

Practices of distributed leadership in two Islamic secondary schools

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ABSTRACT

Distributed leadership (DL) continues to draw practitioners and researchers' attention in the context of education leadership as early as the 21st century. While an increasing amount of literature strongly advises principals to shift toward DL practices, there is a paucity of studies that indicate the extent to which this shift is taking place in practice across Islamic secondary schools. Consequently, this study investigates the distributed leadership practices of two Islamic secondary schools located in two different countries. The study uses a collective case study methodology with a mixed-method approach, and collected data from 30 school teachers and interviews six school teachers. The findings reveal that both selected Islamic secondary schools have a definite hierarchy decided by top management. The findings also indicate that when leadership roles are distributed among classroom teachers, the schools do not seem to have fixed criteria. In addition, the findings illustrate that novice teachers are slowly given responsibilities and prepared to take on leadership roles. The finding could serve as a supportive literature in practicing DL across Islamic secondary schools to reduce the workload of headteachers. The findings further link DL to the development of a professional learning community through teacher leadership. The significance and originality of this research arguably falls along the fact that; it is the first of its kind to empirically investigate DL practices across Islamic secondary schools in two different geographical locations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers in school leadership over the 20th century have conceived the role of the school principal as an administrator whose prime function is to administer the educational process [1]–[5]. The principal's or headteacher's chair implied working distantly and commandingly within an educational bureaucratic establishment—an arrangement signified by hierarchical set up and a stringent division of labor. Handing over organizational roles and responsibilities, commanding and controlling staff, evaluating student progress and making single-sided decisions were all considered as top-down management functions.

Initiating and building a collaborative school culture, fostering adult and student learning processes, or providing aid to teachers partaking in those processes were not emphasized [6].

Nevertheless, starting from early 2000, researchers in school leadership have recognized the need for change in leadership patterns captivating schools [4], [7]–[10]. This change possesses potential challenge on the conventional understanding which associates leadership with particular positions or power [11]. Leadership appears to be less entrenched in the privileged position of the school principal or headteacher and more linked to networked interactions among several stakeholders [4]. To put it differently, leadership is evolving into a multidirectional route of control. This power is shared by everyone who has a stake in the school, including classroom teachers, parents, and even learners in some circumstances. This emerging pattern is known as distributed leadership (DL) and defined as “leadership practice which is distributed over leaders, followers, and others upholding school’s situation or context” [9], [10], [12], [13]. Rather than studying the behavior of a handful of formally branded leaders, researchers interested in school leadership and are currently exploring the activities and tasks of administrators responsible for situating school improvement efforts. School leadership thereby is moving towards a team approach from the individualistic path of the past [4], [13]–[18]. In retrospect, existing research findings in educational leadership urge practitioners and researchers in the arena, to differentiate between a school’s formal leadership structure and actual practice [19], [20]. In this backdrop, it seems no study thus far have delved into the distribution of leadership within the context of Islamic secondary schools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Arguably, the first to use the term “distributed leadership” was Gibb in 1951 [7], [21]. In his book, dynamics of participative groups, Gibb writes “there is a maximum of emphasis upon the growth and development of all the members of the group. There is no one leader; the leadership is distributed” [22]. According to Gibb leadership should not be shouldered by a single individual; rather the responsibilities of leadership must be implemented by a group in a shared, distributed or dispersed manner [7], [21]. Gibb [22] suggested two courses in which leadership could be distributed: authority or leadership imparted to various individuals; and leadership as a collegial system of solving problems [7], [21]. Surprisingly, from the 1950s through the end of the twentieth century, the term “distributed leadership” was surrounded by notions of teacher leadership and shared decision making [18], [21].

Since the advent of the 21st century, many authors have tried to redefine DL. Similarities can be found in the different viewpoints yet no definition can be singled out to be perfect. According to study by Bennett *et al.* [23], it is best to perceive DL as a way of thinking about leadership rather than another leadership technique. Spillane [24] is a pioneer in DL research states “DL is leadership that is stretched over multiple leaders”. According to Spillane [24], the group like interactions among leaders, followers, and the related circumstances are critical to the DL phenomenon. As a result, DL is a type of collective leadership in which there are several leaders rather than just one [24]. Looking at DL in the context of a school suggests that not only the principal, subject heads, or classroom instructors, but also potential learners, might have leadership duties [5]. Harris [25] also views DL as one that is shared and stretched across groups. According to Harris [25], the distribution can be formal or informal. Hence, when top management, teachers, support staff and parents work together to resolve problems in the school-they are all engaging in DL practices.

