enhance emotional engagement, promote open communication, and foster a sense of belonging among language learners (Gao et al., 2021). Furthermore, the integration of technology and innovative pedagogical approaches in language education has necessitated the adoption of adaptive and visionary leadership styles. Leaders in this domain must be adept at embracing and facilitating the effective implementation of technologies such as language learning software, virtual reality simulations, and online collaborative platforms (Healey, 2016). By fostering a culture of innovation and providing support and professional development opportunities for language educators, leaders can enhance student engagement and promote the

development of essential language skills in the digital age (Healey, 2016). Beyond these specific subject areas, the interplay between leadership styles and student engagement can also be observed in vocational and technical education settings. In these contexts, where hands-on learning, practical skills, and industry-relevant competencies are paramount, research has highlighted the effectiveness of a combination of instructional and participative leadership approaches (Loureiro et al., 2021; Park et al., 2020).

Instructional leadership practices, such as providing guidance, resources, and professional development opportunities for vocational and technical educators, can ensure that students receive high-quality, industry-aligned instruction and training (Loureiro et al., 2021). Simultaneously, a participative leadership style that involves students in decision-making processes, encourages collaboration, and fosters a sense of ownership over their learning can enhance behavioral engagement, motivation, and the development of essential problem-solving and teamwork skills (Park et al., 2020).

It is important to note that while these subject-specific trends and patterns have emerged from research, the interplay between leadership styles and student engagement is not a one-size-fits-all style. Effective educational leaders have to have the unique characteristics, learning objectives, and pedagogical approaches of each subject area, while also considering the diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and developmental needs of their students. Adopting a flexible and adaptive approach to leadership, drawing from a repertoire of styles and strategies, and fostering an environment that values collaboration, inclusivity, and continuous improvement is essential for promoting student engagement across all subject areas and disciplines (Hallinger, 2018; Harris, 2020). Furthermore, ongoing research and interdisciplinary collaborations can provide deeper insights into the complex interplay between leadership styles, student engagement, and subject-specific nuances. By incorporating perspectives from fields such as educational psychology, cognitive science, and discipline-specific pedagogy, researchers and educational leaders can develop more comprehensive and tailored approaches to fostering engaging and effective learning experiences for students across all subject areas.

The rapid advancement of technology and the emergence of innovative pedagogical approaches

One of the most transformative technologies impacting education is the integration of virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) systems. These immersive technologies have the potential to revolutionize the way students engage with educational content by providing interactive, multisensory experiences that transcend the limitations of traditional classroom settings (Radianti et al., 2020). VR/AR applications can transport students to historical events, simulated environments, or even distant galaxies, allowing them to explore complex concepts and phenomena in a highly engaging and experiential manner (Kavanagh et al., 2017). Research has shown that the use of VR/AR technologies can significantly enhance student engagement, particularly in areas such as science, history, and geography, where visual and spatial representations play a crucial role in understanding abstract concepts (Radianti et al., 2020; Kavanagh et al., 2017). By providing immersive and interactive experiences, these technologies can foster cognitive engagement, promote active learning, and cultivate a sense of curiosity and wonder among students (Kavanagh et al., 2017).

However, the effective integration of VR/AR technologies in educational settings requires visionary leadership that fosters innovation and provides educators with the necessary training, resources, and support. Educational leaders must foster a culture that encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and the exploration of new pedagogical approaches (Kavanagh et al., 2017). Additionally, they must address issues of accessibility, equity, and the ethical considerations surrounding the use of these technologies to ensure an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students (Radianti et al., 2020).

Another emerging technology that holds significant potential for enhancing student engagement is the use of gamification and game-based learning approaches. By incorporating game mechanics, such as points, badges, leaderboards, and narrative elements, into educational content, gamification can tap into students' intrinsic motivations, fostering engagement, persistence, and a growth mindset (Alsawaier, 2018; Ding et al., 2017). Game-based learning takes this concept a step further by immersing students in interactive, simulated environments where they can apply their knowledge and skills to solve complex problems, make decisions, and experience the consequences of their actions in a safe and engaging context (Plass et al., 2015). These approaches have been shown to promote cognitive engagement, critical thinking, problem-

solving abilities, and the development of essential 21st-century skills such as collaboration, communication, and creativity (Plass et al., 2015; Ding et al., 2017).

Beyond these technological innovations, emerging pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning (PBL) and flipped classroom models have gained significant traction in recent years, offering exciting opportunities to enhance student engagement and promote active learning (Han et al., 2015; Awidi & Paynter, 2019). PBL involves students working collaboratively on authentic, real-world projects that integrate multiple subject areas and require them to apply their knowledge and skills to solve complex problems (Han et al., 2015). This approach has been shown to enhance cognitive engagement, promote critical thinking, and foster essential skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and communication (Han et al., 2015; Awidi & Paynter, 2019). The flipped classroom model, on the other hand, inverts the traditional instructional approach by having students engage with instructional content (e.g., video lectures, readings) outside of class, while classroom time is dedicated to hands-on activities, collaborative work, and personalized guidance from the educator (Awidi & Paynter, 2019). This approach promotes student agency, active learning, and personalized support, ultimately enhancing cognitive and behavioral engagement (Awidi & Paynter, 2019).

Effective implementation of these innovative pedagogical approaches requires transformational and distributed leadership that empowers educators and students to take ownership of the learning process (Han et al., 2015; Awidi & Paynter, 2019). Educational leaders must provide ongoing professional development, create opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices, and foster a culture that values risk-taking, innovation, and continuous improvement (Han et al., 2015).

Despite the promising potential of these emerging technologies and innovative pedagogies, their successful integration into educational settings is not without challenges. Issues such as access to resources, technological infrastructure, teacher training, and equity concerns must be addressed by educational leaders to ensure that these innovations are accessible and beneficial to all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographical location (Trust & Whalen, 2020; Ding et al., 2017). Furthermore, ongoing research and evaluation are essential to assess the effectiveness of these technologies and pedagogies in enhancing student engagement and academic outcomes. Educational leaders must foster a data-driven culture that prioritizes evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

Collaborations with researchers, technology experts, and industry partners can provide valuable insights and facilitate the development of best practices for the integration of emerging technologies and innovative pedagogies into educational settings.

The influence of leadership styles on student well-being and mental health

Research has shown that authoritarian or autocratic leadership styles, characterized by high control, strict rules, and limited autonomy, can have detrimental effects on student well-being and mental health (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Wray-Lake et al., 2017). These leadership approaches often create an environment of fear, stress, and pressure, which can exacerbate anxiety, depression, and burnout among students (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Furthermore, authoritarian leadership styles may stifle students' sense of agency, self-determination, and intrinsic motivation, which are crucial components of psychological well-being (Wray-Lake et al., 2017). In contrast, democratic and transformational leadership styles, which emphasize collaboration, shared decision-making, and empowerment, have been found to positively influence student well-being and mental health (Wray-Lake et al., 2017; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). These leadership approaches foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel respected, and empowered to express their opinions and contribute to the decision-making processes (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017).

Democratic and transformational leaders create a sense of community and belonging within the educational setting, which can contribute to students' emotional well-being and promote positive social connections (Wray-Lake et al., 2017). Additionally, these leadership styles encourage students to develop a growth mindset, resilience, and a sense of purpose, all of which are essential for maintaining good mental health and overall well-being (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017).

Furthermore, research has highlighted the importance of inclusive and culturally responsive leadership practices in promoting student well-being and mental health, particularly among marginalized and underrepresented student populations (Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Inclusive leaders acknowledge and embrace the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities of students, creating a safe and affirming environment that fosters a sense of belonging and psychological safety (Khalifa et al., 2016). By challenging deficit-based thinking and addressing systemic biases and inequities, inclusive leaders can mitigate the negative impact of discrimination and marginalization on student well-being and mental health (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Additionally, culturally responsive leadership practices promote the

development of positive self-identity, self-esteem, and resilience among students from diverse backgrounds, contributing to their overall well-being and academic success (Khalifa et al., 2016).

The influence of leadership styles on student well-being and mental health extends beyond the classroom and into the broader school community. Effective leaders recognize the interconnectedness of various aspects of the educational experience and prioritize the creation of a positive and supportive school climate (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Wray-Lake et al., 2017). By fostering a culture of care, empathy, and open communication, educational leaders can create an environment where mental health issues are destigmatized, and students feel comfortable seeking support and resources when needed (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Additionally, leaders who prioritize the well-being of their staff and promote a healthy work-life balance can contribute to a positive and supportive school community, which in turn benefits student well-being and mental health (Wray-Lake et al., 2017).

Effective leadership in promoting student well-being and mental health often requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach, involving partnerships with mental health professionals, counselors, and community organizations (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). . Moreover, educational leaders play a crucial role in providing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to enhance their understanding of mental health issues and equip them with the necessary skills to recognize and respond to students in distress (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). By promoting mental health literacy and trauma-informed practices among educators, leaders can create a more supportive and responsive learning environment for students (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Furthermore, as educational institutions navigate the evolving landscape of remote and hybrid learning environments, there is a need to investigate the influence of leadership styles on student well-being and mental health in these contexts (Harris & Jones, 2020). Understanding the unique challenges and opportunities presented by these modalities could inform effective leadership strategies to support student well-being and mental health in the digital age.

