



Increased Effectiveness of Schools through Ethical Educational Leadership

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Abstract: This case study focuses on two schools in Lebanon that have gained substantial recognition for providing high-quality education after their continuous success in the official General Secondary Exams. The supposed ethical leadership approach employed at these schools is studied here in order to examine whether it has played a role in their respective success. A number of stakeholders participated in the study through a survey, while eight people were interviewed including the two directors, the two principals, and the four coordinators. Further informal discussions were carried out with a couple of teachers outside the school premises. The analysis reveals a strong link between the highly relationship-oriented work environment at the schools under study and their noticeable success.

Keywords: Educational Leadership; Ethical School Leadership; School performance; School Management

1. INTRODUCTION

As a matter of principal, a school's overall success and increased effectiveness are directly linked with "professional high-quality leadership and management" (Bell & Retchie, 1999:24). A number of thorough academic studies confirm that effective leadership contributes positively to teachers' performance and students' achievement. Mac Gilchrist (1997) and her associates, for example, argue that the core characteristics of an effective school include high standards of leadership and management, "concentration on teaching and (pupil) learning", and developing "a learning organisation" (p.7).

Not too long ago two secondary schools in Lebanon, namely Al-Iman School and Dar El-Uloom School started to achieve success and developed a strong reputation in educational circles. Examination results in both schools have shown significant improvement (Ad-diyar, 2002; Annual Report Al-Hariri Foundation, Oct. 6th, 2002; Annual Science Fair, AUB).

The aim of this study is to explore the supposedly ethical leadership approach adopted in both schools, particularly in the English departments, in order to see how they operate to bring out the best in their teachers, through exploring the perceptions of their directors, principals, supervisors, and coordinators. The study will examine the progress made in light of leadership theories, including competencies, which enable school leaders not only to

cope with, but also to thrive during, change (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020) and to analyze what it is they do exactly and how they react to change.

1.1 Contextual Background

As the following chart shows, both schools use a similar organisational hierarchal structure consisting of principals, supervisors, coordinators and teachers.

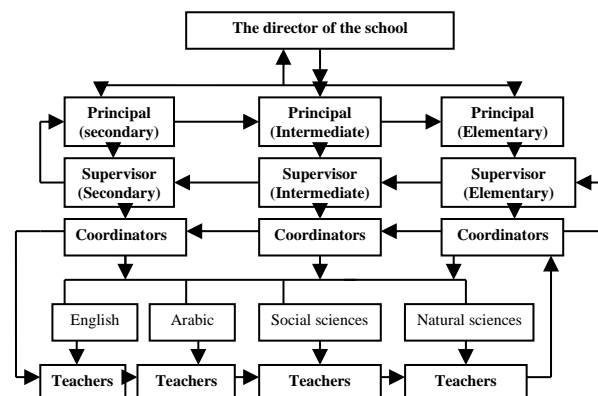


Chart 1. The organizational structure of both schools



1.3 Research questions

The overarching research question is the following:

What type of leadership and management characterizes the school leaders' approach?

From this, two particular sub-questions follow that the researchers were interested in, namely:

How effective are these characteristics in coping with change? And

What do school leaders do to bring out the best in their teachers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brief account of leadership history

After the Second World War, researchers (Adair J, 1983) explored the features that enable successful leaders to face up to challenges while other leaders fail to do so. The first factor identified was the concept of fixed traits. This attributed leadership to particular qualities innate to an individual. However, such a behavioral model was soon replaced by the situational approach, in which leaders are identified in terms of both specific traits and the fit to the situation in which they are expected to operate (Middlehurst, 1997). However, this in turn led to a new model where researchers and theorists concentrated on leaders' behaviors instead of leaders' traits or the situations in which they function. The focus of leadership research, thus, shifted to actions or behaviors.

The most important studies conducted in the behavioural tradition were "Ohio State Leadership Studies" programme and the "Michigan Studies" programme (Middlehurst, 1997). Both studies came up with new dimensions of leadership: task-orientated behaviour and relationship-orientated behaviour. Most of the ensuing leadership models were based mainly on the combination of these two behaviors. Among these theories were Blake and Moutons' (1964) managerial grid, and Adair's (1983) three-circle model.

Blake and Mouton's (1964) model is based on five combinations of relationship-oriented and task-oriented behaviours. They suggest that leaders can be either highly predisposed towards creating humane relations, or they can be greatly inclined to producing effective outcomes. In the second two combinations, a leader can neither accomplish tasks nor show empathy, or he can be both highly task-orientated and highly concerned. The last combination is based on the assumption that a leader is equally concerned for people as well as for a task.

Working in the same vein, Fiedler (1976) suggested that individuals can be either primarily task-oriented or relationship-oriented. However, Hersey and Blanchard (1984) argued that individuals can be both task-oriented and relationship-oriented. In their model, they suggested

that as the team progresses in terms of competence and maturity, the leader's guidance reduces to the minimum.

The third significant model is Adair's (1983) three-circle model. He expanded on the relationship-oriented behaviour through satisfying three sets of needs: the needs of the task, the needs of followers as a team, and the needs of individual members of the team. By doing so, Adair seemed to follow Abraham Maslow (1970), who had suggested a hierarchy of needs starting with basic physiological ones through needs for security and self-esteem up to the needs for self-actualisation.

The importance of Adair's model is that it can be adapted to the changing focus of management and leadership research. For instance, the sixties witnessed an emphasis on meeting the needs of the task. The seventies and early eighties marked an emphasis on the needs for creating effective teams. The current focus has been shifted towards the individual who makes up a team.

Another advantage of Adair's work is that his analysis of leadership from a needs' perspective has consolidated the idea that leadership is a process, which can embrace improvement and modification. Also, his idea of seeing people both as part of teams and as individuals allows for a more dynamic understanding of work organization and team development.

