

PREACHING AND DRINKING WINE: A NECESSITY FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS IN EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Effective schools have been said to have been run by principals that exhibited transformational leadership practices. School effectiveness can be measured by the contribution it has made to the improved academic and students' discipline. This study investigated the relationship between secondary school principals' leadership practice of modeling the way and students' academic performance in secondary schools. Modeling the way practice was measured using Kouzes & Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory. Academic performance was measured using Kenya Certificate of secondary Education Examination. Correlational research design was employed in data analysis. Pearson correlations were used to establish if there was a relationship between transformational leadership practice of modeling the way and academic performance. The results indicated positive but a weak correlation between the transformational leadership in "modeling the way and students' academic performance. School principals should model the way for all stakeholders.

Key words: Transformational leadership, Modeling the way, School principals, Academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been found to play a major role in social, political, economic and cultural aspects of a country (Mbeche & Ndiritu, 2005). It is on this basis therefore that education and training has been isolated in the vision 2030 as the only mechanism that will translate Kenya into a middle-income economy. The running of educational institutions has therefore been taken very seriously in Kenya like in all other countries. Research has indicated that school leadership is the most significant factor in enhancing school performance (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007).

Just as societal and school demographics have changed in recent decades, so has the type of leadership needed to successfully lead the rapidly changing schools of this century (McLeod, 2008). It is undisputed that school leadership is the most significant factor in enhancing school performance (Dinham, 2004; Kearney, 2005; Janerette & Sherretz, 2007; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). It is further agreed that although there are many factors that help make schools successful, such as good curriculum, quality teaching, and a strong professional culture, all these are shaped and developed by leadership characteristics of school principals. Principals serve as key factors in the health of the school and the success of its students (Cotton, 2003; Heck, 1992; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). Different scholars have tried to establish the kind of leadership that would enhance efficiency in organizations. A recent topic of interest has been transformational leadership (Murphy, 2002).

This study investigated the correlation between Transformational leadership practice of modeling the way and students' academic performance in Kenya secondary certificate examination. The findings in this paper are based on a research that was carried out in selected secondary schools in Kenya in 2012. This paper is guided by two major objectives

- a) To establish the extent to which secondary school principals exhibit "modeling the way" practice of transformational leadership.
- b) To determine the relationship between the secondary school principals' transformational leadership characteristic of "modeling the way" and students' academic performance in both public and private secondary schools in Kenya

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of effective school leadership has generated various researches to be conducted on the characteristics, skills and practices of effective school principals (Starcher, 2006). Through studies of best leadership experiences, Kouzes and Posner (2007) found a common pattern of actions and surmised that leadership is about these practices. The model of leadership they developed involves the common practices they found in their research. The five common practices are model the way; inspire a shared vision; challenge the process; enable others to act; and encourage the heart. This study intends to investigate the first transformational leadership characteristic as exhibited by secondary school principals and relationship of this characteristic with students' academic performance.

2.1 Theoretical background

Transformational leadership theory has its origin from Weber's theory (1952; 1978) about charisma especially his application of his theory to the roles of ancient Jewish prophets and priests (Bryman, 1992; Zeitlin, 1984). The interest on transformational leadership and charisma was later developed by Burns (1978) in his attempt to distinguish between transactional and transformational leadership. Burns' concept of transformational leadership was later reviewed and developed further by Bernard Bass in 1985. Burns (1978) contended that transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.

Although Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) did not base their work on transformational leadership in schools, there are may be similarities in such leadership whether it is in a school setting or in a business environment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Leithwood, 1994; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). In the school setting, Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) contend that transformational leadership for schools requires the harnessing of social and interpersonal potential in addition to demonstrations of expert knowledge about education and schooling. The principal, as an administrator influences teachers to achieve the goals and objectives of the school, by enhancing the teaching and learning process.

By following the work of Burns (1978), Bass (1985) developed a model of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Bass and Avolio proposed that transformational leadership could be identified by distinct behavioural constructs or attributes (also known as the "four I's"): Idealized Influence (behaviour), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration. *Idealized influence* describes managers who are exemplary role models for associates; *Inspirational motivation* describes managers who motivate associates to commit to the vision of the organization; *Intellectual Stimulation* describes managers who encourage innovation and creativity through challenging the normal beliefs or views of a group, and *Individual consideration* describes managers who act as coaches and advisors to the associates.

