
WALKING THE TALK: AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between modeling the way characteristic of transformational leadership and academic performance. Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) “Self” and Leadership Practices Inventory “Observer” were used to collect information on transformational leadership of school principals. LPI “self” was used for the principals and LPI “others” was used for the teachers for triangulation purposes. Means, standard deviations were used to measure the degree to which secondary school principals practice transformational leadership characteristic of modeling the way. One-way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were utilized to establish if a relationship existed between selected demographic characteristics and the interaction of leadership characteristics of principals and students’ academic performance. To test relationships between principals’ ratings and teachers’ ratings, t-test was used. Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there was a positive significant correlation ($r=0.648$ $p>0.237$) between High performing schools and transformational leadership.

This means that in schools where the principals were more of transformational leaders, the students performed better than when they were less transformational. In confirming if there is a significant difference between transformational leadership and academic performance, Analysis of Variance indicated that an F-Calculated of 2.175 was derived. However, the tabulated F Value was 0.237. Since the Calculated F was greater than the tabulated F-Value, we concluded that there is indeed a significant difference between transformational leadership and students’ academic performance.

Key words Transformational leadership, modeling the way school principals, schools, academic performance

INTRODUCTION

All organizations irrespective of size and type require effective leadership. Effective Leadership is a very important factor in an organization because it determines most of its success and failure. Schools like all other organizations require effective leadership to achieve their goal which is good academic performance of learners. This fact has been established through research.

Leithwood et al. (2008) assert that leadership of a school principal is a determining factor in school effectiveness, second only to the role of a student's classroom teacher. This has been confirmed by Day, Leithwood, and Sammons (2008) who also found that principal leadership as the major driving force that underpins a school's increased or sustained effectiveness and improvement.

School Principals are considered very important as they are the major driving force and highly associated with the schools' increased effectiveness. They perform a major role in setting direction and creating a positive school culture. The school principal has the capacity to unleash potential capacities that already exist in the school. They also support and enhance staff motivation and commitment that is needed to bring about improvement and promote success for schools in challenging situations. The school leader faces a lot of challenges which include: ensuring there is effective teaching and learning, ensuring that learners are disciplined, managing school resources, encouraging parental support and building the school as a professional learning community (Day & Sammons, 2016)

Transformational leadership practice is associated with improved school functioning and quality education delivery through teacher commitment and willingness to exceed targets or educational benchmarks (Balyer, 2012; Nedelcu, 2013). James and

Rottman (2007) also agree with this by stating that transformational educational leadership is at the center of students' learning and general academic performance. When used effectively, it can improve individuals' attitudes, responses, and actions, as well as communication to or with others or members of the team.

The leaders are able to do this by displaying certain characteristics in their leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (2002) effective leaders have behaviours summarized in the leadership Practices Inventory. According to them, if one wanted to become an effective leader, then he or she should adopt certain behaviours or characteristics. Transformational leaders exhibit certain characteristics which include inspiring a shared vision, modeling the way, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. When leaders adopt these characteristics, they are able to influence the followers and other organizational stakeholders to complete goals of the organization. These are the practices which effective school leaders should adopt. The intention of this study was to investigate modeling the way practice of transformational leadership and its effect on academic performance.

The study was guided by the following research hypothesis

H0: there is no significant relationship between transformational leadership characteristic of modeling the way and students' academic performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Successful schools have for long time associated with effective leadership Behind every successful school there is an effective school principal. VERNYUY (2015) for example restated that below any outstanding school there is an outstanding principal. He also stated that this is true for deteriorating schools which he said have ineffective principals. Darlin-Hammond, (2012) and McKibben (2013) posit that principals are rated second to teachers in improvement of student achievement and that they may explicate up to 25% of the variance in student learning. This is also confirmed by Abu-Tineh et.al 2009 and Leithwood et.al (2008). This is also posited by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology Kenya (2015) on its emphasis that performance of teachers and the school depends almost entirely on the performance of the head of the school. School leaders were deemed the most-influential school-related factor affecting student achievement outside of teachers in the classrooms (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; McKibben, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

The importance of school leadership calls for all concerned to investigate the style of leadership that can best make the schools effective. *Principals' leadership plays a central role in the attainment of the teachers', students' performance and implementation of the education policies (David, Wong, & Choy, 2015).*

Students' academic performance has been greatly associated with the kind of leadership in the learning institution. Management support influences how well any given practice is adopted in an institution, Management support influences how well any given practice is adopted in an institution, Gikonyo (2012). Wilson-Morgan (2015) underscores the role of school leadership by saying that it nurtures the capacity of teacher to combine teaching and learning, interpersonal skills and mentoring so that they can serve as the foundation to improve performance. The importance of effective school leadership is also emphasized by UNESCO (2009). UNESCO assert that high student achievement in education depend on the central role of effective school leadership that is able to create revolutionary changes within educational institutions. Students' academic performance is indeed seen as a barometer on how school leadership is practiced.

