

Understanding Distributed Leadership Practices and Their Influence on School Effectiveness: A Qualitative Case Study in Shaheed Benazirabad

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative case study on the application of distributed leadership and its effects on school effectiveness, conducted in Shaheed Benazirabad. The aim of this study is to understand the application of distributed leadership, its effects on school effectiveness, and its contribution to teacher motivation and student success. The study employed a qualitative research design, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document study for data collection purposes from selected schools in Shaheed Benazirabad. The study revealed that effective distributed leadership is likely to create a culture of collaboration, improve decision-making, and enhance teaching and learning. However, there are also challenges to its application, including resistance to change, lack of training, and understanding of roles and responsibilities, which are also discussed in this study. The study concluded that distributed leadership is likely to improve school effectiveness, and its implications for policymakers, school leaders, and educators are also discussed to promote a culture of distributed leadership in schools across Pakistan.

Keywords: *Distributed leadership, school effectiveness, qualitative case study, educational leadership, Shaheed Benazirabad.*

INTRODUCTION

Education systems around the world are increasingly acknowledging the role of leadership as an important factor in school effectiveness. Traditional approaches to leadership, where the school principal is considered the sole source of power, are gradually being replaced by more collaborative approaches. One such important approach is distributed leadership. It is one of the most widely accepted approaches to leadership, which focuses on collaboration and collective decision-making. In distributed leadership, leadership is not in the hands of a few; rather, it is distributed among those who can contribute to better educational practices.

In schools located in different parts of Pakistan, such as Shaheed Benazirabad, challenges like resource constraints, teacher shortages, and administrative issues exist. These challenges could be addressed by implementing distributed leadership. There is a scarcity of qualitative research regarding how distributed leadership is being implemented in schools and its impact.

This qualitative case study aims to explore distributed leadership practices in selected schools in Shaheed Benazirabad and examine their influence on school effectiveness. Specifically, it investigates how

leadership roles are shared, how teachers participate in decision-making, and how these practices influence teaching quality, organizational climate, and student outcomes.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the concept of distributed leadership practices in selected schools of Shaheed Benazirabad.
2. To identify how principals, teachers, and other school staff members share their roles and responsibilities.
3. To identify teachers' and school leaders' perceptions regarding distributed leadership practices.

Research Questions

RQ1: How is distributed leadership practiced in schools of Shaheed Benazirabad?

RQ2: How do principals and teachers share their roles and responsibilities?

RQ3: What are teachers' and school leaders' perceptions regarding distributed leadership practices?

Problem Statement

It is now widely recognized that school effectiveness is an important aspect that contributes to improved student, teacher, and institutional effectiveness. In traditional models of effective leadership in schools, it is seen that hierarchical models of leadership, with the principal being the main decision-maker, are dominant. Such models of hierarchical leadership may result in lower teacher involvement, lower collaborative culture, and lower opportunities for growth. Distributed models of leadership, which stress shared leadership, collaborative decision-making, and active involvement of teachers/staff, are seen to be effective models of leadership. Despite the increasing global recognition of the concept of distributed leadership, the implementation and impact of the concept on school effectiveness in the Pakistani context, particularly in Shaheed Benazirabad, have not been sufficiently explored. A number of schools in the country continue to operate with traditional leadership structures, and there is a lack of qualitative studies that explore the impact of distributed leadership on school effectiveness from the perspectives of school leaders and teachers. Moreover, there may be factors that affect the implementation of distributed leadership.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it seeks to examine the impact that distributed leadership practices have on school effectiveness, especially within Shaheed Benazirabad. In contemporary educational institutions, leadership is no longer just held by the school principal. Rather, it is shared among teachers and other members of staff. By understanding this concept of shared leadership, it is possible to enhance teaching quality and overall school effectiveness. Firstly, it is important to note that this study contributes to the academic literature because it offers qualitative insights into distributed leadership practices within the Pakistani educational system, especially within Shaheed Benazirabad, where limited research has been conducted on this concept. The study will help expand knowledge regarding leadership practices and how they impact teaching quality.

