

THE EFFECT OF MANAGERIAL CREATIVITY AND INNOVATIVE  
LEADERSHIP TOWARDS SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN UAE

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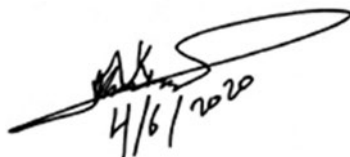
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I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.



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## ABSTRACT

In today's competitive era and changing atmosphere, managerial creativity and innovative leadership contributes towards the education system by overcoming the challenges of innovation. Creativity and innovation measures are needed to help accomplish goals while pushing the school managers to be more creative and critical with their decisions. Creativity is the talent to come out with new ideas by changing, reapplying or combining existing ideas. This study aims to identify the effect of managerial creativity and innovative leadership towards school performance in UAE. The data was collected using a standardized questionnaire with 5-points Likert Scale. A questionnaire survey was carried out amongst the employees of Abu Dhabi selected schools. A total of 260 questionnaires were collected of which 243 responses were found to be valid. Analysis of Moment Structures Equation Modelling (AMOS-SEM) model was developed based on 12 groups related to this study which are: managerial creativity; innovative leadership attributes; promotion of professional development; creating climate for creativity and change; managers encouragement of creativity; action orientated; confidence; emotional stability attributes; openness; risk tolerance; domain expertise and school performance. The findings of this study will encourage the school managers to be critical of their efforts and ideas which promotes a better overall school performance. The findings indicated that managerial creativity and innovative leadership towards school performance in UAE were supported during testing of the related hypothesis using structural modelling. The effect size of the sample groups on school's performance is medium from the  $R^2$  (coefficient of determination). The most significant category is the managerial creativity group based on the path co-efficient values. The implication of this research is the implementation of these findings can enhance the managerial creativity and encourage innovative leadership in schools of Abu Dhabi, UAE. In turn, with a good education system it will help to promote the growth and the betterment of the nation.



## ABSTRAK

Dalam era persaingan sengit hari ini ditambah pula dengan pembangunan teknologi yang pesat, pengurusan kreatif dan kepemimpinan inovatif menyumbang ke arah sistem pendidikan dengan membantu mengatasi cabaran untuk berinovasi. Langkah-langkah kreativiti dan inovasi diperlukan untuk membantu mencapai matlamat sambil mendorong pengurus sekolah untuk menjadi lebih kreatif dan kritis dengan keputusan mereka. Kreativiti adalah bakat mengeluarkan idea baru dengan mengubah, mengaplikasikan semula atau menggabungkan idea yang sedia ada. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti kesan pengurusan kreatif dan kepemimpinan inovatif terhadap prestasi sekolah di UAE. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan soal selidik seragam dengan menggunakan Skala Likert 5-mata. Tinjauan soal selidik dilakukan di kalangan pegawai sekolah terpilih di Abu Dhabi. Sebanyak 260 borang soal selidik diedarkan dan sejumlah 243 borang jawapan didapati sah. 'Analysis of Moment Structures Equation Modelling' (AMOS-SEM) dikembangkan berdasarkan 12 kumpulan yang berkaitan dengan kajian ini iaitu: Pengurusan Kreatif; Faktor-faktor Kepimpinan Inovatif; Penerapan Pembangunan Profesional; Menciptakan Persekitaran untuk Kreativiti dan Perubahan; Mendorong Pengurus Berfikir dengan Kreatif ; Berorientasikan Tindakan; Keyakinan; Faktor-faktor Kestabilan Emosi; Keterbukaan; Toleransi Risiko; Kepakaran dan Prestasi Sekolah. Hasil kajian ini boleh mendorong pengurus sekolah untuk bersikap lebih kritis terhadap usaha dan idea mereka yang juga dapat meningkatkan prestasi sekolah secara keseluruhan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kreativiti pengurusan dan kepemimpinan inovatif terhadap prestasi sekolah di UAE disokong semasa menguji hipotesis yang berkaitan dengan menggunakan model struktur. Ukuran kesan kumpulan sampel terhadap prestasi sekolah adalah sederhana dari  $R^2$  (coefficient of determination). Kategori yang paling ketara ialah kumpulan Pengurus Kreatif berdasarkan nilai 'path co-efficient'. Implikasi dari penyelidikan ini adalah penemuan ini dilaksanakan, ia dapat meningkatkan kreativiti pengurusan dan mendorong kepemimpinan inovatif di sekolah-sekolah Abu Dhabi, UAE. Kesimpulannya, sistem pendidikan yang baik akan membantu mendorong pertumbuhan dan kemajuan negara.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENT</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	<b>xvi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Preamble	1
1.2 Background of the study	1
1.3 Problem statement	5
1.4 Research questions	9
1.5 Research aim and objectives	9
1.6 Significance of the study	9
1.7 Scope of the study	11
1.8 Definitions of operational terms	11
1.9 Thesis structure	12
1.10 Summary	14



