

Leadership and School Performance in Central Colleges in the Western Province of Sri Lanka: An Exploratory Study

R. Lalitha S. Fernando, H. D. M. Kaushalya Geethamali, and E. Achini Indrachapa Kularathna

University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Email: rlsf@sjp.ac.lk, {kaushi.geethamali, chapa.eaik}@gmail.com

Abstract—This study explores the most effective leadership style in school performances of Central Colleges in Sri Lanka and identifies problems and difficulties faced by the principles of the selected schools. This study revealed that the transformational leadership style is the most effective as it leads higher school performances. Some principals of the Central Colleges were not successful due to the lack of resources, negative attitudes of the stakeholders, inefficient government officers, unfavorable external environment and the unnecessary political interference. Policy measures are proposed towards better performance of the Central Colleges of Sri Lanka. Findings of this study will help the governing bodies to design and update policies for improving performance of the Central Colleges specifically, and school leadership of Sri Lanka in generally.

Index Terms—effective leadership, school performance, central colleges, Sri Lanka

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is often regarded as one of the key factors that determine success or failure of any organization. Organizational performance may be defined as the transformation of inputs into outputs in achieving certain outcomes. Similar to any other organization, the performance of schools is also mainly determined by the leadership style. They have never seen a good school with a bad principal or a bad school with a good principal (Gray & Marget, 1989) cited by [1]. In Sri Lanka, the government spends a large amount of resources to maintain schools in the country irrespective of its status; rural or urban. Nearly, 4.2 million children are enrolled in over 10162 public schools around the country [2] and about 5.41% of GDP worth of Rs.90 billion is annually spent by the government for education [3]. But some schools are not recorded with such higher achievements and performances in terms of both academic and extra-curricular activities. This study focuses on Central Colleges in Sri Lanka. C. W. W. Kannangara who was the “Father of Free Education in Sri Lanka” introduced the concept of “Central Collages (Madhya Vidhyala) in locations outside major cities in order to provide the high-quality secondary education to the rural outstations of the country. Currently, there are 54 Central Colleges

in the country. Earlier, Central Colleges have shown higher performances in the Sri Lankan Education system. According to [4], all Central Colleges without exception served the purpose for which they were established is borne out by the fact that a vast majority of professionals and other governmental and non-governmental executives are the products of these Central Colleges. But, in the present, the performances of Central Colleges are declining. Central Colleges did play a significant role in the educational history of Sri Lanka, but it was unable to achieve their aims successfully [4]. It is evident that some schools frequently record higher performance whereas others decline their performance. Thus, it is important in understanding how principals utilize multiple leadership approaches to improve schools and help to inform practitioners of strategies to meet school goals [5]. Currently, 54 original Central Colleges are gasping for breath and the powers that they lacked to resolve and resuscitate them [4]. Even if they had, they were incapable and they were administratively impotent in the face of ascending political clout [4]. It is evident that some principals of Central Colleges have no power and also at some occasions, they do not have adequate skills to manage their schools. In this context, this study explores which leadership style is effective in Central Colleges in Sri Lanka. In the current era, the academic performance of Central Colleges in Sri Lanka has been declined when compared to the selected National Schools. In this context, there is a doubt whether Central Colleges were able to achieve their initial goals of establishment. Reference [6] suggests that one of the key responsibilities of a school principal as a leader is shaping a vision of academic success for all students. Hence, more researches are needed to find out the most effective leadership style for improving performances of Central Colleges in Sri Lanka. In this context, this study tries to achieve the following objectives.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore a better definition to school performance of Central Collages
- To identify the prevailing leadership styles in the Central Colleges.
- To identify the most effective leadership style in improving performances of the Central Collages

- To find out the main problems and difficulties faced by principals in the Central Colleges in Sri Lanka.

III. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A. Theories of Leadership

Leadership is a broader concept where the authority of the leader could be used to influence many people toward achieving organizational goals. School leadership can encompass people occupying various roles and functions such as principals, deputy and assistant principals, leadership teams, school governing boards and school-level staff involved in leadership tasks [7].

