

The Manifestation Of Dominant Leadership Style Of Principals On School Performance: A Case Study At The Secondary Schools Of The Southern Region

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the manifestation of dominant leadership style of principals on school performance in Secondary Schools of the Southern Region in Ethiopia. The problems addressed in the research were the manifestations of dominant leadership styles of principals' on the performance of a school. The main research question that guided this study was: What is the dominant leadership style of principals at the secondary schools? How does this leadership style manifest in the schools? A qualitative method, using a case study design was employed with analyzing observation and interviews as a means of data collection. Through face-to-face and semi-structured, open-ended in-depth interviews with 30 participants, the researcher uncovered personal views of principals' leadership behavior on school performance. Principals used the autocratic as well as the democratic and laissez-faire style. With increasing educational qualifications the employees exhibit more of the democratic leadership tendencies and those who are educated less are inclined towards the autocratic leadership style. It was developed as a strategy that the principals had better equipped with knowledge and skills in management and leadership to transform the Secondary Schools of the Southern Region of Ethiopia.

Keywords: Principal; Dominant Leadership Style; School performance; Secondary schools, Southern Ethiopia.

I. Introduction

To address effective sector reform implementation, a major focus area in fostering school success and ensuring quality performance, has been enhancement of school performance influenced by the school principals' leadership behavior, particularly in the secondary level. As stated by Mohd (2000), the principal is a crucial person in the school to provide motivation and inspiration for teachers to work towards excellence. However, some people question the competence of school leaders in motivating the school community towards the achievement of educational objectives.

Currently, Ethiopia is engaged in expanding education at all levels. However, educators,

parents, and even governmental bodies have recognized the poor quality of services provided in the education sector. According to the MoE (2002), one of the factors contributing to the poor quality of instruction has been the poor leadership of school systems. In Ethiopian secondary schools, studies have shown that students' achievements have dropped mainly due to; lack of committed, experienced, trained and competent leaders in the schools. Moreover, the blame for the poor students' academic performance has been linked to secondary school teachers and principals.

Nowadays, the education system has been undergoing various reforms. Some of these reforms include the introduction of a school improvement programs (SIP) which encompass

improving school leadership and performance. The reform needs commitment and motivation from stakeholders implementing the packages. Under this reform, the role of the school principal has been found to be significant. In Ethiopia, as indicated in the SIP document, the Ministry of Education (MoE) addressed four major domains to improve schools (MoE, 2007). The domains include: teaching and learning, learning environment, community participation and leadership and management. The implementation of the SIP demands active participation of all stakeholders, namely; teachers, students, parents and the local community, supervisors, educational leaders and expertise at different levels (MoE, 2011). However, lack of monitoring and evaluation of the programs, and resources profoundly hinder the reform in the Ethiopian education system (UNICEF, 2010).

2. Literature Review

It is argumentative that school principals are influential in school performance as far as instruction, school environment, and the objectives of the school are concerned. Generally, principals are cornerstones within schools without which school performance cannot successfully be achieved (Lumby et al., 2008). Besides, principals have a powerful indirect impact in instruction (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Hargreaves and Fink (2004) specified the importance of leaders as follows:

- **Motivation:** Leaders motivate employees with either economic or non-economic rewards; in-turn, they get the subordinates to do the work,
- **Providing guidance:** Leader don't only supervise but also undertake the guiding role for their subordinates. In this case, guidance means giving instruction to subordinates on how to effectively and efficiently do their work,
- **Creating confidence:** Being confident is an essential factor for subordinates. Leaders can help them to become confident by appreciating their work efforts, explaining their roles clearly and giving guidelines to achieve the goals effectively. Listening to the

complaints and problems employees is also critical.

- **Building morale:** Morale signifies the willing cooperation of employees towards their job, getting them to attain confidence, and getting them to trust the leader. Leaders can boost staff morale by getting full cooperation; in-turn, they expend all their best abilities on the work to achieve the set goals,
- **Builds work environment:** Management is having things done. A work environment that is efficient supports a sound and steady growth. Therefore, leaders ought to pay attention to human relations by having close personal contacts with staff and as well listen to their complains and resolve them. Staff should be treated on humanitarian terms.
- **Coordination:** Is realized by reconciling individuals' personal interests with the goals of the organisation. Leaders' primary motive should be to synchronize personal interests with organisation goals by using proper and effective coordination.

In general, principal ship is a critical element in school leadership that aims to advance school performance. Principals should create a shared vision and mission for the school among teachers, students, parents, and the school community. A principal rarely leads in isolation, but leadership responsibilities are shared or distributed among staff. Creation of an appropriate learning culture or school climate for student academic achievement is very important. The impact of principals' leadership behavior on school performance is indirect; that is, leadership influences other mediating factors like experiences in student learning and classroom conditions. In turn, principals' leadership influences student performance. Finally, principals must provide both instructional support and organizational leadership and management that include curriculum and assessment.

3. Methodology

3.1 An overview

The aim of qualitative research is to understand the views of individuals, groups or events. The

design of this study basically consisted of a case study where the qualitative approach was used with minimal use of quantitative data (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

3.2 Research Method

Qualitative research emphasizes the investigation of multiple realities gained from diverse interpretations of the social world. Therefore, gathering rich data from different viewpoints promote an understanding of principals' leadership behavior on school performance. Moreover, the specific interview methods encouraged individuals to give detail information (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008).

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Techniques utilized to collect data for this study included; interviews, document analysis and non-participant observation. Each technique is discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 The Interview

The structured interview consisted of specific and defined questions that were determined beforehand, but with room for elaboration when posing questions and giving answers. Interviews gave respondents a chance to provide adequate data through face-to-face communication. It was also helpful as the interviewees developed self-confidence to ask for clarification on what they did not understand during the interview session. It was also possible to probe for additional information beyond what was raised in the structured interview. Through the interview, relevant information or data were gathered for the study (Kwindu, 2002) Brief notes were written to corroborate the interviews (Manoion cited in Budhal, 2000). The researcher interviewed six members of the executive committee comprising of principals, deputy principals, supervisors, heads of departments, teachers and students at each school (McMillan and Schumacher in (Makometsi, 2008).

