

Leadership styles of school headmasters and their impact on school administration in Vlora high schools

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the leadership styles of high school headmasters and the job satisfaction among teachers under the principals' administration. The research was also focused on the impact of leadership styles on school administration. In the meantime, the study intended to determine the extent to which teachers were involved as school actors in decision-making. The questionnaire survey method was used to collect data from a sample population consisting of 87 high school teachers from Vlora district in Albania. Data analyses were facilitated by the statistical package for social surveys (SPSS) version 16. The research found out that the democratic leadership style was widely used by high school headmasters. Teachers were involved in decision-making, but were not involved in setting the agendas for staff meetings or other administrative tasks. The results show that the leadership styles have significant relationship in the teachers' job satisfaction.

Keywords: Leadership styles, school administration, high schools, job satisfaction.

Introduction

In Albania the number of schools is going up because the demand for educations is ever increasing. This means the number of more school administrators is also increasing. Most of the school administrators are promoted from the teaching staff to become deputy headmasters and eventually headmasters. No formal orientation training is offered to the newly appointed administrators. Actually Institution for the Development of the Education is implementing a promontory course for school headmasters, without specification in education levels.

Research has revealed that leadership plays an important role in school effectiveness. Moreover, principals strongly shape the conditions for high-quality teaching and are the prime factor in determining whether teachers stay in high-needs schools. Leadership is not just a group of theories vs. practice. We'll better think of it as theory with practice. Effective leadership is an important asset to an organisation. However the leadership style of the school is also an important factor in school effectiveness to ensure effective school administration (Salfi et. al. 2014). Research by Eyal and Roth (2011) found out that leadership styles play a significant role in teacher motivation and student achievement. In Vlora not much research has been done on school headmasters' leadership and their impact on school administration. Research on

leadership styles and its impact on effective school administration have been done mainly in developed countries (Bass, 1999. Leithwood et. al. 2014). This research paper will present the views of school teachers in the headmasters' leadership style and its effect on school effectiveness. Effective education leadership (and style of it) makes a difference in improving learning among all the actors. There is much yet to be learned about who provides educational leadership.

Literature review

Definition of Leadership

There is a vast amount of literature exploring generic leadership issues. This study concentrates on school leadership, accepting that there are common elements and trends in leadership practice across sectors and much more can be learned from non-educational environments as well. Anyway the concept of leadership carries many different connotations such as power, authority, management, administration and supervision, vision, leading skills. Leadership is defined as a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2001); leadership has been defined as use of power to influence the thought and actions of other people. Leaders are able to direct, guide, influence or control the thoughts, feelings and action or behaviour of individual to achieve organizational goals (Lester, 1975). In the context of a school an effective leader can influence groups such as teachers, students, community members, policy makers towards achievement of institutional goals.

Leadership Styles

Leadership style of school headmasters plays an important role in effective school administration. As Yukl has phrased it, "most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation" (Yukl, 2002). A leadership style is a set of leadership activities that influences subordinates or individuals to achieve organizational goals (Leithwood and Jutzi, 1999). Viewing the school as an organisation, different leadership styles can be used.

These include autocratic style, democratic style, strategic style, transformational style, transactional style, coaching style, charismatic style and laissez-faire style. Researchers have found out other leadership styles. The emphasis of this study is on school leaders. Leadership is a broader concept where authority to lead does not reside only in one person, but can be distributed among different people within and beyond the school. School leadership can encompass people occupying various roles and functions such as principals, deputy and assistant principals, leadership teams, school governing boards and school-level staff involved in leadership tasks.

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leaders make decisions on their own without consulting others. Lewin et. al (2004) found out that the style resulted in very high level of dissatisfaction.

This style is effective if there is no need for others to contribute to decision making and when motivation is not a critical factor in implementing of a decision (Pareek, 2010). In this leadership, leaders make decisions on their own without consulting subordinates. They reach decisions, communicate them to subordinates and expect prompt implementation.

The decisions, which autocrats make, often face resistance because they are made single-handedly. An autocratic headmaster resists the role of School Board and may find it difficult to operate in an environment which demands collective decision-making. This type of leader was considered successful in uneducated societies, but schools (of every level) are made up of educated people.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leaders involve them in decision making. Democratic leaders however, may have difficult when options differ widely and it's difficult to arrive at a consensus (Pareek, 2010). The most unique feature of this leadership is that communication is active upward and downward.

