The influence of professional development program on the leadership style ofschool principals (linemanagers) in Abu Dhabi governmental schools

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ABSTRACT--*This study explores the practices of professional development program in improving leadership style of school principals (line managers) in Abu Dhabi governmental school, UAE. Qualitative research design with Case-study approach was selected to offer in depth analyzing and evaluating results obtained from anstandardized survey. A questionnaire made up of eight Likert questionnaires and three open-ended questions has been administrated. The Survey has been designed based on Ministry of Education School Inspection Framework in UAE. The main goal of the aforementioned framework is to explore the relationship between two variables, professional development program, and leadership style of school principals. This study has been carried out in eight randomly selected public secondary schools located in Abu Dhabi – Al Ain. The target population was each of the principles running the eight schools. The results showed that, as a consequence of professional development program, all principals had acquired new strategies to improve their skills in some spots, but uncertainty appeared in the rest knowledge, strategies and skills. Finally, a bundle of gradual and planned training strategies matching with the requirements of school principals to face internal and external challenges are recommended to improve leadership style of school principals in Abu Dhabi.*

KEYWORDS--*Professional development program; UAE public schools; leadership traits;school principals; inspection framework.*

I INTRODUCTION

Schools are consideredthe fundamental building unit for educational sector all overthe world, where line managers(school principals/leaders) are the fuel for running educationalorganization by engaging teachers to adopt their vision (Madestam, Sundström, & Bergström, 2018). This vision should tape and encourage all staff members, as long as leadersare able to inspire people to follow them by promoting culture of creativity within organization. This study focuses on leadership style, particularly, knowledge and skills acquired by school principals (line managers) from professional development program in Abu Dhabi governmental schools in United Arab Emirates. The influence of these program will be evaluated based on leadership improvement of school principals (line managers) in Abu Dhabi's governmental schools and the reflection on their staff.

The link between education and economic growth has been widely discussed amongscholars focused on both national and internationaleconomic development. Deng & Zhao (2018), identified the direct and indirect influence of education on economic growth and innovation. They analyzed the correlation between number of schools, skilled teachers, curriculum structure and the quality of education system with economic development and how education outcomes could be oriented toward economic demands.According to Zhang (2018), investment in quality of education plays a major role in maintaining sustainable development of countries. These investments are considered one of the major areas that make upthe domestic economies, which rely on highly

skilled armed that occupied with innovative ideas and critical thinking. As a sign of the importance of investment in education,United Nation developed Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) to reshape the future of our world byensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (Nations, 2019). The main purpose of SDG4 is to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, furthermore, helping governments and stakeholders to convert this goalinto action (Nations, 2019). The dependency of economy development on education is not limited to school outcomes, but also extended to universities and higher education outcomes. Dima, Begu, Vasilescu, &Maassen (2018)argued that the global competitiveness indicator comprises three stages of country development, each with its sub-indexes indicating pillars of competitiveness, namely: the factor-driven stage (containing pillars of basic requirements: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education); the efficiency-driven stage (comprising pillars of efficiency enhancement: higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labor market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size); and the innovation-driven stage (including pillars of innovation and sophistication: business sophistication and research and development (R&D) innovation). According to World Bank (2015), there is a deep relationship between education and economy, whereby education can enhance the human capital skills and potential, which increases labor productivity and leads to higher level of outputs. In fact, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is considered the optimum way to measure the influence of education "The standard method of estimating the effect of education on economic growth regressions where average annual growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita" (Haushk&WoBmaan, 2015).

Educational and economic developments have inspired Abu Dhabi's rulers to build their vision in order to reduce dependency on oil as a main source of internal income .Table (1) below shows the percentage contribution of non-oil sectors from total GDP in 2019 (Authority, 2019). To minimize the gap between oil exports and non-oil exports, UAE rulers are working on preparing nationals to be confident with their growth as a global economic center, by offering a high quality educational system whichmay equip nationals to deal with different economical challenges by using "twenty- first" century skills, problem solving technique and analyticaltechnique. To facilitate this vision Ministry of Education in the UAE with cooperation of Abu Dhabi Education and Knowledge (ADEK) has urged to improve leadership skills and qualification as prerequisites for educational leadership positions in the UAE government schools (ADEK, 2019)

