

EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: AN APPRAISAL OF JEAN PIAGET'S LEADERSHIP APPROACH AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

Okhale Emanemua

Department of Educational Leadership, Minnesota State University, Mankato, United State of America

Nathaniel Toyosi Akinlosotu

Lead Research Consultant, NATIsolutions & Services

<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2023.0553>

ABSTRACT

It is impossible to overstate the importance of leaders in the sector. Educational leaders have a crucial role in establishing the course for stakeholders, including teachers, students, and school leaders and administrators, within the educational business. As a result, this essay evaluates the value of strong educational leadership in the area of education. The article focused on Jean Piaget and looked at his leadership style and contributions to education. It was discovered that Piaget's cognitive development theory, which later became recognized as the focus of the Swiss psychologist's work, was primarily concerned with child development. This hypothesis has been used as a foundation for describing how young infants learn arithmetic better by handling actual items and how they interact with objects. The fields of symbolic mathematics, artificial intelligence, and developmental psychology have all benefited from it. In conclusion, it is well known that many contemporary researchers have continued to criticize the writings and leadership styles of various leaders, including Jean Piaget. However, it is impossible to overlook the well-known influence of its employees on a variety of educational subjects, including educational psychology and philosophy of education.

Keywords: Education, Educational Leadership, Effective Leadership, Jean Piaget, Leadership Approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

When the word "leadership" is mentioned, the first thing that typically comes to mind is an assertion of control or influence over a person or group. However, true leadership is more about the desire to develop by offering guidance, transforming visions, and sharing them with the people being led in order to improve the achievement of organisational goals (Harris & Jones, 2015). It is, in the words of Robertson (2016), "the task of organising and persuading people to communicate and achieve shared intents and educational objectives" in the context of education.

To put it more simply, educational leadership is the process of mobilising and directing the skills and efforts of educators, students, and parents in order to achieve shared educational objectives. In the United States, this phrase is often used interchangeably with school leadership, while in the UK, it has replaced educational management (Bush, 2020).

Generally speaking, educational leadership borrows from interdisciplinary literature, but in its ideal form, it stands apart by emphasising pedagogy, epistemology, and human development (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018). It draws from business and political science in modern practise. This conflict is the subject of debate within the area. Teacher leadership, dispersed leadership, instructional leadership, social justice leadership, and transformational leadership are just a few

of the educational leadership ideas and views that have been presented and investigated (Bush, Middlewood & Bell, 2019). Wang, Pollock, and Hauseman (2018), Liu, Bellibaş, and Gümüş (2021) have all investigated how various practises and actions affect teacher job satisfaction, student success, and other factors connected to school improvement. Additionally, studies of the technique and effectiveness of main preparation programmes are ongoing (Bush, 2018; Grissom, Mitani, & Woo, 2019; Barakat, Reames, & Kensler, 2019).

Thus, using Jean Piaget as a case study, this paper offers an analytical assessment of leadership in the context of education. This articles particularly goals are to:

- a) review leadership responsibilities and practices in the context of education.
- b) examine Jean Piaget as a case study for leadership in education.
- c) discuss Jean Piaget's leadership philosophies and approaches.
- d) highlight leadership's effectiveness and its contributions to education.

This paper was discussed under the following sections to do this: Leadership in Education: A Case Study of Jean Piaget, Leadership Styles and Approaches of Jean Piaget, Effectiveness and Contributions to Leadership in Education, and Conclusion.

2. ROLE AND PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN EDUCATION CONTEXT

Educational leadership attracted a lot of attention in the early twenty-first century. This may be due to the generally held belief that a leader's performance has a significant influence on students' academic outcomes (Coleman & Glover, 2010; Mulford et al., 2005). It is widely accepted that effective leaders and managers are essential for educational institutions to provide the best education possible to their pupils (Mulford et al., 2005). As the global economy has advanced, the majority of policymakers are beginning to realise that skilled human capital—rather than natural and physical capital—is their most important resource. This necessitates the employment of skilled and committed instructors, who in turn need the skills of highly effective leaders in the execution of a range of duties, including but not limited to: developing a vision, leading people, planning, and organising multiple resources (Harris & Jones, 2015).

3. LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION: A CASE OF JEAN PIAGET

The research on child development conducted by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980), which later became known as Piaget's cognitive development theory, is what made him most famous (Piaget & Cook, 1952). As a consequence of his work, early childhood education, educational psychology, and psychology of learning have all become important fields of research in child development. At the end of the 20th century, as educators and academics continued to look into constructivist-based study methods, Piaget's leadership abilities and his writings on the theory of child development were investigated in pre-service teaching programmes (McCauley et al., 2006).

