



The Impact of Leadership Styles of School Principals on Teacher Performance

H. M. Lalitha Kumari

Department of Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of principals' leadership styles on teacher performance in secondary schools in Colombo District Sri Lanka. The objectives of this study were to identify the leadership styles used by secondary school principals, find out level of teachers' performance and explore the impact of principals leadership styles on teacher performance. The study was carried out in association with two hundred and fifty (250) sample units of secondary level teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample. This research was quantitative in nature and the descriptive survey design was employed. A questionnaire was used as data collection instruments. The data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented using frequency, percentage, mean value, standard deviation, tables and graphs. Results revealed that there are two types of leadership styles of school principals, namely democratic and transformational leadership styles which have significant impact on teacher performance. Further, it was revealed from this study that more than 80% of secondary level principals use democratic and transformational leadership styles in their schools. In addition, 95% of teachers had positive perception on principals' leadership styles. Further it was found that there is a positive relationship between principals' leadership styles and teacher performance. The study concluded that a significant number of secondary level teachers in Colombo District have positive perception about principals leadership styles. It is, therefore, recommended that, the school principals should use democratic and transformational leadership styles in order to increase work performance of teachers.

Keywords: Leadership styles, School Principal, Teacher Performance.



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Introduction

Leadership plays an important role in the attainment of organizational goals by creating a climate that would influence employees' motivation, attitudes and behavior. Leadership involves the process of getting employees in an organization to work efficiently towards the attainment of institutional goal. It is the activities of influencing, motivating and directing people in an organization to work according to expectation. Therefore, in doing so leaders have to make use of one or a combination of styles and these styles are known as leadership styles. Harris (2006) described leadership as the capability of person to influence other people to work towards the effectiveness of the organization. Leithwood et. al,(2008) stated that the influence is done for a specific purpose; by motivating and inspiring others to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Therefore, leadership is an activity by which the leader leads others by influence and inspiration as well as motivation in other to have things done according to the set guidelines and as such enables goals achievement of the organization.

Leadership style is an important aspect in the success of any organization as it effects on employees' performance and organizational success. Principals' leadership style has been identified as one of the most important factors in terms of teacher motivation and school success. Also, it has been found that the main purpose of school leadership is to support teachers to improve their pedagogical skills which directly benefit students' high level of educational performance and teachers' job satisfaction. According to Bush (2008, P. 1) "there are widespread beliefs that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes". Leithwood et al., (2008) found that all school members and other stakeholders are influenced by leadership of higher- achieving schools to a significantly greater degree than that of lower achieving schools. Mulford et al.,(2003) carried out a study to identify the effects of leadership on student learning and found that there are two main factors that affect to improve student outcomes. They are empowering of teachers and the distribution of leadership responsibilities throughout the school community. Supporting these findings Leithwood and Jantzi (2003) stated that there is a positive influence on teacher engagement and high level of student achievement when leadership responsibilities are distributed to a larger extent. Principals' leadership style is often considered the major influence while teachers', parents' and students' roles are among other factors that impact on the school success (Bush , 2008)

According to Waters et al., (2004) effective leadership style of principal can significantly enhance pupil achievement. As mentioned by them when school principals monitoring the teaching learning process, holding post observation conferences and providing feedback and support for their staff will directly affect improving teacher motivation and effectiveness. Similarly, Quinn (2002) shows that the leadership style of the school principal is important in creating a happy working environment and thereby achieves exceptional educational outcomes. Southworth, (2004) carried out a research focusing on leading small, medium and large sized schools in England and emphasized the importance of learning centered leadership styles in schools. According to him efficient and effective leaders exercise both direct and indirect influence in implementing reforms and improving students' high levels of achievement. Hargreaves (2003) stated that teachers prefer principals who are supportive and collaborative Hargreaves further highlighted that teachers prefer principals who work with them rather than their own.

Dunklee (2000) mentioned that the principal leads with his/her values and vision. All the activities in the school are determined by what the principal does in the school. According to Dunklee the principal influences everyone's behavior in the school. For example, the principal communicates powerful messages in terms of what is important, how people are to be treated and also how the school should function. Thus, all the changes that take place in the school are influenced by the principal. Supporting this view Ramsey (1999) argues that there is no higher performance in schools without an effective and efficient principal. According to him the principal is the model of behavior and work to be copied by all in the school set up.

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England has also stated the importance of effective leadership in achieving higher levels of educational performance. The annual Report of Ofsted (2012) has emphasized the critical importance of leadership in terms of improving teaching. Estyn (2012/2013) in Wales, UK also emphasized that one of the key factors in any journey of improvement is strong and visionary leadership. According to the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England the learning centered approach to leadership is very important as it has been recognized that the most important tasks leaders in schools do is leading learning, motivating teachers, raising standards and focusing on pupils' achievement.

