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The Role of Leadership in Enhancing Academic Performance and Teaching Quality in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the role of leadership in enhancing academic performance and teaching quality in elementary schools. It focused on seven schools in both urban and rural areas and participants were selected to represent the various leadership practices in different schools. The purpose of the study was to assess how leadership styles of principals influence the academic performance of students in elementary schools. Also, to identify specific leadership practices that contributes to improving teaching quality and student outcomes in elementary schools. And to explore the challenges faced by school leaders in implementing effective leadership strategies to enhance educational standards. The study employed selective sampling to choose seven principals and sixty-three teachers in total. The study revealed that consistent and purposeful collaborative leadership practices such as regular feedback, empowering teachers, collaborative decision-making process, classroom visit, and teacher engagements enhance teaching quality and students learning outcomes. The challenges faced by schools especially in the rural areas included shortage of school supplies, outdated and faulty digital learning resources and insufficient funds. These challenges affected the principals leadership strategies which in the long run hindered the quality of classroom instruction and students performance. The findings of this study can add to existing knowledge and be used to provide valuable suggestions for education policymakers, principals and teachers on strategies to enhance academic performance and teaching quality in elementary schools.

RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

Education is a very important aspect of the society, and quality of primary education essential for building a civilised society as it provides the basis for continuous educational experiences and plays a major part in molding the future of a nation and its citizens *(Sharma & Ankit, 2023)*. Improving teaching quality and academic success in elementary schools requires strong leadership which could promote a sense of diversity, reverence, and ownership among teachers and learners, all resulting in improving the teaching and learning process.

In elementary schools in the province I reside, the provincial education department provides them with operations guidelines at the start of each academic session, and each school principal get to implement them *(Mengting & Abidin, 2024)*. In these guidelines, school principals are tasked with a wide range of duties, which can be categorized into five areas: management, classroom instruction, environment and facilities, program support, and school involvement with the community. These duties include managing student enrollments, assigning teaching and leadership duties to teachers, communicating national policy schemes and other rules and regulations, carrying out assessments of learning, and featuring the local community in school development plans.

Elementary schools principals are said to be crucial in determining the trajectory of their schools' growth, ensuring that the curriculum is implemented, and supporting professional development for teachers in the schooling environment. They also serve as internal educational inspectors and are essential to the process of teaching and learning. Their roles requires them as school leaders to assign teaching and administrative responsibilities in line with the national curriculum. It also requires them to schedule staff and departmental meetings every couple of weeks in order to organize, analyze, and disseminate guidelines and other essential responsibilities the school ought to complete in order to achieve the set goals.

Effective leadership can be practiced in schools where there is a cordial working relationship between the principal and the teachers. *Campbell et al. (2018)*, asserts that recognition and professional development for teachers improved teaching quality. The teacher training procedures that target differentiated learning and the areas where

students most need to develop have a good impact on learning outcomes. In addition, leadership styles and teacher engagement are positively correlated, *Bacay (2023)*. School principals ought to adopt leadership styles that could encourage teacher engagement and motivate them towards a better teaching-learning process.

Effective leadership practices, such as developing a well-organized plan, fostering a supportive and collaborative school environment, and using student-centered teaching approaches, are strongly linked to increased student achievement *(Leithwood & Levin, 2010)*.

The challenges that principals usually experience further highlight the necessity for this study. Carrying out effective leadership practice is frequently hindered by lack of some basic educational resources, opposition to innovation, and restrictions from regulatory bodies. To tackle these issues, an extensive knowledge of the ways in which leadership practices impact academic performance is necessary in order to offer recommendations that would assist the principals and teachers overcome these issues.

This study seeks to investigate what leadership practices can be applied to improve the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process so as to achieve academic goals in the elementary schools. This would offer support and insights for school leaders and teachers as well.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. How do the leadership styles of principals influence the academic performance of students in elementary schools?
2. What specific leadership practices contribute to improving teaching quality and student outcomes in elementary schools?
3. What challenges do school leaders face in implementing effective leadership strategies to enhance educational standards?

Research Objectives

The objectives this paper seeks to investigate are as follows:

1. To assess how leadership styles of principals influence the academic performance of students in elementary schools.
2. To identify specific leadership practices that contributes to improving teaching quality and student outcomes in elementary schools.
3. To explore the challenges faced by school leaders in implementing effective leadership strategies to enhance educational standards.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is important in shaping the teaching and learning environment in elementary schools. According to *Chapman & MacAllister, (2016)*, leadership practices directly influence student outcomes and teacher efficacy by fostering a cohesive and supportive educational atmosphere.

The leadership style used in schools and the extent to which it affects the quality of lesson delivery in current circumstances have been found to be typically poorly understood by teachers *(Akhtar & Akhtar, 2024).* The many strategies for leadership and how they connect to or impact the quality of the lessons they teach are unfamiliar to leaders. Furthermore, school leaders are frequently observed to be unaware about the style of leadership that best supports an encouraging educational setting and the

efficacy of the teachers. According to research, Principals' leadership styles tend to have an impact on teachers' instructional outcomes, either positively or negatively *(Muhamad et al., 2019).* Principals may also enhance education by implementing strategies that reduce the disparity in academic achievement. Studies had been done on the relationship between teachers on their organizational involvement and school principals' leadership *(Cansoy & Polatcan, 2019)*. Despite the fact that the results of the research under review do not establish connections between variables, they do enable specific assumptions to be made.

