ACADEMICS' PERSPECTIVE OF THE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS' INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HYBRID LEARNING

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study intended to explore thorough discernments of educational leaders on the function of innovative leadership style in vitally contributing to the implementation of hybrid learning at the university level aiming to understand the role of educational leaders in reference to adopting innovative leadership style for the execution of the matter. The recent pandemic had forced drastic change in reshaping the approaches and designs in the setting of formal education which demands the implementation of hybrid learning to be executed comprehensively in order to accommodate the situation. Through a qualitative research design the targeted informants consisted of head of departments selected from various kulliyyahs in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) using purposive sampling technique. The data collection method used was in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data gathered from the interviews were transcribed using thematic analysis and themes were extracted to answer all of the research questions. Findings had shown relevant support for the mentioned leadership style towards the effectiveness of hybrid learning, and had highlighted the challenges faced in abruptly implementing hybrid learning, and interesting suggestions for considerations.
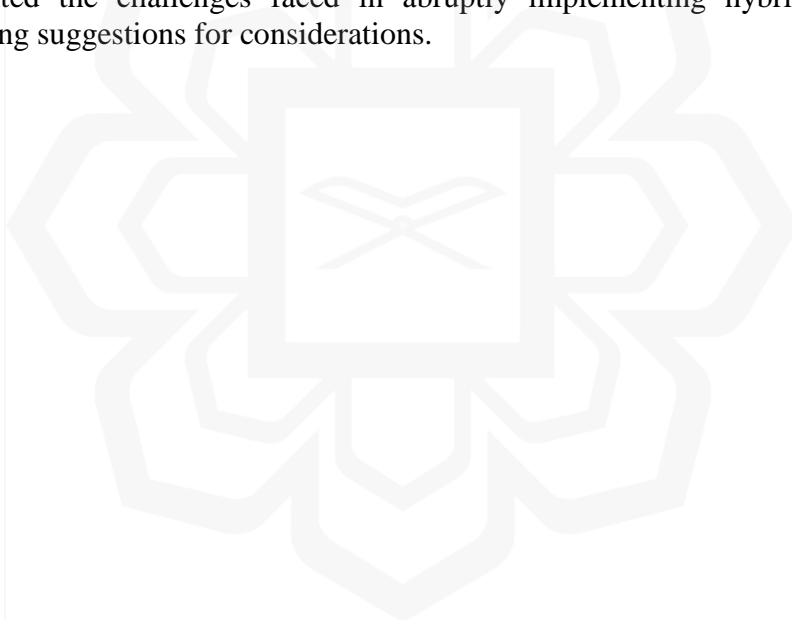
ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الفهم الشامل للقادة التربويين حول وظيفة أسلوب القيادة المبتكر في المساهمة بشكل حيوي في تنفيذ التعلم الهجين على المستوى الجامعي بهدف فهم دور القادة التربويين في إشارة إلى تبني أسلوب القيادة المبتكرة لتنفيذ موضوع. لقد فرض الوباء الأخير تغييرًا جذريًا في إعادة تشكيل المقاربات والتصاميم في وضع التعليم الرسمي الذي يتطلب تنفيذ التعلم الهجين ليتم تنفيذه بشكل شامل من أجل استيعاب الوضع. من خلال تصميم بحث نوعي ، يكون المخبرون المستهدفون يتألفون من رؤساء الأقسام المختارة من الكليات المختلفة في الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينات الهادفة. كانت طريقة جمع البيانات المستخدمة هي المقابلات شبه المنظمة المعمقة. تم نسخ البيانات التي تم جمعها من المقابلات باستخدام التحليل الموضوعي وتم استخراج الموضوعات للإجابة على جميع أسئلة البحث. أظهرت النتائج دعمًا مناسبًا لأسلوب القيادة المذكور نحو فعالية التعلم المختلط ، وسلطت الضوء على التحديات التي تواجه التنفيذ المفاجئ للتعلم الهجين ، واقتراحات مثيرة للاهتمام للاعتبارات.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Education.

