

# UNDERGRADUATE SANDWICH STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALISATION OF LEADERSHIP

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## **Abstract**

*The study adopted the cross-sectional survey design to investigate how sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Ghana, conceptualise leadership. It also sought to determine differences in how the students conceptualise leadership based on their sex, age, and level/professional status. Adopting a census sampling technique, 140 students were obtained for the study. A questionnaire made up of six sub-scales of leadership emphasis (trait, ability, skill, behaviour, relationship, and influence), was used to collect quantitative data. The instrument has a reliability co-efficient of 0.78. The findings revealed that the sandwich students mostly conceptualised leadership as a skill, while relationship was the least conceptualised leadership sub-scale. Apart from a statistically significant difference in means observed for influence emphasis based on sex of the students, no statistically significant differences in means were observed for the remaining five leadership sub-scales based on the students' age, and level/professional status. It was concluded that the sandwich students had varying opinions in understanding leadership based on their different experiences in leadership situations. The findings are valuable for the lecturers of the department in understanding how sandwich students conceptualise leadership. Thus, the use of scenarios, case studies, role-plays, school visits, and hands-on-activities during lectures will enhance the students' understanding of contemporary leadership through promotion of values such as collaboration, teamwork, independent study, critical thinking, and empowerment. Accordingly, the findings will contribute to the body of knowledge in terms of students' conceptualisation of the concept of leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

**Keywords:** Conceptualising Leadership, Trait, Ability, Behaviour, Skill, Relationship, Influence

## Introduction

Leadership, is described as one of the many concepts which is least comprehended even though it has been essentially debated, and gained a lot of attention in all domains of life (Amin, 2012; Northouse, 2012). Many educational institutions stress on leadership in their mission statements, and acknowledge it as an essential goal of their educational programmes (Haber, 2011). Hence, leadership is important and necessary for addressing some of the numerous complex issues faced by the global society (Haber, 2011; Komives, 2011; Senge, Schamer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2004). However, in spite of the importance attached to it, and the high demand for leadership in various contexts, there is no agreement on what leadership is, and how it should be practiced (Goethals & Sorenson, 2007; Haber, 2011; Hariri, 2011; Thomas & Thomas, 2011). Hence, the definition of leadership is vague, arbitrary and subjective (Simkins, as cited in Amin, 2012).

According to Yukl (2013) definitions of leadership differ in so many ways, and these include those who exercise influence, the planned resolve of the influence, the way in which the influence is applied, and the consequence of the effort of the influence. Some people also conceptualise leadership as power, authority, management, administration and supervision (Adams, Kutty & Zabidi, 2017; Yukl, 2013; Boateng, 2012). Even though leadership as a concept has been defined and explained in various ways, there is the need to appreciate what it is (perhaps, subject to the context in which it is being applied). For instance, Adeyemi and Barlarinwa (2013) see leadership as the process through which a group of people are influenced to willingly put in efforts to attain set goals or objectives. Yukl (2013) explains leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. According to Ololube (2013) leadership is a responsibility which seeks to achieve objectives through the use of available resources (human, material and time), and ensuring cohesive and coherent processes in an organization. Similarly, Tengey (2018, p. 40) states that “leadership is a special characteristic feature displayed by a person in any role at any level, and under any circumstance, and is personified by such virtues as responsibility, accountability, moral discipline, courage, confidence, creativity, ability to work with and influence others, and an orientation to the future and the long term”.

The core of what these authorities and researchers say is that leadership involves interacting with, and influencing people to accomplish organisational vision, purpose, goals, and objectives. It could therefore be deduced that leadership is a dynamic social process which involves interactions among leaders, followers and sometimes external stakeholders. The basis of good leadership therefore, is the leader’s ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of followers in order to motivate and inspire them (followers) to achieve set targets. An individual’s ability to influence others stems from his or her ability to inspire others. Inspiration could also be achieved through a leader’s display and exercise of a strong enthusiasm to achieve set targets. Hence, followers are likely to be attracted to leaders who share similar values and attitudes (Kolzow, 2014). Perhaps, this is why Afful-Broni (2006) contends that leaders are those who have a vision of what needs to be done, as well as the appropriate manner of communicating this vision to others to get them to act together for the common good.