DL is defined in view of its implications instead of its constituent [9], [10], [26]. Given the foregoing concepts, DL is that which inspires all stakeholders in a school to look for, make and use leadership opportunities, thereby to facilitate learning for pupils [26]. It is affirmed that leadership starts with the principal or head [26]. The distribution of leadership starts from these formal leaders and it is they who create the culture of distribution. Elmore [15] also holds the view that headteachers have extraordinary impact on the exercise of DL. However, multiple studies portray that the influence of heads on pupil results are mostly latent and indirect [26], [27]. The reason cited is that unlike teachers who are in direct contact with learners, heads facilitate the learning of pupil through their effects on adults who more explicitly influence learning [28].

In an attempt to plainly explain the different routes in which DL can happen, few researchers have come up with classification or taxonomies. The review of literature pertaining to this study discusses two such models or frameworks [29], [30]. These models are considered important and significant because they are specific to the school context and provide an academic and conceptual framework in building research. Both models demonstrate a level of variety in the degree to which DL is regulated inside of working practices as a feature of the by and large culture of the institution and the degree to which this may be purposely facilitated in an orderly fashion. Interestingly, MacBeath *et al.* [29] emphasized that these elements are formal, pragmatic, strategic, incremental, opportunistic and cultural. Each one is explained in Figure 1.

DL continuums present the four dominant approaches to distribution, namely: i) planful alignment, ii) spontaneous alignment; iii) spontaneous misalignment; and iv) anarchic misalignment [30]. These approaches are discussed in Figure 2. It is interesting to note not particular distribution was identified in the continuum as more advantageous than the others [29]. Leithwood *et al.* [30] on the other hand are confident that certain distributions are more likely to contribute towards organizational efficiency. According to several studies [4], [20], [30], planful and spontaneous alignments are most probable to bring about organizational improvement in the short run. For long term improvement planful alignment is the most likely option. Spontaneous misalignment and anarchic alignment on the other hand are liable to negatively affect productivity on both short or long terms.



Figure 1. MacBeath's framework of DL [29]

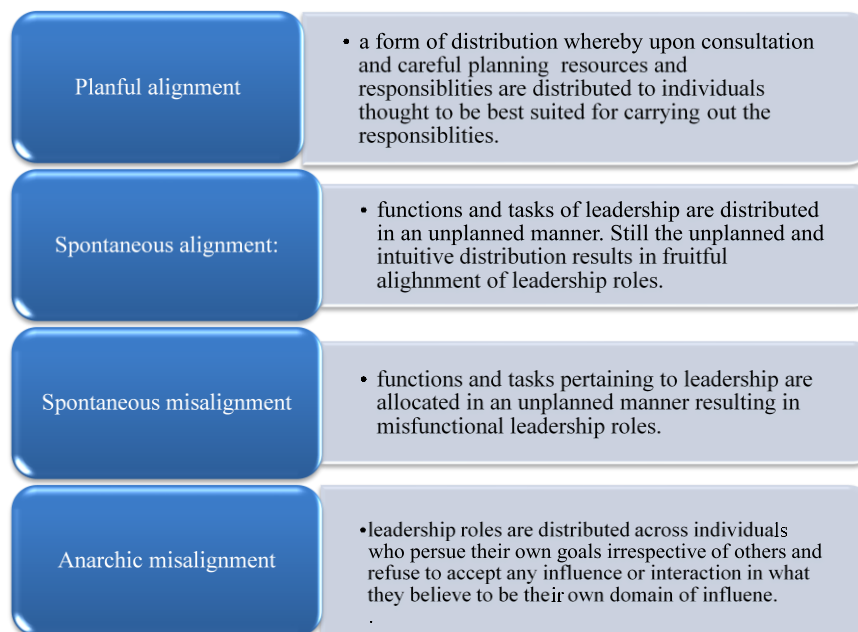


Figure 2. Leithwood's framework of DL [30]

2.1. Dimensions of distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is identified as the foremost individual building bricks to develop a conceptual framework for studying DL [31], [32]. Five dimensions linked to DL were recognized in his framework. They are: mission, vision and goals; school culture; decision-making; evaluation and professional development; and leadership practices. In an attempt to measure these dimensions, the Connecticut Department of Education based on Elmore's research, came up with an instrument titled distributed leadership readiness scale (DLRS). Through a factor analysis of the DLRS condensed Elmore's five dimensions into four [33]. The dimension of mission, vision and goals; school culture and shared responsibility remained unaltered. Dimensions of decision-making/evaluation and professional development were merged by Rae [33] into a single dimension labelled shared responsibility.

2.2. Mission, vision, and goals

The dimension of mission, vision and goals has been discussed by several researchers [33], [34]. According to previous studies [13], [34], mission defines the purpose of an institution and it is its vision that provides it the wisdom of direction. For any professional learning community mission, vision and goals can be considered as building blocks [34], [35]. According to Neuman and Simmons [36], the practice of DL encourages every participant in the school to support its vision and mission and to establish an accountability structure. One advantage of DL is that when DL teams collaborate on a common goal, it results in more organizational transformation [37], [38]. Furthermore, when there is a shared vision, teachers respond with increased zeal and devotion [39].

