

# Paradigms of leadership: A study of doctoral dissertations in two Mexican universities

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**Abstract:** Latin America is increasingly contributing to scientific research on leadership, although less than other regions. What are the predominant paradigms on leadership within the scientific community in Mexico? The article reviews doctoral dissertations on leadership from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Anahuac University of Mexico (UA) defended before 2021. The findings highlight that 1) the number of doctoral dissertations has grown from 2016 onwards, especially in educational leadership. 2) In both universities a “functionalist” paradigm prevails, based on the transformational leadership model. 3) Two other leadership paradigms are present, referred to in this article as ‘political’ and ‘humanistic’. 4) These three paradigms have their characteristics and preferences in terms of research methodology, language, and reference authors. 5) The use of a paradigm is associated with the type of faculty rather than the type of university (public or private): in business faculties the functionalist paradigm predominates, in education faculties the humanist paradigm, and in political science or communication faculties the political paradigm. In conclusion, it is recommended to confirm the exploratory result obtained and to promote the dialogue between leadership paradigms.

**Keywords:** leadership; leadership research; paradigm; doctoral dissertation; Latin America; higher education

## 1. Introduction

Leadership education programs and leadership research have experienced significant growth over the last twenty years (Guthrie and Jenkins, 2018; Ueda and Kezar, 2024). Universities are key players in the formulation and internalization of concepts in students’ lives. One example is leadership. The university stage is an important period for students to learn and develop leadership, foster relationships, and engage responsibly with others in collaborative endeavors (Dugan and Komives, 2010; Johnson et al., 2023; Komives et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2021; Reyes et al., 2019). On the other hand, leadership is part of the institutional mission of many universities, often linked to virtues and values (Arias-Coello et al., 2020; Breznik and Law, 2019; Morphew and Hartley, 2006). Commitment to this objective is evidenced in the wide array of leadership courses offered at the university level (Komives and Sowcik, 2020). Therefore, research on leadership paradigms taught in universities is warranted.

Latin America, especially Brazil and Mexico, is increasingly contributing making significant to scientific research on leadership; however, there remains an over-reliance on models imported from other countries (Oxford Character Project, 2023). Given the diverse array of leadership approaches, it is essential for research purposes to critically examine the paradigms that underpin these models (Avery, 2003; Harrison,

2017; Yukl and Van Fleet, 1992), to facilitate the development of effective cross-cultural research (Hofstede, 1998; Pilz and Li, 2021).

What are the predominant paradigms of leadership within the scientific community in Mexico? Any discussion of the predominant paradigms within a scientific community must refer to the author Thomas Kuhn, and his work “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions” (1970), a classic in the sociology of science. A paradigm refers to a set of ideas, methods, language and theories that are generally accepted by members of the scientific community (Kuhn, 1970). The publication of articles in scientific journals and doctoral dissertations plays a critical role in promoting and reinforcing these paradigms (Anand et al., 2020). Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that paradigms guide the course of research action. They “dictate, what, for scholars in a particular discipline, influences what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted” (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

The analysis of doctoral dissertations presents an opportunity to identify the most prominent paradigms among these discourses of teaching and learning leadership. Doctoral dissertations are indicative of current research trends and dominant paradigms in the scientific community (Jiménez-Contreras, et al., 2014). The paradigm adopted by researchers cannot be understood without considering the academic community to which they belong: the faculty where their discipline is taught, the type of university and even the scientific culture of the country. Furthermore, researchers, when they form a research group, can have a significant influence on the academic culture of your faculty and country.

In order to obtain evidence to answer our research question we have conducted, an overview of content analysis of doctoral dissertations. This review provides an exploratory “topology” or map of current research, enabling us to identify the most prevalent theoretical and methodological paradigms within the scientific community. Topological reviews are a type of content analysis that allows us to understand more clearly the available evidence (current doctoral dissertations) and to detect blind spots or limitations to guide future research (Aravena and Hallinger, 2018; Weinstein et al., 2019).

We limited our study to a single country, Mexico, and two universities: the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Anahuac University (UA). These two institutions were chosen because of their national prominence. Both are among the top five universities in Mexico according to the QS University Rankings (2022). UNAM is a public university and UA is private. Although this is a small sample of universities, it is sufficient for an exploratory study to identify the most relevant paradigms. But it certainly requires further confirmation of the findings in a larger sample of universities, preferably from several Latin American countries, both public and private.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to identify the prevailing epistemological paradigms related to leadership as reflected in the doctoral dissertations defended at UNAM and UA.

As secondary objectives, this work proposes the following: 1) identify whether the number of dissertations has grown and in which subject areas; 2) identify the characteristics and 3) use of these paradigms is associated with the field of knowledge of the faculty in which the doctorate is studied and the type of university (public or private).

