International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

Perceptions on educational leadership among secondary school learners: A case study in Sri Lanka

Oshanthaka Cabraal
School of Education, University of Nottingham, Malaysia

* Corresponding Author: **Oshanthaka Cabraal**

Article Info

Abstract
The evolution of leadership in the educational sector has become a well-researched phenomenon. School leadership primarily refers to the way in which decisions within schools are made, and how they are implemented and executed. An often-overlooked element of this phenomenon is the effect school leadership has on the school's primary stakeholders, its pupils. While leadership is harnessed in students as well, especially through positions bestowed on them, such as prefectship, schools often ignore the ways in which school management and leadership affects students' happiness and satisfaction, as well as how it influences students' perception of leadership at large. In particular, moral and ethical leadership, such as honour, quality decision making and collaboration have a strong impact on student well-being. To evaluate these effects of school leaderships on young learners, data was gathered using semi-structured interviews with secondary school teachers in Colombo who hold leadership positions in order to understand school leadership strategies. Additionally, focus groups were conducted with recent graduates of secondary schools in Colombo to understand their perceptions of these leadership strategies on their understanding and practice of leadership. Over the years, school leadership has developed from hierarchical to collaborative strategies. Yet this study finds a hybridisation of leadership strategies at present among schools in Colombo. The findings of this study direct us towards the understanding that school leadership strategies have a large impact on young learners' perceptions of leadership and their overall attitude towards education.

Introduction

Leadership is an important phenomenon in human civilisation. Whilst it lacks a single definition that may help conceptualise it (Yukl and Gardner III, 2020) [32], it is often associated with two functions: providing direction and exerting influence (Kolzow, 2020). These functions may suggest that leadership is viewed in the light of authority and status. However, Palmer (cited in Colonna, 2015) [8] distances leadership from external / organisational structures to prioritise intention, stating that leaders should strive to liberate the heart and that of others, so that it can liberate the world. This abstract (perhaps even idealistic) definition echoes ideas of empowerment, prioritising it over typical expectations of leadership in schools such as student achievement and school effectiveness.

For many years, leadership in education has been an area of concern. When it gained prominence in the 20th century, it drew on scientific management theories which aimed on improving the quality and quantity of outcomes in business (Gumus, *et al*, 2018) [12]. This is perhaps why student performance (examination results) remains one of the primary measurements of school success. Schuman (2004, cited in Merideth, 2006) [25] has stated that "managing school systems has become more complex and jobs more specialised, [due to which] it is no surprise that these organisations have become increasingly bureaucratic" (p. 250). This statement echoes the typical, traditional top-down structure of leadership in schools which enables bureaucracy.

Over time, there have been various leadership models in educational institutions as stipulated above. The bureaucratic and hierarchical system mentioned above (which continues to influence school management to this day) was embedded into the educational sphere by the managerial leadership model which was based on scientific management theory in the early 1900s.

(Gumus, *et al*., 2018) [12]. Since then, there have been several leadership models for school management such as instructional leadership, curriculum leadership, distributed leadership, transformational leadership and teacher leadership (Gumus, *et al*., 2018) [12]. The existence of several models on school leadership over a century of educational research suggests that leadership is a continuously changing phenomenon. Moreover, it is evident that schools continuously attempt to break away from rigid structures since the quality of leadership determines the motivation teachers have to perform better in classrooms (Fullan, 2020) [11]. Moreover, it is evident that certain leadership models, such as teacher leadership are identified primarily within western educational settings (Hairon, *et al*., 2015) [13], suggesting that the suitability and practice of leadership models depend on cultural context.

Amidst the availability of many leadership models, one aspect remains of utmost importance – the influence leadership has on students. Schools are often perceived as microcosms of democracy. Inclusive education in particular is considered a stepping stone to democracy as it inculcates inclusive and resultantly democratic values. This suggests that democratic school cultures may utilise all personnel in a democratic manner for its leadership, breaking away from top-down leadership structures. Therefore, modelling democratic leadership practices within a school setting provides students with an example of modern leadership (York-Barr and Duke, 2004) [31]. Whilst the success of school leadership is primarily measured by student achievement, the influence and example of school leadership on its student populace and consequential student perceptions also help to determine the success of its leadership.

Nevertheless, not many studies focus on educational leadership from the perspective of students. Educational leadership is poorly researched in Sri Lanka, perhaps owing to its centralised, primarily state sponsored school culture. Moreover, in a culture that respects hierarchy and authority, the perceptions of students are unheard in decision and policy making. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the nature of leadership in Sri Lankan schools and understand how it influences its primary stakeholders, students, in their perception of leadership and school satisfaction. Hence, the research questions of this study are as follows.

1. Do Sri Lankan schools use more hierarchical or collaborative leadership styles?
2. How do educational leadership styles influence student perceptions on leadership and school satisfaction?

This study may contribute to the dialogue of Sri Lankan education and its operational nature. It will provide a platform for student voices on school leadership and student satisfaction. Therefore, it may help re-establish the student as the focus of school leadership and perceive educational leadership from the eyes of learners.

Literature Review
Breaking Free of Bureaucracy: School Leadership over the Years
Educational leadership and structure of school leadership has become an area of study in the 1900s. Prior to this era, research shows a lack of detailed leadership theories. While there are many leadership strategies or models, in the light of situational theory, there is no single leadership model that fits all contexts. It varies largely on situation. Therefore,

educational research identifies a few main leadership models that are used in school management. However, the characteristics of these models illustrate a considerable shift in power and authority over the years which can be seen as hierarchical to collaborative as follows.