For schools to improve their quality, school leaders play a crucial role *(Hallinger et al., 2015)*. As instructional leaders, school principals have the power to significantly impact student outcomes, enhance the success of the school's instructional programs, assert their leadership in fortifying school discipline, and guarantee that learning achievement evaluation is a top priority for the school *(Hallinger et al. 2015).*

Leadership Practices and Their Impact on Academic Performance

Principals play an essential role throughout the educational process. Leaders oversee instructional programs, and instructional leadership promotes excellent teaching techniques. Additionally, instructional leaders make sure that the overall efficacy of teaching is improved and evaluated in relation to the achievement of educational objectives and objectives for students. According to *Culduz (2023),* the primary responsibility of principals is to provide efficient learning environments and diverse curriculum for students that are intended to help schools achieve their objectives. Similarly, the *OECD (2018)* reports that instructional leadership correlates with enhanced teacher collaboration and student achievement. Instructional leaders' supervisory roles further enable them to align teaching practices with institutional goals, as emphasized by *Bacay (2024).*

Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating staff to achieve collective objectives, is another influential approach. *Mincu (2022)* argues that transformational leadership fosters systemic educational transformation by promoting a shared vision and collective agency. The efficiency of instruction is greatly impacted by teacher well-being, which is positively correlated with transformational leadership.

Spillane, (2006) put forward that the primary focus of distributed leadership is leadership practice, not individuals or their positions, duties, schedules, and

organizational frameworks, even if these factors are significant, leadership practice nevertheless represents the first step. Leadership practice is framed differently by a distributed viewpoints, which sees it as the result of interactions between followers, school leaders, and their circumstances *(Spillane, 2006).* He emphasizes that various leaders who assume leadership responsibilities across school levels are necessary for improved school leadership.

A significant leadership practice that allows all parties to actively engage in decision-making is collaborative leadership. The viewpoints of all parties involved in this leadership approach are crucial since they will maintain a positive transformation *(Banashree, 2020)*. Collaborative leadership provides an effective method for an institution to communicate freely with all of its staff. According to *Aryani & Rudic, (2023),* Collaborative leadership has a tendency to unite the principal and teachers with diverse opinions, set aside personal interests, have open discussions about challenges, encourage initiatives to discover solutions, and resolve more significant concerns.

Teacher Leadership and Professional Development

In recent years, the idea of school leadership has evolved, with a renewed emphasis on leadership alternatives as the priority has shifted away from a single centralized leader *(Muhamad et al., 2019).* Consequently, school achievement depends on shared leadership because teacher leadership is essential owing to the complex expectations placed on school management. Teacher leadership has gained greater recognition, and there have been several efforts to create multiple career pathways that would allow successful classroom teachers to take on more roles and responsibilities *(Taylor et al, 2011)*.

Professional development and teacher leadership both support the academic achievement of students, and teacher leadership is a learning activity which provides several chances for professional growth. According to *Alexandrou & Swaffield, (2014)*, professional development which is collaborative, cohesive, based on instructional behavior-focused content, and sustained over time is necessary to bring about improvements in classroom instruction and successful outcomes for students. However, teacher leadership is increasingly being promoted as a way to improve reform in schools and professional development that is integrated into the teaching

profession, and it may have the potential to improve the overall quality of teaching *Alexandrou & Swaffield, (2014)*.

Influence on Academic Performance and Teaching Quality

Effective leadership increases the likelihood of the entire staff being engaged, and when every individual is engaging, ownership is constantly seen. In terms of academic growth, this is quite important, especially when it comes to coordinating students' preparation time and extracurricular activities. Successful leaders foster school cultures and environments that support teachers and students, which enhances instruction and learning environments and makes it easier for students to achieve at higher levels of excellence. Additionally, in the majority of educational systems, a school leader is deemed responsible for increasing student learning by creating collective goals for inspiring and encouraging teachers and students *(Ferdinandi & Kiwonde, 2023).*

Leadership also influences academic performance by establishing a positive school climate, setting clear academic goals, and maintaining high expectations *(OECD, 2019).* Additionally, collaborative, distributed and transformational leadership practices contribute to a supportive culture that enhances both teacher efficacy and student achievement.

Challenges and Barriers to Effective Leadership

Despite the proven benefits of effective leadership, challenges persist. The underlying problems with school leadership and instruction remains precisely the same in many nations. *Mincu (2022)* claims that government policies that are deemed ineffective then affect the duties of school administrators, school management is ineffective, there is an inadequate amount of involvement from the community (parents of students), and there is a lack of government funding.

In school where there is limited resources is provided for leadership development, some principals tend get comfortable with their workload and may not see the need of leadership training, even if their performance may be below average *(Cobbinah, 2020).* Without leadership training, teaching for several years does not guarantee that a person will be a good principal, head teacher, or leader.

Groenewald et al (2024) put forward that the most significant of these issues was the lack of specific requirements and expectations for prospective school leaders, which has led to the promotion of unqualified or inexperienced people to leadership roles. This could lower the quality of leadership in schools. Also, the effectiveness of the leader is impacted when an institution lacks clearly defined responsibilities for its tasks.

