



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Reality of Practicing the Dimensions of Creative Leadership among School Principals in Saudi Arabia

Dr. Habbab Hammdan Bintwalah

Assistant professor in Educational leadership

Education department, University of Hail, Saudi Arabia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT	
Received: Oct 29, 2024	This study aims to show the reality of practicing the dimensions of creative leadership among secondary school principals from the teachers' point of view in the city of Hail. To achieve this, a descriptive survey approach was used in the study, and the questionnaire was used as a study tool. The sample of the study consisted of 122 secondary schools in Hail region, 187 responses were recorded. Study reached several results, the most important of which are the level of principals' school practice of the dimensions of creative leadership is low. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 or less in teachers' attitudes towards the school principal's practice of the dimensions of creative leadership according to the study variables. The study emphasized the need to reform secondary school principals' preparation and training programs among the schools' principles to enhance their creative leadership skills.	
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*Corresponding Author:		
h.bintwalah@uoh.edu.sa		

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the foundation of the administrative process through which all employees are directed to achieve desired goals while considering the organizational, human, and social aspects of administrative operations. This position requires competence and training. Educational institutions are among the most important organizations where leaders possess behavioral and administrative skills based on specific educational foundations and strategies that work to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of educational staff and the educational sector in general. Educational institutions strive to prepare and qualify future cadres capable of keeping up with the changes and challenges in the educational field. They aim to equip them with leadership skills that enable them to adopt change strategies, contribute to the development of their professional performance and that of their colleagues, achieve goals, and uphold the principle of sustainable professional development in educational leadership. This way, they can innovate and create in addressing the challenges of any new educational system.

The concept of Creative leadership is defined as an imaginative and thoughtful response to the challenging opportunities and issues at all levels, it involves vision, thinking, and doing things differently to improve life opportunities for all, it also provides the conditions, environment, and opportunities for others to be creative (Stoll & Temperley, 2009).

Although the outcomes of creative leadership can be measured at distinct levels of analysis (individual, team, organizational), creative leadership itself does not reside within leaders, followers, or organizations, but within the dynamic interactions among leaders, followers, and contextual characteristics (Mainemelis, et al., 2015).

Characteristics of effective creative leadership:

Visionary Thinking

Creative leaders could envision future possibilities and inspire their teams to pursue them. This vision often challenges the status quo and encourages bold thinking (Puccio, et al., 2010).

Risk Tolerance

Creative leaders are not afraid to take risks and encourage their teams to step outside their comfort zones. This requires a high level of flexibility and the ability to learn from mistakes (Amabile&Khair, 2008).

Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Leaders who understand the emotional and motivational drivers of their team members can foster a creative environment. Empathy helps leaders provide appropriate support to their teams (Goleman, 2006).

Collaboration

Creative leadership thrives in collaborative environments. Leaders encourage cross-functional teams to work together, where diversity of thought and expertise often leads to innovative solutions (Edmondson, 2019).

Creativity is vital in leadership for several reasons, first adapting to change, in a rapidly changing business environment; leaders need the ability to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. Creative leadership allows organizations to transform and innovate quickly in response to market changes (Kanter, 2001). Secondly, sustained innovation, organizations led by creative leaders are more likely to maintain a culture of continuous innovation, this leads to long-term competitive advantages (Amabile&Khair, 2008). Finally, employee engagement, creative leaders inspire their teams by giving them the freedom to explore new ideas and contribute to the success of the company. This promotes higher levels of engagement and job satisfaction (Goleman, 2006).

To cultivate creative leadership, organizations can adopt several strategies. Create a safe environment. Leaders must create an environment where employees feel safe to express unconventional ideas without fear of judgment or consequences (Amabile&Khair, 2008). Encourage diversity. By fostering diversity in teams, leaders can ensure a broader range of perspectives and ideas, which leads to more innovative solutions (Edmondson, 2019). Invest in learning and development. Creative leaders are lifelong learners. Organizations must invest in leadership development programs that focus on creativity and innovation (Puccio, et al., 2010). Foster collaboration. Creative leaders must encourage open communication and collaboration across departments and teams to foster the exchange of ideas (Kanter, 2001). By recognizing the importance of creative leadership traits, and implementing strategies to foster them, organizations can thrive in a competitive environment. Leaders who embrace creativity not only drive innovation, but also build teams that are resilient, engaged, and prepared to face future challenges.