2.3. School culture

According to Murphy [40], school culture constitutes the principles, beliefs and norms in the schooling profession. Culture is based upon how people think, feel and act in an institution [34]. School cultures can be collegial or autocratic where teachers may be viewed collaborators or adversaries. The school culture dictates whether students simply maintain the status quo or continuously strives for improvement [34]. Striving to achieve a school culture that is favorable to learning, classroom teachers need to have power to shape policy, craft the curriculum and committed to provide quality education. In addition, value must also be added to the school budget [18], [40].

2.4. Leadership practices

Leadership practices define the actions of the school leaders within structure of the school [24]. According to previous research [32], [33], leadership practices are the processes of leading-characterized by how leaders define, present and carry out interaction with subordinates. The distribution of leadership in schools hence not only applies to top management but is stretched across various stakeholders. Pont *et al.* in a study publish by the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) [41], explain school leadership as a procedure of strategically utilizing the distinct abilities and knowledge of educators, students, and guardians, toward accomplishing set academic objectives. The depiction is clearly in line with DL which concerns integrating leadership at all levels than merely the top. Also, leadership needs not be restricted to formal designations. According to Muijs and Harris [8], in order for schools to be successful it is befitting that leadership is distributed among formal and informal leaders. Rather than focusing upon the actions of the formal designated leaders, the emphasis in DL is upon leadership as interaction and practice. The affiliation of the person and the environment implies that human activity is dispersed in the bilateral network of actors, artifacts and the circumstances [24].

2.5. Shared responsibility

DL constitutes shared expertise spread among individuals. According to Elmore [15], school leaders should guide and direct the school utilizing the expertise of various individuals. DL as a shared responsibility in view of [38], is a substitute to heroic leadership. In fact, it is a shared practice of enhancing the individual and collective competence of individuals to attain effectiveness in task accomplishment [31], [38] further iterates "it is the glue of a common task or goal improvement of teaching and learning and a common frame of values for how to approach that task that keeps DL from becoming another version of loose coupling". Along these lines, the idea of shared responsibility is that leadership exercises ought not be limited to one person but rather ought to be shared amongst multiple individuals in the organization [37]. However, Rae [33] points out that these individuals sharing the leadership tasks must be given time, opportunity and resources to learn and grow.

A study conducted in secondary schools in Nigeria found positive correlation between the practice of DL and school effectiveness [42]. Research carried out in Indonesia, another Muslim majority country, i.e., -links successful schools' leadership to the presence of collaborative culture and exercise of shared

decision making [43]. There is however a dearth of research to explore how leadership is distributed in these regions. Also irrespective of region, very little is known about leadership practices in Islamic Secondary schools. Given the preceding literature gap, this study investigates DL practices in two Islamic secondary schools in two distinct countries. The study, thus poses the research questions:

- What are the models of DL practiced in the selected Islamic secondary schools?
- How do the two schools vary in terms of the dimensions of DL practiced in each school?

3. METHOD

In order to explore the practice of DL in selected Islamic Schools, this study uses a collective case study methodology with a mixed-method approach. This implies the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data for analysis. A number of reasons can be distinguished for utilizing mixed research approaches for this case study. Many authors contend that a mixed method approach limits the restrictions of a singled out qualitative or quantitative approach [44], [45]. Mixed-method approach is suitable for this examination on the grounds that it involves both practice and perception. Also utilizing a mix of research techniques give a far more comprehensive picture of the study topic.

The research instrument comprises semi-structured in-person interviews and a survey questionnaire known as DLRS. The Connecticut Department of Education developed the DLRS by including Elmore's five components of dispersed leadership: mission, vision, and goals; leadership practices; school culture; evaluation and professional development; and decision making. A study that investigated the psychometric features of the DLRS yielded four aspects, namely-mission, vision, and goals; school culture; shared responsibility; and leadership practices [46]. This instrument was chosen since it was specifically developed to assess the existence of multiple dimensions of DL, which is one of the study's key foci. The survey instrument consists of 40 items. All items are considered pertinent to the study. Item 11 is slightly modified to match the context of the study. The original item is described as "School district resources are directed to those areas in which student learning needs to improve most". The item reads as "The schools in the study are private schools not entitled to receive any resource or fund from their respective districts". The item was thus changed to "School resources are directed to those areas in which student learning needs to improve most". Items from the survey instrument that assessed the following leadership dimensions: vision, mission, and goals; school culture; shared responsibility; and leadership practices. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 assessed the dimension of vision, mission, and goals. Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 assessed shared responsibility. Items 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, and 33 assessed school culture while items 25, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, and 40 assessed the DL dimension of leadership practices. The survey instrument was presented to respondents on a 5-point Likert scale. The response options anchored as 1=continually-the particular practice is well-established as a "standard operating procedure" in the school; 2=frequently-this practice is often observed in the school; 3=sometimes-this practice is intermittently observed in the school; 4=never-this practice is rarely or never observed in school; and 5=insufficient information-insufficient information to respond to the statement.