Hierarchical Leadership
One of the first leadership structures identified and is attached to the early 1900s is managerial leadership. Created during a time of scientific management theory, this educational leadership strategy is used primarily in centralised education systems which require a level of hierarchy and bureaucracy for management (Bush, 2020) [6]. Therefore, leadership is exercised by those formally appointed to such capacities. School leaders in this model focused on behaviours, functions and tasks (Bush, 2020) [6], showcasing prominence given to achievement of tasks by individual leaders.

Instructional leadership was identified when leaders paid more attention to teaching and learning that took place in schools. Leaders in this model would direct teachers towards improved instructional practices, and would supervise teaching and provide feedback among many other practices (Gumus, *et al*., 2018) [12]. Instructional leadership itself has evolved from a top-down system which initially prioritised the principal to a more democratic system (Hallinger, *et al*., 2020) [14]. The models that followed instructional leadership were more suitable for a decentralised, democratic educational environment.

Collaborative Leadership
Considered a branch of instructional leadership, curriculum leadership provides leadership in areas such as curriculum development, implementation and improvement (Harris, *et al*., 2020) [15]. Formally, curriculum development and implementation was exercised by principals. However, under curriculum leadership that task was assigned to more specialised personnel. This promoted a certain level of distributed leadership (Bellibas and Liu, 2018) [12].

Distributed leadership in itself is considered a model of school leadership. This model prioritises collaboration among staff based on subject specific expertise to support the principal who may not have the time and expertise to deal with tasks which require specialisation amidst managerial tasks (Gumus, *et al*., 2018) [12]. Bellibas and Liu (2018) [12] elaborate on this model by stating that leadership and decision making is a collective effort of "personnel at multiple levels instead of one predominant leader at the top" (p. 229). Similar to curriculum leadership, this too stems from instructional leadership.

In transactional leadership, the principal is viewed as the primary figure for work coordination (Gumus, *et al*., 2018) [12]. In opposition to this and in response to the bureaucracy of previous models (an element that could not be erased from managerial leadership), transformational and charismatic leadership emerged in the 1990s (Bush, 2020) [6]. This model included multiple sources of leadership that have the capacity to motivate and inspire (Hallinger, *et al*., 2020) [14]. Two of the most collaborative models include teacher leadership, and moral and ethical leadership which are of significant importance for this study which are therefore extensively referred to below.

Teacher Leadership
Teacher Leadership has been a part of pedagogical discourse

especially in western settings since the 1980s. It is near synonymous with school leadership (Hairon, *et al.*, 2015) [13]. Mansor, *et al.*, (2018) [23] define teacher leaders as those who frequently reflect and work collaboratively both within and outside the classroom. Literature on educational leadership primarily focuses on teacher leadership, highlighting its importance for everyday pedagogical practices and school management. While Baker-Doyle (2017) [14] states that teacher leaders' roles exceed their assigned role within the classroom, Wenner and Campbell (2017) [30] assert that teacher leadership roles are rarely viewed outside the classroom, but that teachers in fact have the capacity to lead in terms of social justice and equity issues, setting a fine example for the students who look up to them. Therefore, it is evident that teacher leadership is a collaborative and democratic structure that empowers teachers to take on responsibility and to break free of bureaucratic practices and instill relevant and important values in the children entrusted to their care.

Merideth (2006) [25] identifies five steps teacher leaders need to follow for effective leadership. The model is named the REACH model based on the initialism formed by the five steps which are illustrated below (p. 3).

Risk-taking: Seek challenges and new processes
Effectiveness: Model best practices, professional growth and heart
Autonomy: Display initiative, independent thought and responsibility
Collegiality: Promote community and interactive communication skills
Honour: Demonstrate integrity, honesty and professional ethics

Merideth (2006) [25] identifies action as an essential part of achieving leadership, thus promotes this model as a combination of individual elements that need to be fulfilled for effective leadership. With regard to personal skills of teacher leaders, Jackson, *et al.* (2010) [17] also echo many of the elements of the REACH model such as work ethic, teamwork and risk-taking. Other skills Jackson, *et al.* (2010) [17] refer to are openness, vision, positive affect and pedagogical skills. Therefore, it is evident that teacher leadership as a model of educational leadership encompasses features of collaborative models in an inclusive setting. This may help uproot educational leadership from bureaucratic practices and assist to create an inclusive, empowering and bottom-up leadership environment in schools.

Moral and Ethical Leadership
Gumus, *et al.* (2018) [12] identify moral and ethical leadership to stem from shortcomings found in transformational leadership. Khan and Javed (2018) [19] identify that ethical leadership has a unique position in educational organisations -"ethical leaders lead to positive outcomes in the organization such as organizational citizenship behavior, perception of leader's effectiveness and trust" (p. 222), essentially infusing the organisation with principles that will guide employees. In this model, an ethical leader's honourable life is believed to influence the organisation as a whole and guide it towards ethical and moral values. As such, a leader of this model must demonstrate qualities such as creativity, empathy and thoughtfulness (Gumus, *et al.*, 2018) [12].
Sharma, *et al.* (2018) [28] identify the need for teachers to

become ethical leaders due to its impact on students, the institution and society. Furthermore, they identify the following characteristics with teacher leaders that practise ethical leadership-credibility, quality decision making and collaborative skills. Therefore, it is evident that teacher leadership, and moral and ethical leadership are intertwined and culminate many of the collaborative leadership models illustrated herein.