Leadership calls for results and not just occupying special positions. Tengey (2018) thus, intimates that anybody and everybody can display leadership of a sort, anywhere and at any level, but leadership is not just about one’s position but rather who and what one is at the core, and how he or she orders his or her life. Jenkins (2013) also maintains that strong character, and selfless devotion to organizational needs form the basis of good leadership. In view of this, Fischer, Dietz and Antonakis (2017) stress that leadership implies a leader having a greater impact on his or her followers than followers on

the leader. Thus, leadership connotes all the decisions, directions and management procedures and principles applied to ensure the attainment of a specific goal.

Perceptions and impressions about what it takes to be a leader differs, and this, could be the reason for the different and various theories about leadership. This study is hinged on three leadership theories namely trait, behavioural and contingency. These theories tend to fall into three schools of thought. That is, those who focus on personal characteristics, those who concentrate on the leader-follower situation, and those who attempt to relate leadership styles to the overall organisation context, situation, and climate (Burnes, 2000). According to Northouse (2016), the understanding of such principles of leadership theories will provide meaning to the various aspects of leadership, and how they influence one's leadership practices.

### ***Explaining Leadership***

A common approach to the study of leadership over the decades has been the cataloguing of traits. This emphasis emanated from the early 1800s with an observation that many great leaders possessed something out of the ordinary (Ricketts, 2009). The term trait portrays varied individual attributes such as aspects of personality, temperament, needs, motives and values (Northouse, 2013). The trait emphasis to understanding leadership stresses the personality of the leader. Therefore, defining leadership as a trait means that each individual possesses some inherent potentials that influence the way he or she leads (Northouse, 2016). Leadership as a trait therefore gives constructive information and places a lot of emphasis on the leader, and his or her special traits, gifts or abilities (Sanders, 2014), stressing the belief that leaders are born and not made. This is why some leaders are seen to be confident, with others being decisive, outgoing and sociable. This suggests that organizations will be effective and efficient if people in managerial positions have selected leadership profiles. Sanders (2014) posits that the trait theorists were critiqued for their inability to offer clear distinctions between leaders and followers, and for their failure to account for situational variance in leadership behavior.

In addition to being thought of as a trait, leadership is conceptualized as an ability. A person who has leadership ability has the capacity and is able to lead. The term "ability" is mostly referred to as natural capacity, although it can also be acquired. For instance, some people naturally speak well in public while others rehearse or practice to be able to speak in public. In leadership, some people have the natural ability to lead, while others develop their leadership abilities through hard work, practice and experience (Northouse, 2013; 2016).

Like the trait emphasis, skills approach takes a leader-centered perspective on leadership. However, rather than the personality, skill theorists seek to discover the skills that make leaders effective. Not only does it assume that everyone can learn skills and become a good leader, but it also provides a structure for leadership education and training. Arvey, Zhang, Avolio and Krueger, as cited in Northouse (2013) explain skill as the capacity for someone to do something in an effective way. Leadership skills are explained as the application of one's knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives (Northouse, 2016). Based on these definitions, it could be said that skills connote what a leader can accomplish while traits talk of who leaders are. Skills could be defined at different levels, ranging from general and broadly defined characteristics like intelligence and interpersonal skills, to a narrower and specific abilities like verbal reasoning and persuasive ability (Northouse, 2013). Therefore, as a skill, leadership is the competency developed to complete a task effectively. Thus, skilled leaders are competent people who know the means and methods to perform their responsibilities, implying that skilled leaders know what they need to do, and how to do it.

As a skill, leadership can be studied and learned because a person's ability to learn from experience helps him or her to acquire leadership. Basically, leaders make use of three skill areas namely

technical, human and conceptual skills (Northouse, 2012). Technical skill refers to proficiency in a specific work, while human skill refers to being able to work with people. Conceptual skill looks at how an individual could work with broad concepts and ideas. These areas are all necessary in order for a leadership to accomplish personal and organizational goals or objectives. Unfortunately, emphasising leadership as a skill does not define how each component of the skills style will impact performance. As a skill, leadership is not assumed and considered as performance (DuBrin, 2015). One can acquire leadership, if one is capable of learning. This implies that leadership is available to everyone because skills are competencies that people can learn or develop.

