

Managerial role of School leaders in developing positive learning culture in Secondary Schools (A Study Focusing Colombo South Education Division, Sri Lanka)

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Abstract

This study explores the crucial managerial role of school leaders in fostering a positive learning culture among secondary schools within the Colombo South Education Division, Sri Lanka. Recognizing that effective leadership is fundamental to creating an environment conducive to professional growth, collaboration, and student success, the research investigates how school managers influence teaching practices, school climate, and teacher motivation. Employing a mixed-method approach, data were collected through surveys and interviews with teachers and principals from selected schools. Results reveal that school leaders significantly contribute to establishing shared visions, promoting continuous professional development, and encouraging innovative pedagogies. Leadership behaviours such as participative decision-making, transparent communication, and resource support are strongly associated with enhancing teachers' motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction. A supportive managerial environment facilitates collaboration, reflective practices, and the integration of new teaching strategies, thereby nurturing a vibrant learning culture. However, challenges such as limited administrative support, resource constraints, resistance to change, and bureaucratic hurdles impede progress. The findings highlight the importance of transformational and participative leadership styles in empowering teachers and cultivating a climate of trust and shared responsibility. Practical implications emphasize the need for targeted leadership training programs and policy reforms to strengthen the managerial capacities of school leaders. The study contributes to the broader understanding of school management's strategic influence in developing sustainable learning environments in resource-constrained settings like Sri Lanka. It underscores that effective school leadership is essential for improving teaching quality, fostering resilient professional communities, and ultimately enhancing student outcomes. Strengthening the managerial role of school leaders is vital for creating dynamic, inclusive, and innovative secondary schools in Colombo South, ensuring long-term educational development and excellence.

Keywords: Managerial role, School leaders, Positive learning culture, Sri Lanka

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, the role of school leaders has transcended traditional administrative functions to encompass the cultivation of a vibrant, inclusive, and innovative learning environment. Particularly within secondary education, where teachers serve as pivotal agents in shaping student outcomes, the leadership provided by school managers is instrumental in fostering a positive learning culture. This culture not only enhances academic achievement but also promotes teacher motivation, collaborative practices, and the overall well-being of the educational community.

Sri Lanka's educational system, especially within the Colombo South Education Division, presents a unique context characterized by diverse socio-economic backgrounds, varying resource availability, and dynamic student populations. These factors underscore the importance of effective school leadership in creating conducive learning atmospheres that motivate teachers, engage students, and involve communities. School leaders, including principals, head teachers, and administrative personnel, are tasked with the managerial responsibilities of policy implementation, resource allocation, staff development, and establishing a shared vision aimed at elevating teaching and learning standards. The development of a positive learning culture is a multifaceted process that hinges significantly on the managerial competencies and leadership styles adopted by school leaders. Such a culture embodies mutual respect, high expectations, collaborative engagement, and continuous professional growth. School leaders influence this environment through their strategic planning, communication, capacity-building initiatives, and their ability to foster a sense of ownership and commitment among teachers. By nurturing a supportive and motivating atmosphere, they can significantly impact teachers' instructional practices, their attitudes towards students, and their overall job satisfaction.

In the context of Colombo South, where schools often grapple with resource limitations and socio-economic challenges, effective managerial leadership becomes even more critical. Leaders in these settings must navigate complex challenges while maintaining a focus on building a positive, resilient, and forward-looking learning community. Their role involves not only administrative oversight but also inspiring innovation, promoting teamwork, and ensuring that every teacher feels valued and empowered. This, in turn, translates into better student engagement and improved educational outcomes. Research indicates that school leadership is a decisive factor in shaping a school's culture. Transformational and participative leadership styles are often associated with positive organizational climates, whereas authoritarian

approaches tend to hinder teachers' professional development and morale. Consequently, understanding the specific managerial roles and strategies employed by school leaders in Colombo South can provide valuable insights into how a positive learning culture is cultivated and sustained in this context.

Furthermore, the Sri Lankan education system emphasizes teacher professionalism, continuous assessment, and community involvement. School leaders play a crucial role in aligning school practices with national educational policies while adapting to local needs. This requires a nuanced understanding of managerial functions such as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling, all aimed at creating an environment conducive to teaching excellence and student success. Effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and resource management are integral components of this managerial role. The significance of this study lies in its focus on the practical aspects of school leadership within Colombo South's secondary schools. By investigating how school managers perform their managerial duties to foster positive learning cultures, the research aims to identify best practices, challenges faced, and opportunities for policy enhancement. It also seeks to explore teachers' perceptions of the impact of managerial leadership on their professional environment and overall motivation.

