

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Impact of effective leadership style on school performance: with reference to Central Colleges in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The primary goal of any school is to improve the academic performance of students, which in turn leads to higher performance by school children and the school as well. Research has proved that school leaders can make a difference in school and student performance. Thus, the leadership style and the role of principals are crucial in directing their schools towards better performance. Central Colleges in Sri Lanka as secondary and collegiate levels of schools have shown higher performances in the past, but there is evidence that the performances of the Central Colleges are declining at present. Having explored the meaning of school performances, this study identifies characteristics of effective leadership and examines the impact of the effective leadership style on the school performance of Central Colleges in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Based on quantitative research methods, primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire from a sample of 357 teachers using a random sampling method. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Based on the analysis five characteristics of effective leadership were identified explaining 81.4% variance in school performance and these characteristics significantly and positively affect school performance. Thus, school performances could be improved if principals are inclusive, innovative, resourceful, and thoughtful of others, encourage their teachers to get the best results, and create a stimulating environment for improving performance as there is a lack of research specifically, exploring the qualities of effective leadership style, this study filled an apparent knowledge gaps in prior research concerning effective leadership characteristics with empirical data.

Keywords: Effective leadership, school performance, Central Colleges, school principal.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main goals of the education system is to produce quality human resources, which is important for sustainable development. School education provides the foundation for improving human resources by providing knowledge, improving skills, and nurturing attitudes for the development of the self and the nation. Leadership is often regarded as one of the most important determinants of success or failure (Ogawa & Scribner, 2002). It could be argued that the leadership style and the principal largely determine the performance of schools, hence both factors are important for the survival of any school. The role of the principal today is very different from the past. The task of the school has become a mere preparation of its children to enter the world of work. For this purpose, both the school curricula and the role of the principal must be changed accordingly (Pushpakumara, 2016). The leadership role of the principal is vital to improve teachers' performance. Thus, the learning outcomes of students will increase with high-performing teachers. To improve teachers' performance, a principal as the leader must have certain behaviours to accommodate the goal-oriented teaching-learning environment (Pardosi & Utari, 2021).

The performance of a school needs to be measured both in terms of academic and non-academic aspects. Most probably in Sri Lanka, some schools have recorded

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higher performance and others may be declining in their performance. Various levels of performance are seen in schools and some schools perform well in academic studies while several other schools are well performed in extracurricular activities. This may be due to the leadership qualities of these schools, as some school principals give priority to academic performance while others pay greater attention to extra-curricular activities. There is evidence that Central Colleges in Sri Lanka have shown higher performances in the past, but in the recent past, these schools have not functioned well. In this context, this study tries to identify effective leadership qualities and examine to what extent these leadership qualities affect school performance.

Background of the study and problem identification

In Sri Lanka, approximately 4 million children are enrolled in more than 10,165 public schools across the country (Sri Lanka, Ministry of Education, 2019). The government spends about 1.9% of its GDP annually on education (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2020). It could be argued that when the necessary resources are provided to schools through resource allocation, the performance of each school may be considered equal or better. However, some schools are reported to have high performance levels in terms of academic activities and additional academic activities, while certain other schools have not recorded such achievements.

Central Colleges in Sri Lanka are a type of schools where students can study up to the post-secondary (collegiate) level. The first Central College was initiated in 1941 in Matugama in Kalutara District and to date, there are 54 Central Colleges.

There is evidence that the Central Colleges played a significant role in Sri Lanka's educational history, but now, they are unable to achieve their goals successfully. Many Grade 5 scholarship holders from the remotest areas of the country, try to get admission to popular schools in big cities such as Colombo bypassing the well-run Central Colleges located in their electorates or districts by getting the official approval of the Ministry because a majority of the Central Colleges have been neglected on their early usefulness and students and their parents have lost faith in these schools (Fernando, 2001).

In the current era, the academic performance of Central Colleges in Sri Lanka has declined when compared to the selected National Schools. According to the statistics of the Western Provincial Educational Department (2017), when considering the pass rate in the three core subjects

of Sinhala, English, and Mathematics at the G.C.E. O/L Examination in 2016, the overall academic performance of the Central Colleges in the Western Province is lower compared to National Schools. Their pass rate in relevant subjects is lower and the level of failure rate is higher. Nevertheless, in the same subjects, students at selected National Schools in the Western Province have recorded higher performances than the students of Central Colleges at the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination in 2016. The academic performance of the Central Colleges in Sri Lanka has declined when compared to some National Schools (Sri Lanka, Western Provincial Educational Department, 2017).

The majority of Central Colleges have recorded the worst results for the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination and G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination. There are 22% of Central Colleges that have reported poor level results for the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination in terms of qualifying for the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination. There are 78% of Central Colleges that have obtained lower-level results for the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination in terms of qualifying for university entrance (Fernando *et al.*, 2020). The reason behind this situation may be that many students who have good results for the G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination leave their Central colleges and enrol in national schools to studying the G.C.E Advanced level examinations. Because of that, the Central colleges lack good students in the advanced level classes. On the other hand, Fernando (2001) mentioned that some principals of central colleges have no power and, on some occasions, these principals do not have adequate skills to manage their schools. According to the author, there is doubt whether central colleges were able to achieve their initial goals of establishment.

