

The Effect of Laissez-Faire Leadership Style on Academic Performance of Primary School Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Kasese District

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ABSTRACT

Education plays a crucial role in the development of society, particularly in the developing world. The purpose of this research is to assess the impact of a laissez-faire leadership style on the academic performance of primary school students in selected schools within Kasese district. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative data was processed by coding and entering it into a computer program called the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0). This data was then summarized using frequency tables, allowing for the identification of errors and necessary revisions. Among the respondents, 27 (45%) disagreed with the statement, indicating that teachers appreciate the leadership style that grants them freedom. This lack of accountability can have negative consequences. Conversely, 24 (40%) agreed that head teachers adopt a hands-off approach, empowering teachers to independently solve problems, while 60% disagreed with this statement. Additionally, 17 (28.3%) of head teachers spend the majority of their time outside the school, with their presence on campus being rather casual. This evidence suggests that head teachers do not perceive their presence as significant, failing to recognize its positive impact on academic performance. In Kasese District, the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) results for 2018 and 2020 revealed a disappointing pass rate of only 47%. Therefore, it is crucial to examine various factors, such as the leadership styles of head teachers, in order to address this issue effectively.

Keywords: laissez-faire leadership, academic performance, primaryschool, pupils, social studies.

INTRODUCTION

Educating a nation remains the most vital strategy for the development of the society throughout the developing world [1]. Student academic achievement is very crucial at every level; from a perspective of an individual, a family, an organization (like a school) and thenation as a whole. For a school to perform well both in academics and in co-curricular activities, effective leadership is needed [2].

Besides, in most school systems, school principal is required by the systemic authorities to improve student learning and is held accountable for it by building commitments in developing a shared vision for motivating and energizing the teachers and students [3, 4].

Globally, there is a desire in today's dynamic world class schools mainly those at a lower level have to contend with a desire to maintain or improve their competitive edge through education [5]. However, the most critical resource in UK, Switzerland and America is that more than 78% of these primary schools must harness academics with leadership behavior. An ineffective leadership styles has been one of the factors that has significant impact to the performance of many work organizations around the globe [1]. Findings from Malaysia according to [6] reported that in 2017

Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) released in 2017 shows that (2016) 1.11% passed in A (distinction), 2015 8.65% while 2014 is 7.89%. [7] reported that after a strong improvement particularly between 2006 and 2009, in 2015 the performance of Italian 15-year-olds in mathematics, reading and science as measured by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was rather mixed. The proportion of low achievers in science (23.2% in 2015) and reading (21% in 2015) increased compared to 2012, while the proportion of low achievers in mathematics declined further (from 24.9% in 2009 and 24.7% in 2012 to 23.3% in 2015). In India, 2010 open school examination results show that out of 524, 273 (52.1%) passed in A, 305, 495 (54.1%) passed in B [8].

In Africa, according to Global partnership for education Ghana development partner group (2012) reported that in Ghana in the primary pupils results on the National Education Assessment (NEA) of 2007 shows that 23.6% passed English and 13.8% in mathematics with high grade while 76.9% passed with low grade in English and 61.9% in mathematics. Mass education at primary education level, in African countries may require new leadership approaches in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in

academic performance. Through inefficiency much learning time is lost in many Sub-Saharan African (SSA) education systems. Twenty five percent or more of schooldays may be lost each year in poorly managed schools [9]. Among Southern and East African countries according to [10], over 50.3% of the government effort should focus on efficiency which is needed and can be achieved through management reforms; raising the learner teacher ratio, increasing teachers' time on task, reducing repetition and improving accountability.

In Uganda, [11] reported that in Uganda 57,198 pupils passed in first division, 293,977 passed in the second division, 128,573 passed in third division while 91,504 passed in fourth division. Also out of the 628,606 pupils who turned up for the exams, 571,252 (90.9%)

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Study Population

The population of the study was 355 comprising 325 pupils, 12 teachers, 12 deputy head teachers and six head teachers. The distribution of the population of pupils, teachers, deputy head teachers and head teachers were 54 from Munkunyu primary school, 49 from Kitsutsu primary school, 38 from Kacungiro primary school, 27 from Kilhambayiro primary school, 19 from Kabingo primary school and 21 from Katanda primary school (Kasese District DEO's report, 2016). These will be targeted because; this group of respondents provided information first on how administration styles affect pupil's performance (academic) Orodho, 2009.