Adair (1983) identified nine leadership functions: setting objectives, planning, briefing, controlling, communicating, motivating, organising, reviewing, and setting an example. The latter is important in current leadership research as it reflects one way in which a leader sets a vision of the future. Adair also identified the process of setting and defining objectives and goals; however, he did not discuss the process of communicating these to the followers. Contemporary researchers such as Hooper and Potter (2000), and Fullan (2001) have expanded on this crucial aspect in their writings. For this reason, the present leadership research can be considered as an accumulation of previous models and approaches. What is interesting is that leadership research has moved from being regarded in terms of innate characteristics to being seen as a process created by an individual.

So far, the trait, situational, and behavioural leadership approaches have been briefly presented, with how these approaches examined leadership from different perspectives, in an attempt to disclose its essence. Contemporary research has further investigated leadership but from a new dimension termed as change (Fullan, 2000). Change itself is not a new phenomenon; the only new aspect about this complex phenomenon, however, is the unprecedented rate at which change is taking place (Hooper & Potter, 2001).



2.2 Change

Change is a complex process triggered by intrinsic forces, extrinsic ones, or a combination of both. These can be encouraging or disappointing, driving or restraining. Internally driven forces are represented as emotion, aspiration, motivation, and so on, while the extrinsic ones are represented as power, authority, and influence. It can be highly beneficial if the forces are encouraging and driving, and if change is reinforced by passion, energy, and followers' support and commitment over a long period. In short, beneficial change requires a mix of both sets of forces and consistent goals of both followers and leaders (Hooper & Potter, 2001).

Change has many features that distinguish it from other phenomena. First, it is pursued for the sake of improvement and development: "Is it not in every one's benefit to improve things, to work more effectively" (Hooper & Potter, 2001:5). Second, it is underpinned by discontinuity in that some processes stop abruptly and some start even before the previous ones are completed in response to new circumstances. Third, it is often characterised by anxiety and fear of failure, as the consequences are unpredictable.

In this context, the need for leaders, whose traits and actions can influence and transform their peoples' behaviors, attitudes, goals, and emotion in a way that meets the demands of handling processes with unpredictable consequences and creating a learning organization, has become an utmost priority. Research in this particular domain has investigated every aspect of successful leaders and leadership in response to this need over decades, to identify some of the competencies that promote effective transformational or transcendent leadership.

The following sections are concerned with the competencies of the leaders, who "enable their followers to transcend their current situations and performance levels" (Hooper & Potter, 2001:27) by unlocking their creative potentials.

2.3 Transformational leadership

The transformational leadership model that captures a mix of the core dimensions from all the previous leadership approaches, in addition to a special concern for the notion of change, has emerged to replace all the preceding leadership models. Hooper & Potter (2000) who have defined transformational leadership as "the process of developing people" (p.62) confirm that the key task of the transformational leadership is to unleash the creativity and potentials of followers. To fulfil this seemingly simple task, seven competencies have been determined to be important (Hooper & Potter, 2001).

2.3.1 The competencies of transformational leaders

The following section describes the seven essential competencies of effective transformational leadership. These are setting direction or vision, setting an example, encouraging communication, creating alignment, functioning as change agent, handling crises, and bringing the best out of people or developing a learning organisation as called by Senge (1990). The first six competencies underpin the process of staff development and the learning organization. Brief descriptions of these competencies are included below.

- *Setting direction*

Effective leaders possess a clear idea of the vision, which should be shared and embraced by all members of the organisation and the strategies that turn vision into reality, in addition to full awareness of their resources and constraints of their situations (Malcolm & Walsh, 2007).

- *Setting an example*

Leaders' behaviours, responses, and attitudes founded on their beliefs and values usually come under close scrutiny on the part of the followers. Thus, the consistency of their actions with their beliefs and values known as integrity is the real value sought within any organization (Hooper & Potter, 2001:39).

- *Encouraging effective communication*

Communication "is a key skill for leaders at all levels" (Hooper & Potter, 2000:103). It starts with listening attentively, asking questions, interpreting, repeating, and checking understanding if messages are unclear. Some potential barriers may occur such as misunderstanding, distraction and stress. However, these can be easily resolved if, for example, diversity is celebrated and focus on points under discussion is practiced (Fullan, 2000).

- *Alignment*

The three preceding competencies: setting direction, setting an example, and communicating effectively, can be regarded as jointly constituting the fourth leadership competency, alignment. Without these building blocks, alignment is unlikely to occur (Hooper & Potter, 2000). It is a process by which an effective leader "reduces wasted energies and aligns them to focus on the intended direction" (ibid, p.105) by involving people in decision-making, letting communication flow in all directions (Hooper & Potter 2000), and correcting any inaccuracies promptly.

- *Leader as change agent*

Leaders as change agents are the ones who respond effectively to the complexities of change (Tanno & Banner, 2018). Also, they make changes for the sake of improvement and involve all the people concerned in the process of change to convey the reasons why change has been undertaken, as “change is more likely to occur when people can relate the change to a need” (Wu, 1988:10).

- *Leader handling crisis*

The sixth competency required for effective leadership is the leaders’ ability to provide good leadership in difficult times or under considerable pressure. Hooper and Potter (2000) believe that this competency can be acquired by training underpinned by confidence, knowledge, and experience. In addition, leaders functioning in crisis need to be calm.

- *Bringing the best out of people*

The last competency of effective leadership is bringing the best out of people, described by Senge (1990) as a learning environment or community. He proposes five core disciplines for creating a learning community: commitment to lifelong learning, flexibility in thinking and behaviors, team spirit, and shared vision and goals.

