Cultivating Consciousness: A Meta-Abilities Model for 21st Century Academic Leadership Development

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Abstract

This investigation integrates consciousness expansion into UK academic leadership training to address complex educational environments. Utilizing an integrative review and Grounded Theory elements, it presents the Conceptual Model of Consciousness Development for Academic Leaders (CMDAL) encompassing seven components: Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Cognitive Development, Interpersonal domain, ethical development, spiritual development, and Change capacity (adaptability). Significant and complex challenges that cannot be resolved with traditional ways have evidenced the gap between them and current competencies-based leadership training; Models that use a holistic approach are more appropriate for developing academic leaders; Consciousness expansion is the pillar of these holistic models. The CMDAL proposed model, focusing on seven dimensions highlights the importance of complementing current holistic leadership development with elements of consciousness expansion to develop higher-order abilities or Meta-abilities that can enhance leadership effectiveness as they foster psychological maturity.

Future research should address the empirical validation of the model. Limitations include more analysis for context-specific adaptations and longitudinal research/testing to establish efficacy.

Keywords: Academic Leadership Development, Consciousness Expansion, Leadership Mindset.

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of the 21st century, higher education providers and particularly academic leaders face unprecedented challenges driven by globalisation and rapid technological advancements (Law, 2018). Traditional collegial forms of governance in universities are becoming less effective in the current climate of mass education, internationalization of education (Black, 2015) and intense competition, highlighting the limitations of the existing leadership models. It seems clear the necessity for a shift in leadership paradigms and leaders' psychology, moving away from traditional models towards developing a genuine leadership mindset that embraces adaptability, innovation, and resilience.

The seminal work of O'Connell (2014) was one of the first to highlight the complexity of these challenges, emphasising the strategic discontinuities and the blurring of traditional boundaries. Similarly, The Global Human Capital Trends report (2020) also highlights the speed of change in the education sector.

At the same time, the literature reveals a significant gap in understanding how academic leadership can evolve to address these challenges effectively. While Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky (2011) initiated a conversation on the changing landscape of tertiary education, there remains a lack of clarity on the specific leadership needs and specific strategies for developing these competencies and mindsets within the constraints of existing educational structures.

Law, D. (2018) criticise the insufficiency of traditional programmes, and Anderson & Adams (2015) also challenge the prevailing competency-based models of leadership development, which often disregard the transformative power of working on the inner self. These studies advocate for a holistic development model that integrates personal growth with professional skill advancement, to tackle the increasing complexity and volatility of today's business environment effectively.

Several papers have discussed the concept of meta-abilities or higher-order skills, which help people adapt, learn, and succeed in challenging and changing contexts; Meta-abilities, such as strategic thinking, creativity, and awareness (Bratkova, 2020) must be developed to succeed in hectic work settings and are essential for career advancement, and valuable organisational contributions.

Expanding one's knowledge and comprehension of oneself and the world around us is a necessary component of consciousness expansion. Meta-abilities and consciousness expansion are essentially related ideas that enable people and organisations to prosper in the complicated and changing world of today.

This study aims to address this issue and fill this gap by proposing a holistic approach to leaders' development and an enhanced meta-abilities-based Conceptual model of Consciousness Development for Academic Leaders (CMDAL) for developing effective leadership mindsets and evolving leaders' psychological maturity in the higher education sector in the UK. The fundamental objectives of the research include:

- Identify the challenges and opportunities currently faced by academic leaders in The evolving Landscape of Higher Education in the UK.
- Critically analyse the leadership mindset required to lead effectively in the current condition.
- Critically examine existing frameworks within traditional leadership development, mindset development, leaders' psychological growth and consciousness expansion drawing upon various sources from different fields.
- Comprehend the concept of meta-abilities and consciousness and its potential application to academic leaders' development.

This research seeks to integrate knowledge from leadership, psychology and mindfulness and build upon current frameworks to offer a comprehensive approach to academic leadership development that can be effective in the face of new challenges.

The fundamental difference of this proposal is its focus on *higher states of consciousness (HSCs)* and *meta-abilities*, quite different to the traditional competency-based leadership development programs that are frequently based on technical skills and authoritative leadership styles, which have proven inadequate in changing and complex environments.

