

# OPTIMIZING LEADERSHIP EDUCATION: THE PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP EDUCATION IN WOMEN'S COLLEGES

Natsu Iwaski, Kyoritsu Women's University  
 Riuko Mori, Kyoritsu Women's University  
 Koki Arai, Kyoritsu Women's University

## ABSTRACT

*This paper summarizes reflections on the optimization of leadership education based on actual classroom development. Leadership in this context concerns influencing others to produce some outcome and is considered to be acquired, developable, and something that can be exercised by all. First, leadership is raised as a learning objective; second, project-based lectures and skill-reinforcing lectures are used to enhance the learning process. Furthermore, active learning and enrollment management are used. Enrollment management is a mutual learning experience, in which older students guide and support younger students, and serve as role models to demonstrate leadership.*

**Keywords:** Enrollment Management, Learning Assistant, Project-Based Learning, Student's Characteristics, Women's Colleges Leadership Program.

**Optimizing Leadership Education:** The practice of leadership education in women's colleges.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the optimization of leadership education. It is based on a discussion regarding actual classroom development and how to optimally operate in a women's university (Kyoritsu Women's University), in the light of prior examples of leadership education programs at other universities.

Leadership in this study means that "all participants work around each other in their respective roles, which moves people, and in the accumulation of these actions, the group ultimately achieves some results" (Higano, 2018). This assumes that leadership is fundamentally different from the way we have traditionally viewed those who are called leaders. For example, it used to be natural for a leader to show leadership, but nowadays, in companies and organizations, other members of a team also need to show membership or leadership and to take action for the positive change that the team aims for. It is called this new idea of leadership the 21st century leadership

The major difference between traditional and 21st century leadership is that leadership will be utilized by all people, instead of only by certain people. The concept of a leadership exercised by specific people only came from the idea that there were specific elements which made these people leaders. However, the new idea is that leadership is acquired and can be developed;

therefore, it is something that can be demonstrated by everyone, which is a dramatic paradigm shift.

In the past, leadership was taken by those with executive authority, such as the president, department heads, and group leaders, but now it can be extended to ordinary employees. The president can take action to inspire leaders or to lead everyone by presenting goals, but, in the case of ordinary employees, the kind of leadership that they can show (without authority) is more important. This idea is based on the notion that the exercise of leadership by ordinary employees, for instance new employees, is to turn what has traditionally been a mere grievance or complaint into a suggestion and work toward the improvement of the team or organization.

Leadership education began in 2006 at Rikkyo University in Japan; after which various universities have begun to offer leadership education, with a particular increase since academic year 2020. Leadership education is not limited to universities; it was originally practiced in companies, but recently universities have begun to consider it necessary, and several high schools have begun to offer it as well.

Section 2 outlines previous research and critically examines it in light of the current situation, explaining the practices discussed in this study and the gaps it would be filled. Section 3 describes the three leadership behaviors with respect to the basic structure of the leadership development program and explains the four points of the leadership development program based on these behaviors. Section 4 details the enrollment management of student assistants, one of the most important among these elements, and describes their importance as role models. Section 5 describes how specific examples are used in real-life cases, and Section 6 describes realities and challenges for students as they move forward with these practices. Section 7 concludes the paper.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This form of leadership is defined in Higano (2018) as leadership without authority, which means that leadership is required to be exercised by each and every diverse individual, not just by the leader. This underlies the idea of leadership in the era of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) with enormous change, and the exercise of leadership by a normal leader is derived from the discussion of what can replace it when things appear unresolvable (Iizuka, 2016; Tomioka, 2017). In this case, it is assumed that all members of the group must think about it, one by one, rather than hanging around.

Within these leadership studies, there are several approaches to leadership: the characteristics approach (Stogdill, 1974), the behavioral approach (Yukl, 1994), contingency approaches (Fiedler, 1967), and transformational approaches (Bass, 1998). In addition, one of the leadership approaches that have received a lot of attention recently is servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Originally, there was an argument for the trait approach, which argued that leaders had specific elements, and the idea was that they belonged to the individual and were therefore difficult to reproduce. In the behavioral approach, the PM theory is well known. It considers leadership behavior on two axes: P behavior to raise performance and M behavior to maintain the team. The contingency approach was also the next one to emerge. However, while these are presented in chronological order, they did not switch and develop completely in theory development.

They have emerged as overlapping arguments. The contingency approach is complex and suggests that contingency is the same in the usual variety and in other areas of theory, and

considerably varies from situation to situation. In other words, there is a tendency for the discussion to be difficult to formulate. The transformational approach is also divided into two types with respect to the fact that this also differs from situation to situation: exchange and transformation. The former suggests that there is a leadership method that elicits contributions through this kind of exchange, while the latter tends to encourage members to pay attention to the external environment, provide them a new perspective on thinking, make them realize the need for change, present clear goals and visions for the future, and encourage them to be willing to take the initiative. Some call it transformational, which is risk-taking and practicing transformational behavior (Bass, 1998). Some argue that both are necessary (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Yamaguchi, 2004).