LITERATURE-REVIEW

Distributed leadership theory has been developed from leadership studies that focus on shared influence instead of hierarchical authority. Spillane (2006) developed a conceptual model of distributed leadership that emphasized interactions between leaders, followers, and situations, focusing on leadership as a practice, not a position. Harris (2013) also emphasized that distributed leadership helps to create collaboration to boost school performance through involvement in teacher leadership.

Research has also shown that distributed leadership is linked to enhanced teacher motivation, learning, and organizational performance (Leithwood et al., 2020). Teachers who are involved in leadership roles have been found to be more committed to their roles. Distributed leadership has also been linked to enhanced learning communities that enable teachers to learn from each other.

Distributed leadership has been linked to enhanced school performance in developing countries despite resource constraints (Bush & Glover, 2014). In Pakistan, school leadership is traditionally centralized; however, recent reforms have emphasized collaborative school leadership. Empowerment of teachers has been emphasized in school leadership studies that focus on enhanced school performance, teacher satisfaction, and student achievement. School effectiveness is the degree to which a school achieves its educational goals. These goals include teacher and student performance. Effective schools have good leadership, positive culture, collaboration, and improvement. Distributed leadership contributes to these factors. Distributed leadership was developed as a substitute for traditional hierarchical leadership approaches. Distributed leadership focuses on shared responsibility and collective decision-making among school members. Distributed leadership was developed as an alternative leadership model. In this model, leadership roles are not vested in a single person. Distributed leadership involves the collaborative contribution of school principals and teachers and other stakeholders towards leadership. This model of leadership focuses on leadership as a social process in which leadership occurs through interactions among individuals in an organizational setting.

Distributed leadership was defined by Spillane and his associates as leadership stretched over leaders, followers, and situations. This definition of distributed leadership focuses on the idea that leadership is not vested in a single person. This definition of distributed leadership focuses on the idea that leadership involves both formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders in a school setting are school principals and teachers. Informal leaders in a school setting are those teachers who have a lot of experience.

Theoretical Foundations of Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is based on different leadership theories, including social constructivism theory. According to social constructivist theory, knowledge and leadership are social constructs that are developed through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Leadership in school settings is developed through social interactions between the principal, teachers, and other staff members.

Organizational learning theory provides support for distributed leadership. According to organizational learning theory, learning is continuous, knowledge is shared, and improvements are made collectively (Senge, 1990). By distributing leadership, teachers are active contributors to the development of the school, hence enhancing its innovation.

The concept of distributed leadership was proposed by Gronn (2002). He argued that leadership is developed through group efforts, not through individuals. This theory emphasizes the significance of teamwork in achieving organizational goals.

School effectiveness is the ability of the school to achieve educational goals, enhance students' performance, and maintain a positive learning environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Research has shown that school effectiveness is determined by leadership. Distributed leadership contributes to school effectiveness by enhancing teacher collaboration, improving instructional quality, and strengthening organizational capacity (Leithwood et al., 2004). When teachers participate in leadership roles, they develop a sense of ownership and commitment to school improvement.

Harris and Muijs (2005) observed that schools that practice distributed leadership reported high teacher engagement, innovation, and student achievement. When teachers are involved in decision-making processes, they are more motivated and committed to implementing educational reforms.

In a similar vein, Robinson et al. (2008) observed that leadership practices that involve teachers in instructional decisions have a significant positive effect on student learning outcomes. Distributed leadership allows teachers to share their expertise, which improves teaching practices.

It is important to note that although distributed leadership promotes shared leadership, the principal plays a crucial role as a facilitator. The principal's role is to create conditions that support collaborative leadership, trust, and teacher development (Spillane, 2006).