B. Leadership Style

The simple definition of 'style' is the manner and approach of doing some task. A person's leadership style reflects the leader insider himself or herself to others in society. Reference [8] notes that leadership styles can be classified according to the managers' power, usage of such power and behavior. As such, the leadership styles could mainly be classified as autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire, where the styles are distinguished by the influence of managers on subordinates. Educational researchers from much of the developed and Western world have framed the complexities of successful school leadership in many ways, the most prominent being through transformational, distributed, instructional leadership theories, transactional leadership and ethical leadership.

C. Effective Leadership Style

Effective leadership is a product of the heart and an effective leader must be visionary, passionate, creative, flexible, inspiring, innovative, courageous, imaginative, experimental, and initiates change and when it is related to education it enhances the performance of an organization, primarily the educators, to improve student achievement [9]. In clarifying the concept of effective leadership, scholars list some indicators of leadership effectiveness including follower attitudes and perceptions of their leader, and the extent to which the performance of the team or organizational unit is enhanced and the attainment of goals facilitated [10]. It also associates effective leadership with the leader's contribution to the quality of group processes as perceived by followers [10].

D. School Performance

Organization performance is related to the level of goals and objectives attainment. The extent to which school performance is based on the outcomes of such programs, the more the school would be expected to be effective. School performance reflects 'the effectiveness and efficiency of the schooling process [11]. As per the author, effectiveness, in a general sense, refers to the accomplishment of the school's objectives, while efficiency indicates whether these objectives were accomplished in a timely and costly manner. However, the most research compared the performance of schools in order to explain the difference in students' results and

measured the school performance in terms of average achievements of students. As the primary goal of schools is achieving the high academic performance, many research uses the 'Pass Rate' to measure the school performance. Some authors said that in public education, school teachers and administrators must negotiate the right balance between math, reading, music, art, health, and other activities [12].

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly based on the inductive approach and qualitative research methods. Interviews and in-depth discussions were conducted with 14 principals and two teachers from each school in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Teachers were selected based on the purposive sampling method and data were collected from unstructured in-depth interviews both from principals and two teachers from each school. The grounded theory and substantial descriptions were used to analyze the data.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the sample of the research, twelve (12) principals were male and two (02) are female. Among them, twelve (12) principals have obtained Master's Degree and two (02) of them have obtained Teaching Diploma. Twelve (12) principals from Sri Lanka Educational Administrative service (SLEAS) and two (02) were from Sri Lanka Principal Service (SLPS). Among the respondents, six principals (06) has 10-20 years of overall experience while four (04) have 21-30 years of the overall experience. Rest of the sample has more than 31 years of overall experience in the education field. When considering the experience in the current schools, eight (08) principals have 6-10 years of experience in the current school while the rest of the sample (06) has 1-5 years of experience.

School Performance

School performance is considered here as both academic performances and non-academic performances. Nonacademic performances are considered as achievements in sports and other achievements in the fields of dancing, music, literature and etc.

Academic Performance

Both examinations result of General Certificate of Education of Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) and General Certificate of Education of Advanced Level (GCE A/L) examinations are considered as academic performance. Examinations results of the year of 2016, 2017 and 2018 were considered. Students who have qualified to follow Advanced level and the university entrance are considered as better academic performances.

Non Academic Performance

Non-academic performance is considered as students' achievements in sports and extra-curricular activities achieving in different level namely, zonal level, provincial level, all island level and international level. Number of achievements of the last three years' data were considered here. Other achievements are considered as achievements in the fields of dancing,

music, literature at the zonal level, provincial level, all island level and international level. Accordingly, six leadership styles were recognized such as transformational, transactional, ethical, distribute, laissez

faire and instructional leadership. These styles are discussed in the subsequent section.