To sum up, the transformational leadership approach comprises such competencies as effecting communication to flow in all directions, building effective teams, and unlocking the potentials of individuals. Leaders having these, and other, competencies can be transformational and be particularly effective in periods of change (Hein & Chavez, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

To carry out this inquiry, a case study research from the wider qualitative interpretive paradigm was utilized. Punch (1994), agreeing with Miles and Huberman (1994), defines a case study as a “phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p.152). According to Nisbet and Watt (1984), a case study is “the study of an instance in action”. (p. 27).

The reason why a case study was chosen is mainly related to the fact that the authors wanted to explore the leadership approach embraced by the school leaders in depth. In addition, other school leaders may avail themselves from the findings to redress faults and enhance strengths in their own contexts.

3.1 Context

This small-scale study research was carried out in two bilingual secondary school environments in Beirut, Lebanon. They have enrolments of about 1200 and 800 boys and girls, respectively. The elementary students are

segregated from the intermediate and secondary ones. Both schools are in Beirut.

The two schools are Dar El-Uloom and Al-Iman Schools. Both schools have existed for some thirty years but have recently become two of the leading schools in Beirut. They offer primary, intermediate and secondary education. For the last couple of years, many of their students have achieved a score higher than 90% in the official terminal scientific exams. Because of this prestigious status, notable universities such as the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU) offered scholarships to those students to join their programs.

3.2 Participants

This study involved a total of eight participants from these two schools: two directors, two principals, two supervisors, and two coordinators, to examine the type of leadership approach embraced by them as school leaders.

Table 1. List of participants and their job specifications

- | |
|---|
| <p>1. Two directors/ principals: hold meetings with the staff members to talk about general issues, such as the time when the academic year starts, etc. They also hold separate meetings with the teachers, supervisors, coordinators, and parents' committee. They are also responsible for the school's financial matters.</p> <p>2. Two supervisors are responsible for the coordinators and teachers. They prepare the schedules and organise the exams. They manage the students' behaviors and decide on the types of student punishment. They also control the students' attendance and prepare their certificates and school report cards. They participate in book selection. Working jointly with the coordinators, they conduct workshops and instructional sessions for the teachers.</p> <p>3. Two coordinators: They are responsible for the teachers. They observe them and provide them with help if the need arises. They hold meetings periodically with the teachers of their department. They also evaluate the teachers' activities and coordinate the teaching activities among the teachers who teach the same sections. They are responsible for materials, exams, and so on.</p> |
|---|



3.4 Data collection

This study was entirely based on the use of a closed questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of results. The directors completed the questionnaires and were later interviewed for 25 minutes. The principals were interviewed in the first and third week and completed the questionnaires in the second week. This arrangement was not made on purpose. It came out as a matter of convenience. The interviews were conducted in the participants' offices.

3.4.1 Questionnaire construction

Initially, a plan to use open-ended interviews was decided. However, as soon as meetings with the participants were started, the plan was modified to include semi-structured interviews instead and a closed questionnaire. The reason for doing so was that none of the participant coordinators in the schools would answer subjective, open-ended questions. They insisted that the questions should be yes/no either type or those requiring a tick in the right box. Later they made it clear that they did not think of themselves as leaders, and they were not ready to consider any questions related to this field. Goleman's (1998) analysis of self-awareness suggests that they might be categorised as high self-aware persons who had decided not to wander into unfamiliar territories. It is possible that they objected to answering subjective questions as an indication of hierarchical structure in their institutions.

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Hooper and Potter's *Leadership Skills Questionnaire* (2001). It was made up of seven relatively short sections. Each of these was designed to assess one leadership competency at a time. The assessment of each competency was carried out by probing "ten key areas of the leader's performance" from both "the leader's self-perception of their operation" and from other's perception (Hooper & Potter, 2001, 181).

The resulting questionnaire consisted of seven leadership competencies covering twenty-one areas: setting a direction, setting an example, effective communication, creating alignment, bringing out the best in people, acting as a change agent, and providing leadership in crisis.

In the adapted questionnaire, the participants were asked to assess their perceptions of their performance by responding to each area using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from "Never" to "Always". Due to space constraints, initials were used to stand for the words. Thus, "N" stands for "Never", "AN" for "Almost Never", "ST" for "Sometimes", "AA" for "Almost Always", and "A" for "Always".

The resulting questionnaire was piloted with two colleagues that were not involved in the study.

Although the adapted questionnaire had benefits such as covering all the leadership competencies and being straightforward, it also had some limitations. First, by shortening the original one, the researchers may have missed some important competencies or misjudged the appropriateness of the selected ones.

Moreover, in the adapted questionnaire some areas include compound verbs. For instance, the following sentence: "I listen to other people's opinions in difficult situations and never reject new information because it doesn't fit with my ideas" contains two separate actions. Some participants may have wanted to tick the frequency of each action differently. However, they could not do so because both actions existed in one statement. Hence, this has an implication for the future; one should make sure that each sentence contains one action only.

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

The second instrument for data collection was a series of semi-structured interviews. These were used to explore the participants' leadership approach (Mertle, 2019) and to probe and elicit their knowledge and interpretations of the context in which they function (Charles, 1995).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The questionnaire

The purpose and significance of the study were explained to the directors and principals. The directors of both schools, who distributed the questionnaires to the participants: 2 principals, 2 supervisors, and 2 coordinators, responded to it as well. The eight completed questionnaires were collected in a sealed envelope from their offices. The data were analyzed inductively in light of recent leadership literature. The sections below describe the analysis of the questionnaire data starting with the first area: Creating a sense of direction.

4.1.1 Creating a sense of direction

The statements for this area, depicted in the table below, reveal the essential steps in setting direction. (Hooper & Potter, 2000).



Table 2. Vision

Dimensions of setting vision	N (%)	ST (%)	AA (%)	A (%)
I set a clear vision of the future in terms of what I am trying to achieve as a leader.		12.5	25	62.5
I set a strategy for bringing that vision into reality.		12.5	75	12.5
In planning my strategies, I take into account the obstacles and the possibilities of my school/department.		37.5	37.5	25

62.5% of the respondents who selected "Always" and 25% "Almost Always" set a clear plan for what to achieve in the future, while 12.5% who selected "Sometimes" developed a foresight of what they wanted their school and department to become.