Democratic style of leadership includes administration by consensus through consultation with the staff, parents, and headmasters informed decisions because of the experience and wisdom of other professionals in and outside the organisation. The democratic leader is also known as a consultative leader who reserves the right to make the final decision, holds final responsibility even when delegate authority. All actors of the school including students, staff, parents, and community members have an input in the running and welfare of the school. Subordinates find pleasure and satisfaction in working under this type of headmaster. With respect to statistics, democratic leadership is one of the most preferred leadership, and it entails the following: fairness, competence, creativity, courage, intelligence and honesty.

Laissez –Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership gives authority to employees. According to leadership studies, departments or subordinates are allowed to work as they choose with minimal or no interference. Laissez-faire leaders have minimum involvement in decision making (Pareek 2010). Staff is respectable for the outcome of their decision. These leaders are successful when the people they lead are capable and motivated. In the context of a school, the headmaster will let things happen virtually by themselves. The headmaster does not initiate new innovations, nor does the staff learn from the heads' model. The school operates on the momentum of the staff and the headmaster is reluctant to interfere in the way things are run.

The Concept of Leadership

Reviewing theories, researches and studies on leadership, at the core of most definitions of leadership there are two functions: "providing direction" and "exercising influence." Each of these important functions can be carried out in different ways, and such differences distinguish many models of leadership from one another. As Yukl notes, leadership influences "...the interpretation of events for followers, the choice of objectives for the group or organization, the organization of work activities

to accomplish objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships and teamwork and the enlistment of support and cooperation from people outside the group or organization" (1994, p. 3). Effective leaders try to think through generic and strategic decisions rather than solve daily problems, but there is no perfect leader.

What is Administration?

Many people quickly assume that being a good leader means you're a good manager and vice versa. (Glen. J. 2013)

From a broad perspective, administration is a smaller scale and more focused on details than leadership. The leader sets the vision and the broad plan; the administrator executes it and does what is needed to achieve that plan. Key characteristics of administration are:

- A tactical focus on aspects of the organization's strategy
- Executing on specific areas within their responsibilities
- Formulating and enforcing the policies within the institution to achieve its goals
- Directing and monitoring their team to achieve their specific goals

From many definitions given by different authors one may conclude that administration deals with people, their activities, and their interpersonal relationships in an intentionally designed systematic structure.

The role of the Teacher in Leadership and School administration

Teachers are also taking on formal roles and responsibilities for managing and leading in schools. In Korea, "chief teachers" take care of middle-rung supervision. Schools in Norway are gradually organising their teachers into teams where teacher "team leaders" play a leadership role. In Spain, teachers with a reduced workload take the role of leadership assistants to take care of administrative issues and free principals from this role. Teachers' participation can be used to increase autonomy in decision-making, but even to share responsibilities in leading process.

Methodology

Design

In this study was used the descriptive survey design. This design was preferred because of the necessity to summarise the views of the subordinates towards the leadership style and the practices of the school headmasters in the daily administration of the schools.

Sample

A sample of 87 school teachers was selected from Vlora district, working in public and non public high schools. This sample population was preferred because they were easily accessible and they could provide the relevant data on the leadership styles of their school headmasters. Vlora district was also preferred because most of the school headmasters studied in Public Administration (Master of Science) in Vlora

University, Faculty of Education. The purposive sampling procedure included the respondents from different schools from whom data was collected.

Data Collection

For the data collection was used a questionnaire. Teachers responded to closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire enabled teachers to participate in the study without fear of victimization because of assured anonymity.

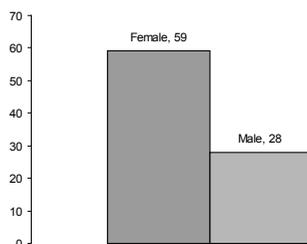
Research Questions

The research addressed the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' views on the leadership styles of high school headmasters in Vlora District?
2. How do these leadership styles impact on teacher participation in school administration?

Results and discussion

Table 1: Sex Composition



There were more female teachers (68%) participants in this research than males (32%). This could be a reflection of the distribution of male and female population in the urban schools where there tend to be more female teachers than male teachers. The results of this study were not affected by the gender variable.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age	V	%
Below 30 years	17	20
30 – 35	21	24
36 – 40	39	45
Above 40	10	11
Total	87	100%

Majority of the respondents in this research were between 30 and 40 years of age. These were experienced teachers who worked in the same school under the same school head. These teachers provided the data on the headmasters' leadership styles

and practices.

