

Nexus Between Democratic Leadership Style And Learners' Academic Performance In Public Primary Schools In Lunga-Lunga Sub-County, Kwale Kenya.

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Abstract

Investing in education is crucial. By fixing in information, skills, and attitudes that are consistent with sustainable development, it empowers citizens and offers chances for active engagement in development. Effective leadership exhibited by head teachers is linked to a school's overall success. Studies indicate that the leadership ideologies of head teachers have an impact on the academic accomplishment of their pupils in public elementary schools. Over the last five years (2019-2023), the academic achievement of the students in the Lunga-lunga sub-County has been below average and of poor quality. This is true even though the schools have highly competent instructors and sufficient facilities and resources to support successful learning. The goal of this investigation was to determine the association between the academic achievement of students in public primary schools in the Lunga-lunga sub-county and the democratic leadership styles of the head teachers. This study was grounded academic performance theory. A descriptive survey was the method of research used in this study. 89 registered public elementary schools in the Lunga-lunga sub-county made up the study's target group where head teachers were the respondents. Responses were gathered via questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to examine the data. The expected outcome of the study was to determine whether there was a significant correlation between the academic accomplishment of pupils in the Lunga-lunga sub-county and the leadership philosophies of the head teachers. The results of the study also revealed a significant positive association ($p < 0.05$) between the academic success of elementary school students in the Lunga-Lunga sub-county and the democratic leadership style. The study concluded that there was significant positive correlation between democratic leadership practices and improved academic outcomes among learners. The study recommends that leadership training and development should be a priority. It is essential to develop and implement comprehensive training programs that focus on democratic leadership principles for school leaders. Secondly, policy implementation and support are crucial. Educational policies should be designed to promote and support democratic leadership practices in schools. Such policies would facilitate inclusive decision-making and shared responsibility among school stakeholders.

Keywords: Democratic leadership style, academic performance, public primary schools.

Date of Submission: 04-08-2024

Date of Acceptance: 14-08-2024

I. Background Of The Study

Performance is a learner's capacity to finish a task. Positive or negative outcomes could arise from the task completion. In public primary schools, academic achievement varies. Positive results show that the learner performs brilliantly or excellently; negative results, on the other hand, show terrible performance. The result of a thorough review via an exam or other assessment techniques is learner performance. Beginning on the first day of school, performance standards are applied and accumulated until the learner's studies are completed. Researchers found that, irrespective of discipline and educational attainment, the flipped classroom had a moderating favorable impact on students' performance (Strelan et al., 2020). The academic performance of students is influenced by a variety of factors. A study by Schwartz and Rothbart, (2019) examines the effects of universal free lunches on student performance and reveals that expanding school free meal programs improves academic achievement for both low-income and wealthy pupils.

In addition to adding to the body of knowledge on student performance, in order to forecast student exam performance, Tomasevic et al. (2020) gave an outline and applied supervised data mining approaches. The authors conclude that in order for students to participate in the learning environment and for proper data gathering functionalities, they must score well on exams. Sunday et al., (2020) employed classification data analysis

approaches to focus on performance of students within the framework of programming instruction and found that class attendance determines whether a student's academic performance is successful or unsuccessful.

Academic achievement of students is extremely important at all levels, including the individual, family, organization, and national levels. A school needs strong leadership in order to succeed in extracurricular activities as well as academics (Syomwene, 2022). Global school academic performance is influenced by the caliber of leadership and the leadership philosophies adopted by those assigned to positions of leadership (Kosgei & Edabu, 2023). According to Kitavi et al., (2020), leadership is the use of interpersonal influence in a scenario that is geared toward the accomplishment of particular organizational goals through communication. In view of Bett (2016), leadership is the capacity to persuade a group of people to achieve a certain organization's goals, vision, mission, and essential values. The head teacher's main responsibility is to support instruction and learning in the classroom.

