

# Principal Leadership Behaviour and School Performance: A Comparative and Co-relational Study

Dr. Mohammad Zamir\*

Principal, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi (SCERT, Delhi)

**Abstract** – *The present paper is based on the research conducted to find out not only the leadership behaviour of school principals but also to identify some of the behavioural characteristics which may be detrimental in improving the school performance while comparing the principal leadership behaviour of high performing and low performing schools. Two factors namely gender (male/female) and type of school (Govt./ Private) were also taken to provide some insight into whether or not the two make a difference in one or more factors of principal leadership behaviour. In order to uncover the most important factors of leadership behaviour of principal which might be detrimental to school performance, the present study not only attempted to identify the association between the two but also the extent to which principal leadership behaviour and its different factors contributes in the school performance. The study has found not only a significant positive relationship between principal leadership behaviour and school performance but also a significant difference in the principal leadership behaviour of high-performing and low-performing schools resulting into the evidence of significant impact of principal leadership behaviour, in terms of the two construct namely transformational leadership and passive avoidant leadership, on school performance.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Behaviour, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Passive Avoidant Leadership, School Performance

-----X-----

## NEED OF THE STUDY

Academic achievement, which is considered to be the most important indicator of quality of education and school performance have been the object of study and analysis for more than a century and has always been given much importance since the origin of formal system of education. Poor school performance particularly in terms of academic achievement is a global concern today. Though the target of excess, enrolment and retention has, to the large extent, been substantially achieved but the goal of providing quality education is far away from realization. A great difference of performance is found among students as well as schools leading to the crisis for social equity. Why such a difference in student or school performance appears? Is this difference due to certain inherent qualities? Can this difference be attributed to psychological factors or to social factors? Is this difference due to the difference in infrastructure and other facilities? Can this difference be attributed to teaching learning process or school leadership and management or both? If yes then, how much? Search for an answer to these questions has made academic achievement and school performance a popular area of educational

research and it is more so when elementary education has been declared as a fundamental right and RMSA initiated to achieve the goal of universalization of secondary education.

Devolving decision-making authority to schools, shifts more responsibility to principals, teachers and parents. Decentralization in education aims to improve quality by strengthening accountability between school and local communities. In practice, implementation of decentralization strategies has been uneven. Outcomes depend on local factors such as finance allocation, human resources, strong school leadership, parental involvement and support from government officials” (UNESCO, 2015, p 43).

School leaders do make a difference (Gray,1990). Newmen and Wehlage (1995) widely cited research found that good leadership is essential for developing a collective school with focus on high quality student learning. Citing an impressive international, although mainly Western research, Huber (2004a) asserts the centrality of leadership to quality schools. School Leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil

learning (Leithwood et al., 2008). There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership (Leithwood et al. 2006, p 6). The essential role of school principals in effective schools and successful school improvement process has been firmly established (Hallinger, 2003a; Hallinger & Hech, 1999).

Studies begin to support international evidence of the centrality of principal leadership to continuous and high-quality learning, and positive school transformation (Harris 2002; Mitchel & Sachney, 2000).

In the fast changing world of the 21st century, there is an urgent need to save the schools from being irrelevant and transform them into a learning organization where focus is on learning and not on teaching merely as a mechanical activity. For this to happen, there is a need for exceptional leadership capable of unleashing a culture that inspires trust. Instead of the 'Principal do it right' model of leadership (Peter Senge) what is perhaps required is for us to move to a culture of 'Leading without control'. What it really means is instead of the top down model which spells fear and intimidation, destroys trust and builds anger and frustration one needs to walk the path of effective leadership where focus is on sharing and consensus building resulting in an environment of mutual respect by providing safe places to share dangerous issues instead of brushing them under the carpet. Therefore, the principal has to, through engagement, understanding the system's dynamic, self-awareness and self-mastery, lead learning with the help of peer partners.

Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive and valid model of leadership for learning, which must place leadership in specific context (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger and Heeck, 1996). Research studies have concluded that most assessment of school leaders in use today are not as focused on learning as they should be, nor are they effective in gathering reliable facts about how leaders' behaviours are or are not promoting learning (Iowa; Delaware; Kentucky. 2009)

The above discussion emphasizes the importance two things. One is the urgent need to transform the schools in order to make them useful for every individual as well as for society as a whole and the second is the transformational leadership of principal to bring transformation in the school to deliver the quality education in terms of its relevance and usefulness to bring peace, happiness and harmony in the society. A large number of studies have been conducted in examining leadership behaviour of principals and its contribution in the school performance in the west but in India, and particularly in Delhi, no research is conducted particularly on Full range of Leadership (FLR), transformational, transactional and passive avoidant, and their relative contribution in school performance which is very

important and useful for practitioners researchers, policy makers, recruiters and trainers for selection and development of school leaders.