The Effect of School Leadership on Young Learners
Literature on educational leadership makes evident that collaborative and democratic leadership models influence young learners positively-both in terms of character and accomplishments. Liggett (2020) [22] identifies participatory democracy as a dominant paradigm of democratic societies; highlighting the importance of participation and ownership. As such, democratic school leadership should support participation of its stakeholders (both teachers and students) in collaborative decision making (Nthontho, 2017) [27].
The student voice has been an area of significant study in educational research. Incorporating student voices cultivates a culture that promotes safe and productive learning (Nthontho, 2017; Kwan, 2020) [27, 21]. However, if student voices are to be considered in governance, it is important to provide due recognition than to merely provide a platform for pretend democracy and concern. Leaders have often been reluctant to include student voices due to possible disruption and resistance on the part of students (Anyon, 2011) [2]. In contrast, Byrne-Jimenez and Yoon (2019) [7] discuss leadership as an act of love in which democratic qualities such as openness, flexibly and thoughtfulness are encouraged to cultivate better understanding of student needs and to practise model citizenship.
Educational leadership styles influence learners. When considering the many leadership models highlighted above, teacher leadership and ethical leadership in particular have a significant impact on learners. Firstly, it is believed that teacher leadership may influence student learning – the ultimate measurement of school leadership success. Relationships among teachers are linked to student learning and achievement (Sharma, *et al.*, 2018) [28]. Better teacher relationships create professional communities, enabling a supportive learning and mentoring environment for teachers from which students benefit. Additionally, teachers who are able to transform their role in the classroom to be more effective are able to transform learners from remaining "passive consumer(s)" to becoming "active participant(s)" of education (hooks, 1994, p. 14). As such, teachers are able to promote effective teaching strategies in which students seek understanding of concepts and take responsibility for their own learning (Merideth, 2000) [26] since teacher leaders model democratic leadership and collective responsibility for their students (York-Barr and Duke, 2004) [31]. Moreover, risk-taking and honour in Merideth's (2000) [26] REACH model for teacher leadership may affect learners directly. Teachers have always been perceived as role models. Thus, teachers "who are excited about learning and expanding their skills through managed risk-taking, provide models for students venturing into new areas" (p. 5). Moreover, "teacher-leaders who have taken care to establish relationships with their students can teach ethical values" (p. 12) to their students, resulting in model ethical leadership.
The moral and ethical construction of character is repeatedly presented as an essential quality of teacher leaders as they

direct young learners' belief systems, morals and decisions. While it is common knowledge that family environments and other factors including pop culture influence the behaviour of young people, the influence of teachers' morality may also influence students' "attitude, perception and overall behaviour towards the different socially formed units including family, friends and other associations" (Sharma, *et al*., 2018, p. 38) [28]. Often the teacher and his/her behaviour and style are observed and imitated by students. Many societies believe that the behavioural, affective and ethical growth of students are influenced by teachers (Blazar and Kraft, 2017) [5], which asserts the fact that school leadership which influence teacher leadership has an indirect link to student formation. In fact, a study conducted by Sharma, *et al*. (2018) [28] identify that teachers' influence on students' lives is only second to parents and has a higher level of influence than relatives, society and public figures.

In comparison to teacher leadership, the influence of principals' leadership is poorly referred to in literature on educational leadership policy. In fact, the influence of teachers has been a lasting belief and concept. As much as teachers seek to impart knowledge and wisdom, in modern pedagogic practices they may naturally influence collaboration among students for learning purposes. However, teacher leaders have the capacity to influence collaboration beyond the classroom and learners, and implement it in and among teachers and the school (Mansor, *et al*., 2018) [23]. When teaching communities are structured in collaborative learning groups, schools possess the ability "to focus wider on school problems; and… build community and challenge the thinking of their members" (Merideth, 2000) [26]. This results in the school's leadership (primarily built on teachers) influencing not only student development but also school development.

In the 21st century, educational policy and practice have had a global effect, surpassing geographical boundaries and cultures (Zajda and Rust, 2021) [33]. However, a Pakistani study conducted by Alam and Ahmad (2017) [1] identifies that professional learning communities (PLCs) are a regular feature in developed countries but is absent in developing countries. This suggests that the significant amount of collegiality and openness PLCs require may not exist in South Asian countries. This exemplifies that context matters in administering school leadership models, and as such, certain school leadership policies and practices may differ and may not have the same impact across different settings (Zajda and Rust, 2021) [33].

Methodology
In terms of educational leadership, research often evaluate the correlation between leadership strategies and student achievement, taking into account numerical data to measure success based on examination outcomes (Dutta and Sahney, 2016; Shen, *et al*., 2020) [10, 29]. However, school leadership also enriches the learning process of students and instils in them exemplary values (Sharma, *et al*., 2018) [28] which cannot be measured numerically.

This study wishes to evaluate and understand the following.
1. The use of hierarchy and collaboration in educational leadership in Sri Lankan schools.
2. The influence of educational leadership on student perceptions on leadership and school satisfaction.

