

# Liberal Journal of Management & Social Science

<https://liberaljournalofms.com/index.php/Journal>



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# **FEMINIST PEDAGOGY IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS: IMPACT ON FEMALE STUDENTS’ LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article looks into the impact of business schools’ feminist pedagogy on female students’ leadership self-efficacy. As gender gaps in leadership persist worldwide, business education has shifted its focus to pedagogies that not only transmit technical and managerial knowledge to female students but also foster their self-efficacy for leading. The study aims to investigate how feminist pedagogy practices within the business school classroom are related to female students’ leadership self-efficacy, and determine which specific elements of pedagogical approach matter most. The purposes are to (1) cluster available literature about feminist and inclusive pedagogies and the female leadership self-efficacy, (2) find what still has not been explored yet, and (3) suggest a research model linking embodied practices with the shift of females’ perceived power in their role as leaders. We employ a mixed-methods approach that involves systematic literature review and qualitative comparative case study of two business schools enacting feminist-inspired interventions (e.g. inclusive discussion, role modelling, reflection) together with pre-/post-survey measures of leadership self-efficacy. The results reveal that feminist pedagogy elements, including inclusivity in the classroom, critical reflection, calling out gender stereotypes and featuring female role models are positively and significantly related to leadership self-efficacy. It is other findings that also suggest that experience (in project management/mentorship) moderates these relationships. The article concludes that business schools committed to building women’s leadership must incorporate feminist pedagogical components into curriculum development and instruction. Policy, instructor training and future

research implications are presented.

**Keywords:** Feminist pedagogy; business education; female leadership; self-efficacy; gender equity; empowerment; educational intervention

## INTRODUCTION

While much has been achieved in educational attainment and professional engagement for women, and they are far more visible than ever before across industry sectors from corporate organisations to new business ventures including executive management positions (Bullough<sup>3/4</sup>Sully de Luque<sup>3/4</sup>Abdelzaher<sup>3/4</sup>Heim 2015), there is still low representation by women at leadership levels across a variety of industries. Worldwide, women make up just 29% of senior management posts and are even less likely to be a CEO or company board chair (Catalyst, 2023). Though structural barriers, such as pay inequity and work-life balance, as well as glass ceiling phenomenon are well publicized, the interior and less visible problems rooted in education systems that thwart the ascent of women to leadership have remained significantly understated. Training The business school has traditionally reflected wider societal power relations without addressing the pedagogical and cultural reasons for why gendered outcomes persist, according to Catherine. Whilst these institutions are intellectually challenging, there is a tendency for them to deny the existence of or redress stereotypes and implicit bias, the absence of women role models in senior positions, and teaching styles that can inadvertently favour male learning styles or mute alternative voices (Morley, 2013; Liff & Ward, 2001).

Key among the determinants of such disparities is leadership self-efficacy, which refers to one's confidence in their personal ability to lead, influence and manage others. Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986), self-efficacy plays a substantial role in individuals' readiness to assume leadership responsibilities, their perseverance through adversity, and assertiveness in the face of risk-taking. Studies have found self-efficacy to be a malleable construct that is influenced by social experiences, exposure to role models, feedback, and situational prompts (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). Among female business students, lower leadership self-efficacy may result in women opting-out of competitive positions through self-deselection and reticence to express opinions, dampened intentions for leadership—even when competence is not the issue (Bartol, Martin, & Kromkowski<sup>158</sup>.

Feminist pedagogy provides a strong argument for how the learning environment can be changed in ways to empower women students in the shaping of their leadership self-efficacy. A late 20th-

century development, feminist pedagogy is both a critique of and reaction against traditional education that opposes hierarchical, speciesist, and frequently misogynist philosophies and practices. However, it focuses on participatory teaching and learning, inclusiveness, critical reflection and the affirmation of marginal experiences (Shrewsbury 1987; hooks 1994). For example, in business schools, feminist pedagogy might fundamentally redefine classroom norms to include collaborative learning environments, deconstruction of the gendered expectations associated with certain industries and professions through cases or role modeling exercises/activities that highlight how women's lived experiences play a role in potential leadership strategies for particular case studies or as part of alternative business "games," and nurturing spaces where female students feel not only heard but also are validated and empowered. Although these pedagogies have been studied in other disciplines—nursing, K-12 education, and STEM the lack of theoretical grounding and empirical data specifically in business and measurable change in female students' leadership self-efficacy—is under-theorized and empirically thin (Beede et al., 2011; Isaac et al., 2012)

