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Adaptive Advising: A Student Centered Approach

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Adaptive Advising: A Student Centered Approach

Laurie Lentz and Dr. Elizabeth Goryunova. Master's in Leadership Studies Program

Introduction

Adaptive leadership is more than a leadership style, it is a methodology that teaches one to embrace change and to teach others how to do the same. The concepts of adaptive leadership enhance the advising practice by leading the practitioner through a self discovery process to gain an in depth understanding of their purpose and role as an advisor. The result is an advising theory that is centered on self-awareness, leadership, and relationships. This mixed methods research focuses on commonalities between the practice of academic advising and the concepts of adaptive leadership. The result is the proposed Theory of Adaptive Advising that incorporates elements of adaptive leadership into the advising practice.

Methods

An interview with a director of advising at a state university provides perspective through the leadership lens in three areas. 1) Hiring practices, 2) leadership, and 3) advising theory.

Through a survey, advisors provide insight on the following three areas. 1) strengths, 2) the advising practice, and 3) views on adaptability.

Analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of three primary themes. (see figure 2)

Guiding questions

1. Advisors adapt to students by using a variety of advising models and approaches. In addition to this, are there additional views and practices shared by supervisors and advisors that align with adaptive leadership?
2. Will the concepts of adaptive leadership compliment an existing advising practice?
3. Are the ability to adapt and leadership skills important qualities that managers seek when hiring new advisors?

“Leadership is relational. When you lead, you are not leading a square box of a department. You are leading a group of people and it doesn’t matter how large or small it is. It is not about moving a box or a department forward, but what is in the box. It is all relational. You can get the work done. You can create strategic plans. You can have goals and all that kind of stuff, but without the core of the people, it is not going to happen.”

Figure1. Quote from interview participant

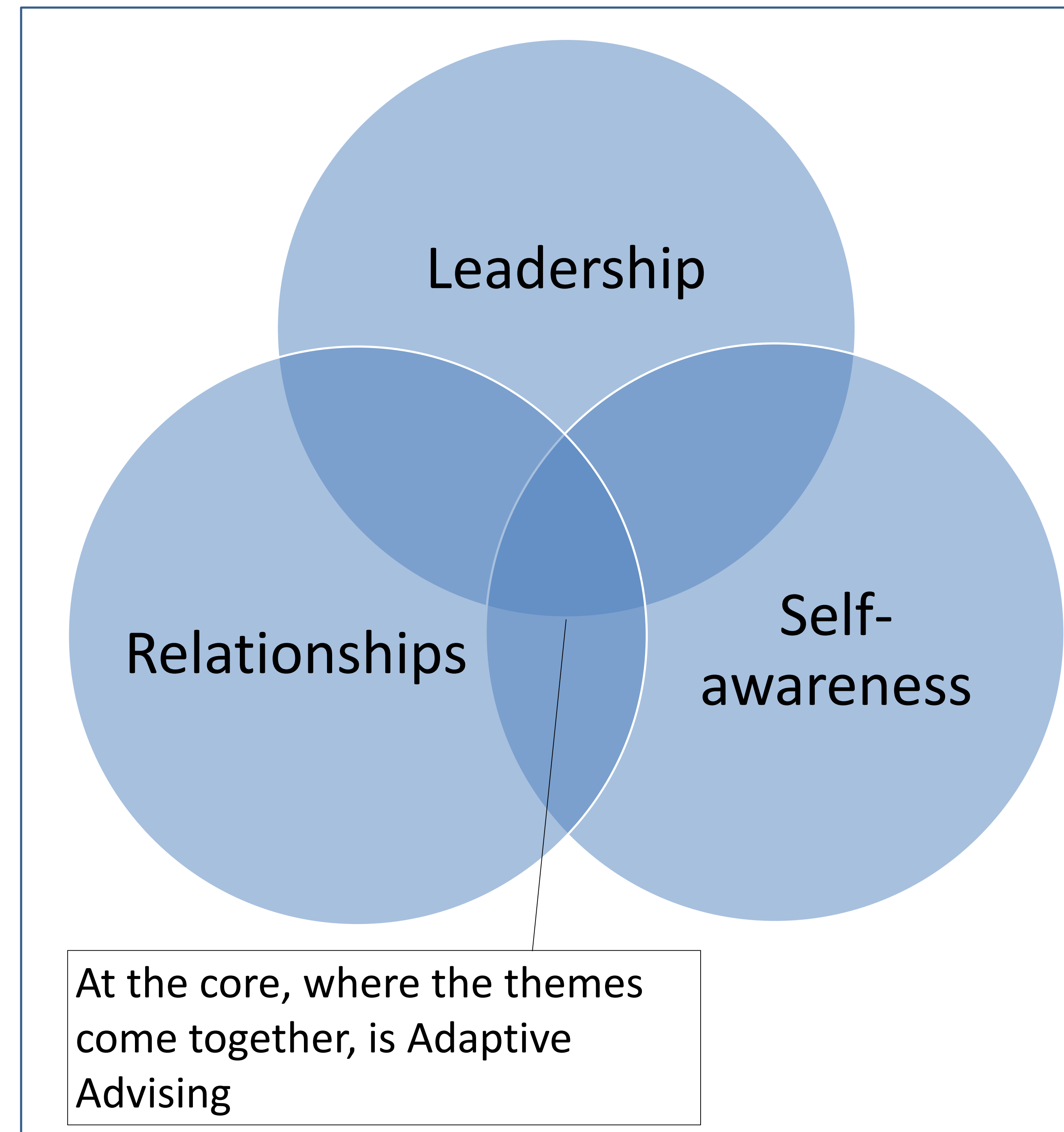


Figure 2. Themes that emerged from data analysis

Results

Analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of three primary themes; leadership, relationships, and self-awareness. (see figure 2)

Leadership is a desired skill that hiring managers seek in a new advisor. Likewise, survey data revealed that leadership qualities are required to be an effective advisor. In addition, attributes that are associated with a leader are also desired in an advisor.

Establishing and maintaining positive relationships is the cornerstone of an advising practice. It was found that communication, acceptance, and emotional intelligence are key factors in this ability.

Self-awareness was a hidden theme in the results. It is more than a list of qualities, or being centered, or mindful. Individually they are all important, but collectively they outline the fundamentals of self-awareness.

Discussion

The literature provides guidance on how concepts of adaptive leadership can support and strengthen an advising practice. There is a need to help advisors learn how to use these concepts to better adapt to the student and address needs, while maintaining and fostering a positive relationship. This research proposal is aimed to respond to this need by developing a theory that integrates concepts of adaptive leadership into the advising practice, thereby strengthening the advisors adaptive capacity.

Future research

The field of academic advising would benefit from future research to develop and implement a training program to teach professionals how to incorporate Adaptive Advising into their practice. Recommendations for a training program would include guidance for leaders on how to assess self-awareness and adaptability, and how to strengthen improvisational expertise and adaptive capacity.

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