The researcher began by conducting a focus group of five past pupils that graduated from schools in Colombo in the 2020/21 academic year. The sample population encompasses different educational settings and structures in Colombo such as international schools and local schools, the latter of which can be further classified as private fee-levying church schools and semi-government catholic schools. Some participants have moved schools for their Advanced Levels which provides a comparative understanding of their lived experiences under different school leadership models. Moreover, these student participants (hereafter referred to as SPs) have held leadership positions in their schools which have placed them in direct contact with decision makers, providing them with a better understanding of school leadership. Additionally, the researcher took into consideration their ability to discuss matters openly and reflectively as graduates of secondary school that are awaiting university entrance. Literature on educational leadership primarily focus on the input of teachers and school leaders. However, the primary recipients of school leadership are learners. Yet, research do not prioritise their lived experiences with school leadership into account. Considering that learners are aware of what works most effectively for them (Allan, 2003), this study has taken into account their views and understanding as the primary focus of this study.

Table 1: Learner participants sample group

Code Name of Participant	Year of Secondary School Graduation	Type/s of School/s	Leadership Positions Held
SP1	2021	Local Semi-Government Catholic School	School Prefect, President – English Literary and Drama Societies
		International School	Director – Interact Club, President – Culinary Arts Club
SP2	2021	International School	School Prefect, House Captain, President – Choir, Secretary – Model United Nations
SP3	2021	International School	Deputy Head Prefect, House Captain, President – Drama Club, Secretary – History Society
SP4	2020	Local Private Church School	School Prefect, President and Captain – English Literary and Debating Society, Vice President – Drama and Gavel Clubs
SP5	2020	Local Private Preparatory Church School	School Prefect, President – English Literary Association
		Local Private Church School	School Prefect, Coordinator of Journalism – Media Unit, Vice Captain – Rowing

In order to triangulate data generated from SPs, three teachers from schools in Colombo were interviewed. These teacher participants (hereafter referred to as TPs) hold formal leadership positions in the schools they teach at. Two out of three TPs also have experience in different educational settings which, similar to SPs, will help understand diverse experiences in different contexts.

Table 2: Teacher participants sample group

Code Name of Participant	Years of Teaching Experience	Types of School/s	Leadership Positions Held
TP1	20 years	Local Private Church School	Head of English, Head of Languages, Coordinator of Clubs and Societies
		International School	Head of English, Coordinator of Clubs and Societies
TP2	16 years	International School	Head of English, Head of Secondary School
TP3	20 years	International School	Class Teacher
		Local Private Church School	Head of Humanities

In educational reform and effectiveness, stakeholder opinion matters (Nthontho, 2017) [27], especially that of teachers and learners. Therefore, the thoughts, understandings and experiences of teachers and learners regarding school leadership are referred to in this study. A better understanding about leadership strategies in Colombo schools is expected through the variables of these two sample groups.

Free education in Sri Lanka results in a complex centralised education system. Whilst private schools' bureaucracy is expected to be fairly lower than state-run institutions, they are still governed by education ministries, religious institutions, directors or awarding bodies that follow relatively centralised education and examination structures. Therefore, the researcher used a purposive sampling method to understand how private or semi-private school leadership function. Both sample groups were questioned on certain elements of their schools' leadership that point toward identifying characteristics of educational leadership models. To understand their perceptions of schools and leadership, they were asked about personal experiences, their satisfaction and lessons learnt from school leadership. In the case of TPs, they were asked in terms of both their own perceptions and their understanding of student perceptions. Through this, the researcher was able to not only understand how leadership affects staff, but also how teachers as leaders understand student perceptions.

The researcher used the qualitative method to process participant input for this study. Participants were asked a series of questions, both close-ended and open ended which were general, specific and comparative. These semi-structured interview questions are found in appendices C and D. The process involved data gathering, data analysis and observation and interpretation of emerging themes in the light of the research questions.

Findings
The findings of this study are presented based on the research questions stipulated.

1. Do Sri Lankan schools use more hierarchical or collaborative leadership styles?
While there are many models of leadership as per educational research, there seems to be an amalgamation of leadership features in schools in Colombo. Both SPs and TPs agreed that schools practise hierarchical leadership strategies while also attempting to practise democratic decision making. However, one TP stated that "they are breaking it down, to have more heads as motivators rather than autocrats – like coordinators of sorts" (TP1). Students had different views on being consulted or heard. While "in local schools you have to go through heavy bureaucracy to be heard… in international schools they listen and make changes where possible" (SP1). Yet, SP4 stated that the principal heavily "depends on the head prefect and considers him the voice of the student population", which he identified as harmful and undemocratic. SP3 also confirmed that the principal, in good intention, consulted her as the deputy head prefect, but did not necessarily consult others officially. The practice of hierarchy and the resultant lack of democracy were linked to culture as TPs acknowledged that hierarchy is a cultural reality in South Asian educational settings.

All participants with the exception of TP3 identified school principals as the obvious leadership figure of school. TP3 mentioned department heads and year heads alongside the principal. This suggests that only a minority view leadership as a shared responsibility. Moreover, none of the participants considered teachers as leaders. It seems that the lack of "power, authority and money - none of which teachers are given" (TP2) is a reason for this perception.

