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School Principals' Leadership and Teaching Quality in Secondary Schools in Makutano, Lubumbashi

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Abstract: ***This study examines the relationship between school principals' leadership and teaching quality in secondary schools in Makutano, Lubumbashi. It analyses leadership practices and their contribution to school performance. A survey method was used, supported by observation, document analysis and questionnaires administered to 10 principals, 40 teachers and 50 students. The findings highlight the importance of planning, communication, instructional supervision, professional collaboration and teacher qualifications. The study proposes a Collaborative Leadership Model within a Quality Teaching and Learning Ecosystem, based on participation and shared responsibility among education stakeholders.***

Keywords: Leadership; school principal; teaching quality; secondary school; collaborative leadership

1. Introduction

Education plays a major role in individual development and social progress. Teaching quality depends on teachers' qualifications, learning conditions, educational resources and school management. Principals are particularly important because they plan, supervise, communicate and monitor educational activities. Their effectiveness also depends on cooperation among teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders. In Makutano's secondary schools, certain management and supervision practices raise questions about their contribution to teaching quality. This study therefore examines principals' leadership practices and their relationship with teaching quality, with the aim of proposing a collaborative approach to improving teaching and learning.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Definition of key concepts

2.1.1 Leadership

Yukl (2013) defines leadership as a process through which a person influences others, guides their actions and facilitates individual and collective efforts towards shared goals. It involves influence, coordination, motivation and collaboration rather than authority alone. In this study, leadership refers to the practices through which a school principal guides, motivates and coordinates the school community to achieve educational objectives.

2.1.2 Leader

According to Northouse (2021), a leader influences a group towards a common goal through interaction, communication and collective participation. A leader also makes decisions, resolves problems and maintains group cohesion. Here, the term refers mainly to the school principal, who mobilises staff and coordinates administrative and educational activities.

2.1.3 School principal

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) describe instructional leadership through three responsibilities: defining the school's mission, managing the curriculum and promoting a climate that supports learning. These responsibilities include setting objectives, supervising teaching, coordinating programmes and monitoring student progress. In this study, the school principal is the person responsible for the administrative, financial, educational, material and human management of a school.

2.1.4 School

For Dewey (1897), a school is a social institution in which children take part in the intellectual and cultural life of society. It provides an organised environment for acquiring knowledge, developing abilities and learning to live with others. In this study, a school is an educational institution that transmits knowledge, practical skills and social values to learners.

2.1.5 Secondary school

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) describes secondary education as the level following primary education. It includes a first cycle that consolidates basic knowledge and a second cycle that provides more specialised learning and prepares students for higher education or employment. In the Congolese context examined here, a secondary school provides six years of education after primary school.

2.1.6 Teaching quality

Darling-Hammond (2021) links teaching quality to subject knowledge, pedagogical skills and an understanding of learners' needs. It also depends on continuous teacher development and the adaptation of teaching methods. In this study, teaching quality refers to the effectiveness of teaching practices, assessed through teacher qualifications, teaching methods, learning conditions, subject mastery and student results.

2.2 Theories related to the study

2.2.1 Leadership theories

Bernabé (2012) views educational leadership as the ability to mobilise staff around school objectives. Pelletier (2013) distinguishes leadership from hierarchical authority, emphasising expertise, personal influence and communication. Boncompain (2020) identifies two complementary forms: instructional leadership, which improves teaching practices, and managerial leadership,

which covers planning, organisation, direction and evaluation.

Normand (2018) identifies several leadership styles, including autocratic, charismatic, laissez-faire, participative and managerial leadership. He also emphasises instructional and transformational leadership. Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008) highlight principals' responsibilities in teacher supervision, evaluation, professional development, teamwork and the recruitment of qualified staff. Overall, effective school leadership requires professional and personal skills, clear objectives, sound decisions, supervision, initiative and teamwork. Weak leadership may lead to poor communication, low staff involvement and weak coordination.

2.2.2 Theories of Teaching Quality

Behrens (2007) explains that educational quality has several meanings and must be assessed through clearly defined criteria. It concerns school performance, teaching practices, teacher-learner interactions and learning conditions, not student results alone. Varcher (2012) also stresses the need for appropriate criteria to assess educational quality. Kupelesa Ilunga (2010, p. 653) relates teaching quality to learners' acquired skills and performance, while emphasising the principal's role in teacher motivation, human-resource management, instructional supervision and school climate.

