

DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT CHARACTER THROUGH PRINCIPALS' SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES BASED ON BANDURA'S SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

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Introduction

Education aims at the all-round development of a person. All-round development means intellectual, physical and moral development. These three aspects of development are equally important. The moral development of a person is essential for the development of a society. Only when a person is morally developed, can he be called a productive citizen. Moral development of a person is attained through character development.

Character is not taught, but caught. It begins at home, through the good examples of parents and other relatives. When a child enters the school this responsibility is extended to the school. There the teachers and the principals have to provide students with good examples to follow. Teacher- student interaction used to play a very significant role in the formation of character in the mind of the pupils. However, in our present society, this interaction is not found to be effective (Sobhana, 2006). So there is a great responsibility vested with the principals in the development of the student's character. Nair (2008) stated that modeling which youth can reproduce through observation can provide valuable information and direction while educating young people. Bandura's work has done a good deal to increase the awareness of the importance of models in child-rearing and education. According to Vijayasree (2006), it is the duty of the teacher to guide, inspire and illumine his/her students to enrich their discipline and to inculcate values which are in consonance with cultural heritage and social objectives.

Deterioration of values among the younger generation is a universal phenomenon. A lot of research has been conducted about the factors influencing the decline of values. Many reasons have been identified. Three main reasons for the decline are: 1. the disintegration of the family, 2. a materialistic outlook, 3. the lack of effective moral education in schools. According to Wardekker (2001) these problems are caused by a decline in the functions of moral education in the family and schools. Researchers found a change in the structure of society and family as the root cause for this decline of morality.

There used to be traditional families where many family members lived together. In India, it was called the joint family system, in which all members of the family were living together. In this context, younger ones could learn good habits from the older ones. But at present, this joint family system has broken up and the nuclear family has arrived. In the nuclear family, there are only a father, a mother and one or two children. In the nuclear family, since both parents are working, they have no time to spare for their children, to teach them good habits. In the nuclear family system, with both parents working, the parents lose their role as a model. This responsibility of the parents is now taken over by the role models and heroes from television and the internet.

So, as many parents believe, this responsibility of inculcating good habits among the children is shifted from home to schools. Now it is seen as the responsibility of the teachers, principals and other educational leaders to teach the students to develop their character. However, the present educational system neglects this aspect of character development of the students. At present, principals, teachers and parents stress only the academic achievement of the students. Teachers are concerned only about how the test score of each student can be increased. Principals are engaged in upgrading the name of the schools through good results. Parents are concerned only about the production of good grades, irrespective of the inability of the students. In such a situation, it is no wonder that the younger generation is misled by the wrong models and concepts.

In this context, the researcher has developed a model to enhance the development of student character in the Indian context.

Research Questions

1. What are the spiritual leadership practices of principals and methods to develop student character in the private schools under the Kottayam Corporative agency in Kerala, India?
2. Is there any significant difference in the perception about the relationship between spiritual leadership practices of principals relative to demographic variables such as gender, age and status?

Research Objectives

1. To examine the spiritual leadership practices of principals in private schools under the Kottayam Corporative agency in Kerala, India.
2. To compare the difference in the perception about the spiritual leadership practices of principals relative to demographic variables such as gender, age and status.
3. To propose a model to develop student character through spiritual leadership practices of principals in private schools under the Kottayam corporative agency in Kerala, India.

Theoretical Framework of the study

Reave (2005) when developing his “leadership practices,” identified three personal values for every leader. They are integrity, honesty and humility. Based on these three values he developed five leadership practices which make every leader effective. They are:

1. *Demonstrating respect for others’ values:* Many leadership theories emphasize the need for a leader to have a vision for the organization and this vision to be communicated to the followers (Reave, 2005). Leaders who respect the values of others create empowerment rather than dependency, substantiality rather than short-term success
2. *Treating others fairly:* Treating others fairly is a natural consequence of viewing them with respect, justice and fairness. According to Elm (2003) employees’ sense of fairness has a relationship with the employee trust, which in turn creates a positive working relationships and outcomes.
3. *Expressing caring and concern:* Expressing support and concern for others is a practice emphasized by virtually all spiritual paths. A leader’s ability to be caring and considerate toward others has been shown to be key determinant of leader’s success or failure (Reave, 2005).
4. *Listening responsively:* Listening to others and responding to their needs is another quality of a spiritual leader. Listening means not only acknowledging their concerns, but also recognizing and respecting good ideas.
5. *Appreciating the contributions of others:* Leadership research shows that recognition has a powerful effect on motivation and performance. A leader’s use of motivating language, including clear explanations of tasks, rewards, and cultural values has been demonstrated to increase worker job satisfaction and performance (Cited by Reave, 2005, from Mayfield, Kopf, 1998). Leadership scholars Kouzes & Posner (1997) call this practice “encouraging the heart.”

When a leader is modeling, inspiring, enabling, challenging and encouraging the followers he is exercising the essential qualities of a spiritual leader.

The social learning theory of Albert Bandura (1977) focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, by including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling. Albert Bandura while talking about the moral development of children stressed the importance of ‘significant ones’ in the life of children in developing their morality. These significant ones are the elders who influence the character development of the children through their role models. Children through observation, modeling and imitation develop character qualities suitable to the society.

Bandura lists four processes that influence observational learning. They are attention, retention, production and motivation.

The Attention process

Before something can be learned from a model, the model must be paid attention to. Bandura (1977) thought that learning is an ongoing process, but he pointed out that only what is observed can be learned. So in the attention process a person’s sensory capacities will influence the process. Various characteristics of models will affect the extent to which they are paid attention to. Research has demonstrated that models will be paid attention to more often if they are similar to the observer, are respected, have high status, have demonstrated high competence and are attractive. In general, people pay attention to models reputed to be effective.

This is the first stage in the development of student character. In the attention stage, students observe the behavior of principal in the school as something good to be followed.

Retention Process

For information gained from observation to be useful, it must be retained. It was Bandura's contention (1977) that there are retention processes in which information is being stored symbolically in two ways: imaginably and verbally. The imaginably stored symbols are actual pictures of modeled experience stored in the memory, which can be retrieved and acted upon long after the observational learning has taken place.

Once information is stored cognitively, it can be retrieved covertly, rehearsed, and strengthened long after the observational learning has taken place. According to Bandura (1977) it is the advanced capacity for symbolization that enables humans to learn much of their behavior by observation. The stored symbols make delayed modeling possible, i.e., the ability to utilize information long after it has been observed.

In the second stage of the development of character students retain the good things they have observed in the activities of the principal. The students keep them in their mind.

Production process

The third stage in the process of observational learning is the production process. It determines the extent to which that which has been learned is translated into performance. It is clear that one may learn a great deal cognitively but be unable to translate that information into behavior for a variety of reasons, such as the motor apparatus necessary to make certain responses may not be available because of one's maturational level, injury or illness.

Bandura maintains that even if one is equipped with all the physical apparatus to make appropriate responses, a period of cognitive rehearsal is necessary before an observer's behavior can match that of a model. According to Bandura (1977), the symbols retained from a modeling experience act as a template with which one's actions are compared. During this rehearsal process individuals observe their own behavior and compare it to their cognitive representation of the modeled experience. Any observed discrepancies between one's own behavior and the memory of the model's behavior trigger corrective action. It continues until there is an acceptable match between the observer and model's behavior.

Motivational Process

The final stage of observational learning is the motivation process. What has been learned through observation remains dormant until the observer has a reason to use the information. According to Bandura, reinforcement provides a motive for utilizing what has been learned. This is a different view about reinforcement. According to Bandura (1977), an observer can learn simply by observing the consequences of the behavior of others, storing that information symbolically and utilizing it when it is advantageous to do so. Learners gain information by observing either the consequences of their own behavior or of the behavior of others. The information gained by these observations can be utilized in variety situations when a need to use it arises.