Sample size determination

The sample size for quantitative respondents was got using [12]. The formula is an extension of Slovenes formula by involving proportionate sampling. The Slovene's formula is used to determine the minimum sample size and computation. The total sample for the Quantitative, Qualitative and Tests will total to two hundred and eight (208).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e_2)}$$

Where;

n = the required sample size;

N = the known population size;

e = the level of significance,

which is = 0.05 and 1 is constant.

$$n = \frac{325}{1 + 325(0.0025)} = 179$$

Sampling Technique

The study used simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was used to select pupils for the test and P7 class teachers. Simple random sampling allowed individual respondents to be chosen by chance [13]. Simple random sampling

passed the exams while 57,354 (9.1%) failed the exams. Comparing 2017 and 2016, it shows that there is improvement in 2017 where 90.9% passed while 87% passed in 2016. The total overall improvement in 2017 PLE is 3.9%. According to [12], only 67% of the head teachers in poorly performing rural schools attend activities as scheduled at schools, and 98% in urban best performing schools have seen head teachers perform their school activities as mandated by their appointing bodies. This envisions the role of leadership in schools' academic excellence. Moreso, this research aimed on evaluating the effect of laissez-faire leadership style on academic performance of primary school pupils in selected primary schools in Kasese district.

was selected because it enables the generalizability of the findings. Head teachers and Deputy Head teachers were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling intensity purposive sampling.

Intensity sampling allows the researcher to select a small number of rich cases that provide in depth information and knowledge of a phenomenon of interest [14]. Using both simple random and purposive sampling, the study was able to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the respondents.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criterion

P7 pupils, P7 class teachers, deputy head teachers and head teachers among Munkunyu, Munkunyu Primary School, Kitsutsu primary School, Kilhambayiro Primary School, Kabingo Primary School and Katanda Primary School, Kasese district, Learners in primary Seven, who consented to participate, were included in the study. While all teachers, head teacher, Director of Studies, Teachers of religion, Priests/Sheikhs and pupils among Munkunyu, who will not consent to participate were excluded.

Research instruments

Data was collected using objective type and semi-structured research questionnaires which maybe open ended or closed. The medium of instruction was English and others who were not able to read and write the questionnaires, the researcher translated to them, [15].

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers requested an introductory letter from the Director Post Graduate School introducing the researcher to schools where data were collected from after the proposal was accepted. The researcher presented the letter to the head teachers who then introduced the researcher to the deputy head teachers and teachers. The head teacher also allocated a teacher who directed the researcher to where the pupils who participated in the exercise. Each head teacher was briefed the importance of the study also, date and time for the distribution of the instruments was well

arranged. The researcher personally distributed the research questionnaires and conduct interviews after obtaining consent from all the selected respondents as it has been described in sampling section. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter explaining the general purpose of the study. In conducting interviews, the researcher tape recorded the respondents after obtaining consent.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected was processed by coding, entering them into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0), summarising them using frequency tables to identify errors and editing them. After that, descriptive statistics namely; frequencies, percentages and means were calculated. Inferential statistics namely; correlation and regression were also done to test hypotheses. This produced data necessary for generalisation of the findings. To determine the control effect of background characteristics, control analysis was carried out. The qualitative data collected was coded and grouped according to the study objectives and emerging themes for through thematic methods and content analysis. Thematic analysis was involved clustering of texts with similar meaning. Content analysis helps to distil words into fewer content related categories. The aim is to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon and the

