Collaborative Leadership Practices and Teacher Collaboration in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Educational leadership is used to enhance the effectiveness of school performance because school improvement necessitates the cooperation of all stakeholders to meet the defined standards of education. Alongside the increasing prevalence of new educational governance, the collaborative leadership style of educational leadership has received growing attention globally. the collaborative leadership style has been considered one of the effective leadership styles for principals because it is firmly believed to be linked with education innovation and the reinforcement of students' learning competencies. In Pakistan there is a growing cohort of disadvantaged schools, which, despite the socio-economic challenges they face, display a great degree of resilience and perform at levels comparable to the advantaged schools. The purpose of our study was to explore practices of collaborative leadership style performed by teachers' secondary schools. In this research we employed a quantitative research method to find the practices of collaborative leadership style experienced by the teachers of secondary schools. The systematic random sampling technique, along with, a survey questioner were used tool to collect data. The findings indicate that a distributed model of collaborative leadership is common in these schools. There is a significant focus on academic achievement, and school personnel are regarded as valuable assets. Time is highly prioritized and used to its fullest potential. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on enhancing the quality of inputs to ensure desirable outcomes. Insights from this study highlight the need to reconsider collaborative leadership approaches, emphasizing the adaptation of school structures and cultures to align with the specific context of the school community.

Keywords: Collaborative Leadership Style, Teachers and Secondary Schools.

Introduction

It has been universally acknowledged that the school principal's leadership style is key in effectively managing the school and improving overall performance (Zhang, 2013). Before the early 1980s, education leadership was centered around the principal's authoritative leadership style (Bush & Glover, 2013). Alongside the increasing prevalence of new educational governance, the principal's collaborative leadership style has received growing attention globally (Pan et al., 2015; Zhao, 2018). However, research on principals' leadership has shifted from general leadership to investigating different principal leadership styles (Pan et al., 2015; Lai et al., 2017). Leadership combines knowledge and skills that lead subordinates to achieve organizational goals (Ashraf & Ashraf, 2015). It is considered an art on one hand because it involves performing different roles; on the other hand, it is a science because it involves practical work (Gill, 2012). The nature of leadership in

multifunctional or complex networking organizations is not only adapted by individuals from personal experiences but also influenced by path dependency, cultural norms, and power relations, which have a restraining influence on leadership practices (Hallinger et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2017). Following the instructional process, research has revealed that school leadership exerts a significant influence, ranking as the second most influential element in student achievement, policy execution, and the attainment of external accountability targets. (Hallinger & Walker, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020; Walker & Qian, 2018). Hence, the topic of school administration or leadership has garnered significant global attention due to its influential role in comprehending school efficiency.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) discussed instructional, transformational, transactional, and shared or collaborative leadership styles in these leadership styles. Further, (Pan et al., 2015; Lai et al., 2017) explained that these leadership styles are significant in developing schools in light of the worldwide pressures that expose education systems to public scrutiny, as evidenced by widely recognized international assessments and rankings. Equally, with the growing concept of educational reforms worldwide placing student achievement at its core, this movement has enhanced the recognition of school effectiveness and the implementation of standard-based accountability systems in the twenty-first century (Zheng et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2017). The influence of collaborative leadership on school improvement has been supported by research showing that professional collaborative activities may positively affect student achievement (Louis et al., 2010; Dumay et al., 2013). Hallinger's (2010) review of empirical studies on school leadership concluded that leaders can positively influence student achievement indirectly by cultivating a collaborative learning culture within the organization and enhancing the leadership skills of staff and the community. Additionally, collaboration among school leaders fosters a climate of trust and respect, enabling open discussions around decision-making, performance, and accountability (Tschannen & Gareis, 2015).