<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Education and school developments in UAE	15
2.2.1 Traditional education history (1820 –beginning of 1900)	16
2.2.2 Modern education development (early 1900 – the 1960s)	17
2.2.3 Education after UAE independence 1970s	18
2.2.4 Structure of the UAE education system	19
2.2.5 UAE school education	20
2.2.5.1 Primary and lower secondary	21
2.2.5.2 Intermediate and lower secondary education	21
2.2.5.3 Upper Secondary Technical Education	22
2.2.6 UAE Bodies of education management	22
2.2.6.1 UAE Education Ministry	22
2.2.6.2 Educational zones	23
2.2.6.3 Education Council of Abu Dhabi	24
2.3 School leadership in UAE	25
2.3.1 Professional leaders' existing positions in the UAE	26
2.3.2 School leader recruitment	27
2.3.3 School leaders' obligations	28
2.3.4 Educational leaders training	29
2.3.5 School leaders' success appraisal	30
2.4 Leadership definition	31
2.4.1 Managers and leaders	34
2.4.2 School principals	36
2.4.3 Educational leadership in the Abu Dhabi	37
2.5 Leadership theories	39
2.5.1 Trait based and great man theories	39
2.5.2 Behaviour Leadership Theory	41
2.5.3 Theory of transformational leadership	41



2.6	Educational leadership	42
2.6.1	Transformational leadership	43
2.6.2	Instructional leadership	45
2.6.3	Transactional leadership	47
2.6.4	Innovative Leadership	47
2.7	Innovation leadership	48
2.7.1	Risk tolerance	51
2.7.2	Expertise domain	52
2.7.3	Openness	53
2.7.4	Emotional stability	54
2.7.5	Confidence	55
2.7.6	Action oriented	56
2.8	Managerial creativity	56
2.8.1	Professional development for principals	59
2.8.2	Climate for creativity and change	61
2.8.3	Managers encouragement of creativity	62
2.9	Attributes of innovative leadership	62
2.10	Conceptual framework	62
2.11	Hypothesis development	65
2.12	Summary	67

### **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** **68**

3.1	Introduction	68
3.2	Research design	69
3.2.1	Justification of research design	69
3.2.2	Why quantitative research in this research	71
3.2.3	Overall research process	71
3.3	Research approach	73
3.4	Source of data	73
3.4.1	Data collection tool/instrument	74
3.4.2	Research instrument development	75
3.5	Target population and sample size	76
3.6	Data analysis	77
3.7	Descriptive analysis	78



3.8	Research validity and reliability tests	78
3.9	Reliability	79
3.10	Pilot study	81
3.11	Justification for using AMOS	82
3.12	Conclusion	83

