Effective Leadership and Its Impact on the Educational Community

Betti Shahin
College of Dentistry, University of Illinois at Chicago, bshahi4@uic.edu

Susan Rowan
College of Dentistry, University of Illinois at Chicago, srowan@uic.edu

Toleen Mazloum
not affiliation temporarly, dr.toleen.mazloum@gmail.com

Nadia Kawar
College of Dentistry, University of Illinois at Chicago, kawarnad@uic.edu

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Abstract

Background: In the contemporary era characterized by globalization and rapid
technological advancement, education is a paramount force driving human progress, with
academic performance as an essential metric for its efficacy. Researchers have diligently
investigated various factors affecting academic performance, encompassing environmental and
student-centered variables.

Objective: This paper undertakes a distinctive exploration, directing attention to the
nuanced impact of the principal's leadership on the overall performance of the educational
community, including educators and students. Delving into factors beyond conventional metrics,
such as the principal's leadership style, classroom size, teacher's salary, and faculty development
and mentoring, this study unravels the complex dynamics that contribute to a comprehensive
understanding of the way principals' leadership shapes academic performance in this dynamic
age of learning.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the principal's indispensable role in shaping the educational
community involves adapting diverse leadership styles as the situation demands. Their strategies,
spanning educator recruitment, resource allocation, and positive relationship building,
profoundly impact the school environment, teaching effectiveness, learning outcomes, and
students' achievements.

Keywords: Academic performance, education, educational community, principal leadership,
teaching effectiveness

Introduction

Education is regarded as the foundation for all human endeavors in this age of rapid technological advancement and globalization. It enables people to gain the necessary expertise and knowledge to boost their productivity and, in turn, improve their standard of living (Farooq et al., 2011). This rise in productivity also creates new revenue streams, further bolstering a nation's economic expansion and social development. Fostering the evolution of a country begins with improving the educational system through student academic performance (Norhidayah et al., 2009).

Researchers have harbored a sustained curiosity in searching for the factors that markedly improve students' performance. They have classified these factors into environmental and student-based ones. The former covers the *principal's leadership style*, educational resources, and educator performance. However, the latter includes the student's intellectual capabilities, self-control, and aspirations (Rustiyah et al., 2021). Actually, the upper management leadership stands out as the most crucial factor impacting the general performance of the educational community, including both educators and students (Tedla & Kilango, 2022). While all other factors have been thoroughly examined in existing research papers, the primary focus of this paper is to delve into the intricate role of the principal's leadership in enhancing the performance levels of the educational community (both students and teachers) by incorporating issues such as class size, teacher's salary, and faculty development and mentoring. Unlike previous research papers that predominantly examine the impact of principal leadership on *either* student or teacher performance, our paper uniquely delves into the comprehensive influence of principal leadership on both students and teachers alike.

Leadership in General

Leadership, being intricate and multifaceted in nature, lends itself to diverse interpretations. This complexity has made crafting a universally accepted and contemporary definition challenging (Pardosi & Utari, 2021). In the literature review, definitions provided are contingent upon the focus and scope of the research being conducted. In general, leadership is defined as the process in which a leader shapes the behavior of his subordinates, fostering a collaborative and productive work atmosphere aimed at achieving organizational objectives (Winston & Patterson, 2006). It encompasses leading and directing individuals, making wise choices, and offering motivation to stimulate positive changes within an organization or community (Parveen et al., 2022). An effective leader who translates the school's mission and vision into actions is critical to a thriving educational community.

The Leader's Role

In the era of rapid technological advancement, educational institutions are confronted with numerous challenges that call for exceptional leadership. The highest leader in a school bears the responsibility for overseeing the overall functioning of the institution (Pardosi & Utari, 2021). His chief role encompasses supervising the day-to-day administrative tasks, directing instructional programs, and guaranteeing the smooth collaboration of diverse facets that contribute to the institution's overall prosperity and functionality (Abbas et al., 2020). The principal is also responsible for establishing budgets and cultivating relationships with the broader community. He is also accountable for hiring teachers, assigning them to programs, conducting performance evaluations, addressing the dismissal of ineffective ones, and offering developmental opportunities that foster teachers' continuous improvement and strengthen their skills (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). Nevertheless, the principal assumes a pivotal function in construing and executing policies enforced by federal, state, or district authorities and conveying

evaluations on the efficacy of these endeavors, guaranteeing congruence with the comprehensive objectives of the educational system (Dhuey & Smith, 2018). To summarize, the principal plays a vital role in enhancing the general school environment, educators' efficacy, the caliber of learning, and students' academic achievement.

Leadership Style and Impact on the Educational Community

The principal's leadership style influences others within the organization to achieve the established goals. These styles exhibit a broad spectrum of variations and are typically classified according to the leader's perspectives, behaviors, and relationships with others (Maqbool et al., 2023). The most adopted styles by principals are "authoritarian (autocratic), participative (democratic), transformational (visionary), transactional (managerial), and delegative (Laissez-Faire leadership)," each with its distinctive approaches and implications for institutional dynamics (Sfantou et al., 2017).