Studies on transformational leadership have come up with other practices that are characteristic of transformational leaders. Kouzes and Posner (2007) conducted their research for almost 20 years and suggested that leadership is a collection of practices and behaviours. Through studies of best leadership experiences, they found a common pattern of actions and surmised that leadership is about these practices. They suggest that these practices are essential components of transformational leadership. They were developed through intensive research on current leadership practices and have been recognized by many researchers as truly representative of highly effective leadership

practices (Taylor, 2002). The five common practices are “model the way”, which involves clarifying values and setting the example; “inspire a shared vision”, which involves envisioning the future and enlisting others; “challenge the process”, which involves searching for opportunities, experimenting, and taking risks; “enable others to act”, which involves fostering collaboration and strengthening others; and “encourage the heart”, which involves recognizing contributions and creating a spirit of community (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

2.2 Importance transformational leadership in schools

A review of effective schools research indicated that the school principal is paramount to a school's success (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1992; Protheroe, Shellard, & Turner, 2003). Scholars continue to believe that the principal is key to addressing the reform movement and creating a professional learning community with high academic performance (DuFour, 2002). Bottoms and O'Neil (2001) characterized the principal as the chief executive officer who assumes the ultimate responsibility for the success of the school.

Studies on leadership have led others to researches on the kind of leadership that brings effectives. One such study is on transformational leadership. For example, Berends, Bodilly, and Nattaraj (2002) found that effective and supportive principal leaders were most likely to increase and deepen the implementation of school improvement initiatives. This leadership style has also been found to create a positive school culture because teachers become interested and are involved in the daily interactions at their schools (Darling-Hammond, 2003, Kanter, 2003). This is further confirmed by Northouse (2001) who states that in 39 studies of transformational literature, individuals who exhibited transformational leadership were more effective leaders with better work outcomes. This was true for both high- and low-level leaders in the public and private sectors (Northouse, 2001).

Transformational leadership has also been related to teachers' effort. Philbin (1997) for example, found that transformational leadership created a willingness by teachers to give extra effort. Jackson (1999) concurred with him, stating that transformational leadership produced extra effort from the staff, increased the perception of effective leadership, and created higher satisfaction among the faculty. Transformational leaders inspire their followers to think more than their own aims and interests and to focus on greater team, organizational, national, and also global objectives (Jandaghi et al, 2009).

Hellriegel et al. (2004) are of the view that followers of transformational leaders feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect for the leader and are motivated to do more than they thought they would do. Transformational leaders make tomorrow's dreams a reality for their followers. Jones and George (2003) concur that followers of transformational leaders have increasing awareness of the importance of their job and high performance. They are aware of their own needs for growth, development, and accomplishment. Followers do not only work for their own personal benefit, but also for the good of the organization. James and Connolly (2000) concur that transformational leadership appears to motivate followers to adopt a critical reflective approach to practice, to actively engage in their work, and to experiment with ways, perhaps radical and creative, of improving the processes and outcomes. Transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often more than they thought possible.

Research has also indicated a positive correlation between transformational leadership of school principals and academic performance. For example, Ross and Gray (2006) conducted a study on

how transformational leadership behaviour contribute to increased student achievement by building teachers' professional commitment and beliefs on their collective capacity through raising the values of members, motivating them to go beyond self-interest to embrace organizational goals. They assert that transformational leadership influences teachers' professional commitment to school's vision, professional community, school norms of collegiality, collaboration, and joint work and also a commitment to community partnerships. In this study, Ross and Gray (2006) involved all elementary teachers in two Ontario districts in Canada with a total of 3042 teachers from 205 schools.

Data obtained from a Likert 1-6 scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, that teachers' beliefs in their capacity and their professional commitment mediated the impact of principals on student achievements. Thus, the results suggest that the principals who adopt transformational leadership style have a positive impact on teacher beliefs in collective capacity and commitment to organizational values. There is need however to test the relationship of specific characteristics of transformational leadership and academic performance (Blatt, 2002). As Rutledge (2009) observes, school leaders are critical in ensuring that school improvement efforts are successful. Systemic change for school improvement requires effective leadership – leaders who take an active role in supporting and sustaining a reform effort (Murphy & Datnow, 2002) and take risks to develop a positive school culture that encourages change (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Morgan and Hopkins (2000) also argue that complex and dynamic cultural changes needed for sustained school improvement, are more likely to occur as a result of transformational leadership that focuses on the people involved, their relationships, and requires an approach that seeks to transform feelings, attitudes and beliefs.