Sanders (2014) is of the view that in explaining leadership as a behaviour, one needs to assess a successful leader along with the actions of that particular leader. This focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act rather than their underlying characteristics. Unlike traits, abilities, and skills, leadership behaviours can be observed. There are two broad categories of behaviours exhibited by leaders. These are task-oriented behaviours (sometimes called initiating structure), and process-oriented behaviours, also referred to as people-oriented behaviours, consideration or relationship behaviours (Carpenter, Bauer & Erdogan, 2017). Task-oriented behaviours are used by leaders to get the job done while the process-oriented behaviours are used by leaders to enable group members become involved in decision-making, feel comfortable with other group members, and perform their delegated responsibilities in an enabling environment. The behaviour emphasis of leadership is how effectively and efficiently a leader blends the two behaviours to enhance group success. Both task and process behaviours are needed in leadership but the challenge is for leaders to know the best way to combine them in order to achieve a goal.

As a relationship, leadership focuses on the connection formed between leaders and followers rather than the unique qualities of the leader (Rost, 1995). With this view, leadership is focused on the communication between leaders and followers rather than on the qualities or traits of the leader. Hence, as a relationship, leadership is a process of collaboration between the leader and followers (Rost, 1991). This implies that leadership is an interactive event and not a linear one-way event. Leadership as a relationship suggests that leaders must be fully aware of their followers and the followers' interest, ideas, positions, attitudes, and motivation. It also stresses the need for leaders to work with followers to achieve their mutual purposes. When leadership is defined as a relationship, it becomes available to everyone, and not restricted to the formally designated leader in a group. Thus, Rost (1995) argues that if leadership is what the relationship is, then both collaborators and leaders are all doing leadership, implying there is no such thing as followership. The implication is that leadership is not seen as a top to down show of authority but rather, a relationship that suggests leaders must include followers in the process of leadership (Northouse, 2016; Wagner, 2008). This emphasises that leadership is an interactive process, where both leaders and followers are affected by the situation in which they find themselves.

Influence is central to the process of leadership because leaders affect followers by directing their energies to influence followers to achieve something together. Therefore, leadership as an influencing process means that it is not a trait or an ability that the leader has but rather an interactive event that occurs between the leader and followers. Hence, it is the ability of the leader to influence others towards a cause or a goal, and to mobilise support towards achieving that goal (Tengey, 2018). The ability of the leader to influence followers could be seen in several ways and it includes inspiration, persuasion, motivation, and sometimes coercion (Tengey, 2018). This is why Munroe, in Tengey (2018) explains leadership as the capacity to influence others through inspiration, motivated by a passion, generated by a vision, produced by conviction, ignited by a purpose. The definition suggests that the ability of the leader to influence others stems from his or her capacity to inspire

others. Such inspiration, according to Tengey (2018), could be achieved when the leader exercises a degree of enthusiasm or passion, which is derived from the vision of the leader to achieve a purpose.

The various leadership theories were propounded by taking into consideration the situation, behaviour, power, charisma, intelligence and function (Northouse, 2013). Arguably, there is no one best style of leadership. However, the best style of leadership depends on the situation, the type of followers, and the type of leader (Mankoe, 2007). Inferring from these assertions, it could be said that leadership theories assist leaders at the various organisational levels to achieve their goals by improving their effectiveness. Contemporary theorists, therefore, consider leadership to be a complex interaction between traits, behaviors and situational characteristics (Rickett, 2009; Zaccaro, 2007). A study conducted by Moorthy (2014) revealed that the current generation believes that great leaders are made and not born. This focuses on the actions of leaders not on mental qualities or internal states. Moorthy therefore argues that if traits are key features of leadership, then how can one explain the situation where people who possess those qualities but are not leaders. The findings from his study revealed that in an event where the leader is the most knowledgeable and experienced member of a group, an authoritarian style or skill leadership might be most appropriate. In other instances, where group members are skilled experts, a democratic style relationship leadership would be more effective.

The argument in contemporary times is that no leadership style is best in all situations. However, leadership success depends on different variables such as the leadership style, qualities of the followers and aspects of the situation. Many people, therefore, prefer leaders who are competent, hardworking, determined, and accountable of their action. With that consideration in mind, the best leadership approach can always be more than one or a combination of all (Moorthy, 2014). According to Kinicki and Kreitner (2009), the main essence of leadership is to have leaders who can produce significant organizational change and results because this form of leadership fosters higher levels of intrinsic motivation, trust, commitment, and loyalty from followers. In cognizance of the views of many scholars that people conceptualise leadership differently, Northouse (2012) indicates that some people understand leadership as trait, behaviour, relationship, ability, skill, or an influence. This supports the view of Thomas and Thomas (2011) that scholars do not agree on a single definition of leadership.