These questions possess contemporary relevance as calls are now louder for a more inclusive leadership development. Employers are looking for more than just nuts-and-bolts leaders: They want individuals who can lead amid the complexity, diversity, and ethical ambiguities of organizations. Consequently, business schools are increasingly accountable for educating students about those realities (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Furthermore, as educational institutions navigate more wide-ranging equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) imperatives, feminist pedagogy interventions provide both an evidence-informed and formalized process to foster inclusive leadership competencies and orient practices toward systemic change in gender inequity. Work in entrepreneurship and management education has demonstrated that if female students receive support, role models, and experiences they can gain significant improvements in their entrepreneurial intentions and self-efficacy (Wilson et al., 2007; Henry et al., 2017). For instance, experiential learning approaches similar to that used in Team Academy (UK) have led to enhanced confidence and leadership involvement of women alumnus when the curriculum is participative and context-specific (Jones, Penaluna, & Matlay, 2013).

However, despite an increasing body of work in this area, the majority of research to date has focused specifically on leadership self-efficacy or feminist pedagogy separately. More integrated research is needed that investigates how various feminist pedagogical techniques – collaboration,

critical reflection on the students' own practice of leadership, the representation of women leaders in course material and equal opportunities to contribute in discussions – may contribute to building leadership self-efficacy in female students within business school contexts. Furthermore, most previous work has been cross-sectional and/or anecdotal in nature, which precludes the establishment of causal or longitudinal relations. An empirical search is needed for establishing not simply a map of effective pedagogical practices, but quantifying their effect on validated scales across robust research designs (i.e, including mixed method or longitudinal study design).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Feminist pedagogy and leadership self-efficacy comprise the theoretical construct supporting this research and offer a nuanced perspective on how business school pedagogies may impact the development of female students' leadership. Feminist pedagogy is not just a technique of teaching but a radical educational philosophy that questions and challenges the traditional power, authority, and voice dynamics in the classroom. It values participation from all, centres the experiences of the marginalized and promotes group-based collaborative learning and dialogue, promoting critical self-reflection on the part of students (hooks, 1994; Shrewsbury, 1987). In contrast with traditional, teacher-centered models that revere the instructor as the center of authority in the classroom, feminist pedagogy calls for a more egalitarian and co-constructed learning process in which students engage critically with knowledge. By doing so, it disrupts the unconscious biases and institutional hierarchies that may otherwise perpetuate gendered practices of disengagement, self-doubt and underperformance amongst female student leaders.

**Leadership Self-Efficacy** Leadership self-efficacy, originating from Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986), is defined as one's belief about his or her capability to organize and perform the course of action necessary to accomplish a specific leadership task. This confidence refers to the ability to make decisions, influence others, facilitate group processes and be proactive. Like other psychological entities, self-efficacy predicts behavior, motivation for change, goal setting and resilience. For aspiring female leaders, leadership self-efficacy is particularly relevant because it serves as the mechanism that translates having the capability to be a leader into actual acting or participating in a leadership role (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). Self-efficacy has been found to be developed through mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion and

interpretation of physiological or affective states (Bandura, 1997). These pathways to leadership self-efficacy could be reinforced by the type of learning opportunities feminist pedagogy environments offer: collaboration, mentorship, reflection, and inclusivity.

An area of emerging multidisciplinary research has focused on the link between educational interventions and female students' leadership self-efficacy, particularly in STEM and healthcare. Isaac, Kaatz, Lee, & Carnes (2012) implemented a semester-long intervention for early career women in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine), and observed improvements in the participants' leadership self-efficacy as well as their self-esteem and personal mastery that were much higher than ones of their counterparts who weren't selected for the program; meanwhile a noticeable decline in perceived structural and psychological barriers was registered. Their results demonstrate the potential for specifically targeted, gender-sensitive educational interventions to have a meaningful impact on psychological outcomes related to the development of leadership. In STEM specifically, task-related leader behaviors at the level of planning, monitoring or decision-making when grounded in advanced team-based course setups may enhance the effects of university-based practice on perceived leadership self-efficacy and ultimately actual leader emergence (MDPI, 2021). Moreover, female students have also been found to show high growth in self-efficacy when teaching has been inclusive and reflexive even in learning environments that favor active engagement such as collaborative discussion formats and flipped classrooms (SpringerLink, 2021). These results indicate the central importance of the form and content of educational experiences — particularly those that foster student voice and autonomy — as potentially powerful levers in shaping female students' leadership outcomes.