Teaching quality therefore depends on teacher competence, teaching methods, learning resources, student outcomes and effective school management. Principals contribute through staff supervision, monitoring, evaluation and corrective action.

2.3 Review of previous studies

Ndagijimana (2008) studied motivation and academic achievement in two teacher-training schools in Rwanda, finding that motivation supports student success. Paul (2010), studying 24 secondary schools in Haiti, reported an average pass rate of 39.55% and identified inadequate libraries and large class sizes as challenges. These studies point to the importance of learning conditions and school leadership.

Vu (2012), based on 27 interviews, examined how leaders develop leadership skills through professional and everyday experiences. Varcher (2012) analysed different definitions and assessment criteria for educational quality. Lauwerier, Thibaut and Akkari (2013) examined curriculum and school reforms in Africa, including competency-based approaches and the factors limiting their contribution to educational quality.

Nakahosa (2012) examined factors behind effective schools in Lubumbashi, including Institut Imara, Complexe scolaire L'Âge d'Or and Lycée Tuendelee. His findings stressed the importance of teachers' pedagogical quality. The present study differs by focusing specifically on the relationship between principals' managerial and instructional leadership and teaching quality in Makutano's secondary schools.

3. Study Area

The study was conducted in secondary schools in Makutano, a neighbourhood in Lubumbashi municipality, Lubumbashi city, Haut-Katanga Province. Makutano's administrative office is located at 104 Sendwe Avenue, near the municipal office. The neighbourhood is bordered by Ndjamena Avenue to the north, Kamalondo stream to the south, Lumumba Avenue to the east, and Likasi and Kamanyola avenues to the west.

Following the 1976 administrative reform under Order No. 252/903/76, the former terms 'chiefdom' and 'locality' were replaced by 'municipality' and 'neighbourhood'. At that time, Lubumbashi municipality had three neighbourhoods: Makutano, Mampala and Gambela. Makutano covers approximately 9 km², with an estimated density of 1,555 inhabitants per km². It includes five administrative cells: Luvua, Tanganyika, Kundelungu, Laboratoire (also called Camp des Assistants) and Sakania.

The neighbourhood office represents higher administrative authorities and coordinates local administration. The neighbourhood chief supervises services, security and hygiene. The deputy chief assists with administrative duties, while the secretary manages records and reports. An usher receives and directs visitors, and an attendant manages reception at the entrance.

Technical services in the neighbourhood include urban planning, the Congolese National Police substation, the Road Traffic Police, the surveillance office known as Bureau II and the National Intelligence Agency. Since 1976, the neighbourhood has been led successively by Kumba wa Kishiwa (1976–1980), Mukaj (1980–1984), Ngoie Mabwa (1984–1988), Banza Dijiba wa Mujinga (1988–1992 and 1996–2004), Kumwimba Mujinga (1992–1995), Kakuni Mwiné Difunde (1995–1996), Kayamba Ngoie (1996), Kilumba Kyandalala (2004–2019) and Manga Mukandjila Fulgence, in office since 2019.

4. Methodological Approach

The study used a research method and data-collection techniques suited to examining principals' leadership and teaching quality. The participants were school principals, teachers and students from the selected secondary schools.

4.1 Research Method

The study adopted a field survey method to examine leadership practices and their relationship with teaching quality. Marie (2008) considers surveys appropriate for investigating a specific phenomenon, while Claude (2019) describes field surveys as direct data collection in the setting under study. This method made it possible to gather participants' perceptions and experiences.

The survey had three stages. First, a preliminary visit was conducted to observe school practices. Second, questionnaires were administered to participants. Third, the collected information was processed using the questionnaires, an observation checklist and school documents.

4.2 Research techniques

Three data-collection techniques were used: direct observation, document analysis and questionnaires. Observation focused on principals' authority and students' learning conditions. Document analysis covered available administrative and educational records. Questionnaires gathered information from principals, teachers and students on the study's two main variables.

Data were classified and analysed through counting and content analysis. Percentages, the binomial test and the chi-square test were used to examine response frequencies and differences between groups. Leadership was treated as the independent variable and teaching quality as the dependent variable.

5. Findings

The findings are based on document analysis, checklist-based observation and questionnaires completed by 10 principals, 40 teachers and 50 students. Results are presented according to the study variables and indicators.