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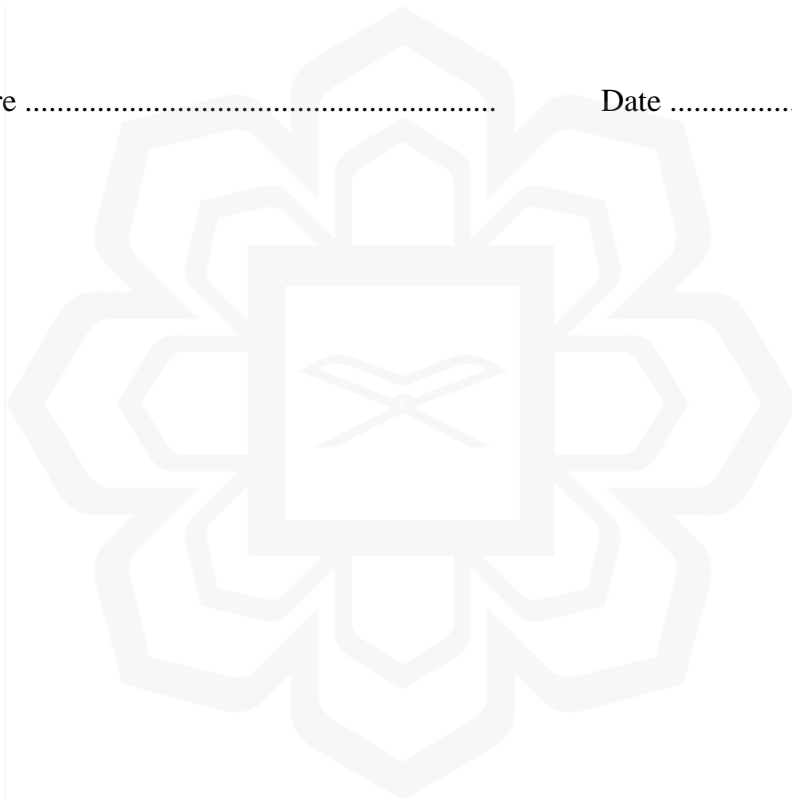Noor Lide Abu Kassim
Dean, Kulliyyah of Education

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Muhammad Syukri bin Abd Hamid

Signature .... Date ....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on educational systems around the world, resulting in the near-complete closure of universities, colleges and schools. In an effort to stem the spread of COVID-19, the Malaysian government has decided to temporarily close educational institutions (UNESCO, 2020). As of January 12, 2021, around 825 million students are affected by school closures as a result of the pandemic (Berita Harian, 2021). According to UNICEF (2021) monitoring, 23 nations have implemented countrywide closures and 40 have implemented local closures, affecting over half of the world's student population.

Institution of higher learning shutdowns have far-reaching economic and societal effects, not just for students, educators, and families (Aristovnik, et. al. 2020). In response to institute closures, the majority of the institutes advocated for the usage of distance learning programmes as well as open educational tools and platforms that educators can utilise to reach out to students remotely and minimise disruption of education (UNESCO, 2020). The situation has forced tertiaty institutions to scramble in finding innovative ways to teach students online, in-person yet socially separated, or in a hybrid style (Newlin, 2021).

Hybrid learning is a type of education that mixes online and face-to-face learning (Garrison & Heather, 2004). Hybrid format is also known as the best of both worlds because of its blending strategy, which combines the features of both online and face-to-face contexts (Lamport & Hill, 2012). When implemented well, hybrid learning has significant advantages for students, instructors, and institutions. According to the researchers, blended learning courses were in great demand due to their enhanced convenience and flexibility, and learning outcomes were better than traditional and face-to-face equivalents. Additionally, the majority of faculty members

were delighted with the blended learning courses, and blended learning benefited the university by increasing classroom performance (Dziuban, et. al. 2004). Students in online learning conditions performed modestly better than students in face-to-face learning conditions, according to a recent meta-analysis by the US Department of Education comparing the effectiveness of online education to traditional education, while students in hybrid learning environments performed better than both completely online and face-to-face learning conditions (Means, et. al. 2010).