Problem Study:

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the issue of developing leadership to improve school performance is of paramount importance, as it has become a top priority in the educational field. Therefore, the school leader is considered the official who manages and organizes human and material resources, in addition to performing administrative tasks and representing authority within the school environment (Laila, 2015).

(Laila, 2015) also indicated that there is an urgent need to develop leadership skills and better direct and train them, as any success in improving the educational environment depends on the presence of effective guidance and leadership, and any change requires participation in planning and decision-making processes, and this can only be achieved through directing and motivating them. She also found that the lack of training and support necessary to implement changes and technical, professional and emotional support for teachers are major reasons behind some problems in schools.

Creativity is an important strategic requirement for educational leaders, which requires them to be able to develop their professional performance in creative ways, which reflects on improving the

performance of workers and enhancing their skills. However, some school principals still rely on traditional methods in dealing with the problems and challenges they face, as some believe that practicing creative methods is a kind of risk (Al-Dossary, 2023).

Several studies have addressed creative leadership, such as (Min and Worapongpat, 2023) study on the level of creative leadership and management of school principals, they were found that the overall creative leadership and administration of educational institution administrators were at a high level in all aspects and creative leadership in overall imagination was positively correlated with management of school principals in terms of imagination and academic administration. (Al-Dossary, 2023) pointed out the necessity of improving and enhancing the work environment and preparing it to respond to creative leadership and accept change in order to achieve the best. (Badr, 2024) identified the practice of creative leadership in government schools, it showed that its practice is generally at an average level. The dimensions of originality came in first place, followed by fluency, then flexibility, and finally problem solving. (Abdul Ghaffar and Al-Harbi, 2024) indicated that experience plays a role in raising the level of practicing creative leadership in kindergarten schools through a survey of the viewpoint of female teachers in private schools in the North Jeddah region.

From the above, it is clear the importance of research into the reality of practicing creative leadership in schools, as it contributes to developing the educational and administrative process, directing its employees towards progress, creating appropriate working conditions, and stimulating creativity to face the surrounding challenges and changes. This is a requirement to support the ability of the principals of these schools to achieve high productivity and continuous improvement and development of the institution as a whole.

Study Questions

- 1- What is the reality of the practice of secondary school principals in Hail city of the dimensions of creative leadership (sensitivity to problems - fluency - flexibility - originality) from the teachers' point of view?
- 2- Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha < 0.5$) in the reality of the practice of secondary school principals in Hail city of the dimensions of creative leadership according to the differences in variables (academic qualification, years of service)?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study is based on the descriptive survey approach, where the conceptual creative leadership scales of dimensions (sensitivity to problems, fluency, flexibility, originality) among school principals from the teachers' point of view. The study variables, academic qualification, and number of years of service were used to detect statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the study sample members. The data were analyzed using frequencies, means, standard deviation, t-test, one-way analysis of variance, correlation analysis, and regression analysis from SPSS methods.

Study limitations

Although regulations and structures within secondary schools in Saudi Arabia are similar, the conclusions of this case study are not meant to be generalized to the entire teachers in Saudi Arabia, is closely related to Hail city. However, its findings could be transferrable to similar contexts. It would be generalizable if the study were to be carried out in other regions. The study was applied to a sample of secondary school teachers affiliated with the General Administration of Education in the Hail region, during the first term of 2024.

Sampling and setting

The targeted population for this study was secondary school teachers in the Hail city, comprising 407 (first term of 2024). This was done after the researcher contacted the General Administration of Education in the Hail region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to request a list of the names of secondary school teachers. The sample was representative of the study population, 30% of the total number of teachers. Therefore, the sample consisted of 122 secondary school teachers, who were selected

randomly, and the data was collected during the first semester of 2024. Table (1) shows the sample distribution according to study variables.

Table (1): Characteristics of the study sample

	Variable	Number	(%)
Educational Qualification	<i>Bachelor</i>	174	93%
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	13	7%
Years of Service	<i>1-5</i>	22	12%
	<i>6-10</i>	76	41%
	<i>More than 10</i>	89	47%

Source: Collected and calculated from questionnaire data in the study community and sample

All secondary school teachers in the Hail city were invited to complete the survey at a time convenient to them. Researcher registered to SurveyMonkey and designed the survey online. This enabled to circulate the link (through emails) to the entire targeted sample. On the introductory page of the survey, the purpose of research and conditions of participation were included. The survey was run in first term of 2024. During this period, 187 responses were recorded.