A key component of managing educational institutions well is leadership. As Lussier, (2020) points out, education administration serves as the foundation for objective integration between students and human resources to produce improved outcomes. Numerous empirical literature reviews have demonstrated that increased performance in any given institution is a sign of strong leadership, whereas weak leadership in any given institution is a sign of poor examination performance. Kenyan School Leadership Head teachers oversee primary education in Kenya. They are chosen by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) via the Sub-County or municipal education officers to oversee public primary education. The Teachers Code of Regulation governs their operations (Teachers Service Commission, 2007). They are supposed to lead and oversee teaching and subordinate staff in order to produce positive outcomes for the institutions. Their appointment is contingent upon meeting specific professional qualifications and experience requirements. Regarding matters pertaining to school management, they answer to the TSC and the Ministry of Education. The head teacher of the school has a direct impact on the students' academic achievement. Presently, stakeholders, in particular parents, expect strong outcomes following significant financial investments in their children's education.

Like other sub-counties in Kenya, Lunga-lunga's growth in education has been based on a variety of variables, including geographic, historical, and infrastructural ones. Since the sub-county's founding, the Likoni ferry channel and way, the road system, and government actions have all had an impact on education in Lunga-lunga. Some of the nation's smaller counties share this historical viewpoint. The Digo and Duruma tribes are found in the bigger Lunga-lunga sub-County. But in more recent times, new communities have moved in. Among them were the Kikuyu, Kambas, Luo, and Luhya communities, among others. These communities established institutions and companies in the area.

Statement of the problem

The leadership style of head teachers in public primary schools within Lunga-Lunga Sub-County would be meticulously aligned with enhancing learners' academic performance. Ideally, head teachers would employ transformational leadership approaches that inspire and motivate both educators and learners. They would foster a conducive learning environment characterized by innovation, collaboration, and a strong commitment to educational excellence. In this ideal scenario, head teachers would possess the necessary skills to effectively manage resources, implement curriculum reforms, and adapt teaching methods to cater to diverse learner needs. Such leadership would result in consistently high academic achievement among learners, reflecting a positive and proactive educational culture within the schools.

However, the current reality in Lunga-Lunga Sub-County presents a different picture regarding the effect of head teachers' leadership styles on students' academic performance in public primary schools. The actual situation often reveals variations in leadership styles among head teachers, ranging from autocratic to laissez-faire approaches. Some head teachers may lack the requisite leadership skills or training to effectively lead and motivate their teaching staff and students. Consequently, this can lead to inconsistencies in educational outcomes, with some schools achieving below-average academic results compared to others.

Moreover, external factors such as limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and socio-economic challenges may further exacerbate the effect of leadership styles on academic performance. These factors often place additional strain on head teachers, making it difficult to implement transformative leadership practices consistently across all schools. As a result, the academic performance of learners in public primary schools within Lunga-Lunga Sub-County may not always reflect their full potential, influenced significantly by the leadership styles and capabilities of their head teachers. Thus, this study sought to determine the influence of head teachers' democratic leadership style on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in lunga-lunga sub-county, Kwale Kenya.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish the Nexus between democratic leadership style on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in lunga-lunga sub-county, Kwale Kenya.

II. Literature Review

Elger (2007) created the theory of academic performance (ToP), defining "perform" as the ability to produce a valuable product and "performer" as an individual or group that collaborates. A student's performance level shows where they are in their academic career. He discovered three axioms for effective performance: the performer's thinking, being in an engaging environment, and pursuing reflective practice. He also determined that knowledge, skills, identity, personal characteristics, and fixed variables are the six components that make up performance levels.

According to this theory, educators should empower others to learn and develop while also improving their own performance. Information from this style of schooling will have an impact on society and encourage quick success. Wiske (1998) found that performance indicates learning-for-understanding.

When analyzing the public primary school outcomes using the academic performance theory, the performer needs to encourage the underachievers to make major development while supporting the top pupils. From the start of the term, the performer might set a demanding objective for the student and include failure in the rubrics to encourage exceptional performance. The process of this intervention ought to be gradual.

Previously, Brown et al., (2008) used meta-analytic to investigate social cognitive as determinants of academic achievement in a college setting. Turner et al., (2009) strayed from social cognitive research and examined the impact of parenting styles, college students' self-efficacy, and achievement motivation. Since academic significance is universal, Akiri and Ugborugbo, (2009) concentrated on the relationship between secondary school students' academic achievement and the efficacy of their teachers. In a similar vein, Oyebolu et al., (2010) integrated the academic achievement of teachers and students with planning implications for secondary schools in Nigeria. Additionally, Koles et al., (2010) investigated how team-based learning affected the academic achievement of medical students.