3.3.2 Document Analysis

According to Best and Kahn (2003), documents serve as important sources of data. They are

helpful in evaluating or explaining educational practices. Thus, different types of documents regarding leadership and performance at each school were referred to for the purpose of this study. Documents used for this study included; the mission and vision of school, school improvement plans, continuous professional development plans, annual plans, lesson plans, code of conduct for teachers and students, and teachers' and students' portfolio prepared at different times within the past five years.

3.3.3 Non-Participant Observation

Observation as a data collection tools is an attempt to observe interactions and events as they occur naturally. Researchers use an observation tool to supplement questionnaires and interviews to collect relatively firsthand information (Burns, 1999). In this situation, Merriam (1998) pointed out that observation is used to triangulate data in order to validate the findings. Similarly, observation data were used in this research to crosscheck data gathered through interviews and records from documents (Lemmer, 1995).

3.4 SITE SELECTION AND SAMPLING

3.4.1 Site Selection

Five government schools were selected as a representative sample from five zones in the South Nation and Nationalities Peoples' Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia. A purposeful sampling technique was employed to choose participants from; Sodo, Dawro, Chamo, Halaba and Durame secondary schools.

3.4.2 Purposive Sampling

In qualitative approach, a purposive sampling technique is used to in the research study. In purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select sites and individuals to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In this study, a case study was employed and discussions are presented in the following sections.

3.4.2.1 Sampling by Case Type

Getting rich information from the cases is the basis for sample size determination (Coetzee, 1999). The researcher interviewed five

principals, five deputy principals, five supervisors, five heads of departments, five teachers and five students at each of the five schools reaching a maximum of 30 participants (six per school).

3.5 Reliability in the Research Method

Reliability in quantitative research refers to consistency of certain measurements while validity refers to whether the measurements used “measure what they are supposed to measure”. In qualitative research reliability is slightly different. Reliability in qualitative research is taken as a matter of thoroughness, and being careful and honest in carrying out the research (Robson, 2002). In qualitative interviews, reliability relates to practical issues in the interviewing process, including; wording in interview questions, building rapport with the interviewees, and taking into consideration the ‘power relationship’ between the interviewer and the interviewee (Breakwell, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007; Silverman, 1993).

3.5.1 Data Collection Strategies

Data triangulation is important as it increases certainty in the data being collected. Besides it brings neutrality making the research result bias free, valid and generalizable (Gall, Ball and Gall 1996). In this study, data collection strategies involved document analysis, observation and interviews. The researcher then triangulated the responses from respondents with the demographic information.

3.5.2 Data Analysis Strategies

The idea of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness in qualitative research, which is “defensible” and establishes confidence in the findings which is discussed later (McMillan and Schumacher 2001).

3.6 Reliability in the Data Collection Process

The strategies applied in this study are verbatim accounts and low inference descriptors.

3.6.1 Verbatim Accounts and Low Inference Descriptors

The study used description phrases very close to the participants' accounts and researchers' field notes. Verbatim (i.e., direct quotations) are a commonly used type of low inference descriptors. Triangulation was used to provide more insights by "Cross-checking" information from different sources and making conclusions through the use of multiple procedures (Gall et al., 1996).

3.7 VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The term validity in research refers to the accuracy of a measure which clarifies the phenomena with certainty of the world (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). Of relevance in discussions of qualitative studies is their validity which often is addressed based on three common threats to validity, namely; researcher bias, reactivity, and respondent bias (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Researcher bias in qualitative research refers to any negative influence that a researcher knowingly brings into the study at any phase. It could be study assumption related with the study design, data analysis or even a sampling strategy. Reactivity bias occurs through the influence of the researcher on the studied situation or by changing the behavior of those being studied rendering the research findings to be subject to error. Respondent bias may present itself in situations where respondents do not give honest responses; that is, they give responses regarding the issue based on what is the socially accepted instead of how they feel. Respondent bias may occur if the participants perceive a given topic as a threat or when they tend to ‘please’ the researcher by giving responses they deem as desirable.

3.7.1 Participants' Language

In this study, being conversant with different languages at the chosen sites was an added advantage to the researcher. The researcher was able to understand clearly the meanings of most expressions made regarding the issues related

with influence of principal's leadership behavior on school performance.

3.7.2 Field Research

Field research is a qualitative method where data collection involves observing, interacting with people, and undertaking interviews in a natural setting. This implies that the researcher had to undertake the study carefully, including research ethics.

3.8 RESEARCH ETHICS

In this study, attempts were made to address ethics of research. To this end, the researcher notified the study respondents that the study was intentionally planned for academic reasons. Besides, all the resources that were used for this research were appropriately acknowledged. In line with this, Schumacher (2001) stated that respondents should give informed consent to reduce risks linked with research, and to secure participants' voluntary participation in the study.

3.8.1 Informed Consent Dialogue

Informed consent is a process where researchers provide sufficient information to the respondents regarding the purpose of the research, including the risks and benefits. In general, the ethics review committee approves the procedures, including legalistic language, and signatures are appended by the participant, the researcher, and in some cases a witness. In line with this requirement, the researcher wrote letters concerning this study to the selected Zone officials and school principals.

3.8.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

In research context, maintaining confidentiality makes little sense. Confidential research is hard to conduct as researchers must report their findings which are not possible if the collected data were treated as confidential. Researchers need to build trust with participants by; ensuring them that identifiable information will not be disclosed, and putting an effort to protect research participants' identity by using various processes designed to keep their identity anonymous. Successful participants' anonymisation vary

based on the research context. In this respect, participants confidentiality cannot be guaranteed; the researcher may claim that efforts will be made to ensure participants' privacy and no identifiable information will be shared but that promise might not be upheld. As van den Hoonard (2002) noted 'promises of confidentiality are easier to make than to keep'.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Interview checklists were prepared and questions that constitute school performance prepared, including: Principal's leadership and training, school vision and mission, leadership styles and factors that affect school performance; Parents and community involvement, conducive school environment, academic performance and availability of resources. The developed interview checklist included the main research questions and sub-questions.

To establish a possible basis for more specific questions, the researcher used more general questions to start the interview. During the interviewing process, the researcher did not impose any view point on the respondents. Instead, a two-way communication was established between the researcher and interviewees to discuss issues in detail.