As leadership behaviour is also contextual and may not be free from social, political and economic situation where it operates, therefore, relying merely on the findings of the research studies conducted abroad may not serve the purpose.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective 1: To study the principal leadership behaviour of schools.

Sub-Objective 1.1: To study the principal leadership behaviour of govt. schools.

Sub-Objective 1.2: To study the principal leadership behaviour of private schools.

Main Objective 2: To compare the leadership behaviour of male and female principals in schools.

Sub-Objective 2.1: To compare the leadership behaviour of male and female principals of govt. schools.

Sub-Objective 2.2: To compare the leadership behaviour of male and female principals of private schools.

Main Objective 3: To compare the principal leadership behaviour of govt. and private schools.

Sub-Objective 3.1: To compare the leadership behaviour of male principals of govt. and private schools.

Sub-Objective 3.2: To compare the leadership behaviour of female principals of govt. and private schools.

Main Objective 4: To compare the principal leadership behaviour of high-performing and low-performing schools.

Sub-Objective 4.1: To compare the principal leadership behaviour of high-performing and low-performing govt. schools.

Sub-Objective 4.2: To compare the principal leadership behaviour of high-performing and low-performing private Schools

Main Objective 5: To study the relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance.

Sub-Objective 5.1: To study the relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance in govt. schools.

Sub-Objective 5.2: To study the relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance in private schools

Main Objective 6: To study the effect of principal leadership behaviour on school performance.

Main Objective 7: To study the independent and interaction effect of gender and type of school of principals on their leadership behaviour.

## **HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

Main Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the leadership behaviour of male and female principals in schools.

Sub-Hypothesis: 1.1: There is no significant difference between the leadership behaviour of male and female principals of govt. schools.

Sub-Hypothesis 1.2: There is no significant difference between the leadership behaviour of male and female principals of private schools.

Main Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the principal leadership behaviour of govt. and private schools.

Sub-Hypothesis 2.1: There is no significant difference between the leadership behaviour of male principals of govt. and private schools.

Sub-Hypothesis 2.2: There is no significant difference between the leadership behaviour of female principals of govt. and private schools.

Main Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the principal leadership behaviour of high-performing and low-performing schools.

Sub-Hypothesis 3.1: There is no significant difference between the principal leadership behaviour of high-performing and low-performing govt. schools.

Sub-Hypothesis 3.2: There is no significant difference between the principal leadership behaviour of high-performing and low-performing private Schools.

Main Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance schools.

Sub-Hypothesis 4.1: There is no significant relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance in govt. schools.

Sub-Hypothesis 4.2: There is no significant relationship between the principal leadership

behaviour and school performance in private schools.

Main Hypothesis 5: There is no significant effect of the principal leadership behaviour on school performance.

Main Hypothesis 6: There is no significant independent and interaction effect of gender and type of school on principal leadership behaviour.

Population and sample of the study

## **VARIABLES OF THE STUDY**

There were three independent variables in the study which include (i) Principal Leadership Behaviour (ii) Gender (male and female principals) and (iii) type of schools (govt. and private schools). However, principal leadership was also considered as dependent variable in order to find out the effect of gender and type of school on principal leadership behaviour.

There was only one dependent variable which was School performance. However, principal leadership was also considered as dependent variable in order to find out the effect of gender and type of school on principal leadership behaviour.

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE VARIABLES AND IMPORTANT TERMS**

### **Principal Leadership Behaviour**

In the present study, principal leadership behaviour refers to the self-rating by the school principals on Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Leader Form) constructed by Bass and Avolio taking into consideration three major constructs—transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and passive/avoidant leadership and nine factors including five namely idealized attributes, idealized behaviour, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, two factors namely contingent reward, Management by exception (passive), and two factors namely management by exception (passive) and laissez faire belonging to transformational, transactional and passive avoidant leadership behaviour respectively. The rating in the questionnaire was on five point scale and it was 0, 1,2,3 and 4 for response to leadership item as 'not at all', 'once in a while', 'sometimes', 'fairly often' and 'frequently, if not always' respectively.

