

Students Learn When Teachers Lead

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Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between leadership behaviour of teachers and academic achievement at higher secondary level of education. The sample comprised of 480 teachers identified from government higher secondary schools of Kashmir Province. Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire having two subscales was administered to collect the data from sample teachers. Statistical techniques like percentage statistics, coefficient of correlation and ANOVA were used to analyse the data. The results showed that majority of the teachers exhibited ineffective initiating structure and consideration leadership behaviour and also showed that leadership behaviour of teachers is significantly related with academic achievement at higher secondary level.

Introduction

Given the current demands for accountability and student learning results, the approach to linking educational leadership with formally designated positions appears to be changing and now leadership in educational institutions is examined through a broader interpretive lens that views teacher leadership as a cooperative agency that is less

organised than the traditional held notions of formally approved leadership roles. The educational institutions need teachers as individuals, who can make decisions and cope with the stress of the changing world. Teachers are expected to extend their influence beyond the classroom and into institute wide leadership activities. This advocacy for teacher effectiveness and

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expanded leadership role is based on the belief that teachers are the nuclei of education system; the teacher leaders are in a unique position to make change happen and are critical partners in transforming schooling and teaching.

Research has led to the conclusion that teachers need greater leadership opportunities if education is to survive in any kind of meaningful way. When teachers step into leadership positions, they become more active learners, students learn by being immersed in a democratic community of learners, and institutions benefit from better decisions. Teacher leaders act as facilitators within the institute and as important element in spreading and strengthening institutional reform and improvement. Agba et al. (2010) revealed that teachers' leadership style significantly influence student academic performance. The study carried out by Akert (2009) concluded that teachers would like to have more responsibility in all areas when it comes to teacher leadership roles. Yildirim et al. (2008) indicated that teacher leadership style was the main factor affecting academic performance. Muijs and Harris (2006) found that there were five dimensions of teacher leadership namely shared decision-making, collaboration, active participation, professional learning and activism. Teacher leadership was viewed as positive, and as being a key contributing factor to school

improvement, because it was seen to harness teacher creativity and devolve work and responsibility from the head. Wright (2005) concluded that teacher leadership affects school improvement and that principal leadership helps to influence, support and sustain both teacher leadership and school improvements. Katyal (2005) conceptualises that students perceived teachers to be primarily instructional leaders. However, even in their role as instructional leaders students do not seek knowledge in terms of information. Teacher leadership affected the engagement of students with schools. Silins and Mulford (2004) found that teacher leadership contributes significantly to organisational learning and improvement in student performance. Study by Cheng, Yin, C. (1994) showed that class teacher's leadership style was strongly related to social climate and student-affective performance. Savadamuthu (1988) pointed out that although the higher secondary school teachers possessed both types of leadership behaviours-initiating structure and consideration, they didn't reveal any distinct type of leadership behaviour.

Research on teacher leadership has identified positive influences on the teacher leader, their colleagues, the school organisation and the students. A close look at the reviewed studies, however, reveals that the nature and importance of teacher leadership has been explored mostly in international studies. Noting

international and systematic call for teacher leadership as well as the lack of research in this area in Indian context, the investigator has identified research into leadership behaviour of teachers as one of the issues to be explored.

Objectives

The following objectives were formulated for the present investigation:

- to describe the sample of teachers with regard to their leadership behaviour at higher secondary level.
- to study the relationship between leadership behaviour of teachers and academic achievement at higher secondary level.
- to study the effect of leadership behaviour of teachers on academic achievement at higher secondary level.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the present investigation:

- leadership behaviour of teachers is significantly related with academic achievement at higher secondary level
- teachers with effective leadership behaviour differ significantly from teachers with average and ineffective leadership behaviour in terms of their influence on academic achievement at higher secondary level.

Methodology

Method: Descriptive method of research was employed to carry out the present investigation.