According to the Theory of Performance, identity, context, knowledge, learning abilities, fixed factors, and personal aspects are the essential elements of a performance. This theory serves as the foundation for performance analysis, performance criterion definition, and the creation of useful performance metrics, hence the choice of it. The relevance of this theory stands out since it is advocating on the issues of performance (dependent variable of the study).

This theory provides a holistic framework for comprehending the factors that influence students' educational achievements within public primary schools. In the specific context of Lunga-Lunga Sub-County, Kwale, Kenya, several interrelated factors contribute to students' academic outcomes. These include the quality of teaching, school leadership, socio-economic backgrounds of students, parental involvement, and the overall learning environment.

Empirical Review

According to Ali et al., (2023), the majority of secondary school heads had previously embraced the democratic leadership style, and staff and students fared better in these schools than in others where the heads used alternative leadership philosophies. A key component of democratic leadership was soliciting input from subordinates prior to making decisions. After allowing followers to cast votes on a proposed resolution, the leaders make their decisions. Heads of schools mentor their staff and bargain for what they want. They also said that school administrators should employ the best leadership philosophies in order to encourage shared accountability and collaborative decision-making among all parties involved in the education process. Higher levels of democratic leadership in schools are linked to higher teacher performance, citing Njuu et al.'s (2023) study on the effect of leadership styles on teachers' performance in Tanzania's Arusha District, which in turn raises academic achievement among students. The researchers go on to say that instructors perform better the more democratic leadership there is, suggesting that democratic leadership has a favorable impact on teachers' performance. This ultimately results in the academic success of the students.

III. Methodology

This study used a descriptive research design and was conducted in Lunga Lunga Kwale County, Kenya involving all the 89 public primary schools in the area. Data was collected only ones from a target population of eighty-nine respondents using a self-administered closed ended questionnaire. SPSS version 29 was used to analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistics were then used for presenting the results.

Response Rate, Reliability of Instruments and Respondent Characteristics

The study was conducted in kwale county Kenya and focused on 89 public primary schools where the respondents were the head teachers.

Response rate

Out of the 89 respondents in the target population, 76 replies in total were obtained. This indicated a response rate of 71.4%. Response rates over 50% are considered appropriate for analysis and reporting, over 60% are generally considered good, and over 70% are considered exceptional, according to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999). A comparable criterion is provided by Khan (2011), who states that a response rate of greater than 70% is regarded as exceptionally good. Furthermore, a response rate of 50% is considered adequate, and a rate of 70% or greater is considered extremely good, according to Dixon and Royce A. Singleton (2012). Thus, it can be concluded from these recommendations that the study's response rate was adequate, which increases trust in the study's capacity for generalization. The analysis and conclusions in this chapter were based on the data in this section.

Reliability Assessment of Data Collection Instrument

A reliability coefficient called Cronbach's Alpha provides an unbiased estimate of the generalization of data. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the validity of the data that was gathered in order to measure the different study variables.

Evaluating the internal consistency of the data gathered through research questionnaires was the aim of the reliability evaluation process. Cronbach Alpha was calculated to gauge this and determine how reliable the data was gathered. When assessing dependability in a research study, a Cronbach Alpha value of more than 0.7 is considered good. The test's findings are displayed and explained in table 1.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha for Reliability Assessments

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha Values
Democratic leadership style	4	0.819
Academic performance	5	0.962

As presented in Table 1, Cronbach alpha values for all the variables; democratic leadership style and academic performance were greater than 0.7. From these results it can be concluded that the constructs measured had the adequate reliability for the subsequent stages of analysis since all the Cronbach Alpha values were greater than 0.7.

Gender of the respondents

According to Figure 1, the study's findings on respondents' gender indicate that 42% of the participants were female and 58% of those who took part in the study were male. Given that most of them were men, this demonstrates that there was a gender balance.