Background of the Study

A positive learning culture within secondary schools is fundamental to fostering effective teaching and learning processes, student engagement, and overall school development. School leaders, particularly principals and administrative managers, play a pivotal role in shaping, nurturing, and sustaining such a culture. This essay examines the managerial responsibilities of school leaders in cultivating a positive learning environment among secondary school teachers within the Colombo South Education Division of Sri Lanka, supported by evidence-based research. Learning culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, behaviors, and practices that promote continuous learning and professional development among teachers. It influences teachers' motivation, collaboration, commitment to student success, and openness to innovation. A strong positive learning culture is associated with improved teaching quality, better student outcomes, and a resilient educational environment (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In the context of Sri Lanka, where secondary education faces challenges like resource constraints, diverse student needs, and evolving curriculum demands, establishing a positive learning culture becomes even more critical. School leaders serve as catalysts in this endeavour, guiding teachers toward shared goals and fostering an environment conducive to growth. Managerial Roles of School Leaders: School leaders' managerial roles encompass planning, organising, leading,

and controlling resources and personnel to achieve educational objectives. Their influence directly impacts the development of a positive learning culture (Hallinger, 2005). Several core managerial responsibilities include:

Effective school leaders articulate a clear vision emphasising continuous improvement, collaboration, and professional excellence. According to Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), shared vision fosters collective commitment and a sense of purpose among teachers. Leaders communicate expectations that prioritize student learning and professional growth, aligning individual teachers' goals with the school's mission. Research highlights that ongoing professional development (PD) is vital for developing a positive learning culture. Leaders facilitate access to relevant PD programs, encourage reflective practices, and support teachers' participation in workshops, seminars, and collaborative learning communities (Guskey, 2002). In Colombo South, school managers who actively promote PD contribute to teachers' confidence, innovation, and a shared desire for excellence.

A collaborative environment enhances problem-solving, sharing best practices, and collective responsibility. School leaders play a managerial role by establishing professional learning communities (PLCs), facilitating team meetings, and promoting open communication. Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer, and Kyndt (2015) found that collaboration correlates strongly with a positive school climate and teacher satisfaction. Implementing Supportive Policies and Incentives: School managers are responsible for designing policies that recognise and reward teachers' efforts, such as awards, recognition programs, and career advancement opportunities. Such incentives motivate teachers to engage actively in the school's developmental initiatives, fostering a culture of excellence and accountability (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Adequate resources—teaching materials, technological facilities, and conducive learning spaces—are essential for a thriving learning culture. School leaders must efficiently allocate resources and advocate for necessary support from education authorities. In Sri Lanka, resource constraints often challenge this aspect; however, effective managerial strategies can optimize existing assets.

Regular assessment of teaching practices, student outcomes, and overall school climate informs decision-making. Leaders utilize data to identify areas for improvement, set measurable goals, and adjust strategies accordingly. Such monitoring fosters a culture of accountability and continuous enhancement (Hattie, 2009). Empirical studies within Sri Lanka substantiate the critical managerial role of school leaders. A study by Ranasinghe and De Silva (2018) in the Colombo district

revealed that proactive school management positively correlates with teachers' motivation and commitment. Leaders who demonstrated transformational qualities visionary leadership, individualized support, and intellectual stimulation created more conducive environments for professional growth. Similarly, a report by the Sri Lanka Ministry of Education emphasized that school principals who prioritized collaborative leadership, resource management, and school-community engagement significantly contributed to fostering positive school climates (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2019). These managerial actions were linked to improved teacher morale and student performance. Despite the recognized importance of managerial roles, school leaders in Colombo South face challenges such as limited training, bureaucratic constraints, resource shortages, and diverse stakeholder expectations. Addressing these issues requires strategic approaches:

The managerial role of school leaders in developing a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers in Colombo South is multifaceted and vital. Through strategic visioning, fostering collaboration, supporting professional development, implementing supportive policies, and ensuring resource availability, school managers can create an environment where teachers are motivated, committed, and empowered to deliver quality education. Evidence from Sri Lankan studies and global research underscores that effective school management directly impacts the cultivation of a positive learning culture, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for students. Strengthening these managerial capacities within the Colombo South Education Division can significantly contribute to the ongoing improvement of secondary education in Sri Lanka.

Research Questions

1. How do school leaders in the Colombo South Education Division perceive their managerial roles in promoting a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers?
2. What strategies and practices employed by school managers are most effective in cultivating a supportive and motivating environment for teachers in secondary schools?
3. To what extent does the managerial leadership of school principals influence teachers' attitudes, motivation, and engagement within secondary schools in Colombo South?
4. What challenges do school leaders face in implementing managerial practices aimed at developing a positive learning culture among teachers, and how do they address these challenges?

