

Principals' Leadership Effectiveness: The Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract

The present study investigated the level/extent of principals' leadership effectiveness as perceived by teachers. A sample of 512 senior most teachers of Government Higher Secondary Schools of Punjab participated who rated the leadership effectiveness of their respective principals. Leadership Practices Inventory LPI (observer version) developed by Kourzes & Posner (2002) was used to measure principal's leadership effectiveness. The result indicated that the perceived leadership effectiveness of the principals in Punjab is of moderate level.

Key words: higher secondary school, principals, teachers, Punjab

Introduction

A School Principal is one of the most important and influential personnel in the process of education. His vision and practices have a significant effect on school success, school climate and student achievement (Spark, 2009; Leithwood&Jantzi, 2005; Gregory, 2008). The Principal is the architect of the quality of work in the school (Ezeocha, 1999; Ibukun, 2002). Educational research in the area of School management has been dominated by the study of the principal as leader.

Leadership is simply the art or process of influencing, directing, controlling and coordinating the activities of other people in an organization towards the achievement of goals of the organization. Leadership which derives its strength from willingness of others to follow is the art of inducing or influencing others to work willingly with zeal towards the achievement of goals.

An educational organization can achieve its aims when it is administered effectively. A proper understanding of effective school leaders envisages that certain factors be understood and their specific contribution be determined. Educational stakeholders including students, educators, policy makers, administrators, parents, and community members are paying more attention than ever to improving schools (Peterson and Deal, 2002). The primary focus of these individuals, especially policy makers is on Principal's leadership effectiveness. School leaders are seen as pivotal to educational reforms (Hallinger, 1992, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, 2006) .The principal is too important in educational change because policies are only written which direct the school reform actions of the principal (Hallinger& Heck, 1996; Lapointer& Davis, 2006; Stronge, et al, 2008). The policy makers are likely to initiate school improvement process with school leaders. They often point to the need of effective principals in schools undergoing change to embody the characteristics of a transformational leader. Toler and Burk (2006) states that "if we have effective principals and thus effective Schools."The effectiveness of school principal is arguably the best predictor of school success (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1995; Valentine and Bowman, 2001). Effective principals are change agents to implement educational reforms(Blackaby and Blackaby, 2001; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, 2006).They provide teachers with opportunities for professional growth and development by providing feedback (Sergiovanni, 2007).

A Principal's Leadership effectiveness is the quality of his leadership performance perceived by school population in general and faculty members in particular.

Leadership effectiveness was described by Bennett (2003) and Oredein (2004) as the acknowledged ability of a leader to guide, manage or coordinate a group of people to achieve pre-determined goals of an organization.

The present study explored factors that make principals effective in their leadership and how teachers perceive principals' effectiveness in Punjab.

Research Questions

The problem of the study was to measure leadership effectiveness of higher secondary schools in Punjab. In addressing this problem, the following research questions were raised:

- What is the extent of each of the five functions of Leadership Practices Inventory LPI to measure principal effectiveness?
- What is the overall level of principal effectiveness in Punjab as perceived by their teachers?

Methodology

Population and Sample of the study

The target population of the study was all the senior most (Subject Specialists) teachers of Government Higher Secondary schools(male)of the Punjab province. A sample of 518 teachers participated in the study who rated the principals' effectiveness.

Instrument

Kourzes& Posner's (2002) Leadership Practices Inventory LPI was used with their permission as an instrument of the study.

Data Collection & Analysis

The researcher used Postal and courier services to send the questionnaire to eighty one higher secondary schools after seeking their telephonic consent. The collected data was entered into SPSS and analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean & Standard Deviation).

Results

The researcher used descriptive statistics on whole scale as well as on 30 items of LPI.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions on the function of modeling the way as employed by higher secondary school principals

Items	Mean	SD
Sets a personal example of what he expects of others	2.99	1.04
Makes certain that the people he works with adhere to agreed-on standards	2.86	0.97
Follows through on promises and commitments he makes	2.98	0.93
Asks for feedback on how his actions affect people's performance	3.84	1.22
Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our organization	2.34	1.14
Is clear about his philosophy of leadership	2.40	1.07
Overall	2.90	1.06

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions on the function of inspiring a shared vision

Item	Mean	SD
Talks about future trends influencing our work	2.36	0.81
Describes a compelling image of the future	3.77	1.41
Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future	3.82	0.78
Shows others how their interests can be realized	3.10	1.05
paints the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish	2.86	1.01
Speaks with conviction about meaning of work	3.59	1.00
Overall	3.25	1.01

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions on the function of challenging the process

Item	Mean	SD
Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his own skills and abilities	3.63	0.89
Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work	3.07	0.78
Searches outside the formal boundaries of his organization for innovative ways to improve what we do	2.72	1.11
Asks "what can we learn?" when things don't go as expected	3.47	0.95
Makes certain that goals, plans, and milestones are set	2.61	1.02
Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure	2.40	1.07
Overall	2.99	0.97

Table 4*Descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions on the function of enabling others to act*

Item	Mean	SD
Develops cooperative relationships among the people he works with	3.41	1.13
Actively listens to the diverse points of view	3.08	1.07
Treats others with dignity and respect	3.16	1.00
Supports the decisions that people make on their own	2.40	1.07
Gives people choice about how to do their work	2.77	1.05
Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves	2.25	1.39
Overall	2.85	1.12

Table 5*Descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions on the function of encouraging the heart*

Item	Mean	SD
Praises people for a job well done	2.74	1.12
Expresses confidence in people's abilities	3.92	1.24
Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects	3.21	0.90
Recognizes people publicly who exemplify commitment to shared values	3.85	1.22
Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments	2.34	1.15
Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions	3.66	0.99
Overall	3.28	1.10

Table 6*Mean & Standard Deviation for perceptions of teachers on leadership effectiveness (LPI) of Principals Extent/Level of principals' leadership effectiveness*

Function	Mean	SD
Modeling the way	2.90	1.06
Inspiring a shared vision	3.25	1.01
Challenging the process	2.99	0.97
Enabling others to act	2.85	1.12
Encouraging the heart	3.28	1.10
Overall	3.05	1.05

Table 6 shows the Mean and Standard Deviation of LPI (Leadership Practices Inventory) and its five functions, clearly indicating that leadership effectiveness is satisfactory. The mean ranges from 2.85 to 3.28 (within Likert scale 1-5). The overall mean 3.05 with standard deviation 1.05 shows moderate level of principals' leadership effectiveness in Punjab.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall effectiveness of the principals is satisfactory but it may be concluded that the teachers rated leadership effectiveness comparatively low for the functions of “enabling others to act” and “modeling the way”.

Given the findings of the study, the following recommendation can be made.

- The principals should try to excite/motivate their teachers to meet the vision of the school. For the purpose, they may display autocratic leadership style according to situation.
- The principals should use specific techniques to enable the teachers with poor to performance work better.
- The principals must be given desired administrative powers in school affairs.
- The principals should try to develop an open and friendly school climate to make them more effective
- The principal should prove himself a model to be followed in teaching - learning process. He should follow all the rules and regulations of Education department besides delivering a model lecture daily in the subject of his interest.

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