

3 Supplemental Instruction (SI) – Learning Leadership and Leadership Development

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Abstract: The topic of this chapter is the student-active form of learning Supplemental Instruction (SI), and the students who lead the SI sessions – the SI leaders. Increased leadership competence for SI leaders is highlighted in descriptions of the SI programme (Helde & Suzen, 2019), but relatively few studies focus on SI leaders with respect to the leadership dimension. This article takes a closer look at how SI leaders learn leadership through the SI programme, and presents the results of a survey and interviews conducted among SI leaders at Nord University Business School, Road Traffic Division, in 2017. The main focus of this chapter is on whether and how SI leaders have learnt leadership, understood their role as leaders, and experienced development as leaders in the context of the SI programme. The research question is: what is SI leaders' understanding and experience of the SI programme's contribution to learning about leadership and leadership development?

1. Introduction

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a professional support programme that aims to improve students' performance and reduce dropout rates by employing cooperative learning strategies (Arendale, 1994). SI was developed in 1973 by Dr Deanna Martin of the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Employees from more than 1,500 universities and university colleges in over 29 countries have been trained to use SI (Martin, 2009). Every year, SI is offered to hundreds of thousands of students (Arendale, 2002). When Nord University was established in 2016, the SI programme was introduced at Nord University Business School, in the physics course of the Road Traffic Division. Nord University has a partnership with Lund University, which is the European Centre for SI supervisor training (SI-PASS). The programme at Lund is regulated through an agreement with the University of Missouri in Kansas City, which is the international development centre for the SI programme.

SI is often linked to specific high-risk courses (Martin & Arendale, 1993). The term 'high-risk course' can be interpreted differently, but such courses may share the following characteristics:

Large amounts of weekly readings from both difficult textbooks and secondary library reference works, infrequent examinations that focus on higher cognitive levels of Bloom's taxonomy, voluntary and unrecorded class attendance, and large classes

as researcher. In the results section, I present the findings from a survey questionnaire and interviews conducted among SI leaders at Nord University in 2017. I then discuss what the findings mean in the discussion section, and answer the questions I initially posed. The chapter is based on empirical data and experiences from the SI programme in the physics course at the Road Traffic Division at Nord University; it highlights both the theoretical and practical aspects of the SI leaders' learning of leadership and leadership development.

2. Leadership, Learning of Leadership, and Leadership Development

Leadership is the art of getting things done through other people (Tannenbaum et al., 1961). Classroom leadership in educational practice is about organising teaching in groups of students in classes. To ensure that the students focus on learning, it is vital that teachers lead the activity in a manner that supports learning. The term 'classroom leadership' can be linked to a certain extent to an American tradition related to classroom management (Kreijlsler & Moos, 2008). However, it is more closely linked to the relational and dialogical aspect, while 'classroom management' is associated with administration. Classroom leadership is about creating an environment that promotes both academic and social learning (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Hattie, 2009; Wubbels, 2011). The teacher as leader helps to engage students in learning work, which makes learning easier for each student (Ogden, 2004). How the teacher practises classroom leadership can potentially make a difference to the students' learning outcomes (Marzano, 2009).

Leadership in teaching practice is both about preparation and the sessions with the students. This leads to a twofold teaching challenge where reflection in and on practice is essential (Schön, 1983). Authority is a key term in the leadership of teaching practice. The leader's authority is a result of cooperation or interaction with the students. It may be expedient in relation to the role of leader to split the term authority into three dimensions: institutional authority, professional and academic authority, and personal authority (Helde & Suzen, 2019). Institutional authority is the dimension of authority assigned to the position of leader. Professional authority is based on the leader's professional knowledge and skills, and personal authority is based on the SI leader's personality.

Leadership practice is based on theory – whether the theory has been personally developed, is research based, or is a combination of the two (Martinsen, 2015). I now explore some of the overarching insights on learning leadership and leadership development.