outcome of the analysis is concepts or categories describing the phenomenon [16]. Qualitative data supplemented quantitative data and help in providing explanations.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher respected the rights of the respondents and maintaining honesty. This involved obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, respect for privacy and honesty in the reporting of data [17]. Informed consent involved ensuring that all the respondents participate in the study consciously, willingly and intelligently. For that reason, the researcher explained to the respondents the reason of this study to make them chose to partake in it on their own by signing a consent form. Anonymity was sustained by protecting the identities of the respondents by not linking the respondents' identities to their responses. The researcher tried his best to avoid all types of risk that may arise in exercise. In case if there is any risk the researcher took proper measure to solve it. Confidentiality was ensured through ensuring that the respondents are free to give and withhold as much information as they wish to the researcher. The researchers-maintained honesty by ensuring that data presentation, analysis and interpretation are strictly based on the data collected.

RESULTS

Table 1: Laissez-faire leadership style results

Questionnaire statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
Head teacher gives subordinates task and leaves them to do it the best way they know	0%	43.2%	11.7%	45%	0%	2.01
Head teacher assigns teachers work and keeps a low profile by leaving them alone as much as possible to do the work	0%	35%	6.7%	70%	0%	2.00
Head teacher applies a hands-off approach and gives teachers authority to resolve problems on their own	0%	31.7%	8.3%	60%	0%	2.05
Head teacher spends most of my time outside the School	0%	28.3%	1.3%	70%	12.7%	3.23
Head-teacher's presence in the school is just casual	0%	43.3%	16.7%	33.1%	0%	3.41
I hardly take disciplinary action against anybody	0%	82.7%	5%	8.3%	0%	3.52

Source: Primary data, 2023

Table 1 above shows the laissez-faire leadership style responses. The descriptive statistics were arrived at by using the 5-scaled numbers 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Undecided, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree. It explains the responses of respondents and the interpretations of the findings. According to the proportion of respondents 33, (55%) agreed with the statement that said "give subordinate tasks and leave them to do the way they wish."

While 27, (45%) disagreed with the statement. In this

confusion, the implication to this is that the teachers enjoy the leadership style that allows them to have freedom, because they will be reluctant since no one will be checking on them. 24, (40%) of the responses agreed that head teachers apply a hands off approach and gives teachers authority to resolve problems on their own, while 60% disagreed with the statement. 17, (28.3%) of head teachers spend most of their time outside the school, although 70% of their presence in the school is just casual. The evidence above means

that head teachers do not take their presence as important in the school, indicating that head teachers do not know that their presence is an automatic drive to good performance. However, when the respondents were asked if head teachers care about what happens to the school, 25, (41.7%) responded positively while 65% responded negatively to the statement. The implication to this means that the head teachers do not care about what happens to the school with or without them. It was also evidenced that 86.7% of the head teachers do not take disciplinary actions on the teachers, and only minimal percentage 5% take action but 8.2% were undecided whether to take action or not, this led to 3.50 mean score. 56, (93.3%) of the respondents seem to be agreeing with the statement that head teachers are putting emphasis on both performance and the learners, but 6.7% are in disagreement.

These findings are in agreement with the responses of the conducted interviews with the school management committees, parents and the learners. One respondent answered “*Pupils are not coming to school daily as expected but head teachers are paying less attention*”. Implying that discipline in the school is low for the learners and no disciplinary action is taken. Another one said, “*Teachers come to and also get out of school at leisure, because the head teacher seems not to be having any interest on them.*” While another one made a comment, only tasks from the DEOs office are taken too serious and not that the head teacher wants the staff to change the image of the school. This is an implication that the schools are run with the external force from the office of the DEO and the teachers do not give respect to it because the head teacher too fails to convince the staff on it.

