

The Relationship between Teachers' Leadership Styles and Teaching Quality in Lower Secondary Schools in Liang Zhou District of Wuwei, Gansu, China

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Abstract

The main aim of this research was to study the relationship between teachers' leadership styles and teaching quality in Liang Zhou District of Wuwei, Gansu, China. A quantitative research method was employed with instruments of questionnaires: multifactor leadership questionnaire and teaching quality questionnaire. The qualities of questionnaires were measured by validity and reliability. The pilot study confirmed the reliability of two questionnaires by Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of 0.765 and 0.851 respectively. A multi-stage sampling was used to select 16 lower secondary schools and to select 352 lower secondary school teachers. The data were analyzed by SPSS, mean, standard deviation were used to analyze the lower secondary school teachers' perception on leadership styles and teaching quality, simple regression was used to analyze the relationship between the lower secondary school teachers' leadership styles and teaching quality. The results indicated a strong relationship between transformational leadership style and teaching quality. Furthermore, the relationship between transactional leadership style and teaching quality was found at the moderate level, positively and significantly. Lastly, the relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and teaching quality was statistically significant, but negatively.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership Style, Transactional Leadership Style, Laissez-Faire Leadership Style, Teaching Quality

Introduction

With the high development of science and technology, teaching and learning in education has been influenced especially after the information and communication technologies (ICT) has been proposed in this century. Education reform and revolution seems to be an urgent problem to meet the new education objective corresponding with the economy development (Frank & Susan, 2004). Traditional education should be changed, for many reasons, such as now educator as a role of coach, guide, lead learner, not like past teacher as the deliverer of content, tests and assignments, teachers are the only sources of knowledge. However, teachers as the direct people who pass knowledge to students, their teaching quality seems more important than other factors that play roles in education.

In China, since the reform and opening-up policy has been carried out in 1949, it has paid much attention to education, policy-makers made a vast number of education policies from different angles and aspects to make sure that everyone can get education (Andy, 2009). Now Chinese government gives education a priority, and they believe education is the most essential and the most fundamental component to improve individuals' life. Artiles (1994) stated that effective teaching is essential for educational development and students learning. Richard and Rebecca (1999) stated that good teaching as instruction and guidance that can make learning become effectively. There are numerous educational literatures explained that a majority of good teaching strategies that prove them (Campbell & Smith 1997; Johnson &

Smith 1998; McKeachie 1999). Teaching as an important part to education, good teaching is the objective of teachers' work. With many requests to teaching, teaching quality has been provided. In National Education Plan, to improve teaching quality has been provided as the core part to implement the education reform. Quality of teaching not only can help students' achievement but also can improve education development. The conception of teaching quality includes the evaluation from different angles not only just from end-of-course students surveys, however, it still rely primarily on assessment of learning outcome (Richard & Rebecca, 1999). China as a large population country, it chooses the elites according to the students' outcomes, teaching as the most important factor that affects the students' achievement, therefore, teaching quality attract people's attention.

The factors that associated with the teaching quality are numerous. Like teaching methods, lesson design, expertise skills, all of them request teachers their own teaching skills and development in their vocations. Communication and appraisal (Ghonji, Khoshnodifar, Hosseini & Mazlounzadeh, 2013), all of these factors act in teachers and students.

Lomas (2004) stated that the provision of good teaching quality depends on many factors, leadership development is the one part among these factors. In order to improve and facilitate teaching quality, leadership as a necessary competence is expected to be reacted by teachers and to be adapted to face the educational reform, decentralization and marketization. The goal of policy of educational leadership development is to improve the learning and teaching (Wang, 2004). If educators can use the proper and suitable leadership, which can help them achieve their goal with a good result. Even if there are many previous studies about professors' leadership styles (that is, transformational and transactional style), numerous authors still suggest to conduct researches on the style of professor in the current context, so that they can find the best style to facilitate teaching quality in the classroom (Lowe et al.1996, Mbawmbaw et al.2006, Moss & Ritossa, 2007). Bass (1985) improved Burns' transforming leadership style to transformational leadership style, and Bass and Avolio (1990) esbalished the related instrument to measure such leadership style, that's transformational leadership theory.

There are many leadership theories that have been established since the earlier of last century, like trait leadership theory, behaviorist leadership theory, situational leadership theory, contingency leadership theory, transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1990, 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Conger, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Fiedler, 1967).