The influence of leadership styles on student well-being and mental health is a critical area of focus for educational leaders and researchers alike. By doing democratic, transformational, and inclusive leadership approaches, educational leaders can create supportive and nurturing learning environments that promote emotional well-being, foster positive mental health, and empower students to thrive academically and personally. However, addressing the complex interplay

between leadership, well-being, and mental health requires ongoing research, collaboration, and a commitment to developing comprehensive and responsive support systems within educational institutions.

3. Methodology

There were used both quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate the topic of leadership in education focusing on its styles and influence on student engagement in educational institutions.

Descriptive research methodology, particularly quantitative research method has been chosen as it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data, enabling the examination of relationships between variables and the testing of hypotheses, and a to prove the hypothesis. The quantitative research methodology has a potential to evaluate the hypothesis objectivity and precision by relying on objective measurements and numerical data, which fosters accuracy in both data collection and analysis. The use of standardized procedures and instruments helps mitigate bias, ensuring consistency across studies. Quantitative research offers generalizability, often employing representative samples from larger populations. This practice allowed the study to extrapolate findings to broader groups or contexts, thereby enhancing the research outcomes.

The quantitative research was made by distributing Google Forms questionnaires by public web link through social media channels. The main aim of the quantitative approach was to cover a wide range of layers of graduates, studying, and education related people. The rest of the analysis and results will be given in the Analysis section.

Since quantitative research methodology has its own limitations, including the potential oversimplification, challenges in capturing context of the situations, and the risk of overlooking important nuances, the study also includes quantitative research methods as interviews from leading experts. A qualitative research design was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic leadership in education and its contextual areas from different leading experts. This approach is chosen due to its well-suited for exploring complex and nuanced social phenomena, such as the influence of governmental institutions, cultural and behavioral patterns of local people, engagement specifications of students, etc. Specifically, this study utilized a research study design to better understand how leadership styles affect students' engagement.

There were two experts chosen for an interview with different backgrounds but common areas of occupation and expertise. It was in order to gain various opinions, more comprehensive understanding and eliminate the one sided bias towards the research topic. By identifying disagreements, the qualitative research focused on maximizing the objectivity of research.

The fist expert is Nurmukhammed Dossybayev, widely regarded as an expert in the education sector of Kazakhstan. His extensive experience spanning both governmental roles and entrepreneurial leadership in the field of education makes him an ideal candidate for having an interview .

Dossybayev's impressive career began with his appointment as the Deputy Head of the Shymkent City Department of Education. Shymkent, being the third-largest city in Kazakhstan with a population exceeding one million, presented him with a challenging yet rewarding opportunity to contribute to the educational landscape. In this pivotal role, he gained important experience in managing main issues as a professional level of teachers, exceeding capacity of students, and the low level of infrastructure of the schools. However, Dossybayev's impact on the Kazakh education system extends little beyond his governmental responsibilities. Driven by a vision for innovative educational approaches, he founded the Astana Garden School, which quickly gained recognition as the leading private school in the nation's capital Astana. Dossybayev's achievements are bolstered by his prestigious academic background. As a Graduate of the University of Cambridge in Education, he possesses a deep understanding of the theoretical foundations and best practices in pedagogy, curriculum development, and educational administration. This esteemed qualification not only enhances his credibility but also equips him with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of the ever-evolving educational landscape.

Currently, Dossybayev serves as the co-head of Garden Academy, a position that allows him to continue his journey of expanding access to quality education throughout Kazakhstan. His primary focus lies in the establishment of new private schools across the country, leveraging his extensive experience and expertise to create educational institutions that foster intellectual growth, critical thinking, and a love for learning. His unique combination of governmental experience, entrepreneurial spirit, and academic acumen positions him as an invaluable resource for researchers, policymakers, and educators alike, as they strive to shape the future of education in Kazakhstan and beyond.

Picture 2. Nurmukhammed Dossybayev

Picture 1 Dr. Zoltan Buzady

The second expert is Dr. Zoltan Buzady, leading expert in leadership skills development in Central Europe and beyond. With a unique blend of academic and practical experience, Buzady has dedicated his career to the complexities of leadership and empowering individuals to realize their potential as leaders. At the core of Buzady's expertise lies his deep understanding of the pioneering work, the concept of "Flow", of Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, famous American-Hungarian psychologist.

Through his extensive research and practical applications, Dr. Buzady has developed a comprehensive framework for integrating the principles of flow into leadership development programs, enabling leaders to unlock their potential and inspire those around them. One of Dr. Buzady's unique contributions to the field is his emphasis on the role of executive management in shaping organizational culture and driving success. Through his work with corporations and executive teams, he provides techniques and methodologies that enable leaders to build cohesive and high-performing teams, foster a culture of innovation, and navigate the complexities of modern business environments.

At the heart of Buzady's philosophy lies the belief that effective leadership is not merely a position or title but a mindset and a commitment to personal growth and self-awareness. He encourages leaders to foster open communication and cultivate a growth mindset that helps them to learn from failures and adapt to changing circumstances.

Having a degree from London School of Economics, Dr. Zoltan Buzady has an academic foundation, combined with his practical experience as consultant and researcher which allows him to bridge the gap between theory and application, offering actionable insights and makes him a perfect candidate for study's qualitative research.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative components in this study provides a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to investigating the impact of leadership styles on student engagement in educational institutions. By combining the strengths of both methodologies, the research aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the topic while eliminating the limitations of relying solely on a single approach. The quantitative approach enabled the researchers to analyze relationships between variables, test hypotheses, and potentially generalize findings to larger populations. The quantitative data provided a robust foundation for identifying patterns, trends, and correlations between leadership styles and student engagement levels. On the other side, a qualitative component took the form of in-depth interviews with two leading experts, each offering unique perspectives and expertise in the areas of education leadership and organizational behavior. By doing both quantitative and qualitative components, the study is able to cross-validating findings from the analysis with the various contextual information obtained from the expert interviews. This approach helped the researchers to identify areas of convergence and divergence between the quantitative results and the qualitative insights, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between leadership styles and student engagement.

4. Analysis

Quantitative research

Doing the quantitative research there were collected 187 respondents, and the first part of the questions addressed in order to identify the profile of the respondents. These questions covered various demographic characteristics, education levels, and fields of study. Particular questions were related to explore student perceptions of different educational leadership styles and their influence on student engagement within the learning environment. Moreover, it offered insights into students' perspectives on democratic leadership approaches, laissez-faire (hands-off) leadership, and the importance of establishing supportive and inclusive environments for fostering engagement. By analyzing these findings, we aim to evaluate the hypotheses related to the potential impact of leadership styles on student engagement levels. The findings provide valuable insights into the core of the sample population and serve as a foundation for further analysis and interpretation. The actual questionnaire's results are indicated in Annex sections of the document.

Firstly, as it mentioned above, focusing on basic info of the respondents, there were 187 responses based on gender, age, education level and focus of their study. The gender distribution of the respondents, indicated on *Figure №1*, shows a relatively balanced representation, with 52.9% identifying as men and 47.1% as women. This near-equal split says that the sample population covers diverse perspectives and experiences from both genders, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the topic.
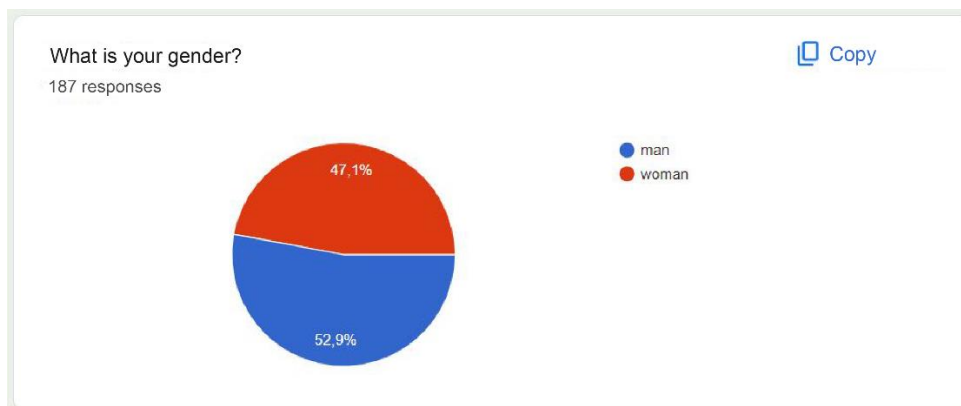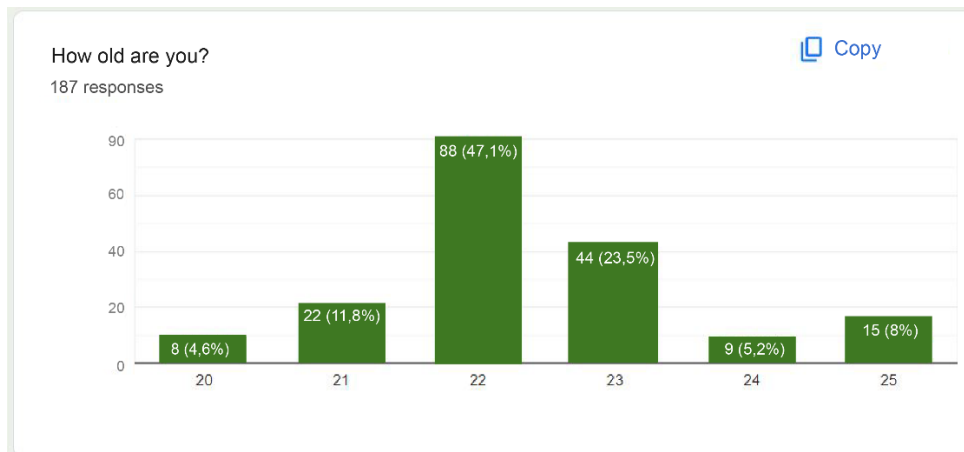