جدول 1: نسبة مساهمة القطاعات في الناتج المحلي الإجمالي الثابت للربع الأول 2019

Table 1: Percentage contribution by sectors in GDP for Q1/2019

Economic Activities	Q1-2018	Q1-2019	الأنشطة الاقتصادية
Non-Financial Corporations Without Oil	60.30	54.76	قطاع المشروعات غير المالية ما عدا قطاع النفط
Mining and quarrying (includes crude oil and natural gas)	23.03	31.19	الصناعات الاستخراجية (تشمل النفط الخام والغاز الطبيعي)
Financial and insurance	9.80	8.83	الأنشطة المالية وأنشطة التأمين
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	6.86	5.22	الإدارة العامة والدفاع؛ الضمان الاجتماعي الإجباري
Total GDP	100.00	100.00	جملة الناتج المحلي الإجمالي

Total Non-oil	76.97	68.81	إجمالي غير النفطي

Source: Federal Competitiveness

& Statistics Authority

المصدر : الهيئة الاتحادية للتنافسية

والإحصاء

II LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

There are numerous leadership theories which are focusing on the significance impact of the leaderson managing and planning strategies for their organizations. Among all of them, it is worth noting thetransformational leadership theory which put forward by Bass and Rigio (2006). They defined of a leader as a person who seeks to stimulate and motivate those working below him to both strive and accomplish extraordinary results not only as an individual but also as a part of a team.This type of leadersare working on pushing subordinates to develop their own leadership competences and skills.Therefore,transformationalleader helps those they lead to grow and develop into leaders themselves.Depending on addressing their needsas individuals and empowering them to take on the responsibilities of making decisions within their given task, which help organizationsto move forward. Accordingto Roggio (2017), numerous scientistsand researchershave mentioned that the transformational leadership approach has a positive influence on staff morale, attitude and encourages group cohesion.Furthermore,Roggio (2017) argued that research evidence clearly shows that groups lead by transformational leaders have higher levels of performance and satisfaction than groups lead by other types of leaders.

In Order leaders maintain staff morale, attitude and productivity .They need to construct solid and real vision which will inspire the change-oriented behaviors of adaptability and proactivity within their organizations(Ndalamba, Caldwell, & Anderson, 2018).In parallel, Farrell (2015) recognized exceptional leaders that predict the future of their organization by creating long-term vision. This vision depends on understanding internal and external environment,stakeholders, market demands, client requirements, finance and competitors. Deep understanding for these factors inspired leaders to create sustainable vision, depending on two principles: "what we stand for and why we exist" and "what we aspire to become, to achieve, to create". These pillars will lead toreshape the future by developing long-term perspective.

Subsequent to fashioning strong vision, leaders should proceed to the application phase by establishing clear implementation plan to move their vision and core values to employees in all levels of the organization's hierarchy. Tawse, Patrick and Vera (2019) points toa framework to transit from strategy formulation to strategy implementation that is associated with psychological and emotional needs. Because each stage of transition depends on individual interaction, starting from planning until engagement, where human emotion plays a major role in improving the productivity. Thisframework depends on six factors a) remove plan distraction.b) maintain implementation intention.c) verbal framing.d) focus on the end of the game.e) learn from crises.f) celebrate small achievement.Furthermore, these factors support top executives to reduce the gap within employees and influence their teams in order to help them better engage in the implementation process. Alagaraja, Cumberlanda and Choi (2015), emphasized on the significant role of leaders especially CEO, in engaging and transferring knowledge to the employees. This leads to achieve higher levels of productivity, to enhance employee's moral, to increase customer satisfaction and also to enhance competitive advantage. Suharti and Suliyanto(2016), also highlighted the importance of decision makers and leaders in the companies, to pay serious attention toemployees'

engagement to simplify the process of implementation. Leadership initiatives, organization culture and leadership style have a positive correlation toward employees' engagement and knowledge transfer across department within the organization. The accomplishment of the leadership within any organization is highly depend on managing organizational change and strategy implementation. According to Lynch and Mors (2019) understanding of a firm's social structure may help in achieving implementation of organizational change, especially when employees' resistance is known to be the main problem/threats to organizational changeand understanding firmsocial structure will minimize the resistance of changes.Dederer and Swan (2016) also mention three keys to manage and minimize the resistance of changes within employees that look at the changes as unbeneficial to them and hold a negative implication for organization. These keys should start by ensuring that the authorizedemployees, CEO and managers, understand the needfor changes. Then engaging and addressing the concerns of knowledge workers, who are involvedin creating, distributing, or implement changes. In the end,respecting the resistance of change as a natural human behavior.