As Central Colleges are mixed schools, the principals of those schools should have additional skills and experience in managing their schools. But it is evident that some principals of Central Colleges have no power, and also on some occasions, they do not have adequate skills to manage their schools (Fernando, 2001). The concepts of power and leadership are closely linked and it can be considered as the ability to influence others (Lunenburg, 2012). Leaders use power to attain group goals, and if leaders know the operation of power in an organisation, it enhances their capacity to be effective leader (Coventry University, 2022).

This study argues that Central Colleges need strong leadership styles to be effective as principals' poor leadership qualities may lead to a decline in school performance. Thus, the main purpose of this study is

to explore the effective leadership styles that enhance the school performance of the Central colleges. Several researchers have examined the effect that school leadership styles on students' academic performance, but there is a lack of research examining school performance involving academic and other activities. It is unknown how key leadership indicators influence student performance including extracurricular activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the theoretical background of the related variables including meaning and definitions of leadership, school leadership, theories on leadership styles and effective leadership, organisational performance / school performance, and empirical research on effective leadership and school performances.

Leadership

Leadership is a process of social influence, which enhances the efforts of others, in achieving the goal (Kruse, 2013) and it is conceptualised as how a leader influences a group to achieve communal goals (Jaques, 2017). Thus, leadership can be defined as the ability to influence a group to achieve organisational goals. Leadership is a process that focuses on building and influencing people to achieve organisational goals (Moorhead & Griffin, 2012) and has a positive impact on followers' performance and satisfaction (Casimir *et al.*, 2006) as well as being uplifting and supportive (Sarros *et al.*, 2008). It can be defined as the ability to influence others by providing them with helpful and efficient organisational resources to carry out strategy and accomplish common objectives (Northouse, 2018, cited in Parveen *et al.*, 2022).

School leadership

Education leadership is critical in developing the future world. School leadership may include people who perform various roles and responsibilities such as principals, deputy principals, leadership teams, school governing bodies, and school-level staff involved in leadership activities (Pont *et al.*, 2008).

“Effective leaders are purposeful, and they trust their followers who voluntarily perform toward better results. It is necessary to have trust in one's abilities as well as the others, so that empowerment, true delegation, and independent actions can be facilitated, then a mistake can be addressed more openly, and also individual and mutual responsibilities have to be respected and appreciated” (Huber, 2004).

It is a process whereby a school leader is employed to supervise staff, assess situations and apply leadership styles to control and adjust situations (Boonla & Treputtharat, 2014, cited in Tedla *et al.*, 2021).

“Leadership of the school principal is the principal's effort to influence, motivate, guide, and direct teachers, staff, students, parents, and other related individuals to work together to achieve set goals. To create this role, the principal must show an influential and typical attitude. The principal as a leader must understand that the success of the school is determined by his behaviour” (Pardosi & Utari, 2021).

Over recent years, Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR and AR) technologies have quickly become part of education leadership practices, becoming an indispensable asset that revolutionises learning experiences at every level, these technologies will revolutionize communication between educational institutions' from virtual staff meetings to immersive training sessions, as they collaborate and innovate for change (Sornberger, 2023).

Leadership style

“Style” means the way of performing activities. A person's leadership style reflects how he/she influences others in a society or in an organisation (Timothy *et al.*, 2011). Leadership styles mean the way leaders guide, influence, and motivate their subordinates. In the field of education, the relevance and effectiveness of leadership style depending on the functional situation in which school leaders balance their style with the tasks of those under their authority. (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). Diverse types of leadership styles are discussed in the literature including, democratic, laissez-faire, transformational, distributed, instructional, transactional, servant, and ethical leadership.

Transformational leadership is a process whereby leaders transform an organisation by enhancing the attitude, motivation, norms, behaviours, achievements, and actions of their followers (Litz *et al.*, 2016). This leadership style depends on prominent levels of communication from management to meet goals. Leaders motivate employees and enhance productivity and efficiency through communication and high visibility (Kramer, 2020).

A transactional leader's goal is to clearly communicate to his followers what is expected from them, both in terms of expectations and actions, and to support them

by offering material and psychological rewards for accomplishing tasks. (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). This style starts with the idea that team members agree to obey their leader when they accept a job, and the transaction usually involves the organisation paying team members in return for their effort and compliance (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015). Further, the authors argued that these leaders have a right to punish team members if their work does not meet the appropriate standard, and the minimalistic working relationships that result (between staff and managers or leaders) are based on this transaction (an effort to pay). This leadership style requires clear leader-follower (manager-employee) relationships with clarified mutual outcomes (Densten, 2006).

Ethical leadership is a form of leadership in which individuals demonstrate and act towards the common good that is acceptable and desirable in all areas of their lives and consists of three main elements; Be a role model, communicate, and champion the importance of ethics (www.villanovau.com, 2020). Ethical leadership as a social, relational practice is concerned with the moral purpose of education (Angus, 2006, cited in Ehrich *et al.*, 2015). "Ethical leadership is uniquely important because this form of leadership can promote ethical conduct at work; set and communicate ethical standards of the organization" (Brown & Mitchell, 2010, cited in Okpozo *et al.*, 2017).

High student achievement is expected by instructional leadership through the establishment of goals and expectations, the use of strategic resources, the development of curricula, ongoing teacher professional development, a positive learning environment, and a focus on student behavior (Hallinger, 2003, cited in Litz *et al.*, 2016). An instructional leader promotes homogeneous approaches such as teaching and behavior management in the school, monitors teaching, and makes sure professional development is focused on teaching and learning (Muijs, 2011).