Teachers focus on the students in the classroom while using Piaget's methodology (Frost et al., 2008). According to McCauley et al. (2006), this focus has contributed to a certain degree of constructivism and learner-centeredness in education. Piaget's approach may help teachers perceive each student as a unique learner who creates their own comprehension by fusing new concepts with prior knowledge. Educators that focus their professional activities on a learner-centered approach include the different dispositions (Frost et al., 2008).

Due to Piaget's work, educational ideas and practises in both Europe and America underwent significant change in the 1970s and 1980s, leading to the development of more "child-centered" teaching approaches (Hsueh, 2002). In the book "Conversations with Jean Piaget," Jean-Claude Bringuier recalled that "education, for most people, means trying to guide children towards becoming the normal adult of his society... but for me, absolutely nothing else has inspired me as much as Piaget's works on early childhood education, which have convinced us that education means producing innovators out of kids and not conformists" (Bringuier, and Piaget, 1989, p. 129). This argument explains how Piaget's theory of cognitive development recognises that learning via interaction strives to produce students who are able to not only ask questions in classes but also critically assess the logic behind the replies. Perhaps for this reason, as noted by Frost et al. (2008), his idea has remained in use in early childhood schools.

4. LEADERSHIP APPROACH OF JEAN PIAGET

Piaget placed a significant premium on the education of children in his role as the Director of the International Bureau of Education (IBE). In 1934, he said, "Education alone may save our society from potential collapse, whether violent or slow." Piaget demonstrated the democratic and charismatic philosophies of leadership at this period (Holmes, 1965; Petrie, 2014). Some democratic leadership traits may be found in his collaborative and participatory leadership since he valued working with others. For instance, in 1920, he worked with Théodore Simon to develop standardised reasoning tests that evaluated children's intelligence and established relationships between a child's age and the kind of errors he committed. As a supporter of democracy, Piaget welcomed Simon's important discovery, worked closely with Simon at the Alfred Binet Laboratory in Paris, and encouraged debates that encouraged other educational leaders and psychologists to offer their perspectives on the researchers' findings (Clough & Nutbrown, 2014). According to Petrie (2014), Piaget's views on child development and his participative, open, and collaborative leadership strategies served as inspiration for American psychologist B.F. Skinner's behaviourism investigations.

Piaget's charismatic leadership influence also extends to related fields like philosophy of education and moral education (as made famous by his 1932 book *The Moral Judgement of the Child*). As the director of IBE, Piaget demonstrated a variety of charismatic leadership traits, including a show of confidence in his own work and that of the rest of his team, sympathy for children, a keen interest in developmental stages, and the ability for vision (Perruci, & McManus, 2012). He emphasised that the theory of the stages of child development is important not only for today's children but also for our society's future generations (Perruci & McManus, 2012). The incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) in education is said to have been fostered by this motivational notion from a charismatic leader, which is perhaps related to Piaget's teachings (Erneling, 2014). For instance, Seymour Papert referenced Piaget's findings while developing the Logo computer language. Similar to this, Piaget's theories were first discussed at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Centre, where Alan Kay based his concept for the Dynabook programming system (Feurzeig, Papert, & Lawler, 2011).

5. JEAN PIAGET'S CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Proof of its efficacy as demonstrated in Gryphon and Case's "Number Worlds" curriculum, Jean Piaget's effect on educational leadership is extremely noticeable in modern curriculum designs that are based on Piaget's ideas of developmental progression and the support of growing mental structures (Erneling, 2014). By focusing on five instructional processes, including curriculum alignment to the developmental sequence of skill acquisition, the programme aims to help young children establish a "central conceptual structure" of number sense. The influence of Piagetian ideas on education, it has been suggested, has not always been favourable since his work has often been misread (Fuson, 2009).

Particularly, Piaget's emphasis on how children interact with objects during the concrete operational stage has given rise to an educational philosophy that encourages young children to learn mathematics by manipulating actual objects without providing them with the necessary direct instruction from teachers that would allow them to comprehend what they are doing and connect their actions to symbolic mathematics (Fuson, 1990, 2012). This has been especially detrimental to low-achieving youngsters who need more assistance from someone who is more experienced in order to make sense of and develop with their learning (Petrie, 2014).

Another sign of Piaget's continuing influence is the Jean Piaget Society, which has annual conferences and averages 700 people. In the realm of education, including fields like developmental psychology, his theory of cognitive development has been extensively embraced (Erneling, 2014). Yet many of Piaget's empirical findings have been disproven by more recent research. Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky played a significant role in refuting Piaget's ideas by highlighting the importance of a child's cultural milieu as a component in the stages of development (Pass, 2004). Despite this, most psychologists who specialise in educational and developmental issues acknowledge the importance of Jean Piaget's legacy as the founder of their field. They appreciate that his groundbreaking empirical research served as the cogent theoretical foundation for other academics (Morra et al., 2012). Despite the existence of post-Piagetian or neo-Piagetian framework, many educational psychologists and academicians still uphold Piaget's original viewpoints (Marchand, 2012).