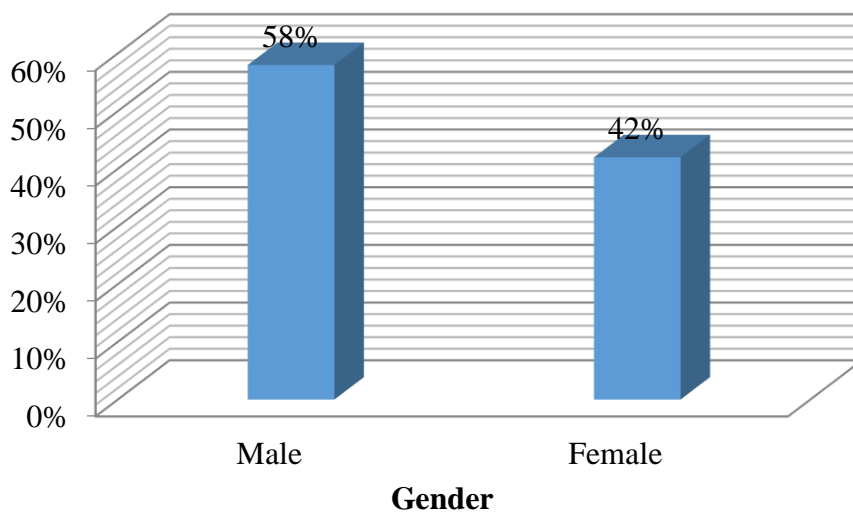


Figure 3:
Gender of the respondents

Respondents Level of Education

The participants were requested to specify their educational attainment by the researcher. Using the findings displayed in figure 2, the respondents indicated that 34.60% had a diploma/tertiary, 51.00% of the

respondents had Undergraduates while 14.40% had Masters Degrees. There was no head teacher with only basic education. All the head teachers had diploma, undergraduate or postgraduates. This shows that the respondents were well education and well informed.

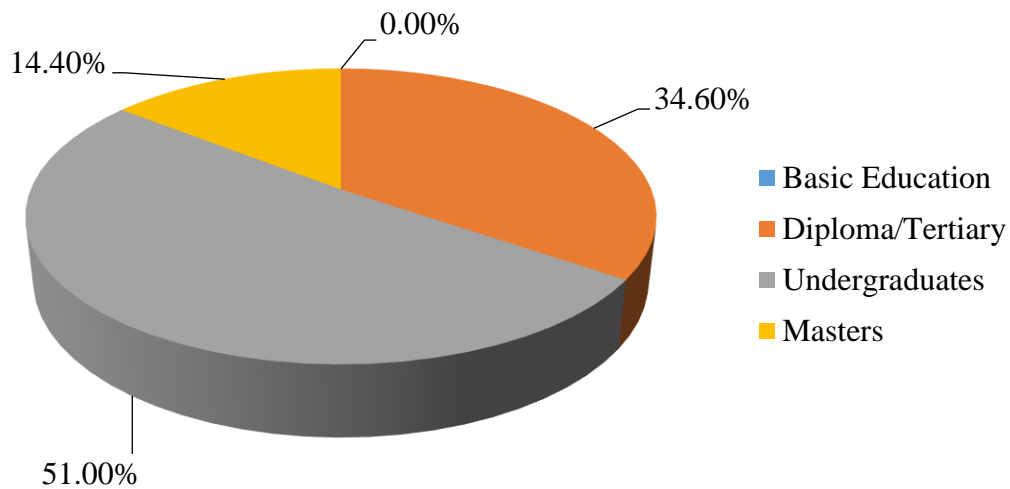
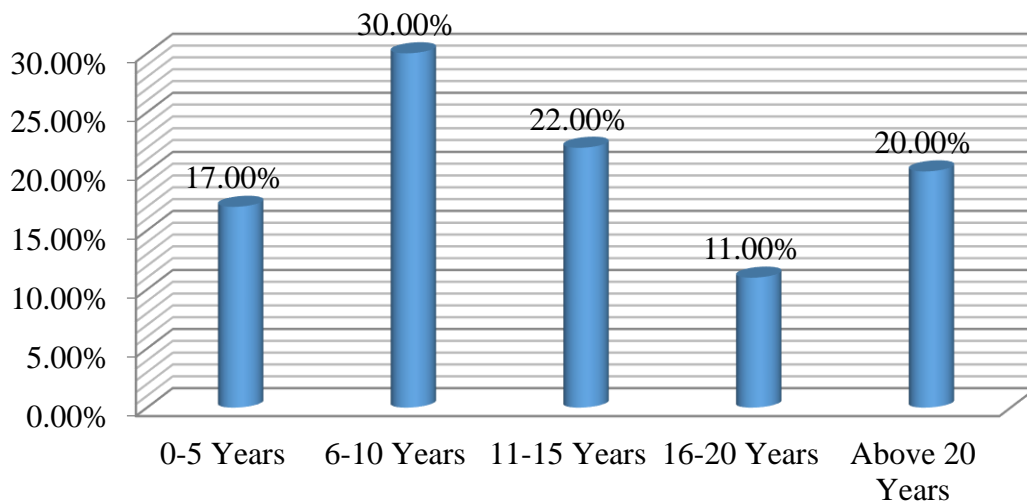