## **2.2. Methodology**

An overview of content analysis of the scientific research produced at UNAM and UA, expressed in doctoral dissertations on leadership between 2002 and 2021, was conducted. In neither of these two universities were doctoral dissertations found prior to 2002 that referred to the topic of leadership in their title.

An overview of content analysis is particularly valuable when a large amount of loosely structured information is available, which can complicate comprehensive and systematic analysis. Here the information is interpreted using rigorous criteria applied according to the expert judgment of the reviewer (Franco et al., 2018). These types of reviews have had an exploratory character, serving to obtain an overview from a series of key research questions, while facilitating the formulation of conjectures that can be contrasted in subsequent studies.

The selection of these two universities provides a broad and exploratory perspective of research on the phenomenon of leadership in Mexico. UNAM was chosen because it is the leading institution of higher education in Mexico and enjoys an international reputation. Its digital archive of doctoral dissertations is freely accessible ([tesiunam.dgb.unam.mx](http://tesiunam.dgb.unam.mx)). UA was also chosen because of its national recognition and because it offers the doctoral program. “Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions”, which is part of the Faculty of Education. The Library of the Universidad Anahuac (UA) provided a listing and access to the doctoral dissertations of this university. A search for dissertation titles was conducted using the keywords “leader” and “leadership” at both UNAM and UA. All dissertations on leadership defended between 2002 and 2019 were included in this study, without limiting the search to any faculty. A list of the doctoral dissertations included in the review is presented in Appendix. It is possible that there are other UNAM or UA dissertations that include the topic of leadership without mentioning it in the title (but in the abstract or in the key words). However, the sample of dissertations obtained is sufficient for the objectives of the research. It is reasonable to expect that the dissertations that have focused more on the topic of leadership have included the word ‘leadership’ in the title.

The primary procedure for the review of the doctoral dissertations focused on two main tasks:

Identify, categorize, and compare the doctoral dissertations on leadership at UNAM and UA: title, date of defense, author, dissertation director, program and faculty where the dissertation was presented.

Identify, categorize, and compare the main theoretical characteristics of the doctoral dissertations at UNAM and UA: such as the topic studied, the reference theories and author, the concept and paradigm of leadership assumed, the use of certain language and the verbs and nouns most associated with leadership, as well as the methodological approach of the dissertations (quantitative, qualitative or mixed).

To execute these tasks, a research sheet was created and randomly assigned to three reviewers, all of whom were PhDs and possessed extensive experience in the field. These research sheets included basic information about the dissertation (title, author, university program, date, director), specific characteristics of the research (theoretical perspective and reference authors, methodological approach, and research findings) and an analytical summary of the research (topic, objectives, hypotheses and central questions, theoretical framework, research methodology, concept of leadership, most commonly used metaphors, language associated with leadership, characteristics attributed to leadership, results and conclusions of the research).

The procedures were designed to ensure that the methodology was replicable and to mitigate potential confirmation bias; that is, to avoid the unconscious selection of information that tends to support one's own hypotheses. The process is inductive-deductive, flexible and at the same time systematic. The steps followed to apply the content analysis methodology were as follows (adapted from Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009):

- 1) Step 1: Prepare the data, categories and coding scheme. Establish the research sheet with the categories of content to be analyzed according to the research objectives.
- 2) Step 2: Ensure that the researcher's own bias is properly controlled. Assign the texts (dissertations) randomly and apply peer review.
- 3) Step 3: Code all the text consistently. Review of the doctoral dissertations and fill the research sheet with peer review.
- 4) Step 4: Elaborate the tables with the results obtained from the research sheets.
- 5) Step 5: Analyze the results of the tables and draw conclusions.

### 3. Results

The findings of the study are presented below.

(1) A total of 14 doctoral dissertations from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and 9 doctoral dissertations from the Universidad Anáhuac de México (UA) were identified. Appendix provides a summary of each dissertation, all published prior to 2021. The distribution of the dissertations by year is presented in **Table 1**, presented below.

**Table 1.** Doctoral dissertations on leadership at the UNAM and UA by year.

Year	Number of UNAM dissertations	Number of Anáhuac dissertations
2002	1	0
2005	2	0
2008	2	0
2011	1	0
2012	1	2

**Table 1.** (Continued).

Year	Number of UNAM dissertations	Number of Anáhuac dissertations
2013	0	1
2014	0	1
2016	1	2
2017	3	1
2018	2	1
2019	1	1

(2) The results indicate (cf. **Table 2**) an upward trend in the number of doctoral dissertations defended from 2016 onwards.

**Table 2.** Doctoral dissertations on leadership at UNAM and UA by year.

Year	Number of dissertations
2002	1
2004	1
2005	2
2008	2
2011	1
2012	3
2013	1
2014	1
2016	3
2017	3
2018	3
2019	2

(3) The only dissertation directors who supervised two doctoral dissertations were Dr. José Ramón Torres Solís (UNAM) and Dr. Abraham Nosnik Ostrowiak (UA). There is therefore a high dispersion in the number of dissertation supervisors.