Distributed leadership permits teachers to focus on specific areas that support the accomplishment of goals for the school community, and they require leadership accepted by the followers (Litz *et al.*, 2016). The success of distributed leadership depends on a strong leader, who is likely to be incorporating the benefits of distributed leadership into the transformational role already (Litz *et al.*, 2016). It holds theoretical promise in terms of organisational improvement and achievement.

Laissez-faire leaders exercise minimal direction and face time with subordinates who have more freedom to make decisions (Kramer, 2020). The leader only acts as a

nominal leader, who lacks capacity for direct supervision of employees and fails to provide regular feedback to those under his supervision (Kramer, 2020). This style is described as the most effective style, especially where followers are mature and highly motivated. The leader in this case acts as the contact person with the group's external environment, very little power is used (Omar, 2016).

Democratic leadership has features such as delegation of authority, participatory planning, and mutual communication. Here, the major focus is on sharing and the manager shares decision-making with the subordinates. Even though the manager invites contributions from the subordinates before making a decision, he/she retains the final authority to make decisions. He/she may allow the subordinates to take vote on an issue before a decision is taken (Dubrin, 1991, cited in Omar & Kavale, 2016). Thus, empowerment, teamwork, and collaboration are important aspects of this type of leadership. "It has been observed that a school is more effective when those who are affected by the organisation's decisions are fully involved in the decision-making process" (Omar & Kavale, 2016).

Effective leadership

An effective leader must be a person who is visionary, passionate, creative, flexible, inspiring, innovative, courageous, imaginative, and experimental and initiates change (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015). Effective leadership is the successful application of the influence to mission accomplishment, and they can obtain the cooperation of other people and harness the resources provided by that cooperation to attain organisational goals (May-Vollmar & Kelly, 2017). Effective leadership focus on establishing goals and high expectations, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, including systematic use of assessment data to monitor learning and adjust provision, leading teacher professional development, ensuring a supportive and orderly environment, resourcing strategically, and developing and maintaining an evaluative mindset for ongoing improvement (Centre for Education, Statistics and Evaluation, 2021).

This style of leadership is crucial for teachers and students to enhance performance at the highest level (Brinia & Papantoniou, 2016) while it is also essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling (Pont *et al.*, 2008). Emotional intelligence is considered as one of the predictors of effective leadership practices (May-Vollmar & Kelly, 2017). This Emotional Intelligence is a variable that has recently gained

popularity as a potential underlying attribute of effective leadership (Sosik & Megerian, 1999, cited in May-Vollmar & Kelly, 2017).

The effectiveness of leadership style must be defined in terms of the leader's behaviour and the demands of the situation, while some authors see this behaviour as resilient, and others see it as rigid. Thus, what constitutes effective leadership must be explored further. When this style uses a particular behaviour in an appropriate situation, then it will give results that are more effective. Yukl (2010) lists some indicators of leadership effectiveness including follower attitudes, perceptions of their leader, the extent to which the performance of the team or organisational unit is enhanced, and the attainment of goals facilitated. According to Hallinger & Heck (1996) better communication among staff, greater mutual trust and understanding, greater cooperation and collaboration, and more active engagement of staff are some examples of qualities of an effective leadership style. Cooper & Nirenberg (2012) describe that the effectiveness of leadership is the practice of applying several principles: building a collective vision, mission, and set of values that help people focus on their contributions, bringing out their best, establishing a fearless communication environment that encourages accurate and honest feedback and self-disclosure, making information readily available, establishing trust, respect, and peer-based behaviour as the norm, be inclusive and patient, showing concern for each person, demonstrating resourcefulness and the willingness to learn and creating an environment that stimulates extraordinary performance. Effective leadership emphasizes impartiality, equality, and honesty, develops employees, and promotes work ethic and integrity (Muchiri *et al.*, 2011). Effective leadership is the ability of a leader to execute a company's vision and create a work culture that allows employees to contribute meaningfully to the achievement of their employer's goals.

Today with an ever-increasing demand and pressures of modern education, leaders' mindfulness and resilience as two essential pillars of effective leadership have become more critical than ever. By cultivating mindfulness practices into their leadership style, leaders will become more present, focused, and adaptable, ultimately resulting in more effective and sustainable leadership (Sornberger, 2023).

School performance

In some studies, school performance was confirmed by Grade Point Average (GPA) in various subjects (Burke, 1989) while other studies looked at school performance as

test scores, drop-out rate, transfer rate, and participation rate (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). School performance indicators should be measured not only by the skills and values of the graduates but also by the level of school experience of the children in school and the academic results are not the only criteria of school performance (Rothstein, 2000).

School performance is a broad term for assessing results of education including, knowledge, intellectual stimulation, vision, situational awareness, relationship, validation, culture, order, visibility, communication, and discipline (Jafari *et al.*, 2009, cited in Tedla *et al.*, 2021). School performance is inferred as an indicator of yearly progress of successful school activities, such as learning, productivity, working conditions, staff satisfaction, parent satisfaction, and teachers' morale (Wahab *et al.*, 2015).

