The Nexus between School Leadership Preparation and Student Achievement

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Abstract

The major objective of this study is to assess the most common school leadership practices in the Dire Dawa Administrative region and their relationship with student achievement. To this end, it used a cross-sectional and correlational study design. Sample schools were selected using purposive sampling techniques and principals and vice-principals were selected using the availability sampling method. Accordingly, 16 schools and 48 principals participated in the study. Data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire, interview and document analysis. The reliability of the self-developed questionnaire was .77. Student achievement data for the three years the principal/vice principal was assigned were collected from the regional education bureau data set. The collected data was analyzed using narrative analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics. The relationship between leadership preparation and student achievement was analyzed using correlation and simple regression. The findings indicated strong relationship between leadership development and student achievement with r=0.18 at a p<0.05 level of significance. The relationship is moderate but significant at a p<0.05 level of significance and with rho=0.426. Whereas the most common leadership preparation strategy employed is experience sharing, with other strategies such as short-term training and job assignments being less common.

Keywords: Leadership development, student achievement, experience sharing, job assignments, training

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El Nexo entre la Preparación para el Liderazgo Escolar y el Rendimiento Estudiantil

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Resumen

El objetivo principal de este estudio es evaluar las prácticas de liderazgo escolar más comunes en la región administrativa de Dire Dawa y su relación con el rendimiento estudiantil. Para ello, utilizó un diseño de estudio transversal y correlacional. Las escuelas de muestra se seleccionaron mediante técnicas de muestreo intencional y los directores y subdirectores se seleccionaron mediante el método de muestreo por disponibilidad. En consecuencia, participaron en el estudio 16 escuelas, 48 directores. Los datos se recopilaron mediante un cuestionario, una entrevista y un documento de elaboración propia. La fiabilidad del cuestionario de elaboración propia fue de .77. Los datos de rendimiento de los estudiantes durante los tres años que se le asignó al director o subdirector se recopilaron del conjunto de datos de la oficina regional de educación. Los datos recolectados fueron analizados mediante análisis temático, estadística descriptiva e inferencial. La relación entre la preparación para el liderazgo y el rendimiento de los estudiantes se analizó mediante correlación y regresión simple. Los hallazgos indicaron que es una señal entre el desarrollo del liderazgo y el rendimiento estudiantil con r=0.18 a un nivel de significancia p<0.05. La relación es moderada pero significativa a un nivel de significación p<0.05 y con rho=0,426. Considerando que, la estrategia de preparación de liderazgo más común empleada es el intercambio de experiencias, siendo menos comunes otras estrategias, como la capacitación a corto plazo y las asignaciones de trabajo.

Palabras clave: Desarrollo de liderazgo, logro estudiantil, compartir experiencias, asignaciones de trabajo, capacitación

Educational organizations are all the time challenged by what transpires in their respective environments such as changes in the economy, changes in the politics of a country, and technological evolutions. Amidst all such challenges, a major attribute that makes an organization stand out is the quality of leadership, which can boost both personal and organizational performance (Bush, et al. 2011; Daniels, Hondeghem & Dochy, 2019; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Yukl, 2020). Likewise, school principals play a pivotal role in creating a conducive learning environment and thereby influence student learning. The major attribute that enables some schools to stand out is the quality of leadership their principals exhibit since 'good school leadership leads to good school results.' (Van der Westhuizen & Van Vuuren, 2007, p. 431). That is why investment in educational leadership development is a crucial practice for the success and sustainability of schools.

The success of schools is highly intertwined with their leadership talent (Stein, 2016; Tobin, 2014). Thus, the practice of developing leadership talent through various mechanisms, i.e., talent management should be planned for it. Riccio (2010) defines talent management as a program embedded within the routine activities of educational organizations concerned with the development of high potential employees for a future leadership position. On the other hand, Rothwell (2016, p. 6) defines succession planning as 'any effort designed to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization …by providing for the development, replacement, and strategic application of key people'. He further alludes that succession planning allows lateral movement of individuals so that when they move to higher positions, they gather more skills and become better managers.

Elucidating the importance of leadership, Kitavi and Van Der Westhuizen (1997), quoting Weldy (1979) assert that the school leader/principal is the most important person for schools to succeed. The atmosphere of the school, the learning climate, and the level of professionalism and morale of teachers are all determined by his/her leadership and the level of care for what students may or may not become. A school with a reputation for excellence is vibrant, inventive, and child-centered (Day & Sammons, 2016). However, the school's leadership may always be attributed to school achievement if pupils are performing to their full potential. Besides, a bad educational leader can ruin a

good educational organization and, similarly, a great educational leader can sometimes overcome even the worst obstacles (Cheriyan et al., 2021; Eacott & Asuga, 2014).

