A Case Study of the Comparison of Philosophical Underpinnings of Educational Leadership in Higher Education

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Abstract

This research paper highlights the comparison of the philosophical underpinnings of educational leadership in higher education. Generally, this study has reviewed the relevant literature related to the two journal articles. The discussion of the major techniques on educational philosophies originate from general philosophical systems and why the first researcher has used mixed methods such as direct observation, documentary analysis, and interviews and second researcher only used quantitative methods such as; questionnaires. To prove this study an experimental study was conducted to explore the philosophical underpinnings of three major educational research paradigms; philosophical and theoretical approaches of two papers, ethical issues in the context of two papers and research methodologies in the two papers. The main aim was to sketch and explore the interrelationships between each researcher considering paradigm's ontology, epistemology, methods and methodology. The results showed that both articles have more critical indicators of the literature reviews and descriptive methodology that is solid to data analysis. The first researcher believes that there is no single paradigm that could satisfactorily deal with all of the required methodologies aspects. In terms of data analysis, the second researcher has more remarks in margins and also started to write down ideas. Consequently, this paper is relevant to every researcher in higher education who is a reader of research. Finally, the results show a significant interpretation for the researcher to focus on the interrelationships between each researcher considering the paradigm's ontology and epistemology.

INTRODUCTION

Initially, the purpose of this study is to summarize the research question and the findings of both of these papers. The two papers chosen, focus on research the impact of leadership improvement in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This study has split into three sections; the first that focus on; how to establish the justification of the topic as educational research methods in Higher Education (HE) in the first paper, 'The effect of institutional leadership on quality of higher education provision , the main research question is; how responsive is the Vice Chancellor to maintain academic quality improvement in HEIs? The model implemented as a four-stage process that provides effective leadership in HE; Collaboration, trust, communication styles, and leadership styles then analysis and reflection. The first paper analyses the indicators determining provisions of qualitative HEIs in state and private universities in Zimbabwe. In this section, the paper has critically discussed and compared the first paper with the second paper the 'Transformational leadership and Academic staff in Public universities . The primary research question is 'What are the most significant factors in transformational leadership in Higher Education? The study focuses on the leaders in public universities. In section two, the researcher has justified the choice of the methodologies and methods and the reasons that he has used mixed methods to evaluate the value of objective and subjective knowledge. In section three, the researcher briefly discussed the findings and own experiences as an insider and outsider researcher. It will be achieved by focusing on self-reflection and to answer the following main research questions:

1.   What are the challenges that face university leaders in leading and managing their institutions?
2.   What are the factors that might influence leaders' views on the quality of higher education provision?

ResearchObjectives:

-   To examine the indicators defining delivery of quality in the state and private universities of higher education.
-   To explore the philosophical underpinnings of the factors that might impact leaders' views in the HE.
-   To investigate the challenges that face university leaders in leading and managing their institutions.

Section 1

Research questions and the findings of both articles:

Article 1: The effect of institutional leadership on quality of higher education provision The goal of the first article is to investigate the results of institutional leadership on the quality of educational provision in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. The research examines the indicators defining delivery of quality in the state and private universities of higher education and how they are influenced by institutional leadership. The researcher has yielded interesting albeit seemingly contradictory. For instance, no quality assurance polices were in place yet, but the two public universities had deployed the Director responsible for quality assurance in accordance to the regulatory requirements of quality.

Conversely, the two private universities were yet to establish quality assurance units though they are willing to do so. The finding also depict the issue where there is a lack of financial resources to run the operations in the university especially for private universities resulting in poor salaries and lack of infrastructure which is a direct threat for quality and leadership in higher education.

Article2: Transformational Leadership and Academic Staff in Iraqi Public Universities

Whereas the second article is emphasizing more on Iraqi higher education challenges especially the role leadership in controlling the organizational factors particularly in the context of human resources area, where the human abilities and experience contract from each other due to employee self-esteem or satisfaction. Thus, the research is inspecting the influence of transformational leadership style on both intrinsic job satisfaction which is internal and extrinsic job satisfaction which is external. In the direction of reach reliable findings few hypothesis have been tested resulting that there are substantial solid association between the transformational leadership extents in the context of idealized influence attribute, idealized influence behavioural, and inspirational motivation and with both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Furthermore in simple words, it specifies that all of the transformational leadership mechanisms are backing significantly to both Intrinsic and Extrinsic job satisfaction.