Centralisation seems to occur and affect leadership in both government and private schools. "The principal is controlled by the education ministry" (SP1). Two SPs and two TPs identified that even in private international schools the principal does not rank among the top management which renders them "powerless under the management" (TP2). These reiterate managerial leadership features while democratic efforts are pretend and do not thrive - "…most principals are progressive, but they report to people who hold opposite beliefs" (TP1). Moreover, all participants agree that while supervision, training and pedagogical instruction are provided, they are haphazardly done. This indicates that even instructional leadership values that are more hierarchical but are closer to collaboration are not entirely practised to empower teachers and teaching.

While all three TPs agreed that collegiality exists among staff, they also admitted to delegating work. TP2 also confessed to doing "the bulk of the work [himself] in order to avoid errors and trouble from the management". Moreover, TPs stated they were not given job descriptions when appointed as leaders, but stated an expectation of the management was to unite their department staff. According to SPs, the said collegiality among teachers is a rarity. In fact, all SPs also commented that majority of the staff are highly competitive and do not display team spirit. Similarly, while all TPs could articulate their school leaders' goals, SPs "…were never told the school's goal" (SP2). This suggests that collegiality and goals, like democratic decision-making may be façades among leadership.

Autonomy and creativity are viewed as essential qualities of teacher leadership. Yet, similar to the above, views on the matter differ between TPs and SPs. TPs believed that teachers

have autonomy, especially in international schools where curricula are developed by staff, unlike in centralised local schools. Nevertheless, SPs stated that only a handful of teachers use creative methods to teach. "The closer they were to the higher-ups, the more creative their teaching was" (SP2), "…positions mattered" (SP3). Teacher leaders are also perceived as risk-takers. TPs acknowledged that most teachers are risk-takers, but for SPs that constituted a minority. SP2 and TP1 identified risk-taking as something that is done on the sly and go unacknowledged while SP1 associated the lack of risk-taking among teachers to overwhelming work commitments stipulated by bureaucracies.

2. How do educational leadership styles influence student perceptions on leadership and school satisfaction?

Based on the features of leadership identified above, SPs conveyed their perceptions on leadership and school satisfaction. However, they echoed similar features when providing personal definitions for leadership, such as the ability to guide, accessibility, friendliness, humility and good decision making. Only SP4 and SP5 stated their dissatisfaction with their school principal. Others identified the said values in their principals but noted their limitations due to rigid management structures.

Autocratic leadership and the lack of autonomy highlighted with regard to teacher leadership seem to have a rippling effect on student treatment. All five SPs were student leaders, yet when asked if they are satisfied with the treatment of leaders (especially students) in the school community, they responded negatively. They lamented; "You become a prefect to make up for not being heard" (SP1), "We were not leaders but followers appointed to propagate what they wanted" (SP2), "There was no autonomy – student leadership is a façade" (SP3).

However, the lack of satisfaction among student leaders has resulted in their understanding of appropriate leadership skills. SP2 identified empathy as a lesson learnt as she could empathise with other students' frustrations and dissatisfaction, while SP3 identified courage which she learnt from her principal who had to put up with bureaucracy. "Resistance is what we leant" (SP5) and "…we learnt not to become what we saw" (SP4) are other similar sentiments shared by SPs. All SPs agreed that the majority of the staff and especially the management of their schools did not set a suitable example of leadership, but agreed that a handful of teachers were exemplary leaders and could be relied on.

SPs displayed dissatisfaction with their schools and the treatment of students at the hands of the management, especially due to a lack of respect for individuality and voices, both staff and students'. While TPs agreed that many students feel negatively, they believed that the system works for the most part and meets the needs of students amidst flaws. However, a possible reason for such dissatisfaction among students was also identified; "…unsatisfied teachers lament in class with students" (TP3) which may affect student perceptions of school and its leadership.

Discussion

This study aims to identify leadership strategies used by Sri Lankan schools and the ways in which students perceive leadership and school satisfaction. In this effort, it was realised that schools primarily contain a hierarchical leadership structure which affects teacher leaders and

collegiality. Moreover, it was evident that students lack a positive perception of schools and leadership which is perhaps influenced by teacher perceptions.

Hybridised Educational Leadership

Schools in Colombo exercise authority to a vast extent in a top-down method. This seems to stem from traditional school management strategies and business models. Considering the nature of the SPs' and TPs' schools, it is evident that colonially established missionary schools and relatively modern international schools registered as businesses of the state are likely influenced by tradition and profit, respectively. However, the findings of this study concur with Alam and Ahmad (2017) [1] and Zajda and Rust (2021) [33] as it is evident that the collegiality and openness required for effective leadership is lacking in South Asian schools, and due to context, certain international policies on leadership may not work effectively in Sri Lanka.

Nevertheless, schools are not entirely autocratic, but attempt to practise democratic values such as openness, flexibly and thoughtfulness (Byrne-Jimenez and Yoon, 2019) [7]. However, Byrne-Jimenez and Yoon (2019) [7] associate these qualities more with an act of love rather than democracy. This propounds that democratic values practised in the classroom, when enhanced by staff and management, may reflect the love and care they may have towards the students entrusted to their care. However, the SPs in this study, do not necessarily view such values, which may exist in their learning environments, with love. Furthermore, these practices are evidently ineffective and do not meet student satisfaction. Representative democracies are practised by states and organizations', and make organisational functions convenient. Yet, it is also clear that such select representation also steers instability and bad-faith among students who prefer more student voices to be heard.

