

	    
<p>Khaleel A. Abu Afifeh The British University in Dubai, UAE</p> <p>Solomon Arulraj David Assistant Professor of Education, Faculty of Education, The British University in Dubai, UAE</p>	<p>Identifying Leadership Styles that Influence Students' Learning Environment: Perspectives from Five Schools in Abu Dhabi, UAE</p> <p>Abstract This study aimed to identify leadership styles that influence the students' learning environment. This research employed a descriptive design using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering. Three public schools and two private schools were chosen as participants. Respondents were volunteered by their leaders were mostly male and young professionals. Majority of the respondents were on their mid to master degree level having eleven to fifteen years of experience. The research combined both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Data were collected using both open-ended questions and self-made questionnaire. These data were analyzed using both statistical techniques and expert panels. The results of this study were based from six leadership traits and six leadership styles. Leadership traits were communicator and friendly, insightful perspective, self-confidence and self-assured, secured, persistence and determination, and dependable and trustworthy. Leadership styles were pacesetter, authoritative, coaching, coercive, democratic and transformational. The findings of the research support the claim of this study transformational and transactional leadership styles have good impacts on better learning environment.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Leadership Styles, Leadership Traits, Student Learning Environment.</i></p>

Introduction

Leadership is like education. It doesn't cease to exist as long as there such thing as an organization. A certain organization will only function positively when there's good leadership that can empower his people to work together in achieving a certain goal. In this study, the ideal leadership that would make an influence to an ideal learning environment will be described according to its characteristics and traits from how dominant the leader is, his ability to establish a good relationship with his subordinates, his skill to communicate to others, a character that can understand people and his being decisive. The study aimed to identify ideal leadership styles that will influence learning environment and sheds the light about the traits that help those leaders to build a comfortable learning environment.

This study aims to determine which leadership styles considered most important for school administrators to promote behaviors that often appear in the educational environment. This study was conducted to determine the traits (or attributes) that are considered the most important teachers' parameters for school administrators to perform their work effectively for the school. Researcher briefed on the views of 102 faculty members about school leadership performance. Analysis of the results of the 102 participants that resulted in effective school leaders is essential for the development of the academic achievement of the students. And teachers will determine to what extent it is important for the principal to exercise those traits as a leader of the school.

The study aims to answer its main general question: What are the styles and traits of school leadership that create a better learning environment? And to find

answers to these sub questions: What is the socio-demographic profile of faculty/teachers in terms of their age, sex, educational qualifications and years of experience that can contribute in identifying leadership style? What are the leadership styles that leaders manifest affecting the learning environment? What leadership styles do leaders possess that influences a better learning atmosphere? What leadership traits that a leader must possess to help in the development of a better learning atmosphere? In this study, the researcher confers indication that leadership can play a significant part in cultivating student learning. That leadership plays an indispensable role in achieving the three key areas of comprehensive development or learning. The researcher believes in its significance in the ever changing world of education, its system and the learners. By scanning other relevant studies, the researcher found most of them discussing the leadership styles or the leadership traits separately whereas this study tried to link the styles and the traits of leadership together. The researcher was highly motivated in doing this research believing a pedagogy that a leader should not undervalue how important in the growth of learners concerning its physical, mental and spiritual development. This study had materialized believing that the aspect of a leader that shows enthusiasm in improving the entity learner and administrates the place which enhances education and brings a good learning environment.

Literature Review

It is important to conceptualize some of the terms used in the study. Al Khatib, et al (2000), defined leadership as achieving a particular goal through the exploitation of manpower and resources available in minimum time, cost and effort. Leadership is centered to

people; skills, ability, capability, adaptation, learning and their self-consciousness to the ever changing workplace. Any organization or any group of people needs a leader, as stated in Al Hdiith Al Sharif of Prophet Mohammad, that any three or more travelers should employ one of them as a leader. One that has a vision and one that has planned to develop a certain direction. Learning organizations are run by people called instructors and the overall accountability and responsibility lies to single individual, the principal. Lee Bolman and Terry Deal (1995), have remarked many qualities leading to effective leadership. Among them are focus, passion, wisdom, courage, and integrity. Effective leaders know what is important and focus on it, care deeply about their work, have learned from both their successes and failures, take calculated risks, and are people you can trust (Sergiovanni, 2005).