Prior research indicated that people choose blended or hybrid learning for three main reasons: 1) improved pedagogy, 2) increased access/flexibility and 3) increased cost effectiveness (Vignare, 2002). Active learning strategies, group collaboration, and learner-centered pedagogies are all enhanced by hybrid learning approaches (Collis, 2003). Learner convenience and flexibility are becoming increasingly important as more non-traditional students with work and family obligations seek higher education (Kaleta, et. al. 2007). Ultimately, by targeting a vast, geographically dispersed audience, hybrid learning environments deliver a high return on investment (Graham, 2006). Furthermore, hybrid learning has the ability to resolve the issue of cost by taking faculty out of the easily automated business of delivery of information and allowing educators to refocus their attention with students on critical thinking abilities (Peercy & Cramer, 2011). Malaysia should plan and prepare for hybrid-blended learning to become an intrinsic part of learning delivery from kindergarten through higher education, including training (John, 2021).

1.1.1 History of Hybrid Learning

The terms "hybrid learning", "blended learning", "technology-mediated instruction", "web-enhanced instruction", and "mixed-mode instruction" are always used interchangeably in academic literature (Martyn, 2003). Although the concepts of hybrid learning were created in the 1960s, it was not until the late 1990s that the formal nomenclature to define it took shape. In a 1999 press release, Interactive Learning Centers, an Atlanta-based education company, announced a name change to EPIC Learning, one of the first usage of the phrase emerges. According to the release,

the company currently operates 220 on-line courses, but will begin offering its Internet courseware using the company's Blended Learning methodology (Hrastinski, 2019).

Initially, the phrase "blended learning" was ambiguous, including a wide range of technologies and pedagogical methods used in various combinations which some making no use of technology whatsoever. With the publication of Bonk & Graham's first Handbook of Blended Learning in 2006, the phrase became more concrete. The term's broad and ambiguous definition were contested, and blended learning systems were defined as learning systems that combine face-to-face and computer-mediated learning (Bonk & Graham, 2006). Friesen (2012) recommends that, in its current form, blended learning denotes the range of possibilities given by merging Internet and digital media with established classroom forms that necessitate the physical presence of teacher and students in a report titled Defining Blended Learning.

In the 1960s, on mainframes and minicomputers, technology-based instruction became a viable alternative to instructor-led teaching. Blended learning has a significant advantage in terms of scale, as one instructor manage to educate so many people. (Bersin, 2004). Particularly, University of Illinois and Control Data successfully developed Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations (PLATO). PLATO, in instance, has a long history of innovation and provided education ranging from kindergarten to higher education (David & Sandy, 1984). In the 1970s, mainframe-based training was phased out due to interface constraints, and satellite-based live video took its place. The benefit here was that you could serve those who weren't as computer savvy. The expense required for this work was a significant challenge.

The 56k modems could not handle very high quality sound and video in the early 1990s, hence CD-ROMs became the main method of delivering technology-based instruction. Because of CD-ROMs had an issue tracking coursework completion, learning management systems arose as a solution to make progress tracking easier. This was largely utilised in the aviation sector to measure how well people fared on courses, how much time they spent on them, and where they left off.

In 1988, the Aviation Industry Computer-Based Training Committee (AICC) was founded, and corporations like Boeing employed CD-ROMs to train its employees.

Although CD-ROMs could still be utilised provided a learning management system fits an institution's requirements, the modern hybrid learning is provided online. Webcasting (both synchronous and asynchronous) and online video (live and recorded) are examples of channels via which online blending learning can be delivered. Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Khan Academy and Microsoft Teams have all been used in classrooms to act as blended learning platforms (Khan Academy, 2012).

1.1.2 The Format of Hybrid Learning System

Hybrid courses blend parts of traditional face-to-face and online course forms to create a unique learning experience (El Mansour & Mupinga, 2007). Mixed mode, blended, or web-enhance learning are other terms for them. Because of shifting student demographics and efforts to make courses more accessible to all students, the offering of hybrid courses in higher education has rapidly expanded (Blier, 2008). For students who reside in remote locations, hybrid courses, for example may reduce travel time, lowering costs and boosting convenience (Yudko, et. al. 2008). This alternative is particularly appealing to a variety of students with hectic schedules with job and family commitments. As higher institutes strive to reach a wider range of students, hybrid courses are likely to become more popular, helping to keep higher education expenses down. (Woodworth & Applin, 2007).