The non-academic performance of a school is determined by the school leadership, annual student engagement, school culture, environment, academics/student focus, teacher commitment, school-community relations, student-teacher well-being, the scope of extra academic activities, and student expectations with the school and its physical services (Gunter & Ribbins, 2003, cited in Urick, 2016).

This study assess school performance in terms of both academic performance and non-academic performance. The academic performance included both examination results of the General Certificate of Education of Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) and General Certificate of Education of Advanced Level (GCE A/L) examinations. Non-academic performance include achievements in sports and extra-curricular activities (dancing, music, and literature) achieved at different levels namely, zonal level, provincial level, all-island level, and international level and well-being of the students.

Improving students' well-being in schools requires a whole-school approach, involving teachers and parents, as the students' well-being and their success in and outside school depends on their ability to use their competencies for democratic culture (Council of Europe, 2022). Further, well-being understood in terms of health and happiness and it includes mental and physical health, physical and emotional safety, a feeling of belonging, a sense of purpose, achievement, and success.

Effective leadership and school performances: empirical evidence

In the last 25 years, much attention has been placed on educational leadership and its impact on student

outcomes. Internationally, there is the appreciation that school leadership is an extremely important variable that can make all the difference in schools (Pina *et al.*, 2015). Pont *et al.* (2008) state that school leaders can influence over school and student performance if they are granted autonomy to make important decisions. In particular, researchers in the area of educational leadership have attempted to identify links between school leadership and student achievement (Kythreotis *et al.*, 2010). The empirical literature shows that both the nature and the degree of principals' impact continue to be a subject of debate (Pitner, 1988; Rowan *et al.*, 1982; Van de Grift, 1999, cited in Kythreotis *et al.*, 2010). Previous research on the effects of school leadership on students' academic achievement has produced contradictory findings. Some studies found that the effects are indirect, if not difficult to measure (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Witziers *et al.*, 2003).

“Transformational leadership is mainly based on pedagogically oriented authority which is essential for the promotion of school effectiveness, indicating that the expertise and personal reward, as well as the referent power bases, partially mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness and a blend of transformational and pedagogical qualities and qualifications may promote school effectiveness” (Nir & Hameiri, 2014).

According to Leithwood *et al.* (2010) and Leithwood & Jantzi (1999), transformational educational contexts

are characterised by increases in shared vision-building, meeting performance expectations, consensus, intellectual stimulation, satisfaction, and enthusiasm. This leadership style has a significant impact on schools' climate and students' academic achievement (Kaleem *et al.*, 2021).

On the contrary, regarding the direct effects of principals' leadership on student achievement, Kythreotis *et al.* (2010), argue that a principal's leadership style is a significant factor that plays a major role in student achievement. There is increasing evidence that within each school, school leaders can contribute to improving student learning by shaping the conditions and climate in which teaching and learning occur (Pont *et al.*, 2008). Griffith (2014) found the direct effect of principal transformational leadership on school performance and the leadership of principals was positively related to organisational latency, or commitment, which was positively associated with the perceived effectiveness of schools. Lipham (1981, cited in Blase, *et al.*, 1986) argued strongly that the leadership characteristics of school principals are critical to teacher performance and school effectiveness. As per Koh *et al.* (1995), transformational leadership was found to have indirect effects on student academic achievement, and according to Heck (1992), principal leadership affects school academic achievement at least indirectly. Principals who use democratic and transformational leadership style, their students and staff perform better than those who are using other types of leadership styles (Omar & Kavale, 2016). Principals' leadership styles do influence school performance either

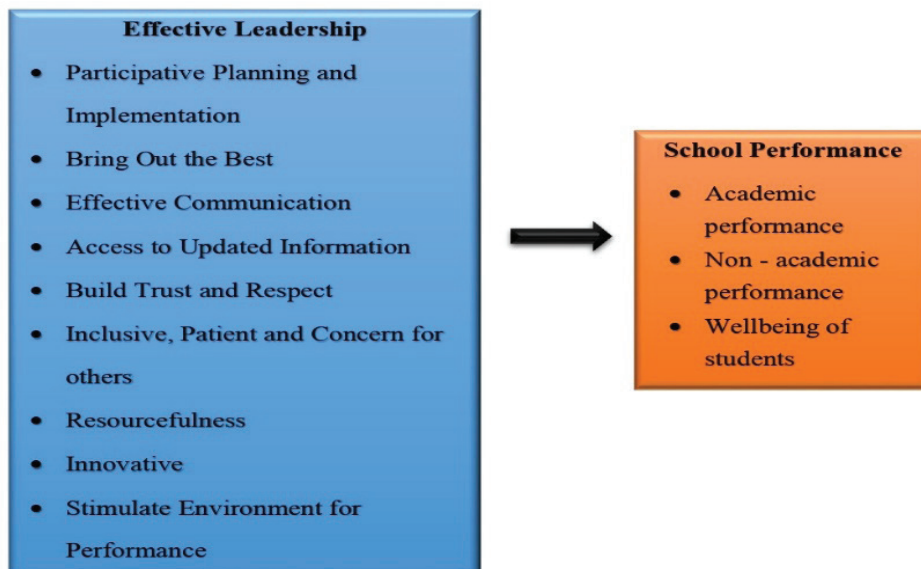


Figure 1: Conceptual framework explaining the causal relationships between effective leadership and school performance

Source: Literature review

positively or negatively, but no single leadership style is always appropriate (Tedla *et al.*, 2021). According to Alhothali (2021), teachers lack many 21st Century skills that require educational life skills, a creative environment, creative thinking, communication skills, and the ability to use modern technology and improve learning outcomes.