The majority of the participants (87.5%) who selected "Always" or "Almost always" decided on the strategies, which enabled them to bring that vision into reality, while 12.5% who selected "Sometimes" did not do so. In this situation, the percentage of those who "Always" took into account the obstacles and resources of their situations when planning their strategies, decreased to as much as 25. Whereas 37.5% "Almost always" considered the givens of their situations before setting their strategies and an equal percentage "Sometimes" did so.

The tabulated information reveals that although the majority of the participants always has plans for the future, not all of them always set the strategies to bring these plans into reality. For some participants, planning strategies does not always seem to exceed the level of an opinion, as only a quarter of them always takes a thorough look at the resources and constraints of the situations while planning their strategies. This contradicts Hooper and Potter (2000) who argued, "A vision ...should be based on sound situational considerations and an awareness of trends in terms of where the current situation is heading" (p.45).

4.1.2 Setting an example

The statements in Table 3 indicate how far the leaders' actions are compatible with their words or what they say.

Table 3. Setting an example

Dimensions of Setting an example	ST (%)	AA (%)	A (%)
I behave in a way I want others to behave.	25	12.5	62.5
School leaders should behave the way they want others to behave.		12.5	87.5
I believe role models are important in terms of creating organisational behaviour.		25	75

Whilst 62.5% and 12.5% of the respondents confirmed that they "Always" or "Almost always" behaved the way they wanted others to behave, only 25% mentioned that they "Sometimes" did so.

All the participants confirmed that role modelling is "Always" (75%) or "Almost Always" (25%) important in creating organisational behaviour.

In general, all the participants acknowledged role modelling as a cause for creating effective organisational behaviour. In addition, there was a consensus that school leaders should behave the way they want others to do. However, not all of them have set an example for the people around them.

4.1.3 Effective communication

The statements in Table 4 assess three main areas of the third leadership competency, effective communication. These are as follows:

Table 4. Effective communication

Dimensions of effective communication	N (%)	AN (%)	S (%)	AA (%)	A (%)
My staff members misunderstand the messages I communicate to them.	37.5	37.5	12.5	12.5	
I am a good listener.			37.5	25	37.5
I use a variety of methods to stay in touch with my colleagues, including personal emails			37.5	50	12.5



Whilst 75% of the respondents confirmed that their staff members "Never" or "Almost never" misunderstood their messages, only 12.5% mentioned that their messages "Sometimes" raised misunderstanding. On the other hand, 12.5% said that their staff members "Almost Always" misinterpreted their messages.

As far as utilising methods of communication is concerned, 50% of the participants confirmed that they "Almost Always" contacted and 12.5% "Always" contacted with their counterparts to exchange ideas or seek different opinions. In contrast, 37.5% "Sometimes" did so.

The tabulated information reveals that the participants do acknowledge the importance of exchanging information and expertise for the development of their departments and schools, but they have not always been good listeners or effective disseminators of messages. The data also indicate that the effectiveness of their channels of communication is questionable. Do people always understand what they wanted to say? Do they exactly articulate what they are thinking of? The people concerned may need to consider these questions and many more to locate problematic areas. These questions are picked up below.

4.1.4 Alignment

The statements below are related to creating alignment, the fourth area of leadership competency.

Table 5. Alignment

Alignment	N (%)	ST (%)	AA (%)	A (%)
All teachers have a clear view of my vision for the future of the school/department		37.5	50	12.5
Teachers share my enthusiasm for bringing our vision into reality.		37.5	37.5	25
Very few people in the school/department do not share our enthusiasm.	25	37.5		37.5

Whilst 62.5% of the respondents mentioned that all teachers "Almost Always" or "Always" had a clear view of their vision, only 37.5% believed that their teachers "Sometimes" had a clear view of their vision.

With regard to enthusiasm, 62.5% of the participants confirmed that their teachers "Almost Always" or "Always" shared with them interest and desire to bring that vision into reality. However, 37.5% confirmed that the teachers in the school "Sometimes" did so.

The above data confirm that two-thirds of the participant leaders share their vision and enthusiasm to bring that vision into reality with their teachers. On the

other hand, these answers also indicate that some leaders seem to have problems with their teachers. For example, they are unable to clearly convey their views of the department/school to their teachers or share enthusiasm with them for bringing that vision into reality. What could possibly be the reason for this lack of enthusiasm?

This might relate to the faults in ways of communicating information identified in the previous section. Some of the participants admitted that their messages were "Sometimes" misunderstood. In addition, on some occasions, they were not good listeners. These flaws in communication, though simple, might limit the possibility of having all or almost all the teachers share their colleagues' enthusiasm for bringing that vision into reality. The participants might have set very ambitious plans; particularly some of them do not "Always" consider the givens of their situations; they might have had serious flaws in expressing themselves, or they might simply be hiding information.

4.1.5 Bringing out the best in people

The statements organised around the fifth leadership competency, the ability to unlock the potentials of followers and unleash their creativity appear in Table 6.

Table 6. Bringing out the best in people

Dimensions of unfolding potentials	AN (%)	ST (%)	AA (%)	A (%)
I praise people when they have achieved good results.		25	25	50
I focus on developing people's strengths rather than correcting their weaknesses.	12.5	12.5	37.5	37.5
I encourage people to talk about their training and development needs and actively support their personal development.			12.5	87.5

Whilst 75% of the respondents said that they "Always" and "Almost always" praise people when they have achieved good results, only 25% "Sometimes" do so. Also, 75% of the respondents "Always" and "Almost Always" focus on developing people's strengths rather than correcting their weaknesses; while, 25% "Sometimes" and "Almost Never" do so. As far as encouraging people to talk about their training and development needs, all of the participants believe that this has always or almost always been a part of their working-life chores.