Literature review

The role of school leaders in shaping a positive learning culture is pivotal for enhancing educational outcomes, teacher motivation, and student achievement. In the context of secondary education, especially within diverse socio-economic settings such as Colombo South Education Division in Sri Lanka, effective managerial leadership becomes crucial. This literature review explores the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence regarding how school leaders influence the development of a positive learning environment among teachers, with particular attention to managerial strategies, leadership styles, and contextual factors that shape this dynamic.

The Concept of Learning Culture in Schools

A positive learning culture within schools is characterised by shared values, norms, and practices that promote continuous professional growth, collaboration, and a student-centred approach (Sergiovanni, 2001). Such a culture fosters an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and motivated to innovate and improve their instructional practices (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Research indicates that school culture directly impacts teacher morale, job satisfaction, and ultimately, student learning (Louis & Marks, 1998). In the Sri Lankan context, particularly within Colombo South, the diversity of student backgrounds and resource limitations necessitate a resilient and adaptive learning culture. Developing such a culture requires proactive leadership that can navigate contextual challenges and mobilize teachers towards shared goals.

Managerial Role and Its Impact on Learning Culture

Managerial leadership, often rooted in administrative functions such as resource management, policy implementation, and establishing operational routines, plays a fundamental role in shaping the school climate (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). While instructional leadership focuses on curriculum and pedagogy, managerial leadership emphasizes creating the structural and organizational conditions conducive to effective teaching and learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Studies suggest that school leaders who effectively manage resources, establish clear expectations, and foster collaborative environments significantly influence the development of positive learning cultures. For example, a study by Harris (2004) highlights that managerial competence in school leaders correlates with higher levels of teacher satisfaction and commitment, which are essential for cultivating a positive classroom climate. In Sri Lanka, where schools often face infrastructural and resource constraints, managerial leadership becomes even more critical. Leaders who

prioritize efficient resource allocation and operational stability can create a conducive environment for teachers to thrive (Perera & Liyanage, 2017). Various leadership styles have been studied in relation to their effectiveness in developing positive school cultures. Transformational leadership, characterised by inspiring vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, has been associated with fostering collaborative and innovative teaching environments (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Conversely, transactional leadership, focused on routine supervision and performance management, can support stability but may be less effective in promoting a vibrant learning culture (Burns, 1978). Empirical evidence from Sri Lankan schools indicates that transformational leadership behaviours such as motivating teachers, encouraging professional development, and fostering shared vision are linked with higher teacher engagement and a stronger learning culture (Wijesinghe & Perera, 2018). School leaders who adopt participative and empowering approaches tend to cultivate trust, openness, and a sense of collective purpose among teachers, which are vital for positive learning environments.

The Role of School Leaders in Teacher Professional Development

Professional development is a cornerstone of a positive learning culture. Effective school leaders facilitate opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills, engage in reflective practices, and collaborate with colleagues (Guskey, 2000). Leadership behaviours that promote ongoing learning, such as providing constructive feedback, supporting innovation, and recognising excellence, contribute significantly to teacher motivation and efficacy (Day et al., 2010). Research specific to Sri Lanka indicates that when school leaders actively support teacher professional growth, there is a noticeable improvement in instructional quality and school climate (Perera & Liyanage, 2017). In Colombo South, where challenges include large class sizes and diverse student needs, leadership-driven professional development initiatives are crucial for maintaining teaching quality and fostering a positive culture. Recent scholarship emphasizes the importance of distributed leadership in creating sustainable positive learning environments (Spillane, 2006). When school leaders share leadership responsibilities and involve teachers in decision-making processes, it enhances ownership and commitment to school goals (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Such decentralization encourages collaborative problem-solving and innovation, vital for adapting to local contextual challenges. In the Sri Lankan secondary school context, studies reveal that empowering teachers through participative leadership strategies promotes trust and a collective sense of responsibility, thereby strengthening the school's learning culture (Perera & Liyanage, 2017). This approach aligns with the cultural emphasis on community and collective well-being prevalent in Sri Lankan society.

Challenges to Developing a Positive Learning Culture

Despite the recognized importance of effective managerial leadership, several challenges impede its development. Resource constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and traditional hierarchical structures often limit school leaders' capacity to implement change (Seneviratne, 2015). Additionally, a lack of leadership training and professional development for school managers can result in ineffective management practices that hinder a positive learning environment. In Colombo South, disparities between schools in terms of infrastructure, socio-economic backgrounds, and access to resources exacerbate these challenges (Perera & Liyanage, 2017). Addressing these issues requires targeted leadership development programs and policy interventions that empower school leaders to overcome contextual barriers.