(4) The predominant topics of the dissertations were leadership and education (11), leadership and business (5), leadership and public administration (5). Two other dissertations explored the topic of leadership from an anthropological perspective and within the health sector.

(5) By institution, we found that the five dissertations addressing the topic of leadership and public administration were from UNAM, alongside four other dissertations on leadership and business, three dissertations on leadership and education, one on leadership from an anthropological perspective and in the health sector. The dissertations carried out at the Universidad Anáhuac primarily concentrated on leadership and education (8 out of 11) and only one dissertation dealt with leadership and business. Notably, there are significant disparities in the topics explored at the different universities. This difference may be associated with the specific faculties of their respective doctoral programs: in the case of the UA, all the

dissertations, with one exception, were part of a doctoral program within the Faculty of Education.

(6) We have identified three distinct leadership paradigms that can be distinguished from each other and that can be grouped together in the various doctoral theses: functionalist, political and humanistic. **Table 3** presents the typical characteristics that allow us to differentiate the three paradigms based on the results of the research sheets.

**Table 3.** Typical characteristics of each leadership paradigm.

Typical characteristic/Paradigm	Functionalist	Political	Humanistic
Faculty (in which the dissertation was defended)	Accounting, Administration	Political Science, Communications, Philosophy	Education
Organizations studied in the dissertation	Business, economic system	Social organizations, companies	Educational institutions
Core of leadership concept	Influence (balanced environment)	Power (social dominion)	Development (flourishment)
Key nouns	Effectiveness, performance, vision productivity	Authority, control, command, power	Closeness, humility, person, common good
Key verbs	Change, influence, innovate	Control, command, fight	Develop, serve, dialogue
Methodology preferred	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed

(7) Regarding the theories and authors of reference, the prominence of the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio (1990), building on earlier studies by Bass (1985) and Burns (1978), stands out. Thirteen dissertations mentioned this theory, and eight placed emphasizing it significantly. In fact, Bass and Avolio were the most frequently mentioned authors in the dissertations, followed by Burns. Also noteworthy are the references to the notion of leadership as service (Greenleaf, 1977) and situational leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969), the main references in four of the doctoral dissertations.

(8) The nouns most commonly associated with leadership in the dissertations were: authority, performance, talent, change, charisma, closeness, effectiveness, innovation, creativity, command, efficiency, power, humility, vision and productivity. Also, the most frequently used verbs in relation to leadership were change, share, compete, consolidate, control, develop, decide, direct, command, exercise, train, manage, guide, influence, integrate, fight, motivate and serve. These verbs are usually associated with movement and most of them connote interpersonal relationships. The verb “to guide” can be considered as a common verb, and a common space of dialogue between paradigms. It is a verb that connects to the etymology of leadership and allows an understanding of leadership as a relational action that is at the basis of paradigms.

(9) The verbs and nouns most commonly associated with the phenomenon of leadership can be organized around three paradigms: functionalist, political, and humanist. The first, functionalist, is linked to effectiveness, performance, efficiency, innovation, creativity, productivity, and vision. The second paradigm, political, is associated with authority, command and power. The third, humanistic, pertains to development, person, closeness, humility, talent. These three paradigms of leadership have an interpretative function, which is reflected in the preference for certain verbs and nouns that convey an underlying metaphor (López González, 2022). Thus, in the

functionalist paradigm, terms such as “influence” or “influential” are frequently employed to conceptualize leadership. In the political paradigm, in contrast, the preferred term is “power,” while in the humanistic paradigm leadership is associated with the service-related idea of development (López González, 2022). It is important to note that, when analyzing the notion of leadership as conceived by each of the authors in their doctoral dissertations, it was observed that nine authors understood leadership as influence, four as personal growth and development, three considered leadership in terms of power, and two as adaptation to the environment.

(10) When categorizing the dissertations according to aforementioned paradigms, of the 23 doctoral dissertations, 12 align with the functionalist paradigm, 6 have a political paradigm and 5 have a humanist paradigm, as shown in **Table 4**. It should be noted that the dissertations from UNAM and UA conform to a functionalist paradigm, while those categorized under the humanistic paradigm are exclusively from UA.

**Table 4.** Doctoral dissertations by university and dominant paradigm.

University/Paradigm	Political	Functionalist	Humanist
UNAM	5	9	0
UA	1	3	5
Total	6	12	5

Certainly, in all the dissertations contain elements or aspects of the three paradigms (for example, in terms of language or theoretical references), so our classification is merely indicative of the most prominent paradigm in the dissertation. We can assert that the functionalist paradigm is the most prevalent among the doctoral dissertations analyzed. Bass and Avolio are the most frequently referenced leadership theorists, even in some of the dissertations characterized as following a humanistic or political paradigm.

