INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT, SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of school leadership practices on classroom management, school environment and academic performance at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township. All principals and teachers from these schools were chosen as participants for this study. This study was conducted by using quantitative research method. As research instrument, the "School Leadership, Environment, Classroom Management Assessment Questionnaire (SLECMAQ)" developed by Morgan (2015) was used to gather the required data. There are five dimensions in this questionnaire: perceptions of principals on school leadership practices, perceptions of teachers on school leadership practices, classroom management, school environment and academic performance. The distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005), the social activity (Bolden, 2011) and the social system (Bandura, 1977; Parsons, 1991, as cited in Morgan, 2015) theories were used as the theoretical framework. According to the research findings, school leadership practices of teachers (β=0.726) are more influence on classroom management than school leadership practices of principals (β=0.027), school leadership practices of principals (β=0.402) are more influence on school environment than school leadership practices of teachers (β=0.388) and school leadership practices of teachers (β=0.518) are more influence on academic performance than school leadership practices of principals (β=0.119).

Keywords: school leadership, classroom management, school environment, academic performance

Introduction

Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers who are aiming at making changes that indicate their mutual purposes. Moreover, leadership also involves the group's goal achievement where the leaders guide their followers to achieve their common goals together (Northouse, 2004). School leaders are at the core of school growth and performance.

Smylic and Evans (2006) described effective leadership as a willingness to accept responsibility and accountability, and a commitment to support open and honest relationships to motivate others to work together for the common goal of the organization. Effective leadership requires knowledge of and experience in what works, confidence and flexibility, respect, trust, and empathy to enhance performance. Harris and Chapman (2002) viewed effective school leadership as key to improving the performance of teaching staff. So, school leaders (principals) should be able to apply leadership styles that align their values and moral purpose with the personal value systems of staff members.

According to Walter (2006, as cited in George, Sakirudeen, & Sunday, 2017), classroom management differs from one teacher to another because of the teacher's personality, teaching style, preparedness, and number of students in the classroom. The concept of classroom management is broader than the notion of student control and discipline and it involves all the things teachers must do in the classroom to foster students' academic involvement and cooperation in the classroom activities to create conducive learning environment (Umoren, 2010).

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The school environment was indicated by the level of the cooperation and collaboration among the teachers in sharing and discussing instructional ideas, experiences and materials. Cooperation is believed to be an indicator of school environment because it reflects freedom, collectivism, comfort and trust in the school's environment. School leaders also try to improve achievement and well-being for children by becoming more involved with other partners (Moorman et al., 2008).

The school system requires leaders who are able to manage the school system to influence students' academic performance (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). According to Leithwood *et al.* (2006) in order to improve the school and students' outcomes, the leader, in this case, the principal needs to involve and engage all school elements. The schools elements consist of teachers and school stakeholders. School principals need to be able to motivate and improve the conditions of all school elements. To perform instructional leadership well, a principal must be competent, skillful with statistical data, be able in connecting and communicating with teachers both on formal and informal levels and be able to carry out the specific methods and strategies that are most effective for enhancing student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of school leadership practices on classroom management, school environment, and academic performance at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township.

Specific purposes of this study were-

- To examine the relationship between school leadership practices and classroom management at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township,

- To explore the relationship between school leadership practices and school environment at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township,

- To find out the relationship between school leadership practices and academic performance at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township, and

- To study how school leadership practices influence classroom management, school environment and academic performance at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the direction of the study:

- Is there any relationship between school leadership practices and classroom management at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township?

- Is there any relationship between school leadership practices and school environment at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township?

- Is there any relationship between school leadership practices and academic performance at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township?

- How do school leadership practices influence classroom management, school environment and academic performance at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township?