Harris (2013) noted that principals play a crucial role as facilitators of distributed leadership by empowering teachers and promoting teamwork. Without principal support, distributed leadership practices are not likely to be effective.

In addition, research has shown that principals who practice distributed leadership are more likely to enhance teacher satisfaction and school performance (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). The present study is grounded in the theory of Distributed Leadership, which views leadership as a shared, collective, and interactive process rather than the sole responsibility of a single individual such as the school principal. Distributed leadership emphasizes collaboration among school leaders, teachers, and staff to improve teaching practices, organizational functioning, and student outcomes.

Distributed Leadership Theory

The idea of distributed leadership was mainly developed by Spillane (2006), Gronn (2002), and Harris (2004). Spillane (2006) explained that leadership is not an attribute of an individual but is instead distributed across a number of individuals who work together in a particular situation or context. The leadership practice is the result of the interaction between the leadership group, the followers, and the context of the school.

The idea of leadership was first presented by Gronn (2002) as a collective concept. He emphasized the importance of collaboration in leadership. Harris (2004) further explained the importance of distributed leadership in the context of school improvement by empowering teachers and encouraging professional participation.

In this context, the idea of leadership is defined as:

- A shared leadership responsibility between the principal and the teachers
 - A collaborative leadership concept instead of a hierarchical leadership concept
 - A context-dependent leadership practice in terms of the school culture and context
- School Effectiveness Theory

This research is also guided by the School Effectiveness Theory. The theory focuses on leadership, teaching quality, school climate, and organizational practices that lead to improved school performance. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) assert that leadership is one of the most important factors that affect school effectiveness.

Characteristics of Effective Schools

Schools that are effective normally exhibit characteristics such as:

- Shared vision and school goals
- Strong instructional leadership
- Teacher collaboration
- Positive school culture
- Teacher professional development

Distributed leadership normally promotes these characteristics.

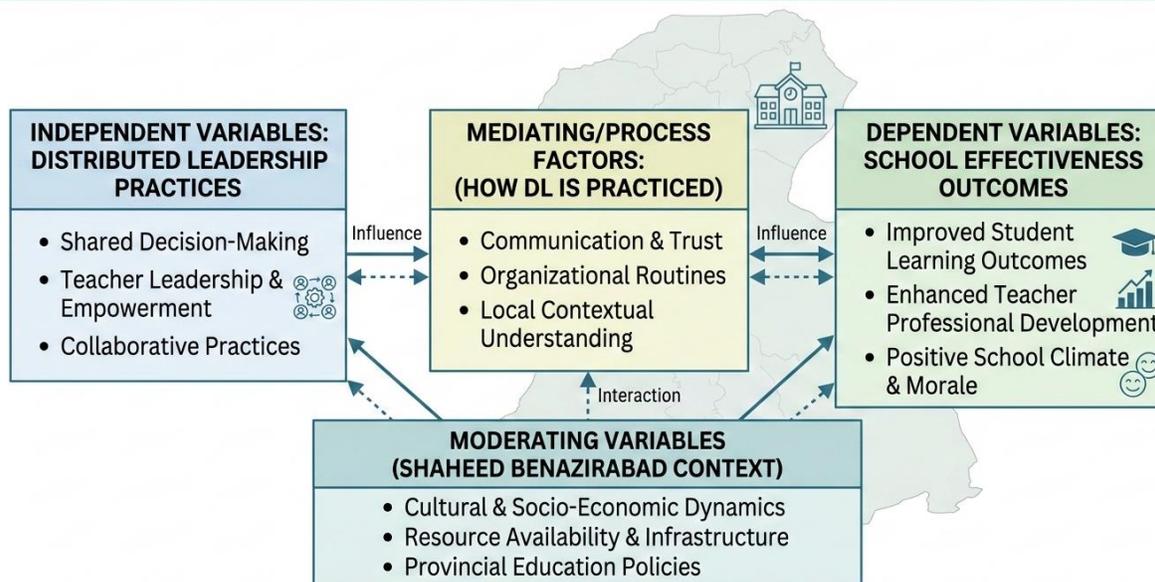
Connection Between Distributed Leadership and School Effectiveness