Leadership style is the way how the leaders adjust to their role and at the same time reflect to their roles to come up with a decision. An organization continues to involve its member with planning, conflict resolving and making decision; this entails a leadership style that can scoop an enlightening encouragement. They take into account the motives of others as human beings and take all effort to listen to their needs. This study will help the readers explore the broader sense of leadership as it is being identified as a factor that influences an ideal learning atmosphere. Superiors are the managers and leaders in a workplace. However, such position entails characteristics and traits that would understand how people think and act. This actuation of a leadership will affect the development of an ideal learning environment if a certain leader will not have enough knowledge to motivate and lead his people. Furthermore, if a certain leader has the qualities to make the working atmosphere truly inspiring then he may influence them to create a better learning atmosphere thus contributing also to the development of a learning atmosphere. "The principal is the principle, and everything flows from there," said Larry Payne, (Markley, 1996). In a study conducted in America, one researcher noted the role of the Principal being the carrier of principle in the effectiveness and efficiency in carrying the development and improvement of the school. The principal manages a different philosophy that is being carried out by different practitioners in the field of education. Despite the variety of ideas that this people have, the principal can collate it to achieve one goal. Principals work with different parents having different cultures and varying principles; thus making the principal meeting the needs of each clientele.

According to Badjugar Preetika and Joshi Priti (May 2013), in their study 'A Descriptive Study of the Challenges Faced by the School Principals,' five school principals mentioned that the safety of students inside and outside the school was a big challenge. Studies in Canada by Macmillan (2000) and more recently by Fink and Brayman (2006), reviewed change of leadership can bring an impact in the continuity in carrying out the functions in

school. Sudden change and unplanned successions shatters the system thus also causing personnel to address the changes in school. This is one of the factors that bring about slow in growth because new system will be introduced according to the preference of new leader. Old models will be modified and new design of instructional system will sprout. However, active school leadership becomes vital in the positive change.

Richard Dufour and Robert J. Marzano (2011) argued that effective educational leaders like the work they do, in order to serve their works, and the people who work with them. The best leaders we knew in schools who demonstrate their passion and presence is important for the purpose of moral, and that passion that will help them to persevere when faced with difficulties that are inevitable as trying to bring about a fundamental change in the school environment. Marzano in his work refer to Fullan (2008) who informs that leaders demonstrated what has called the first secret of leadership: love those you are attempting to lead. These leaders gush with enthusiasm when describing their staff and their students. They view those with whom they work as the solution to the challenges they face and not the cause of those challenges, and they demonstrate their regard for and commitment to others by creating the conditions to help them succeed. Ibukun, Oyewole and Abe (2011) in their work refer to Itsueli (1995) who explained what is required of a school principal to achieve three vital functions: they make progress in the goals and guidelines; the establishment and harmonization of educational institutions on the preparation and implementation of appropriate programs. More recently, the occurrence leadership position had a wide interest and extensive study by theorists and researchers in a number of restrictions. Humphreys, Jiao and Sadler (2008) pointed that there was great interest in influencing the character within the leadership and many of the results associated with the leaders (Bono and Judge 2004).

Richard Dufour and Robert J. Marzano (2011) stated that the ability to articulate a realistic, credible, attractive vision of the future that connects to the hopes and dreams of others is a defining skill of an effective leader. When thousands of people were asked to describe what they want in a leader, their answers were very similar to their response regarding what they look for in a colleague: honesty, competence, intelligence, supportiveness, and so on. The only striking difference in the responses came in one area: forward thinking. People want leaders who are thinking ahead and helping define better future. One of the most important motivators in any organization is the belief that the work being done is valuable and worthwhile, that it is making a positive difference in the world. Effective leaders give the "gift of significance" (Bolman and Deal, 2001, p.95) by helping people throughout the organization find meaning in their work by linking it to a higher purpose and celebrating its importance (Amabile and Kramer, 2010).

In the context of this study, principals' leadership efficiency refers to the ability of the school principals to effectively transfer out managerial tasks related to instructional indoctrination, staff personnel administration, student personnel administration, financial and physical resources, and school-community relations toward achieving the school goals and objectives. To new teachers, the school leader should be the chief source of motivation and support through his advice, stimulation, instruction, and guidance. For knowledgeable teachers, the principal develops chances and channels to enable their contribution in the procedure making process, the preparation of programs, and resounding out a decision jointly agreed upon. For the principal to be of help to any teacher, he must know what goes on in the classroom, despite the fact that he or she accepts informal or indirect feedback regarding the climate of coaching and the value of teachers from students.