Therefore, the idea of leadership has significant implications for practitioners, and field practitioners need to explore their respective leadership styles through practice. In light of these implications, this study also builds on theoretical research and provides a systematic case study for optimizing leadership education by explaining in detail the attempts in practice.

The idea behind the introduction of MBO was that it was clear that clear objectives were important for improving a company's profitability, productivity, market share, and reputation. According to Drucker (1954), the procedure of setting objectives and monitoring progress is a determinant factor towards the functioning of an organization, and this factor is one that needs to permeate the entire organization, from top to bottom. MBO theory has been around for more than 50 years, and Kyriakopoulos (2012) grouped it into 15 major application areas and showed that the main area of application of MBO is in the medical field, with four major subgroups within it, namely medical, nursing, hospital administration, and hospital pharmacy, accounting for 40% of the total. In relation to this paper, there is room for the application of MBO theory to change the behavior of each participant toward collaboration to achieve the common goal of the team.

In addition to this, two other interesting developments have taken place in pedagogy in recent years. The first is scaffolding learning as a way to help learners accomplish tasks that they may not have been able to accomplish on their own. In particular, the emergence of scaffolding and the organization of strategies (Pol, et al., 2010), the education of working adults (Gleason, et al. 2018). Second, it is appropriate to also add the metrical learning method of "*learning how to learn*" (Spencer, 2020, applications to historical research (Halvorsen, et al., 2019, A randomized control trial study on online educational games (Papanastasiou, et al. 2017)).

One of the things that situates this practice study within previous research is shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Ishikawa, 2013). This term describes the state of the organization rather than an idea. In other words, the state in which everyone is exerting leadership is shared leadership. The term authentic leadership was coined to describe a leadership style in which all members demonstrate leadership; it is important that leadership makes use of the individuality of each person and of the essence of that person (May et al., 2003).

Furthermore, this is sometimes positioned as a counterpart to the idea of servant leadership, with some suggesting that this is also a leadership style that supports people in traditional, 'tractional' leadership, and is also positioned as a counterpart to the idea of servant leadership.

This program can be positioned as authentic leadership that makes use of the individual. It would be worth emphasizing on leadership that is unique to a person. In addition, the program is designed to make use of the strengths of female students and their own strengths.

While there are various leadership classifications, such a typology is not just for the purpose of categorization, but needs to be used in such a way that it is possible to find useful points among their characteristics, and later use those useful points as a theory of leadership. A critical review of previous research and the positioning of leadership development programs in practice could also be seen as related to shared leadership.

Servant leadership has emerged from a real-world situation in which leaders turn to their followers and to the followers of their followers, in order to eliminate the disillusionment of leadership among young people. It is a way of thinking. One who felt that it is to be losing young people who will be the future leaders of the United States? Robert K. Greenleaf, who feared this, arrived at this ideal of leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Robert K. Greenleaf's vision of an ideal leader was well received by the young people of the United States at that time. In Japan, around 2000, as Shiseido was in its V-shaped recovery process, the company's president stated that customers were the starting point and highlighted the importance of the workplace, and this approach was widely known in Japan (Kanai & Ikeda, 2007). Although this idea still remains today, it is also thought to be one of the reasons why the servant leadership style has been frequently used by managers who dare to talk about it in order to suggest that this field is important. In other words, this leadership style is the easiest for managers to convey in a straightforward manner, and it is thought that the reason behind this is that they want to support others, and they also want others to do it in that way.

However, servant leadership is difficult to implement in leadership education for students. Students still believe that leaders are in a supremacy position and are supposed to be meaningful in what they say. It is difficult to educate students to accept the servant leadership style because they like to support others.

In this sense, it is must considered the aspects of implementing shared leadership in the education of female college students. For example, using servant leader could make the student just a servant. You need to have a belief that you are a servant leader, and you need to have your own goals first. This is what makes serving a positive characteristic. Given today's student temperament, they may end up simply serving everyone else.

After critically examining these theories and realities, the current focus of leadership education is on shared leadership, a leadership shared by all people. In this study of leadership in a practical case study based on prior research, this paper shows that one of the difficulties of leadership education is that it cannot be limited to thinking in one's head; in fact, it is not a leadership action unless one actually takes action. It is not easy to create a program to encourage people to take action. The base is this shared and personalized leadership (Mazzoleni, 2000), and it is necessary to explain that the program is meant to embody and allow to experience this philosophy. I want to do it.

