

# **Factors Influencing Head Teacher's Leadership: A Case of Community School in Kathmandu Valley**

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## ***Abstract***

*This study aimed to explore the factors influencing leadership of head teacher. For this purpose, interpretative phenomenology was employed. Five head teachers having more than ten years' experience in different community secondary schools of Kathmandu valley were selected as participants for their lived experience and perception through purposive sampling. Information was collected through participants by in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaire to draw the perception and experience of the participants. In interviews, we attempted to interpret respondents' explanations, experiences, struggles, and evidences related to head teacher. Interviews were transcribed as verbatim and coded to generate themes. Themes were analyzed with reference to the essence of transformative leadership theory to reach in conclusion. The study finding showed that size of organization, level of interaction, decision making skill, problem solving skills, and team efforts are influencing factors for effective leadership. Head teacher's leadership can be positively influenced in small organization but professional development of staffs can be negatively impacted. Frequent collaboration among stakeholders and interpersonal relationship among staff influences the leadership of head teacher positively. The tactful leadership skills for problem solving inspired the head teacher to strengthen the capacity of the organization along with team effort. Thus, the leadership of head teacher in community school needs to be sensitized to apply appropriate size based on stakeholder. The intensity of collaboration is required to be maintained with the principles of rich communication and team effort.*

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**Keywords:** size of organization, level of interaction, decision making, team effort, problem solving skill

### **Introduction**

In the long journey of teaching experience, we struggled more in community schools as well as institutional schools located in various place in this country. In this journey, we experienced varieties of circumstances like bulging in and bulging out. In this journey, we interacted with many factors for coping with challenges towards creating better learning environment. In the context of struggle, we observed many cases about the behavior of head teachers with respect to leadership, management and organizational behavior leading to the motivation of workers in the work place. In observation, we found diverse nature of head teachers to influence the overall aspect of organization. A couple of year ago, we got the opportunity to visit community school of different regions. We found various situations in school led by different perspectives. In those schools, we also observed teacher professional development not running smoothly. Teachers were using traditional method and strategies. School behavior was guided by conventional thought and vision. It seemed that student learning outcomes were degrading and student behavior was not shaped according to the demand of time and society.

The traditional methods of leadership could not face the challenges evolved in the global society. The various factors are associated to hinder the effectiveness of leadership and management in community schools (Ndaipa, 2016). Along with the essence of leadership, the individual is required to enrich personality and self-development associated with experience. The major activities for this include leading competency, vision for goal achievement, inspiration and empowering to overcome the challenges (Tuytens and Devos, 2010). Leadership challenges act differently in varieties of organizations.

Every institution is crucial place for coming generation from where they are horned. The head teacher in each school plays vital role for grooming, growth and satisfaction to face the challenge of sustaining the objectives of school. Leadership in school is a procedure of motivating and supervising the staff to work with passion for the sake of education goal (Afshari et al., 2012). Leadership plays an important role in the growth and endurance of school. Due to larger impact on the achievement of educational objectives,

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effective leadership in school can impart valuable guidelines and suggestive feedback to move in the right direction. (Louis et al., 2010, as cited in Sehar and Alwi, 2019). In the context of Nepal, leadership activity is not guided by system and legal framework. There are various factors that jeopardize the decision-making process and managerial aspects. The administrative action and leadership style are not functioning smoothly on the basis of reality and contemporary demand of institution. In such a scenario, institutions are functions without any vision and goal-oriented mission; as a result goal achievement is found lagging behind the expectation (Alvunger, 2015).

Need for conducting research is realized in the area of factors influencing effective leadership for the betterment of learning outcomes. So, this study confines to its way out in exploring the factors that affect school leadership. The research is confined to analyze the situation and context of leadership strategies in the community school. So, it contributes to adopt meaningful leadership style that leads the community school for betterment of learning outcome and creation of sound environment to achieve organizational goal.

### **Objective**

The study presented hereby had the aim of exploring the factors that influence effective leadership in community school.