The evolving landscape of higher education in the UK

Massive changes, social turmoil and administration chaos (Benner, 2022) are taking place in the UK higher education scene. Focus and priority on market and legislation demand and insufficient level of regulation, monitoring and control (Hunt & Boliver, 2023) have made universities vulnerable; this context has created conflicting goals of stakeholders making it hard to define goals (Bartram, 2020) and fulfil its original purpose.

As a result, there is a need for academic leaders and leadership development programmes to adapt to the new conditions (Vincent et al., 2015).

Developmental models in leadership

Leadership development is a field that aims to understand and intervene in the development of individuals as leaders and the development of leadership capacity in groups. Day et al., (2021) empirical studies point out the lack of empirical studies, the contradictory nature of research evidence and the need for more rigorous and systematic research to close the gaps in knowledge and understanding of leadership development. The work of Seemiller (2016) discussed and reviewed deeply the concept of competencies, its applicability in higher education and its integration within the educational framework. However, the discussion of the methodologies for measuring the impact of competency-based education on leadership development could be further developed.

Reichard and Johnson (2011) acknowledge the complexity of leadership development, and were among the first to propose a multilevel model of leader self-development, positioning this individual self-development within the organisational context and suggesting it as an effective organisational strategy; They recognised the importance of considering multiple influences and outcomes for effective development strategies; however, there is limited detail on the practical implications and challenges of implementing such a strategy within diverse organisational cultures in higher education.

Other leadership development research in recent Academic literature collectively seems to favour diverse and context-specific leadership development models, particularly, focusing on coaching, cultural influences, and engaging leadership practices, but once again, they pointed out the need for more rigorous, longitudinal research to genuinely understand the dynamics of leadership development across different settings and cultures (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022).

Similarly, Dinh et al. (2023) evaluation of leadership development frameworks, highlights their focus on individualistic outcomes over collective, emergent perspectives. Although this is a key point, might not be necessarily bad, as individual leadership growth and the role of intrinsic leadership qualities have been recognised as essential for other studies. The paper stresses the necessity for frameworks to adapt to the changing higher education context, particularly, Academic Leadership Development (ALD) models that emphasise collective leadership and adaptability to changes in the academic environment. Similar to other studies, this paper could offer more detailed guidelines on how such adaptability can be achieved in practice.

Leadership mindset in the academic context: a critical review

Bolden et al. (2015) argue that the mentality of individuals and the organisation is critical and should be reflected on for the development of shared leadership in higher education. They see the mindset as a lens that influences how we see the world and directly impacts knowledge and behaviour.
The paper urges the development of shared leadership through a conscious and organised enhancement of relational skills, including empathy, active listening, emotional intelligence, and tolerance to ambiguity and uncertainty. It suggests the relevance of the psychological maturity of leadership and its development in the academic context.

Another paper that also emphasises the psychological growth of academic leaders is that of Zulfiqar et al. (2021b) which discusses its positive effect when included in leadership development programmes in academies. Similarly, Carroll (2008) is of the idea of broadening the concept of leadership competencies to include emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, inclusivity and diversity. Additionally, Bishop (2013) discusses how authentic leadership can be relevant in the education sector by helping with self-consciousness, ethics and genuine relationship building. The concept of authenticity helps with trust-building and commitment among educators, bringing meaningful change in academic organisations.

These articles outline the leadership mindset necessary to thrive in higher education but would be more effective with explicit guidance on developing leadership skills through targeted training and experiential learning. In addition, a deeper analysis of the psychology of the leader and the development of consciousness is necessary to face future challenges.

Understanding and developing these leadership mindsets is crucial for academic leaders to effectively impact their organisations and communities. This review sets the stage for exploring the role of psychological development and consciousness in leadership and its efficacy in nurturing these essential attitudes in the new context, guiding future research and practice in leadership development within the UK's higher education sector.

Meta-abilities and psychological development in leadership

Meta-abilities go beyond the common competencies, and they include a range of emotional and cognitive skills (D'Amico & Geraci, 2023). Among the metacognitive ones are self-control, strategic thinking and adaptability, while the Meta-emotional ones include self-awareness of emotions, self-image, self-evaluation of emotional performance and abilities. Bratkova (2020) recognise them as essential in the educational context as they help individuals to think and evaluate the learning environment efficiently, and as suggested by Yadollahi & Yazdani (2020) they are essential for the development of meta-competences, crucial to overcoming contemporary obstacles, improving learning processes, and foster flexibility and success in complex contexts.