Distributed leadership has a positive effect on school effectiveness. The following are some ways that distributed leadership affects school effectiveness:

1. 1. Teacher Empowerment: Teachers are involved in leadership roles, thus improving their motivation.
2. 2. Improved Decision-Making: The involvement of teachers in leadership promotes improved educational decisions.
3. 3. Improved Collaboration: Teachers and leaders collaborate towards improving teaching and learning.
4. 4. Teacher Professional Development: The involvement of teachers in leadership roles improves their professional development.
5. 5. Positive School Culture: Distributed leadership promotes a positive school culture. According to Spillane (2006), leadership practice is shaped by interactions among individuals, tools, and school context. When leadership is effectively distributed, schools become more adaptive, collaborative, and effective.

Conceptual Framework

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP & SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD.



METHODOLOGY

The present study used a qualitative case study research design to explore distributed leadership practices in secondary schools of Shaheed Benazirabad. Qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of research participants' experiences.

The research participants included school principals, senior teachers, and classroom teachers. The research used purposive sampling as a sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were used as a research instrument.

Research Design

The present study used a qualitative study research design to explore distributed leadership practices and their influence on school effectiveness in secondary schools of Shaheed Benazirabad. The reason for using qualitative research design is that the purpose of the present study is to gain an in-depth understanding of research participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices related to distributed leadership.

In this qualitative case study, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analysis technique for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis involves a systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data. It was considered appropriate for this study because the purpose of this study was to explore the participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices related to distributed leadership and its impact on school effectiveness.

The analysis of the collected data was done through a systematic process as outlined below:

Data Familiarization

The researcher listened to all the interviews and read the notes and other relevant documents. The researcher read the transcripts of the interviews several times in order to understand the participants' responses and the context.

Generating Initial Codes

The researcher highlighted and coded all the significant statements and ideas related to leadership practices, teacher involvement, collaboration, decision-making, and school performance.

Searching for Themes

The initial codes were analyzed and grouped according to their similarities and relationships. The grouped codes helped in identifying potential themes related to shared decision-making, teacher empowerment, collaboration, and school performance.

Reviewing Themes

The themes that had been identified were reviewed, ensuring that they were an accurate reflection of the data and relevant to the aims of the research.

Defining and Naming Themes

The themes were then defined and named, ensuring that they accurately represented the meaning of the themes.

Interpreting and Reporting Findings

The themes were then interpreted in relation to the aims of the research and existing literature. Quotations were included to support the findings of the research.

Population

The population for this research included all school leaders and teachers who were employed in public and private secondary schools in Shaheed Benazirabad district, Sindh, Pakistan. This included school principals, vice principals, head teachers, and senior teachers who were directly involved in school leadership. Sample

The sample was collected through the application of purposive sampling techniques. Such techniques are usually used in qualitative research when the researcher seeks participants who are knowledgeable and experienced in the subject of research. The sample included school principals, head teachers, and experienced teachers from the selected schools in the Shaheed Benazirabad area who are actively involved in leadership and decision-making processes.

Sample Size

The sample included 12 participants who are actively involved in the leadership and decision-making processes in the schools of the Shaheed Benazirabad area. These participants included 5 principals/head teachers and 7 senior teachers.

Data Collection

To collect comprehensive data from the sample participants on the subject of research, the following data collection techniques were used:

Semi-Structured Interviews

Purpose: To collect comprehensive data from the sample participants on the subject of research.

Procedure:

Interviews with the participants were conducted in person at the respective schools.

The interview was conducted for approximately 30-45 minutes

Open-ended questions were used in the interview procedure to allow the participants the free expression of their views on the subject of research.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of the data revealed several important findings. Firstly, leadership roles were distributed among teachers through committees, mentoring, and collaborative planning. Teachers were found to be more motivated by their involvement in leadership roles.

