

# Inspiring a Shared Vision: Getting all the Teachers in the Bandwagon

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## Abstract

Effective organizations have often been associated with the kind of leadership practice exercised in such organizations. When schools are not performing well, the blame is usually put on the principal who is the leader of the school. This study explored the relationship between secondary school Principals' transformational leadership practice of inspiring a shared vision and students' academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). The study was carried out in Nairobi County, Kenya. Stratified sampling process was used to ensure that both public and private schools in Nairobi were captured in the study. Leadership behaviour was measured using the Leadership Practices Inventory-("Self" and "others"). Correlational research design was employed in data analysis. Pearson correlations were used to establish if there was a relationship between transformational leadership characteristics and academic performance. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test if a relationship existed between selected demographic characteristics and the interaction of leadership characteristics of principals' and students' academic performance. To test relationships between principals' ratings and teachers' ratings, ratings of male principals and female principals, t-test was used. Results indicated a positive correlation of "Inspiring a shared vision". It was recommended that secondary school principals should exhibit transformational leadership of inspiring a shared vision in order to succeed in today's changing world of educational leadership.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, inspiring a shared vision, secondary school principals, teachers, academic performance

## 1. Introduction

For any organization to be successful there must be an effective leader who is able to mobilize all the resources in the organization so as to achieve its goals. A school like any other organization requires an effective leader to achieve its goals (Barnett, McCormick & Connors, 2001). When schools are not performing well, the blame is usually put on the principal who is the leader of the school. The significance of the principal is emphasized by Griffin (1994) who explains that many schools are brought down through inadequate leadership. The school principal has also been greatly associated with the creation of an environment in which school efficiency can be achieved. Siens and Ebmeier (1996) for instance, found that the school principal has a direct effect on students' behavioural outcomes.

Scholars have tried to establish the kind of leadership behaviour that would enhance efficiency in organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). One kind of leadership behaviour that has been a topic of debate among scholars for the past decade is transformational leadership (Murphy, 2002). Transformational leadership is hypothesized to occur when leaders create within followers a capacity to develop higher levels of commitment to organizational goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The leaders are able to do this by displaying certain characteristics in their leadership. One such characteristic is inspiring a shared vision among the subordinates. This study links transformational leadership with academic performance as one of the indicators of school efficiency. The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- a) To examine the relationship between "inspiring a shared vision" and the students' academic performance.
- b) To establish the relationship between "inspiring a shared vision" and the gender of the secondary school principal.
- c) To determine the relationship between "inspiring a shared vision" and the secondary school academic qualification.
- d) To examine the relationship between "inspiring a shared vision" and the secondary school principals' administrative experience.

To achieve these objectives, the following research objectives were formulated

- a. To what extent does the secondary school Principal's Transformational leadership characteristic of inspiring a shared vision influence students' academic performance?
- b. What is the relationship between the secondary school Principal's Transformational

- leadership characteristic of inspiring a shared vision and their gender?
- c. How is the secondary school Principal's Transformational leadership characteristic of inspiring a shared vision related to their academic qualification?
  - d. Is there a relationship between the secondary school Principal's Transformational leadership characteristic of inspiring a shared vision and their administrative experience.

### 1.1. Literature review

Just as societal and school demographics have changed in recent decades, so has the type of leadership needed to successfully lead the rapidly changing schools of this century (McLeod, 2008). It is undisputed that school leadership is the most significant factor in enhancing school performance (Dinham, 2004; Kearney, 2005; Janerrette & Sherretz, 2007; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). It is further agreed that although there are many factors that help make schools successful, such as good curriculum, quality teaching, and a strong professional culture, all these are shaped and developed by leadership characteristics of school principals. Principals serve as key factors in the health of the school and the success of its students (Cotton, 2003; Heck, 1992; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). The Ministry of Education and the politicians in Kenya send direct or indirect signals to schools that children must pass examinations as a sign of a school's efficiency or quality. This message is implicitly amplified by the mass media when they publish examination results and highlight the schools which have performed well (Abagi & Odipo, 1997). Therefore, the research base guiding their leadership is of importance. Different scholars have tried to establish the kind of leadership that would enhance efficiency in organizations. A recent topic of interest has been transformational leadership (Murphy, 2002).