Regarding leadership, eight of the 10 principals (80%) received a 'very good' rating from inspectors, while two (20%) received a 'good' rating. All 10 schools had a notice board and work timetable. Nine had a basic management committee and internal regulations. Eight schools kept meeting minutes and held two to four subject-team meetings each month.

Classroom supervision varied: six principals conducted more than 10 classroom visits per term, two conducted one to five, and two conducted five to 10. Seven schools had no disciplinary records, while three had between one and five. In the questionnaires, nine principals (90%) reported preparing an annual activity plan and monitoring its implementation. Seven (70%) said they had all 10 required administrative documents, and the same proportion reported having the three school management bodies. The binomial test found no statistically significant difference in responses for these two indicators.

Among teachers, 32 of 40 (80%) taught subjects matching their qualifications, while eight (20%) did not. Twenty-two (55%) had attended professional development during the school year, compared with 18 (45%) who had not. Twenty-eight (70%) reported being recruited on the basis of both qualifications and skills; the remaining teachers referred to qualifications alone or skills alone.

Among students, 43 of 50 (86%) reported sharing a desk with two or three students, while seven (14%) reported three or more. Forty-five (90%) said they had time to ask teachers questions after lessons. Forty students (80%) said they could easily approach the principal about school difficulties, and 35 (70%) said the principal listened to them.

6. Study Contribution

The study proposes the 'Collaborative Leadership Model within a Quality Teaching and Learning Ecosystem'. It views teaching quality as the outcome of both effective principal leadership and cooperation among school stakeholders. Principals, teachers, students, parents and inspectors have complementary responsibilities and interact through management, teaching, partnership, family support, evaluation and supervision. The principal coordinates these relationships, while each stakeholder contributes to improving teaching and learning.

The model requires a permanent consultation framework coordinated by the principal. At the beginning of the school year, stakeholders should agree on a shared action plan. The principal plans, organises and monitors activities; teachers teach, guide and motivate learners; students take an active role in learning; parents provide family support and strengthen links with the school; and inspectors supervise, train and evaluate teaching practices. Quality education therefore requires collective commitment and shared responsibility.

7. Discussion of Findings

The findings show that principals exercise leadership through activity planning, work schedules, information boards, communication and student support. These practices are consistent with Boncompain's (2020) view that school leaders need planning, organisation, direction and evaluation skills. They also support Pelletier's (2012) emphasis on expertise, communication and listening.

Principals also conduct classroom visits, check teachers' records, monitor lesson delivery and classroom management, and organise meetings and subject-based groups. These practices align with Bamburg and Andrews (1991), Heck (1992), Robinson (2007) and Woessuram et al. (2007), who associate classroom observation and feedback with improved school outcomes. They also reflect Pont et al.'s (2008) emphasis on lesson supervision. Subject-based groups encourage teachers to share experiences, although participation in continuing professional development remains uneven. This finding is consistent with Leithwood et al. (2005) on professional collaboration and Rajala et al. (2007) on continuous development in effectively led schools.

Teacher recruitment based on qualifications and skills is consistent with the recommendations of the OECD (2008) and DEECP (2007). The study also found that classes generally contain 21 to 40 students, with two or three students sharing a desk. This relates to The Conversation (2019) and OECD (2019), which underline the value of suitable class sizes and learning conditions. Overall, teaching quality in the schools studied is linked to administrative planning, instructional supervision, professional collaboration, teacher recruitment and students' learning conditions.

8. Conclusion

This study examined principals' leadership and teaching quality in secondary schools in Makutano. The findings show that most principals prepare activity plans, establish work schedules, organise meetings and monitor school activities. They also communicate with teachers, students and parents,

demonstrating their involvement in administrative and educational management.

Most teachers teach subjects related to their qualifications and are recruited according to their skills. Schools also organise subject-team meetings, supervision sessions and classroom visits. However, participation in continuing professional development is uneven. Classes generally contain 21 to 40 students, with two or three students per desk. Most students report being able to ask questions and approach principals about their difficulties.

The study concludes that principals' leadership is closely related to teaching quality in the schools examined. Planning, communication, instructional supervision, teacher collaboration and resource management support school performance. Areas requiring further attention include continuing teacher development, the availability of administrative documents and the regular operation of school management bodies. Principals are therefore encouraged to strengthen participative leadership, while school owners should support training initiatives and provide the resources schools need. Sustained cooperation among principals, teachers, students and parents is recommended.

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