Other contemporary articles have investigated meta-skills and their impact on psychological development and human transformation in the field of leadership development. For example, Atkinson (1999) defined a management meta-skill as an underlying skill essential to the performance of specific competencies and the effective use of management knowledge and skills. It is in line with an article by Butcher and Harvey (1998) that discusses the concept of meta-abilities also highlighting the importance of those higher-order competencies in achieving organisational change. Those papers agree that developing meta-abilities positively impacts personal actions and decision-making within uncertain organisational frameworks, which would be essential in the current education context.

Effective competence management is made possible by meta-competence, which is defined by flexibility, self-awareness, and self-direction (Hartung & Cadaret 2017). Furthermore, in an advanced process-oriented knowledge management system, meta-rules—which specify actions for adaptation—play a

crucial role in facilitating proactive information supply even in the face of unforeseen changes. When combined, these meta-abilities give people the attitude and abilities needed to adapt to changing circumstances, grow both personally and professionally, and prosper in dynamic contexts.

Zhang, Hu, and Yang (2022) propose a leadership development model for cadets that centres on leadership meta-abilities (attitude and habits, goal planning, time management, interpersonal communication, team leadership) that could be further developed and enhanced to relate to and be applied in an education environment; These are integrated into a framework that encompasses theoretical learning, experiential class, practical exercises, and feedback evaluation.

These studies underscore how essential are meta-abilities in leadership development and human transformation, enabling leaders to manage pressure and adapt to challenging contexts. The issue is that they do not offer specific tactics for the development of these higher-order abilities. Therefore, it is essential to review those developmental models from the perspective of psychology and consciousness, as they could offer new insights for cultivating inner maturity in academic leaders.

Consciousness and leadership

Consciousness expansion is simply the process of developing one's consciousness further than our normal state of consciousness (Metzner, 2017) and it is related to a variety of actions and behaviours such as meditation, psychedelics, and creative visioning. The relevance of self-consciousness in brain networks is that it can produce structural changes, particularly in those networks related to emotion and social cognition (Presti, 2020). Scientists and Buddhists are collaborating in their research to further understand the interdependence of the mind and the outside world, through the understanding of consciousness, which is fundamental in leadership development.

From different perspectives and areas of study, such as psychology, philosophy, mindfulness, etc, we have gained some understanding of consciousness, however, it is the phenomenological perspective (focusing on subjective experience) the one that can bring great insights for academic leaders and the development of meta-abilities such as self-awareness and empathy, which will allow us to better understand internal and external experiences (Baars & Gage, 2010; Chalmers, 2010). These studies of consciousness are growing in number and significance (Madison, 1981). Some of them pointing its role in perception and external orientation and others look at consciousness as the sum of mental processes, setting the groundwork for cognitive psychology's focus on explicit and implicit processes (Baars & Gage, 2010).

The relationship between meta-abilities and higher states of consciousness (HSCs) can be seen as complementary; both are crucial for profound leadership development. HSCs can be considered a foundation for developing meta-abilities, offering leaders a deeper, more intuitive understanding of their roles and challenges, thereby facilitating a more holistic approach to personal and professional development.

Anderson & Adams (2015) identified and suggested the mastery of two areas of leadership, the "outer game" (technical/hard skills and management competencies), and the "inner game" (awareness, values, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence) to achieve effective leadership. Therefore, it is necessary to transcend the technical skills approach and go on an inner journey towards the true self and their work demonstrates how mastering the inner game has a positive impact on leading under pressure.

METHODS

This study follows an Integrative Review approach paired with Grounded theory components. The blended method makes it possible to synthesise and analyse the body of available literature and construct a conceptual framework.

The Integrative Review of the literature was the most appropriate and the first method followed in this research. It helps to summarise a vast number of studies from these two complex areas (leadership development and consciousness expansion) and to look at it from different perspectives, which contribute to gaining a clearer picture by connecting findings from different types of research.

The Grounded theory components were used in the methodology, facilitating early data collection and continuous analysis. This hybrid approach created an environment of constant reflection and intellectual discourse that helped with the update and development of the conceptual model and ensured its robust foundation.