3.1. Sample

Purposeful sampling directed the selection of schools for the study. Determination of qualitative samples is prone to be purposive as opposed to random. The reason being with small case size there is high likelihood of the sample being biased [47].

The cases in this study comprise two Islamic Schools located in different counties. Green school is located in Malaysia. It has a growing student body of 290 and a teacher body of 36. The school comprises preschool and senior high school referred to as the international general certificate of secondary education (IGCSE) ordinary levels. The school adopts the Cambridge international curriculum framework and integrates Islamic values in it. The objective as announced is to provide an internationally recognized, integrated educational program suitable for the early development of the child from preschool to tertiary level.

Blue school is located in Bangladesh at the heart of the capital. In terms of size blue school is much bigger than green school and boasts a student body of 918 and a teacher body 96. Blue school also starts from preschool. The senior most class is the IGCSE advanced level. Blue school adopts the International Edexcel curriculum and inculcates Islamic values into it. The Edexcel curriculum has much similarity with the Cambridge international curriculum. Both schools are registered with the British Council in respective countries.

This case study recognizes primary and secondary schools to be considerably dissimilar. Apart from size, primary and secondary schools vary in terms of arrangement of learning, periodicity of parent teacher interaction, catchment area, scope for improving self-regard and identification of student with learning disabilities or difficulties [48]. Considering the contrasting nature between the two school types, it was deemed fitting to accommodate only secondary classroom teachers in the study.

From each school, the researchers have interviewed three classroom teachers. The researchers asked the heads of each institution to nominate classroom teachers for interview. It is recognized that that the chosen procedure has potential for prejudice because heads may choose individuals who are positive about their experiences of DL practices. To control such a likely bias, heads were requested to nominate teachers who are experience, skilled and outspoken. For the quantitative survey, the survey questionnaires were emailed to 36 participants-26 from blue school and 10 from green school. This comprises the entire population of secondary classroom teachers who have at least worked for one year or more in the respective schools.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The semi-structured interviews and surveys questionnaires were the means of data collection for this study. The interviews were tape-recorded through a digital recorder and the audio was transcribed for analysis. In Miles and Huberman [47] technique was employed to analyze the quantitative data.

The quantitative data collection involved completion of the DLRS scale by the classroom teachers and attach/sending it via email. Out of 36 requested participants, 30 respondents completed the survey representing a return rate of 83.3%. Descriptive frequency analysis was used to analyze the survey responses to find out the dimensions of DL practiced in the selected Islamic schools. As mentioned in the research instrument section, the forty items of the survey measured the presence of four individual dimensions of DL.

Predictive analytic software (PASW) version 25 was used to calculate the frequency response to each item of every dimension. Each dimension is evaluated separately for blue school and green school. The practice of each dimension is then compared. For each dimension and response option, the average percentage response is calculated. For easiness of inference, the combined average of the like responses 'continually' and 'frequently' is collapsed for each school. Likewise, the averages of the response options 'sometimes' and 'rarely' are also added up.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Model/framework of distributed leadership

Teachers were asked to identify any model or framework of distribution of leadership in their respective schools. All participants referred to the top-down approach of the management, but together they could not come to consensus for any fixed criteria for distribution of leadership. One teacher from blue school reports:

“There is a hierarchy in our school...for example in the top level, we have the principal...under her is the section heads...under the section heads, we have the subject coordinators and under the subject coordinators falls the subject teachers...for each designation there are certain responsibilities delegated to that person...”

“I do not know based on what rules they follow.” (Teacher from green school)

Another teacher from the green school reported:

“A system but based on teacher experience and ability... for example, in my previous school, I was the discipline master....so when I enter this school, the principal gives me the same position given my previous experience”.

The view is supported by another teacher from blue school, who states that:

“Mostly, when leadership is distributed, the qualification is taken to consideration, the seniority matters ...more senior people get more responsibility and the people who join new are slowly given the responsibility...”

The interview findings could not identify any one particular model of distribution in either school. Nevertheless, important consistent observations can be made from the interviews. First, the top management has the ultimate say in the distribution. Second, experience and expertise are both important factors for distribution of leadership. Finally, novice teachers are slowly given responsibilities and prepared to take on leadership roles.

4.2. Dimensions of distributed leadership practiced in the two schools

A total of 36 survey questionnaires (36 in blue school and 10 in green school) were delivered via e-mail to the target respondents. There were 30 respondents (20 from blue school and 10 from green school) completed the survey representing a return rate of 83.3%. In terms of demographics, blue school has an equal distribution of male and female respondents while green school has 60% male and 40% female respondents.