Philosophical and Theoretical Approaches of both papers

There are a wide range of range of philosophical and theoretical approaches that can be used in social science research. The two broad paradigms, interpretive and positivism are different their philosophical assumptions concerning the concepts of behaviour action and social reality. According to Comte (2000) " interpretivism starting point is its insistence on differentiating between the nature of the phenomena investigated by the natural sciences and the nature of those studied by social sciences and educational researchers" (p.22). Researchers may come from a positive standpoint, where they record and observe about society, leading to the knowledge of society.

The first paper looks at the impact of the implementation of the effect of leadership on quality of higher education provision. The researcher focuses on the perspective of the participants and the model that have used is documentary analysis and direct observation. Phenomenologically, the "researcher seeks to elicit what is important to individual as well as their interpretation of the environment in which they work" (Bryman, 2004, p.23). The researcher show aspects of constructivism, he seeks to understand the multiple social constructions involved in the leadership in HE. Besides the first paper is having an epistemological and philosophical approach based on phenomenological paradigm by using inductive reasoning, in this approach the importance of societal realism is idiosyncratic built and interpreted via people but not based on objectively where existence is inevitable (Denscome, 1998.p.90). Additionally, the paper described an objective epistemology as presuming that world exists that is external and theory neutral, whereas within a subjective epistemological view no access to the external world beyond our own observations.

In contracts, the second paper has come from a more positivist perspective and the quantitative data collection is only used. Firm answers to closed research questions are gained "researchers are required to show how certain ends might be reached, not to say what those ends ought to be" (Ping, 2000, p.94). The literature is used to predict what may be found. The viewed the positivist paradigm of exploring social reality based on the philosophical ideas, thus the researcher emphasized on a highly structured methodology to facilitate repetition and on quantifiable that lend himself to statistical analysis. This differs from paper one that has used the literature to model the process rather than prove findings.

The research follows a positivist approach as described by Thomas (2009), where the researcher is aiming to explain findings using the work of others through using surveys (questionnaire). According to Thomas (2009) "specific variables are used as closed questions to the participants to collect quantitative data" (p.78).

The researcher has not identified certain ontological positions such as; objective, material, structural and agreed-upon. This may influence the epistemological choices or conclusion drawn and they should highlight the inter-dependent relationship between ontology and positive paradigm. Comparing to the first paper, the second paper has a more ethnographic viewpoint, "from a culture perspective for instance, closeness is somehow restricted between and among some lectures in this context" (Aderibigde and Ajasa, 2013, p.133). The researchers are assuming a real world involving cultural, leadership and gender issues play a part in their **research and subsequently their findings.**

Ethical Issues

According to Thomas (2009) "ethics are principles of conduct about what is right and wrong" (p.147). Researchers must show integrity in their research. To involve people in research you must gain consent which Thomas defines as "the agreement of people to take part in the study" (Thomas, 2009, 149). This can be done by giving informed consent, where participants know exactly what they are consenting to. Along with this Fisher and Anushko stated all ethical requirements are based on three basic principles: beneficence, respect and justice. The researcher must provide adequate information about the research and let the participants know the commitment needed (Denscombe, 1998). Oppositely, Bound and Campbell (2012) discuss three constituents that are key in ethical considerations: the profession or discipline, the overseeing institution and the participants.

In paper one written invitations are sent to leaders in two universities to be part of the project. It requires informed consent of the cohort of male and female HE leaders and Staff chosen for participating in research had been obtained verbally (25 interviews). Participants were able to involve after receiving the invitations. Participants were given details of the proposed study and the opportunity to volunteer and they were given the right to decide whether or not they wished to be interviewed and might even withdraw.

Comparatively, in the second paper ethics are not touched in details. 280 questionnaires were sent out to universities leaders and staffs. They could either complete the questionnaire or return. The paper does not give details of any other information sent and it is assumed from the paper that if the questionnaire was returned implied consent was given. The questionnaire were anonymous and unlike paper one, the participants could refuse to talk. The researcher of the second paper has used only quantitative research methods survey (Questionnaire), and because it is in IRAQ, therefore the researcher was particularly sensitive and sent an invitation letter for each university securing their consent to receive the survey instrument.