This is also confirmed by Leithwood et al (2002) who asserted that effective leadership is a key component in empowering students as well as improving classroom management and the performance of teachers and ultimately students. School leaders are able to influence students' academic performance in various ways. Indeed, school leadership have been highlighted in the context of its contribution to teaching, learning, and the creation of an appropriate environment for learning (Wilson-Morgan 2015). Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) also confirmed that those intending to improve learning in schools should start with school leadership which is considered critical in improving students' academic performance.

Research studies strongly support the fact that the leadership of the school principal impacts directly and indirectly on the climate of the school and, in turn, on student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The leadership of a school principal is a determining factor in school effectiveness, second only to the role of a student's classroom teacher (Leithwood et al., 2008). Day, Leithwood, and Sammons (2008) found that principal leadership is the major driving force that underpins a school's increased or sustained effectiveness and improvement. The importance of school leadership has led many researchers in trying to establish what make them effective.

One kind of leadership behaviour that has been a topic of debate among scholars is transformational leadership (Murphy, 2002). Transformational leadership is hypothesized to occur when leaders create within followers a capacity to develop higher levels of commitment to organizational goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them (Kotter, 1996; Northouse, 2010; Senge, 2006). The transformational leaders are able to do this by adopting certain characteristics associated with effective leadership.

Avolio and Bass, (2004) contend that transformational leadership creates an enthusiastic work atmosphere such that employees work more for the leader even if the monetary and other benefits offered less because they will be inspired by the vision. Most teachers in less developed countries normally feel demotivated by the low salaries they receive compared to their counterparts in other professions. For them to become enthusiastic to teach, they would need a kind of leadership such as transformational leadership. Transformational school leaders should make sense of challenges faced by themselves and their followers who are the teachers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leadership increases performance levels by influencing followers' values, goals and higher order needs to meet the organization's mission. As these leaders model behavior for followers, followers develop great trust to their leaders. They admire the leader and show high levels of loyalty to both the leader and the organization and are motivated to do more than they originally thought possible (Hamlin & Serventi, 2008).

One of the transformational leadership characteristics is modelling the way. Transformational leaders are expected to set an example and to show commitment through how they do their job and through their motivation. Transformational leaders normally set high standards which is imitated by all the subordinates in the organization. These leaders also show by example that they live by the values they advocate. Kouzes and Posner posit that these transformational leaders are consistent in their words and deeds (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

The philosophy behind Modeling the way is that the leader can influence followers only when he/she practices what he/she preaches. He/she acts as a role model that followers seek to emulate. Transformational leaders are expected to set an example and to show commitment through how they do their job and through their motivation.

Transformational leaders normally set high standards which is imitated by all the subordinates in the organization. These leaders also show by example that they live by the values they advocate. They are expected to be exemplary role models for their followers, motivate them to be more committed to the vision of the organization, encourage creativity and also act as advisors to their followers. Kouzes and Posner posit that these transformational leaders are consistent in their words and deeds (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) The principal must be a person who walks the talk. These encourage and strengthen the teachers. The teachers need a strong leader who they can identify with. The idealised influence aspect of the transformational leader enables the leader to be a model of performance (Olurotimi, Asad, & Abdulkadir, 2015).

Research has proved that school leaders who practice transformational leadership are able to exert both direct and indirect influences on attitude and behavior of teachers. These teachers are then able to willingly engage in teaching and learning thereby improving school performance and education outcomes (Lowrey, 2014). It is important therefore that the school leaders lead by example to be able to positively influence the teachers who are expected to willingly perform their duties and advance the school agenda. They must talk walk the talk.

By walking their talk, transformational leaders must model best practices and school values exemplifying the proper ways of doing things.

Transformational leadership is measured by the impact the leader has on his/her followers (Bass 1985). It is a leadership style in which the leader is able to make the followers have trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leaders. It focuses on the impact on how leaders strengthen mutual trust, cooperation and team learning. These leaders make their followers to be more aware of the importance and value of work and persuade followers not to put personal interest first above the interests of the organization. Transformational leaders are able to influence their followers to join them in bringing about the required changes in the organization. This they do by taking bold initiatives to bring about needed changes in the organization. Therefore, transformational leadership relates to the ability of leaders to get followers to learn from their leaders, to identify what has to change, and then willingly act to exceed their expectations to bring about needed changes (McCleskey, 2014).

Kouzes and Posner (2012) posit that leading by example is more effective than leading by command. Transformational leaders know that others are observing what they do and say.

This is because when people see that you work hard while preaching hard work, they are more likely to follow you. School principals can easily exhibit behaviours that they expect the teachers to follow. These behaviours include coming to school early and ensuring that the students excel in the subjects that they teach. Leaders are normally referred as coaches. Kotter (2008) asserted that leaders should demonstrate the right attitude to decrease negative actions. Kotter suggest that peer is able to change the followers' behavior. This is also true on the school leaders; they need to portray positive attitude towards their interaction with the teachers and the students. Their actions require behaviours and characteristics that can challenge teachers and students to achieve a high level of performance.