Dufour and Marzano (2011) argued that to be successful, leaders need to create organizations fluid enough to respond quickly to new circumstance. This involves the alignment of several levels of resource necessary to analyse, plan, and take action in response to opportunities and threats that the future brings. Another component of school capacity concerns the extent to which schools garner technical resource. Instructional improvement requires additional resources in the form of materials, equipment, space, time, and access to new ideas and to expertise. In a study by Okolo (2001) on the performance of elementary school principals, the results showed that there was a big difference in performance between the primary school head teachers with experience ranging from a period of 4-11 years, and those with 20 years of experience and above. And thus can one conclude that the experience contributes greatly to the difference in the performance of head teachers. A related study by Eyike (2001) showed that principals who benefit from ongoing training in certain process skills were more operative than those who did not. An important inference here also, is that skilfully trained principals perform their roles better than non-professionals. Amanchi (1998) stated that teachers who wide-ranging degrees in education have more professional outputs than those who do not. Focussed training allows and encourages such teachers for improved performance. For this study, only several work years the principals have, should make up their experience of management.

Characteristic headship is defined as combined designs of individual physiognomies that reproduce a variety of distinct differences and foster reliable leader effectiveness across a diversity of assembly and structural situations (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). The philosophy of trait leadership developed from early leadership research which focused chiefly on finding a group of genetic attributes that distinguished leaders from non-leaders. Leader efficiency refers to the quantity of

influence a leader has on specific or group performance, followers' satisfaction, and overall effectiveness (Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011). Many academics have contended that headship is distinctive to only a select number of personages and that these entities own certain incontrovertible traits that cannot be developed (Galton, 1869). Although this viewpoint has been slated greatly over the past century, scholars still linger to learning the effects of personality traits on leader effectiveness. Research has verified that prosperous front-runners differ from other people and own certain core character traits that meaningfully donate to their success. Accepting the significance of these essential behaviour traits that forecast leader efficiency can help administrations with their leader range, training, and growth practices (Derue et al., 2011). The discussion of literature review identifies the problem of the study the researcher tries to clarify; the combination of leadership styles and leadership traits that create a better learning atmosphere. The effectiveness of leadership on learning environment does not concentrate only on managing the day-to-day works. It is not also the instructional and development of staff skills. The school leaders should be the spring which waters everything and everything flows from there. The school principal should be the agent of change and the chief source of inspiration.

Methodology

This study was conducted in order to help educational practitioners to draw leadership styles that influence the learning environment and leadership traits that would help in the development of a better learning environment. According to Barnard (1938), the ability of the leader to influence his subordinates to follow a certain goal or path would depend on the style of leadership of a certain leader. This study was conducted at the 4th week of May 2015 until the 3rd week of June 2015. The researcher included one hundred two (102) respondents who were volunteered by their respective leaders from two (2) private schools and three (3) public schools in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The researcher depends on two criteria of choosing public and private schools. Most of public schools teaching staff are Arab and local nationalities with average age of forties. While most private schools teaching staff are in younger ages from different nationalities.

A permission to conduct the study was acquired at the office of Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC). Upon their permission to be one of the respondents of the proposed study, copies of the questionnaire were given to them. After the approval of the request, the questionnaires were then distributed; these respondents were asked to fill up three parts of the questionnaire; Part I is the respondents' personal characteristics. The respondents were asked to fill up the appropriate space to provide necessary data solely for research purpose. Questionnaire-1, which determined the socio-demographic profile of the

respondents in terms of their age, sex, years of experience, and educational level.

Part II is the different questionnaires averaging to twenty questions that determine the leadership styles the respondents' leaders manifest that affects the learning environment; leadership styles of leaders as perceived by the respondents that will influence a better learning atmosphere; and leadership traits as perceived by the respondents that will contribute to the development of a better learning atmosphere. Part III is focus on random interview to answer questions that the questionnaire cannot fulfill and is designed for a purposive focus group discussion as to why leaders need an awareness of seminar to develop an ideal leadership trait that would best develop an ideal learning environment. During the interview, each question was explained thoroughly before the respondents were able to answer. The data gathering with the respondents lasted for 3 weeks.

In this study, the researcher used this method to explore the faculty views about the leadership styles and the traits of leaders that influence the learning environment. The interview questions were designed to reinforce and enhance the questionnaire reliability and accountability. The interview questions were divided into three groups, each group is related to each part of the questionnaire. The questions of group one was about the leadership styles that found in the interviewees schools and how these styles affect the learning environment. Group two questions were about the teachers own believes of a better learning atmosphere. The researcher tried to draw a clear picture of what the staff believes and what they need for a better learning atmosphere. The last two questions of group two conveys the staff opinions about future changes in their schools and how they think these changes to be carried out according to their leadership instructions and views.