The major problem confronting the researcher in conducting that study was how to access potential and suitable participants and this is because Iraq is still not safe! One of the ethical issues is confidentiality and this is more vital if the research take a place in some country like Iraq. Furthermore, Anderson & Arsenault (1998, p.20) explained that "confidential information implies that identity of the individual will remain anonymous". The researcher of the first paper has mentioned that to secure their confidentiality the official invitation email had been sent to the participants were assured that confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed. By contrast, the researcher in the second paper had a similar method that to protected their confidentially the official letter had been sent for six universities and informed the participants by formal invitation email that anonymity would be assured.

Research Methodologies

The research methodologies are the strategies used by researcher in collecting data, processing and analyzing the data. The main methods of research are qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research takes everyday life and experiences as the research matter. It is guided by people active in the research (Pring, 2000, p.35).

In contrast, the quantitative survey is rigid and does not lend itself to change after piloting. Researchers generally take an interpretivist standpoint, and trying to measure variables but looking at how people are interacting within the social world. Quantitative data collection aims to test theories to gain explanations. Data is collected and analyzed to spot patterns numerically. A positivist approach would support a quantitative methodology. According to Thomas (2009) researchers look for ways in which isolated variables have relationships. "The approach would involve forming a hypothesis and drawing conclusions by observing the interaction of these variables" (p.177). Conversely, the data collection techniques employed by qualitative researchers are semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and observation, documents and videos have limited standardization and lend themselves to variation in the course of the research. Whereas for quantitative researchers the instruments are; questionnaire, scales, surveys, structured interviews inventory or tests are standardized and restricts respondents. Sampling techniques and sizes also vary. According to Pring (2000), sampling in qualitative research is purposeful rather than random and it is usually not large and may not be specified from the onset. Random sampling presupposes that research characteristics are normally distributed in a population, a situation that cannot be established at the inception of the research (Kvale, 1997, p.15).

Paper one uses a qualitative approach, using an open ended research question and it has used 7 research questions. Data was gathered through on a descriptive methodology, which means the researcher used three ways in the research and they are: observations, questionnaires and interviews. A non-random, non-representative small sample was used. Non-statistical analysis followed. The primary data collection method was using standardized interviews in two private universities in Zimbabwe. The researcher comes from an interpretivist standpoint, collecting quantitative data from the feelings, reflections and thoughts of the participants. A serious challenge for this design as the researcher may not have enough statistical power to support their research.

Oppositely, second paper used quantitative research and this study believed questionnaires often seem a logical and easy option as a way of collection information from people in a country like Iraq. A closed question survey questionnaire for data collection followed by descriptive statistical analysis to produce series of bar charts showing the results generated from the survey responses. According to Boynton (2005) "the researcher sets the topics for research and the participants' replies are coded and analyzed" (p.55). A four-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to generate responses to specific questions which were driving the study.

A large sample was used, in comparison to paper one, 280 questionnaire were sent out and 72% were received back for use. Questions with given responses were used in the questionnaire. This is very different to paper one where open ended interviews were used to gauge the feelings and opinions of the participants. The two main critiques this research are; the lack of isomorphism between its measures and reality and its failure thus far to produce truths useful to educational practice. Data gathered from the second paper compares survey results to expectations from the literature review.

Definition of Research

According to Perrow (1998), "research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict and control the observed phenomenon and involves inductive and deductive methods" (p.89). The two definitions above interest me for several reasons and I have put these reasons into two groups. The first is what research involves and second what research does. Thus, from the definitions, research involves a search or investigation which also means it is infinite in the sense that one finding may lead to invariably another search. Secondly, as to what research does, the two definitions are quite clear.

The first says it discovers facts and second says it describes, explains, predicts and finally controls observed phenomena. Social science research must always seek to understand the social environment from the individual as well as social group perspectives. As Bryman (2004) suggests "quantitative research has been associated with objectivity and qualitative research with subjectivity. These two paradigms have been engaged in what has been described as paradigm war" (p.453).

I have come from an interpretivist standpoint. I look at leadership in Higher Education and in the world of academicians. The research will understand that the social world for each participant will be different and constructed in a different way for each participant. This is a truly interprevisit standpoint (Thomas, 2009, p.145). I have considered that my research would not fall into a totally positivist approach but may show some aspects due to my chosen design methods. According to Robson (2002) "Positivists look for events having a constant relationship between them" (p.20). It is through reflection, I have use some quantitative data collection methods and this falls into a positivist approach methodology. My aim is for a mixed method approach. Phenomenologically, I have demanded to use an approach described by Denscombe (1998) "phenomenology is an approach that focuses on how life is experienced" (p.94).