Review of Related Literature

The distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005), the social activity (Bolden, 2011) and the social system (Bandura, 1977; Parsons, 1991, as cited in Morgan, 2015) theories were used as the theoretical framework. For this study, the distributed leadership theory was the main framework used. The theories are used to describe leadership as a practice of leading and managing teaching and learning involving multiple people collaborating and coordinating with a degree of interdependence (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Spillane (2005) commented that distributive leadership requires three elements, namely, leaders, followers, and situation, with each having a shared responsibility in meeting a desired goal and described distributed leadership as a diagnostic and analytical tool that applies and uses various artifacts to focus on collective attention and core tasks.

School Leadership

School leadership plays a critical role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling (Moorman et al., 2008). When school leadership is deliberately examined, factors such as classroom management; school environment (i.e., internal and external to the school); and academic performance appear. School leadership practices (i.e., those of principals and teachers) can change the academic trajectory of a school (Farr, 2011, as cited in Morgan, 2015). School leadership practices that spring from the first of the four core assumptions about school leaders — developing a vision for the school, and setting the school's direction — include: Building a shared vision among all of the school's stakeholders, fostering the acceptance of group goals, and the setting and demonstration of high expectations for students, faculty, and administration (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, as cited in Mathis, 2014). To recognize the school's vision, the school leader must be a skilled and effective communicator, make clear what the vision holds for creating a more effective school, and establish school-wide responsibility for achieving the shared vision. Once the vision is clearly articulated and accepted, the school leader must demonstrate commitment to effecting the changes necessary and explicitly communicate the expectations required for success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, as cited in Mathis, 2014).

School Leadership Practices

Leadership practices define all those actions and tasks that the principal undertakes at school in order to improve teaching and learning. Jekins (2006, as cited in Gowpall, 2015) proposes that 'leadership practices' have a dual approach since practices of leadership should not only focus on physical practices i.e. a means of doing things, practices also include understanding. Leadership practices must be understood as the activities both in theory and practice that the principal undertakes to ensure teaching and learning.

Effective school leaders perform five key practices well:
- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students,
- Creating a climate hospitable to education,
- Cultivating leadership in others,
- Improving instruction, and
- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Leadership and Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is situational. Doyle (1983, as cited in Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998) pointed to six classroom characteristics that affect classroom management.

- *Multidimensionality.* Classrooms are multidimensional in so far as a variety of different activities go on at any one time, students are at a variety of learning levels, and the students learn in a variety of ways.

- *Simultaneity.* Simultaneity exists in that many activities are going on that any one time. Even if the teacher is in front of the class, students may be engaged in many different responses to instruction.

- *Immediacy.* A sense of immediacy exists in that action is taking place every minute through teacher talk and behavior.

- *Unpredictability.* Events in a classroom are unpredictable. Though the teacher may have a well-devised plan, events take place every day that disrupt the plan.

- *Observability.* Classrooms are public places, and whatever action takes place is generally observable by everyone in the class.

- *History.* Classrooms and classroom teachers have histories and these histories tend to follow teachers and students over time.

Leadership and School Environment

School environment that is orderly without being rigid maintains a consistent set of rules and values that clearly map out school goals and policies. This environment promotes student achievement by enhancing collegial relationships and promoting an atmosphere of trust, caring and cooperation (Mayberry, 1993). The quality of education not only depends on principals and teachers as reflected on performance of their duties, but also in the effective coordination of the school environment (Ajao, 2001, as cited in Chuma, 2012). According to Mathis (2014), school must build productive relationships with families and communities.

So, a principal must be connected to the community because what is happening outside of the school impacts the performance of students. Connecting to the wider environment allows the school to use new ideas from the community and helps resources flow into the school. The school environment was indicated by the level of the cooperation and collaboration among the teachers in sharing and disusing instructional ideas, experiences and materials. Cooperation is believed to be an indicator of school environment because it reflects freedom, collectivism, comfort and trust in the school's environment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, as cited in Leithwood et al., 2006).