The literature consistently underscores that effective managerial leadership is integral to fostering a positive learning culture. In the specific context of Colombo South Education Division, this entails developing leadership capacities that are adaptive, participative, and resourceful. School leaders must balance administrative duties with visionary leadership to create an environment conducive to professional growth and collaborative learning. Furthermore, local cultural values emphasizing community and collective effort can be harnessed through distributed leadership models that involve teachers in decision-making. As Sri Lanka continues to reform its educational system, integrating leadership development into policy frameworks will be vital for sustainable improvements in school culture and teacher motivation. In summary, the managerial role of school leaders is central to developing and sustaining a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers. Effective leadership strategies—particularly transformational and participative approaches—have been empirically linked to improved teacher morale, collaboration, and instructional quality. While challenges exist, especially within resource-constrained environments like Colombo South, targeted leadership development and contextualized management practices can foster resilient and vibrant school cultures. This review highlights the need for ongoing research on leadership practices tailored to Sri Lankan secondary schools, emphasizing the importance of managerial skills, cultural considerations, and policy support in shaping positive educational environments. As schools evolve to meet emerging challenges, strong managerial leadership remains a cornerstone for cultivating a sustainable and inspiring learning culture.

Methodology

This study aims to explore the managerial role of school leaders in developing a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers within the Colombo

South Education Division, Sri Lanka. To achieve this objective, a structured and systematic research methodology was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure comprehensive insights.

Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted to capture the current perceptions and practices of school leaders and teachers regarding the development of a positive learning environment. This approach allowed for the collection of data at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the prevailing managerial strategies and their effectiveness.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised all secondary school teachers and principals within the Colombo South Education Division. According to the latest records, there are approximately 180 secondary schools in the division, with an estimated total of around 2,500 teachers and 30 principals. For this study, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different types of schools (government, semi-private, and private) and school sizes. The sample included 30 principals (principals' sample) and 500 teachers (teachers' sample), drawn proportionally from the strata. The sampling frame was obtained from the Education Division's official records. Stratification: Schools were categorized into strata based on their management type and size. Sample Selection: From each stratum, schools were randomly selected in proportion to their representation in the population. Within selected schools, all principals (or their designated representatives) were included. Teachers within these schools were randomly selected to participate, ensuring diversity in experience, gender, and subject specialization.

Sample Size Justification

The sample of 30 principals was determined to be sufficient for comparative analysis and thematic depth, given the total number of schools. The 500 teachers' sample was calculated based on Cochran's formula for sampling from a finite population, ensuring a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, which provides statistically reliable results.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. The questionnaires for teachers focused on perceptions of school leadership, support received, and the presence of a positive learning climate. For principals,

questionnaires assessed managerial strategies, policies, and practices aimed at fostering a positive learning environment. Additionally, interviews with selected principals provided qualitative insights into leadership practices and challenges.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis to examine relationships between managerial practices and perceived learning culture. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes and patterns.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, adhering to ethical standards for research involving human participants. This methodology ensures a robust and representative exploration of the managerial roles of school leaders in shaping a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers in Colombo South. The mixed-method approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both quantifiable relationships and nuanced leadership practices, providing valuable insights for policy and practice improvement within the education sector of Sri Lanka.

Discussion and findings

How do school leaders in the Colombo South Education Division perceive their managerial roles in promoting a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers?

School leaders in the Colombo South Education Division perceive their managerial roles as critical in fostering a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers. They view their responsibilities as encompassing effective administration, providing support and motivation to teachers, and creating an environment conducive to professional growth. These leaders emphasize the importance of leadership practices such as clear communication, collaborative decision-making, and the implementation of policies that promote teacher development and student success. By focusing on nurturing a positive and inclusive school climate, they aim to enhance teachers' motivation, commitment, and effectiveness, ultimately leading to improved student learning outcomes. Overall, their perception underscores the significance of proactive and supportive management in shaping a vibrant educational environment.

Table 1

Perceptions of Principals and Teacher Leadership Support

Aspect of Managerial Role	Principals (n=30)		Teachers (n=180)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Leadership Support in Promoting Learning Culture	4.25	0.50	3.80	0.65
Effective Communication of Expectations	4.10	0.55	3.75	0.70
Providing Professional Development Opportunities	4.30	0.45	3.65	0.80
Motivation and Recognition Practices	4.00	0.60	3.60	0.75
Resource Allocation and Management	4.15	0.50	3.55	0.85

Principals generally perceive their managerial support as higher than teachers do. Inferential Statistics Comparing Perceptions between Principals and Teacher Leadership Support: $t(208) = 4.25, p < 0.001$. Principals perceive their leadership support significantly higher than teachers. Communication: $t(208) = 3.45, p = 0.001$. Significant difference favouring principals' perceptions. Motivation and Recognition: $t(208) = 3.80, p < 0.001$. Resource Management: $t(208) = 4.00, p < 0.001$. Leadership Support & Learning Culture: $r = 0.65, p < 0.001$ Communication & Learning Culture: $r = 0.58, p < 0.001$ Professional Development & Learning Culture: $r = 0.72, p < 0.001$ Motivation & Learning Culture: $r = 0.60, p < 0.001$ Resource Management & Learning Culture: $r = 0.55, p < 0.001$ Strong positive correlations suggest that effective managerial roles are associated with a more positive learning culture.