(11) As illustrated in **Table 5**, a correlation can be identified between the research methodology used in a dissertation and its leadership paradigm. Those following a political paradigm are much more likely to use a qualitative method, while the majority of dissertations adhering to a functionalist paradigm use a quantitative (7 dissertations) or mixed (4 dissertations) methodology. Only one of the dissertations characterized by a functionalist paradigm used a qualitative approach. In the case of humanistic dissertations, there is no clear categorization regarding methodology, with three employing qualitative methods and the remaining two utilizing mixed methods.

**Table 5.** Doctoral dissertations by methodology and leadership paradigm.

Methodology/Paradigm	Political	Functionalist	Humanist
Qualitative	5	1	3
Quantitative	1	7	0
Mixed	0	4	2
Total	6	12	5

(12) The comparison of methodologies reveals no significant differences between universities (**Table 6**).

**Table 6.** Doctoral dissertations by methodology and university.

University/Paradigm	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed
UNAM	6	5	3
UA	3	3	3
Total	9	8	6

(13) However, the leadership paradigm implicit in the dissertations shows a clear relationship with the department or faculty of the doctoral program rather than with the specific university. The dissertations from the Faculty of Accounting and Administration at UNAM are predominantly functionalist, while those from the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters tend to reflect the political paradigm. The dissertations of the UA Faculty of Education generally reflect a humanistic paradigm, as illustrated in **Table 7**; the only UA dissertation associated with a political paradigm originates from the Doctoral Program in Applied Communication within the Faculty of Communication.

**Table 7.** Doctoral dissertations according to paradigm, university and faculty.

Paradigm	Political		Functionalist		Humanist	
	UNAM	UA	UNAM	UA	UNAM	UA
Faculty/University						
Faculty of Political and Social Sciences.	2	0	0	0	0	0
Faculty of Accounting and Administration.	0	0	9	0	0	0
Faculty of Philosophy and the Arts.	2	0	0	0	0	0
Faculty of Political and Social Sciences.	1	0	0	0	0	0
Faculty of Education.	0	0	0	3	0	5
Faculty of Communication	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	6		12		5	

#### 4. Discussion

This study presents a methodological limitation: the interpretation of the content of the dissertations, largely relies on the expert judgment of the reviewers. We sought to mitigate this potential bias by using employing research sheets and contrasting the results among the three investigators who participated in the review process. However, the generalizability of the findings is quite limited, particularly within the context of Mexico. In any case, the study serves not as a generalization but as an exploration of the paradigms used to identify them in order to promote a dialogue between them. In addition, the results obtained should be checked, using qualitative data analysis software (e.g., ATLAS.ti). The characteristics of each paradigm need to be confirmed by a broader study that explores in more detail the boundaries and characteristics of each leadership paradigm, the connections between the contents of various dissertations (and paradigms) and the possible presence of mixed cases of dissertations that share paradigms.

Our analysis indicates a growing number of doctoral dissertations on leadership in a wide range of areas (education, politics, economics, and labor environment). 11 of the 23 dissertations were related to educational leadership, which confirms the



growing interest in this field in Latin America, particularly in Mexico (Aravena and Hallinger, 2018; Flessa et al., 2018; Hallinger, 2020) and is reflected in various approaches to the study of leadership. It can be inferred from the above that the phenomenon of leadership is of considerable interest to Mexican researchers. It is also of interest to study leadership in different areas.

The doctoral dissertations analyzed do not introduce new conceptualizations of leadership, nor do they provide significant critiques of prevailing leadership theories. In general, doctoral dissertations adopt existing theory, complementing or contrasting them with another. From the above, it is evident that current research on leadership in Mexico currently tends to confirm and contrast existing models rather than introducing new frameworks or approaches. It is relatively common for doctoral students to use established conceptual models. However, the absence of leadership models that are now being widely used in other countries, such as distributed leadership, is noteworthy.

The most common concept of leadership, ascribed to the functionalist paradigm and widely used in the literature on the subject, is that of influence over others. This research proposes redefining leadership as guiding others toward a common goal, a conceptualization that can integrate three paradigms. This concept aims to integrate the different paradigms into a metamodel that facilitates dialogue among the various scientific communities studying leadership (López González and Ortiz de Montellano, 2021). The definition of leadership as guiding others towards a common purpose, end or good has a long tradition in political philosophy and has now been recovered by the neo-Aristotelian proposals of leadership (López González, 2023).

Transformational leadership emerges as the most frequently cited and utilized in doctoral dissertations. This shows that the predominant leadership paradigm in Mexican universities is the functionalist one. This finding is consistent with previous studies on leadership in Latin America (Aguilar-Bustamante and Correa-Chica, 2017). This leadership model, although some authors deem this model insufficient and outdated, is still used in many countries, as it takes time to abandon one model or paradigm for a better one (Ashford and Sitkin, 2019). The transformational leadership model can be considered an example of a functionalist paradigm.