A. Transformational Leadership Style

TABLE I: LEADERSHIP STYLES AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OF CENTRAL COLLAGES

NO	Leadership Style	School Performance						
		Academic Performance		Non Academic Performance				Other Achievements
		Average Results of G.C.E. Ordinary Level Exam	Average Results of G.C.E. Advanced Level Exam	Total No of Sports Achievements				
				Zonal Level	Provincial Level	All Island Level	International Level	
Principal 1	Transformational leadership	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Average	Poor	Poor	Excellent
Principal 2	Transformational leadership	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 3	Transformational leadership	Excellent	Good	Average	Average	Poor	Poor	Excellent
Principal 4	Transactional leadership	Excellent	Poor	Average	Average	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 5	Transactional leadership	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Principal 6	Transactional leadership	Excellent	Poor	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Principal 7	Transactional leadership	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 8	Ethical leadership	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 9	Distributed leadership	Excellent	Excellent	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 10	Distributed leadership	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Principal 11	Laissez Faire leadership	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 12	Laissez Faire leadership	Excellent	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 13	Laissez Faire leadership	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Average
Principal 14	Instructional leadership	Poor	-	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor

Source: Field Data

Average Results of General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Examination & General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examination- 71% to 100%- Excellent, 51% to 70%- Good, 0% to 50%- Poor.

Total Number of Sports Achievements- 301 to 400- Excellent, 201 to 300- Good, 101 to 200- Average, 0 to 100- Poor.

Other Achievements- 10 to 15- Excellent, 7 to 9- Good, 4 to 6- Average, 0 to 3- Poor.

Transformational leaders have established targets and objectives for their schools. They have creative, conceptual and innovative ideas for the improvement of school performances. Transformational leadership is seen to be sensitive to organization building, developing a shared vision, distributing leadership and building school culture necessary to current restructuring efforts in schools [13]. They highly focus on the results of their schools. These principals create an environment that stimulates extraordinary performance. Most of them have created new assets to their schools. Those leaders have established better communication hierarchy in the school where teachers and the students could meet the principals at any time. Those principals provide necessary resources for teachers and students to carry out school programs. Leaders of this style often have high ethical and moral standards [9]. Transformational approach builds trust, respect, and a wish on the part of followers to work

collectively toward the same desired future goals [14]. Thus, transformational leadership is more facilitative to educational change and contributes to organizational improvement, effectiveness and school culture. Here three principals have been identified as transformational leadership style. These schools have best results for the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination. Their average results of the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination are 93%, 79% and 99% in terms of qualifying for the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination. Average Results of the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination are 84.08%, 62.42% and 61.92% in terms of qualifying the university entrance. Two third from those three schools are maintaining excellent and good levels in sports. Table 1 shows special awards for sports. Transformational leadership contributes to more desirable school cultures [15]; [16]. As per Table I, school 01 and school 03 have excellent level of performances in other achievements. However,

school 02 has limited achievements compared to other two schools. As other achievements, all three schools have excellent and average level.

B. Transactional Leadership Style

Performance of the schools under the transactional leaderships is mainly based on the dedication of the principal. The principals expect disciplinary staff and students and also the principals target to enhance performance through various programs. Those are being implemented under a five years' plan. The principals supervise teachers and some of these schools have taken attempts to implement the "5S" concept. Transactional Leadership focus on the role of supervision, organization and group performance and the exchanges that take place between leaders and followers [9]. Those principals have also paid their attention for curricular and extracurricular activities. Students from grade 6 to 10 were instructed to engage at least in one sport (Chess, Wuhu, Karate or Carom). One principal from those schools has initiated a girls' cricket team. Those principals normally were hard-working and maintained their schools in accordance with laws, regulation and circulars. It seems that those principals have been acting in a balanced manner with the stakeholders to achieve the targets of their schools. Principals have treated the staff equally and maintained school activities by identifying skills of each person and giving them the relevant task. Those schools also have specified vision and mission and conduct skill development programs for students.

Principals provide all necessary resources for teachers and students to implement various school programs. In 2018, for an example, some principals have started a concept of smart classroom. Also those principals had better relationships with students, teachers, past pupils' association and parents. All those parties had opportunities to provide inputs in designing school's plan and those could achieve physical progress without many difficulties. In schools under the transactional leadership, students could meet principals in the given time period to discuss problems and get advices.

