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OBSERVED AND EXPECTED LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER GAP ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. *This study measures how far the leadership competencies that stakeholders expect of graduates are matched by the support that higher education institutions actually provide. It compares an Expected Competency Index with an Observed Institutional Support Index built from three levers: the learning environment, stakeholder interaction and institutional culture.*

Design/methodology/approach. *A cross-sectional survey was administered in November 2025 to faculty, students and employers linked to universities, colleges and firms in Karnataka, India. After screening, 27 usable responses remained (17 faculty, 7 students, 3 employers). Eight competencies (logical-analytical, emotional-social, cultural, technical, financial, communicative, motivational-ethical and team intelligence) were rated for belief and importance. Thirty items captured observed institutional support. Data were analysed with reliability tests, paired t and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, Kruskal–Wallis and Mann–Whitney tests, Spearman correlations, multiple regression and content analysis of open-ended responses.*

Findings. *All scales were reliable (Cronbach's α = 0.85–0.92). Expected competency (M = 4.27) significantly exceeded observed institutional support (M = 4.01): t(26) = 2.24, p = .034, Cohen's dz = 0.43; Wilcoxon p = .009. Three in four respondents (74%) rated expectations above provision. Understanding people, team collaboration and smart thinking were expected most; financial sense least. The weakest observed practices were valuing everyone's ideas regardless of background, rewarding leadership behaviour, open expression of opinion and learner initiative. Stakeholder interaction predicted leadership culture (B = 0.54, p = .026; model R^2 = .63). Respondents most often named team collaboration and self-drive as the qualities young people need to improve.*

Practical implications. *Institutions can narrow the gap by recognising and rewarding student leadership, strengthening mentoring and feedback loops, creating safe spaces for voice and inclusion, and embedding financial and data literacy into leadership learning.*

Originality/value. *The study offers a compact, reliable eight-intelligence framework for leadership competency and a simple expectation–provision gap method that institutions can repeat for self-assessment under the National Education Policy 2020.*

KEYWORDS: *Leadership Competency; Competency Gap; Higher Education; Emotional Intelligence; Institutional Culture; Mentoring; Employability; India*

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is no longer treated as a trait reserved for a few senior managers. Employers now expect graduates to lead projects, teams and change from their first job. Katz (1955) argued long ago that the skills of an effective administrator can be learned, and later work confirmed that leadership skills develop through education and experience (Mumford et al., 2000; Day, 2000). Higher education institutions (HEIs) are therefore expected to develop leadership, not merely to teach about it.

A simple analogy helps. A college is like a bakery that promises a certain loaf. Customers (employers, parents and students) have a clear picture of the loaf they expect. The bakery's ovens, recipes and bakers (the learning environment, mentoring and culture) decide what actually comes out. When the loaf served falls short of the loaf expected, there is a gap. This study measures that gap for leadership competency.

In India, the National Education Policy 2020 calls for holistic, multidisciplinary education that builds communication, teamwork, ethical reasoning and leadership (Ministry of Human Resource Development [MHRD], 2020). Yet the policy leaves each institution to translate these aims into daily practice. Many institutions, particularly in semi-urban regions of Karnataka, have limited industry

links, few structured mentoring schemes and little recognition of student initiative. Whether stakeholders see enough institutional support for the leadership they expect remains an open, practical question.

This paper addresses that question. It defines eight leadership competencies, drawing on the literature on multiple and applied intelligences. It then asks faculty, students and employers two things: how important each competency is (the *expected* level), and how well their institution supports leadership development (the *observed* level). Comparing the two gives a direct, repeatable measure of the expectation–provision gap.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature and sets out the framework. Section 3 states the gap, objectives and hypotheses. Section 4 explains the method. Section 5 reports results, Section 6 discusses them, and Sections 7 to 9 give implications, limitations and conclusions.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Leadership as a set of learnable competencies

The competency approach began with McClelland (1973), who argued that job success is better predicted by observable competencies than by general intelligence scores. Boyatzis (1982) and Spencer and Spencer (1993) turned this idea into competency models for managers. Mumford et al. (2000) showed that leadership rests on problem-solving skills, social judgement and knowledge, and that these skills grow with training and experience. Day (2000) separated *leader* development (building individual capability) from *leadership* development (building relationships and shared capacity), and argued that both need deliberate institutional design.

