

The Implementation of Leadership Practices in High School Classes from Students' Perspectives.



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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this qualitative research is to define leadership and describe how to develop more effective leaders in schools by explaining the most important characteristics of a leader. In general, students need to learn leadership skills at the high school level in preparation for their future. Specifically, educators must understand the importance of education, understand the need for leadership, the importance of developing leadership skills, and the importance of preparing the student to fulfill goals. They must overcome any challenges students may face to reach their goals. Therefore, this article is aimed to highlight the most important skills that high school female students need to prepare them for the future such as "Planning and setting goals, Communication, Time management, Problem-solving, Decision-making, and Teamwork". Also, it provides some suggestions to help educators build suitable curricula to meet their needs.

KEYWORDS: Leadership. High school. Planning and setting goals. Communication. Time management. Problem-solving. Decision-making. Teamwork.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education throughout the ages has focused on building the personality of individuals and preparing them to follow the requirements of the era which provide them with the knowledge, skills, and values that help them to be active members of their societies. Leadership plays an important and major role in the lives of individuals, and there is a growing need for personalities with leadership characteristics and skills to be employed in the service of their people and societies to reach prosperity and achieve the desired goals.

Leadership is one of the issues that concern societies, and some roles characterize the leader during his interaction with members of society, and These roles must be characterized by strength and the ability to influence others and direct their behavior to reach the desired goals (Al-Mutairi, 2020). The importance of developing leadership at the secondary level is one of the priorities for education goals (Hakmi, Albahri, 2022). As they imply that students at this age can master many social skills when they have the opportunity. Students can acquire skills such as communication, empathy, critical thinking, decision-making, and leading groups that provide them with serious challenges to deal with their emotional, physical, and intellectual abilities (Hakmi, Albahri, 2022).

Further, in Saudi Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sought to prepare leaders from promising youth to participate in building the country and achieving its vision. There was the "Misk Al Qayyim" initiative, which is one of the initiatives of the Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Foundation "Misk Charity". It is an initiative offered to university students to build future leaders. The "Leadership by Values" program, program aims to elevate university students and develop their capabilities. The program allows students to accompany some leaders in the government or private sectors. The program also seeks to discover talents among students, which helps in forming a leadership personality that will participate in development (MISK, 2030). This initiative targeted only undergraduate students; therefore, high school students need to be targeted too.

Leadership skills are also considered one of the requirements of the twenty-first century, and they are a set of skills necessary for success and work in this era, such as learning and innovation skills, information and media culture, technology, life, and work skills (Aluatban, 2018). Among these skills is the skill of leadership and responsibility, which is defined as the ability to influence and lead others, positive influence to push others to reach their maximum potential, and act responsibly to achieve goals, taking into account the diversity of interests and capabilities of others (Khamis, 2018).

This is more related to high school students since it is the level where they build their characters and create their way of thinking. Also, it is the stage where we can build new generations of aware students who can build their societies and develop their knowledge. This cannot happen without discovering and building important skills such as leadership (Hakmi, Albahri, 2022). Educators need to pay attention to young people and their leadership skills in an early stage of their educational life by including leadership skills in educational curricula and providing leaders preparation programs that develop leadership skills such as planning skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, and the skill of assuming responsibility (Al-Farih, 2022).

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In Al-Mutairi's study (2020), aimed to identify the necessary leadership skills for secondary school students in Kuwait, and identify the level of leadership skills among students while presenting a proposed vision for developing leadership skills depending on students' points of view. The arrangement of the skills necessary for leadership according to students' feedback came as the following: teamwork skill ranked, problem-solving skills, decision-making, communication skill, and time management came in the last stage.

The fact is most of the research on leadership skills has focused on male students and demonstrate their needs (Hakmi, Albahri, 2022). Also, some initiatives have targeted undergraduate students. Further, most of the studies were quantitative approaches and published in the Arabic language. Therefore, this article is aimed to highlight the most important skills that high school female students need to prepare them for the future. Also, it provides some suggestions to help educators build suitable curricula to meet their needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is one of the most important aspects of human culture, and "leadership has come to mean all things to all people" (McDad, Nooks, et al., 2008, p. 75). According to Gorton and Alston, "[t], the leader is the one who succeeds in getting others to follow him" (2012, p. 6). Leadership is defined as a group of activities that an individual uses to engage a group of people to work to develop and achieve goals (Gorton and Alston, 2012) and is defined concerning the concept of empowerment. Leadership "involves assisting everyone working with the organization to collectively gain control over resources for the common good" (Gorton and Alston, 2012, p. 7). However, power itself is not crucial to determine whether the person is a leader or not. According to Gorton and Alston (2012), it is the nature of personal behavior in the specific position that makes a leader. It is also important to differentiate between managers and leaders in education. According to Bennis, "[m]anagers are people who do things right" while leaders are "people who do the right things" (1997, p. 8). In education, every person who can make decisions is the leader whether a principal, an administrator, or even a teacher in some cases. In short, leadership is "the ability to change organizations, the ability to provide a vision, the ability to create a consensus to move forward [and] the use of emotional intelligence" (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 2002 in Van Wart, 2013).

THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Effective leaders are needed to make changes and achieve goals in the education system, since "the organization without effective leadership is in trouble" (Gorton and Alston, 2012, p. 6). The effective leader must be able to deal with and enjoy such challenges (Van Wart, 2013, p. 554). Hitt and Tucker maintain instructional leadership as "framing school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress" (2015, p. 533). In contrast, the weak leader often "can overuse joint decision making, waste a lot of time, delegate responsibilities to employees incapable of managing, or go through participation but frequently override decisions or disregard input" (Van Wart, 2013, p. 557). Further, effective leaders should be able to face challenges. According to Van Wart, modern leaders face challenges because of the number of decisions they need to make and because of the difficulty of these decisions (2013, p. 557). Therefore, the ability to face challenges is an important quality for an effective leader.

Today, high school students should understand the importance of leadership for directing their future. Further, it is important to focus on the most important characteristics that help to create an effective leader in high school. This section will outline the four major characteristics that education leaders such as principals and administrators should understand to help high school students to be effective leaders. Leaders have to focus on their jobs, their followers, their skills, and their goals. Effective leadership "should not rest solely in the hands of a singular authoritative figure", but instead be influenced by followers as well (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2013, p. 482).

HOW TO BUILD EFFECTIVE LEADERS IN HIGH SCHOOL?

A. Understand the importance of education.

Administrators and managers must understand the importance of their job as education leaders since "to know what to do is as important as to know how to do it" (Bobbit, 2013, p. 12). Education leaders will face challenges that need to be dealt with promptly. These challenges require leaders "to make effective decisions [which] is vital to the successful performance of a school administrator" (Gorton & Alston, 2012, p. 31). Furthermore, education is a way to transfer knowledge to people and society (Doyle & Mulchay, 2012) and to shape students who will become the leaders of the future. Finally, although contemporary education itself is part of a larger movement "characterized by attempts to make nations, industries, companies and even individuals more competitive" (Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2001, p. 2), they must also learn to trust themselves and others to transfer these qualities to their students (Richard, 2013).

Understanding the role of education in students' lives is important to provide better education and develop a curriculum that encourages leadership among students. For example, providing up-to-date technology is one way to facilitate students' learning since students rely on leaders to help them achieve their goals and assuage their concerns. Therefore, leaders should "give

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considerable attention to the communication channels that are available and decide which one would most effectively communicate the message" (Gorton & Alston, 2012, p. 110).

Finally, leaders should clearly define their purpose within the education system (David & Stephen, 2013, p. 59). Administrators and school managers should be able to help see what their followers need and should be able to make decisions accordingly. When leaders know that their job is important, they will be able to give their best to make their societies and their schools the best environment possible to create future leaders.

B. Understand The Followers' Needs

To be effective, leaders also need to understand the needs of their followers. Education leaders must understand the needs of teachers, students, parents, and society. This understanding will help them, as well as their followers such as teachers and administrators, to identify the difficulties of their students so that they can be addressed, and the students can reach their goals. To do so, leaders must "organize everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experience" (Spady, 1994, p. 1).

Effective leaders should also help the teachers to understand their importance in certain tasks and their value within the team (Gorton & Alston, 2012). Therefore, education leaders will work with teachers so that educational goals can be achieved. Principals and other leaders should work to make their teaching staff understand the importance of their work and collaborate to achieve their goals. Teachers should be able to communicate easily with their leaders to make them aware of new issues and concerns. Also, education leaders should provide their workers with the necessary permission to make some decisions on their own, since leadership is the responsibility of everyone involved (Richard, 2013, p. 59). Furthermore, the "lack of training and support (time and resources) for teachers in multi-age settings significantly affect[s] the quality of education of many students in these contexts" (White & Reid, 2008, p.4). Facilitating resources for workers to conduct their jobs more efficiently will help leaders to achieve their goals.