Instructors have created hybrid courses that combine online and face-to-face education in various of approaches. In a symmetrical class, the educator delivered lectures in person and used a portion of each class session to introduce the online exercises that students had to perform in between classes (Antonoglou, et. al. 2011). Online and face-to-face activities were matched differently in an introductory information technology course: students participated in collaboration problem-solving activities in class and completed self-paced activities online (Woodworth & Applin,

2007). Instructors have also designed courses that merge face-to-face and online components. For instance, Bonakdarian, Whittaker, and Yang (2010) defined their undergraduate hybrid computer courses as the mixed mode of instruction that combines both face-to-face and online students in the same class by incorporating synchronous technologies to facilitate the learning process. Equally, Dal Bello, Knowlton, and Chaffin (2007) described an introductory Special Education course in which the lecturer used interactive video conferencing to allow off-campus students to engage in face-to-face classes. Even though there are several methods to construct a hybrid course, the common thread is the incorporation of both online and face-to-face activities. According to Ashland University (2014), up to 74 percent of course meetings are held online, based on the university definition of hybrid course. Meetings for online courses might be synchronous or asynchronous. Through the University's Learning Management System, students and lecturers can access course information and participate in instructional activities to help them learn and teach more effectively. This method (hybrid learning) would allow us to become more efficient and effective not just in terms of teaching and learning, but also in terms of operations and business. (Mazliham, 2022). Hence, the format of hybrid learning can be seen as having a whole impact aside from the learning progression only.

1.1.3 The Objectives of Hybrid Learning

Hybrid learning, as defined – synchronous live and online learning at the same time, is being a component of the evolving educational landscape. As a result many waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators had understood that some flexibility is certainly essential both now and in the future.

While in-person teaching continues to be an important part of education for the foreseeable future, the need to open up multiple channels to respond to not only extreme conditions such as a global disaster, but also the day-to-day interruptions of effective education, is becoming increasingly important. Hybrid learning is not just to give learners more accessible to the disadvantaged, but it also allows educators to reach out to students in remote locations, keeps students linked during long absences,

and familiarises both educators and learners with cutting-edge technological innovations.

As technology and educational best practises advance, hybrid learning is becoming an element of a holistic education strategy. Since hybrid learning had been used as a last resort in the past, it is expected to become a foundation of learning and teaching in the near future. But, considering how new the implementation of hybrid learning in Malaysia is, it is understandably difficult to narrow down precisely what it entails.

1.1.4 The Challenges of Hybrid Learning

A teacher stands and alters their voice in a physical classroom setting to ensure that pupils can see and hear them well. To ensure that each student is paying attention, they move around, use visual aids, and make frequent eye contact with them. Learners put their hands up in a similar manner, pose questions, and rapidly learn to talk correctly so that the entire class can listen and engage in the lesson. However, in a hybrid learning setting, where a class may be made up of virtual and in-person students, this important part of education can only be replicated with the correct collaboration tools. Several students and teachers have gotten by by using the built-in cameras and speakers on their computers and phones, but bad audio and video quality are disturbing and can affect a student's ability to focus on study. Therefore, in order to maintain the entire class engaged, educators must be seen and heard as naturally as possible by all students.

1.1.5 Innovative Leadership

The underpinnings of innovative leadership are path-goal theory and leader-member exchange theory. Work that is creative, a staff that is creative, and unique leader qualities are all crucial core parts of innovative leadership (Mumford, et. al. 2002). There are numerous reasons why innovative leadership is preferable to other types of