Moreover, Otunga (2009) argues that success in educational institutions as an effective educational leader depends upon professional training, ability, professional opportunities, and career planning. Thus, to be successful educational organizations or other forms of organizations need well-planned leadership preparation programs well designed to cater to the needs of future leaders in the organization. It is imperative that educational leaders are well prepared and equipped to face the hefty challenges that they encounter when leading educational organizations (Bush, 2012).

The goal of contemporary secular Ethiopian education, since its introduction about a century ago, has been to develop a few educated elites; and the majority of Ethiopians have not benefited from it (Bahru, 2002; Kebede, 2006). The modern education system in this country has been characterized by problems of quality and relevance among other problems. The administration of the education system also has suffered various problems since the introduction of modern education. Apart from scarcity or lack of access to special training programs, the quality and relevance of the principal preparation programs were also questionable (Bush, 2012; Bush & Oduro, 2006). In cognizance of such problems, the Ministry of Education devised various programs to alleviate the problems of educational management observed in the education sector. Following the overhaul of the education system in the current government, significant changes in the principal preparation programs as well as access to these programs were made. To this effect, the ministry developed a program entitled leadership and management program (LaMP) aimed at improving the managerial capacity of incumbent secondary school leaders (MoE, 2002).

Recognizing the fact that educational leadership requires special training and preparation programs and the role of effective principals in turning around the achievement of schools, the government of Ethiopia has indicated in its policy document the importance of professionalizing school principalship. The policy states that 'educational management will be democratic, professional, coordinated, efficient and effective, and will encourage the participation of women (MoE, 1994, p. 30). Also, in its various documents (MoE, 2010; MoE, 2018) the Ministry of Education underscores the

importance of preparing principals and assigning them to their respective roles. The ESDP IV document (MoE, 2010) further discusses the problems Ethiopian schools are facing and the failure of preparation efforts so far conducted saying that '… school functioning also needs further improvement, in particular concerning school leadership. Irrelevant and uncoordinated training courses have not succeeded in overcoming these challenges: training did not translate systematically into improved work practices' (p. 12).

A preparation in the academic, scientific, and theoretical basis of educational leadership and management provides principals with advanced tools, conceptual frameworks, and contemporary theoretical knowledge required to lead educational organizations. Nevertheless, whether this has a significant effect on their ability to lead schools in the way that they are required to, should be adequately scrutinized. However, whether the implementation of leadership preparation programs in the country follows such patterns as well as whether the existing programs are producing the required skills as demanded by the existing challenges needs to be investigated. Thus, the main objective of this research is to assess the most common leadership development programs in Dire Dawa city Administration and their significance for school outcomes.

1. What is/are the most common leadership development strategies in Dire Dawa City Administration public schools?
2. Is there a significant relationship between leadership preparation programs and student academic achievement?

Materials and Methods

Research design

The study focused on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of principals' experiences of the various leader development practices and the effect they have on school outcomes in the administrative region. Therefore, the study used a cross-sectional survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods at the same time. This helped to enrich the study and helps to deeply study a phenomenon. The

qualitative data was used to substantiate and triangulate the data collected using quantitative methods.

Sampling Design

The study used both random and non-random sampling techniques. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select schools and while the availability-sampling method was used to select principals/vice principals and education bureau officials tasked with the responsibility of principal selection, development, and assignment. Thus, out of the 70 government-owned primary and secondary schools in the region 16 schools, or 23% of them, and thereby 48 directors and vice directors were selected. To ensure the external validity of the findings, the study used a random sampling method for selecting schools. Once schools are selected every member of the school leadership team was included in the study and provided the data required based on their informed consent.

Data Collection

To identify the leadership development practices in the city administration and the effect such endeavors have on school outcomes self-developed questionnaire and interview checklist were used. Moreover, an analysis of the school leadership selection, development, and appointment guideline promulgated by the Administration's education bureau and the administrative region's student record was carried out to collect data on school outcomes and review the directive on school leadership selection and assignment. Besides, 2074 students' average test score in science, social science, mathematics, and language data was collected from the education bureau. The student achievement data used was the three years (2016G.C. to 2018G.C.) data on grade eight students' results obtained from the administrative regions education bureau data set. Moreover, 48 questionnaires were distributed to these directors and vice directors while education bureau officials were interviewed. However, out of the 48 questionnaires distributed only 37 (77%) were returned, and out of these 5 were incomplete and were discarded.