Education leaders also need to communicate with the parents to be clear about the needs of their students. According to Palmer, students are "larger than life and even more complex" (1997, p. 1). Therefore, understanding the importance of communication will help the administrators to anticipate and rectify possible problems for themselves, their workers, and their students. Administrators should communicate with parents to determine the kind of problems that they and their children face every day. Leaders also need to be available to listen and respond to what the other person has to say (Ellinor, 1998, p. 180–81). They should "see them clearly and see them whole and respond to them wisely at the moment" (Palmer, 1997, p. 1). They have to provide the time to facilitate relationships between the group members to collaborate, which will lead to intrinsic motivation to achieve goals and facilitate success (Reinhartz & Beach, 2004). Taking time to communicate with students and their families will allow educational leaders to "enhance student achievement and other desirable outcomes" therefore; they will be able to practice more leadership practices within their school environment (Hitt & Tucker, 2015, p. 533).

Finally, effective leaders should be able to understand the needs of their society so they can build future leaders who can address those needs. In turn, "educational leadership and management in various levels have become one of the important and heavy responsibilities of the society" (Behbahani, 2011, p. 9). Educational leaders "provide children with the groundwork for positive character development in which they may become responsible leaders of a global society" (Valeri & Brianna, 2013, p. 314). Therefore, leaders cannot encourage success without communicating with the parents and the society around them to understand their needs. For example, many schools provide financial support to their students, and to students around the world who are in need, and that cannot happen without the specific decisions of leaders. According to Hitt and Tucker, "[l]eaders must regard the internal organization, and the external community, and approach these stakeholders as valuable contributors" (2015, p. 545). Educational leaders must, therefore, rely on society to help them identify and develop solutions for problems in the education system.

C. Developing leadership skills.

Future leaders need "to have high expectations of themselves and others and constantly upgrade the skills of themselves and their followers" (Van Wart, 2013, p. 561). One way to foster effective leaders is to facilitate training early in their education. According to Arroliga and colleagues, in the discipline of health care, "leadership training should start in medical school or earlier" (2014, p. 249). This mindset applies to all disciplines, and any "curriculum should include leadership courses" (Arroliga et al., 2014, p. 249) to help future leaders access this knowledge and develop leadership skills early in their careers.

Another way in which effective leaders can develop their skills is by learning from experience in other disciplines and nations and determining how other leaders deal with comparable problems. According to Van Wart, "Leaders in all sectors could learn a great deal by studying successful public administrators who span boundaries and extra-organizational roles in a complex political" setting (2013, p. 562). Effective leaders should combine this with educating themselves so that they are up-to-date and can develop and administer the newest leadership skills. This is important because leaders are expected to anticipate future issues to make decisions at the right time. As Gorton and Alston said, leaders "do not wait for the future to occur. They create the future by actively engaging in it" (2012, p. 7) as a result. Further, Muhammed (2017), illustrates that students need to learn some

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important skills to be effective leaders such as intelligence, building a good relationship with others, communicating effectively, time management, and teamwork skills.

IMPORTANT SKILLS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Planning and Setting Goals

Future leaders should also learn how to develop goals, which their team can work towards to provide guidelines and a sense of workplace expectations. Accordingly, they need to “specify clearly what should be done in terms of goals, objectives, criteria, and outcomes” (2012, p. 33). To do that, they have to have a clear plan to follow and, eventually, reach, and the goals along the way should be made clear to their teachers so they can work to achieve them. One way that leaders can help teachers to achieve goals is to provide the most recent equipment, training, and tools, such as technology, to help their workers achieve the goals discussed above. According to Arroliga et al, “the need to train and implement a rigorous curriculum teaching leadership skills [to teachers] is crucial” (2014, p. 249). Leaders could also anticipate potential obstacles that might prevent goals from being reached and put forward suitable solutions.

Communication Skill

One of the most important skills that effective leaders should develop is communication. According to Gorton and Alston “failures in communication lie at the heart of [the] problem in the organization, goal setting, productivity, and evaluation” (2012, p. 101). Effective communication between leaders and their workers will allow leaders to find solutions at a suitable time, rather than problems being left to develop and become a dilemma. They need to work on developing their skills so appropriate decisions will be made to face the new challenges promptly (Melville Ross, 2010, p. 4). Moreover, effective education leaders should learn suitable ways to communicate with their followers. They have to be up to date in using new technologies such as e-mail and academic applications, be willing to investigate the types of problems that cause a lack of communication between educators and the public, and they need to develop their communication skills. Overall, effective leadership “implies taking the organization or some part of it in a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programs, building organizational structures, and improving quality” (Davis, 2003, p. 4). Education leaders need to work hard to make themselves someone who others are willing to follow since good leader inspires people to do their best and look to them as models (Alston, 2002).