Effective leadership is essential when implementing school improvement initiatives Rutledge (2009). A study of the implementation of New American Schools (NAS) designs found that schools reporting strong principal leaders had implementation levels over half a standard deviation above schools at the sample average (Nataraj-Kirby et al., 2001). Findings suggested that effective and supportive principal leaders were most likely to both increase and deepen implementation in a school. Other studies have been done to establish if there is a relationship between transformational leadership and various school factors. Layton (2003) for example, sought to establish a relationship between transformational leadership behaviour of middle school principals and increased student learning measured by Indiana's annual achievement test. In his findings, transformational leadership of middle school principals was not found to be linked to increased student learning. However, transformational leadership was related to increased teacher satisfaction, a greater perception of principal effectiveness, and an increased willingness on the part of teachers to give extra effort. Middle schools with principals considered to be transformational leaders were more likely to have an adaptive school culture. These transformational leaders were more likely to promote an adaptive school culture through staff reward practices. A study by Griffith (2004) however showed no relationship between Principal transformational leadership and school-aggregated student achievement progress.

A study by Chin and Wu (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com>) which sought to establish the relationship between Junior High School Principals' Transformational Leadership, School Health and Teacher's Organizational Commitment indicated that there are significant correlations between teachers' commitment and principals' transformational leadership as well as between teachers' commitment and school health. The results also showed that schools with a high degree of transformational leadership on the part of their principals' behaviour and a high degree of

“healthiness” have greater teacher commitment than schools with a low degree of the same two factors. However contradicting studies have shown no relationship between transformational leadership and students’ performance. For example, Layton (2003) carried out a study on transformational leadership of middle school principals and increased student learning measured by Indiana’s annual achievement test. The data were analyzed using Cronbach’s alpha, Pearson correlation coefficients among other tests. The results showed no correlation between principal leadership behaviour and student’s learning.

2.3 Modeling the way practice

Modeling means living behaviours and values that you want individuals in your organization to emulate. Transformational leaders by living the lives that they expect their followers to live. They develop trusting interactions through doing what they do or say that they are going to do (Knab, 2009). Effective leaders set an example and commitment through their daily acts that create progress. Through setting an example, transformational leaders demonstrate commitment to the organisation and its people. They create a program and lead the others in performing the organizational roles.

In modeling the way transformational leaders appreciate what they believe in and are committed to it (Starcher 2006). Such leaders do not rely on words from others but express themselves using their own words and actions. By being independent on their words and actions, transformational leaders build their credibility. By setting the example, leaders demonstrate a commitment to the organization and its people. Through modeling the way, effective leaders cultivate a culture in which people are committed and loyal as well as take pride in the organization and its work (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

In a school setting, principals who exhibit this leadership practice are expected to be good examples to their teachers. They demonstrate a commitment to the vision and goals of their schools. Such principals spend time with teachers and students, paying attention to them and responding to their needs (Southworth & Du Quesnay, 2005). Such principals are also committed to spending as much time, if not more, at the school as they expect of their teachers (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Such principals are extremely visible throughout the school building, demonstrating the importance of the teaching and learning process and activities taking place under their direction (Shannon & Bylsma, 2002). They are also known to model their work ethics and expectations to their constituents. Bylsma (2002) reports that such transformational leaders listen to others, keep their commitments and respect others.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study targeted all the secondary schools in Nairobi, Kenya. This county had 72 public secondary schools and 139 private schools. There were also 1210 and 1500 teachers in private and public schools respectively (Ministry of Education, 2010). A total of 49 principals were studied both from the public and private schools. A total of 387 teachers were also studied for triangulation purposes. A stratified sampling process was used to ensure that schools from both the public and private schools in Nairobi were captured in the study. This process also ensured that both male and female teachers were represented equally. The study employed correlational research design.

The main research instruments were the questionnaire and an interview schedule. One questionnaire was for the secondary school principals and another for the teachers. An interview schedule was

also used for triangulation purposes. Kenya National examinations statistics were also used to validate the information provided on students' academic performance. Pearson correlations were generated for the independent (transformational leadership characteristics) and dependent variable (modeling the way characteristic of transformational leadership characteristic). Using the SPSS software, Pearson correlation tests were computed on the data, with an alpha level of .05. Data were analyzed using Pearson's moment correlation and Analysis of Variance.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Pearson Moment Correlations results indicated a weak correlation between the transformational leadership in "modeling the way and students' academic performance. This correlation was also not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Using the interview schedule teachers were asked to explain whether it was important for their principals to model behaviour for them. All the participants consented that it is important for leaders to do what they expect from their followers. This builds trust between the leader and the follower. One participant said "*Our principal insist that we come to school early whereas most of the times he is not only late but does not come at all.*" A large number of teachers, (78.12%) felt that the principals should at least teach one class so as to lead by example. Another teacher was of the opinion that principals who do not teach are not aware of the challenges that the teachers undergo in the class. In his words "*...when we are talking of lack of time to cover the syllabus, the principal does not understand at all....*" These results confirms Shannon and Bylsma (2002) who found that highly effective principals are extremely visible throughout the school building, demonstrating the importance of the teaching and learning process as well as the activities taking place under their direction.

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