Prior to descriptive analysis of the DL dimensions, internal consistency analysis was conducted to assess the reliability of the instruments. Each dimension was independently assessed. The results of reliability analysis revealed overall Cronbach's alpha for vision, mission, and goals $\alpha=.77$; shared responsibility $\alpha=.78$; school culture $\alpha=.82$; and leadership practices $\alpha=.71$ respectively. This indicated a substantial internal consistency between individual items of each dimension; thus, the items had positive covariance, since the alpha fell within the desired zone [49].

Each dimension is then assessed separately for blue school and green school. The practice of each dimension is then compared. The dimensions are represented in the form of descriptive frequency statistics. The first column in each table refers to the item number. It is then followed by the descriptive statement and percentage response to each option in the Likert scale. The blue columns represent the percentage response for blue school while the green columns represent the percentage response for green school. For each dimension and response option, the average percentage response is calculated. For easiness of describing the combined average of the like responses 'continually' and 'frequently' are added up for each school. Likewise, the averages of the response options 'sometimes' and 'rarely' are also added up.

Furthermore, Table 1 depicts the practice of the DL dimension of vision, mission and goals in the two selected schools. Considering the descriptive statement on vision, mission and goals (item 1 to item 8), when teachers' opinions were sought about how the statements apply to their respective school—72.5% answered 'continually and frequently' and 26.88% answered 'sometimes and rarely' in blue school. In contrast, 48.75% answered 'continually and frequently' and 38.74% answered 'sometimes and rarely' in green school. There is also considerable variation between the responses to individual items. In the items "the school has clearly written vision and mission statement" (item 1) and "school goals are aligned with the school mission statement" (item 5)—60% and 40% of the respondent in green school answered continually. Comparatively, 50% and 30% of respondents answered continually to the respective questions in blue school. In the remaining items of the dimension, blue school has higher percentages in the continually response option than green school. There is one exception though in item 3 which focuses on the parent's ability to describe the school mission. Specifically, both schools have 0 percentage of respondents in the continually response choice Table 1 depicts the details.

Table 1. Practice of DL dimension of vision, mission, and goals

Item no.	Item	Continually	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Insufficient information
1.	The school has clearly written vision and mission statements.	50.0	60.0	40.0	30.0	5.0 10.0 5.0 NIL NIL NIL NIL
2.	Teachers and administrators understand and support a common mission for the school and can clearly describe it.	45.0	10.0	50.0	50.0	5.0 40.0 NIL NIL NIL NIL
3.	If parents are asked to describe the school's mission, most would be able to describe the mission clearly.	NIL	NIL	50.0	20.0	45.0 70.0 5.0 10.0 NIL NIL
4.	If students are asked to describe the schools' mission most would be able to describe it clearly.	30.0	NIL	35.0	40.0	20.0 50.0 15.0 NIL NIL 10.0
5.	School goals are aligned with the school mission statement.	35.0	40.0	40.0	50.0	25.0 NIL NIL 10.0 NIL NIL
6.	The school uses a school improvement plan as a basis to evaluate its progress.	25.0	20.0	30.0	40.0	40.0 30.0 NIL 10.0 5.0 NIL
7.	Teachers and administrators collectively establish school goals and revise goals annually.	35.00	10.0	35.0	30.0	30.0 30.0 NIL 20.0 NIL 10.0
8.	The school's curriculum is aligned with the state's academic standards.	45.0	10.0	35.0	60.0	20.0 20.0 NIL 10.0 NIL NIL
Average percentage		33.12	18.75	39.38	40.0	23.75 31.25 3.13 7.5 0.62 2.5
Combined average percentage (school blue)		Continually and frequently 72.5		Sometimes and rarely 26.88		Insufficient information 0.62
Combined average percentage (school green)		Continually and frequently 48.75		Sometimes and rarely 38.75		Insufficient information 2.5

In reference as shown in Table 2, in response to the nine statements of how shared responsibility is practiced in their school scenario, 72.5% of the respondents selected ‘continually and frequently’, while 22.5% selected ‘sometimes and rarely’ in blue school. In contrast for the same items 38% selected ‘continually and frequently’ and 22.5% selected ‘sometimes and rarely’ for green school. Both schools scored highest in the descriptive statements of teachers and administrators have high expectations for students’ academic performance (item 9), 85% for blue school and 50% for green school in the continually response choice. Both schools scored lowest for the item decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs are based on assessment data (item 21), blue school having nil response in the continuity range and green school only a mere 10%. Overall, blue school has an average continually percentage response of 31.0% compared to 28.0% for green school and an average frequently response of 41.5% compared to 40.0% for green school.