### **(I) Transformational leadership**

"Leadership behaviour that influences the values and aspiration of subordinates, activate the subordinates' higher order needs, and arouse them

to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of their organization (Bass, 1985).”

1. Idealized Influence (Attributes): “The degree to which leader behaves in an admirable ways that causes followers to identify with the leader. Leaders display a sense of power and confidence and go beyond self-interest for the good of the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1995).
2. Idealized Influence (behaviour): this is about the leader having a strong and collective sense of purpose and a clear set of values, and demonstrating them in every action, (Bass & Avolio, 1995).
3. Inspirational Motivation: Leaders behave in a ways that motivates those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their follower’s work. Individual and team spirit is aroused. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed. The leader encourages followers to envision attractive future states, which they can ultimately envision for themselves (Bass & Avolio, 1995).
4. Intellectual stimulation: Gets followers to question the tried and true ways of solving problems; encourages them to question the methods they use to improve upon them.
5. Individualized consideration: Focuses on understanding the needs of each follower and work continuously to get them to develop to their full potential.

### (II) Transactional Leadership:

Leadership behaviour that is associated with constructive and corrective transactions. It refers to an exchange relationship between leader and follower. The followers receive a certain valued outcomes (e.g. wages, prestige) when they act as leader’s wishes (Bass, 1995). Transactional leadership seeks to motivate the followers through extrinsic rewards. It is based on contingent reward and discipline.

1. Contingent Reward: Clarifies what is expected from followers and what they will receive if they meet expected levels of performance (Bass & Avolio, 1995)
2. Management by Exception (Active): The leader focuses on monitoring task execution for any problem that might arise and correcting those problems to maintain current performance levels (Bass & Avolio, 1995).d on contingent reward and discipline.

### (III) Passive Avoidant Leadership

The leader tends to react only after problems become serious to take corrective action and may avoid making any decisions at all (Bass & Avolio, 1995).

1. Management by exception (passive): The leaders make interventions only when certain standards or norms are not met for completion of tasks.
2. Laissez-faire: The leaders are extremely passive and reluctant to influence followers, make decisions or give direction. They ignore their responsibility and their authority remains unused.

### Government and Private Schools

The government schools are those schools which provide secondary education and are owned and managed by the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi. Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), an autonomous body of Government of India is the examination body for the secondary (class X) education in these schools.

The schools which provide secondary education and are owned and managed by private societies and private enterprises but are recognized by the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi. Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), an autonomous body of Government of India is the examination body for the secondary education (class X).

### Principal/School Principal

The principal is one who acts as a head of the secondary school and responsibility lies with him/her to lead and manage the activities of school in order to achieve the desired goal of education.

### School Performance

School performance is the Cumulative Grade point Average (CGPA) of a school based on the performance/result of its students in the secondary school examinations (class X) conducted by the CBSE, Govt. of India. CGPA of a school is the average of CGPA of the number of students of that school who appeared in secondary school examinations (class X).

The formula to calculate the CGPA of a school is as follows:

$$\text{School CGPA} = \frac{\text{Sum of CGPA of the students appeared in class X exams.}}{\text{Number of the students appeared in class X exams.}}$$

## High-Performing schools and Low-Performing schools

Out of aggregate sample of 231 schools, top 25% (58 schools) and bottom 25% (58 schools) on school CGPA in secondary school examinations(class X) conducted by CBSE were considered to be high-performing schools and low-performing schools respectively.

Similarly, in order to compare the high-performing and low-performing govt. schools, out of total sample of 128 govt. schools, top 25% (32 schools) and bottom 25% (32 schools) were considered to be high-performing schools and low-performing govt. schools respectively.

In the same way, in order to compare the high-performing and low-performing private schools, out of total sample of 103 private schools, top 25% (25 schools) and bottom 25% (25 schools) were considered to be high-performing schools and low-performing govt. schools respectively.

### Data collection

Data on leadership behaviour was collected by administering the MLQ on the principals of selected schools and filled in self-rating form (MLQ) received back from them. Though the target sample was 15% of the total population but finally, in all, the researcher managed to get the MLQ completed from 13% of the principals/ population eliminating the completed MLQs of those who were having less than two years of experience at the time of completing the MLQ. Data on CGPA of students in class X as the measure of school performance was collected from the Directorate of Education, GNCT of Delhi.