Figure 1 Gender distribution

Figure 2 Age distribution

The age distribution data, shown on *Figure №2*, indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the age range of 22 to 23 years old, accounting for 70.6% of the total sample. Specifically, the largest age group is 22 years old (47.1%), followed by 23 years old (23.5%). This concentration of respondents in their early twenties is understandable, as it aligns with the typical age range for university students pursuing undergraduate or graduate studies. The sample also includes respondents from other age groups, such as 21 years old (11.8%), 24 years old (5.2%), 20 years old (4.6%), and 25 years old (8%), providing a broader perspective.
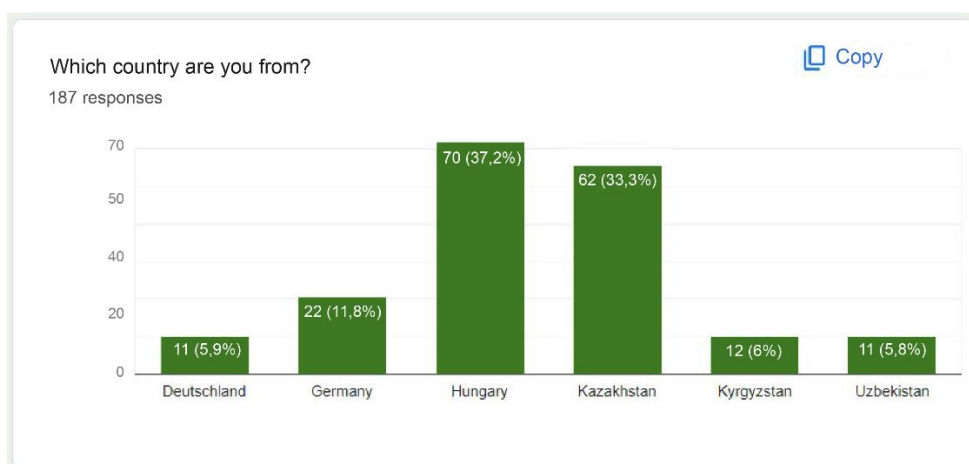
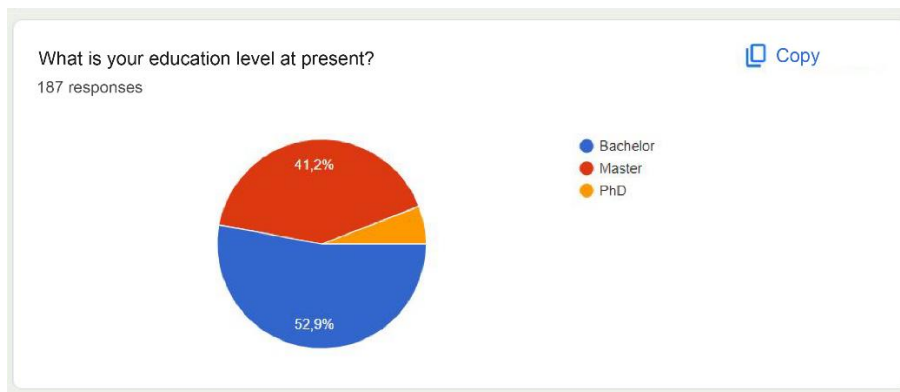

Figure 3 Country of orgin

Figure 4 Education levels

The data on the respondents' countries of origin, indicated in *Figure №3*, reveals a diverse representation, with the majority hailing from Hungary (37.2%) and Kazakhstan (33.3%). Other countries represented include Germany (11.8%+5.9%=17.7%), Kyrgyzstan (6%), and Uzbekistan (5.8%). It is important to mention that the 5.9% of respondents indicated Deutschland as their country of origin due to the fact that the word "Deutschland" is the name of the countryща Germany in native, German, language. Since both words mean the same subject (which is Germany), two samples were united in order to show precise data. This diversity in geographic backgrounds enriches the data by capturing potential cultural and contextual variations.

The analysis of the respondents' education levels, shown on *Figure №4*, highlights a predominance of Bachelor's (52.9%) and Master's (41.2%) degree holders, collectively accounting for 94.1% of the sample. A smaller portion (5.9%) holds a PhD degree. This distribution is likely influenced by the target population, which primarily consists of university students and recent graduates. However, the inclusion of doctoral-level respondents adds depth and nuance to the data, potentially providing insights from more advanced academic perspectives.
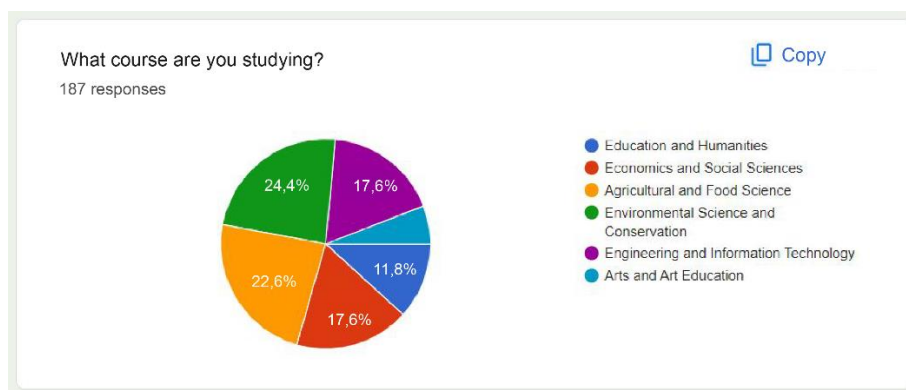
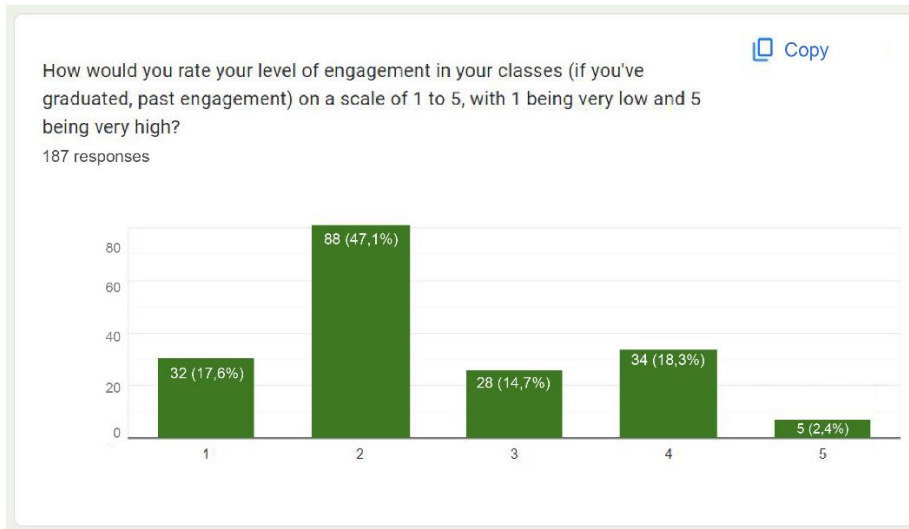

Figure 5 Fields of study

Figure 6 Levels of engagement

The respondents' fields of study, shown on *Figure №5*, reveals a diverse range of academic disciplines. The two most prominent fields are Economics and Social Sciences (22.6%) and Education and Humanities (24.4%), collectively covering nearly half of the sample. Other fields represented include Agricultural and Food Science (17.6%), Engineering and Information Technology (17.6%), Environmental Science and Conservation (11.8%), and Arts and Education (6%). This diversity in academic backgrounds increases the quality of the data by capturing potential variations in approaches, and contextual factors that may influence the study.

Once the profile info of the respondents is created which gives the context of the study, the next part of quantitative research focuses on the core of the research topic: how leadership styles affect the student engagement and identifying the influence of supportive and inclusive leadership in building high levels of student engagement.