Moreover, a mismatch among school leaders and the authorities to whom they report affect school leadership. Educators have experience leading students but report to managers and directors with limited understanding and student interaction. This reality seems to affect progressive leadership and vision that has the potential to meet student needs. Thus, whilst many private or semi-private schools may seem to be more decentralised as opposed to state-run schools, management of principals affect the overall leadership models of schools. This suggests that in the increase of private, international schools, when considering school leadership, it is important to study the role of school managers who may not necessarily possess experience in education. Moreover, while democratic practices may be utilised by principals, they may continue to do so amidst autocratic practices. It also raises the question whether democratic leadership is a façade among Colombo schools to gain reputation as progressive and leading places of education.

Use of other leadership models is evident in other situations as well. Instructional leadership requires school leaders to provide instructional advice, supervision and feedback (Chase and Guba, 1955, cited in Gumus, et al., 2018) [12]. Yet, it is evident that such practices are haphazardly conducted due to which teachers hardly gain constructive criticism to better their teaching. This points towards a more hierarchical structure which utilises collaborative strategies poorly. However, managerial interference seems to be less in curriculum leadership, perhaps due to the subject expertise

required for such decisions.

The increase in authority reserved for the management level personnel of schools points towards a lack of leadership among teachers and other contributory factors. In addition to a lack of power and authority bestowed on teachers, overwhelming additional duties that result due to centralisation and bureaucracy, as well as poor pay may affect the perception teachers have developed about themselves as leaders (or the lack thereof). It is evident that as there is a preference within the system for official appointments for leadership (which are often accompanied by a salary increase), 'ordinary' teachers do not consider themselves leaders. This preference also contributes to a more top-down approach as opposed to cooperation among teachers, reiterating socio-cultural effects on school leadership. However, it is evident that such circumstances affect teaching as well, as teachers do not exercise creative teaching strategies. Fear seems to persist in the culture of Sri Lankan schools which limits the autonomy and creativity that may help improve educational practices. This study found that qualities of teachers such as the lack of initiative, lack of community and the fear of challenges (largely due to cultural reasons) do not reflect those of Merideth's (2006) [25] REACH model for effective teacher leadership. Therefore, it is evident that models such as that of Merideth (2006) [25] which have been put forward to enhance teacher leadership may be ineffective in certain contexts due to cultural limitations. However, this can be overcome by providing substantial feedback via an instructional model and by empowering teachers to consider themselves leaders which may provide them the autonomy necessary to facilitate better teaching.

In a context where a culture of respect persists, obedience to authority is present in collaboration as well. Collegiality is an essential feature of many leadership strategies such as instructional leadership (Gumus and Akcaoglu, 2013) and teacher leadership (Jackson, *et al*, 2010) [17]. However, obedience to authority seems to have a ripple effect among the many layers of leadership in schools. This is evident among principals who lack autonomy, heads of departments who take on the majority of duties, and teachers who oblige to work that is delegated. Therefore, whilst collaboration seems to be practised as a leadership style among staff that may provide specialised input for school management and leadership (Bellibas and Liu, 2018) [12], it is evident that within classrooms and among students, the collegiality experienced by the management does not exist. As a result, the lack of creativity, empathy and thoughtfulness (Cumbo, 2009) [9] as well as the authority managements exert on teachers result in poor ethical leadership.

This lack of agreement among TPs and SPs, as well as the apparent mismatch between layers of school leadership direct this study towards a hybrid model of leadership. Whilst specialised input and collegiality certainly exist to a certain extent, the lack of a genuine contribution on the part of teachers is also evident (which is a result of the hierarchical leadership style exercised in schools). Thus, a more hybridised leadership style among schools in Colombo is evident as both hierarchical and collaborative leadership styles are used, primarily the former perhaps due to contextual implications.

Perceiving Schools and Leadership as Young Learners
School environments formulate models of society for

students. Sharma, *et al*. (2018) [28] identify that students' "attitude, perception and overall behaviour…" (p. 38) are influenced and formulated by schools which have the capacity to empower students to lead change in schools and communities (Kwan, 2020) [21]. This makes evident that democratic and ethical leadership practices in schools have a significant effect on young learners and society at large.

Students seek leaders who are cooperative, understanding and approachable. Although their immediate heads may possess such vital leadership qualities, they are aware of the rigidity of leadership beyond these personnel they are in contact with. As a result, they have observed the effect it has on teachers and their performance in class. Therefore, qualities deemed essential for ethical teacher leaders by Sharma, *et al*. (2018) [28] such as credibility, quality decision making and collaborative skills are absent for learners to see and benefit from. Students understand the shortcomings of school systems. The assertions made by Sharma, *et al*. (2018) [28] are being contradicted by the findings of this study by the fact that the SPs herein have developed leadership skills not due to being empowered by good leadership practices in the learning environment but by developing coping mechanisms to deal with the absence of good leadership. This makes clear the fact that student leadership skills may develop despite the leadership styles exercised by schools or the lack thereof. Thus, students learn to perceive leadership in the light of positive characteristics that aren't evident in their school's leadership such as empathy, compassion and thoughtfulness which typically demonstrate ethical leadership (Gumus *et al*, 2018) [12].