Concerning leadership education for female students, the need for self-development by overcoming the social roles attributed to women by society was mentioned in Sincar et al. (2018), and the concepts of gender equality and social justice remain controversial in Tran & Nguyen (2020). It has been indicated that this is the case. However, although this paper is an initiative set in a women's university and does not delve deeply into the discussion about gender, the need for a leadership development program and the path that this program aims to take, which was done with the development of leadership that is unique to me, is one way to go. In other words, the effectiveness of reciprocal learning interactions in the success of mentoring

experiences among female school leaders, as described by Peters (2010), is also discussed in this paper. This is a study that complements previous research and tests the theory in a real-life case.

## METHODOLOGY

### Leadership Three Minimum Actions

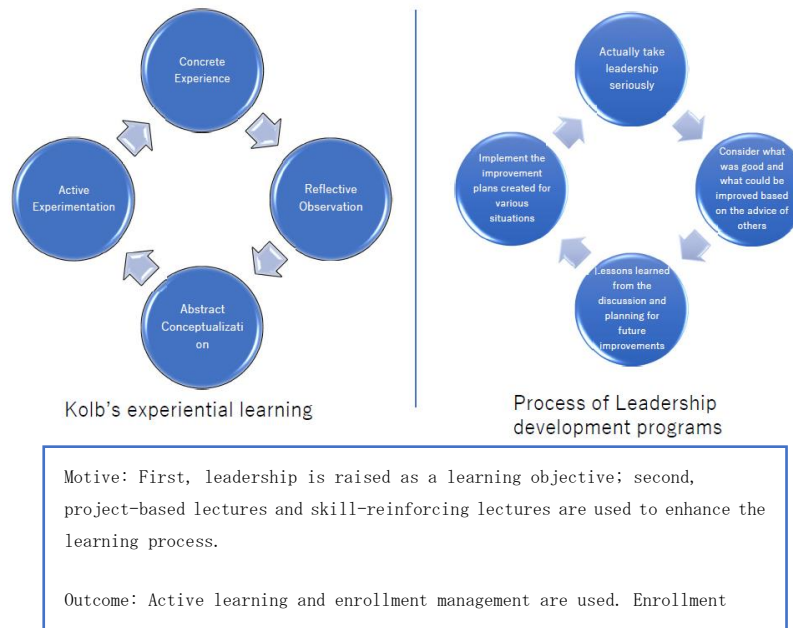
In order to understand leadership as a skill that all people should demonstrate and to advance its acquisition, this paper has analyzed the behavior and broke it down into three necessary elements. Leadership should be an action, and it is positioned as a skill that everyone should be able to exercise without authority, and the three minimum actions (three elements) that should be taken to achieve this are as follows (Higano, 2018).

1. Setting and sharing an objective.
2. Taking the initiative and leading by example to achieve results.
3. Providing mutual support (involving others in helping to achieve results).

This is based on the elements proposed by Kouzes & Posner (2010). In other words, since leadership was regarded as an embodied skill that everyone should be able to demonstrate without authority, from the perspective of the appropriate use of resources to achieve goals, they proposed (i) the planned use of resources (achieving time efficiency), (ii) the expansion of resources and the achievement of internal efficiency of each individual, and (iii) the coordinated use of resources. Their approach is organized in three elements related to each aspect of achieving efficiency.

This leadership development approach is tied to the idea of experiential learning and the field of education. With regard to specific experiences, the experiential learning model takes up the issue and states that specific experiences are observed introspectively, conceptualized, and subsequently acted upon as an active experiment Figure 1. There is a learning model that revolves around this process, and the process of leadership development is also about actually experiencing or, to be specific, experiencing leadership, for example in a project, and then reflecting on what it was all about. The program was created to be considered that allows participants to experience leadership development as a process by thinking about these things and assuming that they can be reproduced in the same cycle, and then taking action again Figure 1.

## Experiential learning and Leadership development programs



**Figure 1**  
**MODEL OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The aim of such a leadership program is based on the idea of developing leadership that can be exercised without authority as a learning goal, and is developed under ethics education in conjunction with courses such as first-year education and basic seminars.

#### Four Points

This study explains this by analyzing four aspects of the course: goals, plans, practices, and characteristics. These four points are as follows: first, leadership is raised as a learning objective; second, the course is a hybrid of project-based and skill-reinforcing lectures; third, active learning is incorporated, and fourth, enrollment management is implemented. These four points are integrated into the program to form a systematic structure supported by long-term goals, medium-term plans, and short-term practices, and are complementary and supportive of all areas.

The first point, leadership as a learning objective, focuses on the recognition of the need for leadership as a fundamental skill from the design stage of a project. Specifically, the following two goals are set: (i) to develop the leadership skills necessary for life in all work environments where interpersonal relationships exist, not only in business departments, and (ii) to develop logical thinking, discussion, feedback, research and analysis, documentation, and presentation skills.