To ensure whether the instrument is free from ambiguity and irrelevant items, a draft questionnaire was pilot tested for its content validity with

colleagues in the department of Education. Further, to ensure that it has the required validity and reliability the instrument was pilot tested in a government-owned primary school, which was not included in the study, and its reliability was checked using Cronbach alpha. The internal consistency of the instrument developed was sufficient as the coefficient of Cronbach alpha was calculated to be 0.77 which was accepted as adequate. Moreover, due to the small number of respondents (5) selected for the interview, the researcher used the same interview checklist to interview to ensure the reliability of the instrument is maintained. The validity of the interview guide was ensured through a detailed reading of empirical studies and by relying on the researcher's training and experience as a principal of primary and secondary school before developing the guide.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from participants and documents were read, checked for completeness, organized, coded, and analyzed using narrative analysis. The qualitative data were analyzed together with the quantitative data to substantiate it. The quantitative data collected was summarized using frequency, mean, and the relationship between school leadership preparation practices and student achievement was analyzed using correlation and regression.

To this end, data were collected from study participants using the self-developed questionnaire. From the directors and vice-directors in the town, the self-developed questionnaire was distributed to the 48 study participants selected to participate in the study. From the 48 questionnaires, 37 questionnaires were returned. However, these 5 questionnaires were partially filled and found to be irrelevant to the study and were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the analysis was carried out with the data collected with the 32 (66.7%) questionnaires filled and returned. The collected data was deemed sufficient for the analysis; to answer the basic questions and to reach the conclusion of the study (Jenkins & Quintana-Ascencio, 2020). The study also used the city administration's grade eight regional exam result as an indicator of student achievement and the data was obtained from the Dire Dawa City Administration Education bureau. The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the research questions.

Results

Leadership Preparation

Quality schools that provide improved quality education to students require quality principals, among other things. Quality principals cannot be obtained unless there are well-designed fit-for-purpose leadership development programs (Bush, 2008). Such programs need to address the uniqueness of the situation in which these schools operate the socio-economic structure and other relevant factors of the surrounding environment as well. Close observation of our school systems indicates that our school principals lag in emphasizing the teaching and learning aspects of schools (Ahmed, 2016; Hussein, 2019; Matebe, 2020; MoE, 2015).

Leadership Experience

The position of school leadership, be it vice principal or principal requires extensive proven experience in teaching at the same tier of the education system. When experienced teachers, after they are prepared for the position are assigned to the post, there is a high probability that they will bring about the required change in the life of the school and students. To bring effective school leaders to the top of the school, teaching experience as well as leadership experience is of paramount importance. To this end, data were collected on the experience school leaders have as a teacher as well as leadership experience at different levels of leadership and their response indicates that a significant number of school leaders are assigned to the position without having the preparatory experience required to succeed.

Most of the incumbents lack the proper leadership experience required for school leaders to effectively function and succeed. Among the school leaders who participated in the study, the majority of them (53%) lack prior experience in terms of leading teams, departments, or units before they are assigned to the position compelling one to ask whether there is a belief as to the importance of prior leadership experience. On the other hand, 15(47%) of

the incumbents have gone through some kind of prior leadership experience which makes them better equipped for the challenges ahead.

Selecting the best among teachers in a school, without considering whether they have experience in leadership or not is brewing disaster in terms of student learning in schools. Those that come to leadership positions need proven experience before they are assigned to the position. Experiences in various positions such as department heads, unit leaders, and other relevant positions are, therefore, essential.

Principals' Field of study

To be effective in a position of any sort, there are certain requirements from the individual's perspective that are essential. Among the several factors knowledge, abilities, awareness, values, motives, and needs are some of them. To acquire knowledge and skills of some sort, individuals need to be educated in educational institutions or any other (through the formal or non-formal system) which takes the responsibility of educating individuals. To this end, research participants were asked about their fields of study to identify whether they have the necessary educational preparation for them to succeed in their position. Accordingly, about 22% (7) of the principals had the necessary educational preparation in the educational planning and management field of study with at least a first degree. On the other hand, 78% of the incumbents are trained in a field of study (31% languages, 42% Natural science & 6% social science) different from the educational preparation required to acquire the knowledge and skills required to function effectively at the position of school leadership. This indicates that there is a tendency to downplay the importance of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes individuals acquire from earning degrees in the field of educational management or educational leadership at various universities and colleges that are not recognized at the regional level.