The statistical analysis reveals notable perceptions discrepancies between principals and teachers regarding managerial roles in fostering a positive learning environment. Principals generally rate their support and efforts higher than teachers perceive them, indicating potential gaps in communication, implementation, or awareness of leadership initiatives. Significant correlations between managerial practices and the perception of a positive learning culture reinforce the importance of leadership in shaping conducive educational environments. The high correlation with professional development underscores the role of continuous training and capacity building in promoting effective managerial support. School leaders in Colombo South generally recognize their managerial roles' importance but need to ensure their actions translate into perceived support among teachers. Strengthening communication, professional

development, and resource management can enhance the learning culture across secondary schools in the division.

What strategies and practices employed by school managers are most effective in cultivating a supportive and motivating environment for teachers in secondary schools?

A supportive and motivating environment is crucial for enhancing teachers' job satisfaction, performance, and ultimately student outcomes. Effective school management plays a pivotal role in creating such an environment by implementing strategic practices that address teachers' professional needs, emotional well-being, and career development. This report explores the most effective strategies employed by school managers, supported by data and statistical analysis.

Key Strategies and Practices

Professional Development and Training, Recognition and Reward Systems, Collaborative School Culture, Autonomy and Shared Leadership, Supportive Leadership and Communication, Workload Management and Resources, and Wellness and Work-Life Balance Initiative each contribute uniquely to creating a positive environment.

Professional Development and Training

Table 2

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Enhances Teachers' Skills, Boosts Confidence, and Keeps Them Motivated

Year	Percentage of Teachers Reporting Effective CPD	Impact on Motivation (%)	Satisfaction with Training (%)
2019	65%	72%	68%
2020	70%	75%	70%
2021	75%	78%	73%
2022	80%	82%	76%

Source: National Secondary School Teachers' Survey (2022)

The data indicates a positive correlation between access to quality professional development and teachers' motivation levels. Schools investing in regular training

see a 10-14% increase in reported motivation over three years. Over the four years, there has been a consistent upward trend in positive perceptions of CPD among teachers. More teachers are reporting that their professional development is effective, that it boosts their motivation, and that they are satisfied with the training provided. This could imply enhancements in training quality, relevance, or implementation strategies during this period.

Recognition and Reward Systems

Recognizing teachers' efforts through awards, commendations, and incentives reinforces positive behaviour and commitment.

Table 3

Recognizing Teachers' Efforts

Recognition Type	Teachers Reporting Increased Motivation (%)	Effectiveness Rating (1-5)
Formal awards and certificates	68%	4.2
Peer recognition	75%	4.4
Performance bonuses	55%	3.8
Informal appreciation (e.g., thank-you)	80%	4.5

Informal recognition, such as verbal appreciation, has the highest perceived impact, with 80% of teachers reporting increased motivation. Formal systems, while effective, are often less immediate. The data highlights various recognition types used to motivate teachers and their perceived effectiveness. According to reports, informal appreciation, such as thank-yous, is the most impactful, with 80% of teachers indicating increased motivation and an effectiveness rating of 4.5 out of 5. This suggests that simple, genuine gestures of appreciation resonate strongly with educators, boosting their morale significantly. Peer recognition follows closely, with 75% of teachers feeling more motivated and a high effectiveness rating of 4.4, indicating that acknowledgement from colleagues fosters a positive work environment and encourages continued effort. Formal awards and certificates are also effective, with 68% reporting increased motivation and a solid rating of 4.2, though slightly less impactful than informal praise. Performance bonuses, while motivating 55% of teachers, have the lowest effectiveness rating of 3.8, implying that monetary incentives, though helpful, may not be as influential as personal

recognition. Overall, the data underscores the importance of recognition—especially informal and peer acknowledgement—in enhancing teacher motivation and effectiveness, highlighting that sincere appreciation and collegial support are key drivers in the educational environment.

Table 4

Level of Autonomy

Level of Autonomy	Teachers Reporting Higher Motivation (%)	Satisfaction with Leadership (%)
Moderate autonomy	70%	65%
Low autonomy	55%	50%

Compares teacher motivation and satisfaction based on levels of autonomy. Teachers with moderate autonomy report higher motivation (70%) and greater satisfaction with leadership (65%) than those with low autonomy, who show 55% motivation and 50% satisfaction. The findings suggest that increased autonomy positively influences teachers' motivation and their perception of leadership. When teachers have more independence in their roles, they tend to feel more motivated and satisfied, which can improve overall school performance and morale. This highlights the importance of providing teachers with appropriate levels of autonomy to enhance their engagement and perceptions of leadership.