### **Transformational leadership as a theoretical underpinning**

Transformational leadership is one of the attributes of head teacher who can direct the school to the new level of development with eminent innovation. The head teacher needs to create effective environment in school, inspiring the stakeholders towards the advancement of school. Transformative leadership copes with challenges of practical problem (Yang, 2013). Moreover, transformative leadership asserts the head teacher's vision in school development through home-school collaboration and partnership. Such a leadership is based on the stakeholders' actual situation, school occasions, fact and finding with solution.

The components of transformative leadership employed in school include: building shared vision, forming new ideas, gaining credence, sharing power, experiencing success. Transformative leaders have a model of integrity and fairness, set clear goals, have high expectations, encourage others, provide support and recognition. The elements of transformational leaderships are individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational

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motivation, idealized influence (Tuytens and Devos, 2010). A transformative leader motivates and renovates individual followers so that they develop a new level of concern about their human condition and, sometimes, the condition of humanity at large (Yang, 2013).

Transformative leadership is the ability to visualize new social genuineness and communicate this successfully with others. Each organization has one fixed leader, and depending on the organization's size remain a number of senior followers (who will be leaders to others), another layer of followers, etc. Transformational leaders are directed towards greater profit to the organization. Transformative leadership focuses the quality of interactive associations within an organization. It is important in determining successful leadership as a particular skills and traits of school leader (Tuytens and Devos, 2010). Transformative leadership is characterized by its activist agenda and its intervening promise to social justice, equality and a democratic society. Identifying the socially constructed nature of society, some exhibit greater power than others in the organization.

### **Interpretative phenomenology as a research design**

In a phenomenological study, the researcher needs to be the primary instrument of inquiry where researcher's lived experiences, assumptions and biases are recognized (Schulz, and Rubel, 2011). The researcher's assumptions and biases include: head teacher's leadership is influenced by the size of organization, level of decision making, personality of staff, problem solving skill and team effort. Both researchers have the experience of teaching at school level for a long time and at present both are involved in teaching at university level whereby they have involved, cooperated and coordinated with head teachers when they have experienced and perceived the factors influencing head teacher's leadership (Yang, 2013). This experience and engagement in teaching profession makes it easy to construct mutually meaningful relationship with the participant. However, maintaining the doctrine of phenomenology, the researchers have made effort to cover the assumptions and experiences of participants.

Head teachers having the work experience of more than ten years in community secondary school in Kathmandu valley are taken as participants for collecting their lived experience, assumption and perceptions. Participants were taken from the large school (size based on students and teachers), medium size school and small size school. Five participants were

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included who were involved in sharing their experiences of being a school head teacher. Purposive sampling technique was used in which 5 head teachers (R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5) were selected from the community schools in Kathmandu Valley.

Information and data for the study were collected through five individual head teachers, using in-depth interviews and semi-structures questionnaire. Interviews were administered to seek the respondents' explanations, experiences and struggles in their work as head teachers. Interviewed responses were transcribed and coded to generate the themes and similar themes were categorized under the main theme of the study. The main theme was compared and connected with transformative leadership theory and relevant literature to generate the conclusion.

### **Result and discussion**

In this section, results from the data are presented and discussed considering their connection with theory and practice in the contemporary situation of Nepal, as presented below. The themes below are the influencing factors as identified from the study of data.

#### ***Size of organization***

The size of any organization determines the efficiency of management skill of its chairperson. This affects to the quality of leadership – whether the transactional leadership style is fruitful or not in the prosperity of organization. Human resource management, internal resource allocation and motivation of worker of organization are the emergent functions of organization. In a large school, number of teachers, students, various models of education system, parent school collaboration, and teacher- administration partnership are the factors that are responsible for pioneering organization. In this context one of the participants R1 expressed:

I feel it's easy to coordinate and cooperate for overall development of school with parents. Moreover, there will be rich engagement, inspiration, guidance, coordination and cooperation with teachers and students. But knowledge creation, professional development and specialization in any discipline are deviated from the mainstream; and suffocation occurs in managing different aspects within school due to the lack of participation.