Three paradigms stand out in other studies on leadership: functionalist, constructivist and critical (Arar et al., 2024). In our case we have found the existence of the functionalist and critical or political paradigm, but did not find evidence of the constructivist paradigm. We have identified, however, another paradigm: the humanistic paradigm. Although humanistic paradigm has a long tradition, it has been relatively neglected and is now being developed more vigorously. This paradigm reflects a growing interest in seeking alternatives to the predominant conceptions of leadership (Parris and Peachy, 2013). Doctoral dissertations show that all three paradigms are current and have their own identity.

An analysis of the most prevalent metaphors can enhance our understanding of the paradigms underlying different leadership theories and practices (Aravena et al., 2020). Underlying the concept of influence is the metaphor of movement, of the balance between forces. Underlying the concept of power (in the political paradigm) is the metaphor of struggle and the domination of some over others. Underlying the concept of development (in the humanistic paradigm) is the vitalist metaphor of nature

and fullness of the person. Each paradigm has its own particular approach to reality and although different, it is possible to find points of contact and dialogue.

The review revealed that each leadership paradigm incorporates a unique set of preferred verbs, nouns, and metaphors, creating a specific language of leadership. Our research partially confirmed the conclusions of Morgan's (1980) studies on the existence of a functionalist paradigm that conceives of the organization as a balanced environment, while a more "radical", structuralist paradigm (such as the one we have called the political paradigm) considers order as an apparent equilibrium, a product of social domination. Proponents of the humanistic paradigm argue that the essence of leadership lies in the dynamism of human action, which is both intentional and relational (López González, 2024) ultimately fostering individual flourishing. This human action can lead to the achievement of a good (in which case it would be a virtuous action) or it can lead to a harmful action or vice. Long-term effectiveness hinges on the competence of execution and the goodness of intention.

The three leadership paradigms seem to coexist and even interrelate. It cannot be stated that a paradigm shift is occurring; rather, an evolution (not revolution) of each paradigm as they interact with one another (Wang, 2018). To foster a dialogue among these paradigms, and consequently among researchers, an interdisciplinary approach is recommended—one that integrates the humanities and the sciences (Case and VanderWeele, 2024). Humanities can contribute by 1) identifying new paths and fields of research; 2) providing conceptual clarity to the constructs that the social sciences decide to study; 3) enriching the interpretation of empirical findings. Conversely, the sciences can: 4) provide new data for humanistic reflection; 5) confirm (or question) assertions from the humanities; 6) develop and evaluate interventions with a view to achieving the objectives proposed by humanistic research.

We detected that the use of certain paradigms is associated with the use of certain research methodologies, with embedded philosophical assumptions beyond operational methods or techniques. This aligns with the findings of other researchers (McGregor and Murnane, 2010, Morgan, 2007). The functionalist paradigm typically employs a quantitative methodology grounded in a positivist philosophical approach, while the political paradigm favors qualitative method rooted in a constructionist philosophy. In contrast, the humanistic paradigm utilizes both, often preferring a mixed-methods approach that aligns with a realist philosophical perspective. It is possible to combine several research methodologies within a research paradigm, but it is important to recognize that the paradigm limits and affects the use of the research methodology (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

This inclination toward specific paradigms or another cannot be separated from the academic background of the researcher or the community to which they belong. Those who adhere to a humanistic paradigm come mainly from faculties of Education; while those who apply the political paradigm come from faculties of Communication, Political and Social Sciences or Philosophy and Letters. In contrast, the functionalist paradigm is primarily favored by those in faculties of Accounting and Administration. This differentiation between faculties suggests that there is not a single university scientific community within the study of leadership, but rather different communities operating at different levels with different cultures and conceptions, different

traditions, customs and community practices, as well as different scientific methodologies (Denscombe, 2008).

The differences between paradigms and scientific communities can be fruitful, helping to uncover and address, for example, the “dark side” of leadership exercised in organizations (Hogan et al., 2021; Tourish, 2013). Some leadership models such as transformational or servant leadership, may be perceived as somewhat naïve and uncritical (Alvesson and Einola, 2019). Thus, the reviewed dissertations of a sociopolitical nature tend to be more critical of the exercise of leadership than those adhering to the functionalist paradigm, which tend to be more optimistic or positive about the effects of leadership styles within organizations.

Regarding the similarities and differences between the dissertations defended at UA and UNAM, the most striking differences are related to the doctoral program in which the students are enrolled. The differences depend to a large extent on the doctoral program rather than on the university itself. Each doctoral program can be considered as a scientific community with its own culture and preferences regarding the scientific paradigm to be followed.