## **CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS 84**

4.1	Introduction	84
4.2	Demographic profile	86
4.3	Respondents characteristics	86
4.4	Preliminary data screening, preparation and analysis	87
4.4.1	Normality test	88
4.5	Multivariate data analyses	91
4.6	Outliers	93
4.7	Homoscedasticity	94
4.8	Multicollinearity and singularity	94
4.9	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	96
4.9.1	Measurement model for Managerial Creativity construct	98
4.9.2	Measurement model for Innovative Leadership Attributes construct	99
4.9.3	Measurement model for promoting Professional Development	100
4.9.4	Measurement model for Climate For Creativity and Change construct	101
4.9.5	Measurement model for Managers Encouragement of Creativity construct	102
4.9.6	Measurement model for Action-Oriented construct	104
4.9.7	Measurement model for Confidence construct	104
4.9.8	Measurement model for Emotional Stability construct	105
4.9.9	Measurement model for Openness Construct	106



4.9.10	Measurement model for Risk Tolerance Construct	107
4.9.11	Measurement model for Domain Expertise Construct	107
4.9.12	Measurement model for School Performance construct	108
4.10	The assessment of reliability analysis for the constructs	109
4.11	The validity analyses for the entire constructs	110
4.11.1	Convergent validity analysis	110
4.11.2	Discriminant validity analysis	111
4.12	Unidimensionality	112
4.13	Analysis for structural equation modelling	113
4.14	Testing of research hypotheses	116
4.15	Chapter summary	117
<b>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		<b>118</b>
5.1	Introduction	118
5.2	Summary of the findings and discussion	118
5.2.1	To identify the managerial creativity influential factors affecting school's performance in the UAE	120
5.2.2	To identify the innovative leadership influential factors affecting school's performance in UAE	122
5.2.3	To develop a framework adoptable as a mechanism to increase UAE school's performance through managerial creativity and innovative leadership	123
5.3	Overall conclusions	126
5.4	Recommendations for future research	126

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

118

### 5.1 Introduction

118

### 5.2 Summary of the findings and discussion

118

5.2.1 To identify the managerial creativity  
influential factors affecting school's  
performance in the UAE

120

5.2.2 To identify the innovative leadership  
influential factors affecting school's  
performance in UAE

122

5.2.3 To develop a framework adoptable as a  
mechanism to increase UAE school's  
performance through managerial  
creativity and innovative leadership

123

### 5.3 Overall conclusions

126

### 5.4 Recommendations for future research

126



5.5	Expected contribution to knowledge	127
5.6	Practical implications	128
5.7	Limitations of the study	129
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>130</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>		<b>155</b>
<b>VITA</b>		<b>161</b>



**PTTA UTHM**  
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

## LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Various Types of Educational Institutions in the UAE	20
2.2	Difference between managers and leaders	34
2.3	ADEC New School Model Principles and KPIs	38
3.1	Krejcie and Morgan's sample size	77
3.2	Mean Tendency Level	78
3.3	Cronbach's Alpha Internal Consistency Range	80
3.4	Summary of the methods of data analysis	82
4.1	Analysis of questionnaire administration	86
4.2	Respondents characteristics	87
4.3	Descriptive statistics for constructs	89
4.4	Observation farthest from the centroid (Mahalanobis distance)	94
4.5	Multicollinearity Test	95
4.6	Goodness-of-fit index and level of acceptance	97
4.7	Research constructs' unidimensionality scores	109
4.8	Convergent reliability	111
4.9	Discriminant Validity	112
4.10	Fitness Indices of structural model	114
4.11	The summary of the tested hypotheses in this research	116



## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	UAE Educational areas	24
2.2	Leadership Philosophy	33
2.3	Conceptual Framework	64
3.1	Overall Research Process	72
4.1	Initial measurement model for managerial creativity	98
4.2	Final measurement model for managerial creativity	99
4.3	Initial measurement model for innovative leadership	99
4.4	Measurement model for professional development	100
4.5	Initial measurement model for climate for creativity and change	101
4.6	Final measurement model for climate for creativity and change	102
4.7	Initial measurement model for managers encouragement of creativity	103
4.8	Final measurement model for managers encouragement of creativity	103
4.9	Measurement model for oriented construct	104
4.10	Measurement model for confidence	105
4.11	Measurement model for emotional stability	105
4.12	Measurement model for Openness	106
4.13	measurement model for risk tolerance	107
4.14	Measurement model for domain expertise	108
4.15	Measurement model for school performance	108
4.16	Initial structural measurement model for the entire research constructs and goodness-of-fitness for structural model	113



4.17	Final structural measurement model for the entire research constructs and goodness-of-fitness for the structural model	115
5.1	Framework of managerial creativity and innovative leadership towards school performance	125



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PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

**LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

EFA	-	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
P	-	Significant Value
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
VIF	-	Variance Inflation Factor
CFA	-	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
TVET	-	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UAE	-	United Arab Emirate
NSM	-	New School Model
ADEC	-	Abu Dhabi Education Council
PD	-	Professional development
KHDA	-	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modeling
ADEK	-	Department for Education and Knowledge
DEC	-	Dubai Education Council
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
AMOS	-	Analysis of Moment Structures



PTTA UTHM  
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNJUN AMINAH

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
A	Questionnaire Survey	155



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Preamble

This chapter starts by presenting the background of the research. The research problem is subsequently articulated, the research aim stated with its accompanying research questions and objectives. In addition, the scope of the research is contextualised. Subsequently, the thesis structures are also presented, designed around the research objectives in dimensions for the effect of managerial creativity and innovative leadership towards school performance in UAE to facilitate creativity in the educational field, in addition to studying school's overall acceptance of this type of managerial creativity and school performance in this particular context. At present, there are increasing pressures in schools in the UAE to enact change in response to the demands of globalisation in the post oil boom era of the Middle East. The academic literature has shown that managerial creativity is positively associated with school performance effectiveness at implementing a reform change agenda. This study demonstrated the degree to which managerial creativity is presently being adopted in schools in the UAE. This research also expected to provide the same school leaders with background and practical guidance on how to approach the new climate of educational restructuring.

### 1.2 Background of the study

UAE has a multitude of issues and has been in need of changes for a long time, and the educational framework in the UAE is not just one of the most underwritten public sectors in the world (Burden-Leahy, 2009; Ridge, 2009). Some of the problems



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identified in the literature were outdated curricula, low performance, and student poor performance in several standard tests, including the mathematics and science test trends, and inadequate training in English and informatics technology.

The current reform requirement also has contributed to a lack of male teachers, unqualified and inferior school management, bad education standards and the lack of professionalism. Moreover, ineffective school culture, poor quality facilities and the need for appropriate methods of assessment contribute also to problems in Emirati (Al-Saeed *et al.*, 2000; Gaad *et al.*, 2004; Hokal & Shaw, 1999; Ridge, 2009; Shaw *et al.*, 1995). It is uncommon to inform the general public that dysfunction and radical restructuring is one of the key public services in the UAE. However, in early 2006, the National Executive Council declared a proposal to introduce substantial changes based on many five-year proposals. In 2008, then again in 2010 (UAE Education Ministry, 2010), the policy has been changed. The current agenda of reform has been endorsed and overseen by the Minister of Education, HH Sheik Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Worldwide organisations, this success is similar to a major factor leading. Creative and effective leadership ensures the success of every business in an organisation and the vision, mission and objectives of an organisation are achieved. While learning organisations are also similar to this principle, educational institutions are similar. The success of educational institutions is certainly dependent on the central importance of the leadership of the school administrators. Thus, achievements in terms of monetary accumulation, efficiency, creative culture, general organisational efficiency and so forth can be calculated for business organisations and companies (Adjei, 2013; Alsolami *et al.*, 2016). The results of learning are slightly different. The number of students enrolled, improved education and learning conditions, recruiting professional teachers, creative teaching and methodology, outstanding student achievement, overall school results etc. are measurements of success. (Shanker, 2014).