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework is drawn explaining how effective leadership affects school performance and depicted in Figure 1.

Based on these discussions, the following hypotheses were developed.

- Effective leadership significantly influences school performance.

As this study assumes Effective Leadership consists of nine dimensions; the following sub-hypotheses were derived.

- H1: Participatory planning and implementation significantly influence school performance.
- H2: Bringing out the best significantly influences school performance.
- H3: Effective communication significantly influences school performance.
- H4: Access to updated information significantly influences school performance.
- H5: Building trust and respect significantly influences school performance.
- H6: Inclusive, patient, and concerned for others significantly influence school performance.
- H7: Resourcefulness significantly influences school performance.
- H8: Innovativeness significantly influences school performance.
- H9: Stimulating environment significantly influences school performance.

A dynamic leadership style is highly effective as it leads to high school performance. Thus, effective leadership allows for many aspects of transformational leadership (Fernando *et al.*, 2020). Yang (2014) pointed out that the principal needs to improve his transformational leadership while improving the school and needs to create conditions to promote the ethics of school members with a higher level of leadership, making different members at different times motivated, respected, honest, satisfied, and reaches unanimous. Transformational leaders are

those who stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization (Bass & Riggio, 2009, cited in Cherry, 2020). Leadership effectiveness is fundamentally the practice of several principles.

“Building a collective vision, mission, and setting values that help people focus on their contributions, bringing out their best, establishing a fearless communication environment that encourages accurate and honest feedback and self-disclosure; making information readily available; establishing trust, respect, and peer-based behaviour as the norm; being inclusive and patient, showing concern for each person; demonstrating resourcefulness and the willingness to learn; and creating an environment that stimulates extraordinary performance” (Cooper & Nirenberg, 2012: p.5).

Transformational leaders are collaborating with their employees to bring about changes. Thus, this study argues that the characteristics of transformational leadership are similar to some dimensions of effective leadership.

School performance

School performance is considered here as both academic performance and non-academic performance (Fernando *et al.*, 2020). Non-academic performances are considered achievements in sports, aesthetics, and the well-being of students (Fernando *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, the focus of this study is to examine the impact of effective leadership styles on the school performance of intermediate colleges in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the study established the following specific objectives to be achieved through quantitative research methods:

1. To identify characteristics of effective leadership.
2. To examine the impact of effective leadership styles on school performance of Central Colleges in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.
3. To provide policy measures to enhance school performance of Central Colleges in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

METHODOLOGY

A survey using a questionnaire was administered on teachers by a research assistant. The study area is the Western Province of Sri Lanka including Colombo, Gampaha, and Kalutara Districts. It consists of 11 educational zones, 38 educational divisions, and 14 Central Colleges. The population of the research is the total number of teachers, which is 1793 in 14 Central Colleges in the Western Province in 2017 (Sri Lanka, Ministry of Education, 2018). According to Sarwar (2022), the principal is responsible for supporting the teachers in their teaching practices. Among his/her responsibilities, principals must give honest and effective leadership, resulting in improved professional presentation among teachers. The principal is responsible to give highly valued visions that are focused on their day-to-day methods and that serve to foster a good culture that is supportive of exceptional teacher performance. That is why teachers are studied to understand the leadership of school principals.

Based on the systematic random sampling method, 357 teachers were selected as the sample of the study from the 14 Central Colleges in the Western Province, which is 20% of the total number of teachers from each school. Questions were asked teachers about the characteristics of principals. Data were collected using

a structured questionnaire and analysed with the use of descriptive and inferential statistics.

ANALYSIS

The first part of the analysis presents a sample description. Alpha Test and Factor Analysis were conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Finally, correlation and regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of leadership style on school performance.

Analysis of demographic variables

About 82% of the sample were female teachers and 92 % of teachers are married. About 59% of the sample has a first degree and 29% of the sample were qualified from the National College of Education. Nearly, 68% of the teachers have been involved in school administrative activities and nearly, 41% of them are class teachers.

Analysis of descriptive statistics

The Dependent Variable of School Performance of the study has four dimensions, namely, Academic Performance and Non-academic Performance consisting of Aesthetic, Sports, and Well-being of students. The mean values of these variables are 4.1, 4.0, 3.9, and 4.1, respectively. The Likert 5-point scale was employed to

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the study

N=357					
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Effective Leadership</i>					
Participative Planning and Implementation (PPI)	3.6	0.8	-0.5	0.6	5
Bring Out the Best (BOB)	4.2	0.8	-1.1	1	5
Effective Communication (EC)	3.7	0.9	-0.8	0.0	5
Access to Updated Information (AUI)	3.7	0.8	-0.6	0.0	5
Build Trust and Respect (BTR)	3.8	0.8	-0.7	1	5
Inclusive, Patient and Concern for others (IPC)	3.6	0.8	-0.4	0.0	5
Resourcefulness (RF)	3.7	0.8	-0.7	0.0	5
Innovative (INN)	3.8	0.8	-1.0	0.0	5
Stimulate Environment for Performance (SEP)	3.8	0.8	-0.8	0.0	5
<i>School Performance</i>					
Academic Performance (AP)	4.1	0.8	-1.3	0.0	5
Nonacademic Performance- Aesthetic (NPA)	4.0	0.8	-1.0	0.0	5
Nonacademic Performance - Sports (NPS)	3.9	0.9	-1.1	0.0	5
Wellbeing of students (WS)	4.1	0.8	-1.3	0.0	5