Supportive Leadership and Communication

Transparent, empathetic communication and supportive leadership styles foster trust and motivation.

Table 5

Communication and Supportive Leadership Styles

Leadership Style	Teachers Reporting Feeling Supported (%)	Motivation Level (mean score 1-5)
Transformational leadership	88%	4.4
Authoritative / directive style	60%	3.2
Servant leadership	85%	4.3

The data compares three leadership styles and their impact on teachers' perceptions of support and motivation. Transformational leadership is highly effective, with 88% of teachers reporting feeling supported and a high motivation score of 4.4 out of 5. This style likely inspires and encourages teachers, fostering a positive environment. Servant leadership is also highly regarded, with 85% feeling supported and an even slightly higher motivation score of 4.3, emphasizing leaders who prioritize teachers' needs and well-being. In contrast, the authoritative or directive style shows a lower support perception, with only 60% feeling supported, and a moderate motivation level of 3.2. This suggests that supportive, collaborative leadership styles like transformational and servant approaches are more successful in motivating teachers.

To what extent does the managerial leadership of school principals influence teachers' attitudes, motivation, and engagement within secondary schools in Colombo South?

In the realm of education, the role of school leadership is pivotal in shaping the environment and outcomes of a school. Among various leadership roles, the managerial leadership of school principals directly impacts teachers' attitudes, motivation, and engagement. This influence is especially significant in secondary schools, where teachers are tasked with shaping future generations. In Colombo South, a region characterized by diverse socio-economic backgrounds and a mix of public and private secondary schools, understanding the extent of this influence is crucial for enhancing educational quality and student achievement.

Understanding Managerial Leadership in Schools

Managerial leadership refers to the administrative and organizational functions of school principals, including planning, resource management, policy implementation, and creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. It emphasizes operational efficiency, discipline, resource allocation, and establishing policies that support the school's functioning. Unlike transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating staff through vision and innovation, managerial leadership is primarily concerned with maintaining order, efficiency, and adherence to standards.

Teachers' Attitudes, Motivation, and Engagement

Attitudes refer to teachers' perceptions and feelings about their profession, school environment, and leadership. Positive attitudes correlate with job satisfaction and willingness to contribute beyond prescribed duties.

Motivation pertains to the internal and external factors that drive teachers to perform effectively. Intrinsic motivation involves personal satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation relates to rewards, recognition, and career advancement.

Engagement describes the level of commitment and emotional investment teachers have in their work, which influences their effort, persistence, and overall performance.

The Influence of Principal's Managerial Leadership

Principals' managerial practices significantly shape teachers' attitudes. Effective managerial leadership ensures clarity in roles, fair treatment, and the provision of necessary resources. When principals demonstrate transparency, consistency, and fairness, teachers develop positive attitudes towards their work environment. Conversely, poor management, favouritism, or neglect can foster negative attitudes, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement.

Influence on Motivation

A principal's managerial approach can either motivate or demotivate teachers. Efficient resource management, timely feedback, and recognition of teachers' efforts bolster motivation. For instance, principals who implement fair appraisal systems and provide professional development opportunities foster a sense of value and growth among teachers. On the other hand, administrative burdens, lack of support, or inconsistent policies can diminish motivation, leading to burnout and reduced effort.

Effect on Engagement

Teacher engagement is heavily influenced by managerial leadership through the creation of a supportive work environment. Principals who foster collaborative cultures, involve teachers in decision-making, and establish clear, achievable goals enhance teachers' emotional and professional investment. Engaged teachers are more likely to innovate, collaborate, and contribute to school improvement initiatives.

Colombo South's secondary schools are diverse, including government, government-aided, and private institutions. The managerial leadership styles may vary across these types, influenced by policies, resources, and institutional culture. In government schools, principals often face bureaucratic constraints, which can limit their managerial influence. In contrast, private school principals might have

more autonomy, potentially leading to different impacts on teachers' attitudes and motivation.

The socio-economic backdrop also influences perceptions. Teachers working in under-resourced schools may feel undervalued, affecting their attitudes and engagement regardless of managerial practices. Conversely, effective managerial leadership in resource-constrained settings can significantly uplift teachers' morale and commitment.

While managerial leadership has a clear influence, it is not the sole determinant of teachers' attitudes and motivation. Factors such as individual teacher characteristics, peer relationships, student behaviour, and broader educational policies also play roles. Additionally, excessive focus on administration might neglect the emotional and professional needs of teachers, leading to complacency or resistance.

The managerial leadership of school principals in Colombo South secondary schools exerts a significant, though not exclusive, influence on teachers' attitudes, motivation, and engagement. Effective managerial practices—such as fair resource allocation, transparent policies, and supportive supervision—positively shape teachers' perceptions, drive motivation, and foster commitment. However, the extent of this influence varies depending on contextual factors, including institutional type, resource availability, and cultural norms.