METHODOLOGY

Description of Participants of the Study

This research focused on elementary schools in the city as well as the countryside, and participants were picked to represent the various approaches to leadership and practices found in different elementary school settings. The schools were located and chosen according to their academic performance measures, such as students assessment results, class attendance register, teacher turnover and retention. This was done in order to adequately represent the high-performing, the average as well as the under-performing elementary schools.

The participants for this study were principals and teachers, and were placed into two major groups.In all, seven schools were involved,with one principal and some teachers from each school taking part. This stratified sort of selection method was done so as to make sure that opinions of participants from various backgrounds and levels of proficiency were captured thereby providing adequate understanding on the role of leadership in elementary school system.

Principals

The study consisted of seven principal in total, one from each of the schools that participated. These participants were in charge of providing academic leadership, strategic planning, resource management, and promoting a productive school culture and learning outcomes. The following factors were used to determine their selection:

i. Leadership Experience: Principals required to have at least five years of experience in their current position to make sure that they had an extensive knowledge of the complexities of leadership and the daily affairs of their schools.
ii. Performance Context: Schools under their leadership had been categorized as high-performing, average, or under-performing based on a combination of internal (e.g., teacher evaluation reports) and external metrics (e.g., district-wide academic rankings).

The principals offered significant information into their leadership approaches, methods for raising the standard of classroom instruction, and challenges associated with leading schools with various levels of performance. Each principal participated in semi-structured interviews, surveys, and observational sessions.

Teachers

The study comprised of sixty-three teachers altogether, with five to ten participants for each school. Teachers represented a range of grade levels and subject areas. to provide give a comprehensive idea of teaching methods and how leadership impacted them. The following were the requirements for teachers to be selected:

i. Professional Experience: Teachers had to have taught in the selected school for at least two years in order to ensure they had adequate knowledge and familiar with the school's culture and leadership style.
ii. Subject Expertise: Efforts were made to include teachers from core subjects (e.g., mathematics, science, language arts) and extracurricular activities (e.g., arts, physical education) to examine the leadership impact across various educational domains.
iii. Voluntary Participation: Teachers who indicated a desire and eagerness in interest in taking part were included, to ensure engagement and reducing possibility of bias in responses.

Data were collected from teachers through surveys, semi-structured interviews, and observations. These three data sources helped to provide useful feedback on how teacher satisfaction, engagement and resources available were impacted by leadership practices.

Sampling Strategy

The stratified sampling approach was necessary to accomplish the objectives of the study. I carried out stratification to ensure that I include schools and participants that would represent a wide array of leadership approaches, academic achievements, and challenges faced by school. Schools were selected to represent the following:

i. High-Performing Schools: Two schools were selected due to their consistent high student test scores and teacher satisfaction ratings. These schools served as models for effective leadership practices.
ii. Average-Performing Schools: Three schools were included that displayed moderate levels of academic performance and teacher engagement. These schools provided a balanced perspective on the potential for leadership improvement.
iii. Under-Performing Schools: Two schools with notable challenges, such as low student achievement and high teacher turnover, were included to investigate how leadership adapted to and attempted to overcome these issues.

The purposeful selection of these schools allowed me to compare and highlight the leadership practices and their effects on the quality of teaching and academic performance in different schools.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with ethical research guidelines to safeguard the rights of participants and guarantee the accuracy of data that was gathered. The following comprise of the relevant procedures that were considered:

i. Informed Consent: I ensured that every participant was given a consent form with precise details regarding the study, which includes the objectives, methods, and their rights to discontinue participation at any moment.
ii. Confidentiality: Personal information of the participants and names of schools selected for the study were made anonymous in all data records and reports, and I ensured that data gathered were only used for the purpose of this study.

iii. Voluntary Participation: Participation was absolutely at the discretion of the participants in the schools selected with no urgency or obligation.

Demographic Overview

The demographics of the participants demonstrated the diversity in the sample:

i. Principals:

- Gender; 3 males and 4 females.
- Years of Experience; ranged from 5 to 15 years in their current schools.
- Educational Background; they all held postgraduate degrees in education or leadership.

ii. Teachers:

- Gender; 25 males and 38 females.
- Years of Experience; ranged from 2 to 20 years, on average of 8 years.

Justification of Sample Size

In order to achieve saturation of data, 63 teachers and 7 principals were included. Without putting too important demand on schools, this sample size enabled extensive collection of data and analysis. In line with the best practices in educational research, the findings were substantial due to the balance struck between qualitative depth and quantitative breadth *(Patton, 2015)*.

Description of Data Collection tools and Procedures

The following are the data collection tools I designed and utilized to gather data.

Surveys

I designed a survey to capture the viewpoints and experiences of both principals and teachers. The questionnaire designed to included; 14 Likert-Scale items to quantitatively measure teacher satisfaction, engagement levels and their perception of various leadership style, and 6 open-ended questions to gather qualitative views on leadership styles, challenges and opportunities for improvement. This was done and translated into Chinese language to bridge the communication gap for the respondents.

I made the questionnaire to be simple so that all participants could easily complete it within 15 minutes. The questions were pretested in a pilot study in order to enhance

reliability. I used WeChat as a medium to distribute the questionnaires digitally to each participant due to its vast usage and confidentiality. Also, I sent reminders regularly for two weeks so as to encourage more participation. The results of the survey generated important information on the connections between teacher satisfaction and leadership styles, pointing to patterns and trends that were subsequently investigated using other techniques of collecting data.