The first set of data, shown on *Figure №6*, explores students' self-reported levels of engagement in their classes, measured on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). The results reveal a notable trend, with the majority of respondents (47.1%) rating their engagement level as 2 (low), followed by 17.6% rating it as 1 (very low), 14.7% as 3 (moderate), 18.3% as 4 (high) and only 2.4% as 5 (very high) This bimodal distribution suggests a polarization in students' engagement experiences, with a significant portion reporting either extremely low and less portion high levels of engagement.
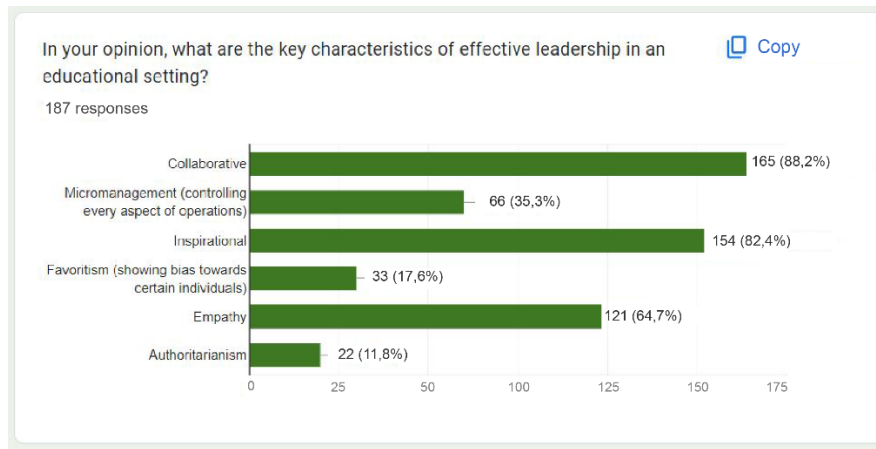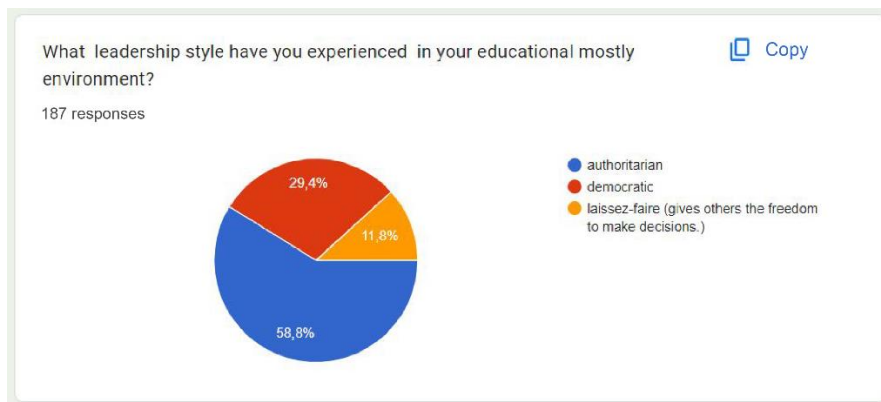
Figure 7 Key characteristics

Figure 8 Leadership styles people experienced

When examining these engagement levels in relation to the leadership styles experienced by students, shown on *Figure №7*, a clear pattern emerges. The majority of respondents (58.8%) reported experiencing an authoritarian leadership style in their educational environment, followed by 29.4% experiencing a democratic style, and 11.8% experiencing a laissez-faire style.

It is worth mentioning that the majority of low and very low levels of self-reported levels of engagement are from developing countries such as Kazakhstan (33.3%), Kyrgyzstan (6%), and Uzbekistan (5.8%), the countries where mostly all respondents tend to experience authoritative style of leadership in education while European countries' respondents mostly tend experience democratic, or laissez-faire styles.

These findings align with the first hypothesis, which suggests that students perceive democratic leadership styles as more conducive to fostering student engagement compared to authoritarian or laissez-faire styles. The data, indicated in *Figure №10,* shows that despite the fact that a significant portion of students (47.1%) reported very low engagement levels, a smaller

percentage (29.4%) experienced a democratic leadership style, which is generally associated with higher engagement. However, it is important to note that a substantial portion of students (17.6%) also reported very low engagement levels (rating of 1), despite the majority experiencing an authoritarian style. This suggests that factors beyond leadership style may also influence student engagement, such as personal motivation of the students, learning preferences, or classroom dynamics.
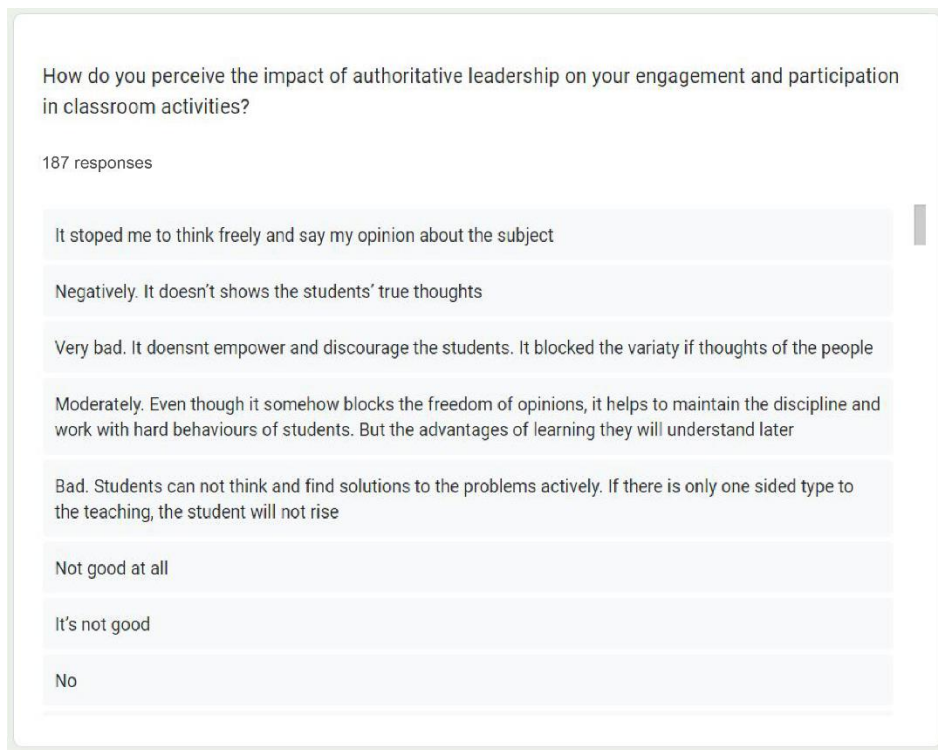

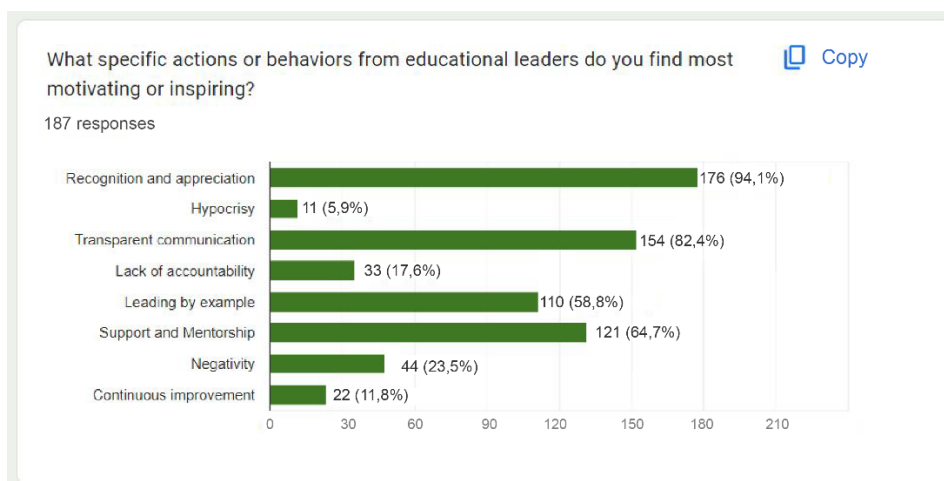*Figure 9 Impact of authoritative leadership*

Figure 10 Behaviors that motivating and inspiring

Having said that 58.8% of respondents mostly experienced authoritative style of leadership while 29.4% democratic and 11.8% laissez-faire or hands-off style of leadershiph (*Figure №8*), the data, shown on *Figure №9*, students' perceptions of the impact of authoritative leadership on their engagement and participation in classroom activities. The responses paint a predominantly negative picture, with several students expressing concerns about the stifling of free thought, lack of opportunities for open discourse, and limited empowerment or autonomy. Responses such as *"It stopped me to think freely and say my opinion about the subject," "Negatively. It doesn't show the students' true thoughts,"* and *"Very bad. It doesn't empower and discourage the students. It blocked the variety of thoughts of the people"* highlight the perceived limitations imposed by authoritative leadership on students' ability to express themselves, share their perspectives, and engage in critical thinking.

While one response suggests that authoritative leadership may help maintain discipline and work with *"hard behaviors of students,"* the overall sentiment leans towards a negative impact on engagement, with comments like *"Bad. Students can not think and find solutions to the problems actively. If there is only one sided type to the teaching, the student will not rise."*

These findings align with the second hypothesis, which suggests that students who report experiencing supportive and inclusive leadership behaviors demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their educational activities. The data indicates that authoritative leadership, which is perceived as more controlling and less inclusive, may hinder student engagement by limiting opportunities for active participation, free expression, and critical thinking.

Figure №7 provides insights into students' perceptions of the key characteristics of effective leadership in an educational setting. The data reveals that "Collaborative" (88.2%) and "Inspirational" (82.4%) leadership traits are considered most important, followed by "Empathy" (64.7%). Conversely, characteristics like "Micromanagement (controlling every aspect of operations)" (35.3%) and "Favoritism (showing bias towards certain individuals)" (17.6%) are viewed as less desirable in effective educational leaders. This data aligns with the broader theme of the findings, which suggest that students value inclusive, supportive, and collaborative leadership approaches that foster engagement, open discourse, and empowerment. The low endorsement of traits like micromanagement and favoritism further reinforces the importance of empowerment in fostering an environment conducive to student engagement.