leadership. The stages of innovative leadership, which include (1) idea generation, (2) evaluation, and (3) implementation, are one of them. Hence, the education system may have differences in style according to the venue, time, faccilities and other factors according to the administrators in charge. Because the method is not standardized, academic administrators will have a lot of chances and opportunities to try and see what works best for their institutes.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As the recent pandemic had forced drastic change in the norm of daily life in general, it had definitely reshaped the approaches and designs in the setting of formal education, which demands the implementation of hybrid learning to be executed comprehensively in order to accommodate the condition of the society in constant apprehensiveness of the possibility of being contracted by the notorious virus that could result in fatal consequences. Due to this, the researcher was interested to attain in-depth understanding from the domain of educational administration on the role and element of innovative leadership style in proactively responding to the dire situation mentioned to positively affect the learning environment and structure through responding, deciding, conducting and ensuring the effectiveness of implementing hybrid education. This sort of leadership characteristics are seen needed to a certain extent demanded in confronting the novel challenges which had and still is impacting globally. Furthermore, the literature on this specific matter is limited and dismal, hence, avoiding a hubristic sense, this study would assist in filling up partly the gap in the matter.

1.3 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

As previously mentioned, due to the gloomy amount of literature specifying on the context highlighted from the domain of viewpoint by educational leaders, the researcher found it necessary to pursue the study further, as this study intended to explore thorough discernments of educational leaders on the function of innovative

leadership style in vitally contributing to the implementation of hybrid learning in the university level. The importance had been made evident and obvious as to react to a more demanding and desperate recent situation which if not highlighted and ignored could spell a more unfavourable outcomes in reaping positive results of the effectiveness of hybrid education endevours. The stated leadership characteristics are imperative to allow the virtue of creativity to take place and the velocity of responses to be executed in order to develop and avoid stagnation. Promoting a relatively young structure in the learning environment challenges the landscape of leadership within which the educational leaders utilize leadership capacities in enhancing the acceptance and effects. Since the characterisics of the mentioned style of leadership could be one of the elements which form as a catalyst for advancement in education settings, it guides ones curiousity to know more concerning the matter.

1.4 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

    i.   To explore the roles of innovative leadership in the effectiveness of hybrid learning implementation.

    ii.   To understand the importance of innovative leadership style in contributing to the university in the implementation of hybrid learning.

    iii.   To uncover the benefits of innovative leadership style in advancing educational administrators in decision making to respond to the challenges of implementing hybrid learning.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The specific research questions are as follows:

    i.   How does innovative leadership affect the effectiveness of the implementation of hybrid learning?

    ii.   Why is innovative leadership important in the mentioned implementation?

iii. What is the role of educational leaders in reference to adopting innovative leadership style for hybrid learning?

iv. What are the challenges in the implementation of hybrid learning?

v. What are the expectations in the implementation of hybrid learning?

vi. What are the suggestions to enhance the process of implementing the hybrid learning?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As the fully face-to-face education had been prohibited in Malaysia since the first Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020. The institutions are struggling with the online learning environment. It is preposterous to say that the educators and students adapt easily to this new norm. Most of the lecturers and teachers are hoping that this pandemic will have a fullstop and the face-to-face education might proceed as before, but the numbers of COVID-19 cases, hitherto, do not reflect this presupposition. The Hybrid Learning might be the temporary, if not, part of the answer for tertiary organizations in proceeding with their tasks. The innovative leadership style is assumed through definition of its components, and literature, as the most appropriate approach in making accurate judgments in handling drastic structural changes in learning design.

1.7 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

Educational Leaders

Educational leaders refers to the administration of the education system in which a group combining of human and material resources to supervise, plan, strategize, and implement structures to execute an education system. To narrow down the dimension of this study is referring to the incumbent Head of Departments (HOD) in the university.

Online Learning

Online learning refers to 100% virtual courses given by postsecondary institutions, except massively open online courses (MOOCs). Traditional courses are contrasted with online learning, which is defined as virtual lessons delivered via the internet.

Hybrid Learning

Hybrid learning courses blend aspects from traditional face-to-face and online course forms to provide a unique learning experience.

Innovative Leadership

Innovative leadership is a philosophy and methodology that blends many leadership styles to motivate employees to come up with innovative ideas, products, and services.