2.2 Eight leadership intelligences

This study groups leadership competency into eight "intelligences" that are each supported by an established stream of research. Think of them as the eight ingredients of one recipe: a leader can be strong in several, but the dish is weakest where an ingredient is missing.

Table 1. The eight competencies and their theoretical basis

No.	Competency (short name)	Intelligence	What it means in practice	Key sources
1	Smart Thinking	Logical, analytical and strategic	Analysing problems and seeing the big picture	Katz (1955); Mumford et al. (2000)
2	Understanding People	Emotional and social	Reading feelings and building relationships	Goleman (1998); Riggio & Reichard (2008)
3	Respecting Diversity	Cultural intelligence and adaptability	Working across differences and adapting to change	Earley & Ang (2003)
4	Tech & Data Awareness	Technical	Using technology and data in decisions	Avolio et al. (2000)
5	Financial Sense	Financial	Understanding how money and resources shape results	Lusardi & Mitchell (2014)
6	Clear Expression	Communication and engagement	Sharing ideas clearly and engaging others	Riggio & Reichard (2008); Kouzes & Posner (2017)
7	Self-Drive	Motivation and integrity	Staying motivated, honest and value-driven	Bass & Riggio (2006); Brown et al. (2005)
8	Team Collaboration	Team player skills	Working with others and helping the team succeed	Hogan & Kaiser (2005)

Emotional and social intelligence has the strongest research base. Goleman (1998) found that emotional competencies separate outstanding from average leaders, and Riggio and Reichard (2008) showed how emotional and social skills together drive leader effectiveness. Cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003) matters more as classrooms and workplaces become diverse. Technical and data awareness reflects the shift to "e-leadership", where influence is exercised through technology (Avolio et al., 2000). Financial literacy is a known weak spot among young adults worldwide (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014), yet leaders must allocate scarce resources. Integrity is central to transformational and ethical leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Brown et al., 2005). Finally, Hogan and Kaiser (2005) argue that leadership is ultimately judged by the performance of the team a leader builds.

2.3 How institutions develop leadership: three levers

The literature points to three institutional levers.

1. **Learning environment (A).** Experiential learning theory holds that people learn by doing, reflecting and trying again (Kolb, 1984). Internships, projects, industry linkages and student-led initiatives turn leadership from a lecture topic into practice (Brungardt, 1996).
2. **Stakeholder interaction (B).** Mentors, teachers and peers provide role models, feedback and encouragement. These are the "vicarious experience" and "verbal persuasion" sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Komives et al. (2005) found

that adults and peers who affirm and challenge students are central to the growth of a leadership identity, and Dugan and Komives (2007) identified mentoring as a strong predictor of student leadership capacity.

3. **Institutional culture (C).** Culture sets what behaviour is valued and rewarded (Schein, 2010). Psychological safety, the shared belief that one can speak up and take risks without punishment, enables learning behaviour in teams (Edmondson, 1999). Inclusion, fairness and ethical expectations shape whether every learner feels entitled to lead.

2.4 The expectation–provision gap

Gap models are well established in service research. Parasuraman et al. (1985) defined service quality as the gap between what customers expect and what they perceive they receive. The same logic applies to education: stakeholders hold expectations about the leadership competencies graduates need, and they perceive a certain level of institutional support. A positive gap (expectation above provision) signals where investment is needed.

2.5 Conceptual framework

The framework has two sides. On the *expected* side, the eight competencies form an Expected Competency Index (ECI). On the *observed* side, the three levers (learning environment, stakeholder interaction and culture) form an Observed Institutional Support Index (OII). The study tests (a) whether ECI exceeds OII, (b) whether the levers differ from one another, (c) whether stakeholder groups differ, and (d) whether the learning environment and stakeholder interaction shape the culture that sustains leadership.

3. RESEARCH GAP, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Research gap

Three gaps stand out. First, most leadership-competency studies examine one intelligence at a time (usually emotional intelligence); few combine cognitive, emotional, cultural, technical, financial, communicative, ethical and team competencies in one instrument. Second, studies of student leadership mostly come from North American campuses; evidence from Indian state universities and their affiliated colleges in semi-urban districts is scarce. Third, few studies place *expectations* and *institutional provision* side by side on a common scale, so institutions cannot see where the shortfall lies.