Figure 2:
Respondents' level of education

Working period of the respondents

The duration of the respondents' employment with the institution was another goal of the investigation. The findings showed that 17.00% of the participants said they had been employed by their school for between 0 and 5 years, 30.00% said they had been employed by their school for between 6 and 10 years, 22.00% said they had been employed by their school for between 11 and 15 years, 11.00% said they had been employed by their school for between 16 and 20 years, and 20% said they had worked for their present employer for almost 20 years.



Respondents' Working Period

Figure 3:
Working Period

Influence of democratic leadership style on academic performance

The third aim of the investigation was to examine the correlation between the academic performance of students in public primary schools within the Lunga-lunga sub-county and the democratic leadership style. To gauge how much their head teachers demonstrated democratic leadership qualities, the teachers were given a series of items to complete. They were asked to rate their reaction on a Likert scale of five, with Strongly disagree

(1), Disagree (2), Somehow (3), Agree (4), and Strongly agree (5) representing the degree to which head teachers demonstrated democratic leadership style in the classroom.

Table 2:
Influence of democratic leadership style on academic performance

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somehow	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers have enough time to teach and do other responsibilities assigned	10.9%	19.9%	6.1%	27.8%	35.3%
Performance is as a result of the school teamwork	0.0%	11.3%	0.0%	11.9%	76.8%
Teachers discuss school academic plans before implementing	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	14.3%	83.3%
Our head teacher is a good listener	0.0%	18.0%	0.0%	32.0%	50.0%

The study's findings showed that 35.3% of respondents strongly agreed, 27.8% agreed, 6.1% were unsure, 19.9% disagreed, and 10.9% of respondents strongly disagreed that they had adequate time to teach and finish other school-assigned activities. According to the results, more than 65.0% of instructors feel that they have adequate time to complete their tasks and other obligations in the classroom. Additionally, 76.8% of respondents strongly agreed that school teamwork contributes to achievement; 11.9% agreed and 11.3% disagreed with the assertion. This demonstrates that the leadership of the primary schools in the Lunga-Lunga sub-county values teamwork. The results are consistent with Nasongo's (2009) research in Vihiga, which discovered that head teachers held frequent staff meetings during which decisions and planning were done collaboratively and policies were clearly explained. Moreover, the vast majority of respondents—83.3%—strongly agreed that they consult with their head teachers before executing school academic programs, followed by 14.3% who agreed and a miniscule 2.4% who disagreed. This suggests that head teachers have conversations about carrying out academic plans in the classroom. The results contradict those of Wanjiku (2013), who found that head teachers infrequently get together with teachers to talk about student achievement. The study comes to the conclusion that while head teachers and teachers did talk about school-related issues like discipline and performance, the frequency of their meetings may not have been sufficient because ongoing meetings are necessary for planning and tracking students' academic progress. Furthermore, the outcomes revealed that 32.0 percent of teachers agreed and just 18% disagreed that their head teachers always listen to them, with 50% of teachers strongly agreeing.

Relationship between democratic leadership style and academic performance

The association between teachers' assessments of students' academic performance in public primary schools in the Lunga-lunga sub-county and head teachers' perceived use of democratic leadership styles was examined using a Karl Pearson correlation calculated at 0.05 significant levels as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Bivariate Correlation analysis results

		Competitive Advantage	Customer relationship management	Deductions
Academic performance	Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's rho)	1.000	.693	Positive
	Sig. (P-Value)	.	.000	Reject H ₀
Democratic leadership style	Correlation Coefficient	.693	1.000	Positive
	Sig. (P-Value)	.000	.	Reject H ₀

The results of the study indicate that, in the lunga-lunga sub-county, there is a significant positive association ($r=0.693$ and $p=0.000$) between democratic leadership and the academic success of primary school pupils. As indicated by the estimated p-value of 0.000, which is less than the crucial value of $p=0.05$, there is a significant and positive link between the academic accomplishment of pupils in public primary schools and democratic leadership style.

