The Impact of Leadership Development Programs on The Performance of Educational Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Educational leadership development programs are important to develop the abilities and competence of academic leaders to foster institutional success. This study explores the impact of such programs on leadership competencies, decision-making, and overall performance in educational situations. Research identifies such factors by examining different training methods, such as mentorship, workshops, and experiential learning, influencing leadership growth. These findings offer valuable guidance to policymakers and educators to provide more dynamic and results-driven leadership training to improve the quality of an educational environment.

Keywords: Leadership development, educational leaders, performance, training programs, institutional effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership is frequently emphasised due to the increasing duties of school principals and the accountability-driven environment where they operate (Daniëls et al., 2019; Kinnaird, 2023). With an average of thirteen per cent of all government spending on education in OECD countries, school administration is a top priority for public administrators (Sinuany-Stern & Hirsh, 2013). Leadership has a significant effect on school effectiveness. According to Culduz (2024) and Mbua (2023), principals possess a great deal of power when it comes to shaping policies and procedures and improving student-learning outcomes via their influence on teachers. Situational leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership are just a few of the many leadership styles that have emerged from the decades of study on educational leadership. Several leadership theories developed, and some expanded upon or synthesised prior theories. This study lays the groundwork for future studies on school leadership by analysing the development of this area, identifying the criteria for effective leadership, and providing recommendations for principals to improve their leadership skills.

Being an early adopter of a rigorous curriculum for principal preparation, Singapore has emerged as a preeminent hub for leadership development in Asia. The Diploma in Educational Administration, a full-time, one-year program for future principals, was first introduced in 1984 by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education; in 2001, it was replaced by a new course, "Leaders in Education" (Bush, 2008). According to Chia et al. (2021), the new program's primary focus is delivery. This observation exemplifies the general 21st-century trend of shifting focus from content to process, from "what" is included in development programs to "how" they are planned and carried out.

Many nations have implemented and expanded their development programs because the general public has faith in their effectiveness (Lambert, 2024; Eriksen et al., 2021). Governments are pouring much money into leadership programs because they think it will improve schools and leaders. People are investing in their professional development, frequently using their own money and time, because they hope it will improve their leadership skills and advance their careers.

The field of educational administration and leadership is attracting much attention. Growing evidence corroborates the widely held belief that strong leadership is critical to a school's academic performance (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022). Systematic leadership and management

development, especially for school principals, has been more popular globally over the last decade. Many nations have made leadership training mandatory. In addition, to ensure that qualified individuals lead school communities, governments, parents, and teachers, certification is required of new principals before they can go into practice.

Educational leadership is crucial, so cultivating capable leaders should not be random. It should be a methodical procedure to ensure that educational institutions have the most capable administrators. Leadership "must grow by design, not by default," as eloquently stated by Erkal et al. (2022). Siniša (2021) mentions the "professionalisation" of the principalship, which involves recognising that school leadership is distinct from teaching and necessitates specialised training.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic success and extracurricular growth in secondary schools depend on competent school administration. Leadership training aims to make school administration more effective by making leaders more competent. Participation in leadership development programs (LDPs) improves school leadership and student achievement (Krasnopevtseva, 2024). Well-designed LDPs can improve the quality of decision-making and the school climate. According to Acton (2021), school administrators should have access to opportunities to improve their professional practice.

Many academics have studied leadership, and their definitions of the term often differ. To structure activities and relationships in a group or organisation, leadership is "a process of influencing in which an individual exerts intentional influence over others" (Krasnopevtseva, 2024). According to Xiao and Vasudevan (2023), individuals and groups can take on educational leadership roles. Özdemir et al. (2024) and Kemethofer et al. (2022) highlight that different interpretations of educational leadership centre on the fundamental process and objectives of education, namely, the teaching and learning process and student accomplishment. One common complaint against educational leadership research is that it emphasises students' cognitive outcomes (Evans, 2022). Mahdi and Nassar (2021) stated that leadership is the art of persuasion that begins with well-defined principles and ends with a "vision" for the institution. Leaders express the vision in order to rally faculty, parents, and community members behind the goal of a more promising future for the institution (Kyambade et al., 2024).