Literature recently shows that school management has a positive impact on the performance of schools and the results of students (Gkorezis, 2016; Orphanos & Orr, 2014). This implies that the leadership of school administrators affects student performance and influences the overall path of schools towards a certain vision, goal and objective. In the years, experts have investigated the impact of certain leadership models on educational success and student findings (Chinedu & Wilfredo, 2015; Litz *et al.*, 2016; Stringer & Hourani, 2016). These studies addressed several issues.



For example, Chinedu and Wilfredo (2015) examined the relationship between TVET and its employee performance relationships between its transformational and transactional leadership roles. With a sample of 237 survey participants consisting of school administrators and lecturers, they have found that the transformation attributes of the manager and his performance of employees are positive and substantial. They also observed that constructive types of transactional management (i.e. discretionary incentives and exemption management) were linked to the success of workers. It was therefore assumed that school administrators had to make choices that would increase their employees' efficiency for institutional achievement, both transformationally and positively.

Likewise, Litz *et al.* (2016) conducted a study to study the transformative leadership practised by the heads of schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and also to see whether the main styles of leadership were different from their Western peers. Study findings show that there were differences in the perception of the directors and the teachers of transformative leadership. This difference was the cause of cultural differences between the west direction of the model for transformative leadership and the Islamic orientation of the Emirates leaders when they adapted the model.

During the last ten years the literature on successful leadership models for members that are likely to instigate reform in their organisations has governed transition management, genuine leadership, transactional leadership and district leadership (Elrehail *et al.*, 2018; Enwereuzor *et al.*, 2018; Gkolia *et al.*, 2018; Spies *et al.*, 2018). However, with the current transformation happening across educational institutions around the world, school directors are confronted with a more difficult role of carried out innovative practices within schools to impact school performance.

According to Stringer and Hourani (2016), the UAE directors saw the modern model of schools (NSMs) adopted by the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) increase in their positions and duties in the administration of Schools. Furthermore, ADEC introduced the Principal Standards and Performance Assessment, which also the responsibilities of the school directors (Kanaan, 2008). Moreover, by means of reforms to curricular, pedagogical and school management, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (2012) has reiterated its mandate for the revolutionisation of its educational system as one of the best education systems. This implies that school officials had to become creative managers and innovative leaders to fulfil Abu Dhabi's mandate.

In enacting creative and innovative school reforms, principals have been placed as catalysts to initiate school innovations and improvements by fulfilling the roles and responsibilities spelt out by the new performance standards known as the Irtiqa'a (Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2011). In achieving these, the Abu Dhabi government has ensured that professional development for principals is undertaken to further assist them in effectively understanding and disseminating their new roles and responsibilities. But the question becomes, does understanding one's roles and responsibilities propel creativity and innovativeness? This further raises another question, does professional development and training equip principals with managerial creativity and innovative leadership attributes needed to improve school performance? In response to these questions, Stringer and Hourani (2016) explain that the expectation for principals to change, innovate and conform to the new performance standards framed by ADEC only increases the pressure to adjust and develop leadership capabilities that are more inclusive and informed by experience and practice.

According to Sultana and Rahman (2012), innovative leadership can be described as a process of fostering innovation by developing innovation-friendly culture and setting strategic directions that guide and build trust among employees to innovate. And, they explain that innovation leadership involves synthesising different leadership styles in organisations to influence employees to produce creative ideas, products, services, and solutions. Adjei (2013) further explains that it is a process that involves three stages of idea generation, evaluation and implementation. These definitions and descriptions of innovation leadership depict a leader's skill in coordinating all resources within the organisation, to create, develop and implement ideas that can revolutionise the organisation. When principals lead with innovation, they can imbue an innovative culture, direct the school with clearly stated visions and goals, build trust with teachers, foster effective communication as well as give room for experimenting new ideas.