Education serves as the foundation for quality growth and requires a continuous, inclusive education system that provides equal access for all (Fatimah et al., 2020). Education plays a crucial role in driving social change and determining a state's social progress and modernization (Lim et al., 2016). In light of its significance, the United Nations Forum developed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), consisting of 17 goals and 165 objectives, endorsed by 193 UN members during the 70th General Assembly (Wu et al., 2018). SDG Goal 4 aims to enhance sustainable development education by 2030. However, according to the 2020 SDG status report, progress toward SDG-4 has been slow, with Pakistan's national literacy rate remaining stagnant at 60% between 2015 and 2020 (UN, 2022). Coordinating various activities, such as planning, supervision, and evaluation, provides a framework for addressing the core priorities of school operations. As part of efforts to enhance their educational systems, developing countries have been actively promoting the use of school leadership teams to drive school improvement. Strengthening a school's capacity for growth is a central goal of leadership initiatives aimed at influencing both teacher practices and student outcomes (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008). Today, schools are expected to continuously reinvent themselves in order to demonstrate sustained improvement and maintain accountability to the school community (Lee & Louis, 2019; Pata et al., 2022).

Practices of Collaborative Leadership in Schools

In the 21st century, global educational reforms, a heightened recognition of school effectiveness, and standards-based accountability systems have increasingly spotlighted the importance of school leadership (Zhao, 2018). Specifically, leadership style is regarded as a key factor in enhancing the overall quality of education in schools (Zheng et al., 2017). As a result, school leadership has been actively involved in the rapid school improvement process, with schools encouraged to use diverse data sources and establish effectiveness criteria based on their internal dynamics (Scherer & Nilsen, 2019). In the post-pandemic recovery phase, it was emphasized

that successful revival would depend on place-based leadership and collaborative efforts in education (Nile et al., 2021).

Collaborative leaders can recognize the impact of their creative behaviour on others and adjust accordingly to the organization's atmosphere (Wepner & Hopkins, 2011). Collaborative leadership style is the way the administrators give supportive collaboration by creating room for listening, praising, asking for input, and giving feedback to carry out agreed issues to the certain goal of achievement (Rubin, 2009). We are now seeing a shift from individual-centered leadership to an others-centered perspective. Chrislip and Larson (1994) defined collaborative leadership as an ability to articulate a vision and inspire subordinates to share in and enact that vision. One of the hallmarks of effective collaborative leadership is to be able to guide and facilitate (Zachary & Fain, 2022).

Factors Influencing Principal's Leadership Style

There exist various aspects that can exert an influence on the leadership style and performance of school principals. Various factors can influence educational outcomes, such as individuals' personal attributes and prior experiences, policies implemented at the school and district levels, the interests of stakeholders involved, and the socioeconomic backgrounds of students' families (Dhuey & Smith, 2014). According to Leithwood and Day (2007), factors such as school size, location, and socioeconomic status (SES) of children can also play a role in moderating the benefits of leadership. Previous research conducted by Silins and Mulford (2004) has reached a similar conclusion, indicating that principals at higher socioeconomic status (SES) demonstrate a greater degree of active instructional leadership than their counterparts in schools serving kids from lower SES backgrounds.

The distinction in defining the school mission and goals between low and high-socioeconomic-status effective schools is evident since low-SES schools prioritise acquiring fundamental skills. Socioeconomic status can also exert an influence on how principals cultivate community relationships. Heck and Hallinger (2014) conducted a study. The researchers observed that there existed much stronger

connections between schools and households in schools with higher socioeconomic status. Principals consistently use socioeconomic strategies to engage community members in schools with higher socioeconomic status.

In contrast, in schools with lower SES, principals exercised control over access to the school to safeguard the school's program from external influences that could potentially diminish its efficacy. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that principals also play a crucial role in fostering an environment favorable to successful teaching and learning. School principals have limited control over the elements above. Nevertheless, principals must assume responsibility for the factors that impact student progress and are under their jurisdiction (Shatzer et al., 2014).

Impact of Teachers' Collaboration on School Improvement

The author emphasizes that this component extends beyond the mere provision of staff development opportunities, encompassing the active involvement of leaders as the primary learners in school performance. According to DuFour et al. (2005), there is a strong recommendation to increase the implementation of collaborative activities in professional learning communities. The authors assert that these collaborative communities offer significant potential for schools and the enhancement of teaching, representing a unique and promising opportunity. Research conducted by Jackson and Bruegmann (2009) and Hochweber et al. (2012) revealed several positive outcomes experienced by teachers. These included enhanced self-efficacy, heightened teaching effectiveness, and improved instructional quality. The aforementioned beneficial effects will enhance their professional quality, as well as their quality as individuals. As Hattie (2003) proposes, it is worth noting that teacher quality alone contributes to 30% of the variation in student achievement. According to Hattie (2015), establishing teachers' collaboration contributes to improving teacher effectiveness and expertise. There is a growing expectation for educational administrators to foster organizational learning that facilitates intelligent learning processes within schools, enhancing the efficacy and capacity for ongoing development within the organization (Mulford, 2008).