Research ethics

The research follows ethical procedures in the social sciences. In this study, before starting this study, several ethical procedures were adhered to, such as seeking permission from the institution to conduct the research and consenting participants. After obtaining these consents, participants were contacted to participate voluntarily in the study. I provided them with information about the nature of the research and asked for their formal consent by signing the designated form in light of complete confidentiality, as maintaining confidentiality is a critical issue and ethical concern. The data collected was kept completely confidential. Participants were assured that the data and information they provided would only be handled in a way that protects their privacy and ensures anonymity.

Survey design

The objectives of the study were determined by taking advantage of theoretical literature and previous studies, and then the questionnaire phrases were formulated. Closed questions were formulated with multiple choices on a 5-points Likert scale (Very high to very low). It is divided into two areas. The first area is about the primary data of the study sample according to its variables, which are the academic qualification and the number of years of service. The second part includes dimensions of creative leadership, sensitivity to problems, fluency, flexibility, and originality, each of which has 8 phrases.

Validity and reliability

This research has followed several procedures to strengthen the validity of the questionnaire by referring the survey to specialized individuals who reviewed the language and the structure of the questions in relation to the research aims and objectives. Their recommendations and suggestions concerning the clarity of the questions and the sufficiency of the instructions were taken up.

The researcher verified the validity of internal consistency by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between the score of each statement and the total score of the dimension to which it belongs. The results came as shown in the following table (2).

Reliability can be tested using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) through Cronbach's alpha test of item reliability. Reliability of attitude and the knowledge scales, in the instruments, were checked for consistency between the respondents. This can be done by using statistical measurement (Cronbach's Alpha) which measures the reliability coefficient. A high reliability coefficient (0.70 - 0.90) was found and was acceptable for the purposes of this study. In the case of the quantitative data, SPSS result in terms of reliability revealed that Cronbach's Alpha test had a high reliability coefficient (0.804), statistically acceptable for the purposes of this study as shown in the following table (3).

Table (2): Pearson correlation coefficients between the scores of each item and the total score of the dimension to which it belongs

Sensitivity to problems		Flexibility		Fluency		Originality	
N	Correlation coefficient	N	Correlation coefficient	N	Correlation coefficient	N	Correlation coefficient
1	0.785**	1	0.945**	1	0.882**	1	0.821**
2	0.806**	2	0.850**	2	0.805**	2	0.805**
3	0.874**	3	0.931**	3	0.884**	3	0.871**
4	0.886**	4	0.902**	4	0.918**	4	0.887**
5	0.901**	5	0.880**	5	0.879**	5	0.902**
6	0.854**	6	0.940**	6	0.865**	6	0.858**
7	0.892**	7	0.854**	7	0.891**	7	0.890**
8	0.893**	8	0.796**	8	0.863**	8	0.893**

Source: Collected and calculated from questionnaire forms using SPSS. **Statistically significant at a significance level of (0.01).

Table (3): Reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.804	32

Source: Collected and calculated from questionnaire forms using SPSS.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section includes presenting the results of the study that resulted from the statistical processing of the study sample responses. In addition reaching conclusions through the interpretation and discussion of the results, in the first question, each dimension will be presented separately.

The first dimension is sensitivity to problems, where the arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated, and the results came out as shown in Table (4).

Table (4): Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and rankings of the study sample members' responses regarding sensitivity to problems

Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Practice level	order of items
Principal analyses situations logically to identify underlying problems.	3.12	0.47	middle	4
Principal asks "why" and "what if" to uncover hidden issues.	2.89	0.36	middle	5
Principal understands others' perspectives to recognize potential problems in relationships or teamwork.	3.21	0.58	middle	1
Principal anticipates challenges before they arise and taking preventive measures.	3.13	0.51	middle	3
Principal shows flexible enough to recognize and respond to unexpected problems.	2.28	0.45	low	8
Principal Identifies trends or recurring issues that may signal a deeper problem.	3.14	0.73	middle	2
Principal pays close attention to surroundings and behaviors to detect early signs of trouble.	2.41	0.63	low	7
Principal knows when to act on a problem and how to approach solving it.	2.81	0.73	middle	6
Overall Score	2.87	0.55	middle	

Source: Collected and calculated from the study questionnaire

The table shows that the level of practice of the secondary school principal of the dimension of "sensitivity to problems" is middle, with an arithmetic mean of (2.87) and a standard deviation of (0.55). The phrase "Principal understands others' perspectives to recognize potential problems in relationships or teamwork" came in first place with a middle level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (3.21) with a standard deviation of (0.58). In last place was the phrase "Principal

shows flexible enough to recognize and respond to unexpected problems" with a low level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (2.28) with a standard deviation of (0.45).