Observational Tools

I planned and conducted observations in both classrooms and during staff meetings to capture a holistic view of leadership practices by collecting data in real-time using a check list I designed, which focuses on aspects such as; nurturing collaborations, providing motivation, instructional resources available for learning, learning atmosphere, student ownership and effect of leadership on student leaning. I allocated 40 minutes for each observation session and completed a total of 14 sessions cut across 7 schools, that is two sessions in each school. This offered valuable understanding of the impact that leadership methods have on the quality of education and the atmosphere within schools.

Interviews

I organised a semi-structured interview with entailed one principal and two teachers as participants from each of the seven selected schools, making a total of seven principals and fourteen teachers.

WeChat live chat was used for interviews in order to make it more convenient for the participants and not interfere with their work.Each interview took about ten minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent. The interviews provided qualitative data about the leadership approaches, and challenges that leadership faces in elementary schools.

Academic Records

I compiled student academic record in order determine the correlation between leadership styles and student accomplishment and to offer quantitative indicators of academic outcomes.

Confidential assessment documents were requested from the examination offices of each school, guaranteeing adherence to privacy laws and ethical standards. Each

school signed a data-sharing agreement that outlined the extent of data use and protected student information.

The data collection focused on records from the past three academic years (2021–2023) to account for variability in leadership practices over time. Performance data were standardized to allow for cross-school comparisons and statistical analysis. These records were critical for correlating leadership practices with academic performance, providing objective evidence to complement the subjective data collected through surveys and interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS OF FINDINGS

Data Analysis

The results were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey data: I used descriptive statistics to analyse survey results to provide an overview of participant demographics, teacher satisfaction, engagement, and leadership style. Inferential statistical methods were used to investigate the connections between teacher results and leadership strategies.

Academic Records: I analyzed the assessment results of pupils in grade 6 from the seven elementary schools to determine the patterns in their academic achievement put the schools in three different categories based on performance as seen in table 5.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview Transcripts: I listened to the interview audio records attentively and jotted down the information. I then arranged the the information gathered into themes in order to identify trends from my findings.

Observational Data: I analyzed the observation checklists and notes to find trends in teacher instruction and relationship with the students, and leadership practices.

Triangulation of Data

I used triangulation to combine and compare the findings from survey, interview, and observational data in order to establish the validity of the study results.

Visual Representation of Data

The results were presented using visual aids, including Tables, bar chats and pie chats to show results and demographic distributions.

Presentation of Results of Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The study included two major categories of participants: principals and teachers from elementary schools. A whole group of 70 participants took part in this study:

Gender Distribution: This was analyzed and shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Participants

Gender	Principals	Principals	Teachers	Teachers
Male	4	57.1%	25	49.7%
Female	3	42.9%	38	60.3%

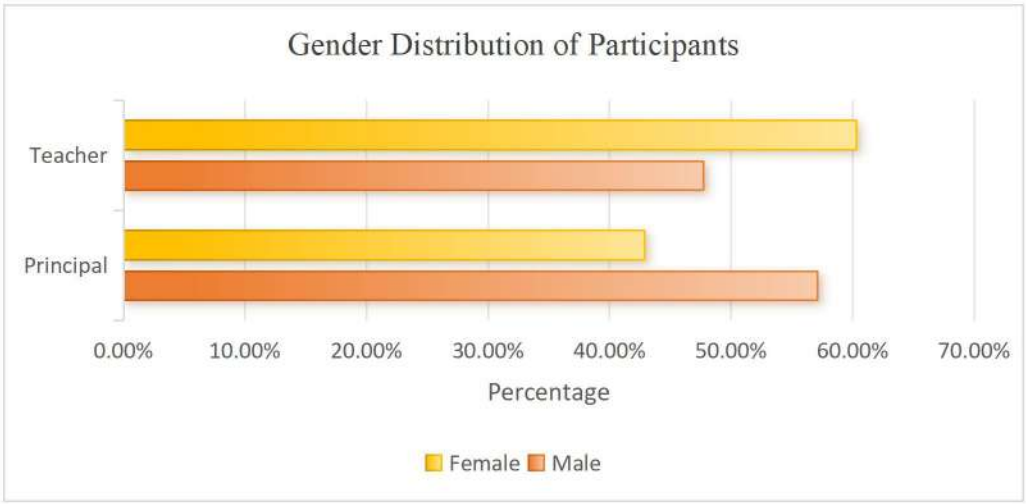


Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Participants.

Observation: The gender distribution among teachers appeared more balanced, with a fairly large proportion of female participants, expressing prevalent patterns in the educational profession.