Those principals even punish children who were misbehaved and are highly concern about the discipline of the students and try to follow rules and regulations strictly. Leadership style starts with the idea that team members agree to obey their leader when they accept a job and the transaction usually involves the organization paying team members in return for their effort and compliance [9]. The leader has a right to punish team members if their work doesn't meet an appropriate standard. These three (03) schools have good results in the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination and average results of G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination are 74%, 99%, 75% and 27% in terms of qualifying for the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examinations. Average Results of the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination are 49%, 52.8%, 44.8% and 4% respectively in terms of qualifying for the university entrance. Those schools have not practiced sports much compared to previous schools. Only the principal 04 had tried to conduct sports level in a satisfied level and achieved number of sports between 101-200 in

zonal and provincial level, but who was not qualified to be awarded at the all island and international achievements. Other principals were not given much attention to sports and other achievements. In those schools, their non-academic performance was not in much of a satisfactory level. As per table 1, school 04 and school 07 have average level of performances in other achievements. But school 05 and 06 are unable to fit with other schools. Under the other achievements, all the schools are in average and poor levels.

C. Ethical Leadership Style

Only one school from the sample could be identified in this category. The principal of this school has developed a new vision for the school and he termed it as "formal education in a disciplined environment". There are two deputy principals in this school, the principal decentralized and divided the work load such as, administration, education development and sports and extra-curricular. There is a clear two-way communication hierarchy and delegation of power to section heads, class teachers, prefect guild and class monitors, and the principal delegates the authority and responsibility in managing the school. As an ethical leader, the principal is an exemplary to the teachers and the students. Some authors mentions that ethical leadership is a form of leadership in which individuals demonstrate and conduct for the common good that is acceptable and appropriate in every area of their life [17]. However, ethical leadership is uniquely important because this form of leadership is to promote ethical conduct at work and set and communicate ethical standards of the organization [18]. Also, an ethical leader exemplified by his actions and interactions with followers, and a practical wisdom that can transcend and provide sustainability to future leaders [19]. The principal conducts internal direction on the works of the teachers by assigning duties and delegates the power to the teachers, and calls meetings to direct and communicate teachers. He does not interfere unnecessarily but facilitates teachers to enjoy freedom in their work. The principal listens teachers' problems and matters and give solutions and also admires works of the staff. Principal has good relationship with past pupils' association and parents and parents and students have better perspective towards the principal. The principal provides all necessary resources for teachers and students to carry out educational programs and advocates teachers and always protects teachers in case of any difficulty. The schools under the ethical leadership have good academic results. Their average results of the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination are 98% and the results of the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination is 58.08%. But they have not much achievements in sports compared to previous schools. They have represented international and national competition and some tournaments were won and others were lost. This school also performs an average level in other achievements.

D. Distributed Leadership Style

Two principals are identified as distributed leaders. "Distributed leadership concentrates on engaging

expertise wherever it exists within the organization rather than seeking this only through formal position or role [20]. The Principal 09 has built new objectives and targets relevant to enhance the academic performance of the school. To achieve those targets, he has created suitable procedures for school management. The principal 10 believes that students should learn to get resources of the society and the aim of the education of other countries is to show up the genetic ability. The principal believes that a good education should be given to the students who wish to continue his/her education up to a high level and professional training should be given to other students to train them to be a professional. It was clear that the principal acts to bring the children to a good social condition than the condition of their parents.

The powers have been decentralized by these principals when handling the staff. The power is executed, through the heads of the relevant sources. They have been given autonomy to decide and act accordingly and also, a plan has been given to the teachers with respect to their duties. Thus, principal and deputy principal direct teachers' work. "Teacher leadership, which is closely associated with distributed leadership practices, merely cements authority and hierarchy whereby leaders monitor teachers and their work to ensure a set of predetermined standards are met" [21]. When teachers do not perform well in teaching, the school has a special procedure where parents can complain to the Deputy Principals about the teacher. The principal gives the authority to get action in an impartial and a tactful manner and the principal take disciplinary action against such teachers. Based on the skills and abilities the principal assigns tasks for each teacher. In the Netherlands and many Scandinavian countries, distributed leadership is associated with more democratic and equitable forms of schooling and it is implicit in the educational discourse and practices of many of European education systems [22].