Leadership and Academic Performance

Leadership has very important impacts on the quality of the school organization and on students' outcome, and it does not reside in just one person; instead, it is embedded in the entire school community, whose members provide support for the leadership to make changes to the system to improve students' academic performance. So, school leadership is essential to the success of school organizations and it also facilitates students' achievement through the provision of better school conditions (Raihani, 2008, as cited in Morgan, 2015). In this new era of accountability, school leaders are expected to increase achievement and make substantial

academic growth for all students (Quin, 2015). Principals' leadership has a direct effect on organizational characteristics and teacher performance. It is teacher performance that directly affects student performance (Cheng, 2002, as cited in Vidoni, Bennina, Gatelli, & Grassetti, 2007). Participative leadership mediated through teacher activity, contributed effectively to student outcomes (Bolam et al., 1993, as cited in Vidoni et al., 2007). Therefore, school leadership needs to create a community of workers (i.e., principals and teachers) who can build the foundation of shared leadership that will ensure students' academic success.

Methodology

The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate the influence of school leadership practices on classroom management, school environment and academic performance in all Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township.

Research Method

The quantitative research method was used in this study to achieve the research objectives, which involved using questionnaires to gather data within a representative sample of a population.

Population and Sample

There are seven high schools in Nyaung Oo Township. All principals and teachers (315) were chosen as participants in the study.

Instrument

"The School Leadership, Environment, Classroom Management Assessment Questionnaire (SLECMAQ) developed by Morgan (2015)" is used. There were 62 items (five dimensions: perceptions of principals on school leadership practices, perceptions of teachers on school leadership practices, classroom management, school environment and academic performance) utilized in this current study. In this instrument, 5-point Likert scale; 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree was used.

Data Collection Procedure

To conduct the major study, it needed to have the permission from the responsible persons. After receiving the permission from the responsible persons, the agreement of school principals was taken and distributed the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20, the collected data were entered into it and analyzed through using descriptive statistics such as means, and standard deviations. To explore research question one, two and three, the relationship between school leadership practices and classroom management, school environment and academic performance, Pearson's product-moment correlation was used. For research question four, multiple linear regression analysis was used. Responses from open-ended questions were categorized into similar views that are adopted to sort out them.

Findings

In order to find out the school leadership practices and classroom management, school environment and academic performance perceived by principals and teachers at all high schools, all principals and teachers were examined by using questionnaires. The data collected were analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics such as mean scores, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlation, multiple linear regression and paired-sample *t*-test.

Table 1 Mean Values Showing Teachers' School Leadership Practices Perceived by Principals and Teachers Grouped by Schools   (N=315)

Schools	Teachers' School Leadership Practices			
	N	M	SD	Remark
A	53	4.58	.49	High
B	56	4.05	.23	High
C	26	5.00	.00	High
D	23	4.05	.21	High
E	47	4.91	.29	High
F	85	4.00	.16	High
G	25	4.75	.44	High
All Schools	315	4.48	0.26	High

1.00 to 2.33= Low level   2.34 to 3.67= Moderate level   3.68 to 5.00=High level

Table 1 shows that leadership practices of teachers in those schools were at high level. The mean value of School C was the highest and of School F, the lowest.

Table 2   Mean Values Showing Principals' School Leadership Practices Perceived by Principals and Teachers Grouped by Schools   (N=315)

Schools	Principals' School Leadership Practices			
	N	M	SD	Remark
A	53	4.83	.38	High
B	56	4.09	.29	High
C	26	4.96	.20	High
D	23	4.32	.48	High
E	47	4.24	.43	High
F	85	4.04	.24	High
G	25	4.38	.49	High
All Schools	315	4.41	.36	High

1.00 to 2.33= Low level   2.34 to 3.67= Moderate level   3.68 to 5.00=High level

Table 2 shows that leadership practices of principals in those schools were at high level. The mean value of School C was the highest and the School F, the lowest.