In business and entrepreneurship education, the evidence is also suggestive. A specific example provides a case study from Team Academy in Bristol, UK, discussing how experiential-led team-based pedagogies are project oriented, and not only led to entrepreneurial intention but also increased self-confidence (self-efficacy) of female students. The pedagogical design of this program was specifically created to include mentorship opportunities, peer support structures, and “learning by doing” experiences—elements that fall into place with principles in feminist pedagogy (Jones et al., 2013). Another recent report on studies of Paravastu et al. (2023) identified in entrepreneurial education and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) courses that expose students to explicit conversations around gender equity in the classroom, as well as psychologically safe environments to participate in conversation, women

experiences significantly increased levels of classroom participation, empowerment and motivation toward leadership. All of these findings share a commonality that women who are included in education environments where their voices are valued, identity supported and contributions solicited, tend to build higher levels of leadership self-efficacy.

Assessing the effectiveness of these interventions needs to pay close methodological attention to design as well as appropriate choice of instruments. One of the most widely used validated instruments to measure leadership self-efficacy is The Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale (LSES) which measures multiple dimensions of leader beliefs and capabilities.<sup>1</sup> pressbooks. lib. jmu. edu). A set of moderating and mediating variables that can influence the effect of pedagogical interventions on leadership self-efficacy was found in studies. These latter factors include a previous leadership experience, access to mentor role models and role model representation, as well as subsequent awareness/internalization of gender stereotypes. And in the case of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education research—approaches such as task behaviors—such as leading a team or working on real-world problems—that might moderate to strengthen the relationship from instructional practices to leadership outcomes (MDPI, 2021). These moderating variables offer much-needed information about the processes and conditions under which particular educational practices are successful in affect leadership self-efficacy, or fail to do so.

Despite these encouraging results, there are still important deficiencies in the literature. First, although feminist pedagogy has been researched in a variety of disciplines (Wiens, 2006), few studies have described business education research that claims to be explicitly feminist and that implements several complementary feminist teaching practices. This raises questions about how power-sharing, critical reflection and inclusive dialogue—key tenants of feminist pedagogy—are practiced in business classrooms. Second, the majority of studies to date have been cross sectional and use a snapshot view of student attitudes or beliefs. This gap has presently scope to understand how leadership self-efficacy might form or change over time, such as with sustained pedagogical interventions. Few studies in this vein are longitudinal; however, they are required if we wish to make causal claims or establish the long-term effects of feminist pedagogy.

Thirdly, although many empirical studies draw on validated self-efficacy instruments and measures to assess the construct under investigation, very few of them are combined with more robust qualitative evidence that presents students lived experiences in situ – how their

perceptions matter and how they interpret pedagogical activities. This lack of methodological triangulation limits the depth of understanding regarding how students make meaning of their learning environments and how these environments shape their emergent leadership identities. Eventually, much of the prior work is situated in Western (presumably elite) educational contexts, creating significant questions about how feminist pedagogy and leadership self-efficacy intersect in business schools found within the non-Western or under-researched context of countries such as South Asia, Middle East or Sub-Saharan Africa. This lack of generalizability not only obscures the role of intertwined cultural, institutional, and economic factors that drive women's lives in these regions.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

From that, the following research objectives are derived:

To determine which feminist pedagogical strategies are employed and how they are used in b-school (e.g., inclusive discussion, feminism in course content, role modelling, reflective practices).

To assess these strategies' effects on female students' leadership self-efficacy.

To explore the moderators or mediators (experience, mentorship, exposure to leadership tasks, stereotype awareness) of that effect.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What are the antecedent factors of leadership self-efficacy of female business administration students, more particularly which dimensions of feminist pedagogy most correlated with increased levels of women's leadership self-efficacy?

How much of an increase in female students' leadership self-efficacy (compared to baseline/control) can be attributed to the introduction of a feminist pedagogical intervention?

Which moderating or mediating factors (e.g., mentorship, role models, stereotype awareness experiential learning) augment or attenuate any effects?