This finding is in assertion with the discoveries of Sultan (2021) discovered that democratic leadership predominated in many schools where heads of school and academic masters all stakeholders, including head assistants and subordinates, in decision-making at all times. The study concentrated on the leadership philosophies employed by academic coordinators and administrators in Pakistani Gilgitistan institutions. Though it changed depending on the situation, this democratic leadership strategy was employed to support the school's learning processes. Sultan continued by saying that school administrators make decisions regarding the tasks that need to be completed in order for their institutions to function effectively based on democratic leadership principles.

Sultan continues, "The subordinates seemed to have a sense of belonging towards tasks because they were involved in the decision-making process."

Moreover, the outcomes agree with those of Ali et al., (2023), who found out that the majority of secondary school heads had previously embraced the democratic leadership style, and staff and students fared better in these schools than in others where the heads used alternative leadership philosophies. A key component of democratic leadership was soliciting input from subordinates prior to making decisions. After allowing followers to cast votes on a proposed resolution, the leaders make their decisions. Heads of schools mentor their staff and bargain for what they want. They also said that school administrators should employ the best leadership philosophies in order to encourage shared accountability and collaborative decision-making among all parties involved in the education process.

In addition, the outcomes also concur with the work of Wakachala et al., (2021) who looked into the leadership philosophies of the principals and the unhappiness of the students in Bungoma County. He employed an ex-post facto study design. The target audience consisted of 152 teachers, 3,040 form four pupils in public boarding secondary schools, 76 vice principals, and other participants. Using multistage sampling, schools were divided into two groups for this study. From each of the categories, 480 pupils from four distinct classes and twelve schools were selected at random. Next, teachers in charge of the guidance and counseling departments in the schools, 24 boarding section heads, and 12 deputy principals in charge of administration were selected using a deliberate sample. The study found that whereas schools with administrators who demonstrated far lower levels of these leadership philosophies were more vulnerable to student unhappiness, those with principals who demonstrated significantly higher levels of democratic and transformational leadership styles were calm. The results of this study are not widely applicable because it only examined unrest in Bungoma County.

Finally, the findings also concur with the works of Muchiri (2022) who evaluated the impact of head teachers' leadership ideologies on academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya. The Fiedler contingency theory served as the study's foundation. Descriptive survey was employed as the research methodology. 46 senior instructors and 46 secondary school principals made up the study's target audience. The census sample approach was used to choose all 46 secondary school senior teachers, On the other hand, 14 teachers were chosen by simple random sampling. Principals were interviewed and senior instructors were given a survey to complete in order to collect data. The questionnaire's reliability was calculated using Crombach alpha, and its content validity was assessed by two university supervisors who carefully reviewed both its face validity and content. To examine the data, both inferential and descriptive statistics were applied. Based on qualitative data, themes were developed and examined. However, certain qualitative data were reproduced verbatim to maintain the impact of the participants' spoken comments. The three suggested hypotheses were investigated using multiple regression analysis.

IV. Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between democratic leadership style and academic performance in public primary schools in Lunga-Lunga Sub-County, Kwale, Kenya. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between democratic leadership practices and improved academic outcomes among learners. Democratic leadership, characterized by inclusive decision-making, open communication, and shared responsibility, was found to foster a conducive learning environment. This leadership style encourages greater teacher and student engagement, enhances motivation, and promotes a collaborative school culture. Consequently, schools led democratically showed notable improvements in learners' academic performance compared to those with more autocratic or laissez-faire leadership styles.

V. Recommendations

The study recommends that leadership training and development should be a priority. It is essential to develop and implement comprehensive training programs that focus on democratic leadership principles for school leaders. These programs should aim to enhance skills in participatory decision-making, effective communication, and creating a collaborative school environment. Additionally, establishing mentorship programs where experienced democratic leaders can guide and support newer or less experienced school heads can further enhance leadership practices.

Secondly, policy implementation and support are crucial. Educational policies should be designed to promote and support democratic leadership practices in schools. Such policies would facilitate inclusive decision-making and shared responsibility among school stakeholders. Furthermore, it is important to allocate the necessary resources to schools, enabling them to adopt and sustain democratic practices effectively.

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