Transformational leadership is a concept that was developed by McGregor Burns in 1978 and later reviewed and developed further by Bernard Bass in 1985. Burns (1978) contended that transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. More intensive research by Kouzes and Posner (2002) has shown consistent practices associated with transformational leadership. These are "modelling the way", "inspiring a shared vision" "challenging the process", "enabling others to act" and "encouraging the heart" (Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

Inspiring a shared vision refers to the envisioning of the future and enlisting others. This requires the leader to communicate this vision in such a way as to motivate the followers to work toward its achievement (Leech, & Fulton, 2008). To accomplish this, successful leaders must utilize charismatic leadership strategies and communication to sell the vision to the entire organization. Kouzes and Posner (1995) asserted that although the vision was cooperatively developed with all stakeholders, the leader must articulate it and provide focus.

In developing a shared vision, effective leaders encourage constituents to examine the big picture rather than simply focus on the here and now. Effective leaders encourage others to envision where they want to be or where they want to go in their futures (Starcher 2006). Kouzes and Posner (2002) also report that best leadership experiences were realized when leaders imagined an exciting, highly attractive future for their organization.

In the school setting, research has also indicated a positive correlation between transformational leadership of school principals and academic performance. For example, Ross and Gray (2006) conducted a study on how transformational leadership behaviours contribute to increased student achievements by building teachers' professional commitment and beliefs on their collective capacity through raising the values of members, motivating them to go beyond self-interest to embrace organizational goals. They assert that transformational leadership influences teachers' professional commitment to school's vision, professional community, school norms of collegiality, collaboration, and joint work and also a commitment to community partnerships. Transformational leaders are committed to working with their followers to develop and foster a shared vision among all stakeholders. They believe that they can make a difference by envisioning the future and creating an ideal and unique image of what the organization can become. Principals who are able to engage the teachers in envisioning the broad vision of the successful future position of the students motivate the teachers to work towards this desired end. A study by Ross and Gray (2006) confirms this in their study that involved all elementary teachers in two Ontario districts in Canada with a total of 3042 teachers from 205 schools. They found that teachers' beliefs in their capacity and their professional commitment mediated the impact of principals on student achievements. Their results therefore suggest that the principals who practiced transformational leadership style impact positively on the teachers' beliefs in collective capacity and commitment to school values.

Effective leaders encourage others to envision where they want to be or where they want to go in their futures. These leaders are able to inspire their followers with a positive and a hopeful outlook. They also generate enthusiasm and excitement for the common vision from others through genuineness and skillful use of positive language, symbols and personal energy (Kouze & Posner, 2002). Effective leaders also recognize that they cannot accomplish much without the involvement of all members of the organization. They therefore communicate the need for team effort in accomplishing a shared vision. These leaders listen to their followers, encourage them to commit to the organizational work and help them feel satisfied as contributing members of

the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). In a school setting, the teachers must believe their leader has a clear understanding of their needs and is committed to their interests at heart.

There has however been contradicting studies on the relationship between transformational leadership. For example Layton (2003) sought to establish if transformational leadership increased school learning measured by Indiana's annual achievement test. He found that transformational leadership was not linked to increased student learning. Griffith (2004) also had similar findings. There was indeed no relationship between Principal transformational leadership and school aggregated student achievement progress.

Research has shown contradicting findings on the gender difference in leadership characteristics. Some studies indicate that there is no significant difference in the manner in which men and women lead (Bass, 1990; Carless, 1998) this is confirmed in later researches. For example, Reichenadter(2005) did a study on transformational leadership and perceptions of male and female middle or junior high school principals and teachers regarding mandated school reform. He found no significant differences in the perception of transformational leadership characteristics between male and female principals. He found that gender did not have an effect on the perceptions of transformational leadership in regard to mandated school reform. Other researchers have however shown that women leaders behave differently to their male counterparts. In a later report, Eagly et al, (2003) reported that female leaders were rated by followers as being more transformational leaders than male leaders. A recent research by Rohmann and Rowold (2009) has also confirmed gender differences concerning leadership styles. On the contrary, male principals in secondary schools were found to be more sensitive to the needs of teachers and students than their female counterparts (Collard, 2001).

The literature reviewed that transformational leadership is a powerful tool for fostering group goals and can evoke positive changes in educational field. There has been a substantial amount of research that has been done in most developed countries. Most of the studies done in developing countries seem to address leadership in general and not transformational leadership. This study addresses transformational leadership in Kenya as one of the developing countries.

#### **1.1.1. Research design**

This study employed the correlational research design. The target population consisted of 72 principals in public schools and 139 principals in private schools. It also included 1210 teachers in public secondary schools and approximately 1500 teachers in private secondary schools in Nairobi County. A stratified sampling process was used to ensure that schools from both the public and private schools in Nairobi are captured in the study. The researcher studied 30 randomly selected public schools and 13 private schools. A total of 384 teachers were studied.