3.2 Objectives

1. To assess the level of importance stakeholders attach to eight leadership competencies.
2. To assess stakeholders' perception of institutional support for leadership development through the learning environment, stakeholder interaction and institutional culture.
3. To measure the gap between expected competency and observed institutional support.
4. To examine whether expectations and perceptions differ by respondent group and gender.
5. To examine the influence of the learning environment and stakeholder interaction on leadership culture.
6. To identify the competencies that stakeholders believe young people most need to improve.

3.3 Hypotheses

No.	Null hypothesis (H_0)	Test
H1	There is no significant difference between the Expected Competency Index and the Observed Institutional Support Index.	Paired t-test; Wilcoxon signed-rank
H2	There is no significant difference among the three observed dimensions (learning environment, stakeholder interaction, culture).	Friedman test
H3	Expected competency and observed support do not differ across respondent groups (faculty, students, employers).	Kruskal–Wallis H
H4	Expected competency and observed support do not differ by gender.	Mann–Whitney U
H5	The learning environment and stakeholder interaction have no significant influence on institutional leadership culture.	Multiple linear regression

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

The study uses a descriptive and analytical cross-sectional survey design with an embedded open-ended question, making it a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative results are the primary strand.

4.2 Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed from the literature in Section 2. It had four parts:

- **Part I – Profile:** respondent group, gender and institution or organisation.
- **Part II – Expected competencies:** for each of the eight competencies, one *belief* item (e.g., "Effective leaders think logically, analyse problems, and see the big picture") and one *evaluation* item (e.g., "Smart thinking is important for effective leadership"), giving 16 items.

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- **Part III – Observed institutional support:** 30 items in three dimensions of ten items each: learning environment (A1–A10), stakeholder interaction (B1–B10) and institutional culture (C1–C10).
- **Part IV – Open-ended:** "Which of these leadership qualities do students or young professionals most need to improve?"

All closed items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The full instrument is given in the Appendix.

4.3 Sample and data collection

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms between 7 and 17 November 2025, using purposive and snowball sampling through academic and professional networks. The population comprised three stakeholder groups of leadership development: faculty, students and employers. Responses came from about a dozen organisations, including Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University (Ballari), government and private first-grade and degree colleges in Gangavathi, Ballari, Jewargi and Nanjangud, two management and engineering institutes in Ballari, a skill-development organisation and two private companies.

4.4 Data screening

Twenty-eight responses were received. The form used a checkbox grid, so a few respondents ticked more than one scale point for an item. Of 1,278 answered cells, 85 (6.7%) carried multiple ticks. Where adjacent points were ticked (for example 4 and 5), the mean of the ticked points was used (4.5). One respondent ticked every scale point (1 to 5) on every item; this response carries no information and was removed. The final sample is therefore **n = 27**. In the first ten responses the belief item for Smart Thinking (P1a) was blank and an unlabelled extra column appeared at the end, which points to a revision of the form during collection. The extra column was dropped, P1a has 17 valid answers, and each competency score was computed as the mean of its available belief and evaluation items.

4.5 Measures

- **Competency score** = mean of the belief and evaluation items for that competency.
- **Expected Competency Index (ECI)** = mean of the eight competency scores.
- **Dimension scores (A, B, C)** = mean of the ten items in each observed dimension.
- **Observed Institutional Support Index (OII)** = mean of all 30 observed items.
- **Gap** = ECI − OII. A positive gap means expectations exceed perceived provision.

4.6 Analysis plan

Reliability was tested with Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951), using 0.70 as the minimum (Nunnally, 1978). Because the sample is small and Likert data are ordinal, every comparison was run twice: with a parametric test and its non-parametric counterpart. Parametric tests on Likert composites are robust (Norman, 2010), but agreement between the two gives extra confidence (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Effect sizes follow Cohen (1988). The open-ended answers were coded to the eight competencies using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005); an answer could receive more than one code. Analysis was done in Python (pandas and SciPy). As a robustness check, the gap test was repeated on the 17 respondents who completed the final version of the form.