The second objective, project-based learning and a hybrid structure, is to provide a framework for the actual experience of the learning process by dealing with actual issues in companies. Specifically, while accepting the donation from a company, the project is advanced by accepting the collaboration of support staff (trainees selected by the company). Furthermore,



in the skill-strengthening courses, the skills that are necessary for leadership development, such as questioning, feedback, and logical thinking skills, are reinforced.

The third type of active learning is to stimulate mutual learning in actual business operations. It is not only based on the active learning attitude of the students, but also on Kolb's experiential learning, for members to try to exercise leadership by placing themselves in an environment that requires leadership, for members of the same environment to help each other with the process and results, and to be able to improve while doing it (Kolb, 1976).

The fourth, enrollment management, is the most significant point, and it as a key feature where it is engaged that students and link student learning to the actual program as a model for leadership development. Specifically, (i) to use student support as the mainstay, and as a catalyst for teaching-students collaboration as a step toward a learning organization, and (ii) to assign student assistants to encourage students, who are sophisticated consumers, to turn their grievances into suggestions, with student assistants also taking the lead in this process. Next section discusses this enrollment management part in more detail in relation to the student assistants (it is called learning assistants).

## RESULTS

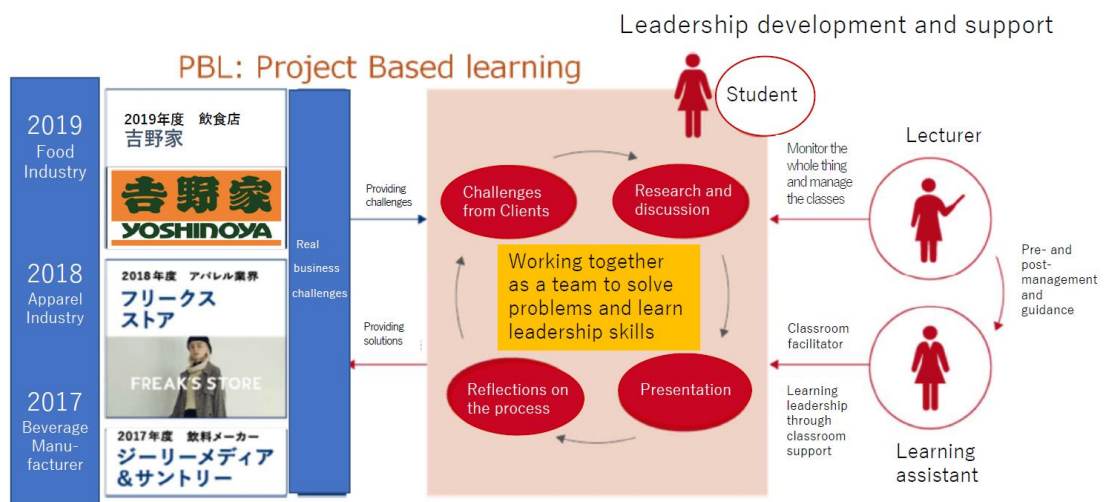
### Enrollment Management of Student Assistants

The purpose of building student assistantships is to foster a mutual learning experience in which younger students are guided and supported by older students, and older students serve as role models and visualize how they can exercise leadership in their university life.

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Provide leadership development and support through corporate problem and issue solving

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**Figure 2**  
INVOLVEMENT OF FACULTY, SENIOR STUDENTS, AND STUDENTS IN PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Not all students will be learning assistants, but those students who are motivated and interested in helping others and developing their leadership skills will be selected to serve as a role model for younger students and guide them on how to develop their leadership skills in this way. This is a picture of how students, faculty, and upperclassmen interact with each other in Project Based Learning (PBL) Figure 2.

In Figure 2, in the PBL session, students research and discuss as they would in a normal project, and the senior students and faculty members support them in an equal relationship to provide a good proposal to the client. The important thing is that the discussions in the PBL process are solid, and the upperclassmen get involved in a very detailed way to provide feedback on the demonstration of leadership and promote the students' growth.

By having some kind of role model in this way, female students are able to play an active role and demonstrate their abilities. It helps them to think more deeply about what they should do.

One of the characteristics of this initiative is that the learning assistant (LA) becomes a learning goal for the students. In a sense, the learning assistants are those who are constantly being observed, and in this way, they grow and develop through class management, consultation, and how they learn. As a result, many students who have experience as learning assistants have a better understanding of themselves and are able to help others when looking for a job. For example, as a result of this, they may be able to find a job they want.

Furthermore, most learning assistants are able to move from being a student in a class to being a program manager, especially when they are able to notice things and make suggestions, which are one of the leadership skills, and take their own actions. The key to this is to further utilize the importance of this role of enrollment in the future.