Figure №10 complements these findings by exploring the specific actions or behaviors from educational leaders that students find most motivating or inspiring. "Recognition and appreciation" (94.1%) and "Transparent communication" (82.4%) emerged as the top motivating factors, followed by "Leading by example" (58.8%) and "Support and Mentorship" (64.7%). These findings underscore the importance of acknowledgment, clear communication, role modeling, and supportive guidance in fostering a positive and engaging learning environment. Conversely, factors like "Hypocrisy" (5.9%), "Lack of accountability" (17.6%), and "Negativity" (23.5%) were identified as demotivating or uninspiring behaviors, further emphasizing the need for authentic, consistent, and constructive leadership approaches.
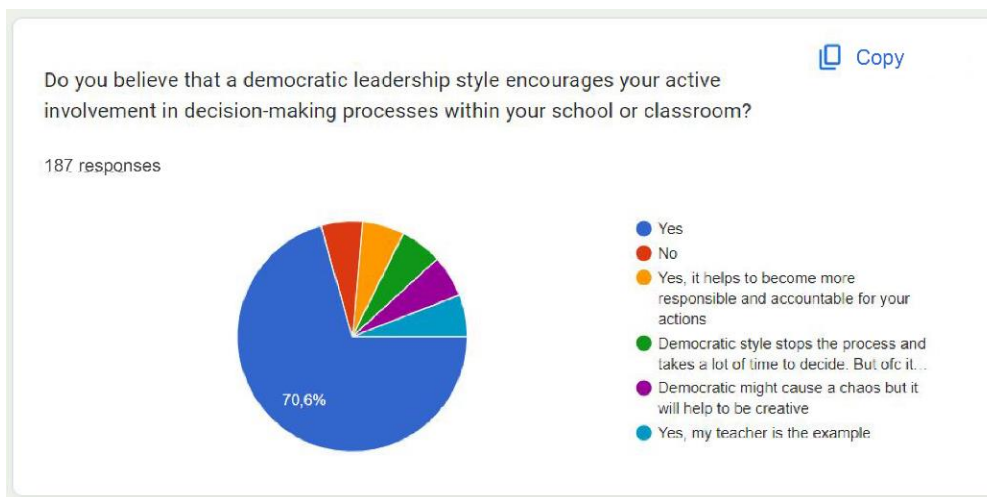

Figure 11 Encouragement of democratic style

The findings from this study resonate with existing literature on the impact of leadership styles on student engagement and academic outcomes. Numerous studies have highlighted the positive effects of democratic and transformational leadership approaches, which emphasize collaboration, empowerment, and shared decision-making (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). Conversely, authoritarian or highly controlling leadership styles have been linked to lower levels of student engagement, motivation, and achievement (Deci et al., 1991; Reeve, 2009). These styles can create an environment where students feel their autonomy and self-determination are compromised, leading to disengagement and decreased intrinsic motivation. The findings from this study also align with the principles of student-centered learning, which emphasize the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment that values student voices, encourages active participation, and promotes critical thinking (Lea et al., 2003; Weimer, 2013).

The next set of data, on *Figure №11*, examines whether students believe that a democratic leadership style encourages their active involvement in decision-making processes within their school or classroom setting. A significant majority of 70.6% of respondents answered positively, indicating that they perceive democratic leadership as conducive to promoting their active participation in decision-making processes. This finding aligns with the hypothesis that students perceive democratic leadership styles as more conducive to fostering student engagement compared to authoritarian or laissez-faire styles. Democratic leadership styles, which emphasize shared decision-making and collaboration, appear to resonate with students' desire for involvement and active participation in the educational process.

It is worth noting that while the majority of responses were positive, a smaller percentage of students expressed concerns, such as the potential for chaos or delays in decision-making processes due to the democratic nature of leadership. However, these concerns were outweighed by the perceived benefits of increased creativity and responsibility that democratic leadership can foster.
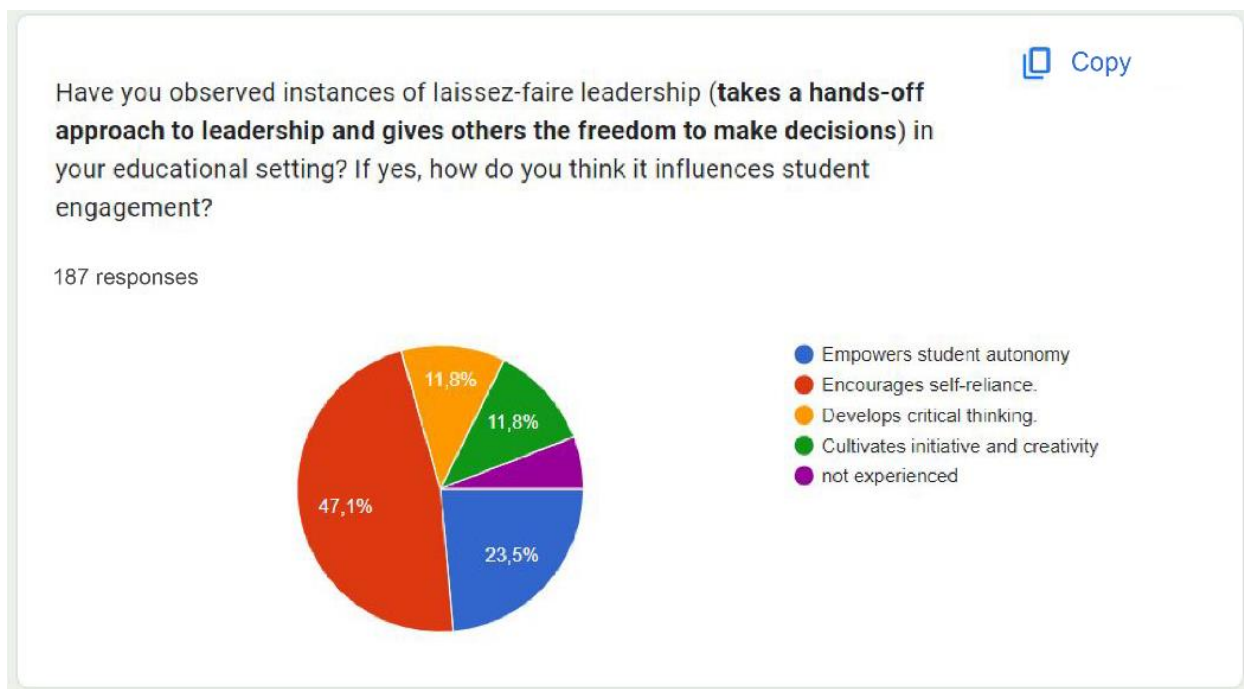

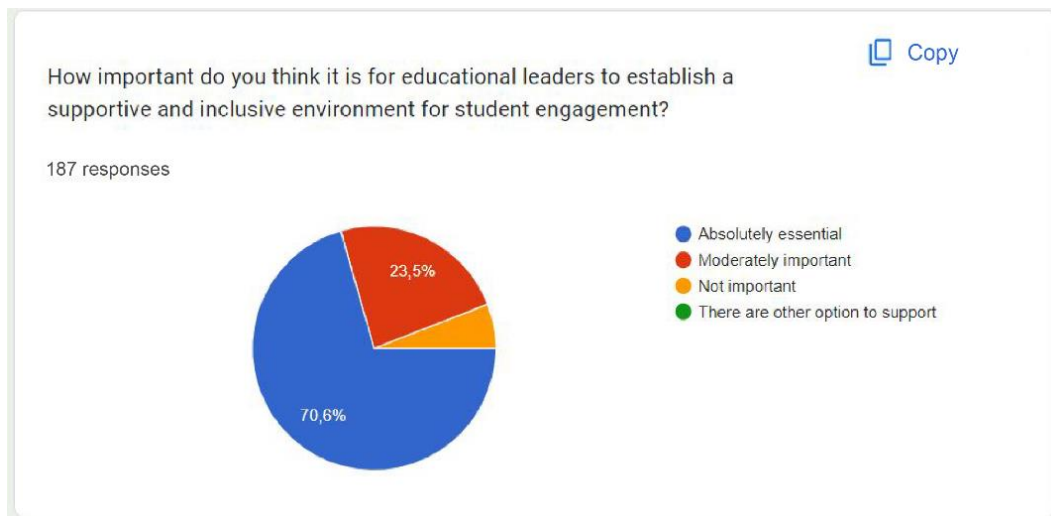*Figure 12 Influence of laissez-faire*

Figure 13 Establishing environment for student engagement

Figure №12 provides insights into students' observations of laissez-faire leadership (a hands-off approach that grants others the freedom to make decisions) within their educational setting. The largest proportion of respondents (47.1%) indicated that this leadership style encourages self-reliance among students. Additionally, 23.5% of students reported that laissez-faire leadership empowers student autonomy, while 11.8% believed it cultivates initiative and creativity. These findings suggest that a substantial portion of students perceive laissez-faire leadership as beneficial for fostering self-directed learning, independent decision-making, and the development of critical thinking skills. However, it is important to note that a significant percentage (11.8%) reported not experiencing this leadership style in their educational setting. While laissez-faire leadership may promote student autonomy and self-reliance, it is essential to consider the potential drawbacks of a lack of guidance or structure, which could negatively impact student engagement or achievement in certain contexts.

Figure №13 highlights the perceived importance of educational leaders establishing a supportive and inclusive environment for student engagement. An overwhelming majority of 70.6% of respondents considered this to be "absolutely essential," while 23.5% viewed it as "moderately important." Only a small percentage (5.9%) considered it either "not important" or suggested alternative approaches.