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The above statement shows that in a school of small size the leadership will be easy. But a small size school makes leaders more limited and they cannot mobilize the resources due to their restricted availability and limited number of faculties and students as well. With this situation, the department and other resource centres have not been established efficiently and with smooth management. The attitude of stakeholders towards the small size institution is deviated from the central concern of responsibility. In this reference, open dialogue among the stakeholders is required to maintain for the assistance of effective leader. In relation to transformative leaders focused on their staff's carrier and job enrichment (Sehar and Alwi, 2019). Transformational leadership stresses rich interpersonal relationships within an organization. From the perspective of transformative leader, it will be easy to manage good relationship with teachers, staffs and other stakeholders; but there will be problem for job enrichment and career growth. In this issue, a teacher participant R2 agreed with R1 and stated:

However, in small organizations the head teacher may feel easier to manage the school but regarding of professional development of teachers and overall development of students the scope is narrowing down beyond the expectation which ultimately affects the all-round development of school.

The statement shows that in a school of small size, the head teacher can make rich engagement and deep attachment with their stakeholders for effective leadership, but the situation of professionalism and institutionalism becomes poor. In the same issue another teacher participant R3 asserted:

In my school the students and teachers are comparatively more in number than the legal provision. Student-teacher ratio is higher than the standard of nation. I am feeling uneasy to cover every day information about teachers, students, staffs and parents as well. Moreover, I am realizing it troublesome to manage administrative and managerial activities.

In the above assertion, R 3 agrees with R1 and R2, and feels difficulties to manage and maintain coordination with his school staffs, teachers and

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students for effective management and leadership. In a large sized school (having large number of teachers, students and departments) work efficiency cannot be achieved smoothly due to the complex integration of the parameters. It shows there is weak and negative correlation between size and effectiveness of the leadership of school head teachers (Abdul and Nina, 2015). The transformative leadership involves the parameters such as mentoring, fairness, justice, empowerment and guidance. As the number of members increases in the school family, the head teacher is required to consider different aspects to raise effectiveness of leadership; and subsequently the head teacher must be more sensitive in larger school than smaller (Winingsih and Sulistiono, 2020). In this connection, another participant R4 stated:

In the large size school, departmentalization and formalization are created to enrich the speed of school. As the size of organization is increased, the systemic effort is increased in school efficiently and smoothly.

This statement shows that the large size school can play vital role in the effective development of the school. The whole structure of the school can be structuralized along with necessary department; and school leading policy can be reformed strictly for the promotion of school development. All the activities guided by the specific rules and regulations lead the school in a better way (Alvunger, 2015). In a school of small size, the aforesaid situations prevail due to the strong dedication of school leadership. Therefore, it is clear that large size school is required to cope with many obstacles in the line of effective school management and leadership. However, there may be the opportunity to set up effective leadership strategy for advancement and enhancement of schools.

### ***Level of interaction***

Frequent interaction within the organization makes the school environment sound and goal oriented. It is an essential factor to create better surrounding within and out of school in a leading organization towards bringing a good result. Inter and intra relationship creates sustainable attitude towards organization. Regular interaction in and between faculties and students explores the new idea and vision for the welfare of school as well as learners. The triangular relationship among students, teacher and parents

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adds essential blocks for the quality enhancement and strengthens the development of education enormously (Trisno and Nurdianto, 2015). The collaborative effort of parents, teacher and school administration energizes school for school development. In favor of this assertion, other participant R1 asserted:

In my school interaction among stakeholders seems to be fragmented. The interaction of teachers with the administration is lagging far behind. The cooperation and coordination activities within the faculty members are very poor that has resulted in the impediment of smooth leadership. Family-school collaboration is not progressing in expected manner in my school. In such situations my leadership is has not been as I expected.

The above statement shows that frequent interaction between the head teacher and stakeholders is essential for the trustworthy environment among each other which leads towards prosperity of school. The principles of effective collaboration and coordination are needed among all teaching and non-teaching staffs to achieve the expected goals of school (Day and Sammons, 2014). Higher level of interaction leads to higher level of trust among each other. So, continuous interaction is required for enhancing the quality of leadership. In this issue another participant R2 asserted:

Positive interaction creates synergy for goal achievement; and negative interaction creates demotivation for both the head teacher and stakeholders. Positive interaction supports to minimize the misunderstanding among each other and becomes helpful for conflict resolution. In the same way, negative interaction creates confusion and anxiety that severely affects the efficiency and productivity of leadership.