The tabulated data reveal that the majority (three quarters) of the leaders praise their teachers if they have produced good results and highlight their strengths. On the other hand, there are leaders, one quarter, who sometimes



praise their people for good results and sometimes focus on developing their strengths. However, with regard to the third area, all the school leaders confirmed that they always or almost always encourage their teachers to talk about their training and development needs and also support their personal development. This finding indicates that all leaders display relationship-oriented behaviour in handling their daily matters. The data also reveal that there are leaders who focus on correcting others' weaknesses rather than highlighting their strengths. This is a contentious issue as it can be indicative of both positive (to support and develop staff) and negative (to undermine people's confidence) forms of behavior.

Subordinates usually respect their superiors" and accept criticism from them, particularly if coming from a well qualified, trustworthy, and caring person. In this context, it would be safe to say that those who focus on correcting others' mistakes must have good intentions and must be accepted as such by their staff. However, this does not imply that what they are doing can lead to effective leadership in the long term. Senge (1990) argues that "personal mastery", a component of bringing the best out of people, involves not only improving weaknesses but also enhancing strengths. Hence, both activities, improving weaknesses and enhancing strengths, should be linked together whether these are carried out personally or by external agents.

4.1.6 Acting as a change agent

Change statements address the leaders' ability to both handle change and function as a change agent, as demonstrated in Table 6 below.

Table 7. Change

Dimensions of Change	AN (%)	ST (%)	AA (%)	A (%)
When implementing a change, I make sure that everyone understands the reasons behind the change.		37.5	37.5	25
I ensure that change is undertaken for sound reasons rather than for the sake of appearances.		12.5	12.5	75
I give people the opportunity to express their views on an impending change.		12.5	62.5	25

62.5% of the respondents reported that they "Almost Always" and "Always" make sure that every member in their departments understands the reasons behind any change made or undertaken; while 37.5% "Sometimes" do so. On the area of implementing change for sound reasons,

87.5% of the respondents confirmed that change is "Always" and "Almost Always" undertaken for profound reasons. Only 12.5% of the participants felt that change is "Sometimes" put into effect for good reasons. When asked about whether they provide opportunities for their people to express their views on an impending change, 87.5% said that this "Always" and "Almost Always" happens. Only 12.5% believed that this "Sometimes" happens.

The tabulated information reveals that the participants, who make sure that all the people concerned understand the reasons for change, are the ones who give those people opportunities to express their views concerning any potential change. It also confirms that flaws in communication do exist. While analysing this data, a question may arise about what could possibly be the reason for not always disclosing the needs for change to everybody in the department. Wu (1988) stresses, "change is more likely to occur when people can relate the change to a need" (p.10).

4.1.7 Action in crisis

The statements investigating one of the main concepts of leadership: being able to make quick decisions in crisis or difficult times appear in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Acting as a change agent

Dimensions of acting as a change agent	N (%)	AN (%)	ST (%)	AA (%)	A (%)
I cope well with crisis/pressure.		12.5	37.5	25	25
People ask my advice to sort things out in times of trouble.			25	25	50
I listen to other people's opinions in difficult situations and never reject new information because it does not fit with my ideas.	12.5		12.5	25	50

50% of the participants confirmed that they "Always" and "Almost Always" function well under the constraints of pressure while 37.5% "Sometimes" function and 12.5% "Almost Never" function under such constraints. When asked about how often the surrounding people consult them, particularly in times of trouble, 75% of the participants confirmed that their colleagues "Always" and "Almost Always" refer to them and look for their advice, while 25% of the respondents confirmed that their people "Sometimes" ask them. As far as listening to other people's opinion is concerned, 75% of the respondents confirmed that they "Always" and "Almost Always" listen to other people's opinions in difficult situations and never reject



new information that is not in harmony with theirs. However, 25% admitted that there have been times when they did not consider the ideas of others in such situations.

Most of the respondents seem to be confident about providing effective leadership, particularly in difficult times, such as functioning under intensive pressure or meeting deadlines with limited resources. This could be an advantage because limited resources and high expectations are the two sides of one coin in many organisations in Lebanon.

4.2 Summary of the findings of the questionnaire data

The data collected by the questionnaire was helpful in analysing the leadership approach embraced by the leaders in the assigned schools and some inferences can be drawn from the data.

In terms of setting the vision, it seems that some leader participants do not share it duly with their subordinates. In addition, when they set plans for their institutions, they may or may not consider the strategies; or they may or may not review the constraints of their situations. Effective leaders, however, should bear in mind all of these areas at the same time.

As far as role modeling is concerned, discrepancies between the actions of some participants and their values seem to exist. The participants may not be aware of the importance of the fact that people are far more influenced by what they see rather than by what they hear (Hooper & Potter, 2001). Although the participants showed discrepancies between what they do and what they believe on certain occasions, this may have negative consequences if these discrepancies happen repeatedly.

The participants acknowledge the importance of open communication for the development of their departments and schools, but there have been certain situations where they could not function openly.

Also, the data reveals that there are competent leaders in the different layers of the school's structure; however, effective leadership seems to be centred mainly at the top.

With regard to providing leadership in crisis, the participants seem to be able to unite efforts and cope well with difficult times, such as functioning under intensive pressure or meeting deadlines with limited resources.

In short, the participants' relationship-oriented approach experience, and common sense, seems to be compatible with that advocated by the literature. Therefore, this approach seems to be the essence of the participants' success.

4.3 Interviews

Five participants: two directors, one principal, one supervisor, and one coordinator, were interviewed to

collect qualitative data and follow up issues raised by those of the questionnaire. The rationale for choosing the sample group for the interviews was related to the fact that it was necessary to collect data from leaders representing different layers of the schools' organizational hierarchies. In the section below, the findings of the interview data and the rationale for each interview question are discussed.