Age Distribution: This was analyzed and shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2: Age Distribution of participants

Age	Principals		Teachers	
20-29 years	0	0	12	19.1%
30-39 years	0	0	31	49.2%
40-49 years	4	57.1%	15	23.8%
50+ years	3	42.9%	5	7.9%

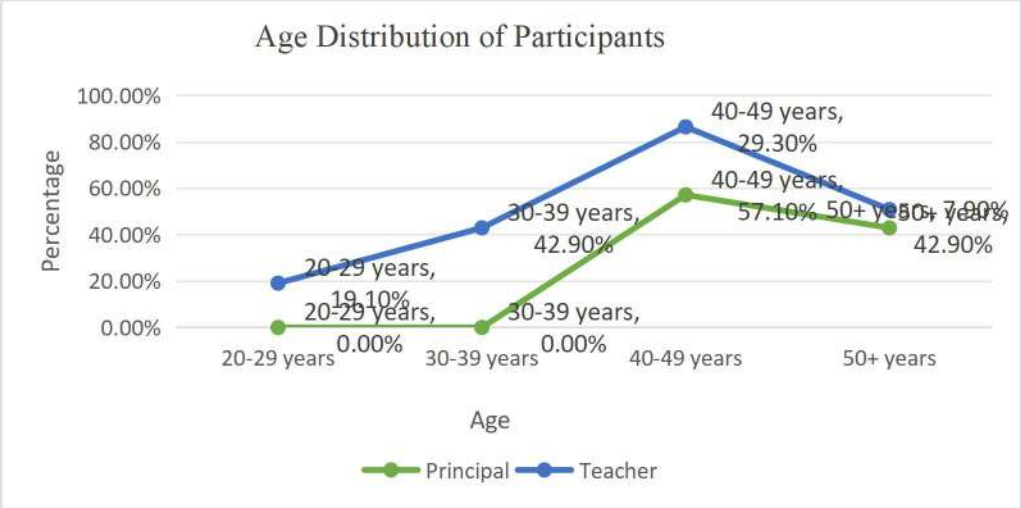


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Participants

Observation: The principals were between the age of 40 to 50 and above years old, which indicates that they were experienced. A large percentage of teachers were in their mid to late 30s, indicating an array of teachers in their earlier and mid-career stages.

Educational Qualifications: This was analyzed and shown in Table 3 and Figure 3.

Table 3: Educational Qualifications of Participants

Educational Qualification	Principals		Teachers	
Diploma in Education	0	0	20	31.7%
Bachelor's Degree	2	28.6%	40	63.5%
Master's Degree	5	71.4%	3	4.8%

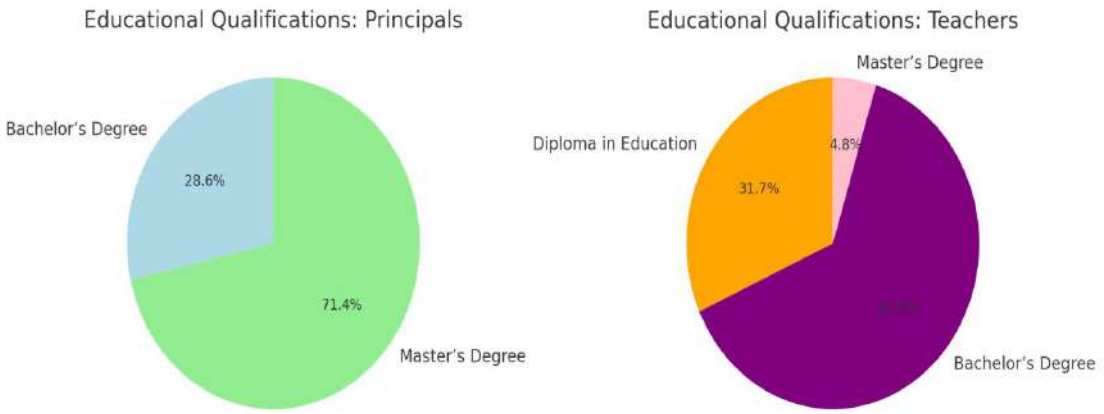


Figure 3: Educational Qualifications of Participants

Observation: The majority of principals held higher degrees, which is indicative of the educational background needed for leadership positions. A few teachers held masters degree, while the majority of them had bachelor's degrees.

Years of Experience: This was analyzed and shown in table 4.

Table 4: Years of Experience of Participants

Experience	Principals		Teachers	
1-5 years	0	0%	19	30.2%
6-10 years	1	14.3%	26	41.3%
11-15 years	3	42.8%	11	17.5%
16-20 years	2	28.6%	6	9.5%
20+ years	1	14.3%	1	1.5%

Observation: five of the seven Principals had 11 to 20 leadership experience. Teachers showed a broad range of experience, with a significant portion being early-career educators.

School Categories Distribution: I analyzed and arranged the participating schools and participants into three groups based on the schools academic performance (as seen in Appendix A). Table 5 shows the distribution of school categories.

Table 5: School Categories Distribution

School Categories	Principals (count)	Teachers (count)	Number of Participants
High Performing Schools	2	16	20
Average Performing Schools	3	28	30
Under Performing Schools	2	19	20

Observation: The distribution made sure that all performance areas were fairly represented, which made it possible to compare leadership strategies along with students performance.

Geographic Location: This was analyzed and shown in table 6.

Table 6: Geographic Location Distribution

Geographic Location	Principals	Teachers	Number of Participants
Urban Schools	4	36	40
Rural Schools	3	27	30

Observation: The study covered a range of geographical locations, offering valuable perspectives on the specific constraints and positive aspects of both urban and rural school settings.