Managerial creativity, on the other hand, is a leader's capacity to unleash the power of the mind in conceiving new ideas in both themselves and in their subordinates (Hornák *et al.*, 2012). According to Somsing and Belbaly (2017), managerial creativity is an essential skill set that managers need to make strategic decisions. School managers (principals) require this skillset to lead schools strategically to reach performance levels according to set standards by ministries of education or related



boards. Some scholars have mostly equated creativity with innovation, but researchers (Adjei, 2013; Agbor, 2008; Sitthisomjin *et al.*, 2018) have argued that although creativity and innovation are complementary, they essentially do not mean the same thing.

### 1.3 Problem statement

The rapid, intensive and at times turbulent reforms which are now initiated by the government that characterise the educational system of the United Arab Emirates (UAEs) are not unique, but rather relativistically contemporary in many countries around the world. In addition, the success of education change and restructuring efforts in the UAE depends on how the various professors, scholars, policymakers and stakeholders view the importance and opportunities of their role in increasing the performance in schools (Cizek, 1999, Abu-Tineh *et al.*, 2008).

The performance of schools depends on managerial creativity and innovative leadership, which can have a significant impact on the whole process (Aou-Tineh *et al.*, 2008; Lam, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006), as well as on the success of the school reform and educational innovation. Educational institutions were supported by many challenges in the United Arab Emirates, which were reported to include weak curricula, low student results, ineffective teaching practices, an insufficient amount of Emirates staff, poorly qualified school management and a weak degree of professionalism in the literature, and such challenges harm school performance (Litz *et al.*, 2016; Macpherson *et al.*, 2007; Thorne, 2011). Litz *et al.*, (2016) also reported that UAE schools continue to be plagued by poor organisational structure and culture, which negatively impact on school performance.

To mitigate these challenges and to revive the UAE education system, especially in school governance and leadership, Abu Dhabi Education Council has initiated major reforms (Stringer & Hourani, 2016). New roles and responsibilities for managers have been defined and implemented in the recent changes and have been guided by ADEC professional standards. As managers have been recognised as a catalyst to enhance efforts to achieve such desired changes in the UAE education system, school leaders receive training and professional development. The Education Council in Abu Dhabi states that this step serves as a concerted attempt to encourage leaders to make the required reforms and address the many problems related to the



UAE education sector which negatively affects the performance of schools (Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2012). Various parties involved in the standard of university education in the UAE, such as teachers, family, jobs and UAE government.

The UAE was ranked 27th in the 2011–2012 WEF survey, third (under its neighbours Qatari and Saudi Arabia), but slightly higher than other Arab nations. The United States was ranked 3rd. In the labour market, financial market, technology and indicators of innovation, the UAE excelled. However, the 'Health and Primary School' and 'Training and Higher Education' pillars were ranked worst in 2011 (Ferah, 2012). The UAE has risen respectively in 2014 and 2015 to 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> grades. This was the product of state policies that allowed the establishment of a competition mechanism for education that encourages creativity and innovation. However, school performance is still lacking in-depth studies that investigate the impact of managerial creativity and innovative leadership on school performance in the context of the UAE.

Career progress (PD), a popular method that is accepted as a framework for the advancement of standard-based teaching techniques in the teachers' classroom environment, is considered a justification for the introduction of standard-based change. To teachers with no subject in a common or significant area, PD is especially necessary. Therefore, teachers are expected to take part in high-quality job preparation under the law, although there are no objective criteria to assess what is high quality (Lee *et al.*, 2017). Opportunities for teachers to engage in career learning have grown with the momentum in the improvement of education (Lawless *et al.*, 2017). However, Reeves (2011) recognised that good intentions are not an approach sufficient for the development of professionals; hence, in response to the statement of Reeves, this study investigates the influence of innovative leadership and managerial creativity on school performance through a quantitative investigation.