Group 3 has three questions; the first one attempted to report the leadership traits that contribute the development of a better learning atmosphere, in the second question, the researcher tried to unfold the traits that leaders should not possess. The last question explored and discussed the favorable leadership qualities that the staff thinks the leaders should have to lead their schools to a better learning environment. To predict the outcomes of his study, the researcher used data analysis. It is also the same process being used by the researcher to examine the trends of the population sample from the collected data.

Results and Discussions

The study were participated by 74% male and 26% female, more than half (52%) of the participant were young professionals aging 25-35 years old, large number (34%) of the participants were already on their 11-15 years and 28% were more than 16 years on the field of education. The following are the findings of this study:

1. The most perceived leadership style that affects an ideal learning environment is transformational style

of leadership having 87% of the respondents strongly agreed of the said leadership style.

2. Leader's motivation is highly affected in the staff performance. They always look forward for a highly motivated task in the daily challenges they meet in their workplace.
3. Leader's expectation plays an important role in whole process. One of the respondents even said that: "transformation is going beyond what you know about your job and what is expected of you to do".
4. Democratic leadership style influences a better learning atmosphere; about 62% of the respondents support this style. Education practitioners are type of working force that need to keep track of the changing environment. It goes with an ever-evolving technology change, learners' behavioral change and the influence of media.
5. A great deal of balance is highly required. So, how transformational leadership style can be truly inspirational in a work place. A respondent described how days are heavy when their leader shows stress and panic
6. The study shows a significant nexus between democratic and transformational styles. It showed on the data on how they agreed with democratic type of leadership and how they strongly agreed on transformational.
7. The leader is the one who will weave his followers and make them become a masterpiece.
8. One of the important findings shows that a communicator and friendly (84%) leadership trait is highly perceived to contribute to the development of a better learning environment.
9. Growing an ideal learning environment depends on the strength of the relationship between the leader and his followers.
10. A leader must be able to empathize and know what the person is going through in order to have a dynamic communication.

Based on the results of this study the following recommendations were made: The meaning developing from this study is that leadership styles and leadership traits are significant in every organization - the focus of this study is to identify leadership style that would influence in the development of an ideal learning environment. This has implications on the dynamics of the ever changing world of education. The recommendations are presented according to the different groups that will find this study beneficial. It includes individuals in an organization who aspire to develop their leadership styles and potential especially for education.

"Hiring the right people in the right job is easy" but "hiring the best people for the right job" entails skills in knowing who's who. Management through the human resource department should be able to define job specifications properly, outline job assignment and develop

work performance evaluation. With this, it is recommended that positions in the leader level or management level should undergo training to help them identify which leadership skills they possess and to help them develop their leadership potential. As a leader, superior needs to define the different aspect of his leadership, his role and the level of performance that is expected of him. It is therefore recommended, that a certain superior must at least have training in leadership before an assumption of a position. Therefore, it's a must recommendation that superior will undergo in depth people skills training to develop and enhance their skills in managing people, understanding them, and resolve conflict through communication.

The result of this study shows the positive impact of democratic and transformational leadership style on employees' job satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that staff and faculty should undergo training, seminar and workshop on "Understanding Leaders" in different work place. This will help them understand the stress that leaders often experience in management that affects their way of management. This will also help the employees manage stress while in the workplace when their expectations are not met.

As a leadership style creates a psychosocial environment that affects teachers, administrators, and students, the leaders' personal traits and values influence what they look at, what they perceive, and what they think they mean. ADEC has a huge variety of schools that implement different curriculums. So, this study will show how to develop unique leaders' styles who can manage multicultural schools in Abu Dhabi area, and how they comprehend their schools' rituals, policies, activities, traditions, curricula, and pedagogy through their own views. Much research has been conducted on the relationship between personality traits and leadership styles, but the current study analyzed the leadership styles and personality traits among private and public school principals, in Baniyas Area, from the followers' perspective. Additionally, future research should include different geographical and demographic contexts, as well as self-assessments by the principals.

Conclusion

Findings showed that the perceived leadership style of the superiors that would affect and influence the learning environment in a positive level is transformational style. Majority of the respondents clearly noted that they like a superior that inspire them and believe in their potential to develop their own classroom strategy. This research would help in the formation and development that corroborates the traits and behaviors of leadership styles that aid in the construction of an ideal learning environment. The selected synthesis studies have provided the researcher of the foundation and the reference points for many of his conclusions. Theories such as

transformational leadership and transactional leadership provided points of contrasts to the research findings.

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