As leaders have a major role in companies, leaders in schools have a magnificent role in establishing and maintaining school's success. Based on Graha's (2018) research, an effective school's leader can promote a culture of creativity in the schools by building a community of trust with teachers, developvision with staffthrough sharing leadership strategies and create honest communication channels. While David &Abukari (2019) explained school leadership as a mechanism of guiding teachers, students, parents and external social community towards achieving common educational goals. Graha's (2018) alsohighlightedthe disadvantagesof the leader who focusing on the task, without caring on motivation and satisfaction of his staff. The influence of leaderseffects not only on teachers, but also it extendsto reachstudents' performance. Pàmies, Senent and Essomba(2016) pointed out the need for considering educational leadership as leadership for learning. This link has a major role in adding value to schools and improving the academic level of students, through acting in two main areas. First, school leaders should contribute to clearly identifying the school project, through a clear vision and continuous evaluation of staff andstudents' performances. Second,looking for collaboration from all of the educational staff. This collaborative work has positive influenceon teaching staff's trust and increases teachers' loyalty and commitment to the school.

Maintaining strong school principals leadership style is depending on high quality of professional development program. David &Abukari (2019) reported that training services, mentors' guidance, continuous professional development trainings have an excellent role in developing leadership skills for school principals (line managers). Furthermore, improving leadership skills and knowledge of school principals by involving them in professional development trainings will affect school quality in two dimensions: functional quality and academic quality (Elahi & Ilyas, 2019). Academic quality through affect the school levels outcomes,on other hand, functional quality by supporting leaders in enhancing their self-awareness on designing clear goals and value which facilitate the role of people that working with them (Mahfouz, 2018).Thessin (2019), argued that continuous professional development training has a role in supporting school principal in developing and creating action vision to transfer new leadership skills to subordinate. By highlighting the need for bridge of trust that depends on effective working relationship between school principal and staff to facilitate dealing with challenges and changes.Afifeh,(2015) also support this concept by showed that principals who benefit from

continuous training in certain process skills such as leadership and management were more operative than those who did not.

The gap appeared in analyzing the role of professional development program on principal's leadership style between international scholars and local scholars in UAE. This assumption was obvious when researcherconduct online search through **Emerald Insight** by using **United Arab Emirates, Professional development program, leadership in education and schools** as keywords. The result shows 753 articles, just 22 of them covering leadership in UAE's schools, for instance, Dari, Jabeen, & Papastathopoulos (2018) Examined the role of leadership inspiration, rewards and its relationship with contribution to knowledge sharing: Evidence from the UAE. Also, Rao & Abdul (2015), idetified the Impact of transformational leadership on team performance: an empirical study in UAE.Where zero of 22 highlighted the impact of professional development program on leadership traits of school principals.

As a sequence of limited research on the influence of professional development program on school principals leadership stylein UAE and based of previousliterature that is highlighting the major role of professional development program on developing leadership style. Furthermore, the importance leadership traits of school principalson designing the strategies that maintaining the productivity of school's staff, studentsand stakeholder satisfactory on the same time; our main hypothesistested in this research is:

H: Does professional development program improve leadership skills and knowledge of school principals (line managers) in Abu Dhabi?

III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to test the set hypothesis, a research study has been carried out in emirates of Abu Dhabi – Al Ain, analyzing the leadership skills and knowledge of public-school principals (line managers) of this area. This study has been taken a place in eight secondary governmental schools in Al-Ain city, which is located in the east of UAE's capital, Abu Dhabi, and governed by Abu Dhabi's rules and regulation. The target schools and population have been selectedbased onthe inspection report that depending on Ministry of Education School Inspection Framework for the best eight schools out of 40 schools in Al Ain (Education, 2019).The eight school principals(Line managers) working in theseschoolshave participate in this research. To analysis hypothesis on a proper way, this paper has been built on qualitative research. This type of designcan be broadly defined as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures, numerical relationship or other means of quantification (Golafshani, 2003).Case-study approachwas selected because it offers in depth analysis and also asses the influence of professional development program on school's principles leadership style (Creswell., 2014).