Source: Field data

Table 2: Factor Loading, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability of constructs (CR)

Variables	Items	Factor loading	TVE	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	AVE	CR
<i>Effective Leadership</i>						
Participative Planning and Implementation (PPI)			66.615	0.872	0.666	0.938
PPI_1	The principal sets new objectives to enhance the performance of the school	0.881				
PPI_2	Interested in achieving the goals set by the principal	0.890				
PPI_3	The principal allows to express your views when designing the plans of the school	0.774				
PPI_4	The principal check whether the school's plans are properly implemented	0.814				
PPI_5	The Principal allows you to participate in the school decision-making process	0.708				
Bring Out the Best (BOB)			78.579	0.864	0.785	0.916
BOB_6	Principal encourages us to get the best results	0.875				
BOB_7	The principal focuses on developing the school's reputation	0.903				
BOB_8	The principal focuses on developing the resources of the school	0.881				
Effective Communication (EC)			83.459	0.801	0.835	0.910
EC_9	You can easily communicate with the principal	0.914				
EC_10	The principal has created an environment of free expression within the school	0.914				
Access to Updated Information (AUI)			70.883	0.793	0.708	0.879
AUI_11	The principal provides accurate and reliable follow-up information	0.836				
AUI_12	We can easily obtain information when required from the principal	0.841				
AUI_13	The principal gives the correct information	0.849				
Build Trust and Respect (BTR)			69.748	0.855	0.697	0.901
BTR_14	Our trust is not violated by the principal	0.809				
BTR_16	The principal focuses on addressing our grievances and problems	0.816				
BTR_22	Principal Values the Exemplary Behaviors of Others	0.874				
BTR_26	Our talents are publicly appreciated by the principal	0.839				
Inclusive, Patient, and concerned for others (IPC)			75.908	0.841	0.759	0.904
IPC_15	The principal is a patient person	0.498				
IPC_17	The principal cares about each individual	0.852				
IPC_18	The principle creates equality among all	0.851				
IPC_19	The principal focuses on each person	0.910				
Resourcefulness (RF)			87.540	0.857	0.876	0.933
RF_20	The principal provides resources when required to perform the task	0.936				
RF_21	The principal provides the necessary resources to carry out our duties and provides continuous supervision and encouragement to do the tasks	0.936				
Innovative (INN)			83.213	0.898	0.832	0.936

continued -

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INN_23	The principal likes to learn new things	0.883				
INN_24	The principal appreciates others' new ideas	0.928				
INN_25	The principal implements those new ideas	0.925				
Stimulate Environment for Performance (SEP)		77.788	0.857	0.777	0.913	
SEP_27	The principal creates a conducive environment for learning	0.885				
SEP_28	The Principal encourages teachers to maintain the standard of behavior for teachers	0.878				
SEP_29	The principal maintains good relationships with teachers and parents	0.883				
<i>School Performance</i>						
Academic Performance (AP)		80.830	0.960	0.809	0.967	
AP_30	The principal understands the school's mission statement	0.868				
AP_31	The principal performs according to the mission statement of the school	0.899				
AP_32	The principal focuses on improving academic performance	0.946				
AP_33	The principal performs to improve the academic performance	0.907				
AP_34	The principal encourages teachers to improve academic performance	0.934				
AP_35	The principal encourages teachers to conduct additional classes in the evening after school to enhance academic performance	0.884				
AP_36	The principal facilitates to conduct of seminars, workshops, and programs	0.854				
Nonacademic performance- Aesthetic (NPA)		82.845	0.896	0.828	0.935	
NPA_37	The principal facilitates to conduct of seminars, workshops, and programs for extracurricular activities (leadership training, psychology counseling programs)	0.911				
NPA_38	The principal works to encourage students in art-related activities	0.927				
NPA_40	The principal encourages all students to participate in extracurricular activities (Scout, Cadet, Student Union, etc.)	0.892				
Wellbeing of Students (WS)		84.663	0.909	0.846	0.943	
WS_41	The principal works to create positive attitudes in the school	0.885				
WS_42	The principal is trying to create a drug-free environment in the school	0.934				
WS_43	The principal is trying to create an environment that is free of misconduct within the school	0.940				