### ***Studies on Conceptualising Leadership***

Research has established that people's comprehension of leadership, their sense of leadership identity, and their leadership behaviours mirror a developmental process, implying a change in the understanding of the complex nature of leadership over time as a result of many influences (Haber, 2011; Lord & Hall, 2005). Literature and research also seem to indicate that college students' understanding of leadership and leadership behaviours vary with respect to sex and age (Haber, 2011; Dugan & Komives, 2007). For instance, female college students tend to have more relational and process-oriented views and practices of leadership than their male counterparts do (Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008; Shankman, Haber, Facca, & Allen, 2010).

Haber (2011) also established that there were significant differences in how female and male college students understand leadership in terms of collaboration, personal qualities (traits) and positive difference (outcome). Specifically, the study revealed that female college students' understanding of leadership, more often, reflected collaboration than their male counterparts. In the same study by Haber (2011), age resulted in a significant difference in how college students understood leadership where younger students were more likely to conceptualise leadership as role modeling (leading by example and leading ethically) as compared their older counterparts who perceived leadership as more hierarchical. Notwithstanding the arguments of different perspectives on leadership in literature, very little is known about how undergraduate students conceptualise leadership (Haber, 2011). Some

scholars, including Dugan and Komives (2010) argue that various studies on college students' self-reported leadership styles and behaviours have revealed little about how students define leadership.

### ***The Study Context***

University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Ghana, is a teacher education university mandated by an Act of Parliament (Act 672) on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2004 to train and produce professional educators to spearhead a new national vision of education aimed at redirecting Ghana's efforts along the path of rapid economic and social development. The University like many other universities in Ghana, mainly offers three modes of university education namely, regular or full-time, sandwich, and distance learning. This study, however, involved sandwich students in the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba.

Sandwich mode of university education is where learners who are mainly teachers, go to the universities to study during vacation when the full-time (or regular) students are not on campus, and the teachers are on holidays. This mode of learning is "sandwiched between the end of academic year (second semester) and the first semester of the following academic year" (Tamanja, 2016, p. 92). Thus, it is organised in such a way that the teachers can move to university campus to learn and return before the beginning of the next academic year. The sandwich mode of learning has a short duration. In UEW, the duration is mainly between July and August, and between December and January, subject to the programme of study. What is learned during a full-time semester of sixteen weeks is learned within eight weeks during the sandwich period. This arrangement provides opportunities for teachers to continue to upgrade themselves academically and professionally while keeping to jobs in their respective schools.

In the Department of Basic Education, UEW, two categories of sandwich students exist. These are Diploma in Education students who are non-professional teachers and Post-Diploma in Basic Education students who are professional teachers. Some of these sandwich students take up leadership positions as elected or appointed executive of Basic Education Students' Association (BESA), or class representatives for their various levels. The leadership traits, abilities, behaviours, relationships, skills, and influence they exert makes one to wonder if they really understand what leadership entails. For example, the executive without recourse sometimes takes unilateral decisions that concern of members of the Association. This makes one to doubt the leadership knowledge, abilities, skills and competencies of these student leaders.

Anecdotal information from some sandwich students revealed that they had varying opinions on the concept of leadership. Whereas some of them perceived leadership to be positions of power, others looked at it as compliance, respect, co-operation and competence. This supports the assertion that different people understand leadership in different ways. Literature shows that studies on how students conceptualise leadership exist. However, Haber (2011) argues that studies that directly examine how students conceptualise leadership seem to be limited. This is the case in the Ghanaian context, and specifically in the University of Education, Winneba where no such study exists. As future leaders, the students need to grasp an understanding of the concept of leadership to enhance their knowledge, competencies, skills, and capabilities as leaders (Adams, Kamarudin & Tan, 2018; Keselman, Ahmed, Williamson, Kelly & Dutcher, 2015; Villarreal, Montoya, Duncan & Gergen, 2018). There was therefore the need to conduct this study to investigate how Diploma in Education, and Post-Diploma in Basic Education sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education, UEW, conceptualise leadership, since a study of this nature seems to be non-existent in the context of the Department, the University, and Ghana as a whole.