Table 2: Correlation on laissez-faire Leadership Style

		Laissez-faire Leadership	Learners Performance
Laissez-faire Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	0.385**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		0.002
Learners Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.385**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.002	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-Tailed)			

Source: Primary data, 2023

The correlation results for the Laissez-faire leadership style and learners' performance above show that there was a significant contribution between the two variables, independent and dependent variables. The correlation between them is $r = 0.38$, which indicates a significant positive contribution, and $p = 0.002$ is quite less than 0.01 hence an indication of a positive significant contribution too. Thus, the researcher concludes that there is sufficient evidence at the 5% level significance that laissez-faire leadership styles significantly contribute to learners' performance. The findings therefore suggest that learners' performance can greatly be improved with leadership style. It also implies that learners' performance would be improved only if the head teachers varied their use of the leadership styles in place. The findings on this were supported by the findings from interviews and discussions conducted with the key governing bodies

of the school which revealed that indeed leadership improves learners' performance at school. Here are some of the responses, “*Well... we have clear and well-defined targets which are challenging to our school, these would have been met with ease if the head teachers working with us.*” Another responded, “*Our environment of work is conducive enough for learners to perform to the expectation, but the leadership here seems not to be giving them support.*” Yet another one responded, I do not see why someone would not excel in h/er performance, when the government has put all the facilities in place, I think the problem is leadership.

However, another responded, leaving learners and teachers alone in the school all the time is the evidence to indicate poor performance. All those interviewed indicated that leadership of any style contributes to performances.

DISCUSSION

The correlation between them is $r = 0.338$; $p = 0.003$. The $r = 0.338$ value means there is significant correlation between transformational leadership and learners' performance. “R” value of less than one means very strong contribution exists. The researcher concludes that there is significant sufficient evidence at the 5% level of significance that transformational leadership significantly contributes to learners' performance. “P” value of 0.003 is less than 0.01 which indicates a significant correlation between

transformational leadership and the learners' performance at school. The finding implies that the improvement in the efficiencies of the leadership would lead to a corresponding improvement in the learners' performance. This therefore implies that leadership contributes to pupils' performance. When the respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with the PLE results of their learners, 35, (58.3%) disagreed and 25, (41.7%) strongly disagreed. This implies that the performances of learners at all

levels is not satisfactory. The ascending mean score in the statement was calculated at 1.500. Evidence was also seen in the completion rate at school, 50, (83.3%) disagreed and 10, (16.7%) was in total disagreement (strongly disagreed). This finding was confirmed by [18], that completion rate of learners was very low in schools; 60, (100%) were in agreement that the enrolment at school is big. This issue therefore can affect the performance of the learners because the teachers will not have humble time for every child to attend to. The finding is in conformity with the finding of [19] who asserted that effective result demands fewer populations. 42, (70%) of the respondents were in agreement that the past rate was not satisfactory and 18, (30%) disagreed with the statement. The implication to the finding is that other schools are doing well in pass rates than other schools. Even though these learners do not meet division one (grade 1), their performance were relatively fair in the sights of others, [20].

The finding on absenteeism of learners indicated that it is very high in schools 60, (100%) respondents were in support to the statement advanced. In the statement, Teachers teach all the lessons as provided for in the timetable every day. The responses were disagreeing with the statement, 60, (100%) ticked disagreement

In the Kasese District, the 2018 and 2020 PLE results indicated a low 47% pass and it is instructive to interrogate the issues by looking at the various

ladder, the ascending mean was met at 2.00, although 20, (33.3%) agreed that formal guidance and counselling is given to learners on performance, 40, (66.7%) were not in agreement with the statement. The implication to this is that formal guidance is given very little attention by the teachers and the head teachers. On the other hand, 50, (83.3%) disagreed on the statement that learners were given home work in every subject, although 10, (16.7%) accepted that some formal counselling and guidance was given to the learners. However, 51, (85%) of the teachers did not give periodic tests to the learners nor did they take them through revision of such given tests. 46, (76.7%) of the respondent disagreed that the parents allowed pupils sometimes at home so that they can revise their homework, 14, (23.3%) agreed that some parents gave that allowance to the learners during their free time at home. The implication to this statement would be that learners would have limited time always at home and they would pay little attention to their performance through revisions of the learned activities at school; 60, (100%) agreed that facilities at the school did not affect the learners at school performance because the government put in a number of facilities at the school, but improvement in performance was at a standstill.

CONCLUSION

variables at play and by no means the roles of headteachers in terms of their leadership styles.

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