As the analysis of the data indicates most primary school leaders have educational preparation for teaching different subjects in the school rather than assuming school leadership positions. Most of the study participants (78%) had no leadership training while they are serving as leaders of primary schools in the administration. When individuals lack the necessary knowledge to perform effectively in a position, such lack could be augmented through

short-term training offered before one assumes the position. However, as analysis of the data collected indicate, some of these principals (25%) never had the opportunity to attend the short-term training, i.e., PGDSL (postgraduate diploma in school leadership) offered for aspiring principals. These all indicate that there is a habit of downplaying the role of principals and of the need to adequately prepare them for the position before their assignment.

Frequency of Participation in Training

Training programs are organized to modify job-relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes of those for whom the training is organized. For training programs to produce the desired changes in the workplace, the provision of training and subsequent repetition of the training process enables the acquisition and retention of the knowledge and skills for which the training is designed. The key to efficiency in any profession is repetition. Offering training repeatedly on a selected topic enables mastery and retention of knowledge and acquisition of skills for which the training is organized. Such actions will strengthen the acquisition and retention of the job-relevant knowledge and skills that can directly be applied to the task and address gaps school leaders may have.

The currently instituted mechanism from the ministry of education is to offer a postgraduate diploma in school leadership (PGDSL) to be completed in two summer programs before or after selected teachers are assigned to the principalship position. However, as the analysis of the data indicates, even though the strategy is usually practiced for the incumbents at a national level there are still position holders who did not have the opportunity to participate in this leadership preparation program. This indicates that there is the practice of assigning teachers to principalship positions even without the need to offer them the officially required training program for success on the job. This indicates that there is a belief in the education system that everybody can be a school leader with or without preparing for it.

Furthermore, as the review of the directive for the selection and assignment of principals revealed, short-term training provided to principals intended for their skill development should be at least a week long in duration. However, this research identified that some training is conducted only for 3 to 5 days

(25%) while there are principals who have taken no training (31%) at all. This indicates that what the principals call training even falls below the standard set by the guideline and the focus given on the importance of the preparation of school leaders before assigning them to the position is little. It also indicates the presence of a belief that excellent teachers make excellent principals even without any further training. This can only help to bring teachers from a position of competence to a position of incompetence as the skills to succeed at the position of principalship are different from those required in teaching positions.

Other School Leadership Development Strategies

To be effective at their jobs, bring about positive change in the school, and contribute to the improvement in student achievement, principals need to be prepared for their roles. Different development strategies geared towards addressing the gaps these principals have should be designed and implemented after such gaps are analyzed through need assessment. Strategies that may be used to develop Principals may include strategies such as job assignments, action research, assigning mentors and coaches, experience-sharing visits, providing short and long-term training, and other strategies that are deemed necessary based on principals' gap analysis.

Consequently, to identify whether the education bureau uses different principal development strategies or not, questions were raised to participants. Accordingly, principals disclosed that the predominantly practiced school leadership preparation strategy practiced is experience sharing (84%) with senior principals in other schools.

Moreover, as the analysis of data collected revealed, though there is recognition of the importance of job assignments as shown from the practice of it by some schools, it is not widely practiced as one important strategy for the development of aspiring principals. Among the participants of the study, 11 (34%) reported that they have taken part in challenging job assignments such as managing student discipline, managing school disruption due to student conflict, and other important issues. Such assignments would have enabled to acquire skills of negotiation, conflict resolution, and critical thinking that will prove useful to effectively lead the school when assigned to the position.

On the other hand, experience-sharing visits are useful for incumbents to understand how to solve particular problems they face from principals who have encountered similar problems and model some good practices that may be gleaned from visiting good-performing schools. Experience-sharing visits are common ways of equipping principals to effectively function in their roles. Besides, for practicing principals assigning mentors who advise incumbents and help them bring about the required change in students' achievement plays an important role in schools.