Learning leadership and leadership development can be based on five strategies: learning through transfer, learning through doing, learning through observation, learning through self-reflection, and learning through feedback (Berg, 2000). Learning through transfer can be achieved by listening to lectures or reading books. This

seeking and accepting feedback and by displaying flexibility of response as conditions change. (p. 395)

3. Description of the SI Programme at Nord University Business School in the Physics Course, 2017

Physics is one of the courses that Nord University Business School, Road Traffic Division, has categorised as a high-risk course in the Driving Instructor Education programme. The course forms part of the Technology TLB110 programme, together with the course in car technology, and the physics exam is the first exam the students sit in the programme. This is a basic course on key terms and dimensions in physics, which are important for explaining safe and environmentally friendly driving, and securing loads on vehicles. In autumn 2017, there were 100 students enrolled in the physics course.

Nord University has a partnership with Lund University, and course material from Lund University (2017a, 2017b) is used in the SI programme at Nord University Business School. The course material does not provide a conclusive answer to understanding learning, but the teaching principles and ideas in the SI programme are clearly related to social constructivism (Helde & Suzen, 2019).

Two aspects of the SI programme at Nord University Business School are not covered by the original course material from Lund University. Firstly, the SI leaders undergo a period of practical training immediately after completing the course and before they start holding SI sessions for first-year students. Secondly, the SI sessions can be led by two SI leaders who take turns cooperating with their counterparts.

The SI leaders in this SI programme in physics were second-year students who had been awarded a grade of A or B in the course, and who had completed SI leader training at Nord University. The seven SI leaders completed the leader training in spring 2017. In autumn 2017, 40 SI sessions in physics were held. The SI sessions were led by two SI leaders, and the seven SI leaders thus had the opportunity to lead 10–15 sessions each.

3.1 Training of SI Leaders

The SI supervisors at Nord University have trained at the European Centre for SI-PASS Lund University in Sweden, and are responsible for training new SI leaders. The course for new SI leaders at Nord University is held over two days, and comprises short plenary lectures followed by group work and role play. The course participants are placed at different tables and are immediately asked to reflect and work actively on the issues presented by the instructor. They start by discussing the issue with the person sitting beside them, and then discuss it around the table before finally summing up the issue in plenum.

The following topics are on the agenda during the course: why SI, presentation and expectations, who are today's students, and what is SI? The SI leaders are expected to discuss the educational basis for the SI programme. This is followed by an explanation of what constitutes a high-risk course, how the students perceive high-risk courses, and a description of the key SI resources and their roles. The last part of the course involves training in SI sessions, including planning and implementing SI sessions using observation methods where the course participants are assigned different roles as SI leader, SI supervisor, or student. The SI leaders of the course at Nord University also take a personal test on their own learning and leadership. Time is set aside after the test for self-reflection and group discussions.

3.2 Practical Training and Preparation for the Start-up of SI Sessions

The seven SI leaders underwent practical training in May and June 2017, where they organised SI sessions for students in their own physics class who were taking the re-sit examination. The SI leaders led the sessions either in pairs or in a group of three leaders.

When the SI leaders returned at the start of the semester in August 2017, they had a two-hour kick-off meeting with the SI supervisor, where they devised concrete plans for the autumn SI programme. The importance of the SI leaders forming and cooperating as a leader group was emphasised at this meeting. A representative from the administration took part in the last part of the meeting. The SI leaders thus established a dialogue with the administration representative, and discussed how they could market SI, book rooms, etc. The students then drew up a plan for the SI work in autumn 2017, which was approved by the lecturer (teacher) and SI supervisor, and the budget was approved by the university's management. The plan was published on an intranet page after it was approved. The SI leaders are responsible for marketing the SI programme through social media and posters, etc. Joining the lecturer at a class session and presenting the SI programme to the first-year students is an important element of the marketing.

3.3 SI Session Period

The SI session period in the physics course is from September to November. SI sessions were held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 15.00 to 17.00 and from 17.00 to 19.00 every week for four SI groups. The availability of students and the capacity of the SI programme served as the basis for determining the number of SI groups and the times of the sessions. If all 100 students took advantage of the weekly SI sessions, and were evenly distributed between the four SI groups, there would be 25 students at each of the SI sessions. An average of 10–11 students took part in the SI sessions.