The powers have also been decentralized to teachers by those principals, when handling the students. Due to this, the schools act to resolve students' problems through class teachers, grade teachers and section heads and if necessary a chance has been given to submit those issues to the principal. It seems that the principal delegates his powers to the followers to maintain the school. "The principals had deliberately shared leadership responsibilities in order to support innovation and change. This was a very conscious and a deliberate strategy by the principals to extend and build leadership capacity within the schools [22]. The average results of the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination of these two schools are 99% and 53% and the average results of G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination are 71.35% and 45.67%. The education result of the school 10 is lower than the school 9. However, the main of thrust of the principal 10 is to create a person who is expected by then society and that students should win their lives by improving the skills and talents. Under the other achievements, those schools have average and poor level.

E. Laissez Faire Leadership Style

There was no improvement in these schools and no target or plans have been designed. These principals

engage on routine work according to the established culture. There were incidents that parents and alumni associations have conflicting ideas with principals. Under this leadership style, teachers have been given their tasks separately with the responsibility. Teachers were assigned as the section heads, head for grade and class teachers and subject coordinator. The principal takes only the final decision in any matter and even though he is not in the school, the deputy principal, assistant principal and teachers have been trained for the school administration. "Laissez-faire leadership style allows complete freedom to group decision without the leader's participation. Thus, subordinates are free to do what they like. The role of the leader is just to supply materials. The leader does not interfere with or participate in the course of events determined by the group" [23].

The assistant principal and the deputy principal help to carry out school activities properly and they have been assigned various responsibilities (Education development, administration, and extra-curricular development). "The leader only acts as a nominal leader (Also, a laissez-faire leader lacks direct supervision of employees and fails to provide regular feedback to those under his supervision" [24]. The principals of these schools' resolve teachers' problems whenever necessary. Teachers are given the freedom to carry out their duties. Hence, the principal of these schools can be identified as a permissive leader as the principals have assigned his powers and responsibilities to the assistant principal and the deputy principal and perform controlling affairs through them and the principal act as a final decision maker. He has assigned many powers and responsibilities to the teachers but do not supervise them closely. The leader delegates the minimum amount of direction and face time required subordinates who have more freedom to make decisions [1]. Laissez-Faire leadership is an approach in which there is no leadership, no interaction between the leader and his followers and these leaders do not take care of needs and developments of followers and wish to continue as it is [25]. The leader rejects responsibility, delays decisions, does not provide feedback, and has no effort to meet the needs of the followers [25]. Average results of the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination of these two schools are 98%, 95% and 71% and average results of G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination are 62.67%, 64.23% and 49%. Under the other achievements, these three schools are at the average level.

F. Instructional Leadership Style

These schools had specified vision and mission with different goals. Principal of those schools tries to enhance the level of education and providing proper teaching, guidance for students to obtain a higher standard of living compared to their parents. However, it has been observed that these schools suffer from resources constraints. Thus, the principals have to carry on their studies with a great difficulty. Even the principals have faced difficulties in getting support from the alumni as those schools do not have a strong association with the school development funds. Also, those schools belong to Provincial Government, and thus, the Central Government's fund

allocations are limited. Instructional leaders were described as strong, directive leaders who had been successful at “turning their schools around” [26]. These leaders are goal-oriented, focusing on the improvement of student academic outcomes. Although schools have many difficulties, the principals try to improve the school performance. To achieve good results, principals provide instructions, guidance and supervise teachers towards better academic performances. Students are forcibly enrolled in those classes because students were not motivated to study. Those principals’ delegate’s power, authority and responsibility to section heads, class teachers and subject coordinators and maintain a decentralized school administration.