Sample: The ten districts of Kashmir province were involved in the collection of data. From the total population of 279 Govt. higher secondary schools, 120 schools (12 from each district) served as the sample for the present study. The schools were identified from the list obtained from Directorate of School Education, Kashmir (DESK), by using disproportionate stratified random sampling technique. 4 teachers were selected from each school (120 schools) for the present study by using systematic sampling technique, thus making the total number of teachers as 480. The results of class 12th annual examination were collected from the respective schools, aggregated and computed in percentage form and were taken as a measure of academic achievement.

Tool: Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire — (LBDQ) was administered on the sample teachers for collection of data. The Questionnaire measures the two fundamental dimensions of leadership behaviour i.e., initiating structure and consideration. It consists of a series of 30 short, descriptive statements; 15 statements for each of the two dimensions of ways in which leaders may behave. The possible range of scores on each dimension is 0 to 60.

Statistical Analysis: the collected data were analysed by means of

percentage statistics, coefficient of correlation and ANOVA. Data were analysed through SPSS Version 16.0.

Analysis and Discussion

(A) Descriptive Analysis

This section gives an account of the classification and description of the sample teachers on Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire in the areas of initiating structure and consideration. The scores on this questionnaire being 45-47 were considered as effective, whereas the scores of 32-44 and 19-31 were considered as average and ineffective respectively.

The overall analysis of teachers' initiating structure leadership behaviour has shown that only 15 percent of teachers were effective thereby showing that these teachers

got involved in developing the school improvement plan and in transferring the goals of the plan into classroom practices. It has also been found that 41.66 per cent of teachers possessed average leadership behaviour thereby indicating that they were moderately task oriented; whereas a majority of teachers i.e. 43.33 per cent were ineffective in terms of initiating structure leadership behaviour. These teachers always worked without a plan and failed to express their ideas clearly.

The overall analysis of teachers' consideration leadership behaviour has shown that only 10.83 per cent of teachers were effective thereby indicating that these teachers maintained good relations with their colleagues and were liked by all. They helped their colleagues work together to establish and achieve the goals

Table 1

Overall percentage of teachers on initiating structure dimension of Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire — LBDQ (N=480)

<i>Scores obtained on LBDQ</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Classification</i>
45-57	72	15.00%	Effective
32-44	200	41.66%	Average
19-31	208	43.33%	Ineffective

Table 2

Overall percentage of teachers on consideration dimension of Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire — LBDQ (N=480)

<i>Scores obtained on LBDQ</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Classification</i>
45-57	52	10.83%	Effective
32-44	196	40.83%	Average
19-31	232	48.33%	Ineffective

and objectives of the school. 40.83 percent of teachers were moderately people oriented. A considerable majority of teachers i.e. 48.33 percent of teachers were ineffective in terms of consideration leadership behaviour. It indicates that these teachers lacked the interpersonal skills that enable them to deal effectively with the group members.

(B) Correlational Analysis

In order to discover any correlation between leadership behaviour of teachers and academic achievement, Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) was employed. The results were analysed at the level of school in order to minimise the impact of individual bias. The results of relationship between leadership behaviour of teachers and academic achievement are presented in the following table:

Table 3

Correlation between leadership behaviour of teachers and academic achievement (N = 120)

<i>Leadership Behaviour of Teachers</i>	<i>Value of 'r'</i>
Initiating Structure	0.55**
Consideration	0.57**
Overall Leadership Behaviour Score	0.59**

Dependent variable: Achievement

** Significant at 0.01 Level

The above table depicts that there is a positive and high correlation

between Initiating Structure dimension of leadership behaviour and academic achievement having coefficient of correlation as 0.55 ($p < 0.01$). This indicated that when teachers acted as agents to initiate changes for school Improvement, and participated enthusiastically in school development efforts and plans, student performance was significantly enhanced. The table further reveals that a positive and high correlation exists between Consideration dimension of leadership behaviour and academic achievement having coefficient of correlation as 0.57 ($p < 0.01$). This revealed that when teachers were more involved in decision-making, maintained positive and productive working relationships with colleagues and students and collaborated with other teachers to identify obstacles to student learning, it had a positive relationship with academic achievement. Lastly the table reveals that Overall leadership behaviour of teachers is also positively and highly related with academic achievement having coefficient of correlation as 0.59 ($p < 0.01$). This implied that leadership behaviour of teachers strongly influence academic achievement of students.