#### **1.1.2. Research instruments**

The study used questionnaires, an interview guide and documentary analyses of examination results from the Kenya National examinations. The first and last part of the questionnaires were developed by the researcher while the second part was adapted from the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) which was developed by Kouzes and Posner (2003) to measure transformational leadership behaviours of practicing leaders. The Leadership Practices Inventory uses a ten-point Likert scale. The data was collected between January and April in 2010.

Pearson correlations were generated for the independent (transformational leadership behaviour) and dependent variables (mainly performance in KCSE). Using the SPSS software, Pearson correlation tests were computed on the data, with an alpha level of .05. ANOVAs were also run to determine if a relationship existed between selected demographic variables and the interaction of leadership practices of principals and student achievement in KCSE. Data were analysed using Pearson's moment correlation and Analysis of Variance.

#### **1.1.3 Research findings and discussions**

The total number of questionnaires delivered to the principals was 43 out of which 40 were returned giving a return rate of 93. %. A total 308 questionnaires were delivered to the selected secondary schools (most private schools had less than 9), out of which 207 were returned giving a return rate of 71.05%. This was considered adequate. Based on the research hypotheses, the findings are as follows:

#### **1.1.4. Relationship between the secondary school Principal's Transformational leadership characteristics of inspiring a shared vision and students' academic performance**

An analysis was carried on the principals' transformational leadership characteristic in terms of Inspiring a shared vision and students' academic performance. This leadership practice was measured by LPI while student performance was measured by the percent of students who passed in KCSE. The results are indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Pearson correlation analysis of inspiring a shared vision (ISV)**

	Inspiring a shared vision	KCSE
Inspiring a shared vision	Pearson Correlation	.477(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	40
	Pearson Correlation	.477(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	40

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was a modest correlation between leadership characteristic “Inspiring a shared vision and students’ academic performance. The Pearson  $r = 0.477$ . Transformational leadership in terms of “Inspiring a shared vision was therefore modestly correlated with students’ academic performance. There was therefore a statistically significant relationship between the two variables  $r=0.477$   $n=40$  and  $p=0.002$ .

The investigation on the relationship between Inspiring a shared vision and academic performance showed a positive correlation. This means that the higher the principals displayed this characteristic, the better their students performed. The Null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant relationship between the secondary school Principals’ transformational leadership characteristic in terms of “Inspiring a shared vision” and students’ academic performance was rejected. The Alternative hypothesis was therefore accepted. There was indeed a correlation between secondary school Principals’ transformational leadership characteristic in terms of “inspiring a shared vision” and students’ academic performance. These findings are similar to Brent’s (2007). In transformational leadership characteristic Inspire a Shared Vision (ISV) and student performance as measured by the percent of all TAKS tests passed, the Pearson  $r = -.313$  and  $r^2 = .10$ . The significance value = .019 revealed a statistically significant correlation. The hypothesis was therefore rejected since there was indeed a significant relationship between inspiring a shared vision and students’ academic performance.

#### 1.1.5. Further qualitative analyses.

All the teachers felt that the principals should guide and lead the teachers. A good number of teachers (68%) expressed the view that they did not know what was expected of them especially in their role as decision making. One teacher complained “... I chased a student out of class for failure to do homework only to be summoned to the principal’s office to explain why I took the role of the principal!...” Majority of the principals (25) could not tell the mission and vision of their schools without checking on the written documents on the same. The same was observed from all the teachers interviewed. *Inspiring a shared vision is one of the characteristics of transformational leadership.* This requires the leader to communicate this vision in such a way as to motivate the followers to work toward its achievement (Leech, & Fulton, 2008). It was therefore found unfortunate that most principals had not internalized the vision and mission of their schools. Kouzes and Posner (1995) asserted that although the vision was cooperatively developed with all stakeholders, the leader must articulate it and provide focus.

#### 1.1.6. Relationship between the secondary school Principal’s Transformational leadership characteristics of inspiring a shared vision and their gender of their gender.

Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for females ( $M=51.375$ ), significantly different from males (Mean=49.652) the study revealed that female principals were relatively more transformational than male principals in inspiring a shared vision. These findings are similar to Knab’s (2009) who found significant correlations between female school managers and male school managers in high, moderate and low performing schools. This result is also consistent with Bass (1998) who posited that woman in leadership positions are seen by their subordinates and colleagues to be, as leaders, somewhat more transformational than their male counterparts (Bass, 1998). These findings however contradict Bass, (1990), Carless, (1998), Manning (2002) and Reichanadter (2005) who found no significant differences in the perception of transformational characteristics between male and female principals.

		female	Male
Female	Pearson Correlation	1	.534
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.354
	N	40	40
Male	Pearson Correlation	.534	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.354	.
	N	40	40

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient  $r$  of .534 indicated a moderate positive relationship between

transformational leadership and gender of principals. These relationships were significant at the 0.01 alpha level. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected since there was indeed a relationship between the transformational characteristic of inspiring a share vision and the gender of the secondary school principals.