Instructional leadership focuses predominantly on the role of the school principal in coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school [27]. The principal treats the teachers fairly. The principal always makes awareness and give advice to teachers in managing schools. Sometimes, the principal behaves friendly with his staff and students. However, he follows the rules and performs according to rules and guides teachers like an instructor. Always pays attention to whether the teachers perform well in teaching. Reference [26] stated that the effective instructional leader will be able to align the strategies and activities of the school with the school’s academic mission. Thus, instructional leaders focused not only on leading, but also on managing. Their managerial roles included coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction. The Principals give advices and/or punishments for children's misbehaviors and meet the parents and discuss with them about their children. Even supervises the work, behaviors of children in the morning assembly and he goes to class room and check whether children are working or not. This school has not much improvement in terms of academic performance and non-academic performance and the level of achievements is poor.

VI. PROBLEMS FACED BY THE PRINCIPAL IN THE CENTRAL COLLEGES

Some Principals of the Central Colleges are unable to succeed due to various problems. The lack of necessary financial, human and physical resources, negative attitudes of the stakeholders, inefficient government officers, unfavorable external environment and inappropriate political interferences are considered as some of the difficulties. These issues are described in brief below.

A. *Lack of Necessary Financial, Human, Physical Resources*

Some principals of the Central Colleges face difficulties in their school development activities due to the lack of necessary financial, human and physical resources. Some schools are funded by the Central Government and some are funded by the Provincial Government. Some schools are unable to collect funds from the students for the School development fund which

is the main income source of any school. Due to the lack of financial resources, those school principals are unable to achieve school targets. The lack of physical resources is the another constraint. Several Central Colleges do not have enough building facilities and buildings have to be renovated, but they do not have sufficient funds for renovations. Furniture is not sufficient in those schools. Central Colleges do not have sufficient human resources and there is a shortage of teachers for several subjects. These constraints affect the academic performance of the schools and it also creates difficulties in the school’s administration and control system. For some subjects of advanced level, there is shortage or a lack of teachers. Further, some Central Colleges do not have enough non-academic staff. Under such situations, teachers in those schools have to do some clerical works as well.

B. *Negative Attitudes of the Stakeholders*

Some schools have internal conflicts among their peers and the alumni. These conflicts are predominant between the principals and deputy principals and among some teachers. Those opposition parties always create problems when the principal introduces and implements school programs and projects which affect the overall performance of the school.

C. *Less Efficient Government Officers*

College teachers have the best practical training than graduate teachers. Graduate teachers have the best of knowledge but their practical skill is at a lower level. Collegian teachers get their training for 03 years specified in teaching methodology. Quality of the Collegian teachers is less due to the politicization of academic institutes and also most of the teachers’ English knowledge is not adequate. The majority of those schools have suitable internal supervision process, but, there are no zonal, divisional and provincial supervision made by the government. Government introduces new projects, programs and policies for education, but they are unable to conduct appropriate monitory processes to check whether those activities align with the planning or not.

D. *Unfavorable External Environment*

Every school has different stakeholders, namely, alumni, parents, politicians. Some of their behavior negatively affect on the school administration. Many schools face several challenges due to narcotic and illegal selling in surrounding areas of the school.

E. *Unnecessary Political Interference*

Currently, most of the school principals have to face this situation, especially during the season of the grade one admission. Local politicians’ influences are very high and the principals of most reputed schools have to face many challenges as those politicians often make influences in order to get several students of their supporters or relatives admitted to the school. Also politicians tend to interfere for other matters such as sports, alumni and etc., for seeking publicity. The existence of these external power sources has allowed some students to act with impunity undermining the principal’s authority and reducing his power.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data analysis, following recommendations are proposed to avoid the identified problems faced by the principals in the Central Colleges.