It is believed that the findings of this study will add to existing knowledge, literature, and debate, in terms of the leadership discourse by highlighting findings from the Ghanaian context. This study is relevant because the findings could help sandwich students in the Department of Basic Education, UEW, Ghana, to identify, explore, and reflect on the different ways they (students) conceptualise leadership. It is argued that one of the core mandates of every institution of higher learning, such as the university, is to train and develop future leaders of every nation (Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, Wagner & Associates, 2011). In line with this, the findings of the study may serve as the basis for planning initiatives by the Department of Basic Education, UEW, Ghana, to assist the students to develop informed knowledge, skills, practice, and capacity in leadership. Again, the differences in how the students conceptualise leadership as a result of their demographic variables, may be essential for leadership educators to understand the range of students they teach and groom for student leadership roles. This may enable leadership educators to design leadership activities that will meet the needs and aspirations of the students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to investigate how leadership is conceptualised by sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. How do sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education conceptualise leadership?
2. What statistically significant differences exist in how sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education conceptualise leadership based on their demographic characteristics (sex, age, level of study/professional status)?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey design to describe how students in the Department of Basic Education, UEW, defined and understood the concept of leadership, and investigated how demographic variables of the students (sex, age, and level of study/professional status) determined the differences in their understanding of leadership as explained by Creswell (2018). The study population was 182 sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education. This was made up of 82 Diploma in Education students who were non-professional teachers, and 100 Post-Diploma in Basic Education students who were professional teachers. The Diploma in Education sandwich students were mainly teachers in the basic and senior high schools in Ghana who had obtained Higher National Diploma and Bachelor qualifications, but had not been trained as professional teachers. Post-Diploma in Basic Education sandwich students were professionally trained teachers from the colleges of education (CoEs) with Diploma in Basic Education certificate. Through census sampling technique 140 students were obtained for the study. This comprised 67 Diploma in Education students (non-professional teachers) and 73 Post-Diploma in Basic Education students (professional teachers).

Conceptualising Leadership Questionnaire (CLQ) (Northouse, 2012) was adapted for data collection. The questionnaire had two main sections. Section A on the demographic variables (gender, age, level and professional status) sought to describe the characteristics of the respondents. Items in Section B were to investigate how the respondents' conceptualised leadership in terms of six sub-scales namely trait emphasis, ability emphasis, skill emphasis, behaviour emphasis, relationship emphasis, and influence emphasis.

Each of the six emphases had four items. Hence, the adapted CLQ was made up of 24 items. Items under Section B were anchored on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagreed, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The respondents were asked to express their views about leadership by choosing one of the scales. The scoring interpretation on the questionnaire indicates that the scores one received on the various sub-sections on the questionnaire provide information about how one defines and views leadership. Thus, the emphasis one gives to the various dimensions of leadership has implications for how one approaches the leadership process. The data was pilot-tested with twenty students each from the diploma and post-diploma cohorts of sandwich students in the Department of Early Childhood, University of Education, Winneba. Analysis of the pilot-test data yielded a Cronbach's alpha co-efficient of 0.78 which falls within the recommendation by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) that the reliability of items in a questionnaire need to have an alpha co-efficient of 0.7 or higher.

## Results and Discussion

Data were analysed to have an idea about the demographic variables of the students, investigate how they conceptualised leadership based on the six sub-scales (trait, ability, skill, behaviour, relationship, and influence) identified for the study, and determine whether statistically significant differences existed in how the students conceptualised leadership based on their demographic variables. For the analysis of the data, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent samples t-test and one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were utilised. Assumptions of parametric statistics were examined to ensure the appropriateness of the use of the independent-sampled *t*-test and one-way ANOVA for the six leadership sub-scales. The assumptions included normality of the distribution and homogeneity of the variance. The results showed that *t*-test and one-way ANOVA assumptions were tenable. A *p*-value of less than or equal to 0.05 was required for significance.

### Results of Demographic Variables

The results of the descriptive analysis of the demographic variables of the respondents in frequency and percentages, are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Frequency Analysis of Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	81	57.9
	Female	59	42.1
	Total	140	100.0
Age	18-22 years	4	2.9
	23-27 years	66	47.1
	28-32 years	33	23.6
	33-37 years	23	16.4
	≥ 38 years	14	10.0
	Total	140	100.0
	Level/PS	Diploma/Non-professional	67
Post-Diploma/Professional		73	52.1
Total		140	100.0

PS= Professional Status



The results revealed that 81 (57.9%) of the respondents were males while 59 (42.1%) were females. Considering the ages of the respondents, the data show that 4 (2.9%) were between the ages of 18 and 22 years, 66 (47.1%) between the ages of 23 and 27 years, 33 (23.6%) between the ages of 28 and 32 years, 23 (16.4%) had their ages from 33 to 37, while 14 (10.0%) were 38 years or more. From the data, 67 (47.9%) of the respondents were Diploma/Non-professional students and 73 (52.1%) were Post-Diploma/Professional students. The analysis of the demographic data was relevant since it helped in determining how they influence the students' understanding of the concept of leadership.