This constructionist perspective facilitated a deeper connection with the subject matter, a better perspective and understanding of leadership dynamics within different cultural and organisational contexts and helped to reduce the gap in understanding how academic leaders can evolve to lead effectively in a complex context.

Search strategy

The exploratory nature of this research addresses open questions to uncover current happenings and improvement areas. The research began without a preconceived notion of what would be found about the challenges and strategies for effective leadership as well as the development of conscious leadership in the academic environment. The data was collected from databases and search engine such as Proquest One Business (Previously called ABI/INFORM Collection), Emerald Journals and Google Scholar for additional and recent publications. In the selection, 90.0% of the studies are less than 10 years old, 10.0% are more than 10 years old, and 47.5% of the papers are peer-reviewed, and 52.5% are non-peer-reviewed. The papers have been critically appraised with a simplified version of the quality assessment and a "high-medium-low" rating system, based on typical CASP questions that assess various aspects such as study design, methodology, validity, results, and applicability. The result of this assessment indicated that 47.5% of the studies are of high quality, 25.0% are of medium quality, and 27.5% are of low quality.

Criteria used to identify the articles:

1. Relevance to academic leadership and higher education: Using Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) a list of keywords included:

    i. Academic Leadership and mindset
    ii. Leadership development AND mindset
    iii. Consciousness AND Leadership Development
    iv. Meta-abilities AND Leadership Effectiveness
    v. Consciousness Development and Academic Leaders
    vi. Consciousness Expansion AND Training
    vii. 21st-century leadership OR Current leadership

2. Diverse Methodological Approaches: The articles provide a thorough understanding of the approaches used in leadership and higher education research by incorporating a variety of qualitative and theoretical research methods.

3. Interdisciplinary Perspectives: The incorporation of papers spanning domains including psychology, neuroscience, education, and organisational studies suggests a comprehensive method of comprehending leadership and postsecondary education from various angles, with the intention that it will help with the development and the proposing the holistic approach to leaders' development and close the literature gap in this area.

4. Practical application: To ensure a strong theoretical foundation and applicability of the research findings, there was an emphasis on practicality and results or real outcomes.

5. The language (English) and the papers' purpose as well as recent publication dates (maximum 10 years) of publication were key criteria for selection.

These standards guarantee a thorough and diverse analysis of leadership development and consciousness expansion, offering insightful information and approaches that may be used in academic contexts helping to address the gap between leadership and leader development.

Regarding the data extraction, it included article title, authors, research approach, data collection method, key theories or models used, purpose and findings.

Grounded theory provided a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis that supported the identification of common themes, patterns, gaps and thematic analysis to combine the data.

Data analysis followed the principles of grounded theory, starting with open coding to identify initial themes. A new set of coding was identified to understand the relationship among the different themes. With the help of selective coding, it was possible to identify the core categories. The process was repeated until no new themes emerged from the data. This approach with continuous comparison and reflection helped to gain a deep understanding of the current knowledge and refine the CMDAL framework for academic leaders' development.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This part of the research shows the key findings starting with the multidisciplinary review of the expanding consciousness in academic leadership topic, and from there, it goes into presenting the conceptual model structured around the seven domains.

Development of the CMDAL

Theme 1. Current academic leadership attitudes

The research examines the current academic leadership attitudes and compares them to the new requirements, focusing on critical evaluations of why such leadership is ineffective in new contexts. The literature review suggested an emphasis on competencies over psychological maturity and behaviour making the leadership programmes limited in the development of the academic leader.

This overemphasis on technical skills is highlighted in the key findings and contrasts with the little attention that the development programmes give to the mental attitude. This has been constantly criticised by authors who have pointed to the lack of attention to psychological growth and the underestimation of behaviour monitoring in the training. The research also found that the general mindset of academic leaders tends to be inclined towards management rather than a leadership approach and is mostly driven by control and individual power with signs of insecurity and lack of self-confidence. Additionally, there was a constant discussion about the limited psychological maturity of academic leaders, their constant issue with accepting incompetence and the negative impact of ego on personal and organisational levels.

Some authors discussed the lack of interest in personal growth and how it has almost disappeared from formal education. These are clear signs of a fixed mindset among academic leaders, who are reluctant to personal change and professional development because of fear, defensiveness and a passive attitude.