- 1) The government should treat equally to all the schools in the country to avoid resource inequality among schools and allocate more financial resources for the school education.
- 2) Continuous and periodical training programs, attitudes development programs and out-bound training programs needs to be conducted to develop the leadership qualities of the principals.
- 3) There should be a clear responsibility in setting up a clear process and officers have to carry-out the monitory and supervision process for school activities. Officers have to provide training and workshop for improving their efficiency.
- 4) The principal should work independently and in a responsible way to avoid those unnecessary interferences.
- 5) The principals should maintain better human relations with the stakeholders to get the maximum support towards better management of the school.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study is to explore leadership styles to be the most effective leader with references to the selected Central Collages in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Both academic and nonacademic performances including achievements in the field of sports and other fields were considered as school performance. Six leadership styles were recognized as transformational, transactional, ethical, distribute, Laissez Faire and instructional leadership. Among them, the most effective leaders are the leaders who follow transformational leadership style which leads higher school performances. This study identified several key issues, namely, the lack of necessary financial, human, physical resources, negative attitudes of the stakeholders, less efficient government officers, unfavorable external environment and unnecessary political interference. In order to enhance the school performances, urgent attention is needed in implementing the above recommendations to address these issues.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RLS Fernando conceived the study and were in charge of overall direction, planning and completion of the paper. Interviews, data collections and performed the analysis by RLS Fernando, HDMK Geethamali and EAI Kularathna. RLS Fernando and HDMK Geethamali aided in interpreting the results and wrote the manuscript with input from all authors. RLSF encouraged, investigate and supervised the findings of this work. RLS Fernando, HDMK Geethamali and EAI Kularathna provided critical

feedback and helped shape the research and contributed to the final version of the manuscript.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to thank to the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka for support by research grants for this paper.

REFERENCES

- [1] K. Pathirana, "Leadership style and organizational performance of selected public schools in Kalutara district in Sri Lanka," Undergraduate Unpublished Dissertation ""- 2016. Nugegoda: Department of Public Administration, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, 2016.
- [2] Ministry of Finance Sri Lanka. (2016). [Online]. Available: <http://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/10181/12870/2016/c36d6610-d6e7-4b1c-ab35-238a4db56b88>
- [3] Unionassurance.com. (2015). Union Assurance PLC | Annual Report 2015. [Online]. Available: <https://www.unionassurance.com/AnnualReport/ooaeel.html>
- [4] C. Fernando, (2001). THE RISE and FALL of THE CENTRAL COLLEGES: A CURSORY GLANCE. featur01. [Online]. Available: <http://www.infolanka.com/org/srilanka/hist/35.htm>
- [5] A. Urlick, "Examining US principal perception of multiple leadership styles used to practice shared instructional leadership," *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 152-172, 2016.
- [6] The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning. (2013). [Online]. New York City, US: The Wallace Foundation (2013). Available: <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-School-Principal-as-Leader-Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning-2nd-Ed.pdf>
- [7] B. Pont, D. Nusche, and H. Moorman, *Improving School Leadership*, Volume 1: Policy and practice. Australia: OECD Publications, 2008.
- [8] O. Timothy, T. O. Andy, O. A. Victoria, and A. N. Idowu, "Effects of leadership style on organizational performance: A survey of selected small scale enterprises in ikosi-ketu council development area of Lagos state, Nigeria," *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research*, vol. 1, no. 7, pp. 100-111, 2011.
- [9] R. N. Amanchukwu, G. J. Stanley, and N. P. Ololube, "A review of leadership theories, principles and styles and their relevance to educational management," *Management*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 6-14, 2015.
- [10] G. Yukl and R. Mahsud, "Why flexible and adaptive leadership is essential," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, vol. 62, no. 2, p. 81, 2010.
- [11] R. Maslowski. (2001). School Culture and School Performance. Unpublished PhD thesis. Enschede, The Netherlands: University of Twente. [Online]. Available: https://www.essr.net/~jafundo/mestrado_material_itgjkhnld/SP/Cultura%20escolar/School%20Culture%20and%20School%20Performance.pdf
- [12] R. Rothstein, "Toward a composite index of school performance," *The Elementary School Journal*, vol. 100, no. 5, pp. 409-441, 2000.
- [13] K. Leithwood and D. Jantzi, "Transformational school leadership effects: A replication," *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 451-479, 1999.
- [14] B. M. Bass and B. J. Avolio, "Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage behavior," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 23-50, 1997.
- [15] K. Leithwood and D. Jantzi, "Transformational leadership: How principals can help reform school cultures," *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 249-280, 1990.
- [16] M. Sashkin and M. G. Sashkin. (1990). Leadership and Culture-Building in Schools: Quantitative and Qualitative Understandings. [Online]. Available: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED322583>