In short, we can say if observational learning fails to occur, it could be that the observer did not observe the relevant activities of the model, did not retain them, was physically incapable of performing them, or did not have a proper incentive to perform them.

In educational settings, the principals are the role models of the students in their educational development. Education ultimately aims at the integral development of the students. Education means the physical, mental and spiritual development of the students. The spiritual development of the students is the concern of this research. Principals as spiritual leaders should be able to demonstrate the personal values of integrity, honesty and humility through leadership practices such as respecting others' values, treating others fairly, expressing care and concern, listening responsively and appreciating the contributions of others. This will help the students to develop a good character.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on these objectives:

1. To analyze leadership practices in private schools under the Kottayam Corporative agency.
2. To compare the perception of students from different class levels about the spiritual leadership practices of principals.

3. To develop a character development model through the spiritual leadership practices of Principals in private schools under the Kottayam Corporative agency in Kerala, India.

Procedures

Stage 1. Content Analysis

The researcher analyzed and studied the theories, principles and practices related to spiritual leadership practices and character development.

Stage 2. Process of Model Development

Instrumentation

From the literature review the researcher designed a questionnaire to assess the spiritual leadership practices of the principals. The questionnaire was categorized into 5 subsystems with 3 sub-data in each category, for a total of 16 sub-data. For example, the 'respecting others' value is measured through three sub- data, namely, respect for others, keeping promises and giving priority to the needs of others. In the 'treating others fairly' category, there are three components: impartiality, justice and ethical judgment.

Scale used in the questionnaire

To assess the questionnaire, a measuring scale was developed from the social learning theory of Albert Bandura. In his theory, Bandura (1977) stated that there are four stages of observational learning. They are attention, retention, production and motivation. These processes of observational learning are used as the measuring scale in this study. In measuring the leadership practices, if a student marks the question "Principal showed respect to others" as attention, it means that he is in the first level and marks motivation, he is in the fourth level which is the highest level in Bandura's effect. The scale and its measurements are given below:

4	indicates Motivation
3	indicates Production
2	indicates Retention
1	indicates Attention

Sampling Design, Data Collection and Analysis

Population

The population of this study is the students from the private schools under the Kottayam Corporative agency in Kerala, India. There are eight private schools under the Kottayam Corporative agency in Kerala, India. Altogether there are three thousand and five students in these eight schools and eight principals who are included in this study. The data was collected by the researcher from the school register of each school.

Sample

According to Krejcie, R.V and Morgan D.W (1970), 345 or more is the needed sample size when the total number of the population is 3305. From these 3305 students, a sample of 400 students was selected through stratified random sampling so that each grade of each school is represented in the study. In each school, the number of students in each standard was stratified by grade level. Ten students were randomly selected by class teachers from each grade to represent each grade level in each school. There are 5 grades and the total sample from 8 schools was 400. The underlying principle of sampling is that 10 students from one grade have been considered as the relevant representatives of all the students in that grade.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data corresponds to the general research objectives. The data was analyzed by the statistical package of SPSS. The following statistical analyses were used:

1) Descriptive statistics contains mean and standard deviation, frequency and percent distribution were performed to describe personal information of the sample population.

2) Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Scheffe's method were conducted to examine the differences in perception of the different class levels of students on the current spiritual leadership practices and development of student character in the private schools. The researcher set up criteria for interpreting the level of perception.

Conceptualization of the Model

To conceptualize the model, results from analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire were used. The possible finding of this study is: leadership practices influence the development of the character of students. Students learn good habits through observational learning. Through observing the activities of the principals, students achieve any of the stages of the process of the observational learning, i.e., attention, retention, production and motivation. At least a few items of the practices are modeled by the students in

their life. There were differences in the perception of students on the leadership practices of the principals relative to the different class level. Using the mean difference and mean score ranking the effectiveness of the practices were assessed to develop the model.

After developing the model for the character development the model will be implemented in the private schools under the Kottayam Corporative Agency.

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