Theme 2. Essential types of leadership attitudes and mindsets
The extensive and critical examination of current literature reveals the types of leadership attitudes and mindsets that are essential for contemporary and future academic contexts. Among them, some of the most relevant seem to be:

a)   Growth Mindset in Academic Leadership.
Dweck (2006) defined a growth mindset as the belief that through effort and constancy, one can continuously and permanently develop intelligence, skills and abilities. The work highlights the value of a growth mindset in fostering learning, creativity, and adaptability among leaders, which can be relevant to academic leaders who are facing challenging situations (Elliot & Dweck (2017).

b)   Emotional Intelligence as a Leadership Competency.
The role of emotional intelligence in leadership, defined as the ability to understand and manage one's own and others' emotions, is underscored by Goleman & Boyatzis. Livesey (2017) stresses its significance in enhancing interpersonal relationships, communication, and motivation, which are crucial for fostering a supportive academic environment.

c)   A positive Attitude towards Inclusivity and Diversity.

The research of Zayim-Kurtay (2018) suggests that valuing diversity and creating a supportive work environment are characteristics of academic leaders who have been more successful in creating a more positive organisational culture.

d) Strategic and Creative Mindsets.

In their study, Gmelch & Buller (2015) discuss how a strategic and creative mindset could contribute to innovative ways to solve problems and achieve organisational goals, which makes it an essential mindset for academic leaders.

e) Global Point of View and Ethical Considerations.

Authors such as Kempster (2021) highlight the need for a global mindset that enables leaders to develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences and the ability to manage organisational disparities. Ethical leadership, on the other hand, focus on integrity and morality as essential qualities of the mind that promote ethical behaviours and trust in organisations (Zhang et al. (2018). This type of leadership will impact organisational culture, by placing a strong focus on responsibility, transparency and integrity, which in turn improve the leaders' capacity for making decisions and effectively managing moral challenges.

f) Resilience, Continuous Learning and a Service Attitude Resilience.

The importance of resilience and a service-oriented attitude was highlighted in the work of Maulding et al. (2012) and Van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2010) who also underscored the criticality of lifelong learning in fostering educational success. This paper calls for a focus on the development of a growth mindset that enable a proactive attitude by embracing change, emphasising adaptability, and open-mindedness as essential components of a new academic leadership mentality that is required for the 21st century academic context.

Some of the key codes found for effective leadership include self-awareness, emotional intelligence and cognitive capacity. Moreover, it was found that to develop decision-making abilities and tackling societal issues, leadership programmes need to emphasise critical thinking and active citizenship.

Theme 3. Integration with Existing Literature

Some papers, such as Atkinson (1999) suggest the integration of meta-abilities such as self-knowledge, cognitive skills, emotional resilience and personal drive as essential to effective management and leadership particularly, while navigating complex organisational environments. This idea could be

extended and applied to equip academic leaders with the psychological maturity that enable them to lead effectively in the current education landscape.

Similar studies also suggest that meta-abilities directly influence the formation of other essential leadership attributes such as visionary, authenticity and resilience that are required in today's dynamic organisational environments. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that those higher order abilities highlighted in Atkinson's paper can successfully support the development of the newly required academic leadership mindset, but partially. Table 1 shows how the meta-abilities in their model can be mapped onto the desired academic leadership mindset.

Table 1. Leadership attitudes vs. Meta-abilities

Leadership attitudes	Meta-abilities			
	Cognitive skills	Self-knowledge	Emotional resilience	Personal Drive
Growth Mindset		✓		✓
Emotional Intelligence		✓	✓	
Inclusivity and Diversity		✓	✓	
Strategic and Creative Mindset	✓			✓
Global Perspectives and Ethical Considerations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resilience, Service Orientation, and Learning Focus			✓	✓