In recent years, a growing body of research has supported the notion of teaching as a collaborative and transparent practice, in contrast to the traditional perception of teaching as an individual endeavour confined within the walls of a classroom. This research emphasizes the importance of collegiality and cooperation, advocating for teaching to be conducted in teams and larger professional learning communities (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Numerous studies have indicated that educational administrators who endorse and facilitate teacher-professional learning communities employ various strategies, such as fostering collegiality, promoting collective responsibility and shared goals, facilitating professional development opportunities, encouraging reflective practice, and implementing quality improvement systems. According to Leithwood et al. (2006), promoting trust among teachers is facilitated by facilitating clarity regarding shared objectives and collaborative roles. Additionally, fostering ongoing dialogue among school staff and ensuring the provision of sufficient resources are identified as means to enhance collaboration. The results of the hypothesis testing concerning the effects of collaborative cultures on knowledge sharing generated significantly positive results. It means that the existing culture in an organization greatly affects the activity of knowledge sharing undertaken by the organization (Nugroho, 2018).

Method of Research

Worldview is the overarching perspective that subsumes the nature and characteristics of the research from its very beginning till the end of it. This research is conducted to make meaning during the research process and interpret the data in a specific and organized manner (Kumatongo & Muzata, 20121). In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher strives hard in ontological assumption to access the multiple or socially constructed realities through language, shared experiences, meanings, and consciousness (Muzari et al., 2022). Moreover, according to this perspective, data for the research is gathered via interacting with the people to be aware of their perceptions, actions, and experiences to gain deep insights into their teaching and learning practices (Al-Abneh, 2020; Richards et al., 2018). The research

design is used to integrate various research components logically and coherently. This section constitutes the data collection, measurement, and analysis. The research strategy was applied in this study quantitative in nature. The standard format in quantitative research design is for each respondent to be asked the same questions, which ensures that the entire data sample can be analyzed fairly. The data is supplied in a numerical format and can be analyzed quantifiable using statistical methods. The study involved survey tool to justify and achieve valid and reliable research. Overall, this study employed casual research using the casual method because it is widely recognized to know the relationship between two variables. Causal research is used in the latter stages of the decision-making process to establish whether there is a relationship between the cause and effect of multiple variables on various actions and efforts of leadership, such as teacher training affecting students' performance, as there may be other factors at play that drive the performance (Peters, 2022). With a confidence level of 95% and an error margin of 0.05, there were 480 questionnaires; each questionnaire was filled out from the overall population on the following sampling criteria.

The primary data collected from the respondent's survey tool was applied. Collect data from all six districts of Karachi based on the random sampling technique. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. In the first portion, mean value and standard deviation techniques were used to measure the level of collaborative leadership practiced by the leadership of public secondary schools in different districts of Karachi. Hence, the researcher gives levels to the practices of collaborative leadership style according to the mean value and standard deviation obtained. The levels of collaboration are very high at a mean value of 4.00 and above, more than 3.00 at a high level, parallel at 2.00 is low, and below than 1.00 is counted as a very low level. In the explanation of question two, a comparative analysis was given based on different levels of collaborative leadership practices practiced by leaders of schools of different districts of Karachi, and school performance was measured based on student's academic achievement and enrolment.

Findings

Overall Practices of Collaborative Leadership Style in Secondary Schools of Karachi Directorate

Table; Practices of Collaborative Leadership Style in Secondary Schools of Karachi Directorate

No	Collaborative Leadership Practices	M	S. D.	Level
1	Collaborative Leadership Practices in Schools of Karachi	3.90	0.45	High