These findings strongly support the hypothesis that students who report experiencing supportive and inclusive leadership behaviors demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their educational activities. Creating an environment that fosters a sense of belonging, encourages

participation, and values diverse perspectives appears to be an important factor in promoting student engagement, according to the students' perceptions.
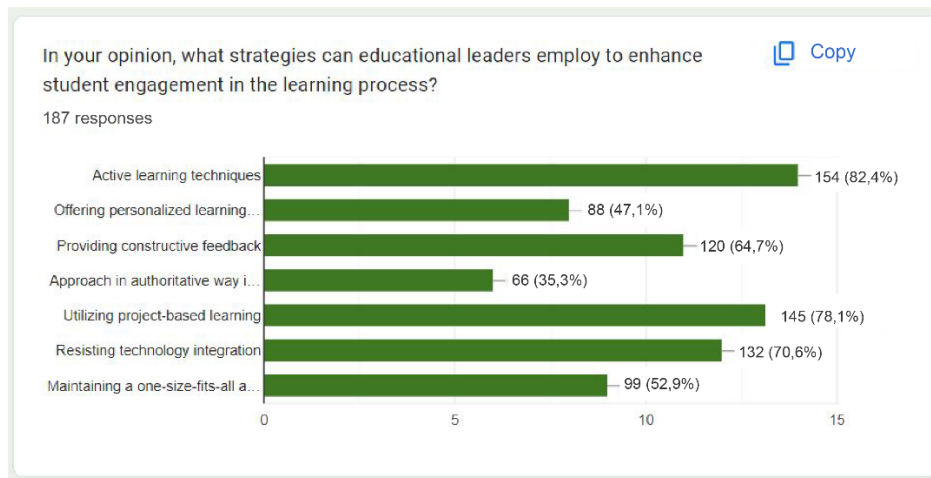

Figure 14 Strategies to increase to enhance student engagement

Figure №14 presents various strategies that educational leaders can employ to enhance student engagement in the learning process. The data reveals that the most widely endorsed strategies were:

1. Active learning techniques (82.4%)

2. Utilizing project-based learning (78.1%)

3. Resisting technology integration (70.6%)

4. Providing constructive feedback (64.7%)

5. Offering personalized learning experiences (47.1%)

It is noteworthy that active learning techniques and project-based learning emerged as the most popular strategies, aligning with the principles of student-centered and experiential learning approaches. Additionally, the integration of technology into the learning process was perceived as beneficial by a significant portion of students (70.6%). Considering the fact that the level of digitalization has significantly increased after COVID-19 quarantine, the question of integration of technology into the learning process has become vital and important. Surprisingly, a relatively high percentage of students (52.9%) suggested maintaining a "one-size-fits-all approach" as a strategy for enhancing engagement. This finding contradicts the previously expressed preference for personalized learning experiences and may warrant further investigation to understand the underlying rationale.

Qualitative research

In this part of Analysis, the study examines two interviews with the two experts, one with experience in both public and private education sectors (Nurmukhammed Dossybayev - Expert №1), and the other a leadership development expert (Dr. Zoltan Buzady - Expert №2), both of them provide valuable insights into the nuances of effective leadership strategies and their impact on student engagement. The written format of the interviews are attached in the Annexes section of the Thesis Work.

The first expert, Nurmukhammed Dossybayev, with their experience as the Deputy Head of the Shymkent City Education Department, highlights the primary leadership challenges faced in fostering student engagement and promoting inclusivity within the public education system. Limited resources, bureaucratic structures, and the need to obtain recognition from various stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents, posed significant obstacles. Moreover, socioeconomic and cultural barriers further compounded the difficulties in creating an equitable and engaging environment for all students.

Upon transitioning to the private education sector as the co-founder and leading manager of private schools in Kazakhstan, Nurmukhammed Dossybayev noted a distinct shift in their leadership approach. In the private sector, he experienced greater autonomy and flexibility, allowing for experimentation and the ability to shape the school culture and student experience from the ground up, based on their educational philosophy acquired at Cambridge University. However, resource limitations remained a challenge, correlating with more control over allocation and decision-making processes.

Both experts underscore the positive impact of a democratic leadership approach on student engagement and participation. Nurmukhammed Dossybayev shares a compelling example of implementing a "student council" program, which empowered students to contribute to campus policies, event planning, and even curriculum decisions. This sense of ownership and voice led to increased engagement, improved attendance, higher academic performance, and a genuine spike in extracurricular participation. The experts emphasize that giving students a sense of agency and involving them in decision-making processes can be a powerful motivator and driver of engagement.

In contrast, the experts caution against the potential negative impacts of authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership styles on student engagement and classroom dynamics. Nurmukhammed Dossybayev highlights how an authoritarian, rigid approach can disconnect students from the learning process, and ultimately lead them to merely "go through the motions" without genuine engagement. On the other hand, laissez-faire style can create chaos, confusion, and a lack of structure, which students require for effective learning. Both experts emphasize the need to strike a balance between maintaining authority and structure while promoting inclusivity and student involvement.

Nurmukhammed Dossybayev recommends open communication as a key strategy for educational leaders to balance authority and student involvement. Clear expectations, transparent communication of reasons behind policies, and actively soliciting student input can foster a sense of being heard and respected among students. While maintaining authority and making tough decisions when necessary, leaders should avoid an iron-fist approach and instead promote a collaborative environment where students feel empowered and valued. The experts share examples of successful initiatives implemented to cultivate a supportive and inclusive environment for students, which positively influenced their engagement levels. Nurmukhammed Dossybayev highlights the "community circles" initiative, which created a safe space for open dialogue, peer support, and holistic addressing of underlying challenges. These weekly discussion groups with rotating student facilitators fostered a strong sense of belonging and community. Dr. Zoltan Buzady emphasizes the importance of open communication, actively seeking student engagement, promoting a growth mindset, recognizing achievements, and providing constructive feedback to create a positive and motivating culture.

Drawing from their extensive experience and expertise, the experts offer valuable recommendations for educational leaders aiming to strike a balance between maintaining authority and promoting student involvement. Nurmukhammed Dossybayev advises leaders to remain open-minded, humble, and willing to evolve their leadership approach based on the specific context, culture, and resources. Empowering students while also laying down the law when necessary for their own benefit is crucial. Leaders should constantly reevaluate what is working and what is not, and be collaborative while also being decisive when required.

Dr. Zoltan Buzady , as a leadership development expert, emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence, active listening, clear communication, collaborative decision-making, adaptability, empowering others, and cultural awareness as essential skills for cultivating a democratic and inclusive leadership style. These competencies enable educational leaders to understand diverse perspectives, consider multiple viewpoints, and find common ground while fostering a sense of shared ownership and responsibility among students. Dr. Zoltan Buzady shares an example of a successful leadership development program called "Flow Leadership," which emphasized distributed leadership and collaborative decision-making across teams. Through workshops, coaching, and hands-on exercises, participants learned to cultivate an inclusive environment where everyone had a voice and shared responsibilities. This approach boosted engagement, motivation, and ownership over goals. Dr. Zoltan Buzady suggests adapting such strategies to the educational context by involving faculty, staff, and students in shared responsibilities, such as designing curriculum, planning activities, and making decisions that impact their learning experiences. This shared ownership could potentially drive higher levels of student engagement.

Dr. Zoltan Buzady also draws insights from their work with executives, experts, and corporations, observing specific leadership practices and behaviors that contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive organizational culture. Leading by example, embodying values like integrity, respect, and inclusivity, creating psychological safety where individuals feel comfortable speaking up without fear, celebrating diversity in all its forms, providing growth opportunities through training and mentoring, and practicing authentic, transparent communication coupled with active listening – these are vital practices that can build trust and foster an inclusive environment. In the educational context, open dialogues, celebrating diverse student backgrounds, providing growth opportunities, and promoting an environment where students feel comfortable taking intellectual risks could enhance engagement levels. Dr. Zoltan Buzady suggests that principles such as leading by example, creating psychological safety, and transparent communication can be effectively translated from corporate settings to foster student engagement in educational settings.

While acknowledging the fundamental differences between corporate and educational leadership, Dr. Zoltan Buzady identifies key similarities that can inform effective leadership practices in both realms. Vision, strong communication skills, and the ability to motivate people are essential qualities for leaders across sectors. However, the expert notes that the focus in the

business world is primarily on making profits, increasing market share, and pleasing shareholders, whereas in education, the emphasis is on teaching students, instilling an ability to learn, and creating an environment for growth. Despite these differences, Dr. Zoltan Buzady highlights that adaptability, building trust, and making tough decisions are applicable regardless of the realm. This suggests that educational leaders can draw valuable lessons from successful corporate leadership practices while tailoring them to the unique context and goals of educational institutions.

Dr. Zoltan Buzady points insights about how educational leaders can create an environment that fosters inclusiveness and engagement among students. Free communication is emphasized as a key factor, actively seeking student engagement, and allowing them to be part of decision-making processes when appropriate. Building strong relationships with students, understanding their diverse backgrounds and learning styles, and tailoring approaches accordingly are also crucial. Promoting a growth mindset, where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning rather than failures, can contribute to a positive and motivating culture. Additionally, recognizing achievements and providing constructive feedback can foster a sense of accomplishment and continuous improvement among students.