Time Management Skill

Time management is another important skill students should achieve. The curriculum has changed during the last decades and student assignments have been developed to depend more on different types of activities and diverse tasks such as projects and seminars that depend on research and need time to be done (Alvarez, Ferrero & Ugidos, 2019). This change requires students to be able to manage their time. As Alvarez et al (2019) illustrate managing time is a crucial ability that can be taught since it is necessary for students. Also, as they show time is “a limited raw material” (p, 3) that students must use effectively and efficiently. Time management is one of the crucial skills that are important to be mastered before reaching university levels since it is important to fulfill due assignments and lead groups in the future.

Problem-Solving Skill

Researchers have found that problem-solving skills are important for students at all academic levels. Problem-solving is important in dealing with issues that arise in students' social lives. Some studies show that students have low problem-solving skills which should be strengthened (Mahanal, Zubaidah, Setiawan, Maghfiroh, and Muhaimin, 2022). Researchers recommend applying activities that depend on problem-solving to solve problems scientifically and to affect students' way of thinking positively. The “RICOSRE” was recommended by Mahanal et al (2022), as a learning style that helps to meet “the requirements of a valid, practical, and effective learning model” (p 2). This RICOSRE stands for the following stages “(1) reading, (2) identifying the problem, (3) constructing the solution, (4) solving the problem, (5) reviewing the solution, and (6) extending the solution” (2022, p 2). These stages should be part of the high school daily learning process to master the problem-solving skill that is important to develop leadership skills.

Decision-Making Skill

Students at the high school level need to participate in making decisions. The high school atmosphere is the place where future leaders are shaped. Therefore, letting them participate in giving suggestions and making decisions have a direct benefit on their education. General decision-making skill refers to “stable differences in judgment and decision-making quality exhibited across diverse and wide-ranging domains” (Cokely, Feltz, Ghazal, Allan, Petrova & Garcia-Retamero, 2018, p 2). Tideman, Kristén, & Szönyi (2022) found that students need to be prepared to participate actively to be independent and support their societies. They summarized that teaching has a clear impact on students' knowledge and curriculum goals in developing such skills. They encouraged educators to be more aware and increase their knowledge to support high school teachers and principals to help students develop their decision-making capacity (Tideman, et al, 2022). Therefore, students in Saudi Arabia should find a helping hand to master such skills.

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Teamwork Skill

One of the most important skills that twenty-first-century students should master is teamwork skills. Teamwork skill is another important quality students should master as an adult to prepare them for future jobs. Students are the future employees or employers who are going to work collaboratively with other workers, this requires mastering special skills which let them understand their team and help to reach goals. Research proves that mastering teamwork is one of the leadership skills that are important in high school life (Muhammed, 2017). At this level, students need to understand human nature and accept and respect differences and different views. Also, it is important to be clear with your team and set all the details, and share the updated actions to facilitate working (Muhammed, 2017). Working as a team is the only way that saves time and effort. Further, it is important to exchange experiences and learn from each other.

School's role in mastering leadership skills

Students are more likely to be less achieve when they could not find a helping hand. In schools in particular, principles play a crucial role in helping students to achieve skills and reach goals by facilitating challenges that face them. According to Althyabani (2018), school managers play clear roles in supporting high school students in participating in making decisions. Further, Asiri (2018) illustrates that school managers help learners build a positive attitude toward leadership practices in private schools rather than in governmental schools by providing scout activities. According to Asiri (2018), the lack of financial support from stockholders shapes the lack of activating scout activities in governmental schools therefore students do not find chances to practice related skills. As he illustrates that such activities help to master skills such as planning and time management, making decisions, motivation, and problem-solving. And where the most popular suggestions are to provide financial support.

METHODOLOGY

The research depends on a qualitative research method by interviewing 5 female high school students at one of Riyadh's public schools. Students chose to answer questions through WhatsApp messages. Questions are sent in the student's first language which is Arabic language.

The interview questions were as follows:

Planning and setting goals

- Do you think that you have the skill of planning when performing your daily tasks?

If yes: What practices do you think are important to the planning process?

If the answer is no: What are the obstacles that you think prevent you from doing the planning process?

Communication

- Do you think you have the skill of good communication with classmates?

If yes: What practices do you think are important for good communication?

If the answer is no: What are the obstacles that you think, make you not communicate well?

Time management

- Do you think you have time management skills?

If yes: What practices do you think are important for time management?

If the answer is no: What are the obstacles that you think do not help in time management?