Table 2. Practice of DL dimension of shared responsibility

Item no.	Item	Continually	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Insufficient information
9.	Teachers and administrators have high expectations for students’ academic performance.	85.0	50.0	15.0	30.0	NIL
10.	Teachers and administrators share accountability for students’ academic performance	55.0	40.0	45.0	60.0	NIL
11.	School resources are directed to those areas in which student learning needs to improve most.	45.0	50.0	30.0	30.0	25.0
12.	The school is a learning community that continually improves its effectiveness, learning from both successes and failures.	40.0	30.0	55.0	60.0	5.0
17.	The school’s daily and weekly schedules provide time for teachers to collaborate on instructional issues.	20.0	10.0	30.0	50.0	45.0
18.	School professionals and parents agree on the most effective roles parents can play as partners in their child’s education.	10.0	10.0	60.0	30.0	30.0
19.	The school clearly communicates the ‘chain of contact’ between home and school so parents know who to contact when they have questions and concerns.	25.0	40.0	55.0	50.0	20.0
20.	The school makes available a variety of data (e.g. school performance) for teachers to use to improve student achievement.	25.0	20.0	55.0	60.0	15.0
21.	Decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs are based on assessment data.	NIL	10.0	50.0	10.0	10.0
22.	There is a formal structure in place in the school (curriculum committee) to provide teachers and professional staff opportunities to participate in school level instructional decision-making.	5.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	45.0
Average percentage		31.0	28.0	41.5	40.0	19.5
Combined average percentage (school blue)		Continually and frequently		Sometimes and rarely		Insufficient information
		72.5		22.5		5.0
Combined average percentage (school green)		Continually and frequently		Sometimes and rarely		Insufficient information
		68.0		32.0		NIL

In probing the DL dimension of school culture, 75.0% of the respondents in blue school and 65.39% of respondents in green school selected ‘continually and frequently’ in regard to how the statements pertaining to their school. Moreover, 20.38% and 34.61% selected ‘sometimes and rarely’ in blue school and green school respectively. Blue school has the highest continuity percentage of 85% for the descriptive statement “My principal’s practices are consistent with his/her words” (item 31). For blue school, the lowest continuity percentage of nil is recorded in the statement “professional staff members in the school have the responsibility to make decisions that affect meeting school goals” (item 24). Green school has the highest continuity percentage of 90% for the descriptive statement “The principal is knowledgeable about current instructional issues” (item 32). Interestingly, 30.0% of respondent teachers in green school reported to rarely developing their annual professional plan jointly with their supervisor (item 28). Refer to Table 3 for more details.

Table 3. Practice of DL dimension of school culture

Item no.	Item	Continually	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Insufficient information					
13.	There is a high level of mutual respect and trust among teachers and other professional staff in the school.	45.0	40.0	50.0	40.0	5.0	20.0	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
14.	There is mutual respect and trust between school administration and the professional staff.	25.0	20.0	60.0	60.0	15.0	20.0	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
15.	The school administrator(s) welcome professional staff members input on issues related to curriculum instruction, and improving student performance.	40.0	20.0	30.0	10.0	30.0	60.0	NIL	10.0	NIL	NIL
16.	The school supports using new instructional ideas and innovations.	40.0	10.0	45.0	70.0	15.0	20.0	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
23.	The principal actively encourages teachers and other staff members to participate in instructional decision making.	20.0	30.0	55.0	40.0	25.0	20.0	NIL	10.0	NIL	NIL
24.	Professional staff members in the school have the responsibility to make decisions that affect meeting school goals.	NIL	10.0	50.0	40.0	25.0	50.0	25.0	NIL	NIL	NIL
26.	Administrators participate along-side teachers in the school's professional development activities.	10.0	10.0	55.0	80.0	25.0	10.0	NIL	NIL	10.0	NIL
27.	The principal actively participates in his/her own professional development activities to improve leadership in the school.	30.0	40.0	60.0	60.0	5.0	NIL	NIL	NIL	5.0	NIL
28.	My supervisor and I jointly develop my annual professional development plan.	20.0	20.0	35.0	30.0	30.0	20.0	15.0	30.0	NIL	NIL
29.	My professional development plan includes activities that are based on my individual professional needs and school needs.	30.0	20.0	50.0	30.0	20.0	30.0	NIL	20.0	NIL	NIL
30.	Teachers actively participate in instructional decision-making.	10.0	10.0	35.0	20.0	50.0	60.0	5.0	10.0	NIL	NIL
32.	The principal is knowledgeable about current instructional issues.	50.0	90.0	35.0	10.0	5.0	NIL	NIL	NIL	10.0	NIL
33.	My principal's practices are consistent with his/her words.	85.0	10.0	10.0	30.0	5.0	50.0	NIL	10.0	NIL	NIL
Average percentage		31.15	25.39	43.85	40.0	19.62	27.69	3.46	6.92	1.92	NIL
Combined average percentage [school blue]		Continually and frequently 75.0				Sometimes and rarely 20.38				Insufficient information 1.92	
Combined average percentage [school green]		Continually and frequently 65.39				Sometimes and rarely 34.61				Insufficient information NIL	