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

This study of doctoral dissertations represents a significant and valuable step towards enhancing our understanding of leadership research in Latin America and lays the groundwork for future studies. Research on leadership in the region is incipient, particularly in the field of education. Therefore, a review of existing literature is essential, given the critical need to improve teaching and management within institutions, leading to better educational outcomes. (Aravena and Hallinger, 2017; Avalos, 2011).

In response to our research question, we identified three underlying paradigms in doctoral dissertations on leadership: functionalist, political, and humanistic. Each of these three paradigms has its distinct characteristics and preferences regarding research methodology, conceptualization and language (metaphors, verbs and key nouns). This finding is the main contribution of our research, although it needs to be confirmed by further research.

The functionalist paradigm emerges as the dominant framework in leadership research, alongside the political and humanistic paradigms. When researching leadership, it is inevitable to assume a paradigm, however it is convenient to consider its limitations as well as the valuable elements of other paradigms. For instance, those operating within functionalist or humanistic paradigm, frameworks might benefit from the critical perspectives presented by the political paradigm of Critical Leadership Studies (Collinson and Tourish, 2015), which helps to consider the danger of hubris around the myth of heroic leadership and the abuse of power in the organization. Likewise, a definition of leadership as guiding others towards a common goal is also proposed, which can be used for all three paradigms. Today, models of virtuous leadership or good leadership fit into this definition (Brooks, 2021; Cameron, 2011; Ciulla, 2004; Newstead et al., 2021). The current debate on virtuous leadership can enrich the dialogue between paradigms (López González et al., 2023; López González, 2024).

Another significant finding of our research is the close association between the methodological approach used in the studies and the faculty of the doctoral program. It does not seem to be so relevant whether the university is public or private. Encouraging a dialogue between faculties could greatly enhance discourse and research on the leadership phenomenon. Furthermore, promoting interdisciplinary studies that utilize diverse methodologies is advisable, as this is beginning to occur in current research efforts. It is also recommended to study the link between the philosophical assumptions immersed in each paradigm and the national or local culture from which they emerge (Flessa and Weinstein, 2018).

Lastly, we recommend the establishment of various research groups in Mexico, preferably with international collaboration, to undertake focused research projects on leadership. These projects should be more cohesive than current efforts, and doctoral students should be guided towards initiatives that prioritize depth and methodological rigor. The growing number of researchers in Mexican universities can make an important contribution to understanding the phenomenon of leadership and improving its practice. Ideally, research should focus on the development of new, empirically validated leadership models aimed at improving interpersonal relationships (Contreras, 2008).

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## Appendix

Doctoral dissertations at the UNAM and the UA on leadership (2002–2021).

Álvarez Martínez, Alejandro. 2005.

- Dissertation title: Liderazgo carismático y proceso político en Haití (1986–1997): el caso de Jean Bertrand Aristide.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Political and Social Sciences.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Latin American Studies.
- Dissertation Director: Johanna von Grafenstein.
- Summary of content: A study of the charismatic leadership of Jean Bertrand Aristide as president of Haiti.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as the recognition of special characteristics on the part of followers.
- Paradigm: Political.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Arévalo Martínez Rebeca Illiana. 2014

- Dissertation title: El habitus del profesional de la comunicación integral para las organizaciones y su relación con el liderazgo y desarrollo de capitales para la organización.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Communication Sciences.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Applied Communication.
- Dissertation Director: María Antonieta Rebeil Corella.
- Summary of content: Develops a model to measure the impact of leadership in organisational communication and offers steps to improve organisational communication.
- Concept of leadership: It offers a concept of called ‘leadership of excellence’ in which leadership is associated with the exercise of power.
- Paradigm: Political.
- Methodology: Quantitative.

Becerril Hurtado Margarita Amneris. 2017.

- Dissertation title: Factores de efectividad de liderazgo que favorecen la consolidación de los cuerpos académicos en una universidad pública mexicana.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Educational Institutions
- Dissertation Director: Abraham Nosnik Ostrowiak.
- Summary of content: An evaluation of the factors of effective leadership which enhance the functioning of academic organisations.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as influence.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Quantitative.

Bermea Vázquez Gloria Ivett. 2018.



- Dissertation title: Continuidad y ruptura de las trayectorias educativas en el nivel medio superior: el papel del liderazgo educativo y el acompañamiento de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil en los CBTIS de la frontera tamaulipeca.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions
- Dissertation Director: Cirila Quintero Ramírez.
- Summary of content: Studies how institutional, socio-economic and individual factors, as well as leadership of organisations in civil society, influence school drop-out rates in Tamaulipas.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is understood as influence.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Mixed.

Cabrera Mir Luis Fernando. 2005.