These references are very cogent for the current study which focuses on leadership styles of principals in secondary level schools in Colombo District and critically explore the extent to which more effective adoption of leadership styles by principals enhance teacher performance.. Therefore, it is very important to find out how leadership styles of school principals helps teachers to perform well and enhance the quality of education in secondary schools in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the study is intended to investigate the effects of leadership styles on teachers' performance

particularly in secondary schools in Colombo District, Sri Lanka in order to conclude whether leadership style has effects on teachers' performance.

Problem statement

The success of any organization depends on how effective the leader of that organization is. Effective style of leadership is paramount in order to minimize inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in organizations. Effective leadership ensures the quality of its output and efficiencies in terms of achieving organizational goals. When consider the school organization it has been found that currently schools are facing various problems particularly in leadership practices around the world. This might be due to lack of on time pertinent leadership training, complexity of work, and more engagement in general administration tasks etc. It was found from the literature that the leadership styles of school principals has effect on teacher effectiveness where transformational leadership style is found to be the most effective style of leadership used by school principals to bring about teachers effectiveness, while autocratic and laissez-faire styles of leadership are found to have negative effect on teachers effectiveness. In this connection school principals can use most effective styles of leadership in order to minimize work related problems and enhance teacher performance and thereby school effectiveness. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the impact of leadership styles of school principals on teacher performance. This research examines how various leadership styles of school principals affect teacher performance.

Objectives of the Research

1. Identify the leadership styles used by secondary school principals.
2. Find out level of teachers' performance
3. Study the impact of leadership styles of school principals on teacher performance.

Methodology:

Study Sample

The sample for the current study included two hundred and fifty ($N=250$) secondary level school teachers in Colombo District Sri Lanka. Using simple random sampling method altogether 250 teachers were selected for the survey.

Research Design

In this study, a descriptive survey design was employed to investigate the effects of leadership styles on teacher performance in secondary level schools in Colombo District. As mentioned by Jayasooriya (2014) descriptive survey helps to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitude behavior or values. Also, descriptive research gives researchers the opportunity to use both quantitative and qualitative data in order to find data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon that is being studied. The data collection for descriptive research presents a number of advantages as it can provide a very multifaceted approach.

Conceptual Framework

The variables of the current study are explained in Figure 1. The variables include leadership styles of school principals and teacher performance. The leadership styles of school principals were chosen as the independent variable. Accordingly four types of leadership styles such as, democratic style of leadership, transformational style of leadership, distributed style of leadership and participatory style of leadership were chosen. Four domains of teacher performance such as job satisfaction, collaborative work practices, teacher dedication and the quality of instructional process were chosen as the dependent variable. The four domains of teacher performance are expected to be related with leadership styles. The teachers' perception of leadership styles of school principal is imperative as it affects the extent of teacher performance. Accordingly, the flowing figure 1.1 shows the conceptual framework of the current study.

Independent Variable



Dependent Variable

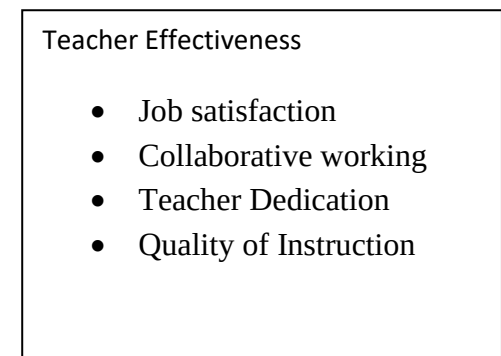


Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework

Data Collection Methods and Procedure

In order collect the necessary data and information of this study, a survey questionnaire was used. Accordingly, the instruments used for data collection were researchers-developed questionnaires for teachers. The questionnaire is one of the most important data collection instruments as it plays a significant role in terms of collecting a wide range of data from a large sample unit (Cohen et al., 2007). As stated by Cohen et. al., the researchers can use different types of questionnaires such as close-ended, open-ended, structured and unstructured depending on the aim and nature of the study. Questionnaire was chosen as data collection instrument in the current study. The questionnaire included variety of question on leadership styles and teachers' effectiveness. The questionnaire asked the secondary level teachers what type of leadership styles do principals in your school use in leading the school and how do you perceive about leadership styles used by your principals and how do you feel about job satisfaction, collaborative work practices, your dedication and the quality of instructional process. The data was collected only from teachers. Before collecting data from the study sample, a pilot study was conducted in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Subsequent to the pilot study a slight revision was done to the question no 5 and 6.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). According to Stephanie and Roger (2019) there are two methods in which a data analysis can be summarized. One is summary statistics and the other one is tabulations. According to them the first form can be presented as mean or standard deviation and the second can be presented in a column and row format. Accordingly, frequency distributions and percentages that come under descriptive statics were mainly used for analyzing data and cross-tabulation, histograms and bar- charts were used to show the analyzed results. Furthermore, Pearson's correlation coefficients used to explain the relationship between leadership styles of school principals and teacher effectiveness. Altogether 250 questionnaires were distributed and 230 (92%) teachers completed the questionnaire. Therefore, the analysis was done using the 230 questionnaires that were responded to.