4. Method and Data Collection

My day-to-day work is at Nord University Business School, Road Traffic Division, and I have trained as an SI supervisor at the European Centre for SI-PASS Lund University. I have coordinated the introduction of SI in Norway, co-organised the SI supervisor course in Norway, and practised as an SI supervisor at Nord University since 2017 in collaboration with the European Centre for SI-PASS at Lund University. My role as author of this chapter is based on my role as researcher.

4.1 Hermeneutic Phenomenological Methodology

Qualitative methods take advantage of different strategies for collecting data, but are largely based on theory of human experience (phenomenology) and interpretation (hermeneutics) (Malterud, 2003). Phenomenology focuses on descriptions of people's experiences (Kvale, [1997] 2007; Bengtsson, 1999). Hermeneutics is described as the study of text interpretation, and processing and interpreting text is a part of the research process in qualitative studies (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

I have taken a hermeneutic phenomenological approach in my research. The intention of a hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the reality, interpret the description, and understand what the reality is all about. A hermeneutic phenomenological practice addresses how narratives from practice can be interpreted and structured, to ensure that the most important elements in the narratives are highlighted and made clear (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Selecting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach makes the description of the SI leaders' experiences and perceptions of their own role pivotal (Creswell, 2007). Knowledge about the SI leaders' experiences is important to following up and understanding what happens in practice. If we do not have knowledge and an understanding of the SI leaders' interpretations and perceptions of their own experiences, we will not have a well-founded understanding of their practice (Helde & Suzen, 2019, p. 72).

It is common in phenomenological methodology to first present some literature in the concluding discussion section, as the researcher cannot predict the relevance of the literature before the findings are presented (i.e. topics that emerged during the process that were not expected; see Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 113).

4.2 Data Collection

The present study is based on a secondary analysis of qualitative data from an earlier study among SI leaders, on the topic of the SI leaders' experiences and understanding of SI as an educational tool and SI as a leadership development programme (Helde & Suzen, 2019).

The data comprise 14 semi-structured interviews, two questionnaires, and observations made among seven SI leaders. The SI leaders completed the questionnaire after finishing their SI leader training (June 2017) and after the conclusion of the SI

programme (November 2017). Interviews were conducted before the start-up of the SI programme (August 2017) and after its conclusion (November 2017). Observations of SI sessions were made during the practical training in the programme (May 2017) and during the SI programme (September and October 2017).

An observation form was used during observations of the SI sessions. Notes from the observations were used as a basis for developing the interview guide and questionnaire. I initially conducted a thematic analysis that involved shortening the interview respondents' statements into shorter formulations, which can be described as condensing the meaning (Kvale, [1997] 2007). I then grouped the statements into overriding topics. This formed the basis for preparing a description of what the participants had experienced (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In phenomenological methodology, the results can be structured to either follow the person or the topics (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 113). I have chosen to present the results from the SI leaders thematically. I illustrate and support this using quotes from the interviews, and the results from the questionnaires and observations. All of the data were anonymised, and I use numbers instead of the SI leaders' names in the text.

The seven SI leaders were women and men of different ages with different education and work experiences. One SI leader had leadership experience from the private business sector, one had taken a leadership programme and had leadership experience from the army, one had taken a coaching course, and one had experience teaching. Not all of the SI leaders had attended SI sessions themselves. Some had positive experiences of participating in SI, while others had chosen not to take it. Most of the SI leaders stated that, as students, they had found the course in physics difficult in the beginning, and they therefore recognised the importance of providing help in the course. The SI leaders also emphasised that physics is a subject that requires academic maturity, which has to be developed over time.

In my study, I have examined the SI leaders' personal experiences and present my findings in the next section.

5. Results

The SI leaders expected their role to help them learn leadership skills and develop as leaders:

It will make me a better leader, and help me to be more confident in front of large groups. . . . I expect that I will have to spend some time working on planning sessions, and that I will have to be structured so that the students taking SI find it useful. . . . I also expect to become a better leader and guide. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

After the period of SI sessions concluded, all SI leaders responded that they had found the work 'very rewarding' (e.g. Questionnaire 2, November 2017).

The SI leaders' experience of and understanding that the SI programme contributes to learning leadership and leadership development is presented thematically. I use active verbs to divide the findings into three categories:

- learning leadership,
- understanding the SI leader role, and
- applying SI and the course material as a 'tool' for learning leadership and leadership development.