The second dimension is fluency, where the arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated, and the results came out as shown in Table (5).

Table (5): Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and rankings of the study sample members' responses regarding fluency

Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Practice level	order of items
Principal process complex information and summarize diverse ideas smoothly.	2.40	0.49	middle	3
Principal manages emotions allowing for strong relationships, motivation, and conflict resolution.	2.36	0.41	low	4
Principal skills in expressing ideas clearly, persuasively, and with impact through verbal, nonverbal, and written communication.	2.26	0.51	low	7
Principal aligns creative ideas with long-term goals, ensuring that innovation serves the mission and broader vision.	2.11	0.43	low	8
Principal understands and navigate different cultural	2.81	0.62	middle	1
Principal works effectively with teams, break down silos, and foster an open environment for the exchange of ideas.	2.27	0.72	low	6
Principal adapts quickly to new challenges, change strategies, and remain flexible in the face of uncertainty.	2.32	0.59	low	5
Principal generates original ideas while fostering a culture of experimentation and continuous improvement.	2.41	0.50	low	2
Overall Score	2.36	0.57	low	

Source: Collected and calculated from the study questionnaire

The table shows that the level of practice of the secondary school principal of the dimension of "fluency" is low, with an arithmetic mean of (2.36) and a standard deviation of (0.57). The phrase "Principal understands and navigate different cultural" came in first place with a middle level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (2.81) with a standard deviation of (0.62). In last place was the phrase "Principal aligns creative ideas with long-term goals, ensuring that innovation serves the mission and broader vision" with a low level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (2.11) with a standard deviation of (0.57).

The third dimension is flexibility, where the arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated, and the results came out as shown in Table (6).

The table shows that the level of practice of the secondary school principal of the dimension of "flexibility" is low, with an arithmetic mean of (2.57) and a standard deviation of (0.53). The phrase "Principal shifts thinking and views problems from multiple perspectives" came in first place with a middle level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (3.18) with a standard deviation of (0.52). In last place was the phrase "Principal balances intuition and data-driven insights to make timely decisions" with a low level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (2.20) with a standard deviation of (0.58).

Table (6): Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and rankings of the study sample members' responses regarding flexibility

Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Practice level	order of items
Principal shifts thinking and views problems from multiple perspectives.	3.18	0.52	middle	1

Principal opens to feedback and adapts leadership styles based on team dynamics and situations.	2.50	0.41	low	5
Principal modifies goals, strategies, and priorities in response to school challenges.	2.92	0.51	middle	2
Principal integrates diverse cultural perspectives to enhance creativity and collaboration.	2.47	0.57	low	6
Principal encourages pivoting when needed and embrace unconventional solutions to drive progress.	2.58	0.48	low	3
Principal balances intuition and data-driven insights to make timely decisions.	2.20	0.58	low	8
Principal adapts communication and leadership approaches to different personalities, work styles, and team dynamics.	2.51	0.61	low	4
Principal adjusts workflows, structures, and processes to accommodate new challenges, technologies, and opportunities.	2.22	0.56	low	7
Overall Score	2.57	0.53	low	

Source: Collected and calculated from the study questionnaire

The fourth dimension is originality, where the arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated, and the results came out as shown in Table (7).

Table (7): Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and rankings of the study sample members' responses regarding originality

Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Practice level	order of items
Principal foresees possibilities that others might overlook and create a compelling, original vision for the future.	2.18	0.44	low	8
Principal looks at challenges from new angles, redefining problems, and uncovering unexpected solutions.	2.56	0.51	low	3
Principal makes choices that defy traditional expectations and lead to transformative outcomes.	2.37	0.54	low	6
Principal stays true to core values, and fosters an environment where others feel encouraged to express their originality.	3.12	0.62	middle	1
Principal draws inspiration from diverse fields, industries, and perspectives to create fresh, cross-disciplinary innovations.	2.25	0.48	low	7
Principal cultivating a culture where team members feel safe to experiment, take risks, and share unique ideas.	2.76	0.53	middle	2
Principal appreciates and incorporates elements of creativity, design, and storytelling into leadership approaches.	2.41	0.47	low	5
Principal maintains a mindset of constant learning, iterating on ideas, and refining creative solutions over time.	2.51	0.55	low	4
Overall Score	2.52	0.51	low	