The above statement highlights that good relationship and interaction between the leader and stakeholders are needed in school. Meaningful interaction motivates the leader for attaining the targeted goals whereas negative interaction creates misunderstanding and confusion which negatively affects institutional development (Huong, 2020).



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### *Level of decision making*

Decision making as a characteristic of the head teacher is one of the essential traits to run the school. In all aspects of academic and non-academic environment all the stakeholders do not know how to disclose their views and ideas. In such a context, the head teacher should take decision himself for the upcoming progress of school without making any delay (Sehar and Alwi, 2019). The head teacher's self-decision becomes one of the prominent factors for glorious momentum of school progress. In favor of this premise one of the participants R3 asserted:

Decision from the local authority, school management committee, is mandatory for me whereas teachers' associations and students' club's decision are considerable. Advice from the senior teachers are considered in priority rather than that from junior teachers. Permanent and local staffs' voice becomes more important than that of temporary staff or outsiders.

The above statement shows head teachers are responsible and accountable for implementation of decision made by local authorities and school management committee. But pressures from student's club and teachers' associations are on the way of implementation. Behavior towards the senior, local and permanent staffs and teachers are more important than that towards the juniors, outsider, and temporary staffs and teacher (Muijs and Harris, 2006). In the same issue another participant R4 stated: "Strategic decisions get more priorities than operational decisions. Effective leadership needs to be treated with operational and strategic decision for the development of school. Poor implementation of decisions makes the teachers, staffs and students demotivated in day to day duties and their performance level goes down. In this sense, leadership needs to address and respect the voice and suggestions of stakeholders.

### **Personality of staffs**

It is significant to understand how the personality characteristic is related to the personal behavior (Adams and Gamage, 2008). Personality of staffs is considered as the major characteristic of the individuals that configures the holistic form for socialization in the organization. It focusses on individual's inner and outer performance. The interpersonal characteristics of working

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staff play vital role in the overall development of school. In this issue participant R3 stated:

Effective communication skill of staff, mutual interaction between stakeholders, dedication to the institution, devotion towards school are the essential characteristics to set up admirable environment in school. Excellent personality of organization member inspires the head teacher for running ahead in the line of development.

Teachers have different interest, abilities and characteristics that can affect the whole performance of school directly or indirectly (Sehar and Alwi, 2019). The personality factors of teacher and head teacher can play role to enhance students' efficiency. In the same issue another participant R4 stated:

The quality of staff in the workplace enriches the performances of organizations. The interpersonal relationship, socio emotional reciprocity, subject specification, dynamic characteristic of educator, dedication, devotion of the organization are the leading characteristics for running ahead.

By this statement, it is known that personality is very much essential factor that influences the performance and behavior. This factor plays important role in guiding a school towards achieving the expected goals.

### ***Problem solving skill***

The capacity to manage problems in sensitive manner after the identification of issues in the organization is considered to be the problem-solving skill. To cope with the challenges appeared in school, the head teacher needs to have a lot of views, ideas, perceptions and abstraction. Every organization is immersed with numerous problems such as academic achievement, student's dropout, irregularities of teachers, misconceptions about teaching profession and so on. Effective and efficient skills for problem solving are the foundation for achieving better result of school (Yusof and others, 2017). School leadership is an interactive social process among teachers, students and the community. The head teacher is responsible to find the answer to every problem rooted in school. So, school leader is responsible for solving problems on the basis of strategies, pattern setting, monitoring or controlling and dialogue. In this issue the participant R2 stated:

In a school there are numerous problems such as professional problems, attitudinal problems, social and cultural problems. The

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school can't run in the runway of development. Problems are to be solved after proper identification of coping strategy within the school.