There is an example of a leadership development program graduate who was able to implement what she learned in this lecture when she became an LA.

During one of the leadership development program lectures on the concept of logical thinking, the LA prepared slides to make the mechanism of logical thinking easier to understand. In fact, she was able to revise their own slides on how to explain logical thinking under the advice of faculty members, and then develop them into "Slack" to demonstrate what they had learned, somehow giving back what they had learned.

In terms of content, the slides were more effectively worded than the slides I use for the mechanism in class, and they were unique in that the detailed explanations were successfully incorporated into them and were put together from a student's clear perspective.

In addition, she had a good way of explaining the mechanism of the system by focusing on a topic that seemed to be of interest to the students, and, in her own way, she further explained the mechanism in crisp and clear terms. This could be explained to the first year students from a different perspective than what was being communicated in class, which made it easier for them to understand it in a familiar way.

Furthermore, LAs felt a sense of existential value in communicating what they had learned in their role, as they wanted to give something back to someone else, who in turn was also willing to contribute and give something back to someone else, was also considered to be mutual support in terms of leadership and a good example of a leadership development program.

### Examples of Specific Efforts



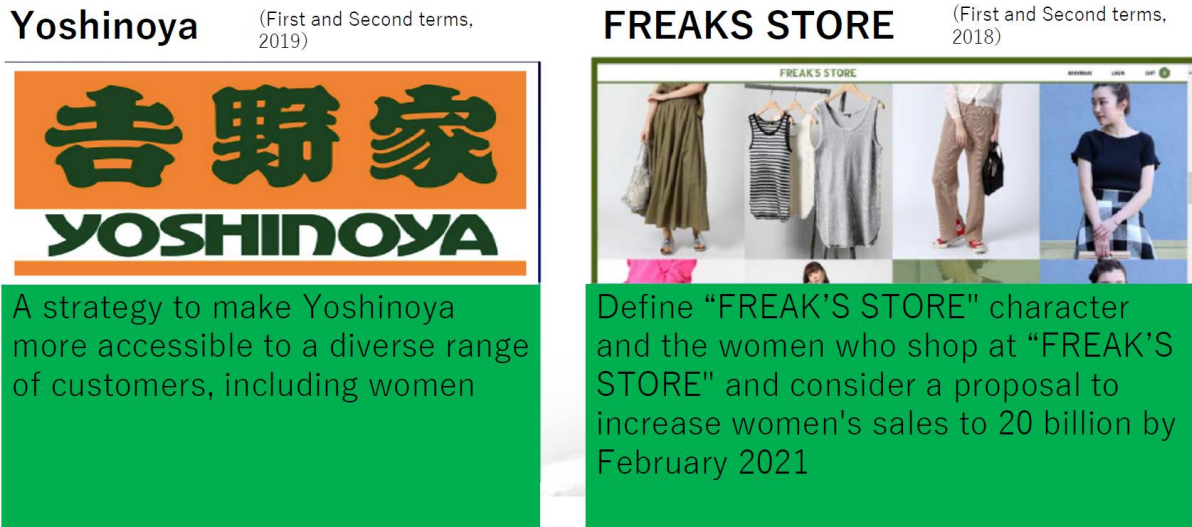
The initiatives at Kyoritsu Women's University were conducted between 2017-19, and in 2016, this study conducted case studies and research with other universities. Based on that, this study started a trial program that it actually ran in 2017, recruiting and having second- or fourth-year students. Based on the results of that research, in fiscal year (FY) 2018, this study had a liberal arts course, first semester and second semester, and the same was done in FY 2019, with a first semester and second semester liberal arts course. That involved about 31 students. This study had just under 30 students a year studying this course, and those students are now working as learning assistants Table 1.

<b>THE DATA AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION</b>			
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>The number of Participants</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Region (Country)</b>
2017	30	18-22	Tokyo (Japan)
2018	30	18-22	Tokyo (Japan)
2019	31	18-22	Tokyo (Japan)
2020	157	18	Tokyo (Japan)

There were two initiatives for fiscal year 2020: an introductory leadership course in the School of Business and a course in liberal arts. The first semester's program was designed to teach basic skills such as self-awareness and one's idea of leadership. The second semester was called Project-Based Learning, in which students are provided the opportunity to deal with corporate themes. Throughout the first and second semesters, the focus was on how to support others, thus exercising one's ability to gain perspectives on supporting colleagues and teams through self and social understanding, which was a distinctive initiative.