Analysis of Survey Data

I used descriptive statistics to calculate each survey item in the survey data in order to identify trends and variances in within the sets of data, and provide an overall view of responses that could be meaningfully used for comparisons across high-performing, average-performing, and under-performing schools.

Teacher Satisfaction

Teacher satisfaction was important in evaluating the connection between leadership styles and the welfare of teachers. I designed the Likert-Scale to measure satisfaction, teacher recognition, work-life balance, leadership support, and chances for career

advancement. The results of the analysis for teacher satisfaction are shown in table 7 and Figure 4.

Table 7: Teacher Satisfaction from Survey Data

School Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)
High-performing Schools	4.5	0.4
Average-performing Schools	4.0	0.5
Under-performing Schools	3.6	0.7

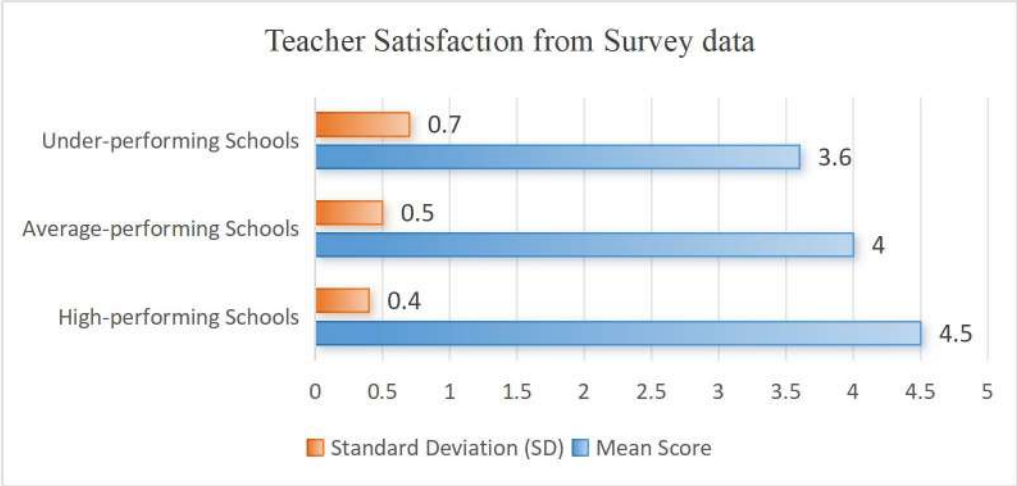


Figure 4: Teacher Satisfaction from Survey Data

From the analysis in table 7, high-performing schools recorded teacher satisfaction score of 4.5 (SD = 0.4) which was the highest. This indicates that they experienced the most efficient leadership style. The average-performing schools recorded teacher satisfaction score of 4.0 (SD = 0.5) which was close to that in high-performing schools. The lowest satisfaction score 3.6 (SD = 0.7) was recorded in the under-performing schools.

Teacher Engagement

Teacher engagement measured teacher commitment to students learning goals, passion for schools achievement, creativity in lesson delivery, collaboration with colleagues in school programs and teaching practices. The results of the analysis for teacher engagement are as shown in table 8 and Figure 5.

Table 8: Teacher Engagement from Survey Data

School Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)
High-performing Schools	4.5	0.3
Average-performing Schools	4.1	0.4
Under-performing Schools	3.6	0.6

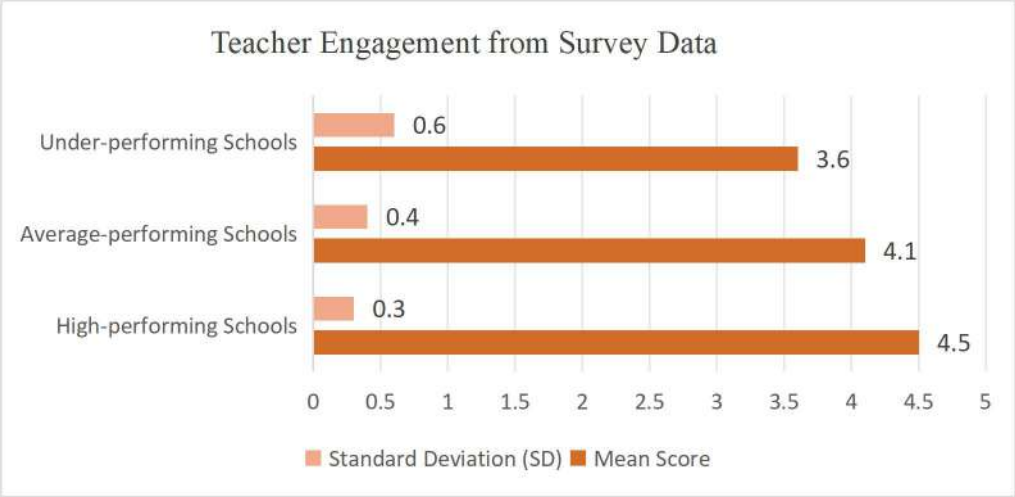


Figure 5: Teacher Engagement from Survey Data

Engagement scores showed similar patterns to satisfaction scores. From the analysis in table 8, high-performing schools recorded teacher engagement score of 4.5 (SD = 0.3) which was the highest. The average-performing schools recorded teacher engagement score of 4.1 (SD = 0.4) which was close to that in high-performing schools. The lowest engagement score of 3.6 (SD = 0.6) was recorded in the under-performing schools.