Leadership is seen as an organizational trait rather than the responsibility of a single individual, so it is approached from a collaborative standpoint, emphasizing both formal and informal leadership methods. This includes examining how leadership roles evolve and are adopted, as well as how a collaborative framework can be supported by relevant teams (Spillane, 2012). In today's schools, various stakeholders, including parents, community members, teachers, administrators, and students, seek to have a say in the educational process. Mehdinezhad and Arbabi (2015) identified key elements of collaborative leadership practices, such as clear roles, involvement in decision-making, and knowledge sharing. Karnan & Marimuthu (2021) suggest that these collaborative leadership practices prompt leaders to engage more actively in organizational leadership. The descriptive analysis of collaborative leadership practices in Karachi schools, as shown in Table 24, indicates a high level of practice with a mean (M = 3.90, SD = 0.45). Cleveland & Cleveland (2018) explored how collaborative leadership operates, the concept of collaboration, and the process of fostering community engagement in education through collaboration. They further argue that highly collaborative functions positively impact team stability, helping members understand each other's strengths and encouraging cooperation to achieve organizational objectives. Developing and maintaining an inquiry-driven work environment, in turn, requires effective coordination.

Discussion

Teachers' capacity to change through collaboration implies their readiness to engage in joint work. According to Judith (2020), collaborative work features high levels of task interdependency; it is a far-reaching configuration of collaboration, unlike storytelling, aid, assistance, and sharing, which constitutes lower levels. Collaborative work means that teachers should collectively engage in instructional planning and solve problems by exchanging experiences, ideas, and methods to develop shared, innovative teaching practices (Meirink et al., 2010). In collaboration with school principals, teachers' collaboration provides an environment of empathy and support, keeping communication open and providing opportunities to develop the students' critical thinking abilities. Equally, teacher collaboration substantially influences school performance, as measured by the quality of the pedagogy and student achievement.

At the secondary level, teacher professional development is the most significant factor influencing education quality and learning in the province of Sindh. Strong priorities for the education sector are to improve the qualifications of teachers through improved pre-service training and implementation of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) model (SESP, 2019). There needs to be more than the teachers' professional development models developed by the Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STEDA) to meet the standards developed by the government itself (Imran et al., 2022). Hence, the provincial secondary school teachers must be trained to take collective responsibility for student learning, staff cooperation, and control over classroom and school work conditions. Thus, the teachers' development institutes should be directed toward properly evaluating these teachers' responsibilities.

Moreover, the teachers at the secondary level should be trained in the skills of teachers as leaders, and the teachers should be given awareness about the teachers' collective efficacy. Besides, these teachers of secondary schools have discussed the very effective use of 'collaboration,' so culturally tailored teacher education

programs should be offered to the teachers at the school level by the Provincial Teachers' Professional Development Authority (STEDA). A school-level professional development suggested in the literature is teacher collaboration. Ronfeldt et al. (2015) reiterated the global calls on schools to enhance teachers' quality through teacher collaboration activities. Such programs must respect the role and experiences of these teachers and fine-tune their skills to encourage teacher collaboration within the school, which is centered on teaching and learning issues.

Conclusion

Collaborative leadership has a positive role, so it is necessary to implement it in organizations to solve problems and disorders and continuously improve organizational activities. A collaborative leadership style is useful, so it is required to employ managers who have good decision-making power and determined preferences. Kind of leadership style is assessed, too. Further, evaluating collaborative leadership practices and effectiveness is an ongoing process. We must continue our efforts to enhance the quality of collaboration essential for students' outcomes or school improvement. In collaborative cultures, professional development is the only purpose, including coaching, peer observation, mentoring, modeling, and discussions. The activities participants engage in to get to know one another are aimed at fostering relationships. Principals can strengthen stakeholders' commitment to school improvement through decision-making and ongoing development (Robinson et al., 2008). Additionally, school leadership influences teacher motivation and teaching quality, which in turn boosts student performance (Marzano et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2010). Numerous studies have consistently shown a significant correlation between school leadership and leaders' willingness to put in extra effort during the school change process, resulting in improvement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). As a result, principals or head teachers seek ways to integrate principles of educational reform and knowledge society development with those that promote and sustain strong, inclusive collaboration.

School improvement involves efforts to move a school from its current state toward an ideal scenario, with administrators, teachers, students, and families all playing key roles. It is a shared responsibility undertaken collectively by the entire school community (Kocx Akran, 2020). A significant trend in education is the shift towards community-managed or self-managed schools, rather than those controlled by the state or district. Similarly, in many parts of the world, provincial and local governments have launched self-management initiatives, acting as partners or coordinators in the process (Akhtar & Hafeez, 2022).

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