In the latter stages, the project was finally presented to companies, and afterwards, they carefully reflected on what kind of leadership they had demonstrated and how they had organized their thinking. The key to implementing such a program was how to involve the students. Therefore, the verbal message to students was that there were many assignments, that leadership was required in the classroom, that it was essential that you and your team had time to learn outside of class, that this was not a subject where knowledge was taught, and that self-learning was the basis for such a course. It stated that it was important to learn not only on your own, but also from the learning of others. These things were carefully communicated to the students, and the students' sense of participation in the class was also confirmed here as well as the sharing of goals. Until now, this had been very effective.

Figure 3 shows examples of themes of courses implemented in collaboration with companies in the second semester of 2017 and 2018.



**FIGURE 3**  
**EXAMPLES OF CORPORATE COLLABORATION**

This study ran projects with the participation of companies such as Yoshinoya Corporation in 2019 and 2020, and Kajima Corporation in 2020.

The key point here is the relationship between PBL and leadership programs. Because leadership development is often demonstrated in important projects, the program is structured to promote the exercise of leadership within the context of actual issues faced by companies. However, after experiencing the project and reflecting on it each time, regardless of the success of the actual project's business competition, In this way, the participants verified whether everyone has been able to exercise diverse leadership skills.

One of the features of the program is that it is based on the best practices of other universities and incorporates a leadership development program with considerable care. The program includes both required and elective courses; it is very careful about training learning assistants; one of its strengths is the thoroughness of meetings outside of class time, and the faculty and LAs have worked together to create this program.

Additionally, conferences have been held with other universities as a study group outside of the classroom. It is also mentioned that LAs are actively trying to participate in those as well.

For example, in a PBL class, in one group that had been getting along somewhat well up to that point, a female student had been opinionated and promoted by one of the other female students. The other four had been primarily following this one. This was seen as a situation where the students were not so used to saying things differently.

In the midst of all this, they had come to the stage where they were asked to make a proposal about the core of the project, which was the company's future in 30 years (A major beef-bowl restaurant). They decided to discuss how to target a wide variety of people who would be using the company. At that point, one person who had led the group from the beginning argued that they should use the media to target women broadly. However, others argued that they

should focus on social networking sites and not on traditional media, and that they should focus on young women in particular, which led to a dispute over the selection of the target.

By the time it got to that stage, four followers were complaining, and the LA, hearing this, intervened after the class to clarify that it was important to formulate a different opinion and say it in the meeting in a logical way.

This led to a number of meetings, where the four of us were able to say that they wanted to do something different from what they were saying, and those who did not usually express their opinions were able to exchange ideas and discuss them; those who were already used to expressing their opinions were able to receive others' opinions openly and frankly. The suggestions were adopted, and the final plan was made.

This did not end well and they did not win, but, afterwards, the team was able to move forward with the discussion and to come together as a team and finish a good quality proposal that included a variety of suggestions.

The four participants were changed by this PBL experience. They became aware that their outspoken opinions for the good of the team did not necessarily provide them with an environment in which they could speak up or contribute to the output of the team, and they began to consciously listen to the opinions of others. This kind of leadership education is becoming a reality in PBL.

When dealing with such specific cases, examining the correlation between goal achievement and leadership education is important. In the educational setting, leadership training is a good thing, but if it ends there and the situation for achieving goals is not good, leadership development will eventually taper off. With regard to these issues, the organizer carefully share with the companies participating in the competition that there is a difference between normal business competition and the problem-solving business competition part of the leadership development program. Therefore, one of the key points of the competition is that the study was very selective about the companies that agree to participate in leadership education and development. In other words, while the ideas and public relations content that come out of business competitions are, of course, part of the output that companies are looking for, the companies come to every class to participate in leadership development, except for the competition part, to develop their own leadership skills. A major feature of the program is its learning cycle, which allows students to reflect on themselves at the site of their work and later do it again within the company. In this way, companies have selected employees who come to the class as part of their own human resource and leadership development programs, and, as part of this, they provide feedback, comments, and evaluations of student presentations, which are useful activities for human resource development. Therefore, it is important to share what the companies think should be the outcome at the beginning, when they participate in this program.

In another case, the case of a major youth clothing retailer, the students who were able to collect and analyze information in the course of PBL proceeded with the project increasingly. However, there was a student who did not perform well. This person was unable to participate in the project even though everyone else was advancing.

Once, when she gave a presentation in front of people, she found that people listened to her, and although she was not very analytical, her ability to communicate was highly valued by others. In other words, when she proposed something by herself, she did not do well at all, but when she presented what she had created in a team, she was judged as being able to do it very well. After recognizing this, she was able to make a conscious effort to take on that role.

In a mid-term presentation, she presented a proposal on behalf of my team to number of clients from the company (collaborating company) to increase the sales of womenswear stores to 20 billion by developing a new label incorporating elements of Japanese kimonos, to be sold both domestically and internationally, which was very well presented.