Data Analysis of the Interviews, Observations and Open-ended Survey Responses

I did a thematic analysis of the data from interviews, observations and open-ended survey questions to investigate the various aspects of leadership practices, detect common patterns, and uncover recurring challenges.

The analysis revealed three interconnected themes which show how leadership practices affect teacher satisfaction, engagement, and learning performance in addition to offering insight into them. The three themes are shown in table 9.

Table 9: Themes and Description

Theme Number	**Description**	**Practices**
Theme 1	Collaborative leadership	• Regular staff meetings where teachers' inputs were solicited. • Joint decision-making on curriculum design, resource allocation, and professional development. • Open communication channels that fostered trust and transparency.
Theme 2	Teacher empowerment	• Encouraging teachers to lead workshops and professional development sessions. • Recognizing and rewarding innovative teaching strategies. • Providing autonomy in lesson planning and classroom management.
Theme 3	Resource constraints	• Limited access to instructional materials. • Outdated infrastructure. • Insufficient funding.

Theme 1: Collaborative Leadership

In the High-performing schools, the teachers mention that they have regular meetings and feedback, their opinions were sought they jointly make decisions on matters. These showed consistency in collaborative leadership. Meanwhile, in the average-performing schools, staff briefings were not regular but the usually recognize their inputs and give timely feedback to teachers. In the under-performing schools, the teachers mentioned that the principals have become complacent. There were less collaborations.

Theme 2: Teacher Empowerment

In the high-performing schools, one of the main emphasis was teacher empowerment. The teachers showed high level of commitment and creativity in their classroom instructions. In the average-performance schools, teacher empowerment was characterized as inconsistent. Although principals recognized its significance, but was

not applied regularly. Teachers reported that they were occasionally recognized, but they hoped for more opportunities for career development. In under-performing schools, empowerment was notably inadequate. Teachers reported feeling stagnated and devoid of motivation as a result of an inadequate level of training opportunities and recognition.

Theme 3: Resource Constraints

In high-performing schools, resource constraints were noticeably not a challenge due to the presence of adequate facilities, digital learning resources and financing. Principals ensured that instructional resources were allocated to improve teaching and learning.In average-performing schools, they were resources available but some of them were not functional. This occasionally affected how some leadership practices were implemented. Principals often used their creative ideas to optimize the resources.Resource constraints were the most recurring theme in the under-performing schools. Teachers often reported cases of over crowded classrooms, insufficient digital learning resources and lack of basic amenities. These issues often hindered leadership practices.

Triangulation Analysis

I used triangulation to combine and compare the findings from survey, interview, and observational data in order to establish the validity of the study results. Thus, the study was able to provide a detailed knowledge of leadership practices and their effects on teaching and academic performance.

i. Findings from Survey Data: High-performing schools got the highest mean scores when compared with the average-performing schools and the under-performing schools.
ii. Findings from Interview Data: High-performing schools reported a very consistent collaborative practices, teacher empowerment and adequate educational resource in comparison with under-performing school where teachers pointed their dissatisfaction due to resources constraint and inconsistent leadership practices.
iii. Findings from Observational Data: High-performing schools showed high engagements in terms of staff meetings, classroom visits, innovative leadership

and instructional methods as well as classroom management. On the other hand, under-performing schools showed inconsistent leadership practices and lack of motivation during classroom instruction. The observational data however, validated the leadership practices recorded in surveys and interviews.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored the role of leadership in elementary schools reiterating its influence on the quality of teaching and academic performance. The first objective was to assess how leadership styles of principals influence the academic performance of students in elementary schools. The results revealed that all the principals adopt collaborative leadership style which creates a supportive school culture, empowers the teachers to be more involved in decision-making, and innovative in classroom instruction. These enhance improved quality of teaching and learning outcomes.

The second objective was to identify specific leadership practices that contributes to improving teaching quality and student outcomes in elementary schools. The findings revealed that consistent and purposeful leadership practices such as regular feedback, empowering teachers, collaborative decision-making process, classroom visit, and teacher engagements enhance teaching quality and students learning outcomes.

The third objective was to explore the challenges faced by school leaders in implementing effective leadership strategies to enhance educational standards. The results showed that most reported challenge faced was resource constraints. The two under-performing schools had shortage of school supplies, outdated and faulty digital learning resources and insufficient funds. These schools were also located in the rural area. These challenges affected the principals leadership strategies which in the long run hindered the quality of classroom instruction and students performance.

The findings of this study have many implications for school principals, teachers as well as policymakers in education. To effectively enhance the educational process in elementary schools, principals ought to adopt a collaborative leadership style and ensure that teachers are recognized and actively involved in decision-making. Teacher engagement and satisfaction have a significant impact on students academic

performance. Educational planners must give adequate funding, resources, and support to enable principals and teachers to overcome the constraints in education and improve academic performance.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

i. School principals should implement collaborative leadership strategies to promote common goal, empower and motivate teachers, and create a conducive learning environment.
ii. Principals should carryout classroom visits consistently and implement a proper feedback criteria that would enhance academic performance.
iii. Educational policy makers should invest in training principals to equip them with innovative leadership strategies and problem solving skills.
iv. School planners should provide the needed resources for schools in the rural areas to improve leadership practices that would boost the quality of teaching and learning.