In this study, time allocated for interviews to discuss issues that required general understanding was between 50 to 60 minutes in each respective school. Before conducting the interviews, participants signed the consent form as evidence of written permission to engage in research. Besides, interviews were tape-recorded only for the purpose of research with participants' permission.

3.9 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Steps for Analyzing Qualitative Data

In qualitative data analysis, three concurrent activities are followed: data reduction, data display, and data management (Creswell, 1994).

Data Reduction

In qualitative data analysis., data reduction forms the first step in this process. This process involves data simplification and transformation of field data for ease of management. Data reduction allows application of deductive and inductive analysis. The process eventually lead to further data coding and transformation until data are substantially shaped up and reconfigured. Note worth is that qualitative data comprises of personal observations and recorded data which is written in words and phrases. Data analysis efforts refer back to the research questions and the transformed data, supported by specific resources used in the analysis process. After data are reduced, data are displayed using symbolized diagrams or word format. Information displayed during data analysis, purposely try to communicate engaging meaning for the readers.

Data Management

More often, qualitative data are derived from participants' in-depth interviews or focus groups discussions that explore issues related with the research questions. Besides, observations and document reviews are additional data collection techniques used in qualitative research. Recordings are then transcribed by the researcher with no identifying information or names are anonymously used. Transcribed text is cleaned and quality of the data reviewed against the original audio.

Data Presentation

After transcribing the interviews verbatim, the researcher re-reads each transcript making notes at the margins for words, theories or short phrases that sum up or present a pattern of information contained in the text. This process is referred to as open coding. The aim of open coding is to offer a summary statement or word or an identifier for each element that is being discussed in the transcript (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001).

The final record includes:

- Verbatim accounts,
- Non-verbal communication, and
- Remarks to supplement the search.

In general, the document includes participant codes, where; 1) P – Principal 2) DP – Deputy Principal 3) SP – Supervisor 4) HoD- Head of Department 5) T– Teacher 6) S– Student.

4. Results and Discussion

Thirty participants participated in the face-to-face interviews. The researcher conducted six interviewees per school (five supervisors, five principals, five deputy principals, five heads of departments, five teachers, and five students), totally 30 interviewees (6x5) from the five schools. The participants were coded as: five Supervisors (SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4 and SP5), five principals (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5), five deputy principals (DP1 to DP5), five department heads (HoD1 to HoD5), five teachers (T1 to T5) and five students (S1 to S5).

DISCUSSION OF OBSERVATION DATA

This section presents discussions of observational data from five government secondary schools located in the Southern region of Ethiopia.

School I

The school (S₁) is a mixed school which accommodates both boys and girls. Five thousand seven hundred fifty-three students (7753) were enrolled, and there were 268 teachers. Overall, all students and teachers were Ethiopians. The teacher-student ratio was 1:22. The teachers were qualified with Bachelor's degrees and some with Master's degrees. The principal had eight years teaching experience and a Bachelor's degree qualification.

The school was equipped with sufficient classrooms and the library was better equipped with the necessary books. The administration block was immaculate and equipped with information communication technologies. A non-governmental organization built one of these blocks.

The gate was firmly controlled by guards which minimized entrance of late comers from their home while teachers are in class teaching. However, the researcher noted that the school

showed inconsistent matric results of both Grades 10 and 12 students over the past five years.

The researcher concluded that the principal revealed some better leadership styles compared with other schools. He tried to motivate and support teachers and students and was firm on time management.

School 2

The school (S₂) is a mixed school which accommodates both boys and girls. All the students and teachers were Ethiopians. One thousand five hundred one students (1501) enrolled in this school, and there were 62 teachers. The teacher-student ratio was 1:25. The offices for administration, the room for staffs and the meeting hall were not well maintained. The principal's office was not well furnished with computers.

There were four blocks of ramshackle classrooms with unfurnished library and laboratories. Students were seen going here and there at any time. Generally, the discipline of the students was questionable. The researcher concluded that the performance of school two was also poor. Moreover, the motivation of teachers was low.

School 3

The school (S₃) is a mixed school which accommodates both boys and girls. All the students and teachers were Ethiopians. Four thousand five hundred thirty-two (4,532) students were enrolled, and there were 94 teachers. The blocks were immaculate. The office was equipped with computers and photocopiers. No students could be seen outside classrooms while instruction was going on.

The school had built additional classrooms aided by a non-governmental organization. This is why most parents were attracted to this school because of its consistency in excellent results (see Table 4.1). Many co-curricular activities were not done in the school, but students had debate programs. Award giving activities were organized yearly to encourage best performers in the school. The principal's qualification was at master's degree level and had good working experiences at

different positions. The supervision of teachers from Grades 9 to 12 was done by the principal as indicated in the yearly plan.

The researcher concluded that the school was performing well. Basics of principal's leadership like time management, resource utilization and motivation were manifested. This notion was also established by constantly posting excellent results from grades 9 to 12.

School 4

The school (S₄) is a mixed school which accommodates both boys and girls. There were 94 teachers and 3,178 students. All the students and teachers were Ethiopians. The school was furnished with attractive buildings. However, the school fence had been vandalized recently. Some building blocks were still strong, however, cracks on some classroom walls are being seen.

Excellent performance was a feature for the school in the past, but the results were becoming low. Students were going out of the school haphazardly. Some students even grumble of criminals that come from the bordering towns. The school could not give much emphasis on co-curricular activities; however, they placed more focus on academic work.

The supervision activities were not done well in the school. Moreover, Continuous Professional Development that was connected with the career structure, was unaltered. According to teachers and students remark, most of the office work was done by the principals.

Low participation of parents was perceived as indicated by all participants who interacted with the researcher. The KETB was also assumed to be inactive. Though the principal believed the parents to be unconcerned, students observed that parents had severe problems which hinder participation, but the principal did not make any effort to enquire about these issues.

The researcher concluded that there was no stable connection among all the concerned bodies, which led to the decline of the school performance. The researcher observed that the performance of the school was not consistent.

Therefore, all the concerned bodies need to participate to attain excellent results consistently.