### Statistical Procedure Used

Statistical techniques such as mean and standard deviation were used to describe the leadership behaviour of school. Pearson product moment correlation was used to study the relationship between principal leadership behaviour and school performance. The t-test technique was used to compare the principal leadership behaviour of govt. and private schools, leadership behaviour of male and female principals, and principal leadership behaviour of high performing and low performing schools. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to study the effect of gender and type of school separately and their interaction effect on leadership behaviour. Simple regression analysis technique was used in order to find out the impact of principal leadership behaviour on school performance. The SPSS package was used in applying the abovementioned statistical techniques for the analysis of the data in order to achieve the objectives and test the hypotheses.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The school principals exhibited Transformational and transactional leadership behaviour almost equally and more than sometimes and less then fairly often, and passive avoidant behaviour, rarely across gender and schools.
2. The school principals exhibited Transformational and transactional leadership behaviour almost equally and more than 'sometimes' and less then 'fairly often', and passive avoidant behaviour, rarely in government schools.
3. The school principals exhibited Transformational and transactional leadership behaviour almost equally and 'fairly often', and passive avoidant behaviour, rarely in private schools.
4. There is no significant difference in the leadership behaviour of male and female principals across schools.
5. There is no significant difference in the leadership behaviour of male and female principals in govt. schools.
6. There is no significant difference in the leadership behaviour of male and female principals in private schools
7. There is a significant difference in the principal leadership behaviour of govt. and private schools across gender with respect to the two constructs of leadership behaviour namely transformational and transactional and no significant difference with respect to the construct of passive avoidant. There is a significant difference between the principal leadership behaviour of govt. and private schools with respect to eight out of nine factors of leadership behaviour except with respect to the only one factor namely management by exception(passive)
8. There is a significant difference between the leadership behaviour of male principals of govt. and private schools with respect to the one construct of leadership behaviour namely transactional. There is no significant difference between the leadership behaviour of male principals of govt. and private schools with respect to eight out of nine factors of leadership behaviour except management by exception (passive).

9. There is a significant difference between the leadership behaviour of female principals of govt. and private schools with respect to the two constructs of leadership behaviour namely transformational and transactional, and not so in the case of passive avoidant leadership behaviour. There is a significant difference between the leadership behaviour of female principals of govt. and private schools with respect to the five out of nine factors of leadership behaviour which belong to transformational and transactional leadership behaviour namely idealized attributes, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation and management by exception (active).
10. There is a significant difference between the principal leadership behaviour of high performing and low performing schools.
11. There is a significant difference between the leadership behaviour of the principals of high performing and low performing govt. schools” with respect to all the three constructs of leadership behaviour namely transformational and transactional and passive avoidant. There is a significant difference between the leadership behaviour of the principals of high performing and low performing govt. schools with respect to the eight out of nine factors of leadership behaviour except management by exception (active).
12. There is a significant difference between the leadership behaviour of the principals of high performing and low performing private schools with respect to the two out of the three constructs of leadership behaviour namely transformational and passive avoidant. There is also a significant difference between the leadership behaviour of the principals of high performing and low performing private schools with respect to the eight out of nine factors of leadership behaviour except management by exception (active).
13. There is a significant relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance across gender and schools” with respect to all the constructs and all the factors of leadership behaviour.
14. There is a significant relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance in govt. schools across gender with respect to all the constructs as well as all the factors of leadership behaviour.
15. There is a significant relationship between the principal leadership behaviour and school performance in private schools across gender” with respect to all the three constructs of leadership behaviour and with respect to 8 to of nine factors except management by exception (active).
16. There is a highly significant effect of transformational leadership behaviour of the principals on the school performance. Transformational leadership behaviour is found to explain the variance in the school performance equal to 29.60. The total contribution of both the construct namely transformational and passive avoidant was found to be 34.20%. There is a highly significant effect of two out of five factors of transformational leadership behaviour of the principals on school performance namely intellectual stimulation and idealized behaviour which are found to explain 26.40 and 4.30 variance respectively in the school performance.
17. There is a significant negative effect of passive avoidant leadership behaviour and both of its factors on school performance.
18. There is a significant independent effect of type of school of principles on their leadership behavior. Private school is a better place for the development of the principal leadership. There is no significant independent effect of gender of principles and interaction effect of gender and type of school on their leadership behavior.

## CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

1. The school principals exhibited Transformational and transactional leadership behavior almost equal/same and more than ‘sometimes’ and less than ‘fairly often’, and passive avoidant behavior rarely.
2. Gender does not make any significant difference in the principal leadership behavior of school. Gender does not make principal leadership behaviour effective or ineffective.
3. Type of school does make a significant difference in the principal leadership behavior. It means that school ownership and management can play an important role in improving the leadership behaviour of school principal
4. Significant difference exists between the principal leadership behavior of high performing and low performing school. It

signifies the importance of leadership behaviour in improving the school performance,

5. Significant relationship exists between the principal leadership behavior and school performance. It again indicates the role of principal leadership behavior in school performance.
6. Principal leadership behavior significantly contributes in the school performance. It signifies the importance of principal leadership behavior in predicting school performance.
7. There is a significant effect of type of school (govt./pvt) of principal on their leadership behaviour. Again, it highlights the role of management in principal leadership behaviour.
8. Finally, it may be concluded that the principal leadership behaviour is a strong predictor of school performance. Leadership matters as it has great potential to transform schools and bring improvement in the school performance as has been revealed by several research studies in the past.

#### **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The policy makers need to focus on devising the policy regarding the recruitment of principals having professional qualification in the leadership development and evolving a mechanism of objective assessment of principal leadership behaviour and leadership development on the job continuously.
- The concerned department of the universities need to device professional course on transformational leadership under the pre service education programme.
- For continuous professional development of principals on leadership development, there is a need to device a systematic assessment of principal leadership behaviour on the basis of objective criteria and conducting regular need-based programme with the follow up focusing on intellectual stimulation and idealized behaviour
- Mentoring is essential for continuous feedback and facilitation on leadership behavior of principals on the job.
- The study reveals a lot of scope in the improvement of transformational as well as transactional leadership behavior of

principals, therefore the principals themselves need to work to improve upon them for better school performance.

- All the leadership development programmers working at national, state and district level need to have a close coordination for their leadership development programmes and follow up making the programmes more useful to avoid repetition, establishing coherence and making programmes more useful.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Bass, B.M. (1985) Leadership and performance beyond expectations. New York: Free press.
- Bass and Avolio (1995) in Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Manual, Published by mind garden, Inc.
- Bossert et. al. (1982). The Instructional Management Role of the Principal. Educational Administration Quarterly, Volume: 18 issue: 3, page(s): pp. 34-64.
- Gray, J. (1990). The quality of schooling: Frameworks for judgements. British Journal of Educational Studies, 38(3), pp. 204-233.
- Griffith, James (2004). Relation of Principal Leadership and School Performance. Educational Administration Quarterly, pp. 370-97.
- Hallinger, P. (Ed). (2003a). Reshaping the landscape of school leadership development: A global perspective.
- Hallinger, P. (Ed). (2003a). Reshaping the landscape of school leadership development: A global perspective. Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Harris, A. (2002). School improvement: What's in it for Schools? London: Routledge/Falmer.
- Huber, S. G. (2004a). Preparing school leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Iowa, Delaware; Kentucky (2009). Assessing the Effectiveness of School Leaders. Wallace Foundation. International Journal of Research Studies in Education 2013 January, Volume 2 Number 1, pp. 41-54
- Leithwood, et.al (2010), Testing a Conception of How school leadership influences students

learning. The journal of educational administrated Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 5, Dec. 2010.

Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). What we know about successful school leadership. Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success, Temple University.

Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A and Hopkins, D. (2006). Seven Strong about Successful School Leadership (p 6): London: Department for Education and Skills. Lisse, The Netherlands: Sweets & Zeitlinger.

Leithwood et.al. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. Volume 28, Issue 1, Pages 27-42.

Mitchell, C., & Sackney, L. (2000). Profound school improvement: Building capacity for a learning community. Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Marks et.al. (2003). Principal Leadership and School Performance. Educational Administration Quarterly, pp. 370-97.

Newmann, F. M., & Wehlage, G. G. (1995). Successful school restructuring: A report to the public and educators by the Centre on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report (summary), p3.

Yukl, G. (2006). Leadership in Organizations (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall.

---

### Corresponding Author

**Dr. Mohammad Zamir\***

Principal, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi (SCERT, Delhi)