Transformational leaders need to demonstrate very high standards, are clear about their own values and philosophy and set and achieve shared values and goals. Modeling the Way begins with the clarification of personal values and involves building and affirming shared values that all can embrace. Eloquent speeches about common values are not nearly enough. Exemplary leaders know that it is their behavior that earns them respect. The real test is whether they do what they say; whether their words and deeds are consistent.

School principals are able to model for both the teachers and the students by daily acts that create progress such as being in school earlier than everybody else and ensuring that the classes they teach perform better than those of other teachers. These leaders act as role models in their moral and ethical conduct which should be of higher standards. Followers identify and have high respect for such leaders and want to emulate the standards. Ndiritu (2012) agrees with this by commenting that school leaders who model for their followers turn out to be admired, respected and trusted by their followers who in turn want to emulate the leader.

These leaders are seen to do what they advocate and are present for all the stakeholders to attest. This implies that, they should be in and around the school to monitor everyday activities to ensure the school is a nice place for teachers to work in and learners to study and perform excellently.

METHODOLOGY

This study was quantitative in nature. The research instrument used was the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) which measures leadership qualities (Kouzes and Posner, 1993). The LPI “Self” and “observer” was used to collect information on transformational leadership. The LPI-Self was used on the principals while the LPI-observer was used on teachers for triangulation purpose.

The survey was cross-sectional as data were collected at one point in time. Means, standard deviations were used to measure the degree to which secondary school principals practice transformational leadership characteristic of modeling the way. One-way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were utilized to establish if a relationship existed between selected demographic characteristics and the interaction of leadership characteristics of principals and students’ academic performance. To test relationships between principals’ ratings and teachers’ ratings, ratings of male principals and female principals, t-test was used.

A total of 211 principals from public and private schools were studied. A total of 2710 teachers were also selected for the study as shown in the table below

Type of school	Principals	Teachers
Public schools	72	1210
Private schools	139	1500
Total	211	2710

93% of the questionnaires delivered to the school principals were returned while 71.05% of the questionnaires that were delivered were returned. This was considered adequate.

Pearson correlations were used to establish if there was a relationship between transformational leadership characteristics and academic performance. ANOVA was used to test if a relationship existed between selected demographic characteristics and the interaction of leadership characteristics of principals and students’ academic performance. To test relationships between principals’ ratings and teachers’ ratings, ratings of male principals and female principals, t-test was used.

The data was analyzed and statistically evaluated with the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. A set of t-tests was utilized to determine the differences in leadership practices of principals in high performing (Above C+) and low (below C+)performing schools. The statistical test was appropriate for measuring the differences among principal groups

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicated that principals in high performing schools employ modeling the way characteristic of transformational leadership. It was therefore recommended that Kouzes and Posner’s transformational model should be taught to all school principals before they embark on leadership.

Mean and Standard Deviation of Above C+ and Below C+ on total LPI scores

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Above C+	52.1140	1.90431	14
Below C+	49.2860	2.29008	26

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey Honest Significance difference (HSD) indicate that the mean LPI scores in the above C+ schools (Mean 52.11 SD=1.90) were higher than the scores in the Below C+ schools (M=49.287 SD 2.29). This would make us conclude that the higher the principals practiced transformational leadership, the higher the students’ academic performance as measured by KCSE.

The relationship between transformational leadership scores and academic performance was also investigated as shown in the following table

Pearson Correlations analysis of the LPI scores for the two categories of schools

		Above C+	Below C+
Above C+	Pearson Correlation	1	.648
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.237
	N	14	26
Below C+	Pearson Correlation	.648	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.237	.
	N	14	26

There was a positive significant correlation ($r=0.648$ $p>0.237$) between the two categories of schools. This means that in schools where the principals were more of transformational leaders, the students performed better than when they were less transformational.

The relationship between transformational leadership scores and academic performance was also investigated using Pearson Product Moment correlation.

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Regression analysis of Principals' LPI scores for Above C+ and Below C+ schools

Further ANOVA analysis yielded the following statistics:

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.109	1	6.109	2.175	.237(a)
	Residual	8.426	3	2.809		
	Total	14.534	4			

a Predictors: (Constant), Above C+

b Dependent Variable: Below C+

In confirming if there is a significant difference between transformational leadership and academic performance, Analysis of Variance indicated that an F-Calculated of 2.175 was derived. However, the tabulated F Value is 0.237. Since the Calculated F is greater than the tabulated F-Value, we conclude that there is indeed a significant difference between transformational leadership and students' academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Principals in the Above C+ schools scored higher in transformational leadership characteristic of modeling the way than the principals in the Below C+ schools. This has an implication to all the secondary school principals. There is need for them to study the characteristics of transformational leadership characteristic of modeling the way so as to practice them if they expect similar performance to the Above C+ schools. Transformational leadership characteristic can also be embedded in the curriculum that is used by the Education Institute which is in charge of training principals.

Regression analysis of Principals' LPI scores for Above C+ and Below C+ schools

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