School 5

The school (S₅) is a mixed school which accommodates both boys and girls. There were 75 teachers and 2,891 students. All the students and teachers were Ethiopians. The administration building was kept well, but the classrooms were dilapidated. There was no school fence except the gate, which is difficult for students' security besides being open to vandalism. Punctuality of students and teachers was a severe challenge. Students came and left haphazardly.

There was little evidence of the monitoring and evaluation of students and teachers' work. Only some students and teachers had portfolios. The matric results were poor. The principal held a bachelor's degree and had no extensive work experience at various levels. The researcher concluded that there was minimal supervision, monitoring and follow-up. However, some teachers and students were dedicated, but on the contrary the rest were not.

There are 30 participants who took part in the process. These informants were asked to describe their experiences with the principals' leadership behavior on school performance. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for data analysis. In the following sections, the participants' verbatim quotes are presented in italics.

What is the dominant leadership style of principals at the secondary schools? How does this leadership style manifest in the schools?

Democratic Leadership Style and School Performance

In a democratic leadership style, leaders have complete confidence and trust on their employees. Democratic leadership is a working situation where power and authority is derived from those governed. That means, the power to lead is rendered legitimate by the people. Decisions being made regarding organization matters should be finalized after consultations

and communication with various sections of the organization. This creates high self-confidence among employees and encourages better group efficiency (Ezenne, 2003).

The interviews anticipated to get opinions of principals about the democratic type of leadership. Regarding this issue, a principal stated this,

Schools don't operate successfully without participation of stakeholders. Principals are leaders of the school, they need collaboration in team-work, financial and material support, safe and comfortable learning environment, applicable rules and regulations and responsibility and accountability. Moreover, supervisors, head of departments and teachers need cooperation from parents in order to increase students' academic results. This could also help the principal in other ways (P5).

Most of the participants in the study emphasized that principals should consider the views of stakeholders. In this regard, a principal noted that "followers are conscious about their duties, but need order from the principal" (P1). This implies the presence of participation by followers in decision-making was low.

Similarly, another principal said that,

I like to get contributions from my employees. An essential feature of my leadership style is understanding others and trustworthiness. The suggestion could help me in that I can understand the needs of the employees and students, and to hold their visions. Hence, the style could be demonstrated by enthusiasm (P2).

With regard to the role of principals' leadership in the schools, the researcher cross-checked the findings of the views of the supervisors, heads of departments, teachers and students with principals. A teacher was asked to explain regarding principal's leadership and this was the response,

The principal maintains a close relationship among the teaching, administrative and support staff. Most importantly with students and parents. He attentively looks at the school's activities. We frequently find him exchanging information with teachers and students. He is able to establish teamwork among the teachers. The most appropriate leadership style he maintained was democratic leadership (T3).

Empowering communities requires a level of decentralization to give localities meaningful decision-making and administrative power, while holding these communities accountable also requires a level of centralization of power in order to regulate the power. Thus, the ideal school systems combine a bottom-up and top-down approach to simultaneously monitor each other's system. It also utilizes the teachers, parents, students, and the community to make the majority of meaningful decisions about a school, and yet also utilizes a strong central power to regulate all the activities. Principals and deputy principals were able to include teachers to the leadership positions of the school. It was also indicated that teachers were involved in meetings such as departmental, issues related to continuous assessment, guidance and counseling.

Concerning this this issue, a teacher said that "Issues related to disciplinary problems and staff conflict of interest are taken into the parent-teacher and students association (PTSA) and kebele education and training board (KETB)" (T4).

The head of the department argued that the principal of a school should be more consultative when it comes to employees. He said that "The principal has to be an exemplary for others. He should be more collaborative. This proves the opinion that he relies on group involvement" (HoD).

However, another teacher mentioned that,

The principal lacks participation in school activities and that he was unsuccessful in giving satisfactory

lessons. He claimed that the principal was unable to get the stakeholders to work together which proves a lack of consultation with employees and students (T5).

An effort was made in the study to clearly understand the respondents' view of the role of principals' leadership on the mission and vision of schools. Vision is what is intended to be achieved; e.g., to have quality education and training for school development. The mission is the way to achieve the vision; i.e., to work with other education stakeholders to provide, promote and coordinate quality training and research for Ethiopian sustainable development and responsible citizenship. The vision and mission of education statement set towards realizing better school performance. The mission statement gives education stronger motivation and provides parents with a clear picture of what school values are. It helps school leaders to come up with a plan which will involve the staff in revising the existing vision and mission statement or creating new ones. This is also critical in the curriculum development process. Therefore, in this regard, the purpose of the study was to see whether the respondents were aware that the school had vision and mission and how these were implemented. All agreed in the presence of vision and mission, but they differ in the implementation.

For example, a head of department said that,

The school has mission and vision statements that play a significant role in setting and articulating the objectives and goals for the performance of the school. However, there was a gap in achieving the stated mission and visions of the school (HoD1).

One of the long-standing criticisms of strategic planning in the business world is that it is a mechanical process that must be performed in a sequence of linear steps. Organizations are first encouraged to define a mission and set a vision, produce PEST and SWOT analysis, create goals, and generate corresponding performance measures. Finally, there is an evaluation process

that must evaluate the program effectiveness. Although the sequence of the steps is theoretically sound, the reality is that effective strategic planning is a non-linear process whereby steps can overlap or occur out of sequence.

A school plan is a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to improve with regards to the level of student achievement, and shows how and when these changes will be made.

For school improvement planning to be successful, it should include the stakeholders of school who participate in managerial functions of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the progress. It is true that the leadership of the school implements the planning process in a collaboration which indicates democratic leadership.

A head of department on the issue replied that “Involving all stakeholders ... for instance, parents and the community work together in the planning process that results in maximizing student academic performance” (HoD2).

Similarly, a teacher indicated that, “School principals should be qualified with the necessary professionalization. Moreover, they have to share the skills and vision with the other school community, and this has a relation between leadership and performance” (T1).

Kimancia (2007) notes that school leaders want to be involved in decisions that involve students, personnel, financial management, school community relations, planning and articulating the vision-mission, to name a few. Democratic leadership practices such as open-mindedness understanding, flexibility; persistence, consultative and accommodation are aspects stakeholders should consider in ensuring partnership in decision-making.