Results

Objective 1: Identify the leadership styles used by secondary school principals

In terms of leadership styles used by secondary level school principals, 93% and 86% of teachers from the entire sample had responded that principals in their schools use democratic and transformational leadership styles. Compared to this the percentage of teachers who responded "Yes" to distributed and participatory leadership styles was 10% and 18% respectively. The table 1.1.below shows the mean value and slandered deviation of teachers' responses in terms of leadership styles used by secondary school principals.

Table 1: Leadership styles used by principals

Responses of Teachers	Leadership Style			
	Democratic	Transformational	Distributed	Participatory
Mean Value	4.621	4.513	3.234	2.735
Standard Deviation	.7345	.7021	.6021	.5243

It is clear from the above table that the secondary school principals mostly used democratic (Mean 4.621, SD .7345) and transformational leadership (Mean 4.531, SD .7021) styles in their schools. This indicates that democratic and transformational leadership styles are the most popular leadership styles among secondary school principals in Colombo District Sri Lanka. According to Northouse (2006) democratic leaders give more opportunities to their followers to develop leadership skills. They create an environment where followers have an opportunity to engage in participatory planning, organizing and decision making. As stated by Bass (2000) leaders who use transformational leadership responds to followers' needs, encourages them to develop their own capacities and achieve beyond expectation. They further highlighted that transformational leadership behaviors have positive relationship with higher level of follower performance. As depicted from the above table although distributed and participatory leadership styles are exercising in secondary schools they are not popular as democratic and transformational leadership styles.

Objective 2: Find out level of teacher' performance

In order to find out performance level of teachers six statements were included into the questionnaire. It was found from this study that under each statement the average means score for teachers' performance level was above 3.9086. This indicates that the teachers' performance level is satisfactory. The following table 2 depicted the mean score for each statement.

Table 2 : Performance of Teachers

SN	Item	Mean score	Interpretation
01	I usually prepare a lesson plan to be taught	3.735	Agree
02	I usually attend the class on time	3.867	Agree
03	I usually give more opportunities for students to engage in group activities	4.625	Fully Agree
04	I usually correct students work and give feedback	3.562	Agree
05	I usually communicate students' progress with parents	4.211	Fully Agree
06	I usually cover the syllabus on time	3.452	Agree
	Average Total	3.9086	

According to the above table it is clear that the average means for teachers' performance in each statement fall above 3.9086. This implied that the respondents generally agreed that teachers' performance is satisfactory.

Objective 3: Study the impact of leadership styles of school principals on teacher performance

There is significant relationship between effect of leadership style and teachers' performance in secondary schools in Colombo District, Sri Lanka. Accordingly, it was found from this study that, there is positive correlation between both Democratic Leadership Style (.382) and transformational leadership style (.364) and teachers' performance. This implies that when school principals adopt democratic leadership styles and transformational leadership styles it affect positively on teachers' performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that both democratic leadership style and transformational leadership style has positive effects on teachers' performance. As stated by Northouse (2006) democratic leaders consider about their followers by empathetic listening and understanding. According to Harris (2002) Democratic leaders work

together with teachers and make collective decisions. Also they distribute leadership responsibilities among the staff members in the school. This helps to create a collaborative working atmosphere in the schools. Schools become more democratic through the practice of collaborative decision making and actions. Leadership requires participation from everybody so that all members can get an opportunity to develop leadership skills. (Harris, 2002). As stated by Michel et.al, (2007) the transformational leader attempts to have a strong teacher's commitment towards achieving the school goals. In a study conducted by Bateh and Heyliger (2014) on leadership styles and the impact of job satisfaction of the staff in a Florida University revealed that transformational leadership had increased the job satisfaction.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between Democratic and Transformational leadership Styles and Teachers' Performance. In particular, the principals who practice democratic and transformational leadership styles give more opportunities to their teachers to engage in participatory planning, organizing and decision making and thereby enhance leadership skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that the more democratic and transformational leadership styles enhance teachers' level of performance in secondary schools in Colombo District, Sri Lanka. The study concluded that the leadership styles of principals influence teachers' performance in secondary Schools of Colombo District, Sri Lanka.

Recommendation

The researchers recommended that principals should use democratic and transformational leadership styles due to the fact that the two leadership styles increases teachers' performance.

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