There is a vast number of past researches about the education leadership such as principals' leadership style, administrators' leadership style or other leaders in schools, they always connected with schools achievement, teachers' job satisfaction, student outcome (Menon, 2011). However, few studies directly stated the relationship between of teachers' leadership styles and teaching quality. In 1994, Chinese researcher Yin established a study about the relationship between teachers' leadership style and classroom management, students' performance and students' achievement, the finding showed that teachers' leadership style positively related with students' performance and achievement and classroom management. In 2013, Mohammna & Rahil illustrated in their study transformational leaderships style was effectively related with classroom management, teaching skills, and teachers' expertise knowledge. Both of these two studies connected the leadership styles with teaching quality, and this study still stated this topic, but the study focused on basic education of lower secondary level.

This research, therefore, studied the teachers' leadership style based on transformational leadership theory, and examined teachers' perception on their leadership style and teaching quality in lower secondary schools. The last but the most important, stated the relationship between teachers' leadership styles and teaching quality in lower secondary schools in Liang Zhou District of Wuwei, Gansu, China.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational Leadership Theory: Transformational leadership that brought the great difference in individuals and institutions (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership was first time introduced by James V. Downton in Rebel leadership: “Commitment and Charisma in a Revolutionary Process”, and further improved by James MacGregor Burns in his book Leadership. To Burns, Transforming leadership was a process in which “Leader and follower help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation”. Burns established two concepts: “transforming leadership and transactional leadership” and defined transforming leader are those who give inspiration to others to achieve a higher morale and motivation level, on the other hand, transactional leaders who directly motivate those individuals who make contributions to organization (Burns, 1978). Bass (1985) improved Burns transforming leadership to transformational leadership, and defined how to measure the transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style in cooperating with Avolio by using “Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire”. Bass & Avolio (1990) developed this instrument again, it involved three leadership styles: transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire (Bass & Avolio, 1990, 1994). Laissez-faire leadership is one kind of leadership style that leaders unwilling to control or without control to their subordinates. Laissez-faire, this word came from French word which means “let it be”, therefore, such leaders with little or no supervision to their followers when they together. MLQ was developed and validated to reflect leadership style by the dimension of transformational transactional leadership and Laissez-faire leadership. Modified MLQ that used in this study including 34 questions totally. Transformational leadership style (20 items), transactional leadership style (30 items) and Laissez-faire leadership style (4 items). In this study, the leadership measurement questionnaires established based on the using a 5-point likert scale (“Never” to “Always”)

Teaching Quality: Ghonji et al., (2015) conducted a research, in their study they analyzed the teaching quality was mainly including lesson design, communication skills, teaching skills, and the expertise skill in the lesson content. Oliver & Reschly (2007) stressed the importance of classroom management for teaching quality, they stated that the result of classroom management can result in positive educational outcome. In order to access to the level of teaching quality, the questions in questionnaire refer to the past questionnaire about teaching quality and Teacher Classroom Management Strategies Questionnaire (2012). The number of total questions is 25 items. Lesson design (5 items), teaching skills (5 items), and communication skills (5 items), the expertise skill in the lesson content (5 items), classroom management (5 items). To each item, there are five degree on perception of teaching quality ranking from: never, rarely, sometimes, often and always with the score from 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively based on 5-point Likert scale.

Conceptual framework

The study showed the independent variable: leadership styles were related to the dependent variable, teaching quality.