5.1 Learning Leadership

The SI leaders emphasise that the lectures given by the SI supervisor before and between the tasks in the SI leader course were a source of learning.

I think it was great to get training. There were a lot of things I didn't fully realise, such as how an SI group was to be led. I thought we were going to teach, but I learned during the course that we were going to serve more as supporters and help the students to find answers themselves. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

The SI leaders appreciated the short lectures before tasks and the role play.

Informative, a lot of useful information, brought up unseen aspects. . . . Good, brief and precise. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

The SI leaders learned a lot from taking on different roles in the role play during the SI leader course.

I thought that the role play we did worked really well. I would say that I remember more from the role play than from what I have read about SI. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

Fun and educational. Nice to try the role yourself, although it is a slightly artificial situation. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

The SI leaders emphasise the importance of feeling confident in the role of SI leader during the practical training.

It has been really good to be able to start the SI sessions with people you already know. This has enabled us to focus more on the SI method than I think would have been the case if we had been thrown in at the deep end with a much bigger group of people we didn't know. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

After the period of practical training, SI leader 2 said the following about how you could learn more about leadership during the SI session period:

SI leaders would like even more communication, which is reflected in one proposed improvement:

Better cooperation between the SI leaders, more communication. (Questionnaire 2, November 2017)

The SI leaders believe the feedback from the SI supervisor is important at the start of the SI programme, but, as they work in pairs, this is not as necessary after they have led a few SI sessions. The SI leaders said the following in this context:

Maybe a little more closely initially, but with a freer rein at the end. (SI leader 3, interview 1)

I think it's good that the SI supervisor is available, that we can ask about anything we are wondering about, so that's very good. I don't think that we need follow-up all the time. Because we've had a go during the practical training, and we got feedback before summer and we had some discussions before we started holding the SI sessions. (SI leader 7, interview 2)

All of the SI leaders say that they are happy for the SI programme to include observation and feedback from the SI supervisor.

Now we know that this is being done properly, and probably get a lot more out of this programme as SI leaders when it includes proper follow-up. Other than just helping people with their school work, I mean. (SI leader 5, interview 1)

The SI leaders find that everyone benefits from attending SI, and that there is learning to be gained by everyone, both SI leaders and SI participants (students):

Those who are guided learn something and increase their understanding, but those who guide end up in full control. . . . [T]hose who guide learn most. (SI leader 2, interview 2)

5.2 Understanding the Role of SI Leader

One SI leader offered the following statement about their expectations of SI and the role of the SI leader:

I expect SI to be a social anchor for those learning a subject that requires academic maturity. Because understanding the importance of a head start is not perhaps associated with knowledge, but with feelings, somehow. So the fact that they are participating is not necessarily about their wish to excel in the subject, but more a social anchor where you want to go somewhere with others and do something you think is important and enjoyable. I think that's what I expect – that we are a group that has fun and does important things. That they get a chance to have a go six months before they sit the exam. (SI leader 7, interview 1)

I dreaded it a bit, thought it would be really scary to stand in front of them. . . . It wasn't as scary as I had imagined. You don't get better at something without giving it a go. (SI leader 6, interview 1)

5.3 Applying SI and the Course Material as a 'Tool' for Learning Leadership and Leadership Development

The SI leaders highlight the importance of having a 'Handbook for SI leaders' when it comes to learning leadership on the SI leader course.

Good. Review of the most important aspects of the book. Focus on group dynamics. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

The SI leaders have also experienced that the course material can be applied throughout the SI programme.

The book is a great thing to have. I wish it was in Norwegian, but that's not a big problem. I think it's good to have if there's anything I'm wondering about in relation to being an SI leader. (Questionnaire 1, June 2017)

The SI leaders perceive SI, with the course material, lectures and self-study, as a programme for learning leadership. As SI leader 4 states:

I have full confidence in this programme, definitely. If I didn't, I wouldn't have registered as a leader. (SI leader 4, interview 1)

The SI leaders were asked whether they felt they had developed as leaders during the SI programme. Most answered that they had developed as leaders to a great extent, while one SI leader felt they had only developed as a leader to a lesser extent.