Qualification	V	%
Old system	34	39
Professional Master	12	14
Science Master	37	43
PhD, Dr.	4	5
Total	87	100%

Majority of the respondents in this study were qualified teachers holding a diploma in education, especially from the old system (4 years), which includes the Master of Science nowadays. A minority of the teachers had further qualification in doctoral studies (5%).

	V	%
Below 5	4	5
5 – 10	26	30
10 – 15	43	49
Above 15	14	16
Total	87	100%

The respondents below 5 years of work experience make a small percentage, but even these teachers provided reliable data useful to this research.

	V	%
Below 1 year	5	6
5 – 10	39	45
10 – 15	32	37
Above 15	11	13
Total	87	100%

Most teachers (45%) had worked for more than five years at the same school under the same school headmaster (at least for 4 years). Such teachers could give relevant information relating to the leadership styles of the school headmasters as well as issues relating to school administration.

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	V	%	V	%	V	%
Teachers contribution to problem solving/ decision making	64	74	11	13	12	14
Teachers involvement discussing/setting the agenda	8	9	14	16	65	75

Strong debates between headmaster and teachers during the meeting	24	28	11	13	52	60
Domination of headmaster during staff meetings	52	60	9	10	26	30

Most teachers in high schools were not involved in setting/discussing of the agenda for staff meetings. However they contributed significantly to decision making made in the meetings. The heads did not dominate completely their subordinates during the staff meetings, and the meetings were considered democratic.

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	V	%	V	%	V	%
Headmaster distributes resources fairly	63	72	14	16	10	11
Headmaster has good relations with staff	79	91	3	3	5	6
Headmaster resolves conflict among staff	56	64	10	11	21	24
Objective supervision by the headmaster	61	70	8	9	18	21
Headmaster – staff working well as colleagues	62	71	11	13	14	16

The school headmasters communicated effectively on policy issues to their subordinates. The relationship between the teachers and the school headmasters were cordial. Most teachers indicated that they worked harmoniously with their school heads however some 16% of teachers revealed that they did not work well with their school principals. The research also found out that the school headmasters are involved in resolving conflicts among staff. School principals supervised their subordinates by 70% while a few teachers disagreed with the view that supervision by the school heads was objective. Majority of teachers indicated that the school heads had good human relations with their staff and they equitably distributed resources in their leading institution.

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	V	%	V	%	V	%
The headmaster’s style is democratic	63	72	8	9	16	18
The headmaster’s style is autocratic	22	25	18	21	47	54
The headmaster’s style is laissez faire	14	16	11	13	62	71
The headmaster’s style is transformational	38	44	10	11	39	45

As the Table 8 shows most school headmasters used democratic style of leadership. Few school headmasters (16%) used the laissez faire style of leadership. And the transformational style of leadership tends to be something new. The results of the study reveal that in some schools the principals were autocratic specially in certain situations regarded with structure and positioning; and the majority of respondents could not tell whether the headmasters were democratic or not in these situations.

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	V	%	V	%	V	%
Teachers are informed of supervision on time according to D.N.	63	72	8	9	16	18
Headmaster facilitates the professional development of the teachers	58	67	18	21	11	13
Headmaster supervises subordinates subjectively	21	24	14	16	52	60
Headmaster approaches contemporary teaching techniques	72	83	4	5	11	13

Before carrying out supervision the school headmasters informed teachers according to the DN rules of their impending visit to their classes. Headmasters tend to encourage open communication and create a culture of transparency in the institution. Teachers benefited professionally from supervision done by the school headmaster knowledgeable of the contemporary methods of teaching, which are keen on innovation, support and encourage initiatives for improvements during the educational process (83%).

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	V	%	V	%	V	%
Headmaster forms with the teachers a common understanding on the philosophy of the curriculum	63	72	8	9	16	18
Headmaster creates with the teachers a common understanding of basic competencies, cross-curricular topics	58	67	18	21	11	13
Headmaster forms with the teachers a common understanding of the main ways to achieve the goals of the curriculum	72	83	4	5	11	13
The teachers are involved in the choice of their teaching classes	4	5	14	16	69	79

The teachers are involved in the creative implementation of the curriculum	74	85	3	3	10	11
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Most teachers are not involved on allocation of classes to teach, at beginning of the year. Most schools use creative methods to implement the curriculum, to encourage and to motivate new evaluation forms for the students. Teachers have the freedom as to which teaching methods to employ during lesson presentation.