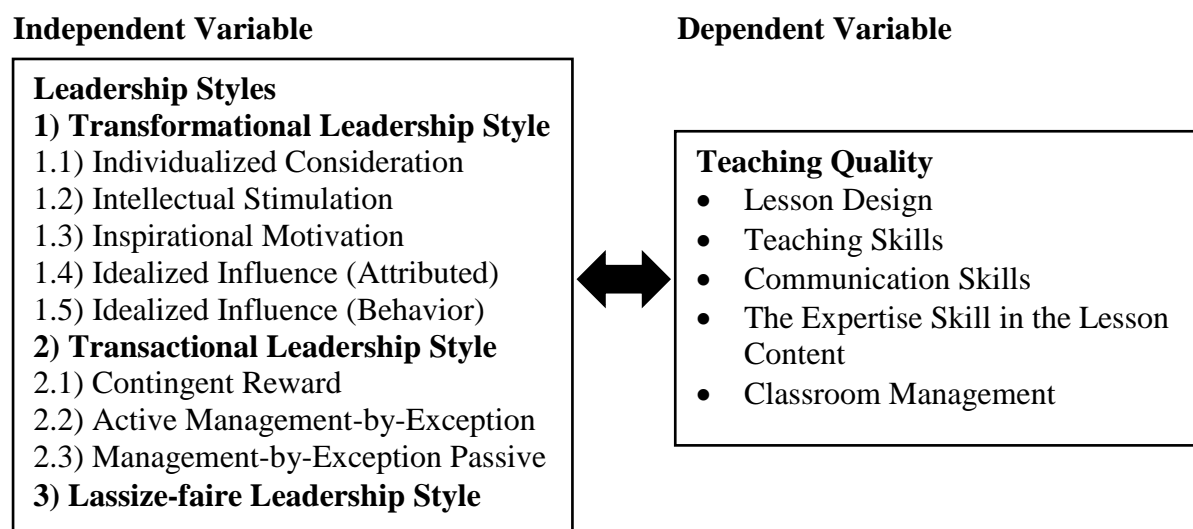


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Method: The quantitative method was used for the objective of the study, the study was established by using sixteen public lower secondary schools' teachers who worked in Liang Zhou district of Wuwei. The questionnaire were based on transformational leadership style and teaching quality. There were 352 samples confirmed based on the Taro Yamane formula (1967) with 95% confidence level and $P=0.05$ from 78 lower secondary school with 2964 teachers who work in Liang Zhou district. And according to using multi-stage random sampling, these 352 teachers were coming from 16 lower secondary schools in Liang Zhou district.

Instruments: All questions in two questionnaires were answered by five-point likert scale ranging from 5 to 1: Always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. The questionnaire of leadership styles was modified according to the original one that established by Avolio & Bass (1994) and the questionnaire of teaching quality was modified according to original teaching quality questionnaire which conducted by Ghonji, Khoshnodifar, Hosseini and Mazlounzadeh (2013). The reliability of questionnaires on leadership and teaching quality were 0.76 (Alpha value) and 0.85 (Alpha value) respectively. There were three experts checked every item of questionnaires from aspects of content, criteria and construct corresponding with the objectives of the study (IOC: Item Objective Congruence), this process confirmed the validity of the questionnaires.

Result

The data of mean and standard deviation of the leadership style (transformational and transactional and laissez-faire), and of teaching quality that illustrates the level of perception by lower secondary school teachers.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistic

	M	SD	Perception Level
Transformational	3.65	0.59	High
Transactional	3.06	0.55	Moderate
Laissez-faire	2.32	0.87	Low
Teaching quality	3.87	0.59	High

Note: M=mean SD=Standard deviation

The figures of the table1 showed that the mean score and standard deviation of transformational (M=3.65, SD=0.59) meant the lower secondary school teachers perception on transformational leadership style on high level. And transactional (M=3.06, SD=0.55) indicated that lower secondary school teachers perceived on transactional leadership style at the moderate level, and lassiez-faire (M=2.32, SD=0.87) manifested lower secondary school teachers perception on it at the low level. On the other hand, the mean score of teaching quality (M=3.87, SD=0.59) indicated that the lower secondary school teachers have a high perception on it.

Table 2 Simple Regression Analysis: the relationship between teachers 'leadership styles and teaching quality

Predictor Variable	t	B	β	R ²	F	P
Transformational	20.583	.740	.740	.548	423.665	.00
Transactional	7.736	.406	.382	.146	59.844	.00
Lassize-faire	-4.420	-.155	-.230	.053	19.539	.00

Note: B = Unstandardized regression coefficient, β = Standardized regression coefficient, t = Observed t value, p = Significance level, R²=effect size, P=0.05

The regression model for teachers' transformational leadership style with their teaching quality scores showed as significant, $F(1,350) = 423.665$, $P < 0.05$, with $R^2 = .548$. As for standardized coefficients $\beta = .740$, which was greater than zero, it indicated the transformational leadership style and teaching quality were related, and the relationship between transformation leadership style and teaching quality was positively and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the higher the transformational leadership style scores, the higher their teaching quality, $\beta = 0.74$, $t = 20.583$, $P < 0.05$. Effect size R^2 was 0.548. Thus, the predictor variable of transformational leadership style predicted 54.8% of the variance in the dependent variable of teaching quality. And as for the $F(1, 350) = 423.665$, with observed significance level of less than 0.05. Thus, the first hypothesis the transformational leadership style positively affects teaching quality was accepted.