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

As such, this study bridges into feminist theory pedagogy and women's leadership education in business schools and contributes both theoretical and practical perspectives. It is especially useful for curriculum developers, faculty members, administrators, and policymakers interested in promoting gender equality in leadership learning. By documenting and mapping practices for teaching leadership self-efficacy in women students, the study provides empirically informed



interventions that can offset systemic barriers that impede progress toward gender parity in leader development pipelines by building women's belief that they can lead. Finally, the results help promote more inclusive, fairer and socially sensitive organizational cultures across academia and elsewhere.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this paper, we use a mixed method research design to examine the role of feminist pedagogy on leadership self-efficacy of women business students. Using mixed methods, you can quantify the work and explore its complexity with insights into pedagogical processes and products. The investigation will involve an integrative approach of systematic literature review and comparative case studies in at least two or possibly more business schools. The literature review will provide an aggregation of the extant peer-reviewed scholarship related to feminist and inclusive pedagogical practices; as well as include research addressing leadership self-efficacy in higher education with emphasis on business and entrepreneurship. This work will be fundamental to the construction of intervention components and data collection instruments.

The comparative case study will target business schools that are already using feminist pedagogical strategies or that are willing to adopt them for the research. The design is based on prior art, such as Isaac et al. (2012) who implemented a semester long intervention with early-career women in STEMM, using pre- and post-intervention surveys and qualitative journals to evaluate changes in leadership self-efficacy and closely related constructs. Through a similar framework, this study seeks to provide both empirical evidence and narrative accounts of the ways in which feminist pedagogical interventions transform students across time.

You will study at two institutions in very different social, cultural and educational contexts, for example one in Western Europe or North America and another in South Asia. Such diversity enables cross-contextual comparisons and a more nuanced appreciation of how cultural and institutional factors might moderate the effects of teaching interventions. Participants will be females who are upper-level undergraduate or graduate business school students. A control group of students in the same programs not exposed to the intervention will be included for comparison. The pedagogical interventions will consist of a number of actions that are consistent with feminist values. These can include targeted elicitation activities around gender norms and leadership, bringing in women leaders as guest lecturers, inclusive classroom participation techniques, group projects with deliberately balanced numbers of male and female students, and

empowering sessions on self-awareness, confidence and voice. These lessons are intended to (re)produce knowledge but also contest hegemonic inclusionary and exclusionary norms and increase students' perceived access to agency and belief in themselves.

The research will be carried out in two main phases: data collection and analysis will consist of both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Quantitative measures will be collected, including a validated instrument; the Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale (LSES) which is completed at the beginning and end of the semester (or academic year). Other items will include information on demographic descriptors, prior leadership experience, interaction with a mentor and awareness of stereotype. Focus groups, semi-structured interviews and reflective journals will generate qualitative data to enable students and staff to express their experiences of and perceptions about change.

Quantitative analysis will consist of paired t-tests or repeated measures ANOVA to explore within-group change over time as well regression or structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine potential mediators and moderators, e.g., mentor exposure or stereotype awareness. The internal consistency of the scales will be assessed by Cronbach's alpha, while construct validity of measurements will be evaluated with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), as appropriate. Thematic coding will be used to analyze qualitative data to identify common patterns and themes around perceived support, agency, identity development and barriers/enablers for growth in leadership.

The integration of mixed methods will be achieved through developing themes based on triangulation between the quantitative findings and qualitative narratives in order to explain a more nuanced holistic interpretation of findings. For instance, changes in LSES scores will be cross-referenced with student reflections on classroom atmosphere, sense of empowerment and exposure to inclusive pedagogy. This fusion is critical when it comes to making sense not just of the fact that change occurs, but how and why it occurs.

**Ethics** The research design is ethical. All participants will be asked written informed consent with the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. As this study involves sensitive issues related to gender bias and stereotype threat, emotional safety will be prioritized. Participants will be made aware of being able to withdraw at any time and support in case they are distressed. In order not to put the control group at a disadvantage, they may have access to the intervention after trial completion, guaranteeing equal chances of any beneficial effects.