- [17] Villanovau.com. (2019). [Online]. Available: <https://www.villanovau.com/resources/leadership/what-is-ethical-leadership/>.
- [18] A. Z. Okpozo, T. Gong, M. C. Ennis, and B. Adenuga, "Investigating the impact of ethical leadership on aspects of burnout," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 1128-1143, 2017.
- [19] S. Ben-Hur, and K. Jonsen, "Ethical leadership: Lessons from Moses," *Journal of Management Development*, vol. 31, no. 9, pp. 962-973, 2012.
- [20] A. Harris, "Distributed leadership and school improvement: Leading or misleading?" *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 11-24, 2004.
- [21] A. Harris, "Distributed leadership: Implications for the role of the principal," *Journal of Management Development*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 7-17, 2011.
- [22] K. Beycioglu and A. Harris, "Distributed leadership: Implications for the role of the principal," *Journal of Management Development*, 2012.
- [23] J. E. Talbert and M. W. McLaughlin, "Teacher professionalism in local school contexts," *American Journal of Education*, vol. 102, no. 2, pp. 123-153, 1994.
- [24] Chron.com. (2008). 5 Different Types of Leadership Styles. [Online]. Available: <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/5-different-types-leadership-styles-17584.html>
- [25] A. Aydin, Y. Sarier, and S. Uysal, "The effect of school principals' leadership styles on teachers' organizational commitment and job satisfaction," *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 806-811, 2013.
- [26] P. Hallinger, "Instructional leadership and the school principal: A passing fancy that refuses to fade away," *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 221-239, 2005.
- [27] P. Hallinger, "Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership," *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 329-352, 2003.

Copyright © 2020 by the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License ([CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)), which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided that the article is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.



R. Lalitha S. Fernando was born in Sri Lanka on 15th September 1962. She was awarded the prestigious Commonwealth Academic (internal) Scholarship to pursue Postgraduate Diploma in Development Studies, leading to Master's in Development Administration and Management at the University of Manchester, UK, and obtained a full-time scholarship to pursue her Doctoral study from the Graduate School of Public Administration, National Institute of

Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand. Currently, she serves as a SENIOR PROFESSOR in the Department of Public

Administration of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in Sri Lanka and serves as the DIRECTOR of Research Centre for Governance and Public Policy of the University. She served as the former HEAD of the Department of Public Administration and also the CHAIRMAN of Research Committee of the Faculty. She has published a number of research papers, book chapters and articles related to public management and environmental management in both national and international level. Including these followings.

Solid Waste Management of Local Governments in the Western Province of Sri Lanka: An Implementation Analysis (2018) by R. Lalitha S Fernando, Elsevier journal." Waste Management – International Journal of Integrated Waste Management, Science and Technology", Vol.84, Page 194-203.

Critical factors affecting students' satisfaction with higher education in Sri Lanka, Quality Assurance in Education, (Joint Paper by Weerasinghe, I.M.S, Fernando, R. L.S, (2018). Quality Assurance in Education, Vol. 26 Issue: 1, pp.115-130, ISSN: 0968-4883, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QAE-04-2017-0014>



H. D. M. Kaushalya Geethamali was born in Sri Lanka on 28th September 1993. She was obtained B. Sc. Public Management (Special) Degree at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in Sri Lanka, for the period of 2014-2017. She serves as a RESEARCH ASSISTANT in the Research Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce of the

University of Sri Jayewardenepura in Sri Lanka. Her interested research areas are public policy analysis and governance. Phone: +94766744128. Email: kaushi.geethamali@gmail.com



E. Achini Indrachapa Kularathna was born in Sri Lanka on 15th September 1991. She was obtained B. Sc. Public Management (Special) Degree at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in Sri Lanka, for the period of 2013-2016. She serves as a RESEARCH ASSISTANT in the Research Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce of the

University of Sri Jayewardenepura in Sri Lanka. Her interested research areas are public policy analysis and governance. Phone: +94716009443. Email: chapa.eaik@gmail.com