In order to validate the accuracy of information, data has been analyzed through several steps. Starting from organized and preparedinstrument to collect data, which was a survey that consist of eight items of Likert questionnaire rangedfrom stronglydisagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and open-ended questions, these questions are constructed based on Ministry of Education School Inspection Framework (education, 2019) . Next stepwasanalyzed the information and ideas that were collected from participants and reflectedtheir perception on the role of professional development program in developing their leadership style. Overall answers of the survey

were usedto explore the relation between two variables, which are professional development program and leadership style ofschoolprincipals. The framework of school inspection is structured on six performance standards, which are 1) students' achievement 2) students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills3) teaching and assessment 4) curriculum 5) the protection, care, guidance and support of students 6) leadership and management. However, the questionnaire designed for this piece of research is focused only on the criteria of leadership and management.Finally, coded similar data basis of emerging information collected from school principals and reflected them to scientific chart to simplify analyzing results (Creswell., 2014). The research matched the standard ethical protocol, by obtaining necessary approval from the participants with due information about the research and the purpose of collecting data and information.

IV DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS AND RESULT

During data collection process, eight surveys were distributed by hand to eight school principals and none of them were counted as uncompletion's. It's useful to highlight that all school principals surveyed are local, located in Al Ain, having more than 10 years experiences in managing schools, their mother tongue is Arabic. For this reason, some of the last questions of the survey, which were open-ended, have been answered in Arabic. Hand coding was the tool that used to analyze data with support of simple software to calculate the percentage and weight of each answer as a reason of small number of samples.

Table (2) summarized all participants opinions on the Likert questionnaire'squestions.Consequently, 12% of school principals are stronglyagree that professional development program inspired them to develop exceptional strategic direction and promote an ambitious vision that is shared by the whole school community where, 88 % agree on the same point. This lead to explain that PDP has a positive impact on school principals to be highly effective, inspirational and gave opportunity for skilled practitioners to display a high level of professional competence.Furthermore, helps them in communicate a clear view of the school's aims so that all staff members are clear and committed to their parts in achieving the school's vision.

In terms of the role of professional development program in showing principals how to demonstrate comprehensive and thorough knowledge of the curriculum and best practices in teaching, learning and assessment. 37% of them strongly agree, 50% agree on the role of PDP in this area, where 13% of them disagree on this role.These percentages highlighted unclear strategies that PDP implemented to support principals in maintaining high level of understanding curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment which is reflected on learning culture and student's attainment.

Distorted answers from principals were clear, when Likert questionnaire covered the role of PDP in building the relationships and communication with all stakeholder effectively. Where 25% strongly agree, 62% agree but 13% of them are unsure from the effective role of PDP in this area as.

The confident and clear answers were appeared when questionnaire highlighted the role professional development program in helping principles to demonstrate innovative and accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school. Where 25% strongly agree and 75% of them agree in this role. This reflected how PDP shows principals how to take full account of the school's vision, values and aims when developing new initiatives.

The disturbance was clear when questionnaire ask about the role professional development program in helping principals to conduct systematic and rigorous self-evaluation, using both internal and external data, embedded in the school's improvement planning and in its practices at all levels. Where 12% strongly agree, 63% agree in the positive role of PDP in this area, but 25% didn't find any value for PDP in this area. These percentages show that not all principles are fully involved in systematic self-evaluation, which has the explicit purpose of improving the quality of students' experiences and their standards of attainment.

The uncertainty was clear also when onequestion in questionnaire asking, if professional development program helps principles to implement systematic and rigorous monitoring to ensure that there is accurate evaluation of teaching and learning and their effect on student's achievement. Where 25% strongly agree, 62% agree but 13% disagree on the role of PDP one this point.Again, these percentages show that principles need more effective training strategies to occupy them with tools thatrigorously monitor and evaluate classroom experiences, track students' attainment and evaluate their progress towards meeting agreed targets.

Almost same scenario appears, when questionnaire asking about the role professional development program in helping principles to build coherent and ambitious school improvement plans based on accurate school evaluation. Where 13% strongly agree,75% agree but 12% disagree. Identifying key priorities for the preparation of the improvement plan and involves staff, parents and students by principles still need more attention from PDP.

Last part in thequestionnairewas covered if theprofessional development program helps principals in analyzing all the recommendations from the previous inspection report have been implemented in full.The result was 12% strongly agree, 62 % agree, 13% neutral and 13% disagree. As a sequence of previous analysis, PDP doesn't offer enough tools for all principles in schools to monitor and manage changes quickly, flexibly and successfully.