The regression model for teachers' transactional leadership style with their teaching quality scores showed as significant, $F(1, 350) = 59.884$, $P < 0.05$, with $R^2 = .146$. As for standardized coefficients $\beta = .382$, which was greater than zero, it indicated the transactional leadership style and teaching quality were related, and the relationship between transformation leadership style and teaching quality was positively and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the higher the transactional leadership style scores, the higher their teaching quality, $\beta = 0.382$, $t = 7.736$, $P < 0.05$. Effect size R^2 was 0.146. Thus, the predictor variable of transactional leadership style predicted 14.6% of the variance in the dependent variable of teaching quality. And as for the $F(1, 350) = 59.884$, with observed significance level of less than 0.05. Thus, the second hypothesis the transactional leadership style positively affects teaching quality was accepted.

The regression model for teachers' Lassize-faire leadership style with their teaching quality scores showed as significant, $F(1, 350) = 19.539$, $P < 0.05$, with $R^2 = .053$. As for standardized coefficients $\beta = -.230$, which was greater than zero, it indicated the Lassize-faire leadership style and teaching quality were related, and the relationship between Lassize-faire leadership style and teaching quality was positively and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the higher the Lassize-faire leadership style scores, the lower their teaching quality, $\beta = -.230$, $t = -4.420$, $P < 0.05$. Effect size R^2 was .053. Thus, the predictor variable of Lassize-faire leadership style predicted 5.3% of the variance in the dependent variable of teaching quality. And as for the $F(1, 350) = 19.539$, with observed significance level of less than 0.05. Thus,

the third hypothesis the laissez-faire leadership style negatively affects teaching quality was accepted.

Discussion

According to the research results, both the transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style were found positively and significantly affected their teaching quality. These two results were matching with the previous researches: the leaders who master transformational leadership features, which could guide their employees fulfill their objectives easily (Buluc, 2009; Cemaloglu, 2007; Samier, 2008; Celik, 2000; Sisman, 2002). Mohammad & Rahil (2013) stated that transformational leadership style based on Bass and Avolio's transformational leadership theory positively associated with classroom management, teaching skills and teachers' professional knowledge. The leaders who master transformational leadership features, which could guide their employees fulfill their objectives easily (Buluc, 2009; Cemaloglu, 2007; Samier, 2008; Celik, 2000; Sisman, 2002) Blase (1999) stated in research that transactional leadership style improved teachers' professional growth, such as their teaching methods and logical ability. Teaching quality as a performance result in this study, the finding results were consistent with the Talat, Muhammad & Ishfaq's (2015) research finding that transformational and transactional leadership had a positive relationship with performance. In their study, they found that transactional leadership style has a greater positive relationship with their performance than the relationship between transformational leadership style and performance, which was different from the present study finding that transformational leadership style had a stronger effect on teaching quality than transactional leadership effect on teaching quality. The finding that teachers' perception on transformational leadership had a vital consequence on their teaching quality in line with Hanna, Hilla & Rachel's finding that teachers' perception on transformational leadership had consequences for their involvement in organization learning process to improve their own practices and teaching ability. Laissez-faire leadership style which characterized for leaders who avoid to make decisions and to take responsibility for their work. The finding was also accordance with Abdul & Husnain's (2012) finding in a macro-angle that transactional leadership style positively affected subordinates' motivation, while laissez-faire leadership negatively affected their subordinates' motivation.

Conclusion

On the one hand, the findings of the study showed that firstly, the lower secondary school teachers had a high perception on teaching quality, especially the aspect of teaching design. To lower secondary school teachers, how they made their teaching become effectively, that is, what kind of ways and methods that could make their students get what they say during the class, for instance, teachers set homework to request students to review the previous knowledge and prepare the future lesson. Secondly, the lower secondary school teachers had a high perception on transformational leadership style, tightly followed was transactional leadership style. Anyway, the lower secondary school teachers had the similar conceptual and attitude as many individuals that laissez-faire leadership was the negative component. On the other hand, the findings also revealed that the lower secondary school teachers' transformational leadership style had a positive effect on their teaching quality, their transactional leadership style also had a positive effect on their teaching quality, but this affection level was less than that of transformational leadership style. That is to say, the higher transformational or transactional leadership style, the higher teaching quality to lower secondary school teachers. However, their laissez-faire leadership style was negatively affect their teaching quality, which meant that the higher laissez-faire leadership style score, the

lower the teaching quality score. Therefore, compared with the past welcomed transactional leadership style, transformational leadership style as a population and efficiency style that was perceived by teachers and used in modern education gradually.

Recommendations

- 1) The principles can encourage teachers' leadership style in schools.
- 2) The policy-maker can make related policies to improve teachers' leadership styles in their work to improve education.
- 3) The future can extend the research samples and compare the different efficient size between public school teachers and private school teachers.

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