A worked example makes the gap concrete. Suppose a faculty member rates the eight competencies at an average of 4.5, but rates the institution's support at an average of 3.9. That person's gap is 4.5 − 3.9 = +0.6: the institution delivers less than the person expects. The study averages these gaps across all 27 respondents and tests whether the average is larger than chance would produce.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Respondent profile

Table 2. Profile of respondents (n = 27)

Respondent group	Male	Female	Total	Share
Teacher / Faculty	10	7	17	63.0%
Student	5	2	7	25.9%
Employer / Corporate professional	3	0	3	11.1%
Total	**18**	**9**	**27**	**100%**

Faculty form the majority, so the findings mainly reflect the view from inside institutions. Students and employers add outside and learner perspectives.

5.2 Reliability

Table 3. Reliability of scales

Scale	Items	Valid n	Cronbach's α
Expected competency – belief items	8	17	0.82
Expected competency – evaluation items	8	27	0.88
Expected competency – all items	16	17	0.91
A. Learning environment	10	27	0.85

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Scale	Items	Valid n	Cronbach's α
B. Stakeholder interaction	10	27	0.92
C. Institutional culture	10	27	0.90
Observed support – all items	30	27	0.96

Every scale exceeds 0.80, well above the 0.70 benchmark, so the composite scores can be used with confidence.

5.3 Expected leadership competencies

Table 4. Expected importance of the eight competencies

Rank	Competency	Mean	SD	Agree (score ≥ 4)
1	Understanding People	4.47	0.77	81%
2	Team Collaboration	4.39	0.90	81%
3	Smart Thinking	4.38	0.65	81%
4	Clear Expression	4.29	1.00	81%
5	Self-Drive	4.26	0.89	78%
6	Respecting Diversity	4.20	0.84	74%
7	Tech & Data Awareness	4.12	1.07	70%
8	Financial Sense	4.06	0.91	56%
	Expected Competency Index (ECI)	**4.27**	**0.69**	

All eight competencies are rated important (means above 4.0). The people-centred trio of understanding people, team collaboration and smart thinking leads. Financial sense trails: only 56% agree it is vital, and its evaluation item ("understanding money matters is vital for leadership success") has the lowest single-item mean (3.89). The ranks do not differ significantly (Friedman $\chi^2(7) = 9.84$, $p = .198$), which means stakeholders see leadership as a balanced bundle rather than one dominant trait. Belief items (M = 4.31) and evaluation items (M = 4.22) agree closely (Wilcoxon $p = .211$), which supports the internal consistency of the expected side.

5.4 Observed institutional support

Table 5. Observed support: dimension scores and weakest items

Dimension / item	Mean	SD	Agree
A. Learning environment	**4.03**	0.63	
B. Stakeholder interaction	**4.01**	0.77	
C. Institutional culture	**3.99**	0.75	
Observed Institutional Support Index (OII)	**4.01**	0.67	
Weakest items			
C5. Everyone's ideas are valued regardless of background	3.65	1.19	63%
B5. Institutions recognise and reward leadership behaviour	3.72	1.09	63%
C1. People here can express opinions openly and respectfully	3.74	0.86	48%
B1. Learners actively take initiative and responsibility in group tasks	3.74	1.12	59%
A4. Industry experts or mentors interact with learners	3.87	0.97	70%
A5. Internships and projects help in understanding leadership in practice	3.87	0.89	59%
Strongest items			
C6. Leadership confidence increases through practice and reflection	4.26	0.94	81%
A7. Leadership learning goes beyond the classroom	4.24	1.10	85%
B10. Overall interaction builds a strong leadership culture	4.24	0.89	89%

The three dimensions are almost level (Friedman $\chi^2(2) = 1.43$, $p = .489$), so **H2 is not rejected**. The weakest items tell a consistent story. Respondents believe that practice builds confidence (C6), but fewer see voice, inclusion, recognition and real-world exposure being delivered. Fewer than half (48%) agree that people can express opinions openly.