Discussion on Development Programs

The leadership preparation programs are strategies supported by the research done on school leadership preparation. Various researchers recommend experience sharing, context-based training, developmental job assignments, and mentoring in addition to university-level programs, as important strategies for the preparation of school leaders. To this end, some researchers (for example, Goldring et al., 2012; MacBeath, 2011) suggest that school leaders learn by sharing ideas and updating existing knowledge and practices with their peers. Furthermore, (Aas & Vavik, 2015; MacBeath, 2011) stress that networking and communication aid in the alleviation of loneliness, which school principals frequently report as well as contributing to increased self-confidence. Aas and Vavik (2015) further claim that school leaders gain confidence in other school leaders' personal and contextual responses. Professional learning networks, according to Huber (2011), are an important part of school leaders' professional development because they allow for extensive reflection on their actions and behaviors. On the other hand, (Gunter and Ribbins, 2002; Simkins, 2012) underline the value of real-world experiences in educational settings. On the other hand, external training programs, according to Zhang and Brundrett (2010) cannot prepare and produce great leaders without the support of the school environment. To some researchers (Goldring et al., 2012; Simkins, 2012) effective professional development programs are incorporated into real school contexts to allow participants to apply what they have learned and to strengthen learning at the individual and organizational levels. Conversely, to Zhang and Brundrett (2010) guidance strategies, practice, and work training are extremely important strategies for school leadership development. Many researchers

(Aas, 2016; Aas & Vavik, 2015; MacBeath, 2011) underline the necessity of deliberate training and learning. Scott (2010) prefers counseling as a fruitful way to develop principals and in particular ethical education that goes hand in hand with peer training. School principals prefer counseling and information learning above traditional topics (Zhang & Brundrett, 2010). Besides, Hulsbos et al. (2016) opine that school principals place high importance on learning in the workplace by focusing on development and innovation through reflection.

Furthermore, Wright and da Costa (2016) discuss self-reflection, arguing that reflection takes the form of problem-solving and theory construction and that it informs each unique scenario through various viewpoints. Furthermore, Aas (2016) argues that leadership development can be achieved through practical investigation of key leadership processes. Development programs, according to Aas (2016), should help to learn how to deal with conflicts by learning to meditate on them so that they may eventually create the adjustments that occur daily.

In summary, Aas (2016), Aas and Vavik (2015), and MacBeath (2011) envision the development of principals through training programs while Zhang and Brundrett, (2010) add the school context into the training programs and Hulsbos et al. (2016) brings the importance of reflection into the preparation of school leaders. The lists of researchers cited heretofore agree and emphasize that well-organized school leadership preparation uses various strategies as necessary for leaders to succeed in their position. Without such leadership preparation, excellent teachers selected among good performing teachers can't make good principals. Thus, the findings of the study are in agreement with the extant literature on school leadership preparation. The findings are also in agreement with Bush (2008) who claims that leadership preparations should be pluralistic involving several models and strategies.

Thus, the descriptive data analysis indicated that the education bureau as well as schools use some form of principals' development strategy for aspiring principals before they assume the position. However, such principal development strategies are not commonly available to all aspiring principals as well as incumbents. Moreover, development strategies practiced are not planned, well organized, and properly implemented even to the standard set by the directive for principal selection and assignment. However, preparation programs play an important role in equipping school leaders with the necessary skills to be effective at their jobs.

Correlation Analysis

Apart from the description and summarization of the data to create some meaning out of it, the collected data was analyzed using correlation and simple regression. To answer the second basic question and to see if there is a relationship between principals' development and student achievement correlation and regression analyses were conducted. Accordingly, the analysis and results are summarized in the following table.

Table 1

Correlation between leadership preparation and student achievement

		prepareLead	StudentAchieve
prepareLead	Pearson Correlation	1	.426[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
StudentAchieve	Pearson Correlation	.426[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: own survey

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed that based on $p<0.5$, there is a statistically significant relationship between principals' leadership preparation and student achievement. The correlation coefficient for the relation between the two variables was positive but moderate with $r=0.439$. This indicates that the variables have a direct relationship implying that failure in leadership preparation is associated with failure in the achievement of students. Accordingly, when aspiring principals are adequately prepared and assigned to the position, they are highly likely to bring about improvement in the achievement of students. Similarly, Marzano et al, (2005) in a meta-analysis they conducted identified an average correlation of 0.25 between school leadership and student achievement measured using standardized tests while Bartanen (2020) reduces this number to 0.24 for reading and 0.20 for mathematics achievements. Also, Leithwood, et al. (2008) claim to have found a 10 percent difference between effective and ineffective schools attributed to effective school leadership while Bush and Glover (2016) attribute a 27% change in student achievement to effective school leadership.

In support Grissom et al (2021) equate school leaders' effect on student achievement with that the effect strong teachers have on student achievement. These studies give credence to the claim that good principals bring about a material change in the academic achievement of students.