4.3.1 Questions 1 & 2

The rationale for posing the first introductory question (How do you introduce yourself?) was to initiate a conversation with the interviewees and to decide whether they have the traits underlying the skills that enable them to handle difficult times effectively. Hooper and Potter (2001) think that leaders functioning in crisis need to be calm, forbearing, and wise. It was beyond the scope of the research to observe the participants and decide on this competency without their help.

As far as the rationale for the second introductory question, "What does this institution mean to you?" is concerned, it was designed to explore the participants' beliefs and values which underlie their concepts of themselves, of others, systems, and of organisations (Hooper & Potter, 2000). Goleman (1998) argues that "commitment to the organisation" is one last piece of evidence of high levels of achievement motivation. He adds, "Optimism and organisational commitment are fundamental to leadership" (p. 100). The degree of the participants' commitment will influence the kind of culture they are going to build. "Leaders create culture and so play a vital role in ensuring that the organisation has the ability to tap into the potential of its workplace" (Hooper & Potter, 2001:107).

The data reveal that the interviewees have displayed high sense of responsibility and accountability for contributing to the growth of the wider society: "I like to contribute to the development and progress of this society. I would like to set a role model of a successful Islamic educational endeavour". Their high levels of commitment correspond to Hooper and Potter's (2001) "empowerment" and "ownership". All participants expressed a significantly positive attitude towards the school context: "it's my home". In Hooper and Potter's words, they have a real sense of ownership.

Nevertheless, in order for this strong feeling and positive attitude to persist year after year, the top management in both organisations needs to nurture this driving force by implementing such procedures as a profit-sharing approach in any form they render suitable. The creeping sense of being exploited and not adequately appreciated will probably have, over the years, adverse impact on the workforce in general. The implication for the



future is that the status quo needs to be modified in terms of appreciation and incentives.

4.3.2 Questions 3 & 4

Acknowledging the fundamental effects of change and the need not only to cope with it but also to thrive on it (MacBeath, 1998); two questions on this theme were raised:

- (3) What changes have you introduced into the school/department?
- (4) Were you able to implement all of the changes?

The rationale for question three was to explore the participants' perceptions of change, their approach, reactive or proactive, and their perseverance; while the rationale for question four was to probe the participants' perceptions of how much they have achieved or of what they should do.

The participants' responses have reflected their areas of specialisation and the degree of their authority. For example, one participant stated:

"I have established the spirit of cooperation, by encouraging people to express their opinions and points of view. Currently, we are studying the possibility of investing technology in teaching English".

Another respondent focused on teamwork:

"Teamwork is the first thing I have introduced into this school at all levels. I have established the sense of loving work and not to worry about positions or posts. I have also ingrained the belief that teaching is more than a profession; it's a moral mission".

Both responses tapped on the most important components of a learning environment and transformational leadership: communication and teamwork. Hooper, and Potter (2001) and many more have highlighted the importance of building and delegating work to teams.

The researchers note at this point that there is a discrepancy between the interview findings and those of the questionnaire. The questionnaire revealed flaws in communication, whereas the interview confirmed that the participants are encouraging communication to flow in all directions. When asked why the transmitted messages are not clear, the responses of the participants concentrated on one point, which is the concern for other colleagues. They often talk indirectly and deal with more than one topic at a time so that the listeners do not get personal.

-As far as changes that have been implemented so far, the respondents seem to have been implementing changes in response to the requirements of the surrounding environment. In this sense, it seems that their approach

towards change is mainly reactive rather than proactive. One issue is whether this is sufficient for effective leadership. Hopper and Potter (2001) confirm, "Leadership should be proactive and, increasingly, it is concerned with creativity" (p.100).

On responding to the fourth question, one participant said,

"Nobody can pretend to have achieved everything in life. Otherwise, the wheels of progress stop. There is always something new to learn, to adjust, and then to implement, if possible".

For the first time, the participants acknowledged the resources and constraints of their situations when asked about the reason for not being able to implement some of the changes mentioned in response to the preceding question, by saying: "there is a shortage of money" and full-time "qualified people". In addition, "time is not enough".

The responses to this question may imply that some of the changes mentioned in the preceding section have not been fully accomplished. It seems that the authorities in both schools need to examine the changes that they have already decided on, see how many they have already achieved, or where they are still in the process of implementation. For instance, they have decided to apply comprehensive education, but they cannot decide on the strategies because they need more full-time qualified people to do so. In light of the above, they need to review their plans and reconsider their strategies.

4.3.3 Question 5

Question 5, "Whom do you involve in the process of change?" aims to explore the participants' perceptions of leadership hierarchy. Is it a top-down or bottom-up structure? Moreover, how much say do they have in making decisions. Once more, the directors brought up teams and teamwork as an essential issue in accomplishing jobs: "We work in teams, I do believe in teamwork and team spirit". Another director mentioned: "All the people involved, particularly those who are directly connected with the issue under change". In general, all of the respondents agreed that it is essential to involve "everybody in the department" in the process of change.

The findings reveal another distinction between the Western culture and that of the context under study. This distinction is concerned with the impact of school structure on the behaviour of the workforce. Contrary to Western scholars (Hooper and Potter, 2000), the participants seemed to be unconcerned with the organisational hierarchy of their schools as set by the top management in the institutions; they seemed to have developed their own working environment. They talked about flattened



structure by referring to teamwork and how communication flows, but none of them articulated the term “flattened structure”. The implication is that flattened structure is not always the outcome of decisions made by the top management of an organisation. In the absence of the latter, individuals can create working environments based on cooperation, understanding, and a happy atmosphere.