The analysis of the interviews with the two education experts highlights the complexities and nuances of effective leadership strategies in fostering student engagement and creating an inclusive learning environment. The experts underscore the importance of a democratic leadership approach, open communication, empowering students, promoting a growth mindset, and striking a balance between maintaining authority and promoting student involvement in decision-making processes. While acknowledging the fundamental differences between corporate and educational leadership, the experts identify common threads, such as the need for vision, strong communication skills, and the ability to motivate and build trust. By bridging these gaps and tailoring effective practices to the unique goals and contexts of educational institutions, leaders can create a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters genuine student engagement, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience.
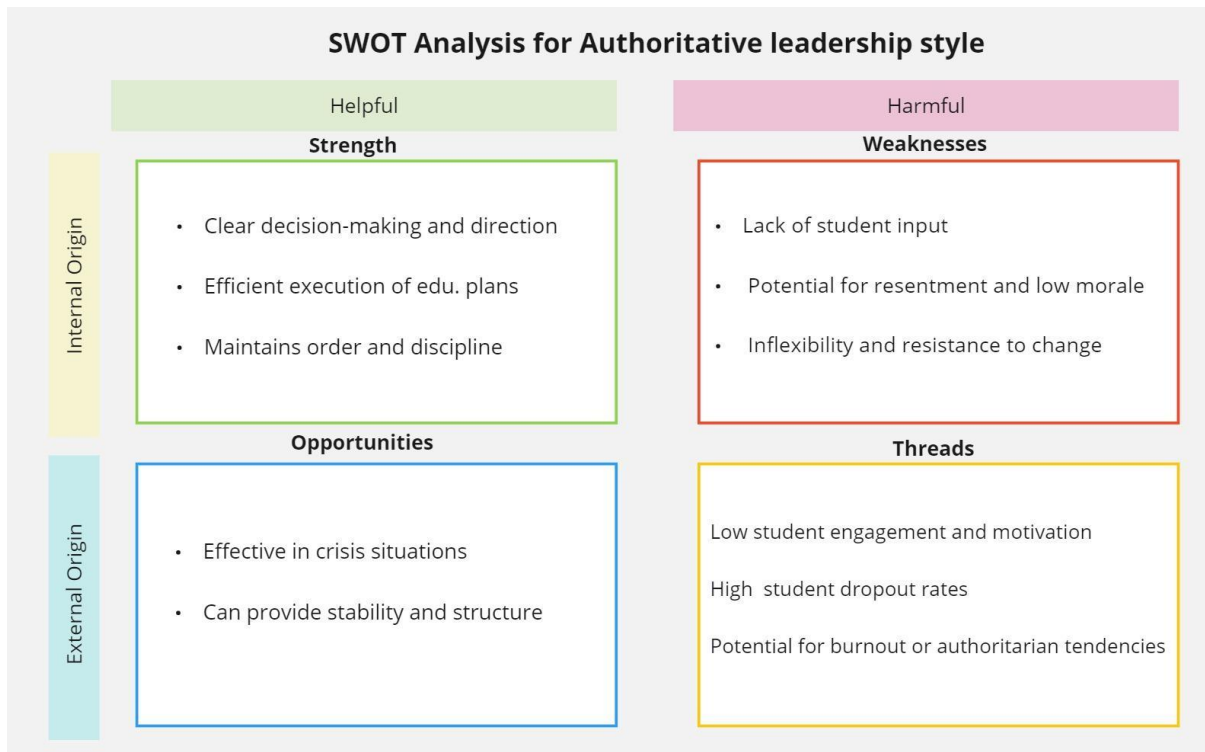
SWOT Matrix Analysis

Figure 15 SWOT Matrix for authoritative leadership style in education

Making both quantitative and qualitative research, SWOT matrix analysis was made for each leadership style in education.

Having the first SWOT analysis for authoritative leadership style, there are a number of aspects for each side of the matrix. While there are strengths like clear decision making, efficient execution of education or lesson plan and maintaining order and discipline, there are weaknesses such as lack of student input, potential for resentment and low morale, meaning motivation, and inflexibility and resistance to change. Following strengths and weaknesses, there are opportunities such as efficiency in crisis situations and ability to provide stability and structure.
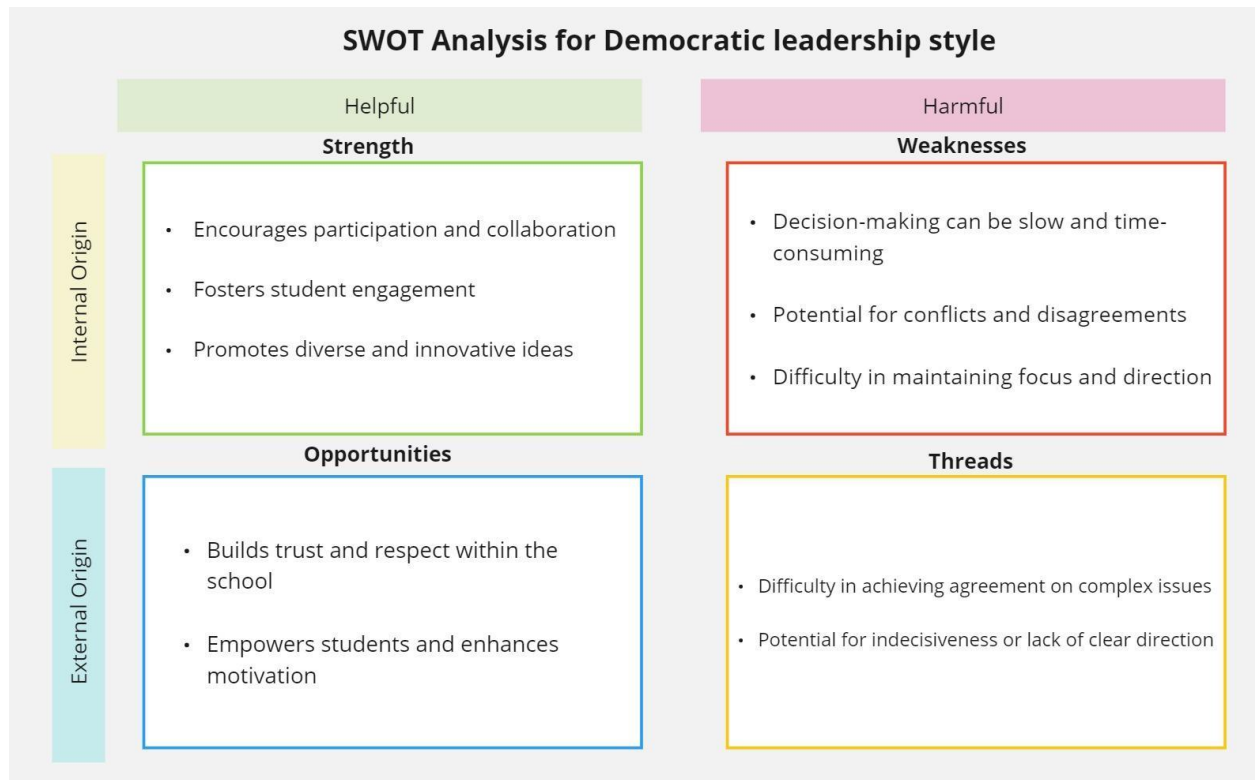
SWOT Analysis for Democratic leadership style

Helpful	Harmful
Strength	**Weaknesses**
• Encourages participation and collaboration • Fosters student engagement • Promotes diverse and innovative ideas	• Decision-making can be slow and time-consuming • Potential for conflicts and disagreements • Difficulty in maintaining focus and direction
Opportunities	**Threads**
• Builds trust and respect within the school • Empowers students and enhances motivation	• Difficulty in achieving agreement on complex issues • Potential for indecisiveness or lack of clear direction

Internal Origin (rows 1), *External Origin* (rows 2)

Figure 16 SWOT Matrix for Democratic leadership style in education

Considering the fact that democratic leadership has strengths like encouragement and collaboration it also has weaknesses such as time consuming and slowing down the decisions making, potential for conflicts and difficulty in maintaining focus and direction. There are opportunities such as building trust and respect, empowerment of students and increasing motivation.
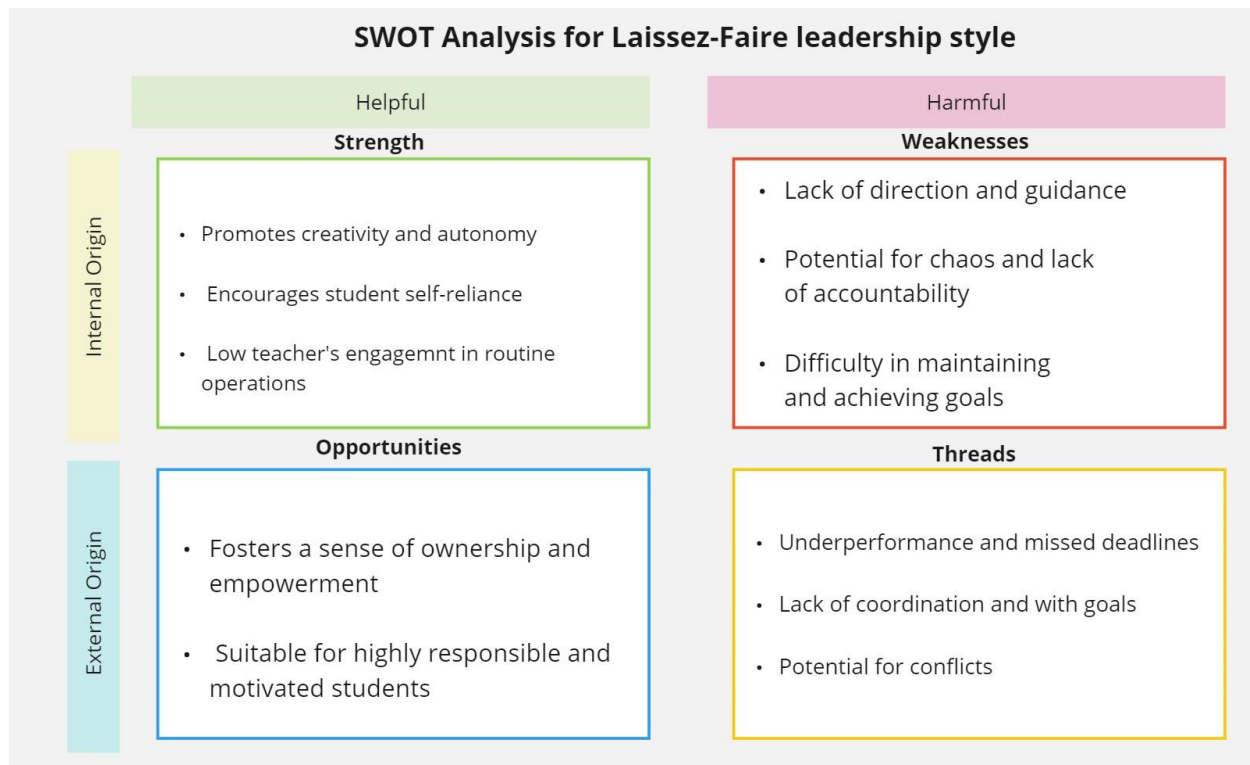
SWOT Analysis for Laissez-Faire leadership style