Discussion

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas across developed countries. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the environment and climate within which they work. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling, people empowering toward an educated society.

Regardless of the fact that most teachers were not involved in setting the agenda for staff meetings, the contribution made by teachers during staff meetings contributed significantly to decisions made by the school principal. Meetings held in co operational environment improved individual member participation. The school headmasters allowed debate among staff members and reached decisions by consensus. School headmasters had good interpersonal relationships with their subordinates. The teachers indicated that the school principal resolved conflict and distributed resources fairly among staff. The school heads supervised their staff effectively and worked well with their subordinates.

Although the majority of the school headmasters were using democratic leadership style, there was evidence of a few headmasters who were considered autocratic and laissez faire. These school heads had negative effect on school effectiveness. It would be in the best interest of the Ministry of Education and Sports to identify such leadership styles schools then use them as examples for other schools during staff development.

Many teachers do not find it satisfying to work with autocratic headmasters; they move on to less demanding environments at the first opportunity. Teachers want to feel certain about their ability to meet the goals they have for educational process and their professional growth.

Heads of schools informed their subordinates of classroom supervision and contributed significantly to the professional growth of staff. But in terms of teachers' assessment should be considered the subjectivity of the headmasters toward the teachers, because these ones were not satisfied with the assessment criteria. The heads were also considered highly knowledgeable of modern teaching techniques.

In decision-making the participatory approach was highly relevant. It was noticed that there was standardization of schemes of work, but not the lesson plans. The teachers were motivated to choose the methods they want to according to the curriculum framework.

As Albania strives to transform its education systems to prepare students with the

knowledge and skills needed to function in rapidly changing societies, it is adopting a considered number of policy trends. "New public management" structures stressing decentralisation, school autonomy, parental and community control, shared decision making, outcomes-based assessment and school choice play an essential function to build the capacity of the school for high performance and continuous improvement.

Findings

The research helped deduce the following:

- School leaders must master the new forms of pedagogy themselves and they must learn how to monitor and improve their teachers' new practice. Moreover, instead of serving as head teacher they have to become leaders of learning responsible for building communities of professional practice. Classroom supervision by school headmasters was objective and contributed to the professional development of staff since they were considered highly knowledgeable of contemporary teaching techniques.
- "Effective" or "successful" leadership is critical to school reform. Most school principals used the democratic leadership style while only a minority used the laissez faire and autocratic leadership styles. It is important to contextualise school leadership policies. There is no single model of leadership that could be easily transferred across different school-level and system-level contexts. Depending on the school contexts in which they work, school leaders face very different sets of challenges. Approaches to school leadership styles need to be based on careful consideration of the context in which schools operate and their particular challenges.
- Development of people is another contribution to school efficiency. More-specific sets of leadership practices significantly and positively influencing these direct experiences include, for example: offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and providing appropriate models of best practice and beliefs considered fundamental to the institution.
- School headmasters had good interpersonal relationships with their subordinates and used the participatory approach to decision making.
- School headmasters prepared staff meeting agenda without consulting their subordinates. Teachers participated actively during staff meetings and contributed to decisions made. The school headmasters did not involve teachers in class allocation this can be a source of ineffectiveness in teaching and learning.

Conclusions

Research about the styles and effects of leadership is becoming increasingly sensitive to the contexts in which leaders work and how, in order to be successful, leaders need to respond flexibly to their contexts.

The study concludes that the democratic style of leadership is used in conjunction with the autocratic style of leadership. While the democratic leadership style was widely used by school administrators the Ministry of Education and Sports needs to

promote its use in school administration.

The overall conclusion considered in these reviews is that school leaders have a measurable, mostly indirect influence on learning outcomes; in school administration and in job satisfaction. This means that the impact of school leaders on all the school actors is generally mediated by other people, events and organisational factors such as teachers, classroom practices and school climate.

School leadership can make a difference by creating the right environment for teachers to improve classroom practice. Research evidence shows that there are specific leadership styles that have greater influence on teaching and learning than others. In practice, however, school leaders can only have an important impact on curriculum framework if they have enough autonomy and support to make important decisions and if their major responsibilities are well-defined and focused on teaching and learning.

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