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Appendix A: Students Academic Performance Record

Elementary School	School Scores in 2021/22	School Scores in 2022/23	School Scores in 2024/24	Performance Rate	Location
School 1	96.3	94.3	94.3	High-performing	Urban
School 2	96.3	96	93.3	High-performing	Urban
School 3	84.3	83.7	80	Average-performing	Urban
School 4	82	84.7	81.3	Average-performing	Urban
School 5	83	81.7	81	Average-performing	Rural
School 6	68.3	68.7	68.7	Under-performing	Rural
School 7	69	69.7	69.3	Under-performing	Rural

2021/2022 Academic Session

Elementary Schools	Overall Mean Scores in Maths	Overall Mean Scores in Chinese/Language Arts	Overall Mean Scores in Science	School Overall Mean Scores
School 1	96	98	95	96.3
School 2	98	96	95	96.3
School 3	83	86	84	84.3
School 4	80	85	81	82.0
School 5	81	85	83	83.0
School 6	66	71	68	68.3
School 7	67	73	67	69.0

2022/2023 Academic Session

Elementary Schools	Overall Mean Scores in Maths	Overall Mean Scores in Chinese/Language Arts	Overall Mean Scores in Science	School Overall Mean Scores
School 1	92	96	95	94.3
School 2	97	98	93	96.0
School 3	82	85	84	83.7
School 4	85	87	82	84.7
School 5	80	83	82	81.7
School 6	68	70	68	68.7
School 7	71	72	66	69.7

2023/2024 Academic Session

Elementary Schools	Overall Mean Scores in	Overall Mean Scores in	Overall Man Scores in	School Overall

	Maths	Chinese/Language Arts	Science	Mean Scores
School 1	95	97	91	94.3
School 2	93	94	93	93.3
School 3	80	82	78	80.0
School 4	81	83	80	81.3
School 5	80	84	79	81.0
School 6	68	71	67	68.7
School 7	70	73	65	69.3

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Principals and Teachers

Instruction: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Teacher Satisfaction	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. I feel recognized and appreciated for my duties at my school					
2. I feel motivated to do my best as a teacher					
3. My school provides sufficient instructional resources to support my teaching					
4. I receive timely feedback to improve my teaching					
5. My school environment promotes collaboration and mutual respect					
6. My gives me the opportunities for career growth					
7. I am satisfied with my workload and the support I get from my school					
Teacher Engagement	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8. I am engaged with my students academic performance and goals					
9. I am passionate about my school's ongoing achievement					
10. I am encouraged to be creative and explore different teaching styles in my classroom					
11. I am enthusiastic about participating in school initiatives and programs.					
12. I collaborate regularly with my colleagues to improve teaching practices					
13. I consistently strive to find ways to enhance my skills as a teacher					
14. I feel that my feedback and suggestions are taken seriously by school leaders					

15. How would you describe the style of leadership in your school?	
16. How does you're the leadership style of your principal affect your teaching?	
17. What particular thing has your principal done to motivate you as a teacher?	
18. What challenges does your school leadership face in improving the teaching and learning process?	
19. How has your principal been to	

handle these challenges in order to improve student performance?	
20. What would you suggest to improve the present leadership practices in your school?	

Appendix C: Interview Questions

My name is Robert Eneojo Abogede, a masters student at European International University EIU-Paris. I am conducting a study on the role of leadership in enhancing academic performance and teaching quality in elementary schools. Thank you for participating and kindly be informed that your name and school name will not be mentioned in this interview in order to ensure confidentiality. Your participation is absolutely voluntary and feel free to ask me any questions before or during the interview.

Interview Questions	Theme Numbers	Remarks
Introductory Questions		
Can you tell me about your background I the field of Education? Probes: Age, Educational qualifications, Years of experience.		
Leadership style and practices	**1**	
How can you describe your leadership style as the principal or the principal's leadership style at your school?		
How do you or does the principal engage teachers to ensure an improved lesson delivery?		
Can you give one or two examples of how the principal usually perform his duties?		
Impact on Teaching Quality	**2**	
Do you or does the principal provide workshops or other training opportunities for teachers? Probes: How often and how has it improved teacher performance?		
In what ways does the principal motivate teachers to be engaged and creative?		
Challenges Faced by School	**3**	
Can you tell me about some problems that affect the teachers work in your school?		
How well-equipped are the classrooms, technology and other learning resources at your school? Probe: What improvements are need?		

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview. Your responses will help me in my research. If you have any questions or comments after this session please reach me on my WeChat or call: +8613070287045. I am grateful for your time.

Appendix D: Observations Checklist

Observations	Comments	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7
Feedback Sessions	Focus on actionable academic goals							
	Constructive feedback to teachers							
	Implementation of workshops/training							
	Encouragement and empowering teachers							
Collaborative Meetings	Communication (between principal, teachers & parents)							
	Shared vision among teachers							
	Teamwork among teachers							
	Contribution of ideas/decision making							
Classroom Visits	Classroom management and culture							
	Availability & use of instructional resources							
	Student engagements & differentiated instructions during lessons							
	Timely feedback to students							

Remarks	
School 1	
School 2	
School 3	
School 4	
School 5	
School 6	
School 7	