Secondly, distributed leadership promoted better communication among teachers. Teachers were found to participate actively in meetings, sharing their ideas and participating in decision-making processes. This promoted a sense of trust among teachers.

Thirdly, distributed leadership was found to enhance the quality of instruction. Teachers were found to share their expertise, mentor one another, and use innovative methods of instruction. Teachers were found to be more effective in their instructional roles.

Despite the benefits of distributed leadership, there were also some drawbacks. Teachers lacked proper training, and there were traditional hierarchical mindsets. Some teachers were found to be reluctant to take up leadership roles due to concerns about their workload.

This chapter highlights the findings of the qualitative study that examined the phenomenon of distributed leadership and its impact on school effectiveness in Shaheed Benazirabad. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with school leaders, teachers, and staff members. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The findings are discussed according to the major themes that emerged from the data.

Understanding of Distributed Leadership

The level of understanding of distributed leadership by the participants was varied but had similar characteristics, such as collaboration, shared responsibility, and collective decision-making. The majority of the respondents understood that it is not just the principal who is involved in leadership, but also the teachers and other staff members who actively participate in the achievement of the school's objectives.

KEY FINDINGS

Teacher Participation

The teachers felt empowered when they participated in the decision-making process, hence enhancing commitment to the school's initiatives.

Role Clarity

Some of the staff also felt confused by the roles played by the leaders, indicating that distributed leadership needs to be supported by effective communication to avoid role duplication.

Participant Quote

"Leadership is not just about the principal. Every teacher can contribute ideas and influence how the school functions."

Analysis

The above indicates that the concept of distributed leadership is understood to some extent in schools but needs to be supported by structural mechanisms for it to be effective.

Theme 2: Leadership Practices Observed

The following leadership practices related to the distributed leadership model were observed:

1. Collaborative Decision-Making: Teachers and staff participated in committees for curriculum development, extra-curricular activities, and school improvement plans.
2. Mentoring and Professional Development: Senior teachers mentored junior staff in the sharing of skills and expertise.
3. Delegation of Responsibility: Principals delegated some responsibilities to department heads and senior teachers.

Analysis

These leadership practices show a move from the traditional hierarchical leadership model towards a more distributed model. These leadership practices had a positive effect on the morale of the teachers and the overall effectiveness of the school.

Theme 3: Impact on School Effectiveness

The participants pointed out the following areas where the distributed leadership model had a positive effect on the effectiveness of the school:

- Improved Student Outcomes: Collaborative planning helped in the development of better strategies in the class, which resulted in better student outcomes.
- Improved Teacher Motivation: The feeling of shared responsibility made the teachers feel valued and motivated.

- Problem-Solving Efficiency: Collective decision-making helped in the faster generation of solutions for the problems affecting the school.

Participant Quote:

“When we discuss challenges together and share ideas, solutions come faster, and students benefit.” - Principal BAnalysis:

The research findings indicate that the application of distributed leadership in the school promotes a positive learning climate, boosts teachers’ engagement, and indirectly improves student performance.

Theme 4: Challenges in Implementing Distributed Leadership

Despite the positive consequences of the implementation of distributed leadership in the schools studied, a number of challenges were also identified:

- Resistance to Change: There was a degree of reluctance on the part of the senior teachers and the staff.
- Lack of Training: There was a lack of proper training in the implementation of the distributed leadership.
- Communication Gaps: There was a poor level of communication in the schools studied.

Analysis:

The challenges in the implementation of distributed leadership show the importance of having a proper framework for the implementation of the concept in the schools.

Summary of Results

The results of the research show that the concept of distributed leadership is partially implemented in the schools in the region of Shaheed Benazirabad. The positive consequences of the implementation of the concept are also clear from the research.