In the light of the empirical evidence discussed above, hypothesis number one which reads as "*leadership behaviour of teachers is significantly related with academic achievement at higher secondary level*" stands accepted.

(C) Analysis of Variance

To find out the effect of teachers' leadership behaviour on academic achievement of students, the sample schools were categorised, on the basis of overall teachers' leadership behaviour score, into three subgroups i.e. Schools with Effective, Average and Ineffective Teachers. Further, the corresponding academic achievement scores were taken for analysis of variance (ANOVA). Mean and S.D. of academic achievement scores across three categories of leadership behaviour was computed, results of which are presented in the table given below:

reported average (M=60.65) and low (M=55.49) mean score for achievement respectively.

In order to study whether the difference in mean scores are attributed to real cause or have occurred due to chance factors, ANOVA technique was employed.

Table reveals that there is a significant difference in academic achievement among three leadership behaviour categories as the obtained F-value is 33.98 ($p < 0.01$).

This indicates that schools where teachers were highly task-oriented and took risks in order to find out new ways of accomplishing

Table 4 (a)

Mean and S.D. of Academic Achievement Scores across three categories of schools

Category	N	Mean	S. D.
Schools with Effective teachers	20	65.55	4.52
Schools with Average teachers	43	60.65	3.68
Schools with Ineffective teachers	57	55.49	5.87
Total	120	59.02	6.19

Dependent variable: Achievement

The above Table gives an account of mean and S.D. of academic achievement for three categories of schools i.e. schools with effective, average and ineffective teachers in terms of leadership behaviour. It is evident from the table that schools having effective teachers reported higher mean score for achievement (M=65.55) while as schools having average and ineffective teachers

the institutional goals, students' academic performance was also high. It was further reported that schools having teachers with average leadership behaviour had average academic performance of students. On the other hand, when teachers were disinterested in their work and exhibited lower level of trust and concern about the welfare of their team members; it had significant

Table 4 (b)

**Summary of analysis of variance of teachers' leadership behaviour
and academic achievement**

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degree of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F-value</i>
Between Groups	1677.00	2	838.50	33.98**
Within Groups	2886.96	117	24.67	
Total	4563.97	119		

** Significant at 0.01 Level

negative impact on achievement of students. This suggests that teachers' leadership behaviour has a significant effect on academic achievement of students as more effective the teachers, better was the academic achievement.

In the light of the above results, hypothesis number two which reads as "Teachers with Effective Leadership Behaviour differ significantly from Teachers with Average and Ineffective Leadership Behaviour in terms of their influence on Academic Achievement at Higher Secondary Level" stands accepted.

Conclusion

The current educational context pressures both leaders and teachers to improve their practice and raise student achievement levels continuously. The challenge is not only to improve but also to sustain improvement. These pressures have also put the concept of teacher leadership to the forefront of the educational landscape as the traditional leadership approaches no longer meet the current demands

of school reform. Through stepping out of the confines of the classroom, teacher leaders forge a new identity in the school and create ways of engaging others in development work. The findings of the present study showed that there exist a significant and positive correlation between leadership behaviour of teachers and academic achievement. It was also observed that schools having effective teachers differed significantly from schools having average and ineffective teachers in terms of their influence on academic achievement.

The findings of the study bear implications for policy and practice specifically in the context of secondary education. The study recognises that teachers can be leaders and that their ability to lead has a significant influence upon the quality of education in schools. Ways must, therefore, be looked for to encourage more teachers to actively participate in school decision-making. This study would provide some kind of insight for the school administrators and teacher-leaders to reflect on their leadership with a better

understanding of teacher leadership and how this fosters a learning culture. Furthermore, it reiterates how teacher leadership behaviour is pivotal in generating collaboration between teachers and in securing professional learning communities within and between schools.

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