A principal suggested that “Participative or consultative leadership in school is necessary to increase students’ results. This could be done when teachers give freedom to students to ask anything democratically” (P1).

Why is this type of leadership essential? In response to this, a school supervisor replied that “A leader with power and willing to share responsibility is the characteristics of participative leadership. With his/her power, the leader sets the limits inside the organization which subordinates consultations are welcome” (SP2).

The staff and students are consulted and sometimes invited to participate in decision making, policy and procedures. The principal who uses this style of leadership is making a statement to staff and students on trust and respect. Shared belief and respect make easy the mission of the school and increases confidence by making the employees and students feel respected and valued (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 1996). In order to find out principals’ perception regarding the type of leadership employed in schools, most of the participants preferred the democratic leadership style.

In this regard, a principal revealed that “the principal’s leadership was ‘democratic’, largely because he allowed his employees to convey their views freely” (P2). However, the principal still believed that he should be respected. This suggests a mixture of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles.

Additionally, a supervisor responded that “Democratic leadership style allows members to voice their opinion. Decision-making matters. When stakeholders participated in schools, they need decisions to be made. Based on the context the type of leadership differs among leadership styles (SP3).

Many teachers explained the same opinion in the same school. In expressing the principals’ leadership style, a teacher revealed that,

The principal adapted a participative leadership style to promote common decision-making to increase the involvement of employees. However, he used to exercise the autocratic style of leadership which reflects the failure of staff in the decision-making processes (T2).

Principals should run schools more efficiently and effectively with reduced resources. They should be able to develop good school policies and implement them, have skills in delegating authority, and be able to understand teachers' professional problems, especially the young inexperienced teachers. Besides, they should be able to give professional guidance and work towards establishing good working relationship with the school community (Northouse cited in Jacobs and Kritsonis, 2006).

The teachers were asked about principals' delegation on what, when and how the delegation is carried out. A teacher replied that "In the absence of leaders, other individuals were delegated to accomplish the duties and responsibilities like leading meetings, curriculum and academic issues which could be decided on the behalf of the principal" (T3).

Regarding the benefit of delegating authority, a teacher stated that,

Delegation is very important in school leadership and should be well understood by school heads as well as by the teachers especially its process, benefits and how to make it work to the benefits of school performance. It makes the stakeholders responsible (T4).

Concerning teachers' involvement in decisions, participants noted that it was done frequently during the school planning process at the commencement and final phases of the semester. Quarterly meetings were held with the heads of departments per year on issues related to the teaching-learning where teachers were consulted.

Regarding the relationship, a teacher had this to say, "People provide thoughts and on various circumstances such thoughts are applied by the leader who has a democratic leadership style. This brings empowerment in teachers, which ultimately might enhance school performance" (T5).

The teachers' responses revealed that the principal used both the democratic and autocratic leadership styles. This was evidenced

with most teachers that the principals employed the democratic and autocratic leadership styles according to the situation. However, this is in contradiction with Roberts and Roach's (2006) idea that democratic leadership style is more favorable than autocratic as it is believed that it increases participation of stakeholders and improves school performance.

The country's Education and Training Policy stipulates the need to ensure access, quality, equity, and efficiency. Extending these prerequisites of the policy to the school level, the General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP) includes teachers', supervisors' and principals' capacity building strategies with clear objectives to facilitate and support school improvement. As a component of the quality improvement package, Ethiopia's general guideline (Blue Print) for teachers' development program emphasizes the need for school leadership, and supervisors who can provide effective support to schools in various aspects, including the development and implementation of the vision and strategic plan for school improvement.

It is also indicated in ESDP I-V that the existence of a transparent and efficient system of teacher and school leader development and assurance of their competence is one of the mandatory preconditions for ensuring the provision of quality education (MoE, 2007).

Regarding this issue a school principal said that "I always treat my employees fairly. My responsibility is to give the way to do tasks. Employees raise different issues and I try to execute" (P1).

On the relationship between the different styles and performance, a teacher said that,

The presence of good leadership style implies strong school performance. However, the existence of bad leadership in return leads to weak school performance. Therefore, this confirms that the direct relationship between the different styles and the performance (T1).

Regarding the presence of vision and mission and the leadership role, another teacher replied “The leadership role is to lead by consensus, and if the leader has shared vision and mission in the school, it will result in better performance” (T1).

Regarding the involvement of teachers in the school planning process, a teacher explained that,

The plans in the school for good instruction of courses and most of the teachers in the different departments involve in the school planning process. They do both the individual and group CPD plan that could help them to increase the academic excellence of students.

Participants also recognized that the principals and deputy principals are involved in all supervisory activities. Furthermore, all stakeholders are involved. Therefore, this shows the existence of collaborative planning.

Concerning, the relationship between the principals’ leadership style and school performance, a teacher had this to say “Good leadership improves students’ results by initiating the stakeholders of the school to be involved in the overall performance of the institution” (T3).

To confirm the findings obtained from the principals and teachers, interviews were made with deputy principals to determine if school were posting good performance.

In this regard, a deputy principal said that:

It is an effective school, because I can make the environment conducive by promoting, supporting and initiating teachers and students for effective learning and teaching activities in the school. Moreover, I am implementing supervisory work strategies using effective monitoring and evaluation systems (DP3).

Regarding the relationship with concerned bodies, a teacher replied that, “The relationship is

excellent. Bringing parents and community members closer to schools, leading to long-term gains such as, minimizing drop out, absenteeism and easy transition of students going from home to school” (T3).

Similarly, Carter (2003) affirmed that the involvement of family and community in education can also have effects on the learning environment for students. In the Philippines, it was found that one program referred to as Parent Learning Support System (PLSS) transforms schools into friendly, non-alienating, familiar places for students where they can work, play, and study without fear.

To validate information obtained from different participants, interviews were made with students to gather ideas in relation to the concerns discussed. When commenting on the performance of school, a student said that,

The school performance is fine. The principal is making a favorable environment for instruction. Tutorial programs and make-up classes were arranged especially for grade 10 and 12 students. We participate on the department competitions and perform better. This could result in good academic standard and relationship between the teachers and parents (S3).