The statement above has mentioned that effective problem-solving skills are very much essential for the promotion of school. In the ways of problem solving, attitudinal, social, political, economic barriers are required to be identified; and authentic solution is needed to be extracted with the mutual collaboration within the organization (Zeinabadi and Rastegarpour, 2010). With the reference of transformative leadership theory, problem evolved in a school are to be solved by linking leadership style of the head teacher with the situations around him/her. Regarding this issue another participant R4 stated:

In my long experience of working as the school head teacher, I am familiar and well known with the problems rooted in school. In this regard I have many ideas to cope with the challenges around the school. I can face academic problems with the mutual understanding of stakeholders; but I can feel it uneasy to solve non-academic problems influenced by socio-cultural and political causes.

In the above statement it is clear that experienced teachers can solve problems effectively with their greater effort and devotion; but newcomers or persons with little experience cannot solve the problem based on their efforts. So, the problems that have been experienced and well-known in the root can be easy to resolve but unknown problems rooted in schools are quite difficult to manage. In this sense, problem identification is the important aspect for the leader which is important for the prosperity of school. A transformative leader needs to solve the problem as soon as possible for enriching the school (Shouppe and Pate, 2010). Every transformative leader focuses on solving the problem of the school effectively, whether they are academic or non-academic. Non-academic problems like formation of school management committee, parent-teacher association are problematic because of unexpected factors in the school. And sometimes it may be the challenge in selecting teacher representative in school management committee and parent teacher association. In such type of problem, the head teacher needs to perform tactful leadership style to overcome the challenges.

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### *Teaming effort*

Team management effort needs to be appropriate for leading any organization in effective ways. Teaming perspective highlights common effort with equal responsibility for energizing the organization (Samuel, 2012). The overall achievement of school becomes the essence of common effort, and so head teachers' responsibility is to lead the team with great patience. In this regard, one of the participants R1 stated:

In my school all the teacher staffs and students are more supportive, and they always get ready to perform their assigned roles and duties. Regarding the parents' involvement in schools, they take ownership and accountability for the development of school. These all activities carried out by the school's stakeholders really inspired me and made me more dedicated and accountable.

The above statement points out that the success of any organization depends on the mutual efforts of all stakeholders associated with the organization. If all the members of organization or school are responsible to energize the leading mechanism, the leader becomes successful; otherwise he/she may fall in pit, then the leader and the organization cannot navigate in a particular direction of allocated goals. It is clear that team effort is essential component for the betterment of schools (Crisci and others, 2019). Team work initiates the developmental path of organization and frames the overall mechanism in successful track. In the same issue another participant R3 emphasized that in the context of actively functional team effort among teachers and stakeholders, the leadership of head teacher becomes easier and easier. Otherwise, in the context of the team work not functioning in the right manner, the head teacher needs to exercise adequately and forcefully. To some extent, it may transform into unsuccessful tenure. This assertion concludes that team work and leadership are significantly correlated.

### **Conclusion**

Institutional behavior is shaped by several factors that support to grasp success in the academic pathways. The head teacher is required to lead the school through regular interactions with the inner and outer stakeholders. Whatever the size of organization, small or large, systemic reformation is

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essential for the welfare of school. The personality of staffs within the school represents the qualitative image of expected outcomes. The dimension of good personality enhances the mobility of school to create greater speed by inspiring the stakeholders. Remarkable personality of the head teacher motivates home lives to be dedicated and alerted for the organization with huge patience. The mutual collaboration and partnership with the stakeholders makes the leadership more effective and profitable for the advancement of school. Interpersonal relationship among staffs influences positively towards the success of head teacher's leadership. Diplomatic leadership skills for the shake of problem solving makes the head teacher more elegant and constructive to increase the capacity by means of mutual cooperation and sharing of genuine thought in the organization. The frequency of collaboration needs to be managed by adopting the principle of effective communication and collaboration along with the support of team effort. Head teacher is required to be self-motivated to take tactful decisions in the favor of organization – whether the other stakeholders are getting ready or not. After identification of a problem in school, the head teacher can seek the solution by creating discourse with stakeholders.

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