Those who felt that they had developed as leaders explained this through statements, such as:

Better administrative skills, classroom teaching has become easier. . . . I've improved at asking the right questions. I'm more comfortable standing in front of a group of people. (Questionnaire 2, November 2017)

The SI leader who had developed as a leader to a lesser extent explained this through the following statement:

I have previous education where the SI leader role is an element that falls under the same category as guidance and coaching. (Questionnaire 2, November 2017)

6. Discussion

I now answer the three questions I posed in the introduction to this chapter.

6.1 How have the SI Leaders Learnt Leadership in the SI Programme?

The SI leaders find that the SI programme, in different ways, enables them to learn leadership skills and develop as leaders. Berg (2000) points out that learning leadership and leadership development can take place by means of transfer, observation, doing, reflection, and learning through feedback. Learning leadership by means of transfer mainly took place in the SI leader course. The SI leaders highlighted that the short lectures given by the SI supervisor before and between the tasks on the SI leader course were a source of learning. Passive intellectual learning can be important for establishing an overview of a topic. The SI leaders thus gain an understanding of the most important terms, models, and theories relating to the SI method before they start practising as SI leaders themselves. Learning leadership through observation takes place during role play and by observing how other SI leaders hold SI sessions. The SI leaders expressed that they learned a lot from taking on different roles in the role play. They also emphasised that cooperating with different SI leaders makes for a close-knit leader group, which contributes to individual learning.

The SI leaders emphasise that learning and leadership development takes place through trial and error in connection with the SI sessions. It may in this context be expedient to distinguish between SI leaders' strategic leadership and situational leadership. With respect to strategic leadership, the SI leaders highlighted the importance of being up-to-date with the subject and investing time in planning SI sessions. They also believed that it does not really matter if SI sessions do not turn out as planned, but that the most important thing is that the students learn what they want to learn. The SI leaders referred to situational leadership as being open to the unforeseen, and they highlighted that this makes them independent and that they develop 'the ability to take things in their stride'. A positive and supportive relationship with each student is very important for the students' learning outcomes (Marzano, 2009). The SI leaders believed that the biggest challenge in connection with holding the SI sessions is the difficulty of setting a fixed agenda for the sessions.

The SI programme uses special SI forms to enable the leaders to think through the experiences they have had. The SI leaders pointed out that they learned a lot by reflecting on their own experiences. An SI leader can reflect on 'different levels', for example, through self-reflection, together with the other SI leader, the SI leader group, or the SI supervisor. SI leaders must be willing to analyse and evaluate their own preparations and leadership of sessions, which leads to a twofold educational challenge where reflection on practice is essential (Schön, 1983). Learning leadership also takes place through feedback, and confrontational learning is a method that can contribute to leadership development for the SI leaders throughout the programme. The SI leaders pointed out that working in pairs and alternating between the SI leaders you cooper-

ate with is an advantage. The SI leader group thus developed an open and direct learning environment, enabling the SI leaders to give each other feedback after the sessions.

The SI programme is also organised such that the SI leader receives feedback from the SI supervisor who observes the SI sessions (Lund University, 2017b). All of the SI leaders said that they are happy for the SI programme to include observation and feedback from the SI supervisor. During the period in which SI sessions are held, the SI supervisor holds supervision meetings with the individual SI leaders or with the SI leader group. The supervisor should also regularly observe SI sessions. Special SI observation forms can be used during observation. This observation forms the basis for subsequent discussions with the SI leader. The dialogue with the SI supervisor is important for SI leaders' learning, and the SI supervisor can give a formative assessment of the SI leader's activities at SI sessions. Formative assessments are intended to promote development and improvement in an ongoing activity (Scriven, 1967). In their research, Black and William (2009) refer to three key principles of formative assessment: feedback, feed up, and feed forward. The SI supervisor can provide feedback on how the SI leader handles situations at the SI session, feed up in relation to the SI method, and feed forward in relation to the SI leader's further development. The SI leaders believed the follow-up from the SI supervisor is important at the start of the SI programme, but, as they work in pairs, it is not as necessary after they have led a few SI sessions.