When asked to rate the descriptive statements pertaining to leadership practices in the Likert scale, 66.67% of the responses corresponded to 'continually and frequently' while 29.44% selected 'Sometimes and Rarely' for blue school. In contrast, 42.2% in green school selected 'continually and frequently' and 45.6% chose 'sometimes and rarely'. Of the 66.67% response by blue school, 20% corresponds to continually while the remaining 46.67% represents the frequently response category. For green school the breakdown is 14.4% and 27.8% respectively for continually and frequently. When asked if new teachers are provided to fill some leadership roles (item 39), no respondent has selected continually for blue school. Likewise for the descriptive statement 'The school provides teachers with professional development aligned with the school's mission and goals' (item 25), no respondent from green school selected continually. Schools blue and green seem to differ most in item 38 and item 39 which ask about veteran teacher filling leadership roles in school and opportunities for new teachers to take up leadership roles. While the response to the item 38 for blue school is 35% continually, 50% frequently, 10% sometimes and 5% insufficient information, that for green school is 10% continually, 10% frequently, 70% sometimes and 10% rarely. Alternately for item 39, teachers in blue school respond with 30% continually, 60% sometimes, 5% rarely and 5% refer to insufficient information. In the same item, teachers in green school selected 10% continually, 80% frequently and 10% sometimes. Table 4 presents the details.

Table 4. Practice of DL dimension of leadership practices

Item no.	Item	Continually	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Insufficient information					
25.	The school provides teachers with professional development aligned with the school's mission and goals.	35.0	NIL	60.0	50.0	5.0	50.0	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
31.	Central office and school administrators' work together to determine the professional development activities.	40.0	30.0	25.0	10.0	5.0	40.0	30.0	10.0	NIL	10.0
34.	Informal school leaders play an important role in the school in improving the performance of professionals and the achievement of students.	5.0	20.0	60.0	30.0	15.0	40.0	NIL	NIL	20.0	10.0
35.	The school has expanded its capacity by providing professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.	10.0	20.0	55.0	60.0	30.0	20.0	NIL	NIL	5.0	NIL
36.	Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient school time to permit them to make meaningful contributions to the school.	25.0	20.0	35.0	30.0	35.0	40.0	5.0	10.0	NIL	NIL
37.	Teachers who assume leadership roles in the school have sufficient resources to be able to make meaningful contributions to the school.	20.0	10.0	55.0	20.0	20.0	50.0	5.0	20.0	NIL	NIL
38.	Veteran teachers fill most leadership roles in the school.	35.0	10.0	50.0	10.0	10.0	70.0	NIL	10.0	5.0	NIL
39.	New teachers are provided opportunities to fill some school leadership roles.	NIL	10.0	30.0	80.0	60.0	10.0	5.0	NIL	5.0	NIL
40.	Teachers are interested in participating in school leadership roles.	10.0	10.0	50.0	50.0	35.0	40.0	5.0	NIL	NIL	NIL
Average percentage		20.0	14.4	46.67	27.8	23.89	40.0	5.55	5.6	3.89	2.2
Combined average percentage [school blue]		Continually and frequently 66.67				Sometimes and rarely 29.44				Insufficient information 3.89	
Combined average percentage [school green]		Continually and frequently 42.2				Sometimes and rarely 45.6				Insufficient information 2.2	

5. DISCUSSION

This research seeks to find out the models or frameworks of DL practiced in the selected Islamic secondary schools. The literature review in this study discusses two such models or frameworks [29], [30]. The models are used to answer the research question. The two models indicate a degree of variation in the extent to which DL is institutionalized within working practices and the extent to which this may be instigated deliberately in a coordinated manner in the organization.

From the findings, it is obvious that both of the selected schools have a definite hierarchy decided by top management. There is formal role of the likes of headteacher, assistant headteacher, sections heads and coordinators. Each designation holds certain leadership responsibilities. If viewed from this perspective, the structure fits into the formal distribution category in the MacBeath's taxonomy [29]. According to the Leithwood's taxonomy [30], the structure can fit plentiful alignment-form of distribution whereby upon consultation and careful planning resources and responsibilities are distributed to individuals thought to be best suited for carrying out the responsibilities.

Again, when leadership roles are distributed among classroom teachers, the schools do not seem to have fixed criteria. The roles are decided by the top management and distributed at their will. Teachers however identified experience and expertise as crucial factors for selection in leadership roles. The findings also illustrate that novice teachers are slowly given responsibilities and prepared to take on leadership roles. This has resemblance with strategic and incremental distribution in the MacBeath's model [29]. Strategic distribution is usually characterized as appointment of people with specific skills and knowledge to fill the gap of leadership responsibilities. Incremental distribution on the other hand, refers to leadership roles given to people based on acquisition of experience. If the distribution of leadership to teachers discussed in the framework of the Leithwood [30], blue school fits the continuum of spontaneous alignment. Green school on the other hand, fits the continuum of spontaneous misalignment. The similarity between both forms is that leadership tasks and roles are distributed in an unplanned manner. The difference lies in the fact that spontaneous alignment brings about fruitful results while misalignment brings about mis functional leadership roles.