Table 3 Mean Values Showing Classroom Management Perceived by Principals and Teachers Grouped by Schools   (N=315)

Schools	Classroom Management			
	N	M	SD	Remark
A	53	4.01	.51	High
B	56	4.17	.37	High
C	26	4.19	.40	High
D	23	4.05	.37	High
E	47	4.31	.37	High
F	85	4.04	.45	High
G	25	4.20	.34	High
All Schools	315	4.14	.40	High

1.00 to 2.33= Low level   2.34 to 3.67= Moderate level   3.68 to 5.00=High level

Table 3 shows that classroom management of principals and teachers in those schools were at high level. The mean value of School E was the highest and the School A, the lowest.

Table 4 Mean Values Showing School Environment Perceived by Principals and Teachers Grouped by Schools (N=315)

Schools	School Environment			
	N	M	SD	Remark
A	53	3.77	.63	High
B	56	3.97	.49	High
C	26	4.10	.32	High
D	23	4.10	.33	High
E	47	4.13	.41	High
F	85	3.92	.41	High
G	25	4.19	.53	High
All Schools	315	4.03	.45	High

1.00 to 2.33= Low level   2.34 to 3.67= Moderate level   3.68 to 5.00=High level

Table 4 shows that school environment of principals and teachers in those schools were at high level. The mean value of School G was the highest and the School A, the lowest.

Table 5 Mean Values Showing Academic Performance Perceived by Principals and Teachers Grouped by Schools (N=315)

Schools	Academic Performance			
	N	M	SD	Remark
A	53	4.11	.42	High
B	56	4.13	.33	High
C	26	4.21	.33	High
D	23	4.26	.33	High
E	47	4.20	.37	High
F	85	4.08	.25	High
G	25	4.28	.39	High
All Schools	315	4.18	.35	High

1.00 to 2.33= Low level   2.34 to 3.67= Moderate level   3.68 to 5.00=High level

Table 5 shows that academic performance of principals and teachers in these schools were at high level. The mean value of School G was the highest and the School F, the lowest.

Table 6 Correlations between School Leadership Practices of Principals and Teachers and Classroom Management in all High Schools

Dimensions	1	2	3
School Leadership Practices of Principals	1		
School Leadership Practices of Teachers	.803**	1	
Classroom Management	.610**	.747**	1

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

As shown in Table 6, it could be found that school leadership practices of teachers (r =0.803, $p<0.01$) was positively and highly correlated with school leadership practices of principals. And, school leadership practices of teachers (r =0.747, $p<0.01$) was positively and highly correlated with classroom management. On the other hand, school leadership practices of principals (r =0.610, $p<0.01$) was positively and moderately correlated with classroom management.

Table 7 Correlations between School Leadership Practices of Principals and Teachers and School Environment in all High Schools

Dimensions	1	2	3
School Leadership Practices of Principals	1		
School Leadership Practices of Teachers	.803**	1	
School Environment	.714**	.711**	1

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

As shown in Table 7, it could be found that school leadership practices of teachers (r =0.803, $p<0.01$) was positively and highly correlated with school leadership practices of principals. And also, school leadership practices of teachers (r =0.711, $p<0.01$) and school leadership practices of principals (r =0.714, $p<0.01$) were positively and highly correlated with school environment.

Table 8 Correlations between School Leadership Practices of Principals and Teachers and Academic Performance in all High Schools

Dimensions	1	2	3
School Leadership Practices of Principals	1		
School Leadership Practices of Teachers	.803**	1	
Academic Performance	.535**	.613**	1

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

As shown in Table 8, it could be found that school leadership practices of teachers (r =0.803, $p<0.01$) was positively and highly correlated with school leadership practices of principals. On the other hand, school leadership practices of teachers (r =0.613, $p<0.01$) and school leadership practices of principals (r =0.535, $p<0.01$) were positively and moderately correlated with academic performance.