6.2 How have the SI Leaders Understood the SI Leader Role?

The SI leaders referred to the importance of understanding what the SI leader role entails at an early stage. They made it clear that the clarification of roles at the SI leader course was important for their understanding of their role. One SI leader said that they learned how to lead an SI group in the course and to help students find answers themselves. The SI leader is only meant to serve as a facilitator of learning activities and to help students in the learning process. The SI leaders also saw it as their role to include all the participants, to enable everyone to benefit from taking part in the SI sessions. SI should thus contribute to realising a key educational paradox:

- How should SI leaders lead the students to lead themselves?
- How should the student contribute through participation to their own development?

Being able to lead oneself in the longer term is only possible through an external influence (von Ottingen, 2003). The leadership of SI sessions will thus entail an asymmetrical relationship between the SI leader and students where the students are brought on board and assigned responsibility. This is not an equal relationship, but it should be balanced. The SI leader must exercise a form of authority or certain control, and, at the same time, be supportive, appreciative, and close to the individual student. Helde and Suzen (2019) highlight three dimensions of authority. Professional authority is the

academic skill that the SI leader possesses. The SI leaders highlight being up-to-date and prepared as an important part of the SI leader role. The SI leaders express that professional authority is linked to the strategic leadership they exercise in advance. The personal authority of each SI leader is important for individual students to be able to trust the SI leader. It is important for SI leaders to be confident in their own role and with respect to creating a sense of security in the SI group, so that the students feel confident contributing to discussions. The SI leader role automatically gives the leaders a type of institutional authority, but this is not necessarily strong. The term SI leader expresses a role and a position that involves responsibility and leadership. The SI leaders believe that the most important thing is how the role is filled and exercised by the individual. As SI leader 2 states: 'It's really about including everyone, and those who are best at SI can help those who aren't quite as good' (interview 1).

Many good arenas have been created in the SI programme for SI leaders to develop in their role, and to reflect on and exercise their own authority. Awareness of this role is a precondition for creating learning that contributes to leadership development for the SI leaders. This development takes place by discussing the understanding of roles, together with other SI leaders or the SI supervisor.

6.3 How have the SI Leaders Understood and Experienced that the SI Programme Contributes to Leadership Development?

For the SI leaders, participating in an SI programme shares many similarities with participating in a leadership development programme (Lund University, 2017a, 2017b). The SI leaders must complete a two-day course before they can lead SI sessions. An SI leader group is established at the course. The SI leaders have highlighted in many contexts that they believe that working together with another SI leader at the SI sessions is an advantage.

The SI leaders highlighted the importance of the course material with respect to understanding the SI leader role and to learning leadership and leadership development through the SI programme. The course material from Lund University (2017a, 2017b) includes observation forms that the SI supervisor or SI leaders can use during observation of SI sessions. The observation form is used to learn more about leadership, and, together with SI leaders' own reflections, form a basis for conversations between SI leaders and with the SI supervisor. The SI leaders believe that the dialogue with the SI supervisor provides useful guidance, particularly during the SI programme's opening phase. Learning leadership requires time to be set aside for reflection and feedback, and the SI leaders believed that the SI programme and course material are good tools for learning leadership and leadership development. This promotes the SI leaders' continuous learning throughout the SI programme, and the SI leaders are perceived as reflective leaders – or as Schön (1983) calls them, reflective practitioners.

After the end of the SI programme, most of the SI leaders responded that they had developed as leaders to a great extent. The SI leaders emphasised that they had developed better administrative skills, become better teachers, improved at asking

questions that engaged the students, and become more comfortable leading group processes. One SI leader who had previously taken a guidance and coaching course had developed as a leader to a lesser extent.

7. Implications and Further Research

This chapter has focused on SI leaders' understanding and experience of learning leadership and leadership development in the role of SI leader at the university. The SI leaders also believed that what they learned about leadership in the SI programme may prove useful in their subsequent careers. 'I believe that my SI leadership experience can give me a better foundation for a range of jobs' (Questionnaire 2, November 2017). One relevant topic would be to investigate how previous SI leaders have applied these experiences in their own professional practice.

This study only deals with seven SI leaders in the Driving Instructor Education Programme. Including other fields would be beneficial to gain knowledge of how the SI leaders at other faculties and universities experience the SI programme's contribution to learning leadership and leadership development.

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