5.5 The expectation–provision gap (H1)

Table 6. Expected competency versus observed institutional support (paired comparisons, n = 27)

Comparison	Mean gap	SD	t(26)	p (t)	Wilcoxon p	Cohen's dz
ECI vs OII (overall)	+0.26	0.61	2.24	.034	.009	0.43
ECI vs A. Learning environment	+0.24	0.50	2.53	.018	.007	0.49
ECI vs B. Stakeholder interaction	+0.27	0.74	1.88	.072	.059	0.36
ECI vs C. Institutional culture	+0.28	0.74	1.95	.062	.092	0.37
Robustness: final-form respondents only (n = 17), ECI vs OII	+0.29	0.55	2.14 (df 16)	.048	.015	0.52

Expected competency exceeds observed support by 0.26 scale points, a small-to-medium effect. The gap scores are not normally distributed (Shapiro–Wilk $p = .015$), so the Wilcoxon result ($p = .009$) is the more appropriate test; both agree. **H1 is rejected.**

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Twenty of the 27 respondents (74%) rated expectations above provision. The gap is significant against the learning environment and marginal ($p < .10$) against interaction and culture. It holds when the analysis is limited to respondents who used the final form.

5.6 Differences by respondent group and gender (H3, H4)

Table 7. Mean scores by respondent group

Group	n	ECI	A	B	C	OII	Gap
Employer / Corporate	3	4.81	4.40	4.07	4.37	4.28	+0.53
Teacher / Faculty	17	4.36	4.08	4.11	4.04	4.08	+0.28
Student	7	3.82	3.74	3.71	3.72	3.73	+0.09
Kruskal–Wallis H (df 2)		4.77	2.71	1.42	2.51	2.09	
p		.092	.258	.491	.285	.352	

A clear ordering appears: employers expect the most and students the least, and students also rate institutional support lowest. Employers show the widest gap (+0.53). None of these differences reaches significance at .05, although the difference in expectations is marginal ($p = .092$), so **H3 is not rejected**. With only three employers, this pattern should be read as a lead for future work rather than a finding.

Men and women gave nearly identical scores (ECI 4.27 vs 4.28; OII 3.96 vs 4.11; all Mann–Whitney $p > .40$). **H4 is not rejected.** Women's ratings were noticeably more consistent (SD of OII 0.47 vs 0.75).

5.7 Relationships among the constructs (H5)

Table 8. Spearman correlations (n = 27)

	ECI	A	B	C
ECI	1			
A. Learning environment	0.75**	1		
B. Stakeholder interaction	0.50**	0.83**	1	
C. Institutional culture	0.57**	0.80**	0.78**	1

** $p < .01$

All correlations are positive and strong. Respondents who value leadership competencies more also see more institutional support, and the three observed dimensions move together.

Table 9. Regression of institutional culture (C) on learning environment (A) and stakeholder interaction (B)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P
Constant	0.55	0.61		0.91	.371
A. Learning environment	0.32	0.28	0.27	1.16	.256
B. Stakeholder interaction	0.54	0.23	0.55	2.38	.026

$R^2 = .63$, adjusted $R^2 = .60$, $F(2, 24) = 20.26$, $p < .001$; VIF = 3.47

Together, the learning environment and stakeholder interaction explain 63% of the variation in perceived leadership culture, so **H5 is rejected**. Stakeholder interaction is the significant unique predictor ($\beta = 0.55$). Learning environment adds little once interaction is known, partly because the two overlap strongly ($r = 0.83$). Put simply: programmes and internships matter, but culture is shaped most by how mentors, teachers, peers and employers actually engage with learners.

5.8 Open-ended responses

Of 27 answers, 26 could be coded (one said only "Good").

Table 10. Competencies young people most need to improve (coded mentions, n = 26 answers)

Competency	Mentions	Share of answers	Example words used
Team Collaboration	12	46%	"taking everyone together", "effective co-ordination"
Self-Drive (motivation and integrity)	10	38%	"commitment to deliver", "patience and hard work", "honesty"
Smart Thinking	7	27%	"strategic thinking", "problem solving"
Understanding People	6	23%	"emotional intelligence", "empathy"
Clear Expression	6	23%	"good communication"
Respecting Diversity	4	15%	"inclusivity", "respectful nature"
Tech & Data Awareness	3	12%	"technical skills"
Financial Sense	2	8%	"evaluate resources"

The open answers reinforce the quantitative picture. Team collaboration is both highly expected (rank 2) and the most-cited area for improvement. Self-drive is the second most-cited need, which matches the low score for learner initiative (B1 = 3.74). One faculty

member offered a dissenting view that "a true leader never depends on technology" but on decision-making, honesty and teamwork, a useful reminder that technical skill is seen as a support to leadership, not its core.