However, the influence of the handful of teachers who practise ethical leadership cannot be ignored (Sharma *et al*, 2018) [28]. It is evident that as much as the absence of exemplary leadership influences good leadership among students, resilient teachers and principals also inculcate and influence good and moral leadership among students. This also suggests social reproduction as students learn to bear injustice, unethical leadership and hierarchy similar to their teachers and principals. Nevertheless, it also suggests the potential for Colombo schools to develop more progressive styles of leadership in the future if managed by younger generations who seem more critical and perceptive of existing school leadership.

As opposed to Zajda and Rust (2021) [33], students do not seem to be concerned with cultural context with regard to school leadership. Their perceptions can be considered more universal. This may result in a cultural insensitivity which teachers seem to be more aware of, due to which they understand the limitations of school managements and the need for hierarchy more than students. Students display a more unforgiving attitude towards school culture and management, thus are unable to perceive the situation objectively. However, this also points towards the future of schools which produce students whose perceptions and needs transcend geographical and cultural boundaries.

Parallels can be drawn to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1987) [24]. On the most basic level, schools provide students with physiological needs and security. However, due to poor leadership and a lack of recognition of individuality, voices and democracy, students' sense of belonging, esteem needs and self-actualisation may not be satiated. Whilst team work such as sports and extra-curricular activities may help achieve these elements to a certain extent, it is evident that students no longer consider them to have the capacity to

fulfill such needs. Instead, lack of respect and recognition seem to affect their needs that are poorly met by schools. Therefore, a mismatch exists between teachers' understanding of students' satisfaction and the reality.

The influence of teachers on students is undeniable, as stipulated before. Thus, the perceptions of students whose contact with school management is limited may be more influenced by unsatisfied teachers who share their personal grievances and concerns with students. This directs our understanding towards the importance of enhancing teacher satisfaction. Leadership that empowers teachers and provides them the autonomy to perform better, and remain happier and more satisfied may improve student perceptions on leadership and school satisfaction. Other possibilities include more inclusive environments with higher stakeholder participation and more democratic practices that are distant from the use of hierarchical authority. The above signify that in education, whatever is done and practised affects the primary stakeholder which is the student. Therefore, as schools are places with a high level of influence on students, it is the school's responsibility to provide good examples of modern leadership through practice (York-Barr and Duke, 2004) [31].

Conclusion
Literature suggests that leadership in the field of education has evolved over the past century. Beginning at managerial leadership, education has evolved to adopt teacher leadership, and moral and ethical leadership to accommodate the changing nature of leadership and values of society (Gumus, *et al*., 2018) [12]. Change in leadership directs a school's value system towards current trends and allows it to function in an exemplary manner.

However, the results of this study make apparent that schools in Colombo do not have a set model of leadership, rather a combination of features that may characterise and amalgamate different leadership models. As such, it is evident that hierarchy, which is a significant feature of managerial leadership is the most prominent leadership style exercised by these schools. Participatory and democratic leadership (Jwan and Kisaka, 2017) [18] seems to be under utilised, resulting in an inability to meet the expectations of models such as teacher leadership and ethical leadership (Merideth, 2006) [25]. Nevertheless, the use of features from diverse leadership models points this study towards a possible hybrid leadership style that is more heavily managerial in nature within Colombo schools.

It is also evident that students are highly perceptive and critical of leadership and school satisfaction; identifying short comings and their effects on them. It is evident that students are unsatisfied with educational leadership overall. Unmet needs seem to stem from feeling unheard, unrecognised and unacknowledged. Students are increasingly seeking an active role within schools and school leadership. It is clear that student leadership positions such as prefectship are no longer sufficient to meet student needs and do not help to achieve self-actualisation (Maslow, 1987) [24]. As a result, their overall experience in school can quite accurately be termed unsatisfactory. However, teachers' influence remains a contributory factor (Blazar and Kraft, 2017) [5]. Coping strategies and perceptions on leadership students may develop seem to be influenced by both a handful of exemplary teachers and unsatisfied teachers. This points towards the importance of teacher satisfaction in school

leadership, which when mended may lead towards better and satisfactory perceptions among students.

Limitations and Directions for Further Study
This study identifies leadership styles of Colombo schools and the perception of secondary school students on leadership and school satisfaction. However, the sample population is limited to private and semi-private, local and international school students and teachers. Whilst this sample population may help understand the most up-to-date leadership styles among Colombo schools which are privatised and relatively decentralised, it does not represent the majority of Colombo schools which are state-sponsored centralised schools. Moreover, the participants were student and teacher leaders who have been officially appointed to lead. The TPs of this study in particular are all in managerial positions as heads of departments which may influence their perception to be less critical of the school management. Further study of teachers and students who do not hold such positions of authority may respond to the study and its questions more differently. Furthermore, the results also point towards an emerging need to study leadership practised by school administrations that supersede principals.

In conclusion, it is apparent that student perceptions of school and leadership are heavily influenced by leadership styles exercised by schools. All educational leadership decisions in essence should have at its centre the wellbeing of staff and students. This encourages a need to rethink school leadership: a model that is significantly exemplary of democracy, leadership and society.