The effectiveness of one style over another is debatable. Previous empirical studies have compared and evaluated different leadership styles for their impact on the performance of the educational community, yielding controversial results. However, the disparities in effectiveness observed across these studies are attributed to the diverse institutional characteristics inherent in each organization (Pardosi & Utari, 2021).

In the literature review, the comparison results were contentious, with one leadership style proving effective for one organization but not for another. To elaborate further, some researchers contend that the *autocratic* leadership style decreases the teachers' performance as it excludes them from the decision-making process, giving the principal full decision-making power. This lowers the teachers' job satisfaction, which negatively affects the students' achievements (Dursun & Bilgivar, 2022; Guanah et al., 2022; Imhangbe et al., 2018; Inandi et

al., 2019; Yusuf, 2012). On the contrary, other researchers believe that the *autocratic* style has a positive impact in situations requiring a decisive leader to guide through a crisis or for employees in need of direct supervision to complete their tasks. They claim that an authoritarian leader's clear commands leave no room for ambiguity during a crisis, providing employees with explicit guidance on what actions to take. Also, they affirm that this style achieves the highest productivity as the leader directly and firmly supervises their subordinates (Ahmed Iqbal et al., 2021; Basri et al., 2020; Okoji, 2016; Werang & Lena, 2014).

For the *democratic* style, most researchers agree that it enhances teachers' performance and, consequently, students' achievements. This is attributed to the efforts of the democratic principals to include teachers in the decision-making process and foster a friendly and collaborative working environment. Hence, there is a consensus that the *democratic* leadership style is considered optimal and should be considered as an alternative to the *autocratic* style (Agustin et al., 2021; Dursun & Bilgivar, 2022; Inandi et al., 2019; Mumford, 2006; Sarwar et al., 2022).

The *Laissez-Faire* style is named after the French term, which means "leave it alone" (Aungal & Masare, 2017). Some researchers certify that this style yields positive outcomes in the educational community, as the leader refrains from giving commands to subordinates and allows them to make all decisions. This approach fosters creativity and satisfaction and expedites decision-making as employees don't have to await approval (Ahmed Iqbal et al., 2021; Imhangbe et al., 2018; Wu & Shiu, 2009). From an alternative perspective, some researchers assert that the *Laissez-Faire* style is detrimental and ineffective, advocating against its use. Their point is that educators often perceive principals employing this style as inept or reluctant, and thus, they lose confidence in them. Additionally, this leadership style may lead to stagnation as the principal is

not actively pushing the employees forward (Adeyemi, 2010; Dariush et al., 2016; Gemeda &

Lee, 2020; Yasir et al., 2016).

Some researchers claim that the *transactional* style contributes to better performance

within the educational community. This is attributed to its structured approach of employing

rewards and penalties, motivating teachers to strive toward achieving predetermined objectives

(Eyal & Roth, 2011; Niță & Gutu, 2023; Saleem et al., 2022; Saravo et al., 2017). Conversely,

others contend that this style is not as effective in enhancing creativity within educational

settings and may contribute to burnout and low job satisfaction among educators (Chebonye et

al., 2021; Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha, 2021; Yasmin et al., 2019).

Finally, in the *transformational* style, the leader centers on motivating and inspiring their

subordinates to attain higher performance levels by appealing to their vision, internal

motivations, values, and goals. This approach reduces the requirement for ongoing performance

and advancement monitoring. Some investigators believe that this style promotes the confidence

and performance of teachers, supports collaboration between members, and positively impacts

the overall organizational effectiveness (Jia & Jiang, 2018; Trigueros et al., 2020; Wang et al.,

2017; Zhu et al., 2005). Contrariwise, others assume that the *transformational* style risks losing

sight of individual learning curves if direct followers are not given the required guidance to

manage new responsibilities. They contend that this approach, without proper support, could

potentially slow down decision-making processes and contribute to employee burnout (Guanah

et al., 2022; Tian et al., 2022; Trigueros et al., 2020).

From the preceding discussion, it can be inferred that there is no universally optimal

leadership style applicable in all situations. However, it is imperative for the principal to adeptly

integrate various styles depending on the institute and subordinates' working styles. Recognizing

that not every organization can thrive under the same leadership approach underscores the importance of adaptability and strategic leadership.

Leadership Impact on Educators' Performance

Beyond examining the impact of leadership style on teachers' performance, as discussed previously in this paper, it is important to acknowledge other factors implemented by the principal that can influence teachers' effectiveness.

Classroom Size

Primarily, the leader bears the responsibility of overseeing the institutes' finances and resources. Accordingly, leaders often find themselves compelled to increase classroom size in response to various challenges, including school resources and classroom shortages, funding constraints, a lack of available staff, and the need to accommodate a growing student population. This shapes and enhances teacher performance. Handling a smaller group of students is typically less demanding than managing a larger one, as teachers encounter fewer behavioral problems, enabling them to dedicate more time and energy to teaching and less to disciplinary matters. Smaller class sizes enable educators to give each student the individualized attention they need, which helps them understand their needs better and provide instructions that are tailored to each student. This ultimately contributes to better academic performance and a supportive overall atmosphere. Additionally, teachers find creating participatory and interactive lessons in smaller classrooms easier, allowing for a more engaging learning environment. Also, teachers who have to deal with larger class sizes are prone to heightened stress and even burnout. These difficulties of overseeing larger classrooms affect teachers' morale and overall job satisfaction.