Regarding the same issue, a head of department pointed out that,

Many of the principals have their own leadership style. Our principal is working towards the excellence of the school and participating in co-curricular tasks of the school. He can create a well-built joint effort among employees. He provides us all the necessary materials and guidance (HoD3).

Similarly, a teacher further added that,

The principal is willing to help and understand everybody's feeling easily. He is initiating and encouraging us to work hard. A principal is an individual who is approachable to all. If board members constantly meet the students and their

teachers to share ideas and advise them, it builds a harmonious relationship between teachers, students and the entire support staff and this is healthy for the students as it helps them even work harder to pass examinations (T4).

Based on information obtained from the teacher, it indicates that democratic leadership style was employed to some extent by the principal in this school. However, the principal ought to devise strategies to improve the school performance. Regarding this issue, a head of department argued that,

Management strategies that attempt to keep constant performance and rewarding teachers for excellent results attained by students was observed to get better in future school performance. If teachers perform excellently their efforts are adequately recognized (HoD4).

On the other hand, revealed that, “The principal is supportive; he listens to every one's opinions before making any decisions. Hence, our opinions are taken into account” (S4).

Regarding the cruciality of such type of leadership for school performance a teacher answered that,

It builds solidarity and collaboration. It leads to good communication which maximizes the performance of the school. Moreover, teachers were nearer to the grassroots activities and as such, a group approach would be an essential approach (T4).

The interviews also revealed that the heads of departments and teachers create a forum for consultation which was effectively used in the school. In support of the above idea, a teacher replied that,

To promote teachers and student relationships skills, teachers must create an inclusive atmosphere that welcomes all students to interact with one another. When students are

engaged in social situations early, they have more opportunities to develop social confidence and feel a sense of belonging (T3).

It was also revealed that teachers who can exercise the style of democratic leadership could shoulder the responsibility. Likewise, a student responded that,

We discuss freely with our class teacher informally about our grievances. Through such kind of communications, our issue would be considered. There is no question that the class teacher has an influence on our life. Both directly and indirectly the teacher creates an environment that allows us to be ourselves and to achieve more (S3).

It is essential to look for collective input into the design of the vision, ensure that it is flexible for change, and encourage common rights of the group. Additionally, some of the respondents recommended that the vision must develop and ensure that the vision is appropriately focused and has shared ownership.

In this regard, a teacher replied that,

The vision of the school needs to be specific not too general to attain, it is going to be extended, realistic and attainable and eventually it has goals and targets towards the accomplishment of the vision (T1).

Unfortunately, interviews with students revealed that they were unclear about the vision and mission of the school. The school ought to involve concerned bodies in the method of creating the vision and mission. Moreover, the principals should create awareness programs regarding the vision and mission of schools,

School planning is a different area of concern that needs the participation of all concerned bodies. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating if schools carry out different types of planning. Results show that the school planned for better

instruction of courses through the efficient utilization of resources.

Regarding the involvement of stakeholders in school planning, a teacher answered that “All the stakeholders such as principals, deputy principals, supervisors, head of departments, teachers and kebele education and training board (KETB) are involved in the planning” (T4).

With regard to stakeholder’s involvement in planning, another teacher explained that,

Stakeholders’ involvement in planning is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school and ensure continuous progress of students learning. Policies and practices that have an impact on classrooms include those that build school infrastructures, such as regular data analysis, the involvement of teachers and parents in decision-making, and the allocation of resources to support core goals (T3).

Bush and Bell (2003) noted that there is a need for an effective leadership behavior where schools are provided with an explicit vision philosophy based on consultation with others and team-work that leads to success in the attainment of good national examinations results.

So, in this study, the researcher intended to find out the contribution of principal leadership and its relation to the performance of the school. Regarding this issue, a teacher expressed her views as,

The principal is the leader in a school, the pivot around which many aspects of the school are revolving and the person in charge of every detail of the running of the school be it academic or administrative. A principal employs teamwork as a working strategy, and sets up committees and small groups of staff members to investigate ideas and to come up with strategies. It is critical that the school performance is evaluated against the performance of the person leading it. Schools require good leaders to organize the teaching-learning process to ensure that the school mission is achieved.

However, our school suffers from what is stated above, resulting in deteriorating matriculation results (T5).

Likewise, a student replied that,

Most of the time, our principal does not involve all the students in different kinds of discussions such as ... our studies, co-curricular activities, the use of library, rules and regulations of the school and exam related activities. However, sometimes our principal calls upon student representatives to participate on disciplinary cases only. This enables the school achievement (S5).

Concerning the influence of leadership on the performance, a teacher explained that,

Our school experiences poor performance, which indicates ineffective leadership. There is lack of involvement and implementation of school policy. For example, we do not implement the policies, and we do not get involved in the commencement of educational policies. Academic staff has the autonomy to devise mechanisms. For instance, as a teacher one can arrange tutorial and make-up classes in order to improve students’ results. There is no consultation which encourages us to do so (T2).

Teachers reflected that the school condition is not pleasant. The relationship among students and teachers is also bad; so, does the relationship among the principals, teachers and students. The students were not being empowered to shoulder leadership responsibilities and, in addition, there was no strong parents and community involvement. These factors resulted in low students' outcomes.

The students were asked to state their opinion and interest in the school environment. It was observed from the students that the school did not have a pleasant learning situation. A student for example said that,

The school doesn't give us a chance to investigate our abilities. We are not given

chances to take part in cluster-school festivals, education contests and co-curricular tasks, and that the case students fail to perform better and lag behind in school (S2).

On the other hand, students gave their responses regarding the level of school performance. Another student explained that,

Our school leaders call upon class monitors and leaders of clubs to discuss issues that affect students. Head of departments and teachers could arrange students in different cooperative groupings in order to discuss and study different kinds of disciplines (S3).

From the response this school seems to be on the way to better performance. Good leadership implies that the school ought to include all the concerned bodies.

Accordingly, regarding the relationship among the management, the community and stakeholders, a teacher replied that:

The relationship with all the stakeholders and the school is excellent. The leadership of the school involves parents. Hence, the relationship was healthy with the public and influential people. The reason for this could be to give emphasis to the society to be committed and devoted for the excellent performance of a school (T3).