References
1. Alam A, Ahmad M. The impact of instructional leadership, professional communities and extra responsibilities for teachers on student achievement. International Journal of Educational Management. 2017; 31(3):383-395. Doi: 10.1108/IJEM-09-2015-0126.
2. Anyon J. Marx and Education. Routledge, 2011.
3. Bellibas MS, Liu Y. The effects of principals' perceived instructional and distributed leadership practices on their perceptions of school climate. International Journal of Leadership in Education. 2018; 21(2):226-244. Doi: 10.1080/13603124.2016.1147608.
4. Baker-Doyle KJ. How can community organisations support urban transformative teacher leadership? Lessons from three successful alliances. The Educational Forum. 2017; 81(4):450-466. doi:10.1080/00131725.2017.1350242.
5. Blazar D, Kraft MA. Teacher and Teaching Effects on Students' Attitudes and Behaviors. Educational evaluation and policy analysis. 2017; 39(1):146-170. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373716670260.
6. Bush T. Theories of Educational Leadership & Management (5th ed). Sage Publications, 2020.
7. Byrne-Jimenez MC, Yoon IH. Leadership as an Act of Love: Leading in Dangerous Times. Frontiers in Education, 2019. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2018.00117.
8. Colonna J. (Host). Shadow and Leadership - with Parker Palm [Audio Podcast], 2015. Reboot. https://www.reboot.io/episode/shadow-and-leadership/
9. Cumbo LJ. Ethical leadership: The quest for character, civility, and community. Current Review for Academic Libraries, 2009, 47(4).
10. Dutta V, Sahney S. School leadership and its impact on

student achievement: The mediating role of school climate and teacher job satisfaction. International Journal of Educational Management. 2016; 30(6):941-952. doi: 10.1108/IJEM-12-2014-0170.

11. Fullan M. Leading in a Culture of Change (2nd ed). Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2020.

12. Gumus S, Bellibas MS, Esen M, Gumus E. A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014. Educational Management Administration & Leadership. 2018; 46(1):25-48. doi: 10.1177/1741143216659296.

13. Hairon S, Goh JWP, Chua CSK. Teacher leadership enactment in professional learning community contexts: towards a better understanding of the phenomenon. School Leadership & Management. 2015; 35(2):163-182. doi: 10.1080/13632434.2014.992776.

14. Hallinger P, Gumus S, Bellibas MS. Are principals instructional leaders yet? A science map of the knowledge base on instructional leadership, 1940–2018. Scientometrics. 2020; 122:1629-1650. doi: 10.1007/s11192-03360-5.

15. Harris A, Hones M, Crick T. Curriculum leadership: a critical contributor to school and system improvement. School Leadership and Management. 2020; 40(1):1-4. doi: 10.1080/13632434.2020.1704470.

16. Hooks B. Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom. Routledge, 1994.

17. Jackson T, Burrus J, Bassett K, Roberts RD. Teacher Leadership: An Assessment Framework for an Emerging Area of Professional Practice. Educational Testing Service, 2010.

18. Jwan JO, Kisaka ST. Democracy, ethics and social justice: Implications for secondary school leadership in Kenya. South African Journal of Education, 2017, 37(3). doi: 10.15700/saje.v37n3a1339.

19. Khan SR, Javed U. Revision of Ethical Leadership Scale. Journal of Research and Reflections in Education. 2018; 12(2):121-135. http://www.ue.edu.pk/jrre.

20. Kolzow DR. Leading from Within: Building, 2020. Organizational Leadership Capacity [Kindle Paperwhite version]. Retrieved from amazon.com.

21. Kwan P. Is Transformational Leadership Theory Passe? Revisiting the Integrative Effect of Instructional Leadership and Transformational Leadership on Student Outcomes. Educational Administration Quarterly. 2020; 56(2):321-349. doi: 10.1177/0013161X19861137.

22. Liggett R. Toward a Conceptualization of Democratic Leadership in a Professional Context. Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy. 2020; 193:115-127.

23. Mansor M, Yunus J, Yuet FKC. Validity and reliability of the teacher leadership inventory in Malaysian educational context. International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development. 2018; 7(3):480-488. doi: 10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i3/4566.

24. Maslow A. Motivation and Personality. Harper Row, 1987.

25. Merideth EM. Leadership Strategies for Teachers. Sage Publications, 2006, 1-19.

26. Merideth EM. Leadership Strategies for Teachers. Pearson Professional Development, 2000.

27. Nthontho MA. Children as stakeholders in education: Does their voice matter? South African Journal of Childhood Education, 2017, 7(1). Doi: 10.4102/sajce.v7i1.434.

28. Sharma A, Khandelwal U, Agrawal R. Impact of Teachers' Ethical Leadership Behaviour: A Students' Perspective. International Journal on Leadership. 2018; 6(1):36-45.

29. Shen J, Wu H, Reeves P, Zheng Y, Ryan L, Anderson D. The association between teacher leadership and student achievement: A meta-analysis. Educational Research Review, 2020, 31. doi: 10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100357.

30. Wenner JA, Campbell T. The Theoretical and Empirical Basis of Teacher Leadership: A Review of the Literature. Sage, 2017. doi: 10.3102/0034654316653478.

31. York-Barr J, Duke K. What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. Review of Educational Research. 2004; 74:255-316.

32. Yukl GA, Gardner III WL. Leadership in Organizations. 9th ed. Pearson, 2020.

33. Zajda J, Rust V. Globalisation and Comparative Education: Changing Paradigms. Springer, 2021.