- Dissertation title: Enfoque de liderazgo situacional como herramienta eficaz en las funciones directivas de los gerentes a través de un plan estratégico de seguimiento.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: Lucía Andrade Barrenechea.
- Summary of content: Analyses training in management skills using a sample of company management from the department store and self-service sectors.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as a role or motivational skill, the effectiveness of which depends on establishing the appropriate relationship with followers.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Mixed.

Camacho González Alejandra. 2016

- Dissertation title: Trayectancia del docente y su liderazgo en las instituciones educativas.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions
- Dissertation Director: Jorge García Villanueva.
- Summary of content: Analyses how teacher training in specialised institutions positively influences the exercise of education leadership, using a case study in Mexico City.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as a process in which leaders and followers support and benefit each other through increasing moral and motivational actions.
- Paradigm: Humanist.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Castaño Benjumea Juan Carlos. 2018.

- Dissertation title: Compromiso organizacional, desgaste profesional y liderazgo transformacional de los empleados en las instituciones prestadoras de salud del área metropolitana centro occidente de Colombia.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: Ignacio Alejandro Mendoza Martínez.
- Summary of content: A study into the influence of factors of Transformational Leadership in professional burnout and organisational commitment among healthcare workers in the Área Metropolitana Centro Occidente of Colombia.
- Concept of leadership: Transformational Leadership, as proposed by Bass and Avolio.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Mixed.

De la Sota Riva Echánove Marcela. 2012.

- Dissertation title: Valores culturales como fundamento para la formación de líderes en la Red de Universidades Anáhuac.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions
- Dissertation Director: María de la Soledad García Venero.
- Summary of content: Studies the cultural traits of young university students and their education in leadership using the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Theory.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as a characteristic of all human beings, which must be developed as part of their ethical and social fulfilment and responsibility.
- Paradigm: Humanist.
- Methodology: Mixed.

Espinosa Gomez Rosa Aurora. 2004.

- Dissertation title: Expresiones de liderazgo, poder y desarrollo rural en dos grupos de mujeres en el bajío guanajuatense.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Philosophy and the Arts.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Anthropology.
- Director de Tesis:
  - Mary Rosaria Goldsmith Connelly de Rimada.
  - Maria de la Soledad Gonzalez Montes.
  - Hubert Francis Marie Carton de Grammont Barbet.
- Summary of content: Studies the exercise of leadership among women in rural Guanajuato.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is understood as both the exercise of and resistance to power.
- Paradigm: Political.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Gallardo Hernández José Ramón. 2018.

- Dissertation title: Habilidades Directivas y Competencias de Liderazgo que potencian el desarrollo de los colaboradores. Análisis de una empresa multinacional.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.

- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: Ignacio Alejandro Mendoza Martínez.
- Summary of content: A study of the competences which explain the influence of leadership in organisational effectiveness based on a case study of a multinational corporation.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is here understood as a competence for certain people to persuade others to carry out a task.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Quantitative.

Mendoza Martínez Ignacio Alejandro. 2017.

- Dissertation title: Influencia del liderazgo transformacional y transaccional de directivos de Escuelas Normales Públicas del Estado de México en el desgaste profesional de su personal.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration (Organisations).
- Dissertation Director: José Ramón Torres Solís.
- Summary of content: Proposes that transformational leadership, more than other types of leadership, has a positive effect on performance and prevents professional burnout. It analyses the leadership of directors of normal public schools in Mexico.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as related to the effective development of individuals within a social group.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Quantitative.

Pesantez Molina Wilson Geovanny. 2017.

- Dissertation title: El Liderazgo Transformacional - Transaccional y su impacto en las Autoevaluaciones Centrales del trabajador, en el sector agroindustrial de la caña de azúcar en la zona costanera de la provincia del Cañar, Ecuador.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: Alejandro Vega Henze.
- Summary of content: A study of the impact of transformational and transactional leadership on the attitudes of sugar cane workers in Ecuador.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived in terms of exercising influence over others.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Quantitative.

Peschard Gutiérrez Norma. 2013.

- Dissertation title: Influencia del liderazgo del rector en el logro de la misión de la universidad.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions
- Director de Tesis:

- José Antonio Núñez Ochoa.
- Julio Herminio Pimienta Prieto.
- Summary of content: A study of how the leadership of top university authorities impacts the development of the institution in the pursuit of its mission.
- Concept of leadership: Here leadership is understood as the capacity to generate the conditions for institutional governance and dedicating resources towards the institutional mission or goals.
- Paradigm: Humanist.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Rocha Lerdo de Tejada Álvaro. 2002.

- Dissertation title: El liderazgo en la administración pública mexicana. De la administración patrimonial a la administración institucional, un problema de estrategia.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Political and Social Sciences.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Public Administration.
- Dissertation Director: Jose Juan Sanchez Gonzalez.
- Summary of content: Offers a proposal for the transformation of public services in Mexico through leadership of service.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as adaptation or the ability to take advantage of circumstances.
- Paradigm: Political.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Rodríguez Minor Rebeca. 2011.