Source: developed by the author

The cultivation of self-knowledge and personal drive will have a positive direct impact on the development of a Growth Mindset as these to meta-abilities encourage persistence in the face of setbacks and helps to embrace challenges as a way to growth. Emotional Intelligence is developed through the practice of

emotional resilience and the cultivation of self-knowledge because of self-awareness, which is essential for managing emotions and understanding others. Equally, through the cultivation of self-knowledge it is possible to enhance empathy, inclusivity and diversity. The cognitive skill component of the model helps to develop that strategic and creative mindset that enable innovative thinking and effective problem-solving. On the other hand, the understanding of complex global issues and the capacity to make ethical decisions can be enhance through the cultivation of all four meta-abilities. Finally, resilience, continuous learning and the dedication to serving others can be positive outcomes of gaining emotional residence and personal drive.
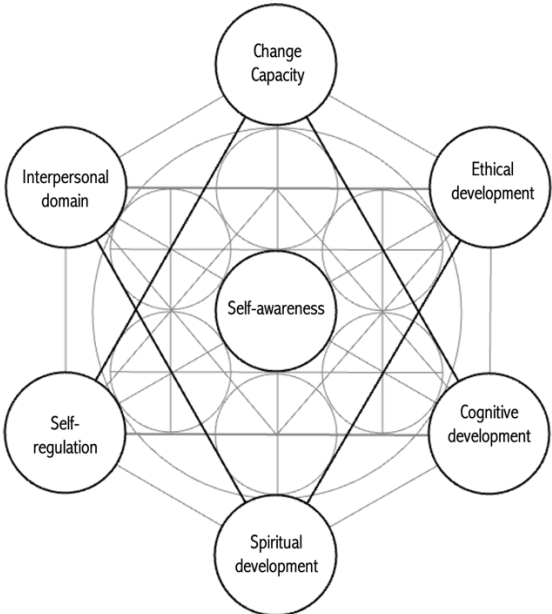
It is clear, however, that additional meta-abilities like cultural competence and ethical reasoning (to specifically address ethical considerations could complement the model and ensure a

While these meta-abilities lay a solid foundation, additional meta-abilities like cultural competence (for better-fostering inclusivity, diversity, and global perspectives) and ethical reasoning (to specifically address ethical considerations) could enrich this model, ensuring a far-reaching development of all six leadership mindsets.

Theme 4. Theoretical Framework

As a result of the findings and analysis of the data, a Conceptual Model of Consciousness Development for Academic Leaders (CMDAL) is proposed in this paper to prepare academic leaders to lead effectively in the 21st century. The model highlights the importance of integrating the cultivation of self-awareness, the capacity for change and the development of five other domains including the cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, ethical and spiritual.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model of Consciousness Development for Academic Leaders (CMDAL)

Leadership Challenges	CMDAL Component
Self-awareness	
Being able to navigate complex and fast-changing academic environments that requires leaders to have a deeper understanding of their strengths, weaknesses and emotional triggers.	This component encourages reflective practices and mindfulness to cultivate self-knowledge and enable leaders to understand their emotions, motivations and values and their impact on decision-making and behaviour.
Self-regulation / Emotional Balance	
The current academic landscape requires the ability to manage fear and stress caused by the highly competitive environment. The effective self-control will improve personal motivation to create a positive culture in the organisations.	A vital component of the model in emotional balance and the ability to self-regulate, which helps to understand and manage our own emotions as well as those of others. The aim is to create extraordinary interpersonal relationships as the base of an encouraging and supporting work environment. This emotional balance or equanimity is crucial for managing uncertainty and anxiety when under pressure in complex and rapidly changing environment.
Cognitive Development	
To have the capacity to think strategically to solve a variety of complex problems resulting from different stakeholders' interests and a highly dynamic environment.	The domain of cognitive development focuses on improving reflective thinking, creativity and adaptability, to facilitate strategic decision and problem-solving particularly for adaptive problems where there is no clear understanding of the problem and the solutions. The aim is to develop a growth mindset that is open to change and fosters creativity, innovation and strategic planning to face the new and more complex challenges.
Interpersonal Domain	