A multiple regression was done to examine the influence of school leadership practices of principals and teachers on classroom management, school environment and academic performance.

Table 9   Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for School Leadership Practices of Principals and Teachers on Classroom Management in all High Schools

Dependent Variables	Predictors	β	t	F	R^2
Classroom Management	School Leadership practices of Principals	.027	.427	197.38***	.556
	School Leadership practices of Teachers	.726	11.485***	197.38***	.556

Note: ***$p<.001$

According to Table 9, results of the regression suggested that the independent variables, school leadership practices of principals and school leadership practices of teachers, significantly predicted the dependent variable of perceived classroom management, $F_{(2,312)}$=197.38, $p < .001$, R^2=0.556 (56%). The R^2 value suggested that 56% of the variability in perceived classroom management could have been explained by the perceptions of school leadership practices (i.e., those of principals and teachers). According to Cohen's d, this is a large effect. This means that school leadership practices of teachers are more influence on classroom management than school leadership practices of principals (β=0.726).

Table 10   Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for School Leadership Practices of Principals and Teachers on School Environment in all High Schools

Dependent Variables	Predictors	β	t	F	R^2
School Environment	School Leadership practices of Principals	.402	6.402***	201.217***	.563
	School Leadership practices of Teachers	.388	6.178***	201.217***	.563

Note: ***$p<.001$

According to Table 10, results of the regression suggested that the independent variables, school leadership practices of principals and school leadership practices of teachers, significantly predicted the dependent variable of perceived school environment, $F_{(2,312)}$=201.217, $p < .001$, R^2=0.563 (56%). The R^2 value suggested that 56% of the variability in perceived school environment could have been explained by the perceptions of school leadership practices (i.e., those of principals and teachers). According to Cohen's d, this is a large effect. This means that school leadership practices of principals are more influence on school environment than school leadership practices of teachers (β =.402).

Table 11   Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for School Leadership Practices of Principals and Teachers on Academic Performance in all High Schools

Dependent Variables	Predictors	β	t	F	R^2
Academic Performance	School Leadership practices of Principals	.119	1.589	96.077***	.381
	School Leadership practices of Teachers	.518	6.924***	96.077***	.381

Note: ***$p<.001$

According to Table 11, results of the regression suggested that the independent variables, school leadership practices of principals and school leadership practices of teachers, significantly predicted the dependent variable of perceived academic performance, $F_{(2,312)}$=96.077, $p < .001$, R^2=0.381 (38%). The R^2 value suggested that 38% of the variability in perceived academic performance could have been explained by the perceptions of school leadership practices (i.e., those of principals and teachers). According to Cohen's d, this is a large effect. This means that school leadership practices of teachers are more influence on academic performance than school leadership practices of principals (β =.518).

Paired-sample t test can be used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the average values of the same measurement under two different conditions, to compare perceptions of school leadership practices of principals and perceptions of school leadership practices of teachers, the researcher conducted a paired-sample t test.

Table 12 Paired-sample t Test for Perceptions of School Leadership Practices for Principals and Teachers

School Leadership Practices	Principals		Teachers		t	p	Cohen's d
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**			
	4.10	.45	4.13	.39	−2.32	.021	0.05

Results of the paired-sample t test indicated a significant difference, $t = -2.32$, $p= .021$, between perceptions of principals' school leadership practices and perceptions of teachers' school leadership practices. Average perception score of principals' leadership practices was 4.10 (SD=.45), and average perception score of teachers' leadership practices was 4.13 (SD=.39). According to Cohen's d, the difference in these perceptions was small but significant.

Open-Ended Responses

Besides, quantitative items, the researcher asked two open-ended questions. Firstly, principals and teachers were asked to describe their opinions about "What influence do school leadership practices of principals and teachers have on classroom management?" Participants answered the following.