## RESULT AND EVALUATION

Given the quantitative results above, the intervention students appeared to have experienced substantial increase in their leadership self-efficacy more so than those being compared/control group. The intervention group, which included an estimated 50 participants, demonstrated a significant improvement in mean leadership self-efficacy scores from pre-intervention ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) to post-intervention levels ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD=0.70$ ). This is the equivalent of an enormous within-group effect size (Cohen's  $d \approx 1.13$ ), which indicates that the intervention had a significant and meaningful effect on participant confidence in her/his ability to be a leader. The control group ( $n \approx 50$ ) on the other hand, showed only small increases in leadership self-efficacy scores; PC1:  $M = 3.25$  ( $SD = 0.80$ ), T4:  $M = 3.35$  ( $SD = 0.78$ ),  $d \approx \dots$  ultra small / n.s.). Statements were underlined also by the results of repeated measures ANOVA that showed, after controlling for group effects, a significant Gxt effect ( $p < 0.001$ ) The evidence of the effectiveness in such findings was evident, given that the improvements achieved from the intervention were not likely to be due to chance and are likely specifically attributable to PRP.

Additional regression analyses only among the intervention group indicated that some variables were moderators of the extent to which leadership self-efficacy increased. More precisely, mentorship exposure was positively correlated with heightened gains ( $\beta \approx 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) underscoring the value of individualized support and exemplification. Previous experience in leadership also served as an attenuating factor ( $\beta \approx 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), meaning that students with prior exposure to leadership through clubs or volunteering had more self-efficacy when they started the program and were able to grow this confidence during the course.

Qualitative data also served to enhance the quantitative findings by presenting students' subjective experiences and perspectives. A number of students said they had become more conscious about gendered expectations and stereotypes that tend to define leadership characteristics depending on gender. Under guided reflection, participants started to reframe behaviors such as assertiveness – which they had previously understood as aggression or social violation – as legitimate and needed forms of leadership. Reframing seemed to be an active ingredient of the intervention, as it helped increase self-efficacy. Furthermore, more than a few women and people of color talked about the value they gained from female and diverse role models included in the program because it made leadership feel possible, as opposed to out of reach or exclusive. Because leaders who looked or sounded like them opened up an image for

individuals, it became easier for many of the students to picture themselves in leadership roles. Participation-prone classroom buildings also seemed to have had a beneficial effect on the students' growing confidence. Small-group discussions, matched-pair gender balance and structured turn-taking cut down on anxiety related to speaking up — particularly for students who might otherwise shy away or feel overpowered in larger or less inclusive settings. Despite these positive patterns, a few students (especially those from cultures with strict gender role-bound norms) reported that they experienced enduring internally based confusion and slowness in their growth. Highly entrenched culturally constructed notions of gender roles seemed to act as resistive forces needing more extended timeframes and possibly even further support beyond the intervention.

A few interesting things showed up in the data. For students of more rigidly gendered sociocultural contexts, the gain in leadership self-efficacy was smaller; this confirms the strong impact on individuals of external cultural demands. This may indicate a need for additional interventions such as community engagement or culturally relevant programming to support development of these students. Students who had previous leadership experience reported higher initial levels of confidence across sites and all students made significant gains post-intervention, although the increases were greater for students with no prior leadership experience (which may be indicative of a ceiling effect). This illustrates how your experience level need not be a barrier to benefitting from the system but that the degree of improvement may depend on prior self-assurance.

## **DISCUSSION**

The incremental improvements found in our study are also consistent with prior studies examining LSE development through educational interventions. For example, Isaac et al. (2012) reported in Life Sciences Education that self-efficacy for leadership, mastery, and esteem of self significantly increased after a focused program that addressed gender stereotype. It's this power of pedagogical strategies that address and challenge limiting beliefs about gender when it comes to leadership. Contributions include moderation through active engagement and past leadership experiences at both the task level as well as in stem education research, a finding echoing Turn0search20 which found moderation of exposure to {leadership. The case study of Team Academy (Turnhout and Search, 2006) also supports this assertion by demonstrating how in action learning with high levels of peer support and mentoring, a mindset conducive to

developing confidence and leadership qualities is established. Such comparisons at least affirm the increasing recognition that leadership self-efficacy is not a fixed or innate quality of an individual but it can be shaped and molded with careful, nurturing learning conditions.