This research further aimed to understand the practice of the dimensions of DL in each school. The first dimension of DL is vision, mission and goals. For the success of schools, it is necessary to have a clear

vision which integrates beliefs about reaching the expected goals [35]. Hence, it is important that teachers and administrators have a common vision and set goals together. Equally important, students and parents are aware of the school's mission and are able to describe it. From the survey findings, both schools seem to be lacking in this aspect. According to Dufour and Eaker [34], mission defines the purpose of an institution, and it is its vision that provides it the wisdom of direction. The use of a school improvement plan for evaluating progress and aligning the school's curriculum with the state's academic standards are all part of the process. Furthermore, it is also important the school's mission, vision and statements are clearly written and that the goals are revised annually. There is considerable scope of improvement for both schools in these aspects.

Another dimension of DL is shared responsibility. From survey finding it is evident the teachers and administrators in both schools have high expectations of students' academic performance and share the accountability for academic performance. Both schools are striving to be learning community that continually improves its effectiveness, learning from both successes and failures. This is in line with the analysis that individuals sharing the leadership tasks must be given time, opportunity and resources to learn and grow [46]. Both schools are found to be lagging in regard to teacher engagement in decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs and teacher participation in school level instructional decision-making. This calls for more participation. According to Elmore [15], school leaders should guide and direct the school utilizing the expertise of various individuals.

The dimension of school culture iterates the ways that the headteacher, teachers, parents and the community relate with each other. According to the findings, teachers in both schools have a high level of mutual trust and shared support between administrators and teachers, as well as administrators and professional staff. The majority of teachers say that their principal is aware about current instructional practices and that they participate in professional development initiatives to improve school leadership. However, there is a significant absence of inviting professional staff members' advice on matters relating to curriculum instruction, enhancing student performance, or delegating authority to make decisions that affect attaining school goals. Striving to achieve a school culture that is favorable to learning, classroom teachers need to have power to shape policy, craft the curriculum and committed to providing quality education. In addition, value must also be added to the school budget [40].

The DL dimension of leadership practices defines the actions of the school leaders within structure of the school [24]. From teachers' responses, it seems that the schools do not provide teachers with ample professional development aligned with the school's mission and goals, more so for green school than blue school. Informal school leaders were not found to continually play an important role in the school in improving the performance of professionals and the achievement of students. This finding corresponded with [8] where they suggested that leadership needs to be distributed among formal and informal leaders for school success. Furthermore, there is much scope for the schools to expand capacity by providing professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles. Rather than focusing upon the actions of the formal designated leaders, the emphasis in DL is upon leadership as interaction and practice. The affiliation of the person and the environment implies that human activity is dispersed in the bilateral network of actors, artefacts and the circumstances [24]. According to DLRS survey, many teachers seemed apprehensive about participating in leadership roles. This might be due to the lack of time and resources to permit them making meaningful contributions when assuming leadership roles.

Due to the limitations of the sample size of this study, the findings should not be generalized to all Islamic secondary schools. If the findings are to be generalized, there is a need for a more in-depth study with a bigger sample. Given the findings, classroom teachers pose both positive and negative perceptions about the effect of DL on teaching. Some contemporary studies in this note advocate for DL to enhance teaching and learning. The researchers have not found any empirical evidence supporting the stand. Thus, further empirical research is needed to prove this notion.

5.1. Implications of the findings

Practically, the practice of dimensions of DL (i.e., - vision, mission, goals, shared responsibility, school culture and leadership practices) in the selected schools differ from one another. The findings could serve as a supportive literature in practicing DL to reduce the workload of headteachers. The study also supports DL to have a number of advantages to classroom teachers of the likes of increased motivation, empowerment and capacity building. The findings further link DL to the development of a professional learning community through teacher leadership. In spite of its small sample size, the study does provide a basis upon which a fuller picture of DL in action across Islamic secondary schools would be further extended.

6. CONCLUSION

In summary, this research examines the models of DL in selected Islamic secondary schools. The findings reveal a hierarchical structure that is determined by top management. In one school, leadership roles are aligned, while in the other school, there is misalignment. Leadership positions are assigned based on experience and expertise, and novice teachers are gradually prepared for leadership roles. However, the schools lack a clear vision, mission, and goals, as well as shared responsibility. While there is trust and support among teachers and administrators, teacher engagement in decision-making and access to professional development opportunities are insufficient. It is important to exercise caution when generalizing the findings, and further research is needed to investigate the impact of DL on teaching and learning.




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