6. CONCLUSION

The importance of leaders in the educational environment cannot be undermined since they play a crucial role in establishing the course that other stakeholders, including teachers, students, and school administrators, will follow. Even while many contemporary researchers continue to criticize the works and leadership styles of most leaders, including Jean Piaget, their contributions to subjects in education including educational psychology and philosophy of education are well known and cannot be disregarded.

REFERENCES

- Barakat, M., Reames, E., & Kensler, L. A. (2019). Leadership preparation programs: Preparing culturally competent educational leaders. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 14(3), 212-235.
- Bush, T. (2020). Theories of educational leadership and management. *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*, 1-208.

- Bertrand, M., & Rodela, K. C. (2018). A framework for rethinking educational leadership in the margins: Implications for social justice leadership preparation. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 13(1), 10-37.
- Bush, T., Middlewood, D., & Bell, L. (2019). Principles of educational leadership & management. *Principles of Educational Leadership & Management*, 1-408.
- Beattie, L. (2020). Educational leadership: Producing docile bodies? A Foucauldian perspective on higher education. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 74(1), 98-110.
- Bringuier, J.C. & Piaget, J., (1989). *Conversations with Jean Piaget*. University of Chicago Press. p. 129
- Bush, T. (2018). Preparation and induction for school principals: Global perspectives. *Management in Education*, 32(2), 66-71.
- Clough, P. & Nutbrown, C., (2014). Early childhood education: History, philosophy and experience. *Early Childhood Education*, 1-216.
- Coleman, M. & Glover, D., (2010). *Educational Leadership And Management: Developing Insights And Skills: Developing Insights and Skills*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Erneling, C.E., (2014). The importance of Jean Piaget. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 44(4), 522-535.
- Feurzeig, W., Papert, S.A. & Lawler, B. (2011). Programming-languages as a conceptual framework for teaching mathematics. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 19(5), 487-501.
- Frost, J.L., Wortham, S.C. & Reifel, R.S., (2008). *Play and child development* (pp. 140-141). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Fuson, K.C., (1990). Conceptual structures for multiunit numbers: Implications for learning and teaching multidigit addition, subtraction, and place value. *Cognition and instruction*, 7(4), 343-403.
- Fuson, K.C., (2009). Avoiding misinterpretations of Piaget and Vygotsky: Mathematical teaching without learning, learning without teaching, or helpful learning-path teaching?. *Cognitive Development*, 24(4).343-361.
- Fuson, K.C., (2012). *Children's counting and concepts of number*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Grissom, J. A., Mitani, H., & Woo, D. S. (2019). Principal preparation programs and principal outcomes. *Educational administration quarterly*, 55(1), 73-115.
- Harris, A. & Jones, M.S. eds., (2015). *Leading futures: Global perspectives on educational leadership*. SAGE Publications India.
- Holmes, R., (1965). Freud, Piaget and democratic leadership. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 16(2), 123-139.
- Hsueh, Y., (2002). The Hawthorne experiments and the introduction of Jean Piaget in American industrial psychology, 1929-1932. *History of psychology*, 5(2), p.163.

- Liu, Y., Bellibaş, M. Ş., & Gümüş, S. (2021). The effect of instructional leadership and distributed leadership on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Mediating roles of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(3), 430-453.
- Marchand, H., (2012). Contributions of Piagetian and post-Piagetian theories to education. *Educational Research Review*, 7(3), 165-176.
- McCauley, C.D., Drath, W.H., Palus, C.J., O'Connor, P.M. & Baker, B.A. (2006). The use of constructive-developmental theory to advance the understanding of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 634-653.
- Morra, S., Gobbo, C., Marini, Z. & Sheese, R., (2012). *Cognitive development: neo-Piagetian perspectives*. Psychology Press.
- Mulford, W., Silins, H. & Leithwood, K.A., 2005. *Educational leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes* (Vol. 3). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Pass, S., (2004). *Parallel paths to constructivism: Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky*. IAP.
- Perruci, G. & McManus, R.M. (2012). The state of leadership studies. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 6(3), 49-54.
- Petrie, N., (2014). Vertical leadership development—part 1 developing leaders for a complex world. *Center for Creative Leadership*, pp.1-13.
- Piaget, J. & Cook, M., (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children* (Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 18-1952). New York: International Universities Press.
- Robertson, J., (2016). *Coaching leadership: Building educational leadership capacity through partnership*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research. PO Box 3237, Wellington 6140 New Zealand.
- Shava, G. N., & Tlou, F. N. (2018). Distributed leadership in education, contemporary issues in educational leadership. *African Educational Research Journal*, 6(4), 279-287.
- Wang, F., Pollock, K. E., & Hauseman, C. (2018). School principals' job satisfaction: The effects of work intensification. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 185, 73.