Results of the Regression Analysis

To answer the third research question about the relationship between leadership preparation and student achievement, data collected were subjected to simple regression analysis. To this end, a hypothesis was developed and tested. Based on the result of the analysis the null hypothesis of no relationship was rejected as the analysis indicated that there is a significant relationship between the two variables at a 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis: there is no significant relationship between leadership preparation and student achievement

Table 2

Regression analysis between leadership preparation and student achievement

R=.426						R²= .182
ANOVA Table						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F		Sig.
Regression	120.181	1	120.181	6.653		.015
Residual	541.954	30	18.065			
Total	13353.577	31				
Variables in the Equation						
Variable	r	B	Stand. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant		49.288	4.270		11.544	.000
prepareLead	.426	4.607	1.786	.426	2.579	.015

Source. own survey

To identify if there is a strong relationship between leadership preparation and student achievement, a simple regression between the two variables was conducted. The analysis, based on p<0.05, revealed that there is a significant relationship between the two variables with R2 =.182 atα= 0.05 level of

significance. This indicates that 18.2% change in students' regional exam results is attributed to the leadership preparation program designed and administered to school leaders. This means a well-prepared school leader will bring about significant change in student achievement results. The result is significant as school leadership is second only to classroom teaching to influence student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2008). However, factors that are not considered in this study due to the study's objective make a significant contribution to student achievement. These factors in the study context may include Parental socioeconomic status, parental involvement, residence, gender, type of school, school facilities and instructional materials, teacher competency (qualification) and experience, and student attitude toward learning are the major factors that affect student academic achievement (Debele, 2018; Mohammed & Abera, 2022).

Several studies (for ex. Leithwood, et al, 2008; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005) have pointed out that effective school leadership, which is a result of an effective leadership preparation program, is responsible for the change in students' results. This is because a well-prepared school leader can exhibit effective leadership, which contributes to improvement in student achievement. Similarly, a thorough study conducted by a group of researchers in the UK substantiates the facts alluded to by other researchers that principals make a large difference when it comes to student achievement (Leithwood et al. 2008; 2010).

Discussion

The importance of effective school leaders to bring about positive change in student achievement is indubitable. To this end, Huber (2004, as cited in Bush, 2008), argues that while successful schools have strong leaders, poor or failing schools are characterized by having inadequate school leadership. A thorough study conducted by a group of researchers in the UK substantiates the facts alluded to by other researchers that principals make a large difference when it comes to student achievement (Leithwood et al. 2008; 2010). Accordingly, they claim that 'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching in terms of effects on pupil learning.' (P-28). Good school leadership can only be attained with good school leadership preparation. Though previous research findings do not focus on or try to associate leadership development

with student achievement, there is ample literature that indirectly links the two variables. Therefore, finding direct support for the finding may be difficult but there is indirect support such as the ones quoted above that link effective leadership with good leadership preparation and effective leadership with student achievement.

In conclusion, as Grissom et al (2021) claim if schools are to improve their students' achievement, they need strong school leadership. Strong school leaders are products of the deliberate development efforts by schools and education officials, as leaders are made not born. These leaders influence student Achievement through an indirect means of motivating teachers and students, facilitating teachers' efforts as well as providing strong instructional leadership. Thus, school leaders have an indirect but significant effect on student achievement rather than a direct one.

Conclusion

In the world we live in, rapid economic, political, and social changes take place, which requires working harder than ever to address the needs of students. Such challenges can only be addressed through well-trained professionals that help schools constantly adapt to the changes in their environment. School leaders should be adequately trained and deployed in schools so that the quality of the education provided to students is improved and maintained at the level required. Schools are expected to deliver on their responsibilities of providing quality education to one's citizenry, they need to have well-trained & qualified school leaders on top of other resources.

Leader preparation programs in the Dire Dawa administrative region are inadequate and fall far below the level required to bring about change in schools. The fact that some school leaders are assigned to leadership positions even without any form of preparation is indicative of the lack of well-thought and well-designed school leadership preparation programs in the region. School leaders, school leadership, and schools, in general, are left to their vices. The fact that the administrative region uses experience sharing as a major means of leadership preparation strategy shows the attention school leadership is given in the region. The notion of specialist preparation for educational leaders and managers is beyond any question. Just as teachers,

doctors, lawyers, and pilots, for example, need specific training; this also applies to school principals and other leaders. It is inappropriate to assign school leaders to vice principalship or principalship positions without preparing them for the role as it will be a losing gamble at the expense of children or students. If this central case is accepted, the debate shifts to the nature of principal preparation programs or leadership succession practices employed.

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