A leader influences the actions of those under him to create a more cooperative and fruitful work environment with the ultimate goal of accomplishing the organisation's stated objectives (Cai, 2023). According to Bolden et al. (2023), effective leadership involves guiding and directing people, making wise decisions, and providing motivation to encourage positive change in a group or community. The success of any educational community hinges on the quality of its leadership and how well it implements the school's stated goals and objectives.

Improving future leaders' abilities to lead is, in a nutshell, what leadership development is all about. For most people, an action is considered adequate if it produces the desired results. Educational leadership has garnered much attention at this early stage of the 21st century. This is the widely held belief that leadership quality significantly impacts school and student outcomes (Streimikiene et al., 2021). The need for strong school administration and leadership to ensure that all children have access to a quality education is being acknowledged worldwide. This is applicable in both developed and developing nations. A growing number of governments are coming to terms with the fact that their citizens are their most valuable resource and that maintaining or improving their competitiveness is directly related to their workforce training. To achieve this goal, schools must employ dedicated educators guided by firm principals and backed by other upper- and middle-level administrators.

Evidence from studies of first-year principals supports the idea that formal training improves school leadership. According to studies conducted by Medford and Brown (2022) with first-year principals in the United States and England, one of the challenges of becoming a school leader is adjusting to a new culture. According to Plessis (2023), many new principals "flounder" (no preparation) when they try to balance all the responsibilities of the position. Zahra (2024) argues that leadership development is a "strategic necessity" due to the principal's increased responsibility. The idea that leaders are "made, not born" provides the foundation for Ationg et al.'s (2021) persuasive argument for leadership development.

Many people think that being well-prepared is important. "Leadership development makes a difference, be it in different ways, to what leaders do in schools," argues Jacobsen et al. (2022).

Leadership development can be classified into four distinct modes: acquiring knowledge for understanding, knowledge for action, improving practice, and developing a reflexive mode (Sanders et al., 2012).

Knowledge for understanding might be the overarching goal of content-led programs, especially those offered by educational institutions. A "curriculum" that outlines the expected

content of each program is available. The US-based Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed the Standards for School Leaders, the content of which is linked. Such programs "tend to place greater emphasis on the application of knowledge to improve practice than on theoretical issues," according to Wong (2017).

Knowledge for action and improvement of practice are two terms that Sanders et al. (2012) emphasise method over substance. "Personalised" or "individualised" learning is becoming more popular as an alternative to following a set curriculum to develop leaders. This type of learning involves tailoring various action modes and support mechanisms to each leader's unique needs. According to Mahdi and Nassar (2021), there is no silver bullet in management and leadership skills; moreover, there isn't a silver bullet for making these abilities a reality. On the other hand, development can take numerous forms that produce leadership and management skills, which can boost performance in different ways. Coaching, mentorship, and facilitation can all lead to individualisation.

Group activities are an integral aspect of many development programs, even though there is a trend to prioritise individual leadership learning. There are a variety of other group learning strategies that can be used to enhance participants' learning, although this could occasionally be a chance to deliver a "body of knowledge" through a purely didactic approach. Action learning, as demonstrated by Li et al. (2021), allows a "set" of individuals to engage in an "experiential learning cycle" of continuous reflection and learning. Through the growth of both the manager and the company, these writers demonstrate how action learning may aid in management development. Among the four primary methods for developing leaders, networking is supported by Dooris et al. (2021). The other three are formal leadership programs, work-based experiential learning, and mentoring and coaching.