- Dissertation title: Brasil y México. Potencial y límites de una alianza estratégica por el liderazgo integrador de América Latina.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Political and Social Sciences.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Latin American Studies.
- Dissertation Director: Alfredo Guerra Borges.
- Summary of content: A study of the viability of a strategic alliance between Brazil and Mexico for Latin American integration in opposition to other regional blocks.
- Concept of leadership: Con Leadership is conceived as the capacity to overcome limitations and assume political responsibilities with those of lesser ability.
- Paradigm: Political.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Schlam Epelstein Débora. 2012.

- Dissertation title: Liderazgo del estado en las políticas públicas. salud financiera preventiva para la población de la tercera edad.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: Beatriz Castelán García.
- Summary of content: Proposes a model of leadership applicable to public policy in healthcare and finance.

- Concept of leadership: Leadership is understood as a situational role, facilitating the optimum performance of an organisation.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Mixed.

Solís Sánchez Ismael. 2019.

- Dissertation title: Formas de dominación y de liderazgo político local en América Latina: el caso del caciquismo urbano en las organizaciones de transportistas del servicio público en el Estado de México, México.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Philosophy and the Arts.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Latin American Studies.
- Dissertation Director: Lucía Álvarez Enríquez.
- Summary of content: A study of “caciquismo” or bossism in the transport union in Mexico City as an example of the exercise of political power and how to control the strategic resources within a certain territory.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived in terms of domination and the exercise of political control where an individual and a small group of collaborators monopolises power.
- Paradigm: Political.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Varela Medina Néstor Daniel. 2016.

- Dissertation title: Diagnóstico de las percepciones de estilos de liderazgo y efectividad en los equipos de trabajo virtual, en el centro de diseño de la organización DELPHI México.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: José Pedro Rocha Reyes.
- Summary of content: A diagnostic of the relation between leadership styles and the effectiveness of remote work teams within an organisation in Mexico. Effectiveness is measured in terms of job satisfaction, disposition to make extra efforts and achieving objectives.
- Concept of leadership: The dissertation adheres to the definition of leadership by Yukl (2002), understood as a process of influence on other people, determining a course of action to achieve shared goals.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Quantitative.

Vargas Rosales Mónica. 2019.

- Dissertation title: La formación del liderazgo en alumnos de licenciatura de instituciones de inspiración católica: un estudio en dos universidades privadas mexicanas.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions
- Dissertation Director: María del Carmen González Videgaray.
- Summary of content: An analysis of the undergraduate student perception of the leadership training they receive in schools, with a proposed course of action for improvements.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is conceived as a competence to influence others to achieve goals.

- Paradigm: Functionalist
- Methodology: Quantitative.

Vázquez Amaya Salvador. 2008.

- Dissertation title: Diseño de un modelo multidimensional de liderazgo para apoyar a la Administración de Recursos Humanos en los Procesos de Selección y Capacitación de Personal Directivo aplicable a Instituciones de Educación Superior.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: José Ramón Torres Solís.
- Summary of content: An analysis of the actions of leaders in higher education institutions and their impact on the performance of these institutions.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is understood as the ability to influence others.
- Paradigm: Functionalist
- Methodology: Qualitative

Vega Henze Alejandro. 2008.

- Dissertation title: El liderazgo, como moderador de la relación entre la disposición del trabajador y su desempeño.
- University: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Faculty: Faculty of Accounting and Administration.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Administration Sciences.
- Dissertation Director: Carlos Igor Irazoque Palazuelos.
- Summary of content: Explores the job performance and worker attitudes (intrinsic motivation) and actions by a leader (extrinsic motivation) as a moderating variable.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is understood as the ability to influence the behaviour of others.
- Paradigm: Functionalist.
- Methodology: Mixed.

Vega Masso Roberto Andrés. 2012.

- Dissertation title: El liderazgo de los rectores en universidades privadas en Chile: Un estudio comparativo.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions
- Dissertation Director: Abraham Nosnik Ostrowiak.
- Summary of content: A study of the type of leadership characteristic of the rectors of four private universities in Chile.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is understood as the task of steering, guiding, directing, commanding or indicating a path.
- Paradigm: Humanist.
- Methodology: Qualitative.

Virués Macías Ricardo. 2016.

- Dissertation title: El liderazgo y rol del entrenador en equipos representativos universitarios: una mirada desde el deporte educativo.
- University: Universidad Anáhuac.
- Faculty: Faculty of Education.
- Program: Doctorate Program in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions
- Dissertation Director: Evelyn Diez Martínez Day.
- Summary of content: A study of the leadership styles of coaches in the training of their sports teams.
- Concept of leadership: Leadership is understood here as an educational task.
- Paradigm: Humanist.
- Methodology: Mixed.