She had not previously played a major role in the team, contributing little in terms of content, documentation, research, and analysis. Furthermore, she had not been able to speak fluently or with sophisticated words, but, because of that, she found that it was better to communicate in simple words, and both she and the other people found that what she said would resonate with others; thus, she gave the final presentation, and, as a result, the team won the championship.

Students' ability to consciously turn their own strengths into contributing behaviors was one of the outcomes of leadership education through PBL, as they were able to demonstrate leadership and recognize their own leadership style.

## DISCUSSION

The idea of leadership has significant implications for practitioners and the field, and the mainstream is to explore each leadership style through practice. For example, using the idea of servant leadership, considering today's student temperament, may just serve everyone else. A critical review of previous research and the positioning of the leadership development program in practice was considered to be related to shared leadership. Based on theoretical research, the present study was designed to provide a systematic case study to optimize leadership education after detailing the attempts to implement the program in practice.

In order to understand leadership as a skill that all people should demonstrate and to promote its acquisition, the study analyzed behaviors and categorized them into three necessary elements: setting and sharing of goals, leading by example, and mutual support. From the four aspects of these three elements, first, leadership was raised as a learning objective; second, a hybrid course of project-based lectures and skill-strengthening lectures was created; third, active learning was introduced, and fourth, enrollment management was created as a systematic structure and organized.

Regarding enrollment management, senior students will guide and support junior students, while becoming role models and learning from each other, imagining how they can exercise leadership in their university life. One of the characteristics of this initiative was that the LAs were the learning objectives for the students. Figure 4 shows a SWOT analysis of these Kyoritsu leadership programs.



**FIGURE 4**

### **SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE KYORITSU LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

As a specific example, after a program that facilitated the learning of basic skills such as self-awareness and leadership, a project-based learning program was developed to deal with a corporate theme. The point was the relationship between PBL and leadership programs. The participants were asked to reflect on what they had learned from the experience, regardless of the success of the actual business competition in the project, and this allowed them to evaluate whether or not they had demonstrated diverse leadership skills. I have tried to examine these describing specific cases. It is also a matter of how to look at the correlation between goal achievement and leadership education. The companies were actually able to reflect on themselves outside of the competition; in fact, they came to every class and developed leadership, and subsequently they did it once again in the companies. The learning cycle part was a major feature of the program. It was important to share what it was thought should be the outcome at the beginning of the program and during the program.

Female students were characterized by an extremely high level of empathy. Nevertheless, there were huge hurdles in expressing different opinions. Many were scared to take action in the hurdle to try first. For this reason, they tended to be more likely to take action if they were previously provided input on something basic to learn and then tried it out.

One of the characteristics of the students up to the third year is that female students are considered to have a high level of empathy. However, the hurdles in expressing different opinions are very large. Many of them do not express different opinions, even if they have some. In addition, there is variation in the level of motivation to learn when they come to college. For example, there are students who would have liked to go to a slightly different university than the



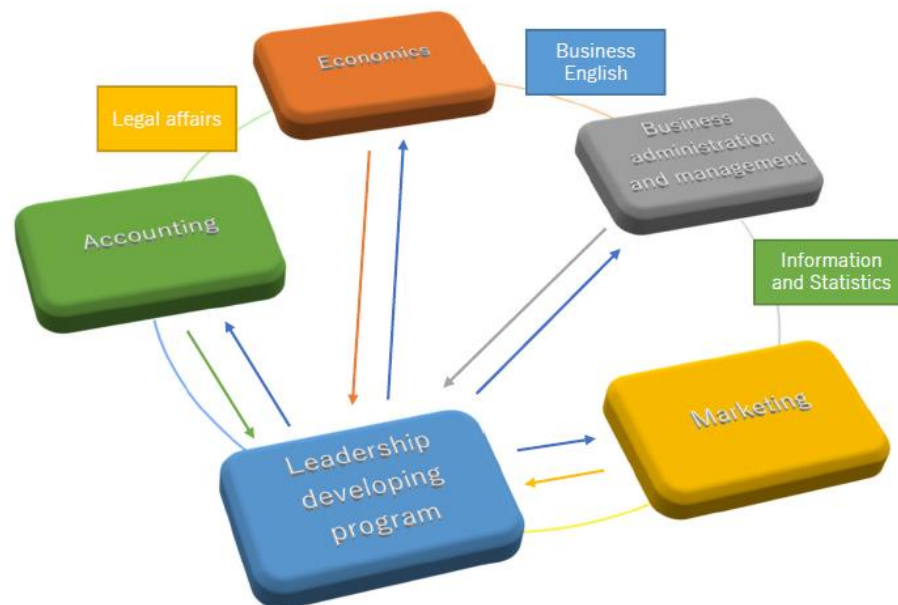
one they are supposed to go to, but there are students who are really happy to have been admitted to this university. I can sense that there is a difference in the way they learn and their motivation regarding new things.