### ***Sandwich Students' Conceptualisation of Leadership***

This study aimed at investigating how leadership is conceptualised by sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education, UEW. Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the distribution with respect to how the respondents conceptualised leadership. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Mean Analysis on *Conceptualisation of Leadership*

Leadership Emphasis	Frequency (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Trait	140	3.87	0.783
Ability	140	3.87	0.511
Skill	140	4.28	0.523
Behaviour	140	3.83	0.608
Relationship	140	3.86	0.638
Influence	140	4.12	0.522

The results, in Table 2, revealed that the highest mean score was recorded by skill emphasis (M=4.28, SD=0.523). This was followed by influence emphasis (M=4.12, SD=0.522), ability emphasis (M=3.87, SD=0.511), trait emphasis (M=3.87, SD=0.783), relationship emphasis (M=3.86, SD=0.638), and behaviour emphasis (M=3.83, SD=0.608). This suggests that even though the Diploma in Education and Post-Diploma in Basic Education sandwich students conceptualised leadership based on all the six sub-scales identified for the study, they relatively conceptualised leadership as a skill and as an influence. In essence, the students, relatively, understood leadership to be based on the skills, and influence of the leader.

### ***Conceptualising Leadership Based on Sex***

One of the demographic variables considered for this study was the sex of the students. This study sought to find out if there were statistically significant differences in how sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education, conceptualised leadership based on their sex (male or female). The data was analysed using the independent-samples *t*-test. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** *t-Test Result son Conceptualising Leadership Based on Sex*

Variable (Emphasis)	Sex	N	M	SD	Mean Difference	t (df)	p-value
Trait	Male	81	3.92	0.64	0.107	0.800(138)	0.425
	Female	59	3.81	0.95			
Ability	Male	81	3.84	0.47	-0.072	-0.817(138)	0.416
	Female	59	3.91	0.56			
Skill	Male	81	4.29	0.50	0.029	0.324(138)	0.747

Behaviour	Female	59	4.26	0.56	0.014	0.138(138)	0.891
	Male	81	4.29	0.50			
Relationship	Female	59	4.26	0.56	0.058	0.526(138)	0.600
	Male	81	3.88	0.62			
Influence	Female	59	4.82	0.66	0.228	2.602(138)	0.010
	Male	81	4.22	0.45			
	Female	59	3.99	0.58			

Significance = 0.05

The results from Table 3 show that differences existed in the mean values for male and female respondents. With the exception of ability emphasis, and relationship emphasis where female respondents obtained higher mean values, the male respondents recorded higher mean values for trait emphasis, skill emphasis, behaviour emphasis, and influence emphasis. The test of significance, using independent samples *t*-test, revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in means for trait emphasis [ $t(138)=0.800$ ,  $p=0.425$ , 2-tailed], ability emphasis [ $t(138)=-0.817$ ,  $p=0.416$ , 2-tailed], skill emphasis [ $t(138)=0.324$ ,  $p=0.747$ , 2-tailed], behaviour emphasis [ $t(138)=0.138$ ,  $p=0.891$ , 2-tailed], and relationship emphasis [ $t(138)=0.526$ ,  $p=0.600$ , 2-tailed], all at 0.05 based on the sex of the students. However, the results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in means for influence emphasis [ $t(138)=2.602$ ,  $p=0.010$ , 2-tailed] at 0.05 based on the sex of the students. Relying on the interpretation of Eta Squared values from the formula  $\eta^2 = t^2/t^2+df$  as suggested by Pallant (2016), the Eta Squared value of 0.05 obtained for influence emphasis implied that there was a small difference in how the male and female sandwich students conceptualised leadership as an influence.