**1.1.7. Relationship between the secondary school Principal’s Transformational leadership characteristics of inspiring a shared vision their academic qualification.**

Secondary school principals’ scoring on “inspiring a shared vision” depending on their academic qualifications was found to be as follows:

	Bed	Med	MA	PGDE	Dip in ED
Inspire a Shared Vision	46.392	50.714	48	51	50

The principals with a Masters degree in education reported higher leadership scores than those reported by their B.Ed counterparts. They also reported higher leadership scores that their MA counterparts. The principals who also had a postgraduate diploma in education reported higher scores in those who had an ordinary diploma in education.

**1.1.8. Relationship between the secondary school Principal’s Transformational leadership characteristics of inspiring a shared vision and their administrative experience.**

Years as principal	Below1 yr	1-3	4-6	7-9	Over 9
Inspire a Shared Vision	45.6	47.66	50.857	54.111	51.4

These findings indicate that the secondary principals who had administrative experience of less than 3 years scored lower in inspiring a shared vision characteristic than those who had more years in administration. A further analysis was done using Pearson correlations and the findings are shown as follows:

		B.Ed	M.Ed	M.A	PGDE	DIP in ED
B.Ed	Pearson Correlation	1	.870	.122	-.034	-.319
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.055	.845	.957	.600
	N	40	40	40	40	40
M.ED	Pearson Correlation	.870	1	.427	-.031	-.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.	.473	.960	.951
	N	40	40	40	40	40
M.A	Pearson Correlation	.122	.427	1	-.296	-.267
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.845	.473	.	.628	.664
	N	40	40	40	40	40
PGDE	Pearson Correlation	-.034	-.031	-.296	1	-.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.957	.960	.628	.	.935
	N	40	40	40	40	40
DIP in ED	Pearson Correlation	-.319	-.038	-.267	-.051	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.600	.951	.664	.935	.
	N	40	40	40	40	40

Pearson moment correlation calculations indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between transformational leadership and professional experience of principals who had worked as principals in a duration of below 3 years. There was however no statistically significant correlation between transformational leadership and professional experience of principals who had worked as principals for more than 3 years. The difference can be explained by other factors other than transformational characteristics. These findings are similar to the Vanderhaar, Muñoz and Rodosky (2006) study, which revealed that secondary school principals who served for a long period of time in the same school administratively did better than principals who spent a few years in the same location. The study reported that Long-serving principals had time to interact and understand the needs of their teachers, and were able initiate changes for teacher growth and academic progress (Earley & Weindling,

2007).

### 1.1.9. Conclusions

Exemplary leadership has been linked with high academic performance. The analysed data revealed a number of facts about principal leadership and students' academic performance. It was evident that principals' transformational leadership characteristic of inspiring a shared vision has a positive impact on academic achievement. Academic performance was found to be better in schools where the principals scored high in Inspiring a shared vision characteristic. Principals with postgraduate qualifications displayed more transformational characteristics of inspiring a shared vision than those who had a Bachelors degree and below. The principals with Masters Education degrees also scored higher than their counterparts who had a Masters degree in a different field. This finding also led to the conclusion that educational administration courses taught at Master of Education Degree level have an impact on principals' leadership effectiveness.

### 1.1.10. Recommendations

The findings of this study indicated that principals who had post graduate degrees scored relatively high in transformational leadership characteristics. However, the number of principals with post graduate degrees in Nairobi county was low. Principals should be encouraged to go for further studies. Principals who had less than 3 years in administration were found to be more transformational than their counterparts who had more than nine years. This could mean that long serving principals tend to relax and forget their major role in learning the schools. Constant monitoring of the principals should be made to ensure quality leadership. Principals in the Above C+ (Minimum university entry marks) schools scored higher in transformational leadership characteristic of inspiring a shared vision than the principals in the Below C+ schools. There is need therefore for principals in the Below C+ schools to study the characteristics of transformational leadership so as to practice them if they expect similar performance to the Above C+ schools. These characteristics can also be embedded in the curriculum that is used to train principals.

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