METHODOLOGY

The academic literature on educational leaders' participation in leadership development programs was reviewed by combining a thorough keyword search with snowballing approaches. Prior research has used and recommended these techniques to collect data necessary for a literature meta-analysis (Cai et al., 2022). Google Scholar and EBSCO were the only databases used for this investigation. The tools' accessibility and usability and the extensive, diverse, and inviting literature on leadership development programs will likely play a part. Also, the scope of research conducted during this period is not meant to be highlighted, and the study does not claim to examine an exhaustive sample of literature in this area.

Consequently, a wealth of information available in these databases could be combed through to find any signs of a void in the current literature regarding leadership development programs. As per Karunarathna et al. (2024), the review presents a synopsis of current thinking in the field and explains the evolution of known information.

A comprehensive set of appropriate keywords has been compiled, refined, and enlarged throughout the stages of original literature recognition. Searching databases and using keywords led to discovering several English-language, full-length, scientific, peer-reviewed articles about educational leaders and the leadership development program. Additional publications that met the criteria were created after numerous snowballing and reference monitoring rounds. We checked each article to ensure it dealt with the same topic and that the dependent variable that was important to the study was relevant.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Numerous studies highlight the importance of leadership development programs (LDPs) in improving school management and educational outcomes and show that LDPs increase the effectiveness of educational leaders. Among the many duties assigned to principals and other school leaders are encouraging teachers to work together, improving the school as a whole, and shaping pedagogical practices. Loumpourdi (2024) emphasised that LDPs are crucial for developing leadership abilities and giving school leaders the tools to tackle difficult problems.

In order to train school administrators to raise the bar for classroom instruction and student achievement, leadership training is considered essential. Well-run programs highlight leadership qualities like making decisions, creating a welcoming school environment, and managing a team effectively. Learning outcomes and development plans (LDPs) are classified by Sanders et al. (2012) as information gathering, application, and reflection. These things must be in place for leaders to make wise choices that improve classroom climate and student achievement. According to Hashimy et al. (2023), leadership is not an innate quality but a skill that can be improved through ongoing training and education.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of leadership development programs for improving school administrators' effectiveness. Successful school creation relies on strong leadership, and LDPs lay the groundwork for leaders to develop their abilities. Leadership development programs must be contextually aware and backed by institutional frameworks that promote lifelong learning and improvement. They can significantly improve student

achievement by helping school administrators become more effective by tackling issues like contextualisation and institutional support.

Theoretical implications

Leadership development programs (LDPs) have important theoretical implications for educational settings, and they show how decisive leadership can be in improving student achievement. Leadership is not something someone is born with, but rather someone hones through experience (Hashimy et al., 2023). According to leadership theories like transformational and instructional leadership, leaders can affect the culture of their organisations and the results of their students' education (Liu et al., 2021). Leadership development programs (LDPs) provide a theoretical framework for enhancing leadership competencies by focusing on reflective practices, knowledge acquisition, and practical application. They help shed light on the idea that educational leadership is best seen as an ongoing process that necessitates refinement and modification. Leadership development programs (LDPs) emphasise teamwork and shared decision-making rather than individual initiative, crediting that leadership is a shared duty (Rawe, 2024). These findings lay the groundwork for future studies on successful school leadership practices and add to the growing body of theoretical literature on leadership models.

Practical implications

Concerning the practical side of the study, LDPs are vital because they provide school leaders with the skills to deal with the challenges of today's classrooms. With increasing demands placed on school administrators, LDPs provide actionable advice for enhancing school operations and teaching methods and cultivating a positive school culture. The ability to make sound decisions, work together effectively, and encourage innovation throughout the school are all crucial for improving students' academic performance (Maryani et al., 2023). Additionally, leaders can enhance the training's relevance and impact by customising their development to their school's specific needs through LDPs that incorporate action-based strategies and personalised learning. Leadership development plans (LDPs) allow principals to put leadership theories into practice, which in turn helps students succeed academically and the school as a whole. Educational systems can better prepare leaders to face the difficulties of their positions if they place a premium on leadership development.

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