Problem-solving

- Do you think you have the skill to solve the problems that you face?

If the answer is yes: What practices do you think are important for solving problems?

If the answer is no: What are the obstacles that you think do not help solve problems?

Decision-making

-Do you think you can make decisions?

If yes: What practices do you think are important for decision-making?

If no: What are the obstacles that you think do not help in acquiring decision-making skills?

Teamwork

Do you think you have teamwork skills?

If yes: What practices do you think are important for teamwork?

If no: What are the obstacles that you think do not help in acquiring teamwork skills?

FOUNDING

When asking participants about planning for daily tasks, three out of five agreed that planning is an important skill for daily routine. And one of the participants illustrates that

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"It is a roadmap that guides us on how to complete a task before trying to start it and mastering it correctly, and it is important because it is the ability to multitask and enhance the spirit of cooperation because all team members will be assigned their roles." While two of the participants clarify that they are not good at planning tasks. They said some obstacles such as laziness, and leaving the strategy lead to a loss of passion and the surrounding atmosphere does not support planning. One indicates that focusing on one thing for a long period is hard to manage.

Therefore, students lack confidence in planning tasks related to the lack of using such skills within their curriculum. Students need to be taught how to plan short-term and long-term goals. In addition, they need to be familiar with their school's vision and the lesson objectives, and how lessons are planned. This will help them to be familiar with daily tasks and how they are related to the school goals.

Further, participants show the ability in communicating with others. One illustrates that "being confident in yourself, talking about the things you love" is one way to communicate with others.

Also, they list some skills such as

"Cooperation, mutual respect, and good listening. Understanding body language, tone of voice, clarity, and confidence" In addition, "Speak softly, talk about your interests, bring out your talents, draw attention to you while talking" are skills mastered by the participants.

Therefore, students can communicate and build strong relationships with others.

When the participants were asked about time management, three of them agreed on the inability to manage time. Where one of the students showed that she is distracted easily and has a short attention span. She suggested "sitting in a quiet place that gives you the motivation to continue working".

Another told the reason is

"The occurrence of an emergency wastes time, and it is not possible to predict what will happen at that time, as well as the implementation of study projects. I do not guarantee the time that it will take."

While two believe that time management is important, and they can master it so easily that they "divide time" "organization - setting goals - planning - dividing and arranging responsibilities and tasks".

This is clear that students feel less focused because they did not learn how to set plans therefore some faced difficulties in managing their time.

And when the students were asked Do you think you have the skill to solve the problems that you face?

They answered in the affirmative. One tells that it might have plans B and C to face other circumstances. Then she said, "I can ask the questions such as, what is the reason behind this problem and how to solve it?"

Another one illustrates that "calmness and understanding are solutions to reach an appropriate solution". While the opinion of another student; problem-solving

"requires defining the problem and finding alternative solutions to it, such as research. Most of the problem-solving are not limited to scientific intelligence. Knowing the feelings of others and the ability to interpret them and then choose the appropriate solution - the right decision-making skills" is one of the most important practices that must be mastered to solve problems".

Therefore, students have a clear image of how to solve the problem and how to deal with difficulties.

When students are asked about their ability to make decisions, they assure that they can take decisions. One said she has to follow stages to make decisions such as: "1- Studying the decision 2- Choosing the decision 3- implementing the decision". Also, one said she has to spend time studying carefully decisions related to the future. For example, she set a table with possible solutions and add the negative and positive effects of some decisions to come up with a perfect decision. Fortunately, students at this age can study their decisions and think carefully about their circumstances.

Regarding the ability in working with a team to fulfill goals, students show their ability to work in groups even though some illustrate that working in a group determines the ability to share ideas because of the lack of confidence of other members. Another one shows that some members may be unable to work collaboratively and that affects teamwork and task achievements. However, the same students said they can communicate with others effectively. Therefore, principals should provide more support to help students practice more tasks with the team in preparing them for the future.

CONCLUSIONS

Educators should put consideration when working to attain education-based goals for the future needs of students. A focus on students' needs will help educators and leaders to be better aware of how to develop suitable curricula that serve students and their communities. Students show noticeable ability in making effective decisions related to their personal lives and can solve problems. However, they mentioned that they are not able to manage their time or set goals sometimes. Although students can communicate effectively in daily situations, they cannot work effectively with teams. As a result, educators need to provide more tasks within students' curricula to master skills related to communication and teamwork. Further, students faced difficulties in managing their time and developing plans for themselves. These obstacles should be solved by engaging students in developing visions for their schools and participating in planning their lessons.

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