My Development Research

My aim is to grasp the development of a journey to educational leadership in higher education sector as a career. It is significant that I am a full-time lecturer within higher education sector effortlessly. I have tried to observe and conduct interviews with leaders such as: Head-department, Directors, Principals, Vice Principals, and Vice president). In future research, I would use implied consent, ensuring the participants are clear on the research and their part in it and assume consent is given by them unless they tell me otherwise. An idea concerning ethics from the papers, I have researched and I would like to use in my future research as from the first paper. Participants were spoken to in a forum before starting the research. This gave an insight into the research project plus an opportunity for questions.

It is proven that mixed method approach lends itself well. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), note three reasons why the mixed approach is good; its ability to answer research questions that other approaches cannot (confirmatory and exploratory questions at the same time), provide stronger inferences through depth breadth in answer to complex social phenomena and provide the opportunity through divergent findings for an expression of differing viewpoints. Following the second paper used in part one, I believe using a closed questionnaire with a Likert scale will enable me to draw comparisons between different leaders and to look for patterns. At the end of the process, I will include another qualitative interview for each participant to gain an understanding of their thoughts, beliefs and reflections on the leading process in an interprevisit manner.

The phenomenological emphasis in my research will involve looking at the experiences and beliefs of the participant and the impact of leading has upon their leadership and in leading their department. It will be a different personal experience for each leader due to their differing positions and setting. It will be a different personal experience for each leader due to their differing positions and settings. Therefore, I would look at 'subjective meaning' (Pring, 2000), as stated by him: " To understand particular events one must see things from the point of view of the participants or of the people who are involved how they interpret events and thereby constitute those as evens of certain sort" (Pring, 2000, p.98). On the other hand, according to Saglam and Milanova (2013) "the insights gained from the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research provide a better and expanded understanding of the research subject" (p.5).

Philosophical Approach

In order to understand the methodology and methods adopted for this study it is necessary to clarify the researcher's philosophical viewpoint from both papers. In first paper, ontology was emphasized. Thomas (2009) suggests that Ontology: is concerned with the nature of being, of reality and of truth. It explores what the nature of world is and what really exist." (p.87). In contrast, in second paper epistemology focuses on the study of knowledge. That is, "how do we know about the world that we have defined ontologically?" (Thomas, 2009, p.87).

Section Two

Research Methodology and Research Design

Research design "deals with a logical problem and not a logistical problem" (Yin, 1989, p.29). Ideally, the experimental design would have been a better approach as it would have afforded me the opportunity to randomly assign per-service leaders to lead their institutions. In-terms of design characteristics, the first paper has a good research design because it has flexible type of design minimizes bias and maximizes the reliability of the data collection and analyze the findings. The design of second paper gives the smallest experimental error on their reported compared with the first. It's also, the research questions are related to the purpose of objectivity on second paper, but on first it's generalize the main issue.

I will not have a set hypothesis for my research, but a series of research questions looking at how leadership style affect leaders. There are different variants to the experimental design but the purposes of this. The critical problem associated with first paper is the possible statistical measurement limitations of qualitative data. At the heart of quantitative research methods is some very sound statistical theory and the researcher on second paper need an understanding of the statistical methods. The first paper has mixed research design, regardless of their theoretical differences, reflect some sort of individual phenomenological perspective and there is no specific independent variable. While, the second paper has only quantitative research approaches, regardless of their theoretical differences and the independent variable is controlled and manipulated variable. From point of view, I have found from both papers there are four properties of situation specific theories are accessible: reflection of specific phenomena, connection to research practice, incorporation of diversities and limits in generalization.

The Methods of Data Collection

To practically answer the main research questions of this study, and this study is conducted and on 14 lecturers and 10 leaders who have been working at the three universities; University of Sulaimani, University of Human Development and Cihan University.

Data Analysis

After the reflections from both paper, for data collected using instrument and the framework of data analysis, I have developed Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) data analyze. According to Ritchie (1994) " Framework analysis is flexible during the analysis process in that it allows the user to either collect all the data and then analyze it or do data analysis during the collection process" (p.24).

1. Participants

For this study, 24 leaders and lecturers were optionally selected from the University of Human Development, University of Sulaimani, and Cihan University in Iraqi Kurdistan. The leaders and lecturers at the University who have been leading their higher education institutions in the academic year 2018-2019.