Source: Field data

Table 3: Pearson Product- Moment Correlation Matrix for variables

		S c h o o l performance	PPI	BOB	EC	AUI	BTR	IPC	RF	INN	SEP
S c h o o l performance	P e a r s o n	1									
	Correlation	1									
	Sig. (2- tailed)	-									
	N	357									
PPI	P e a r s o n		1								
	Correlation	.735**	1								
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	-								
	N	357	357								
BOB	P e a r s o n			1							
	Correlation	.839**	.744**	1							
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	-							
	N	357	357	357							
EC	P e a r s o n				1						
	Correlation	.583**	.651**	.570**	1						
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	-						
	N	357	357	357	357						
AUI	P e a r s o n					1					
	Correlation	.586**	.702**	.581**	.693**	1					
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	-					
	N	357	357	357	357	357					
BTR	P e a r s o n						1				
	Correlation	.733**	.744**	.635**	.682**	.752**	1				
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-				
	N	357	357	357	357	357	357				
IPC	P e a r s o n							1			
	Correlation	.708**	.704**	.601**	.584**	.661**	.714**	1			
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-			
	N	357	357	357	357	357	357	357			
RF	P e a r s o n								1		
	Correlation	.752**	.726**	.657**	.574**	.624**	.733**	.713**	1		
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-		
	N	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357		
INN	P e a r s o n									1	
	Correlation	.756**	.693**	.678**	.573**	.582**	.787**	.693**	.735**	1	
	S i g . (2 - tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-	
	N	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	
SEP	P e a r s o n										1
	Correlation	.823**	.710**	.756**	.574**	.617**	.748**	.754**	.729**	.760**	1
	S i g . (2 - tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-
	N	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

PPI - Participative Planning and Implementation, BOB - Bring Out the Best, EC - Effective Communication, AUI - Access to Updated Information, BTR - Build Trust and Respect IPC - Inclusive, Patient and concern for others, RF – Resourcefulness, INN – Innovative, SEP - Stimulate Environment for Performance

Table 4: Regression test results

Predictor	Standardized Regression coefficient	T- Value	Significance
Bring Out the Best	.435	11.918	.000
Inclusive, Patient and Concerned for others	.232	5.087	.000
Resourcefulness	.153	3.969	.000
Innovative	.115	2.897	.004
Stimulate Environment for Performance	.084	2.215	.027
Constant		2.402	.017
R	.904 ^e		
R ²	.817		
Adjusted R Square	.814		
F	312.534		

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

evaluate the variables reflecting the extent of agreement level from low to high. This scale has five levels of agreement : 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree. These values representing all respondent are higher than 3 (neutral level) representing the “agreed level”.

Characteristics of effective leadership

The Independent variable of the study is Effective Leadership, which is measured by nine (09) sub-variables namely, participative planning and implementation, bringing out the best, effective communication, and access to updated information, building trust and respect, inclusive patience, and concern for others, resourcefulness, innovation and stimulating the environment for performance (Cooper & Nirenberg, 2012).

A five-point Likert scale was used to allow the teachers to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement. The mean values of the nine sub-variables of effective leadership (the independent variable of the study) are indicated here. According to the mean values of participative planning and implementation, the principal brings out the best, enables effective communication, provides access to updated information, builds trust and respect, inclusive patience and concern for others, resourcefulness, innovation, creating stimulation for the environment for the performance of their teachers, are respectively 3.6, 4.2, 3.7, 3.7, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.8.

Reliability and validity of measures

All the variables were selected based on a comprehensive literature review to ensure face validity. Content validity was ensured by including all dimensions of the variables.

Factor analysis was conducted to ensure Construct Validity (convergent and discriminant validity).

To ensure the reliability of the measures, a reliability test was conducted. An alpha level of 0.7 or above is considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951, cited in Karunasena & Deng, 2012). Construct reliability between 0.6 and 0.7 is acceptable (Hair *et al.*, 2014). All the reliability coefficient values of the variables in this study had values higher than 0.7 ensuring the reliability of the items.

Correlation analysis

According to the Correlation analysis, the dependent variable, School performance is positively correlated with all dimensions of effective leadership at the significant level of $p < 0.01$.

Regression analysis

The study used ‘Stepwise Regression’ for the analysis. Even though there is a significant correlation between each independent variable and dependent variable, there is a high correlation among some independent variables. Stepwise regression analysis excludes some independent variables having high correlations with each other. Other variables have no multi-collinearity issue as the value of tolerance is greater than 0.

The regression coefficients shown are standardized coefficients.

According to Table 4, five independent variables namely, ‘bringing out the best’, ‘inclusive and concern for others’, ‘resourcefulness’, ‘being innovative’ and ‘stimulating environment’ are statistically significant

with the dependent variable of School Performance. These five variables of effective leadership explained 81.4% variance of the dependent variable of School Performance. Other dimensions of effective leadership did not significantly affect school performance.

DISCUSSION

There are similar findings brought to light by various scholars in their previous studies, as discussed below.

Bringing out the best

Cooper & Nirenberg (2012) pointed out that leadership performance is essentially a practice of a set of values that helps people focus on their contributions and deliver the best. Garza *et al.* (2014) support that principals express their views openly about education and help their schools put them in the right places. Cemaloglu (2011) argued that because of the good practices of principals such as inspiration, which is seen in the leaders of change, the good health of the organisation takes place in educational institutions. Schools in which students' achievements are led by principals who make a significant and measurable contribution to the teaching and learning practices (Andrew & Soder, 1987; Bossert *et al.*, 1982, Murphy & Hallinger, 1992, cited in Sharma, 2011). The better a principal can prioritize the things that have to be done, the better they can focus their efforts on the things that matter to their students and faculty most (Castillo, 2019). Successful principals see the greatness in others and do what they can to bring that greatness out of them (Castillo, 2019). Effective principals are reliably mindful of best practices while instructing and encouraging the teaching staff to adopt these learning techniques in the classroom (Whitaker, 2012).