1.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher's goal in this study is to learn more about educational leaders' perceptions on innovative leadership toward implementation of hybrid learning. Among the limitations of this study that can be identified is that the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia. This has restricted the researcher's movement to gain sample from other universities in Malaysia. Thus, to reciprocate, capitalizing on the utilization of established contacts and connections, the approach within the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) would be sufficient to extract relevant and useful data concerning the study. The University is obvious not deprived of preponderance experienced administrators located throughout several Kulliyyahs. One could argue that communications could be extended to other universities, however, it was made evident to the researcher of the difficulty to communicate with external administrators as they are rarely in their office to be contacted, and those who were able to, seemed reluctant to coorperate and be forthcoming due to online

platforms in comparison if one is given the luxury to attend in person for a discourse on the subject as it is more personal, comfortable and a sense of trust due to eye to eye setting. The researcher is in the opinion that the administrators in IIUM would encompasses more than sufficient information needed to explore the matter in depth, furthermore, the university is implementing identical or almost identical approach to hybrid learning as other universities. Hence, the researcher would focus the scope on IIUM only. Apart from that, the University implemented and still is implementing new set of rules for off campus student restricted from entering the campus, with this, all of the interviews will be held via online platform such as Zoom, Google Meet or Whatsapp Video Call.

1.9 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

One of the study's delimitations is that it only looks at academic administrators' perspectives rather than other aspects of tertiary education. Other aspects of Malaysian education, such as elementary, secondary, and early childhood education, have yet to be investigated. It is also delimited in the sense of applying the innovative leadership style. Alternative leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, and visionary leadership, have yet to be fully appreciated, as the relation between innovative leadership and educational leaders appears to be far more suitable than other leadership styles.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter delves into the theory behind numerous of the study's themes. It also consists of previous research that contributed to conceptualize, elaborate and support the flow of this study. In brief, it is divided into three sections. The first section discusses several types of leaderships and why the innovative leadership is selected in this study. Next, how the concept of education, future education, and also the hybrid learning had effected and unfolded through the historical sense of formal educational settings. The third one highlights on the role of educational leaders and administrators consideration of innovative leadership approach for hybrid learning. Finally, based on among others, the theoretical framework assisted how this study can shed a light on the topic of innovative leadership toward hybrid learning.

2.2 LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a research field as well as a practical talent that encompasses an individual's, group's, or organization's ability to lead, influence, or direct other people, groups, or entire organisations. Specialist literature argues numerous positions, contrasting Eastern and Western approaches to leadership, as well as within the West which North American versus European methods (Western, 2019).

Leadership is defined in academic settings in the United States as a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (Chemers, 1997). Some have questioned the traditional managerial view of leadership, which holds that it is something that one individual possesses or owns because of their position or authority, and instead

advocate for the complex nature of leadership that exists at all levels of the institution, both within formal roles and outside of them (Goleman, et. al. 2003).

Traits (Kirkpatrick et al. 1991), contextual interaction, function, and behaviour (Goldsmith, 2016), power, vision, and values (Richards & Engle, 1986), charisma, and intelligence, to name a few, have all been studied in relation to leadership (Chin, 2015). Leadership has always been seen as a critical component in the management of any institution, major or minor. (Irma er al. 2021).

2.2.1 Type of Modern Leadership Styles

2.2.1.1 Charismatic Leadership

Max Weber, a German sociologist, used the term charismatic leadership to describe a type of leadership (Adair-Toteff, 2005). It refers to a type of organisation or leadership in which the leader's charisma is the source of power. In contrast, there are two more sorts of authority: legal authority and traditional authority. Max Weber's tripartite classification of authority includes all three types.

"Charisma" is an ancient Greek term that rose to prominence in the first century as a result of Saint Paul's letters to the fledgling Christian communities. Within that setting, it usually referred to a divinely-inspired "gift" that revealed God's authority over the Church's early leaders. This theological concept was broadened by Max Weber, who saw it as something that followers attach, allowing sociologists to apply it to political, military, celebrity, and non-Christian religious circumstances. (Joosse, 2014). Other terms that have been used include "charismatic domination" (Power, Domination, Legitimation & Authority Sociology, 2006) and "charismatic leadership" (Adair-Toteff, 2005).