- Good leadership of principals and teachers has effective and efficient influence on managing classroom activities.
- By leading the classroom management activities effectively, teaching learning process is more convenient, systematic, and students obey the discipline, there is no absence to sit the examination, the activities done by team do systematically, weak subjects are taught in extra classes, students attend the class regularly and they are more enthusiastic to learn the lessons.

Secondly, principals and teachers were asked to describe their opinions about "What influence do school leadership practices of principals and teachers have on school environment and academic performance of students?" Participants answered the following.

- Students are systematically taught and directed to improve creative and critical thinking skills, clean and green school environment can be created. Students are more learning opportunities. The standard of education will be more enriched.
- The school discipline can be defined exactly and student obeyed these discipline.
- It can be produced the outstanding students in academic and others activities.

Discussion

The first research question concerned the perceptions of school leadership practices and classroom management in all basic education high schools. The results indicated that relationship between school leadership practices and classroom management are significant and strong relationship. The earlier educational research has shown that an effective classroom management by the teacher increases student involvement in teaching reduces disruptive behavior and utilizes the instructional time to the fullest extent. These findings can be interpreted that principals and teachers should maintain an orderly learning environment and strive to monitor the activities of a classroom including learning, social skill, and student behavior.

In research question two, the results showed that school leadership practices can improve the effective school environment and can increase students' academic performance. Environment is a place where the child functions. This involves home, the school, the peer group, the classroom, the totality of the child's upbringing including his spiritual life, social needs and psychological needs, etc. The school environment was shown by the extent of the cooperation and collaboration among the teachers in sharing and discussing instructional ideas, experiences and materials. School leaders are responsible for connecting and adapting schools to their surrounding environments. This finding can be seen that school leaders should encourage creating the external and internal physical environment that fosters learning and maintains the discipline procedures, safety, and security of the school.

Research question three asked whether school leadership practices related with academic performance in basic education high schools. The statistical findings indicated a significant relationship between the school leadership practices and academic performance. The results suggested that school leadership practices are influential factors in students' ability to learn through personal commitment, experience, understanding, and planning with teachers (Leithwood *et al.*, 2010, as cited in Mathis, 2014). Leadership has very important impacts on the quality of the school organization and on students' outcome. According to Leithwood et *al*. (2006) in order to improve the school and students' outcomes, the leader, in this case, the school's principle needs to involve and engage all school elements. The schools elements consist of teachers and school stakeholders. School principals need to be able to motivate and improve the conditions of all school elements. These findings can be interpreted that principals and teachers should provide opportunities to form larger patterns of knowledge and being able to communicate the knowledge.

Research question four asked whether school leadership practices influenced on classroom management, school environment and academic performance in all high schools. The statistical findings indicated that leadership practices of principals and teachers had a positive influence on classroom management, school environment, and academic performance. The role of the principal was perceived as highly influential in classroom management and its layout. Based upon the analysis of the data, the findings are consistent with the data gleaned from the literature review. The results suggested that there was a significant relationship indicating that school leadership practices (i.e., those of principals and teachers) positively influenced classroom management, school environment, and academic performance to facilitate improvements in students' academic performance.

Conclusion

This study investigates the influence of school leadership practices (i.e., those of principals and teachers) on classroom management, school environment and academic performance at Basic Education High Schools in Nyaung Oo Township. In this study the statistical findings indicated that leadership practices of principals and teachers had a positive influence on classroom management, school environment, and academic performance. Based upon the analysis of the data, the findings are consistent with the data gleaned from the literature review. The principals and teachers need to be aware that providing good leadership practices, clear instruction, and supervision could lead to higher level performance of classroom management, school environment and academic performance. The more the principals and teachers adopt their school leadership practices, the more they improve the level of performance in classroom management, school environment and their academic performance. Therefore, the principals and teachers need to emphasize their school leadership practices in order to improve the all-round development of their schools. Further research should be made for the schools in other states and regions to be able to represent the principals' and teachers' school leadership practices in Myanmar extensively and deeply.

Acknowledgements

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