4.3.4 Questions 6 & 7

The aim of the sixth question “In what ways can you help your teachers to become more successful?” was to pinpoint what the participants can do to unlock the hidden abilities and skills of their colleagues. Their responses addressed a variety of important issues. For instance, some respondents believe that their teachers’ professional development is their own responsibility, but they can support if the need arises. Some feel that this is a part of the management’s responsibility. They can provide beneficial books or articles that they have come across, or some scholarly journals. In fact, the directors have already subscribed to a few educational journals”, including a TESOL one. The school leaders attend local and international symposia, workshops, seminars, and conferences. They have already been to Dubai and Bahrain, where they attended conferences on teaching English as a foreign language. Upon their return, they held several meetings with their staff members telling them about the most recent events in the world of teaching and distributed handouts, which they have brought with them. One director stressed that directors should:

“Set a good example for others to follow, make staff members believe that ongoing learning and professional development are important for the progress of the school; they should not indicate a deficiency in teachers’ competencies or skills. Rather they should make them believe and feel that the school undergoes and will always undergo change and that improvements start with the director and end up with the porter. Achievements should be rewarded and constructive cues should be given regarding defects”.

One coordinator focused on the importance of guiding and helping others: “I can help teachers to improve by discussing teaching methods with them, coming up with new ones”. Other interviewees felt that “attending seminars, workshops, and one another’s class, in addition to outside reading” could considerably help to unlock the teachers’ potentials. Some respondents stressed on providing moral and material incentives when teachers have achieved good results.

One possible interpretation is that all of the respondents seem to be willing to help their colleagues to

improve professionally. However, some of them seem to lack structured strategies for doing so. While answering, they did not refer to their own experiences. They rather expressed their views, in general terms, of what could be done not what had already been done. It is illuminating to recognise that some respondents identified peer coaching but never expanded on this particular issue. It is also interesting to recognise the presence of working ideas, but have these been put into practice? The implication for plans is that the top management needs to seriously consider strategies that enable the staff members to interact, exchange ideas and put these into practice. Some people seem to be qualified and some have knowledge but miss the strategies.

The rationale for asking question seven: “What do school leaders do to bring out the best in people?” was to explore the participants’ perceptions of an effective leader and what they should do to tap on people’s potentials. The interviewees’ responses conveyed almost a full range of essential leadership traits and competencies. One respondent said: “an effective leader is the one who guides others by encouraging them to follow in his footsteps. He should be firm and fair. He should be a good listener and treat others the same way he wanted others to treat him. He’s a risk-taker and ready to implement sound changes”.

Another interviewee said:

“an effective leader is a hard worker, good listener, respectful, approachable, emotionally intelligent and considerate. He should promote incentives, set good example, and have vision for the future and positive reactions to change”.

Most of the respondents believe that an effective leader is “a decision-maker and risk-taker, organised and tidy, firm and fair. He feels with others, ready to improve himself and the people around him, and capable of getting people together”. They also stress that an effective leader is “wise, considerate, energetic, approachable, bighearted, rational, calm, patient, creative, responsible, knowledgeable, and altruistic”. In addition, the interviewees agreed that an effective leader must be “emotional, helpful, innovative, modest, open-minded, experienced, knowledgeable, and above all, have morals”. The implication for the future is that school leaders can assess privately and sincerely their performance, traits, and competencies in the light of these responses.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The research questions

To answer the first research question, “What type of leadership and management is the school leaders’ approach?” is to find out whether the leaders are relationship-oriented, task-oriented, or a combination of both. This needs a comprehensive investigation of several different domains such as leaders’ attitudes toward



themselves, others, and the context in which they function (Hooper & Potter, 2000). Another area of investigation is their beliefs and values and whether these are reflected in their actions.

In terms of the attitude towards themselves, the participants displayed strong self-awareness. They are clear about who they are, where they are heading and why. They know themselves very well, have charted their way forward, and have been pursuing it for some time. They talked confidently and openly. Goleman (1998) asserts that people with strong self-awareness are constructive, just, and honest.

As far as their attitude towards their institution is concerned, the participants showed remarkable dedication and commitment. They have developed the feeling of ownership and so work accordingly. They succeeded in creating unintentionally their own working environment irrespective of systems and top regulations.

With regard to beliefs and values, there seems to be some discrepancy between the interview data and those of the questionnaire. As mentioned before, the actions of the majority of the participants are consistent with their beliefs and values. However, there are some whose values are not reflected in their actions. For example, during the interviews, they displayed their values and beliefs clearly when they described themselves, but when responding to the dimensions of setting an example, they thought that they sometimes (not always) behaved the way they wanted others to behave.

The questionnaire and interview findings reveal that the participants are both relationship and task oriented. However, their concern for people is sometimes stronger than that of the task. This implies that the findings of this case study are compatible with those of the literature: the chosen relationship approach is effective in leading institutions to gaining success and achieving accomplishments.

As far as the first sub-research question: *“What do school leaders do to bring the best out of their teachers?”* is concerned, it seems that the participants are sparing no efforts to help their teachers become successful. In one of these schools, there were few teachers whose performance did not meet the required standards of the new curricula. Instead of terminating the teachers’ contracts they were given some training courses and asked to attend certain workshops at local universities. They were also encouraged and coached to provide better performance in their classes. The participants thus tapped on the most effective strategies to unlock the potentials of their colleagues.

Concerning the second sub-research question *“How effective is it in coping with change?”* it seems that the participants’ approach has proven to be successful but in the end it may gradually lose its prominence and rigour.

Some participants have excellent ideas of leadership and change:

“We always try to professionally develop ourselves and renew everything around us because if we don’t embrace change, we will become outdated. Anything that does not move is like stagnant water; running water never gets rotten or smelly. We always keep in touch with publishers. We have already subscribed to several educational journals. We are always in touch with whatever is new. This does not mean that we take everything new; we only choose whatever suits our students and suffice our needs. We embrace change not for the sake of change, but for the sake of improvement.”