6. DISCUSSION

Expectations run ahead of provision. The central finding is a consistent, positive gap: stakeholders expect more leadership competency than they see institutions supporting. This mirrors the customer gap in service-quality research (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The gap is modest in size (0.26 points), but it appears for three in four respondents and survives a robustness check. It is largest against the learning environment, where concrete opportunities such as internships (A5) and mentor interaction (A4) lag behind expectations. This supports the experiential view that leadership is learned by doing (Kolb, 1984; Brungardt, 1996), and suggests that institutions still teach leadership more than they let students practise it.

People skills are expected most. Understanding people and team collaboration top the expected list, consistent with evidence that emotional and social intelligence separates effective leaders (Goleman, 1998; Riggio & Reichard, 2008) and that leadership is judged by team performance (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Stakeholders did not rank one competency far above the others, which supports treating leadership as a bundle of intelligences rather than a single trait (Mumford et al., 2000).

Financial and technical intelligence are under-valued. Financial sense ranked last and drew few mentions as a development need. Yet resource allocation is a core leadership task, and financial literacy is known to be low among young adults (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Tech and data awareness also ranked low, and one respondent argued that leaders should not depend on technology. This suggests stakeholders may be under-estimating competencies that the digital economy increasingly demands (Avolio et al., 2000). It is a blind spot rather than a gap: people do not yet expect enough.

Culture is shaped by people, not just programmes. The regression shows that stakeholder interaction, not the formal learning environment, uniquely predicts leadership culture. This agrees with Komives et al. (2005) and Dugan and Komives (2007), who place mentors and peers at the centre of leadership identity. It also fits Bandura's (1977) account of self-efficacy, which grows through role models and encouragement. The weakest culture items (open expression, valuing everyone's ideas) point to limited psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). In a hierarchical academic setting, students may hesitate to speak up, which in turn suppresses the initiative (B1) that respondents want to see.

Who sees the gap. Employers expect the most and see the largest gap; students expect the least and rate support the lowest. Although not significant with this sample, the pattern is plausible. Employers judge graduates against workplace demands. Students may not yet know what leadership requires, so their expectations are lower, and they experience the institution's shortfalls first-hand. Faculty sit in between. If confirmed in larger samples, this would mean the gap seen from the labour market is about twice the gap seen from inside the campus.

A coherent message from the open answers. Team collaboration and self-drive are both highly expected and most often named as needing improvement. Institutions are therefore being asked to strengthen exactly the competencies that depend on practice, feedback and a safe culture, which are the same levers the observed data show as weakest.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 For institutions

- **Recognise and reward leadership.** B5 was among the weakest items. A leadership transcript, certificates for student-led initiatives, or credit under the NEP's co-curricular framework would signal that leadership counts.
- **Build voice and inclusion.** Student councils with real agendas, anonymous suggestion channels and open forums can raise C1 and C5. Faculty can model "failure as learning" by debriefing projects that did not work.
- **Make the learning environment practical.** Structured internships with a leadership reflection report, live projects with local industry and regular mentor sessions address A4 and A5.

7.2 For faculty

- Act as mentors, not just instructors. Because stakeholder interaction best predicts culture, short one-to-one feedback meetings may yield more than a new course.
- Rotate leadership roles in group work so that every student, not only the confident few, practises initiative (B1).

7.3 For employers

- Employers see the widest gap. Guest mentoring, co-designed projects and feedback on intern performance give institutions the signal they currently lack.

7.4 For curriculum and policy

- Embed financial and data literacy into leadership education, since these are the least expected competencies but increasingly essential.
- Use the ECI–OII gap as a simple annual self-assessment metric in Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) reporting. It needs one short survey, and the gap for each dimension shows where to invest.

8. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. **Sample size.** With 27 respondents, the study can detect medium effects but not small ones. Group comparisons, especially with three employers, are underpowered. The study should be read as an exploratory, pilot-scale investigation.
2. **Sampling.** Purposive and snowball sampling through professional networks limits generalisation. Faculty are over-represented relative to students.
3. **Self-report and common-method bias.** Both sides of the gap come from the same respondents on the same form, which may inflate correlations.
4. **Instrument issues.** The checkbox-grid format allowed multiple ticks (6.7% of cells), and one item was missing for the first ten responses. Future rounds should use a single-choice grid and a locked form.
5. **Different item sets.** The expected and observed sides use different items, so the gap compares two indices rather than matched item pairs as in SERVQUAL.