Additionally, a student also mentioned that,

Parents are given an opportunity to come to school any time. It could be made on their willingness. They should come and help their children on the follow-up process for those who are performing and not performing better at school. They come up with new ideas that will help the school in the instruction. These help the school strengthen the link between parents and the society (S1).

On the same issue, a head of department indicated that,

The principal consults with the community on issues like teaching-learning, assessment and student support. The relationship between the school and the community is good which results in provision of support on different school activities. This could have its own impact on the matriculation pass rate for a couple of years (HoD1).

Regarding principal's role in running the school, a teacher indicated that,

The leader, most of the time exercised shared responsibilities. He meets teachers, PTSA, KETB and the management team on a regular basis to get feedback from their respective tasks to follow and monitor the performance of the school by the involvement of all parties (T3).

Similarly, a student had this to say,

The leader does not work alone. He is working jointly with deputy principals, head of departments and teachers dealing with curriculum and discipline issues in the school. He engages students and parents too. Students have meetings to convey their observations regularly. In such meeting the students' opinions are respected and dealt with (S1).

It was observed that the school has a mission and vision. The mission statement of the school is to foster lifelong learning by nurturing the unique talents of each, promote social responsibility and prepare the students for responsible citizenship. In this regard, a teacher revealed that,

We tried to make our students to be visionary, but some of teachers do not get involved in coordinating students to share the vision for future of the school. If leaders and teachers are not willing to share their knowledge and skills in the innovative and change process, it will result in inefficient school in all rounded development of students (T4).

With respect to the establishment of collaboration and cooperation in schools, a deputy principal said that,

A few employees are committed and devoted to work hard in the school. But there is lack of common understanding among employees to cooperate and collaborate in the school activities. Hence, the school board should work on creating awareness on collaborative work by developing a shared vision towards the planning process (DP4).

Similarly, a student explained that

Teachers consult students on how to implement activities. It is imperative that students should spend more time in class than elsewhere. If students are not participating in decision making, it makes them to breach school rules and regulations (S4).

Leadership is understood as a process of influence that is based on clear values and beliefs, leading to a 'vision' for the school. The vision is clearly developed by leaders who seek to gain staff and stakeholders commitment on the idea of a better future for the school, its students and stakeholders (Anderson and Dexter, 2005). Participants were asked about the connection between leadership and performance. Regarding this issue, a teacher indicated that,

Inability to exercise a democratic type of leadership, employees will always be unhappy, and the staff turnover may increase alarmingly. This will certainly lead the school performance into delinquency. However, democratic leadership paves the way to participate many, and there is a possibility of getting rid of disagreements (T2).

A student had the same opinion that "If teachers are not working as a group and are not participating, the students will be uncheerful, and when this happens, without doubt, there will be negative impact on performance" (S2).

A familiar climate is necessary for a school to be effective and it can be characterized by a cheerful and friendly interaction between the principal and employees. In connection with the above idea, a teacher said to say,

A school will only realize a positive climate if successfully planned and coordinated to fulfill the needs of the society in all rounded personality. However, in order to do this our school has many problems such as discipline, political interference and of forgery documents. It is not only grades that verify the quality of schools but also the responsibility of the school community that changes the behavior into better human beings (T5).

Autocratic Leadership Style and School Performance

Generally, a leader who gets things done is advantageous but the follower becomes dependent on the leader and his/her personal development becomes a disadvantage from the autocratic leadership style (Yukl, 2013). While decisions made by the leader are binding for the team regardless of the leadership style, autocratic leadership allows minimal team participation in the decision-making process, and at times leaders even ignore subordinates' opinions (John, 2002).

Autocratic leaders are too firm to secure effectiveness according to teachers' response. Moreover, most of the teachers replied that when some principals employed an autocratic leadership style, the school may not get high-quality results. In connection with the above idea, HoD2 responded,

Autocrats are tyrants who enforce their orders on others leading to hostility of people from them. Leaders make decisions without consulting the followers, and ultimately hurt them from performing to their excellence.

A head of department (HoD) described how infrequently the deputy overrides their messages to the leader because he constantly ordered things to be accomplished in his method. Some heads of different departments in the school were

exercising autocratic leadership as replied by many teachers.

A principal was requested to respond regarding the leadership style he used. He answered that “Autocratic leadership style is used, when issues related with the realization of policies, regulation and any change activities in the school” (P1).

On the same issue a head of department said that “there are situations that determine to make decisions without discussion” (DP1).

Similarly, another principal P3 replied that,

Autocratic leadership style is used where little or no input is needed from the group. However, each individual is permitted to provide their ideas, but the last decision will be made by all the concerned bodies (P3).

As previously described, autocratic leadership style was infrequently exercised in schools. Leaders who used autocratic leadership tends to overlook the knowledge and expertise brought by about by group members in relation to the situation. Failures to consult with team members in such situations jeopardize the overall success of the group. The style also creates dispute with students. Autocratic leadership style is not recommended because the style prevents group participation and cooperation. Ideas forwarded respondents appeared to point out that when autocratic leadership was practiced it was not easy to produce outstanding performance in schools.

Regarding this issue, a deputy principal said that,

Autocratic leadership works in a chaotic type of school. In such an environment, dictators can order to set the schemes in place to develop schools’ performance using power. It usually leads to a high level of absenteeism and staff turnover (DP2).

Managing people using autocratic leadership is so difficult (Cherry, 2014). This can be analyzed as an authoritarian style of leadership which eventually suppresses inventiveness of others.

Choosing the right kind of leadership styles could be achieved by having an outstanding leader with highly motivated, devoted and committed followers. The ideas of respondents supported the work of Frost and Harris’s (2003) who concluded that it is essential to give a chance to all teachers to utilize their capacity to make transformation and improvement in schools.

During the interviews, principals were asked how this style affected performance. For example, a principal answered that,

My teachers are involved in professional career developments and this helped them in their instructional process. However, if teachers are not cooperative in helping students in the instructional process and not involved in the leadership of school, these will result in less achievement of performance (P5).