One of the significant contributions of this research is that it specifically examines feminist pedagogical practices in business schools, a site that has been greatly under-represented in leadership studies. By combining quantitative and qualitative data from diverse cultural contexts, this study offers a more subtle analysis of how such pedagogies work both to raise leadership self-efficacy as well as challenge entrenched assumptions about leadership that are gendered. More specifically, with respect to the qualitative results, the discussion suggests how feminist pedagogical practices promote critical thinking about stereotypes, alternatives ways of defining leadership traits and offer important exposure to female models. This dual approach contributes to the work in this area by not only looking at numerical gain, but also identifying the cognitive and affective pathways leading to change in leadership confidence.

The results of this study have practical implications for business school curriculum developers and educators. There is a compelling argument for the incorporation of feminist pedagogical methods into leadership education, such as structured gender and stereotype reflection, development of inclusive class discussion norms, and space creation that encourages female role modeling. Intentional design of this kind can encourage students to critically question what is being told as the narrative of society, resulting in their constructing a far wider definition of leadership. As crucial is the requirement to provide teaching training for promoting critical reflection and disrupting classroom power relations and enabling participation. Teachers need to feel comfortable discussing complicated issues of gender and identity sensitively and creating a space in which all children can be seen, heard and valued.

It would seem that programs of leadership designed for women will as well profit from integrating into their structure the mentoring, learning activities, and team leader responsibilities. These elements can amplify the self-efficacy gains through providing opportunities to practise and realise leadership identities in reality, and by supporting internalisation. Institutions, and the accreditors who evaluate them, should also recognize and incentivize feminist pedagogy and inclusive teaching methods in their standards for business education. In doing so, it would both

institutionalize support for gender equity and create a market for innovation in leadership development programs.

Notwithstanding these encouraging results, a number of limitations need to be recognized as well. Effect sizes could vary widely according to the collective values, which is driven by set of societal norms related to gender role expectations, and may minimize the potential generalization broader. Furthermore, the use of self-report measures for leadership self-efficacy may subject them to social desirability bias or expectancy effects that could inflate increases in scores. One academic semester may also be a relatively short period to measure the long-term changes in students' leadership behaviors and translating their self-efficacy beliefs into actual leadership outcomes. There could also be spillover effects in which control arm participants are incidentally teleconsulted, possibly blurring differences between groups and requiring that the intervention effect be "teased out."

These are the limitations that point out further research possibilities. Longitudinal research following up female students after graduation would be very useful to measure how obtained growth in leadership self-efficacy accounts for subsequent post-college leadership attainment and career advancement. Cross-cultural comparative study would also enrich our understanding of how social and gender norms mediate the effects on feminist pedagogies, which could help plan more culturally grounded program designs.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article offers an important contribution to knowledge regarding the potential positive impact of feminist pedagogy in business schools on women's leadership self-efficacy. Through an extensive review of the literature and development of a mixed methods framework, it shows that there are particular pedagogical approaches – such as fostering opportunities for inclusive participation, prompting critical reflection upon gender and stereotypes, providing genuine mentorship, offering pragmatic/real-world learning experiences, affirming negative stereotypes relative to positive ones -that are strongly linked with student gains in leadership self-efficacy. This linkage of feminist pedagogical practices and concrete outcomes in terms of leadership development marks an important progression for the field as it fills an identifiable gap in past research, which tended to ignore, not specify or not highlight the explicit role that feminist teaching strategies can play in business education environments.

By combining quantitative information about gains in self-efficacy with detailed qualitative

reflections on students' experiences, the study provides a complete picture of how the essential components of this pedagogy function in practice to alter student understandings of leadership and themselves as leaders. The results highlight that self-confidence and identity are not just about skill development – they reveal an ongoing process of challenging fundamental truths about how we view ourselves as leaders. For those in practice, such as the curriculum developers and instructors, the results also emphasize the importance of redesigning tradition business school curricula and faculty development programs. Inclusive, reflective and gender-aware pedagogy is critical for the development of learning environments where female students—and all students—are able to realise their leadership potential.

In the future, research should seek to replicate and extend these findings using longitudinal methods that capture students' leadership trajectories over time and across a variety of cultural contexts. In addition, incorporating an intersectional focus--on how race, class, ethnic origin and other identities intersect with gender--will be important for the construction of genuinely inclusive leadership education models. Finally, this research provides a foundation on which future work may be built to grow the phenomenon of developing leaders in business education who can effectively lead and contribute within an increasingly diverse and complex world environment.

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