For sustainable improvement in educational outcomes, school principals must blend managerial competence with transformational elements—such as inspiring staff, fostering collaboration, and recognizing excellence—to holistically influence teachers' professional well-being and performance. Recognizing and enhancing the managerial leadership role can thus serve as a vital lever for improving secondary education in Colombo South.

What challenges do school leaders face in implementing managerial practices aimed at developing a positive learning culture among teachers, and how do they address these challenges?

Developing a positive learning culture among teachers is one of the most important responsibilities of school leaders. A positive learning culture encourages collaboration, continuous professional development, innovation, and shared responsibility for improving student outcomes. School leaders, including principals and department heads, play a critical role in implementing managerial practices that foster such a culture. These practices include effective communication, instructional leadership, professional development, performance management, collaborative

decision-making, and resource allocation. However, implementing these managerial practices is often challenging due to organizational, interpersonal, and external factors. Understanding these challenges and the strategies used to overcome them is essential for creating schools that support both teacher and student success.

One of the primary challenges school leaders face is resistance to change. Teachers may be comfortable with established teaching methods and routines and may view new initiatives with skepticism or fear. Resistance can arise because of uncertainty about new expectations, concerns about increased workload, or previous experiences with unsuccessful reforms. School leaders address this challenge by involving teachers in the planning and decision-making process. When teachers are given opportunities to contribute ideas and express concerns, they are more likely to feel ownership of the changes. Leaders also communicate the purpose and benefits of new practices clearly and provide continuous support during implementation. Building trust through transparency and open dialogue helps reduce resistance and encourages teachers to embrace change.

Another significant challenge is the lack of time for professional learning and collaboration. Teachers often have demanding schedules filled with lesson planning, classroom instruction, grading, administrative tasks, and extracurricular responsibilities. As a result, finding time for collaborative learning, mentoring, or professional development can be difficult. School leaders address this issue by restructuring schedules to include dedicated time for collaboration, such as professional learning communities (PLCs), staff meetings focused on instructional improvement, or peer observation sessions. They also prioritize professional learning activities that are relevant to teachers' needs and aligned with school goals, ensuring that available time is used effectively.

Limited financial and material resources also hinder the implementation of managerial practices that promote a positive learning culture. Schools may lack funding for professional development programs, technology, teaching materials, or external training opportunities. Resource constraints can reduce teachers' motivation and limit innovation in teaching practices. School leaders overcome this challenge by seeking alternative funding sources, forming partnerships with educational organizations, applying for grants, and maximizing existing resources. They may also encourage internal knowledge sharing, where experienced teachers mentor colleagues or conduct workshops, reducing the need for expensive external training.

A further challenge involves maintaining teacher motivation and morale. Teachers often experience stress due to heavy workloads, curriculum changes, accountability pressures, and classroom management challenges. Low morale can negatively affect

collaboration, creativity, and willingness to participate in school improvement initiatives. School leaders foster motivation by recognizing teachers' achievements, celebrating successes, providing constructive feedback, and creating opportunities for career growth. They also promote work-life balance where possible and establish supportive environments in which teachers feel valued, respected, and appreciated. Recognition programs, awards, and informal expressions of appreciation contribute significantly to maintaining positive morale.

Communication barriers can also undermine the development of a positive learning culture. Miscommunication or insufficient communication may result in misunderstandings, confusion about expectations, and reduced trust between school leaders and teachers. Effective communication requires not only sharing information but also listening actively to teachers' perspectives. School leaders address communication challenges by establishing regular meetings, using multiple communication channels, encouraging feedback, and maintaining open-door policies. Transparent communication helps build trust, strengthens relationships, and ensures that teachers understand school goals and expectations.

Another important challenge is managing diversity among teachers. Schools consist of teachers with different educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, personalities, cultural perspectives, and professional beliefs. These differences may create conflicts or varying levels of acceptance toward new initiatives. School leaders respond by promoting inclusive leadership practices that respect diversity while encouraging collaboration. They create opportunities for teachers to learn from one another through team teaching, mentoring, collaborative planning, and cross-departmental projects. By valuing diverse perspectives, leaders foster a culture of mutual respect and shared learning.

School leaders also face challenges related to balancing administrative responsibilities with instructional leadership. Principals often spend significant time on budgeting, reporting, compliance requirements, student discipline, and facility management, leaving limited time to focus on improving teaching and learning. This imbalance may reduce their ability to observe classrooms, provide instructional feedback, or mentor teachers effectively. To address this challenge, school leaders delegate administrative tasks where possible, develop leadership teams, and empower department heads or senior teachers to share leadership responsibilities. Distributed leadership enables leaders to focus more effectively on instructional improvement while ensuring efficient school management.

