

## Leadership in Virtual Teams for Online Learning in Higher Education: Caribbean Perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

Hinged on leadership in education, this research explored what leaders in virtual teams do to facilitate online learning in a higher education institution in the Caribbean. There is a paucity of literature and research on leadership in virtual teams in online higher education, and a need for research in this area, particularly in developing regions like the Caribbean. A qualitative case study design was used to (a) find out how leaders in virtual teams with responsibility for online learning define 'leadership in virtual teams for online learning (b) itemize the leadership behaviors and skills required for facilitating online learning and (c) determine the reasons why leadership in virtual teams for online learning might be impeded. Participants in this study were leaders in virtual teams attached to a higher education institution in the Caribbean which offers online studies up to the doctoral level. Data was collected over a six-weeks period using asynchronous email interviews, computer-assisted focus group interviews, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted on the data collected through the asynchronous email interviews and the computer-assisted focus group interviews. Content analysis was conducted on the student handbook and reports examined. Nine themes were found: deliberate networking, capacity building, managing online learning operations, monitoring for quality, communicating, planning, skills for online learning facilitation, impact of work-scope and understanding job functions. It was concluded that leaders in virtual teams for online learning combine their skills and take a concerted and student-centered approach to planning and managing the online learning environment.

**Keywords:** Case; Distributed; Interview; Qualitative; Transformational.