Empirical data, however, that confirms or negates the effect of professional development on the improvement of clinical practices and student success, remains minimal (Fischer *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, there is a lack of understanding as to which characteristics are most important to include in professional development programmes in terms of managerial creativity and innovative leadership. Professional growth has long been regarded as an under-investigated subject, whose diverse identities and many facets of its professional development are still not fully explored (Karagiorgi *et al.*, 2013), this study attempts to bridge such gap by investigating the





relationship between managerial creativity as well as innovative leadership on school performance in the context of the UAE.

Stringer and Hourani (2016) suggest that principal's capacity to innovate as school administrators is a quality that may come with much experience and practice rather than through professional development or preparation; however, Orphanos and Orr (2014) investigated the moderating effects of leadership preparation on the leadership practices of school principals and found that innovative leadership preparation had a significant direct relationship on principal leadership practices.

This further suggests that the professional development and training aimed at empowering school principals in Abu Dhabi to understand their new roles and innovate school practices may be associated with principal's development of innovative leadership attributes and managerial creativity. But that hypothesis has not been tested; therefore, this study first describes the managers of Abu Dhabi Principal School's innovative leadership behaviour, their managerial creativity from Principal and Teacher perspectives. The research would also examine the connection between creative leadership practices, organisational innovation, and professional growth.

There is a significant amount of literature establishing the relationships between creativity and innovation, especially in management and school's performance contexts. However, there is limited literature exploring this relationship in an educational context with the addition of professional development as a construct in the relationship model for studies by Gkorezis (2016) and Orphanos and Orr (2014).

It is important to continue to evaluate the viability of the School in the UAE since the Government has given priority to its implementation across the school system and in the education system. Finally, and perhaps most notably, there has recently been an increasing community of scholars debating the feasibility, in some areas of the emerging or non-Western world, of implementing any tenet of strategic innovation and leadership. Many theorists have argued, in using the constructions defined by theorists such as Hofstede (1980; 1993), that the imposition of management and management models, including those based on a leadership paradigm of innovative nature, can lead to negligible or counterproductive results because of fundamental differences in national cultural values which distinguish societies of western nations. As such, there is a gap in past studies in terms of assessing whether a general and successful Western model of conceptual leadership is appropriate for the specific cultures and customs of



the UAE or there is a need for changes in Western managing creativity and innovative management constructs to succeed in other non-western contexts as UAE.

Gkorezis (2016) found that exploration mediates the link between the primary leadership empowerment and the innovative behaviour of the teacher. The moderating impact of leadership growth on leading activities and instructor engagement, teamwork, and happiness was also addressed by Orphanos and Orr (2014). Findings show that innovative leadership development has an important direct impact on the leadership practices of principal as well as an indirect impact on the cooperation and the satisfaction of teachers. These studies demonstrate fundamental efforts to study the role of professional development and training to foster creativity and innovation development. And as a more focused depiction of leadership styles is used, their vulnerability exists. A wider understanding of creative leadership models and management innovation will perhaps change this effect. This study, therefore, examines the role of creative leadership fostered by professional development in achieving managerial innovation among Abu Dhabi school managers.

The finding of previous studies showed that investments in innovative leadership and managerial creativity has a major influence on leadership practices which yield more positive teacher work conditions, and that are essential for improving students' learning (Orr, 2006; Orphanos, & Orr, 2014; Di Liberto *et al.*, 2015; Agasisti *et al.*, 2020). Hence, the finding of past studies shows that investigating the influence on leadership preparation and managerial improvement is still in need of further studies as it can play an important role in enhancing school performance.

It is particularly important to undertake this study, as it will provide a medium for exploring the role of innovative leadership attributes and managerial creativity in enhancing school performance, especially that principals have taken professional development program to prepare them for their new roles and responsibilities in implementing the desired school change. This will contribute to the current literature on innovation and creativity in schools and may provide input on the additional component that may be required in Abu Dhabi's professional school's managers.





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