On the contrary, the principal in his leadership, he stated that he used democratic leadership style, and on other instances, autocratic style. For instance, the principal added that “Excellent work is realized when the style of leadership transforms depending on the circumstances. All the concerned bodies should stand together to achieve the goals and work depending on the context” (P5).

A head of department described the principal’s leadership style as “... He is quick and makes decisions, but he tries to satisfy every employees working in varies departments of the school” (HoD4)

The reason for teachers’ participation in decision making as described by a head of department was that “it was indispensable to utilize their skills in the overall activities” (HoD4). HoDs’ participation also makes ownership of decisions. It was also learned from one of the teachers that the heads of departments in this school participated in decision making.

Education stakeholders in the Southern region of Ethiopia have observed by that the education systems at all levels face many severe problems, including; poor students’ academic performance, cheating during exam time, and teachers’ poor

attitude to teach. School principals take much of the blame for failure to exhibit appropriate leadership behaviors that can solve these perpetual problems which overwhelm the education system. Principals have a primary duty of enhancing teaching and learning in their schools. As noted by Adetona (2003) principals are task to produce well-educated students through effective teaching and learning.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style and School Performance

Laissez-faire leadership style refers to leaders who allow their group members to have complete freedom in decision making. The near avoidance type of leadership is a situation where there is no transaction between the leaders and the followers (Tossi et al., 2000; Avollo, 1999). All authority or power is given to the staff, and they determine goals, make decisions, and resolve obstacle on their own.

Unfortunately, this type of leadership can also occur when managers do not apply sufficient control. It's advantageous in that every follower has the opportunity to make decisions. The disadvantage of this style is that it can easily lead to anarchy if allowed to function for an extended period of time.

Based on the interview, a teacher said this, "We should make decisions about the educational program in our departments as responsible individuals. The principal should evaluate and endorse decisions as he is the leader and accountable for everything happening at the school" (T5).

Situational Leadership Style and School Performance

Situational leadership style is a type of style that is recurrently used in schools. The implementation of a predominantly significant style in a particular circumstance directly leads to the success of school. It is good for a leader to employ various styles of leadership based on the context in a school.

A head of department had this to say, "... if the leader is new for the school, he will likely

implement novel styles of leadership because the new situation requires transformation" (HoD5).

Another head of department said that,

If the principal refuses to listen to others ... this creates a problem that will collapse the system. Moreover, if the principal is in breach of the change, his leadership style and employees will become disinterested to transform the school (HoD4).

A principal disagreed that leadership is stated by the internal and external change of the school situation. At one time, students may be disobedient and aggressive that there is need to use the style to impose firm actions. But students may be so dedicated and committed in another situation which requires use of collaborative leadership.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

In attempting to lead schools, principals are central in advancing school performance. Principals ought to create a shared vision and mission among teachers, parents, students, and school community. Principals do not lead in isolation, but they share or distribute leadership responsibilities. Creating an appropriate learning culture or school climate that improve student academic achievement is necessary important. Studies on leadership show that principals' leadership behaviors have an indirect impact on school performance; that is, principal leadership influence act as a mediating factor on student learning experiences or classroom conditions which in-turn influence students' success.

Finally, and most important, principals need to pay attention to both instructional and organizational leadership and management which encompass assessment and curriculum. Hence, the dominant leadership style depends on the context and the school environment. However, this does not necessarily define the quality of leadership in schools. There are other factors which determine dominant leadership, like; teachers' related factors, achievements and resources. These factors determine how the three

leadership styles could be used, and how they could be used as supplements.

The Autocratic Leadership Style and School Performance

Autocratic leaders maintain for themselves the decision-making rights. The style could damage an organization irredeemably as followers are forced to implement plans, and give services in a very narrow way based on a subjective idea of defining success. Moreover, there is no common vision and there is little motivation beyond intimidation. In autocratic leadership, follower commitment, creativity and innovation are typically eliminated.

The Democratic Leadership Style and School Performance

In democratic leadership, workers are highly motivated by getting involved in goal setting, improving methods, and evaluating progress towards organizational goals. There is good employee-management relationship, and workers relate themselves as part of the organization evidenced by exhibiting commitment and a high degree of responsibility (Hersey and Johnson, 1996). In democratic leadership, power and authority is derived from the governed; meaning, authority to lead is rendered legitimate by the people. Decisions on organizational matters are made after making necessary consultations and communication with all sections in the organization. This creates high self-confidence among employees and encourages better group efficiency (Ezenne, 2003). Democratic leadership style was proposed during the interviews to generate ideas with principals, considering why and when it is used.

The Laissez-faire Leadership Style and School Performance

The laissez-faire leadership style is based on a non-interference policy which permits absolute workers' autonomy and has no meticulous means of achieving organizational goals. However, it is argued in literature that there is no one best style of leadership. The effectiveness of a particular style depends on the conditions of the organization.

Results from documents, observation and interviews confirmed that leadership at the sampled secondary schools in Southern region of Ethiopia could be ranked in the following order; autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire and situational. The dominant leadership style was autocratic which according to participants negatively influence academic performance because principals adopt a harsh leadership style which is widely detested by teachers. This implies that the more leaders use autocratic style, the more academic performance is influenced negatively. The study aligns with Charlton (2000) work that as principals use strict control measures there is a likelihood that they will face students' and teachers' resistance. Further, increased indiscipline of teachers and students tend to go against dictatorial measures used by principals. Moreover, teachers do not embrace having absolute authority as it lessens their morale; in-turn, they neglect their duties leading to an increase on job turnover.

The result identified dominant styles of leadership in the following order; autocratic, democratic and then laissez-faire. This confirmed that secondary school principals exercise more of autocratic leadership style. The problem with autocratic leadership is that principal may ignore other aspects of leadership which when supplemented with autocratic style facilitate quality leadership and school performance. However, teachers and heads of departments in the sampled secondary school argued that only democratic leadership have an impact on school performance. According to Ololube (2013), employees are contented with democratic leadership because their views, observations and ideas are essentially taken to inform actions. This finding also supports a study by Endale et al. (2015) who found that democratic leaders perceive their employees as partners and colleagues in development with an intention of mitigating organizational pitfalls. Democratic leadership style is therefore taken as a good predictor of teachers' job satisfaction and school performance.

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