Inclusiveness and concern for others

Cooper & Nirenberg (2012) revealed, that "being inclusive and showing concern for each person" is a fundamental practice of leadership effectiveness. Muchiri *et al.* (2011) identified such effective leadership as one that emphasizes justice, equity, honesty, and employee development. Wang *et al.* (2016) highlighted that principals were successful in improving school capacity through redesigning school structures, particularly those that facilitate improvement in the work of teachers. The principals in these schools demonstrated the ability to care for others through words and deeds and the willingness to listen to the different views and to empathize with them (Wang *et al.*, 2016). True effective leadership emerges when one's primary motivation is to help others (Hughes *et al.*, 2010). When the effective principal listens to the

teachers, the best teachers feel that they have a voice. If the principal is not an empathic listener, teachers will not share ideas and strategies during meetings (Freeman & Randolph, 2013). Spiro revealed (2013) that "Within a school, teachers will feel safe and valued under the wing of an effective principal".

Resourcefulness

Urlick (2016) found that principals should have the same significant impact on resources, security, and resources regardless of how much teaching is shared because these responsibilities consider the needs of the school. Fullan (2002, cited in Sharma, 2011) also suggested that at the heart of school capacity are principals emphasising the development of teachers' knowledge and skills, professional community, program coherence, and technical resources. Effective leaders can obtain the cooperation of other people and harness the resources provided by that cooperation to attain organisational goals (May-Vollmar & Kelly, 2017). Effective educational leaders recognize that investing in the professional development of the staff is good for achievement and will cause to the best practices of teachers (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Essentially, money will be put toward resources that will help a school to improve weaknesses or help staff and students to reach collective goals (Klar & Brewer 2013). "Pursuing student progress and controlling monetary funds to address weaknesses are other indicators of an effective leader" (Barkman, 2015).

Innovativeness

Garza *et al.* (2014) revealed that all principals are teaching leaders who have contributed to teaching and learning and are committed to making a difference. Wang *et al.* (2016) highlighted that principals should demonstrate initiative and creativity, and be resilient. Koech & Namusonge (2012) revealed that leaders should stimulate subordinate efforts to become more innovative and creative. According to Whitaker (2012), effective principals are creative and always try something new. Also, principals adapt well to constant change.

Stimulating environment for performance

Some research confirms that environmental stimulation for others has significant effects on school performance. "Creating an environment that stimulates extraordinary performance" is a fundamental practice of leadership effectiveness (Cooper & Nirenberg, 2012). Huguet (2017) found that effective leadership creates a school environment conducive to academic success. Teachers seem to be more satisfied when they have greater control over classrooms and when they receive effective

support and guidance from the principals (Tillman & Tillman, 2008; Hulpia *et al.*, 2009, cited in Dutta & Sahney, 2016). Every effective principal must have strong interpersonal skills and focus on developing relationships (Barkman, 2015). “Good principals try to redesign the organisation through building relations with families and connecting the school to the community” (Klar & Brewer, 2013). The importance of integrating 21st century skills systematically in the curriculum to achieve educational objectives and provide a supportive environment for creativity and innovations (Shalabi, 2014).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations could be proposed to improve the performances of Central Colleges: School performance is directly affected by effective school leadership.

School principals should be able to bring out the best results

School principals should encourage their teachers to get the best results and develop schools’ reputations and resources. For that, principals should encourage teachers to do extra classes before or after school time and develop the school’s reputation and resources of the school. To develop the school’s reputation, principals should encourage students to participate in sports activities and aesthetic competitions at both local and international levels and encourage students to win those competitions.

The school principal should be inclusive and have concern for others

School principals must care about each individual and try to create equality among all teachers, students, and non-academic staff of their schools. Further, school principals should focus on each person by addressing their grievances and problems. The principal must allow teachers to express their ideas and reward their achievements.

The principal should be resourceful

The principal should be able to provide resources when required to perform the task and continuous supervision and encouragement to do tasks. By doing such, the principal can get teachers’ contribution in achieving the objectives of the school. Meanwhile, school principals should develop the human and physical resources of the school. That means they should try to develop physical

infrastructure such as new classrooms, laboratory facilities, playground facilities, IT lab facilities, etc. For that, principals can get the support of the school alumni association. Furthermore, principals should be able to identify the shortage of teachers and be able to take necessary actions.

The principal should be an innovative person

School principals should be innovative people and should always try to learn new things and appreciate others’ new ideas. They should also be able to implement those ideas.

The principal should create a stimulating environment

A school should have a stimulating environment for performances. Principals must create a conducive environment for learning and encourage teachers to maintain the standard of behaviour for others. Further, the principal should maintain a good relationship with teachers and parents and a proper relationship with the school alumni association.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was to examine the impact of effective leadership style on the school performance of Central Colleges. The most effective leaders have several characteristics of the transformational leadership style, which leads to higher school performance. Effective school leadership is directly affected by school performance. Effective leadership characteristics are; bringing out the best, being inclusive, having concern for others, resourcefulness, being innovative, and being able to stimulate the environment for performance. These characteristics significantly affect School Performance and explain the 81.4% variance of the dependent variable of School Performance.

The research has certain limitations. This study was carried out covering only the Central Colleges in the Western Province. Therefore, future studies could be conducted by covering all Central Colleges in the other Provinces. Further, this study covered only a smaller sample. Hence, further studies could be carried out by covering a larger sample to better understand leadership and School performance.

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