However, the participants largely seem unprepared when it comes to adapting or coping with change. The rate of change is so rapid that such unpreparedness will not be appropriate to live up to the requirements of the current age. They need to take initiative and come up with ideas that are relevant to their own situations. For instance, they need to find better ways of communication among all participants.

In short, the participants concerned are aware of the impact of change and seem to be coping with it intuitively. However, they may need to alter their approach and start being more adaptable because sooner or later they will have to accommodate new changes specific to their own environments. Being reactive does not seem to sustain success forever, particularly in the face of a continuously changing world.

Therefore, we can conclude that coping with change effectively is concentrated at the top layers of the organisational structure of the schools. Participants other than those in top management positions seem to be functioning more as implementers than as innovators. The school leadership may now need to take a more dynamic stance and start considering innovative issues in terms of their teachers, departments, classes, materials, and so on. It is their responsibility to do so because they are familiar with the demands of their contexts more than anybody else is. Further discussion will be provided in the following section, the findings.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The qualitative and the quantitative data have provided substantial information about the leadership approach embraced by the leaders in the schools under study. The participants have come up with interesting ideas and wide-ranging lists of key leadership skills and competencies. One of the major findings of this study, therefore, is that most of the participants praise collective work and effort. It could be an advantage in Lebanon because the school stakeholders want to unite to stand against outside



influences such as the dominating aspects of globalisation. They believe that this is their duty, and it should be performed to the best of their abilities.

One more implication is the determination of those stakeholders to uphold their values, principles, and culture. Their cultural identity is so precious that they are ready to spare no effort for keeping their cultural background intact. In short, there is a high level of motivation underpinned by strong faith, altruism, and determination to stand up for moral deeds and values.

Another identified in the local context but not been mentioned in Hooper and Potter's book is the impact of flattened structure. Individuals have the ability to establish the atmosphere they want irrespective of systems and regulations. The participants were able to work together as much as the time allowed despite the hierarchical systems of their institutions.

The rest of the competencies identified by Hooper and Potter do exist in the schools but in varying degrees. For example, Hooper and Potter confirm that the acknowledgement of good results; that is, praise is a healthy indication of emotional leadership. Both directors in the study have confirmed that they usually praise teachers when they have achieved good results. They also showed integrity in their actions and principles.

However, there seems to exist some unintentional flaws in the channels of communication, for example. Some participants admitted that they sometimes did not understand their colleagues' messages. The participants may need to examine their system of communication to locate where the flaws are or to endorse some improvements.

Another seemingly good point brought up by the participants is that some of them show too much concern for other people. They prefer to use general terms so that they do not hurt or embarrass their colleagues. However, this approach has resulted in unclear messages. Hence, those participants need to be more open when they communicate their messages, as they can be both clear and considerate simultaneously.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some of the most crucial recommendations for an effective school leadership based upon the above discussion.

1. All the preceding strong values that underpin the participants' enthusiasm and determination to succeed might weaken over time if the authorities do not listen well to their teachers. The findings have already revealed weaknesses in communication. This may be due to lack of active listening, which is one important

element of effective communication (Hooper & Potter, 2001). Bearing in mind the concept of communication, the participants need to convey very clear aims and plans for the future. Above all, their messages must be clear.

2. There are some fears that the authorities are perhaps unintentionally exploiting their teachers' enthusiasm for accomplishing good deeds. If this had been proven to be so, then there would have been dangers of losing some of the teachers' dedication and commitment. The school leaders need to be fully aware of their teachers' rights and responsibilities and not to confuse motivation for responsibility. The teachers have the right to receive crystal clear messages from their superiors and voice their "demands, wishes and aspirations questions to understand. Also, they have the right to know the rationale for any task assigned to them to develop sense of ownership and commitment,
3. The school leaders should involve their colleagues more in decision-making, listen to their ideas and suggestions. These may prove to be sensible and applicable. They also need to find time when they can communicate and discuss plans and ideas for the well-being of the institution.
4. The middle leaders should take professional development activities more seriously. Subscribing to a professional journal or attending a workshop are insufficient if their content is not discussed, look for more creative strategies for their contexts because the current reactive approach may not suffice the needs of their departments.
5. It seems that both schools should recruit more qualified people and secure suitable resources to help sustain success.

8. CONCLUSION

The success story of the two schools discussed here reveals that certain managerial strategies when coupled with partnership-oriented administrative tactics may significantly increase an educational institution's performance. For instance, the rather all-empowering organizational structure at both schools ensured healthy communication and collaboration among all the stakeholders, which led both schools to achieving higher success rates. Having said that, the schools have also shown how the top leadership may not always be entirely and solely held accountable for creating an overall ethical management environment. All stakeholders must persistently and creatively seek to promote teamwork and effective communication despite regulatory challenges. In fact, the participants interviewed for this study did not necessarily go out of the way to alter any regulations laid out by the system. The flattened structure has, in fact,



emerged as a consequence to the ethical emotional leadership in place. Such a consideration successfully strengthens the earlier findings of Hooper and Potter,

In other words, this study attributes the success of the two schools to three main reasons. First, the school leaders' strong concerns for human relations and human welfare ensured a work environment, where, as the participants testify, the leadership was considered supportive and trustworthy. Second, the commitment and dedication of the workforce at the schools, especially the teachers have immensely contributed to the overall student excellence. Third, high ethical and moral standards were intently maintained across the management and staff, probably through an absolute emulation of the ethical leadership model given by Hooper and Potter.

One feels, however, that the success of the two schools may be limited to the peculiar circumstances of the two schools discussed, and that it may only last as long as the current leadership stays in place. A future study should investigate proposing a comprehensive and, more importantly, a sustainable ethical management model for schools valid for all schools of our age and context.

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