The challenge is to develop a culture that value collaboration and encourage teamwork to tackle the new challenges. It requires a great ability to communicate and influence to build a truly cohesive organisational culture.	This domain aims to develop the interpersonal skills of the academic leaders by building a better understanding of empathy, active listening, emotional competencies that make the process of embracing cultural diversity more natural. This is a fundamental meta-ability that is crucial for managing collaborative multicultural environment.
Ethical Development	
Maintaining trust and credibility among staff, colleagues, students and other stakeholders by upholding integrity and ethical standards.	Integrates ethical principles and moral judgment into leadership development. Leaders are encouraged to act with integrity and transparency, fostering an ethical organisational culture.
Spiritual Development	
Developing a deeper sense of purpose and values to gain clarity, connect and build stronger relations while inspiring others.	Emphasises the importance of spirituality in leadership, helping leaders connect with their inner values and purpose. This component aims to foster resilience and a sense of community.
Change Capacity (Adaptability)	
Facing the challenge of constantly evolving educational paradigms, copying with pressure of managing fast-changing environment and stakeholders needs as well as facing new demands and adjusting to the political and economic spheres.	An explicit focus on flexibility and change management that helps leaders to be adaptable in the face of unexpected changes and to manage transitions smoothly. The capacity for change is seen as a meta-skill essential for personal and professional development, allowing leaders to adapt effectively to new challenges and environments.

Theme 5. Expanding Consciousness in Academic Leadership

The experience of operating from higher states of awareness and self-awareness that elevates a sense of compassion, and inventiveness and facilitates adaptability can be recognised as consciousness expansion (Cikotić, 2021). This places the individual mind above the controlling attitude, allowing higher

perception and concentration on current behaviours and organisational dynamics that are invaluable when navigating uncertainty.

"When conventional management strategies falter in the face of complexity, it becomes crucial to embrace intuition and inner knowing (Sell, 2017)."

Consciousness expansion papers cover a range of topics, including altered states of consciousness, which explore various states of consciousness experienced during activities such as sleep, dreaming and meditation, critical consciousness development, and the psychological dimensions of personal transformation. The main characteristic is the alteration in overall patterns of mental functioning. It is this alteration, the ones that academic leaders can use to gain unique insights into personal transformation and psychological development.

"Harung et al. (1995) propose an innovative approach to leadership. It suggests that world-class leaders often experience **higher states of consciousness (HSCs),** *which significantly contribute to their effectiveness and leadership qualities."*

This theory bridges the gap between personal development and professional leadership, offering a unique perspective on how consciousness levels can impact leadership capabilities. According to this theory, experiencing HSCs could significantly increase creativity, and moral reasoning and give a holistic perspective, all of it extremely valuable qualities for effective leadership. Its findings showed a strong correlation between HSCs and superior leadership capabilities.

It is clear that a higher level of psychological maturity is needed to lead effectively in difficult situations, and expanding one's consciousness could be the solution for it.

"All things considered, raising consciousness in leadership helps people to awaken latent potential, manage chaos, and live out a purpose-driven vision (Maheshwari, 2023)."

"The literature converges on the importance of consciousness in effective leadership, underscoring self-awareness, mindfulness, and the "inner game" of leadership as foundational for effective action in the "outer game" (Anderson & Adams, 2015; Palmer et al., 2010)."

Developmental frameworks such as those proposed by Wilber and Kegan provide a framework for understanding the development of leaders regarding consciousness.

"Developmental Leadership Profile (DLP), grounded in Kegan's concept, has been effective in aiding leaders to identify their development stage and target specific growth opportunities (Cook-Greuter, 2013)."

By identifying their developmental stage, leaders can target specific areas for growth, enhancing their ability to address educational challenges through increased self-awareness, empathy, and adaptive leadership strategies, which are essential to embracing change.

Consciousness expansion involves shifting from a poor level of awareness and non-reflective state of mind to a more critical, highly reflective and liberatory consciousness. This is an essential shift for a personal transformation as it included the expansion of one's awareness of societal structures and their ability to enact social change. There are clear classifications of thought and behaviour expected as individuals transition through various stages of consciousness development.

Summing up

It is clear that consciousness development, as a process to achieve a more critical, reflective and liberatory state of mind, is crucial for leaders to undergo personal transformation since it helps them comprehend society structures and implement social change. It is also evident from the research that Spiritual transformation is essential and would contribute to personal development and leadership effectiveness. These two developmental processes not only can help, but they are necessary for leaders to manage change in a complex academic environment; they stress psychological maturity and could be the best approach for leaders and organisations to approach the complex issues faced by UK higher education providers.

Overall, studies proved that Consciousness-based training, particularly, those with an integrative or integrated approach helps leaders to expand their self-awareness and become more emotionally balanced; as a result, it tends to increase their decision-making and overall leadership effectiveness. These meta-abilities are among those that have been neglected in the current competency-based leadership training. Thus, to fully satisfy the demands of fast-evolving educational landscapes and promote resilience and creativity, this holistic development approach is essential.