### ***Conceptualising Leadership Based on Age***

The second demographic variable considered for this study was the age of the students. One-way ANOVA was used to determine if statistically significant differences existed in the way the sandwich students conceptualised leadership based on their age. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** ANOVA Test Results on Conceptualising Leadership Based on Age

Variable		(df)	F	p-value
Trait Emphasis	Between Groups	4	0.676	0.610
	Within Groups	128		
	Total	132		
Ability Emphasis	Between Groups	4	0.842	0.501
	Within Groups	128		
	Total	132		
Skill Emphasis	Between Groups	4	0.109	0.979
	Within Groups	128		
	Total	132		
Behaviour Emphasis	Between Groups	4	0.621	0.648
	Within Groups	128		
	Total	132		
Relationship Emphasis	Between Groups	4	0.481	0.749
	Within Groups	128		
	Total	132		

Influence Emphasis	Between Groups	4	0.176	0.950
	Within Groups	128		
	Total	132		

Significance = 0.0

The results showed that no statistically significant difference was found for trait emphasis [F (4, 128) = 0.676, p = 0.610], ability emphasis [F (4, 128) = 0.842, p = 0.501], skill emphasis [F (4, 128) = 0.109, p = 0.979], behaviour emphasis [F (4, 128) = 0.621, p = 0.648], relationship emphasis [F (4, 128) = 0.481, p = 0.749], and influence emphasis [F (4, 128) = 0.176, p = 0.950] at 0.05 in relation to the age of the students. This implies that there are no statistically significant differences in how Diploma in Education sandwich students (non-professional teachers) and Post-Diploma in Basic Education sandwich students (professional teachers) conceptualise leadership in terms of their ages.

### ***Conceptualising Leadership Based on Level of Study/Professional Status***

On whether there were statistically significant differences in how the sandwich students conceptualised leadership based on their level of study/professional status, the independent samples *t*-test was used for the analysis. The results are in Table 5.

**Table 5: T-Test Results on Level/Professional Status**

Variable (Emphasis)	Level/Prof. Status	N	M	SD	Mean Diff.	t(df)	p-value
Trait	Dip/NP	67	3.81	0.78	-0.126	-0.947 (138)	0.345
	Post-Dip/P	73	3.93	0.78			
Ability	Dip/NP	67	3.86	0.52	-0.022	-0.253 (138)	0.801
	Post-Dip/P	73	3.88	0.50			
Skill	Dip/NP	67	4.25	0.54	-0.059	-0.669 (138)	0.505
	Post-Dip/P	73	4.31	0.50			
Behaviour	Dip/NP	67	3.87	0.58	0.082	0.796 (138)	0.427
	Post-Dip/P	73	3.79	0.63			
Relationship	Dip/NP	67	3.84	0.69	-0.037	-0.346 (138)	0.730
	Post-Dip/P	73	3.87	0.58			
Influence	Dip/NP	67	4.16	0.55	0.064	0.727 (138)	0.469
	Post-Dip/P	73	4.09	0.49			

Significance = 0.05;

Dip/NP = Diploma/Non-professional; Post-Dip/P = Post-Diploma/Professional

The results showed that there were differences in the mean values for Diploma in Education students (non-professional teachers) and Post-Diploma in Basic Education students (professional teachers) on all the six sub-scales of leadership. It is realised from the results that Post-Diploma in Basic Education students (professional teachers) rated higher on all the sub-scales of leadership except the influence emphasis where Diploma in Education students (non-professional teachers) rated higher in terms of the mean value. It is also observed from the results that there were no statistically significant differences in the means for trait emphasis [t (138) = -0.947, p = 0.345, 2-tailed], ability emphasis [t (138) = -0.253, p = 0.801, 2-tailed], skill emphasis [t (138) = -0.669, p = 0.505, 2-tailed], behaviour emphasis [t (138) = 0.796, p = 0.427, 2-tailed], relationship emphasis [t (138) = -0.346, p = 0.730, 2-tailed], and influence emphasis [t (138) = 0.727, p = 0.469, 2-tailed] at 0.05 based on the level of study/

professional status of the students. The implication from the results is that there is no statistically significant difference in how leadership is conceptualised among Diploma in Education students (non-professional teachers) and Post-Diploma in Basic Education students (professional teachers) of the Department of Basic Education, UEW.