Helpful	Harmful
Strength	**Weaknesses**
Internal Origin • Promotes creativity and autonomy • Encourages student self-reliance • Low teacher's engagemnt in routine operations	• Lack of direction and guidance • Potential for chaos and lack of accountability • Difficulty in maintaining and achieving goals
Opportunities	**Threads**
External Origin • Fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment • Suitable for highly responsible and motivated students	• Underperformance and missed deadlines • Lack of coordination and with goals • Potential for conflicts

Figure 17 SWOT Matrix for Laissez-faire leadership style in education

The last considering leadership style is laissez-faire. Meaning hands-off, laissez-faire has strengths like promoting creativity and autonomy for students, encouraging students for self-reliance and low teacher's engagement in administrative and routine based operation by delegating them to students. Following the strengths and weaknesses, there are opportunities such as fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment, suitability for highly responsible and motivated students which continues with potential threats such as low level of performance, lack of coordination with aims, and raising of potential conflicts.

PESTEL Analysis

Political	Economic	Social
• Government policies and regulations on education • Political stability and priorities for education • Funding and budgetary allocations for educational institutions	• Economic conditions and their impact on education funding • Availability of resources and funding sources • Cost of educational materials and technology	• Demographic changes and their impact on education demand • Social attitudes to education and its importance
Technological	**Legal**	**Environmental**
• Technological advancements in teaching and learning methods • Integration of technology in classrooms and online learning • Access to technology and digital resources for students and teachers	• Laws and regulations governing education systems • Compliance with safety and accessibility standards • Intellectual property rights and copyrights for educational materials	• Sustainable practices in educational institutions • Energy efficiency and eco-friendly initiatives

Figure 18 PESTEL Analysis of leadership in education

Since the topic of leadership in education concerns a wide range of people and institutions, there was made PESTEL Analysis with focus on general leadership in education. The analysis was made in order to understand and identify political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors of the topic.

There are three main points for political factors such as government policies and regulations on education, political stability and priorities for education, funding and budgetary allocations for educational institutions while for economic factors there are economic conditions and their impact on education funding, availability of resources and funding sources, cost of educational materials and technology. There two points for social factor such as demographic changes and their impact on education demand, and social attitudes to education and its importance. Also, there are three points fro technological factors such as technological advancements in teaching and learning methods, integration of technology in classrooms and online learning, access to technology and

digital resources for students and teachers while there are two points for environmental factor such as sustainable practices in educational institutions and energy efficiency and eco-friendly initiatives. Lastly, there are three main points for legal factor such as laws and regulations governing education systems, compliance with safety and accessibility standards, intellectual property rights and copyrights for educational materials.

5. Conclusion

The research work has provided a comprehended and dimensional understanding of different leadership styles on student engagement and importance of building inclusive and supportive environments for students. Both independent quantitative and qualitative research that was made throughout the thesis increased the value and credibility of the research work. The study examined hypotheses, answered thesis questions and achieved the objectives stated in the beginning of the research work.

Concluding the research work, **the hypothesis that students perceive democratic leadership styles as more conducive to fostering student engagement compared to authoritarian or laissez-faire stylesis is <u>proved positively</u>.** Students' responses and experts' opinions with analysis on different methods as SWOT matrix and PESTEL, supported by the findings that democratic leadership encourages their active involvement in decision-making processes.

The second hypothesis that students who report experiencing supportive and inclusive leadership behaviors demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their educational activities is <u>proved positively</u>. An overwhelming majority of students considered establishing a supportive and inclusive environment as absolutely essential for fostering student engagement. Students perceive laissez-faire leadership as promoting self-reliance, autonomy, and creativity, but its impact on overall engagement levels remains unclear, as a significant portion of students reported not experiencing this leadership style. Strategies such as active learning techniques, project-based learning, technology integration, constructive feedback, and personalized learning experiences are perceived as effective in enhancing their engagement in the learning process. Additionally, further research incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods could

provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between leadership styles, student engagement, and academic outcomes.

This analysis highlights the importance of adopting democratic and inclusive leadership approaches, prioritizing student-centered learning strategies, and fostering a supportive and empowering educational environment to maximize student engagement and promote a positive learning experience.

Recommendations based on research work

1. Educational leaders should prioritize **adopting collaborative, inspirational, and empathetic leadership approaches that foster student engagement, autonomy, and critical thinking.** These approaches have been shown to be more effective in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.

2. Authoritarian or highly controlling leadership styles s**hould be minimized, as they may contribute to disengagement, stifled creativity, and a lack of open discourse in the classroom.**

3. Professional development programs for educational leaders should **emphasize the importance of transparent communication, recognition and appreciation, leading by example, and providing supportive mentorship.** These actions have been identified as motivating and inspiring by students.

4. Continuous efforts should be made to involve students **in decision-making processes and encourage their active participation**, as this can enhance their sense of autonomy and engagement in the learning process.

6. Educational institutions should consider implementing r**egular assessments or feedback mechanisms** to gauge student perceptions of leadership approaches and their impact on engagement, allowing for data-driven adjustments and improvements.

Suggestions for future research

1. The study relies on self-reported data from students, which may be subject to biases or individual perceptions. Future studies could **do more objective measures** of student engagement, such as academic performance, attendance, or observational data.

2. The sample size and demographic characteristics of the participants are not specified, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should **aim for larger and more diverse sample populations to enhance the external validity** of the results.

3. The study **does not account for potential confounding variables,** such as the subject matter being taught, classroom size, or institutional factors, which may also influence student engagement levels.

4. **Longitudinal studies** could provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of different leadership styles on student engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes.

5. Future research could **explore the effectiveness of specific leadership development programs** or interventions aimed at enhancing student engagement and fostering a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment.

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List of figures and tables

In this section, there are included figures, tables and illustrations supporting the analysis and conclusions. Moreover, the written version of the interviews with Nurmukhammed Dossybayev and with Dr. Zoltan Buzady is also included.

<center>**Interview questions in written format**</center>

Interview with Nurmukhammed Dossybayev

Question №1: Based on your experience as the Deputy Head of the Shymkent City Education Department, what were the primary leadership challenges you faced in fostering student engagement and promoting an inclusive learning environment within the public education system?

Question №2: How did your leadership approach differ when you transitioned to the private education sector as the co-founder and leading manager of private schools in Kazakhstan? approach and increased student engagement or participation?

Question №4: In contrast, what are some of the potential drawbacks or negative impacts of an authoritarian or laissez-faire leadership style on student engagement and classroom dynamics?

Question №5: How would you recommend educational leaders strike a balance between maintaining authority and structure while also promoting inclusivity and student involvement in decision-making processes?

Question №6: Could you provide examples of specific initiatives or strategies you implemented to cultivate a supportive and inclusive environment for students, and how did these efforts influence their engagement levels?

Question №7: Given your unique perspective spanning both governmental and private sectors, what recommendations would you offer to educational leaders aiming to strike a balance

between maintaining authority and structure while also promoting student involvement and decision-making?

Interview with Dr. Zoltan Buzady

Question №1: In your experience, how do the principles and practices of effective leadership in corporate business compare or contrast with those in educational institutions? What are the key similarities and differences?

Question №2: How do you believe educational leaders can create an environment that fosters a state of inclusiveness and engagement among students?

Question №3:. From your perspective as a leadership development expert, what are the essential skills or competencies that educational leaders should prioritize to cultivate a democratic and inclusive leadership style?

Question №4:. Could you share examples of successful leadership development programs or interventions you have implemented within organizations that have positively impacted employee engagement and motivation? How might these strategies be adapted to the educational context?

Question №5: In your work with executives, experts, corporations, have you observed any specific leadership practices or behaviors that contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive organizational culture? How might these principles translate to fostering student engagement in educational settings?

DECLARATION

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Year of publication:	2024
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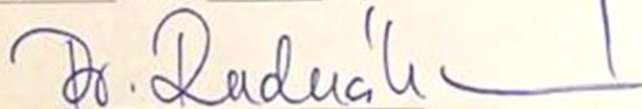
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