Therefore, given the leader's authority in determining classroom size, decreasing the class size emerges as a strategic approach to improve teachers' effectiveness and job satisfaction.

Despite practical reasons for a potential increase in class sizes, it is crucial to acknowledge the prospective impact on overall classroom dynamics. Consequently, finding a balance between resource constraints and maintaining an optimal learning environment poses a substantial challenge for principals in such circumstances (O'Brennan et al., 2014; Wang & Calvano, 2022).

Teachers' Salary

Addressing issues related to teacher salaries openly poses numerous challenges within schools and universities. Leaders do not directly manage individual teachers' salaries, as it is a function of the institute's board of trustees and chancellors. However, principals play a pivotal role in budget allocation within their schools. They can strategically allocate funds to prioritize teacher compensation and other benefits, thus enhancing teachers' effectiveness. Maintaining competitive and adequate salaries attracts and retains educators, motivates them, and fosters higher levels of job satisfaction. Fair compensation significantly impacts the caliber of education the teacher delivers, ultimately improving student outcomes. Also, higher salaries empower teachers to engage in professional development opportunities, thereby improving their teaching methods and strategies. On the other hand, salary disparities among educators can negatively affect their morale and make them actively pursue better opportunities. Disparities ultimately hinder the learning process by undermining retention rates and increasing faculty turnover. So, addressing fair compensation becomes pivotal in cultivating a productive working environment, fostering teamwork, and instilling a sense of value among educators. Additionally, teachers with insufficient salaries are more susceptible to higher stress levels and burnout, thereby impacting their overall performance (Hill & Jones, 2018; Pardosi & Utari, 2021).

Faculty Development and Mentoring

In the educational field, ongoing research and fast-paced technology underscores the need for continuous improvement in educators' performance, tools, and pedagogy. Evolving generational differences in the student population make it a necessity for continuous faculty development to keep up with rising needs. The awareness of diverse learning capabilities mandates educators to implement curricula using varied teaching tools and methodologies.

To address a variety of learning needs, principals can make sure that teachers have access to counseling or special education resources. This proactive approach fosters teachers' abilities to facilitate inclusive and fair educational opportunities. Effective leaders appreciate those needs and provide opportunities for mentorship and faculty development programs. This encompasses periodic mentoring and training sessions and workshops, group learning activities, or even opportunities to earn additional formal degrees or certificates in education. It is also the current leader's role to prepare for successors and future leaders. Furthermore, principals can cultivate a collaborative culture that fosters camaraderie and scholarship, where faculty members can exchange ideas and empower each other. This cooperative approach promotes group work toward efficient teaching. In addition, leaders can monitor the progress of their faculty through direct and indirect supervision and provide constructive criticism and feedback as necessary. This continuous feedback loop guarantees alignment with educational objectives and helps teachers hone their facilitation techniques.

It is crucial to emphasize the pivotal role of leaders in establishing a positive school culture that values cooperative education and ongoing development. In such a supportive environment, teachers are motivated to explore and use different teaching strategies and share successful practices. Reward systems, such as awards and promotions, recognize and motivate

faculty. Raising and allocating funds to support faculty to engage in all these opportunities is a tribute to an effective leader (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Widodo, 2022).

Leadership Impact on Students' Performance

While leaders in upper management positions may not directly interact with students, the influence of their leadership reverberates throughout the educational institution, shaping students' achievements through strategic planning and the implementation of daily and long-term decisions. As discussed before, the decision to reduce class size enhances student-teacher interaction, fosters greater student engagement in class activities, creates a more collaborative and supportive learning environment, and helps reduce student anxiety (Filges et al., 2018). Decisions regarding the recruitment and retention of effective educators, the creation of a safe and supportive work environment conducive to growth and opportunities for faculty, and the establishment of clear goals and a shared vision are paramount for achieving common objectives. By implementing these actions, leaders play a crucial role in cultivating an environment that promotes academic achievement and overall student success, ultimately leading to the improvement of communities. (Cotton, 2003; Berson & Oreg, 2016).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of an educational leader in shaping the educational community's performance is paramount and multifaceted. The fact that not all organizations can be successfully led by the same strategy necessitates that leaders should have a diverse repertoire of leadership styles, adapting them to the faculty and learners' demands. Additionally, the measures and strategies implemented by the principal, including effective leadership, educator recruitment, resource allocation, and fostering positive relationships, significantly impact the overall institution environment, teaching quality, learning outcomes, and student achievements.

Acknowledging these multifaceted responsibilities emphasizes the pivotal role the leader plays in steering the educational community toward excellence.

However, further research is needed to discuss comprehensive training programs and professional development needed to equip educational leaders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and strategies to effectively influence both teacher and student performance.

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