The study sought to investigate how sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education, UEW, Ghana, conceptualise leadership. It was established that to a large extent, the students defined and understood leadership as a skill, and as an influence. This conception of leadership is in line with the contemporary philosophy that leadership as a skill implies that leadership is available to everyone because skills are competencies that people can learn or develop (Northouse, 2016). Similarly, defining leadership as an influence means that it is not a trait or an ability that resides in the leader, but rather an interactive event that occurs between the leader and the followers (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2014; Northouse, 2016). Influence is central to the process of leadership because leaders affect followers by directing their energies to influence followers to achieve something together. Tengey (2018) purports that a leader's ability to influence his or her subordinates is depicted in many ways including enthusiasm in communicating vision, inspiration, persuasion, and motivation. Therefore, the students conceptualising leadership as a skill, and as an influence means that even without natural leadership ability, people can learn and improve their leadership behaviours through practice, instruction, and feedback from others. This confirms the finding of a study by Moorthy (2014) that great leaders are made and not born.

The study also aimed at examining whether the students' demographic variables (sex, age, and level of study/professional status) resulted in statistically significant differences in the way they conceptualised leadership. It was found out that female students obtained higher mean values on ability emphasis and relationship emphasis whereas their male counterparts recorded higher mean values on trait emphasis, skill emphasis, behaviour emphasis, and influence emphasis. This finding seems to be in line with that of other studies where female college students were found to have more relational oriented views and practices of leadership than their male counterparts (Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008; 2010; Shankman, Haber, Facca, & Allen, 2010). The study established no statistically significant difference in how the students conceptualised leadership based on their age. This finding, however, deviates from that of Haber (2011), who found out that age was a factor in the significant difference in how college students understand leadership. The study further revealed no statistically significant differences in how students conceptualised leadership based on their level of study or professional status. Thus, it was observed from the findings that differences in ages of the students, or they being professionally trained teachers or not, were not determinants of the differences in their views on the meaning of leadership.

It was evident that the sex of the students resulted in statistically significant differences in how they conceptualised leadership as an influence where the male students were perceived to be rated higher by focusing more on influence emphasis in defining, explaining and understanding the concept of leadership as compared to their female counterparts. This finding could be explained by the Ghanaian cultural setting, where males seem to dominate in influencing decisions and activities in almost all spheres of life. Probably, this is why the male students' conceptualisation of leadership as an influence surpasses that of the female students. The finding, in a way, supports Meier's (2010) conclusion from a study that social identities, including sex, appear to play a role in the differences in understanding the concept of leadership.

## Conclusions

The concept of leadership has gained more attention in contemporary times even though it is considered as one of the concepts which is least understood. Leadership is an essential construct in organisational behaviour. However, no single definition can completely encompass its meaning and nature. It could be concluded from the findings, and from the numerous literatures on leadership, that leadership as a concept is understood differently by Diploma in Education and Post-Diploma in Basic Education sandwich students of the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. This stresses that the students have multiple perspectives in conceptualising and comprehending the concept of leadership. This supports the assertion that leadership defies one definition. These different perspectives of the students on the concept of leadership could be contradictory, or have different rationale on how they experience and comprehend leadership outcomes. For instance, there could be varied assumptions about the role of the leader and the followers in the relationship or collaborative endeavour as compared to the understanding of leadership as an ability endeavour. It could, therefore be concluded that these different assumptions or rationale on how the students conceptualise and understand the concept of leadership, could be based on their sex, and not their age nor their level of study/professional status.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the lecturers who teach school leadership, and school administration and management courses should clarify the values, attitudes, behaviours, skills and styles of leadership they seek to develop in Diploma in Education and Post-Diploma in Basic Education sandwich students in the Department of Basic Education. This is essential especially when these students perform certain responsibilities in one way or another in the schools in which they teach. This could be done when scenarios, case studies, role plays, school visits, and hands on activities are incorporated in the teaching of the topic by the lecturers. Again, it will provide a good opportunity for the students to enhance their understanding of contemporary leadership through promotion of values such as collaboration, teamwork, independent study, critical thinking, and empowerment. Eventually, the students would be helped to identify their leadership and organisational abilities and skills, and develop them for their future tasks as leaders. It is also recommended that the Head and staff of the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, should examine, modify or re-design departmental programmes to enhance the assessment of the values, skills and attitudes about leadership that are being taught, promoted and modelled. With this, the Diploma in Education and Post-Diploma in Basic Education sandwich students could be provided with opportunities to be involved in leadership activities while on campus in order for them to practically experience leadership. This will make them have a better understanding of what is involved in student leadership.



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