DISCUSSION

The findings are in conformity with the distributed leadership theory, which emphasizes collaboration. Distributed leadership was seen to boost motivation, teacher development, and school performance. Schools where leadership was collaborative showed positive outcomes in school culture and teaching approaches. The findings of this particular study are of significant value for understanding the role of distributed leadership approaches in promoting school performance, especially in the context of Shaheed Benazirabad. By taking up the qualitative method of research, the study was able to tap into the views of school principals, teachers, and administrative staff, highlighting the impact of distributed leadership

However, for distributed leadership to be effective, leadership training, policy support, and cultural change are necessary. Principals are key change agents in facilitating distributed leadership by empowering teachers and providing opportunities for collaboration.

The key findings of the study are that distributed leadership promotes collaborative decision-making in schools. It was noted by the participants that if leadership is distributed among teachers and administrative staff, then decisions are more collaborative.

This is in line with Harris (2014), who stresses that distributed leadership generates a culture of mutual accountability, where members can contribute their expertise towards a common goal. In the case of Shaheed Benazirabad schools, such collaboration between teachers and other members was evident with regard to curriculum development and assessment strategies, thus suggesting that distributed leadership can strengthen the participatory nature of school governance.

One of the main research findings from this study is that distributed leadership can facilitate collaborative decision-making within schools. The participants stressed that distributed leadership can facilitate collaborative decision-making within schools. This is because, as Harris (2014) has stressed, distributed leadership generates a culture of mutual accountability where members can contribute their expertise towards a common goal. In the case of Shaheed Benazirabad schools, such collaboration between teachers and other members was evident with regard to curriculum development and assessment strategies, thus suggesting that distributed leadership can strengthen the participatory nature of school governance.

The research has found that distributed leadership can positively influence teacher motivation and development. The teachers stressed that being part of leadership activities can enhance teacher motivation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Distributed leadership has a major impact on school effectiveness because it enhances collaboration, teaching quality, and organizational effectiveness. Schools in Shaheed Benazirabad may benefit from adopting distributed leadership strategies to make them effective. From the findings of this study, it is evident that distributed leadership strategies have a major impact on enhancing effectiveness in schools located in Shaheed Benazirabad. Leaders who delegate roles and responsibilities to teachers and encourage collaboration among them make them effective.

The importance of effective communication, mutual trust among the staff, and a shared vision is emphasized in the study as integral to the success of distributed leadership. Further, the flexibility in adapting leadership practices in accordance with the needs of the teachers and the students ensures the positive influence of distributed leadership on the quality of instruction and the outcome on the students. However, the challenges in the success of distributed leadership are also emphasized in the study, such as the absence of proper training for the leadership in schools, the absence of a willingness to share the responsibility of leadership, and the absence of a framework for shared leadership.

Thus, in essence, the concept of distributed leadership is revealed as a dynamic concept in the study that seeks to transcend the limitations of hierarchical leadership through the adoption of a shared sense of accountability, professional development, and problem-solving skills for the enhancement of the effectiveness of the schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of these are leadership training programs, policies that support teachers, professional learning communities, and encouraging teacher participation.

Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that:

Professional Development for Leaders:

School administrators should be provided with constant professional development on distributed leadership principles, such as collaborative decision-making, conflict resolution, and teacher empowerment.

Encourage Teacher Participation:

Schools should establish structures that encourage teachers to participate actively in various planning, decision-making, and problem-solving processes.

Strengthen Communication Channels:

Schools should establish communication mechanisms that ensure all stakeholders are informed and involved.

Build Trust and Collaboration:

Interventions should be geared towards creating trust among teachers, as trust is essential for effective distributed leadership.

Policy Support:

Educational authorities should develop policies that support distributed leadership principles.

Monitor and Evaluate Effectiveness:

Schools should establish mechanisms that monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of distributed leadership on teaching standards, student performance, and school effectiveness.

Address Resistance to Change:

Interventions should be made towards creating awareness among teachers on how they can benefit from distributed leadership principles.

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