2. Mixed Methods of Data Collection Techniques

This study has used mixed methods of data collection; interview and questionnaire. These are two useful approaches for this study because the researcher could obtain acceptation by only ten candidates to be interviewed and this is not sufficient data to be collected for this study. Thus, a researcher had to choose a questionnaire for the rest of 14 candidates. The selected students were divided up into two groups; first group (A) they were interviewed. A researcher used structured interview because it usually deprives researchers from the opportunity to "add or remove questions, change their sequence or alter the wording of questions" (Kyale, 1998, p.18). A second group (B) they have only accepted questionnaire. Self-completion questionnaires are those that respondents can fill out on their own, saving time and money. Both methods of data collection used in this study asked the same questions. Data were collected first using the interview and the second questionnaire.

3. Procedures of This Study

This study applied action research in order to investigate the significance of research methods with reference to language Education in higher education. Action research is used because it reflects the method that helps lecturers and students to examine, an explore aspect in research methods learning in order to take action and make improvement in both their practice and their students learning the outcome. Thus, this study aim to considering points for research methods in higher education and particular 4th stage students by putting students' stories at the centre of teaching about research methods processing. The study started at the beginning of the final year of the 4th stage students of the academic year 2018-2019. The students were informed that they are participating in research with this aim, and they were through an ongoing process of reflection and refinement, this approach helps students and lecturers expand their understanding of research methods and particular mixed methods in a way that is practical, accessible and innovative in their future.

Instrument

According to Baryman (2004 "data collection instruments refer to devices used to collect data such as questionnaires, tests, and structured interview" (p.161). Three separate instrument will be used in my future study. The first is an adopted standardized instrument used to measure leadership knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required to answer research question 1. The second is an investigation how the four-stage career framework growth can be used in practice leadership in educational setting to answer research question 2. The third instrument will be a semi-structured interview guide to collect qualitative data for research question 3. In summary of the reflection, as a researcher of this study, I like statistics, tangible, observable things and operationalizing a variable. More than once I have called a positivist. However, I do not consider myself a positivist. I do not like labels, as they tend to imply characteristics that may or not apply. If I call myself a positivist, then people might expect me to only look for objective reality, only look at numbers and statistical trends and miss the beauty of the detail. Additionally, I believe the truth is socially constructed. People's subjective perceptions are a valuable source of information, not only to themselves but to the world. Thus far, I do not consider myself an interpretivist either only. I am a pragmatist. I focus on what works. I have used mixture methods and I can understand truth as a tentative, evolving entity. It is at this point resonates with me to refer to mixed methods research as a form of research. Although it is clearly a pragmatic approach to exploring research questions, there is still a tendency amongst mixed methods researchers to claim that this approach (Firm, 2000, p.34p).

Section Three

The Findings

This section present the findings for each main research question that is addressed in turn with the intention of respondents from participants. In addition tom this section has pointed out of the discussion of findings from the quantitative stage and the linking of them to the qualitative results and the especially regarding the unexpected findings from the mixed methods and how both method stages with the literature review in order to provide the on the whole findings of the study. By doing so, a framework to reflect the new knowledge gained in addressing the research questions. Therefore, for the purpose of identification, the seven candidates' interviews were referred to as A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9 and A10. Despite the fact, the 14 candidates for questionnaire were identified B1 up until B14.

Research question 1: What are the challenges that face university leaders in leading and managing their institutions?

The findings of research question has found there are five main challenges are the most difficulties that facing leaders and lecturers in leading and managing their institutions. The majority of interviewees and respondents from questionnaire 22 out of 24 they have mentioned the four main challenges.

The challenges that face university leaders in leading	Total (n=24)
Difficulty to share the leader's vision	22
Poor communication skills	20
Lack of self-confidence	19
Deficiency luck of motivation	21
Teachers' pedagogical knowledge	23

(Table 1. The four Challenges that face university leaders)

Challenge 1: Difficulty to share the leader's vision

The results reflect that the practice of the difficulty to share the leader's vision emphasized by (22 out of 24) respondents from both interviews and online questionnaire that their incapability to achieve their vision was one of the challenges they faced in leading and managing their institution.

Challenge 2: Poor Communication Skills

The majority of the respondents (20 out of 24) they had stated that leader's poor communication skills can have a negative impact on staff and might even damage the university's bottom line and some significant signs of poor communication skills that can kill leadership potential.