The CMDAL in the Context of Integrative Models.

The proposed model is in line with those other conceptual models that emphasise a mix of cognitive, affective, social and managerial competencies, but complement with a strong focus on the moral and spiritual domains.

Studies like Harung et al., (2009) have demonstrated a correlation between excellent leadership performance and higher levels of brain integration and consciousness. Thus, the incorporation of techniques in the CMDAL, from both, Western and Eastern philosophies, which help to cultivate consciousness can contribute to the development of more effective academic leadership.

Integrative models of leadership

Integrative approaches in leadership involve combining various competencies and dimensions to create a holistic framework for effective leadership. This synthesis of different aspects of leadership can improve personal, and organisational outcomes and address complex challenges.

Searching the literature, there have been developed many different types of integrative models, for example, integrative frameworks for global leadership competencies, integrative models of leader competencies, Multidimensional frameworks for leadership competencies, integrative frameworks for leadership competencies for digital transformation and even multilevel sustainability leadership framework integrating individual, organisational and societal mechanisms that are essential for addressing complex sustainability issues. These integrative approaches in leadership are evidence of the possibility of combining various competencies and dimensions that could produce more holistic and effective leadership. Each of them demonstrated an enhancement of organisational capabilities to address diverse and complex challenges. In this context, the CMDAL can be positioned or aligned with integrative models that emphasise a combination of intellectual, emotional, social, and management competencies that according to Figueiredo et al. (2022) are essential for effective leadership. The proposed model can also leverage findings from research such as those proposed by Park et al. (2017) and Sajjad et al. (2023), addressing individual, organisational, and societal
dimensions of leadership.

Additionally, to those integrative approaches, the CMDAL can integrate practices from a variety of philosophies to develop consciousness in leaders, as suggested by Heaton (2017) (Heaton, 2017), who found how some meditation techniques can improve performance on multiple measures of intelligence, brain integration and exceptional levels of psychological maturity. Mindfulness practices included in

these types of approaches contribute to the improvement of behaviour and other abilities like big picture awareness and building trust.

Research papers such as Day et al. (2021) mention that despite a large number of theoretical models and frameworks available, there is still a significant gap in the application of those models to practical leaders' development and the understanding of the long-term impact of such development on organisations.

Some of the obstacles to the integration of awareness and consciousness expansion into academic leadership training might be related to acceptance of the topic, qualified facilitators and lack of evidence of positive outcomes. Precisely, to overcome these obstacles, it is required a combination of mindfulness training, emotional regulation techniques, moral analysis and cognitive development.

Programmes that are specifically designed to meet the requirements of academic leaders are crucial. The limitation of the research is in terms of Validation and Reliability Measures. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, more triangulation needs to be further employed by cross-referencing data from different sources. Member checking can be conducted with a sample of academic leaders to validate the themes identified. Intercoder reliability has not been assessed.

CONCLUSION

This piece of work highlights the essential role of consciousness expansion in academic leadership development and calls for an integrative, comprehensive approach to developing more effective leaders for the current educational context.

As the complexity of challenges within the educational sector escalates, so must the psychological maturity and consciousness of leaders. These challenges bring the need for more creative, adaptive solutions that transcend conventional problem-solving approaches. In turn, these new solutions require a higher level of awareness that the current or traditional training are not offering, therefore the need for a shift towards developing leadership qualities rooted in higher consciousness is evident.

The proposed CMDAL model offers a holistic approach like some other frameworks, however, it fills a gap by emphasising on missing areas. As a result, the seven interconnected domains of consciousness fulfil the requirement for cultivating effective leadership in the educational sector. The model domains include self-awareness, self-regulation, cognitive development, interpersonal domain, ethical development, spiritual development and change capacity. The comprehensive framework suggests that effective leadership in higher education requires this integrated approach to personal transformation from the

mindset level, embracing growth, ethical decision-making, interpersonal relationships and a deeper understanding of oneself and others.

Areas for further research should explore the model's applicability and effectiveness in enhancing academic leadership effectiveness in the UK and beyond to meet the challenges of 21st-century education.

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