Future studies should use a larger stratified sample with equal numbers from each stakeholder group, confirm the eight-factor structure through confirmatory factor analysis, and match each expected competency to an observed provision item. Longitudinal designs could test whether closing the provision gap raises graduates' leadership performance at work.

9. CONCLUSION

Stakeholders expect graduates to bring a balanced set of leadership competencies, led by understanding people, team collaboration and smart thinking. Institutions are seen as supporting leadership reasonably well (M = 4.01), but not as well as expected (M = 4.27). The gap is statistically significant and shared by three in four respondents. It is widest where leadership must be practised: internships, mentor contact, recognition, open expression and inclusion. Stakeholder interaction is the strongest driver of leadership culture. The practical lesson is simple: to close the gap, institutions should invest less in telling students about leadership and more in giving them safe, recognised and mentored opportunities to lead. The eight-intelligence instrument and the ECI–OII gap offer a reliable, low-cost tool for institutions to track that progress.

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Ethical statement: Participation was voluntary and anonymous; no personal identifiers other than institution name were collected.

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Appendix: Survey Instrument

All items rated 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Part I – Profile: Q1 Respondent group (Student / Teacher or Faculty / Employer or Corporate professional); Q2 Gender; Q3 Institution or organisation name.

Part II – Expected leadership competencies

Code	Item
P1a	Effective leaders think logically, analyse problems, and see the big picture.
P1b	Smart thinking is important for effective leadership.
P2a	Good leaders understand others' feelings and build strong relationships.
P2b	Understanding people is essential for good leadership.
P3a	Effective leaders respect differences and adapt well to new or changing situations.
P3b	Respecting diversity and being adaptable are key leadership traits.
P4a	Good leaders use technology and data effectively when making decisions.
P4b	Tech and data awareness are important for modern leadership.
P5a	Effective leaders understand how money and resources affect goals and results.
P5b	Understanding money matters is vital for leadership success.
P6a	Good leaders share ideas clearly and engage others in discussion.
P6b	Clear expression and engagement are essential for leadership.
P7a	Effective leaders stay motivated, act honestly, and stick to their values.
P7b	Self-drive and integrity form the foundation of good leadership.
P8a	Strong leaders work well with others and help the team succeed.
P8b	Team collaboration is essential for effective leadership.

Part III – Observed institutional support

Code	Item
A1	My institution provides enough opportunities to practise leadership skills.
A2	Learning activities encourage teamwork and shared responsibility.
A3	Leadership lessons are connected to real-life business or social situations.
A4	Industry experts or mentors interact with learners to share leadership insights.
A5	Internships and projects help in understanding leadership in practice.
A6	The institution supports innovative or student-led initiatives.
A7	Leadership learning goes beyond the classroom and into practical settings.
A8	The campus environment motivates learners to take initiative.
A9	Industry linkages enhance leadership exposure among learners.
A10	The overall learning setting supports leadership growth and confidence.
B1	Learners actively take initiative and responsibility in group tasks.
B2	Teachers act as mentors and examples of good leadership.
B3	Students, teachers, and employers work together to improve leadership outcomes.
B4	Feedback from teachers and peers helps in developing leadership qualities.
B5	Institutions recognise and reward leadership behaviour.
B6	Faculty encourage creative thinking and problem-solving.
B7	Collaboration among students is improving leadership ability.
B8	Support from mentors motivates learners to become better leaders.
B9	Institutional activities help in building team leadership experience.
B10	The overall interaction among people here builds a strong leadership culture.
C1	People here can express opinions openly and respectfully.
C2	Risk-taking and innovation are appreciated and supported.

Code	Item
C3	Failure is viewed as a learning opportunity, not a weakness.
C4	Equal opportunities for leadership are given to all genders.
C5	Everyone's ideas are valued regardless of background.
C6	Leadership confidence increases through practice and reflection.
C7	Ethical conduct and honesty are expected in leadership.
C8	Integrity and transparency are valued more than short-term gains.
C9	The environment encourages personal growth and continuous learning.
C10	The overall culture promotes responsible and inclusive leadership.

Part IV – Open-ended: In your opinion, which of these leadership qualities do students or young professionals most need to improve?