In addition, because some students have listened to their parents and others around them, they are less enthusiastic compared to other students, or hesitant to deepen their understanding of what they want to do and what their characteristics are.

Furthermore, over the past few years, the project has tried two different approaches to learning by doing. As a result, many of the students said that the hurdle of doing it first was very large, and they were too scared to take action. For this reason, it was easier to take action if they had received an input on something basic to learn and then decided to try it. Therefore, unlike other universities, the project was decided to perform PBL after deepening the students' self-understanding, and it was considered that the students were able to learn spontaneously and with less stress.

The difficult part is the balance between the student-led and the faculty-led part of the program. Thus far, the faculty think that it had been doing faculty-led program classes, but they would like to make them more student-led. They think they would achieve this to some extent when students in the School of Business are able to become learning assistants. Collaboration with other universities continues, and the students at Kyoritsu are very motivated to collaborate with other universities. If possible, they would like to put mechanisms in place so that they can go to other universities ourselves and have experiences that will allow us to engage in leadership development.

In addition, they hope that the leadership program can become a hub for a variety of disciplines Figure 4.



**FIGURE 5**  
**MAKING THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM A HUB**

At this point, the project is in our third year, but it is needed about four years to get the execution cycle going. It would take another year or so to try out several new things and prepare an optimal program. As for the significance of student-led initiatives, the project still in the minority in terms of student-led initiatives and the significance of the learning assistantship needs to be shared within the university as well in Figure 5.

While it is needed to create a solid program, the situation is needed to be flexible and make changes as we see how the students are doing. Sometimes it is very difficult to manage teams. For this reason, it is needed to review each time and each year the use of support companies—the people from the companies—and the use of outside consultants. However, if it is considered evaluating the leadership development program's components, it may neglect trying to educate our students. The challenge is also about balancing that properly. The balance between the two is important, but it is also difficult to position the self-evaluation of students who are around 18 years old. It is possible to conduct a qualitative survey through interviews.

One of the students who took this class successfully negotiated a project, hoping to implement what she had learned in the project back at her high school.

She wanted to implement what she had learned in the leadership development program in a project to devise a menu for a restaurant outside of her high school, which had been a cross-grade learning experience for her high school group to come together and make recommendations.

The leadership development program had made her realize that she was a good communicator and listener in groups and she wanted to learn these things in high school. She wanted to pass on the methods of learning in this leadership program to her younger students at her alma mater, so she proposed an excerpt of what she was learning in that moment to her high school teachers, and she made a leadership project for high school students a reality.

Specifically, she handed out multiple sticky notes so that everyone could give their opinions openly, asked them to write them down and express them, and then grouped or structured the best ideas from there to come up with a menu of methods, to arrive at the best idea out of multiple options, not just an idea, but a leadership education frame.

As a result, what used to be group work in which those who are younger students, listened to their seniors above them was replaced by sticky notes and a method of discussing the ideas without the power due to hierarchy. In order to avoid hierarchical relationships, they learned leadership techniques and gathered opinions from everyone, to produce a good plan.

Note that since Kyoritsu Women's University has an affiliated girls' junior and senior high school next door, and since the students were from the affiliated girls' high school, they went to the affiliated girls' high school to implement the plan. It is important to note that they went to their home high school and made the improvement plan a reality by themselves.

She was able to talk to the teachers at the high school herself and actually implement this at that high school. This is another visible outcome of leadership education.

## CONCLUSION

This paper summarizes reflections on the optimization of leadership education, based on previous research and actual classroom development. Leadership in this context is defined as influencing others to produce some outcome, and it is considered to be an acquired and developable skill that can be exercised by all.

Finally, this paper has the following limitations and challenges ahead: first, it is part of an interim understanding of the current state of affairs and an analysis and consolidation in the context considering the four-year cycle as one. In addition, it is necessary to support the findings with quantitative verification based on future data. Although the case under consideration here is a case study at a women's university, this does not represent a limitation of the study, as this is a pilot trial for a group of subjects typically most in need of leadership education. Therefore, the limitation related to the subjects does not limit the discussion. This will be an indication of the importance of the results obtained therein, not the other way around. Nonetheless, it will be necessary to further examine the necessary and sufficient conditions for the new leadership exercise as the digital society progresses.

The world is currently in a very difficult situation with COVID-19. In this situation, there seems to be a strong demand for leadership. However, the kind of leadership that is needed in these circumstances is leadership that is uniquely one's own, in which each individual must look for contributions that he or she can make toward the achievement of goals.

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### Declaration of Interest Statement

No potential competing interest was reported by the authors.

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