Source: Collected and calculated from the study questionnaire

The table shows that the level of practice of the secondary school principal of the dimension of "originality" is low, with an arithmetic mean of (2.52) and a standard deviation of (0.51). The phrase "Principal stays true to core values, and fosters an environment where others feel encouraged to express their originality" came in first place with a middle level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (3.12) with a standard deviation of (0.62). In last place was the phrase "Principal foresees

possibilities that others might overlook and create a compelling, original vision for the future" with a low level, as the arithmetic mean of the phrase reached (2.18) with a standard deviation of (0.44).

The impact of variables on teachers' dimensions of creative leadership

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the averages of the study sample members' answers according to the difference in the academic qualification variable, the "one way ANOVA" test was used. The results were as shown as in Table (8).

Table (8):Results of one-way analysis of variance for differences in sample response means according to the difference in the academic qualification variable

	Groups	sum of squares	degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F value	Sig.
Dimensions of creative leadership	Between groups	2.044	4	0.511	1.366	0.072
	Within groups	68.431	183	0.374		

Source: Collected and calculated from the results of the research sample analysis using the SPSS program

The results shown above show that there are no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 or less in teachers' attitudes towards the school principal's practice of the dimensions of creative leadership according to the academic qualification variable. This result may be attributed to teachers' awareness of the importance of creative leadership, which may be reflected in their performance within the school.

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the averages of the study sample members' answers according to the difference in the years of service variable; the "one-way ANOVA" test was used. The results were as shown as in Table (9).

Table (9):Results of one-way ANOVA for differences in sample response means according to the difference in the years of service variable

	Groups	sum of squares	degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F value	Sig.
Dimensions of creative leadership	Between groups	2.273	3	0.757	1.893	0.114
	Within groups	73.617	184	0.400		

Source: Collected and calculated from the results of the research sample analysis using the SPSS program

The results shown above show that there are no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 or less in teachers' attitudes towards the school principal's practice of the dimensions of creative leadership according to the years of service variable. It is clear from this that years of service does not make a difference, as teachers may be prepared to respond due to the spread of knowledge about leadership styles and their dimensions.

This study addressed the teachers' point of view on the reality of the practice of secondary school principals in Hail city of the dimensions of creative leadership (sensitivity to problems - fluency - flexibility - originality). The results showed that the level of principals' school practice of the dimensions of creative leadership is low. This result agrees with the findings of previous studies, which found and confirmed that indicated that there is a lack of creative leadership skills in schools, so there is an urgent need for training and development (Laila, 2015). In addition, some principals still rely on traditional methods it is necessary to improve and enhance the work environment and prepare it to respond to creative leadership and accept change (Dossary, 2023). The results of this study disagree with the results of a previous study, which stated that the overall creative leadership and administration of educational institution administrators were at a high level (Min and Worapongpat, 2023). Also, as in study of (Badr, 2024) stated that practice of creative leadership is generally at an average level. The current study also differed from other studies in terms of its variables, as in study of (Abdul Ghaffar and Al-Harbi, 2024), which stated that experience plays a role in raising the level of practicing creative leadership.

Creating appropriate working conditions and stimulating creativity to face the surrounding challenges and changes, are important features for practicing creative leadership in schools (Stoll & Temperley, 2009). Moreover, there is consensus in the literature in the stressed the creativity is leaders require them to be able to develop their professional performance and enhancing their skills (Al-Dossary, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study found that teachers perceive the degree of high school principals' practice of creative leadership dimensions to be low, which indicates the importance of attributed to teachers' awareness of the importance of creative leadership, which may be reflected in their performance within the school.

The study emphasizes the need to reform secondary school principals' preparation and training programs to enhance their creative leadership skills. In addition, teachers should be given opportunities to choose who takes on leadership roles in the school. The results of this study indicate the urgent need to shed light on the criteria for appointments in school administration. This study encourages research into the issue of school leadership to rotate and give teachers the opportunity to take on these positions.

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