Table 2: Questions

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	**5**
You are inspired by professional development program to develop exceptional strategic direction and promote an ambitious vision that is shared by the whole school community.	0	0	0	88%	12%
Professional development program shows principals how to demonstrate comprehensive and thorough knowledge of the curriculum and best practices in teaching, learning and assessment.	0	13%	0	50%	37%
Professional development program shows principals how to build relationships and communication with all stakeholders	0	0	13%	62%	25%

consistently professional and highly effective.					
Professional development program shows principals how to demonstrate innovative clear and accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school.	0	0	0	75%	25%
Professional development program helps principles to conduct systematic and rigorous self-evaluation, using both internal and external data, embedded in the school's improvement planning and in its practices at all levels.	0	25%	0	63%	12%
Professional development program helps principles to implement systematic and rigorous monitoring to ensure that there is accurate evaluation of teaching and learning and their effect on student's achievement.	0	13%	0	62%	25%
Professional development program helps principles to build coherent and ambitious school improvement plans based on accurate school evaluation.	0	13%	0	75%	12%
Professional development program helps principles to analyze all the recommendations from the previous inspection report have been implemented in full.	0	13%	13%	62%	12%

In the second part of the survey, there were three open-end questions that clarify the overall understanding of professional development program's roll and emerging framework for their function. As variation appears in the first part of the questionnaire, also variation appears in open-ended questions. In the part that covered the ways that PDP supporting school principals(line managers) in involving all staff in analyzing the recommendation from previous inspection, most participants agreed that PDP helped them in analyzing the previous inspection report in a good way, stand on weakness to improve offering clear strategies to change , example conducting weekly planning with coordinators and supervisors to be the changing agent forteachers.

"Through these recommendations weak and strength points have been highlighted. Strategic plans to improve these weak points have been implemented".

On other hand, some participants didn't find any value for PDP in supporting them with enough strategies to involve all staff in a proper way.

"No clear strategies from professional development program to implement all staff in analyzing inspection's recommendation".

The link between the role of professional development plan in facilitating the job of principals in involving all staff in analyzing inspection reports, and his rolein developing principal's strategies in maintaining staff influences was obvious from participants answers. Where the participants that found value for PDP in the first point, also recognized the positive role for PDP in the second point. On other hand, the participants that didn't find value for PDP in the first point, didn't find value for PDP in the second point.

"It gave me new strategies to inspire my staff. How to work as one team that has one goal. If the staff engaged in the strategy, they follow it easily".

"I don't have direct training, just based on my experience".

Regarding the last question that looked to discover if professional development program highly effective in anticipating and addressing potential barriers to sustain school improvement. All participants agreed that PDP helped principals most of the time in anticipating and addressing potential barriers to sustain school improvement.On the same time, all of them agreed that they still need more efficient and effective tools to keep their leadership traits up to date, which help them to face continuous changing and challenging in the school'senvironment in innovative way.

"Effective, but not highly effective".

"Professional development program helps principals most of the time in anticipating and addressing potential barriers to sustain school improvement".

V   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As shortage in researches that exploring the influence of professional development program (PDP) on school principal's leadership style in UAE. Thispre-study makes contributionto understand the influence of professional development program on leadership style of school principals through providing empirical evidence for those resultby using pre-test. In particular, professional development programs allow novice and experienced school principals (line managers) to obtain innovative approaches and initiatives that aid in the acquisition of new content knowledge, approaches, beliefs, attitudes, and abilities. (Özer, Doğan, Yalaki, Irez, & Çakmakci, 2019). However, this piece ofresearch explored that PDP may need to enhance their strategies to improve learning and training tools to achieve their goals. Based on principles perspective, there are limitation in developing their leadership skills and style in specific areas.

In this context, the result highlights the positive role of professional development program in promoting leadership style of school's principals in developing exceptional strategic direction and promote an ambition vision that is shared by the whole of school community,furthermore, professional development program success in show principals how to demonstrate innovative clear and accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve school. However, PDP may fail in improving leadership style for all principals in a) showing them how to demonstrate comprehensive and thorough knowledge of the curriculum and best practices in teaching, learning and assessment. b) building relationships and communication with all stakeholders consistently professional and highly effective. c) conducting systematic and rigorous self-evaluation, using both internal and external data, embedded in the school's improvement planning and in its practices at all levels. d) implementing systematic and rigorous monitoring to ensure that there is accurate evaluation of teaching and learning and their effect on

student's achievement. e) building coherent and ambitious school improvementplans based on accurate school evaluation. f) analyzing all the recommendations from the previous inspection report have been implemented in full.

The main limitation of this piece of researchis the fact of being conducted only over eight school principals that may influence the accuracy of information. Future research should increase sample size to collect more data regarding to the role professional development programs. A second limitation is that this study conducted in Al Ain city, which is a district of Emirates of Abu Dhabi, further research should cover whole emirates of United Arab Emirates.

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