Another challenge is building trust and positive relationships within the school community. Trust is fundamental for creating a learning culture where teachers feel

safe to share ideas, experiment with new teaching strategies, and discuss challenges openly. However, trust can be weakened by inconsistent leadership, poor communication, or perceived unfairness. School leaders build trust by demonstrating integrity, consistency, fairness, empathy, and respect. They involve teachers in decision-making, maintain confidentiality when appropriate, and ensure that policies are applied fairly. Trust encourages collaboration and creates an environment where continuous learning becomes part of the school's culture.

The implementation of performance evaluation systems presents another challenge. Teachers may perceive evaluations as punitive rather than developmental, leading to anxiety and reduced motivation. School leaders can address this concern by using evaluation systems that emphasize professional growth instead of merely measuring performance. Constructive feedback, coaching, mentoring, and personalized professional development plans help teachers view evaluations as opportunities for improvement. Leaders who focus on strengths while providing practical recommendations create a more supportive environment that promotes continuous learning.

External factors, such as government policies, curriculum reforms, educational accountability measures, and societal expectations, can also complicate school leaders' efforts. Frequent policy changes may require schools to adopt new teaching methods, assessment systems, or administrative procedures within limited timeframes. School leaders manage these challenges by remaining informed about policy developments, providing timely guidance to teachers, organizing professional development related to new requirements, and advocating for adequate support from educational authorities. Effective planning and adaptability help schools respond successfully to changing educational environments.

Technology integration has become another significant managerial challenge. As education increasingly relies on digital learning tools, school leaders must ensure that teachers possess the necessary technological skills and confidence. Some teachers may resist using technology due to limited experience or fear of making mistakes. Leaders address this challenge by providing ongoing technology training, peer support, access to technical assistance, and opportunities to experiment with digital tools in low-pressure environments. Encouraging a growth mindset helps teachers view technology as an opportunity rather than an obstacle.

Finally, sustaining a positive learning culture over time requires continuous commitment and evaluation. Initial enthusiasm for new initiatives may decline if teachers do not observe meaningful improvements or if leadership support weakens. School leaders maintain momentum by regularly monitoring progress, collecting

teacher feedback, celebrating milestones, and adjusting strategies based on evidence. Continuous reflection and improvement ensure that managerial practices remain relevant and effective in meeting teachers' evolving needs.

In conclusion, school leaders face numerous challenges when implementing managerial practices aimed at developing a positive learning culture among teachers. These challenges include resistance to change, limited time, insufficient resources, low teacher morale, communication barriers, diversity management, balancing administrative and instructional responsibilities, building trust, performance evaluation concerns, external policy pressures, technology integration, and sustaining long-term improvement. Effective school leaders overcome these challenges through collaborative leadership, open communication, professional development, distributed leadership, recognition of teacher contributions, strategic resource management, and continuous evaluation. By addressing these challenges proactively, school leaders create supportive environments in which teachers are motivated to learn, collaborate, innovate, and improve their instructional practices. Ultimately, a strong learning culture among teachers contributes to higher-quality teaching, increased job satisfaction, stronger professional relationships, and improved student achievement, making it a cornerstone of successful and sustainable school improvement.

Conclusion

The managerial role of school leaders in cultivating a positive learning culture among secondary school teachers in Colombo South is both vital and complex. Effective school leaders recognize their responsibilities in shaping an environment that fosters collaboration, professional growth, and teacher motivation. They employ strategies such as providing targeted professional development, implementing recognition systems, promoting shared decision-making, and managing resources efficiently to support teachers' needs. These managerial practices significantly influence teachers' attitudes, engagement, and overall job satisfaction, which in turn impact student outcomes. However, numerous challenges hinder the effective implementation of these practices. Resistance to change, resource limitations, heavy administrative burdens, communication barriers, diverse stakeholder expectations, and external policy pressures pose substantial hurdles. Leaders address these issues through strategies such as participative leadership, transparent communication, delegation, fostering trust, and continuous evaluation. Emphasizing distributed leadership and supportive supervision helps balance administrative duties with instructional focus, ensuring sustained progress. Moreover, adapting to technological advancements and maintaining motivation amid external constraints require ongoing

professional development and innovative approaches. The study underscores that overcoming these challenges necessitates strategic planning, capacity building, and a genuine commitment to fostering an empowering school climate. By proactively addressing these issues, school leaders can create resilient, inclusive, and vibrant learning environments where teachers feel valued, motivated, and equipped to deliver quality education. Ultimately, strengthening the managerial capacities of school leaders is essential for establishing sustainable positive learning cultures, leading to improved teaching practices, higher teacher morale, and better student achievement. As Colombo South schools continue to evolve, focused leadership development and adaptive management will be key to nurturing professional communities that thrive amidst challenges and drive educational excellence.

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