Challenge 3: Lack of self-confidence

The results display in this research that lack of self-confidence was quantified by (19 out 24) leaders in public and private sectors responded to be one the significant challenges that they faced during leading and managing their institution.

One of the leader in public sector A6 said:

… "In my understanding, a good leader has the self-confidence to personify all these attributes. Nevertheless, I believe not every leader is naturally confident, some of the leaders are under lack of self-confidence can find it difficult to success".

Challenge 4: Leader's lack of motivation

The findings show that of the 21 respondents 24 believe that one the most recent challenges to lead in HEIs is the lack of leader's motivation. The results of this study show the motivational factors leads to quality performance and high efficiency which improve quality assertion in the education system in HEIs. The motivational theories are essential for each department in HEIs when it comes to coordinating and controlling activities within the department atmosphere.

One of the leader in public sector A5 said:

… " I believe that leaders or educators and lecturers across the whole country including Iraq are unsatisfied with the challenge of how to motivate the ever increasing number of academic staff and new students entering each university who are socially and academically improvised for the demands of university life".

Challenge 5: Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge

The findings show that of the 23 respondents 24 believe that one the most recent challenges to lead in HEIs is the lecturers do not co-operate with leaders in their departments effectively in teaching and learning. Consequently, this means teachers' pedagogical knowledge and the teaching profession are significant as professionals in their filed that to collaborate with their leaders successfully. Teachers can be expected to process and evaluate new knowledge relevant for their core professional practice and to regularly update their knowledge base to improve their practice and to meet new teaching demands in the higher education. Teacher quality itself is an important factor in determining gains in student achievement.

In fact, as research has shown, pedagogical knowledge refers to the specialized knowledge of teachers in HE for creating effective teaching and learning environments for all students. On the other hand, to face this challenge in the HE, hence, the leaders need to focus how to improve teacher quality, it is crucial to understand what teacher professionalism involves. In other words, the implication of this study that leaders can consider the two main themes underlying the study of teacher knowledge are improving student outcomes and teacher professionalism

Research question 2: What are the factors that might influence leaders' views on quality of higher education provision?

The findings presented there are four main factors that might influence leaders to view on leadership based on the research question two are analysed. The majority of the respondents (23 out of 24) leaders stated that direct and indirect of the fear-factor in leadership that influence leaders' views. The second factor has respondents (20 out of 24) they have mentioned that policies and places in their department that might influence leaders' views on leadership. The third factor is the length of experience that (21 out of 24) leaders stated that the experience is the factor that strength leaders' views on leadership and management. Similarly, confirmed in literature review as the same factor. The factor four is a lack of clarity in vision and this stated by (22 out of 24) leaders.

The factors that might influence leaders' views on leadership	Total (n=24)
Direct and indirect of the fear-factor in leadership	23
People (staff and student), policies and places	20
Length of experience	21
Lack of clarity of vision	22

(Table 1. The factors that might influence leaders view)
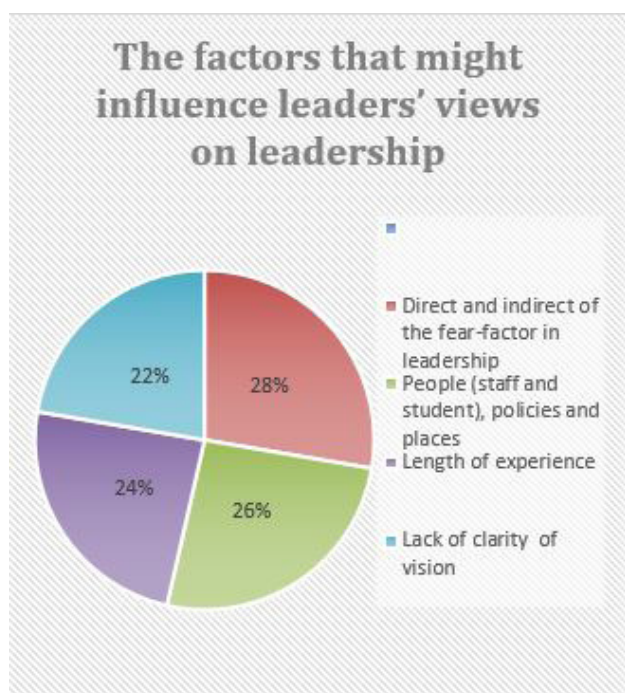
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