

Role of the Language School's Principals in Academic Achievements

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of the principal in managing teaching and learning. It examined how and to whom principals distributed the management of teaching and learning. It was found that participants thought principals could improve school effectiveness most by engaging in activities that develop a good climate and ensure appropriate resources are available for instruction. There is a growing understanding that leadership is embedded in various organizational contexts within school communities, not centrally vested in a person or an office. This study has left the researcher with a great respect for the all encompassing role of the principal.

Keywords: Management, Distributed Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Academic Achievements

1. Introduction

The Principal is the key person of the school guidance services. Even what the classroom teacher is able to do on his own varies with the Principal's personality, point of view, and knowledge of guidance. Some teachers say, "I could do more effective guidance if my Principal must exemplify guidance in his day by day personnel relations with parents, teachers and pupils (Parkesh, 1991)." Contrary to popular beliefs, powerful leadership skills are not genetic endowments; they are systematic endowments that anyone can learn and use. (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Some would argue that leadership is one of the most studied but least understood of all social phenomena (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Leadership is defined as influence, the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of group goals of a leader is someone who exercises influence over other people (Buchanan and Huczynski, 1985, p. 281). Role is the pattern of behaviour expected by others from a person occupying a certain position in an organizational hierarchy (Buchanan and Huczynski, 1985, p. 325). Organization can be understood from behavioural perspective as well; it would then mean a collection of rights, privileges, obligation, and responsibilities that are deliberately balanced over a period of time through conflict and conflict resolution (Laudon and Laudon 1999). According to Akintunde (2007), supervision involves the parents, teachers, departmental heads, principals/head teachers and inspectors of education or anybody vested with the power of inspection. Each of these groups of persons work separately and interdependently to transform the child into a finished "product". While the instructional role of principals was central in the

1980s, the trend in school administration from that time has moved toward managerial and accountability imperatives (Johnson, 2002), thus changing the focus and direction of principals' work. "Principals of rural schools spend a large percentage of their time teaching cross age, multi grade students" (Starr & White, 2008, p. 5)

1.1 Principal

Leadership - Is it Acquired or Innate?

There are people who think that leaders are born while others refute this claim and assert that leaders are made. Drucker (1990) believes that management cannot create leaders but only the conditions under which potential leadership qualities become effective.

1.2 The Role of the School Principal

1. Establish and promote high standards and expectations for all students and staff.
2. Manage, evaluate and supervise effective and clear procedures for the operation and functioning of the school consistent with the philosophy.
3. Establish the annual master schedule for programs.
4. Supervise the instructional programs of the school.
5. Establish procedures for evaluation and selection of instructional materials and equipment, approving all recommendations.
6. Establish a professional rapport with students and with staff that has their respect.
7. Keep the Board advised of employees not meeting their contractual agreement.
8. Research and collect data regarding the needs of students.
9. Keep the staff informed and seek ideas for the improvement of the school.
10. Maintain a master schedule to be posted for all teachers.

2. Methodology

The outlines of the research methods, procedures, materials and the data collection strategies are analysed. A mixed method research was employed in undertaking this study because, mixed method research is inquiry in which researchers collect data in face to face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. Respondents such as students, teachers and principals completed the questionnaires and interviews conducted in their classrooms and offices in three language schools in Tehran. In a familiar environment, they were more relaxed and responsive.

2.1 Participants

Mixed method of research uses different sources of information that include individuals, groups, documents, reports and interviews structured research.

This study was conducted with 5 principals, 10 teachers and 60 students at three language schools in Tehran, Iran.

2.2 Instrumentation

To achieve the aim of the study, a number of instruments were required as follows:

1. Interview: Included the open ended questions and were piloted.
2. Questionnaires: Multiple choice items and were piloted before being administered.

2.3 Procedure

This study sought to establish the principal's and educators' perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader in creating a quality learning environment. In a case study design, the data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher selected to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites or participants for the study.

The multi method strategies of data collection employed (i.e. Semi structured interviews and questionnaires). These multi method strategies allowed for providing different insights into the topic of research and making the findings of the research more credible.

In order to ensure reliability and validity of data collection, questionnaires were also used. The principal, deputy principal, student, educators in each school were asked to complete the questionnaires.

2.4 Design

Mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) was used in this study to analyse the role of the principal in managing and leading teaching and learning in language school. The data collected via questionnaires and interviews.

3. Result

Principals and other school leaders in schools affirm that they will

- Display a high level of understanding about quality teaching and learning, curriculum, assessment and reporting
- Apply this understanding to inform, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate teaching, learning, assessment and reporting practices across the school
- Apply this understanding to assist with the development of systems to support learners and their learning
- Develop and sustain a professional learning community.
- Empower, value, trust and support policy and decision-making at the school level.
- Ensure appropriate resources are directed to public secondary schools after taking into account the socio economic context of the school community.

3.1 Preparing school leaders

There is no doubt, that effective schools virtually always have strong school leaders. The measure of a strong school leader is one who develops the

schools capacity to engage in reform a capacity which is stronger at the end of the leader's term than at the beginning.

3.2 Conditions of work

The conditions under which heads work greatly affects the quality of people attracted to the role and their effectiveness once they are in the role. Currently, in most jurisdictions around the world there is a shortage of candidates to take on the position of head. It is not seen as an attractive position. There was a hiatus during the 1990s, during which time there was a failure to cultivate leadership for the future. The job itself has become increasingly problematic. During the period of the past decade there has been less opportunity to learn on the job. The need, then, is to pay explicit attention to the cultivation of leadership. Just as teaching is a lonely profession, school leadership is more so. There are numerous ways in which the isolation of principals should be overcome. At the most comprehensive level, the job of the school head will become more worthwhile when the overall infrastructure of reporting improves. On the principal ship itself, the opportunity to learn on the job through problem based conferences, networking and linking to the big picture will make the position exciting and uplifting (see Elmore and Burney, 1999, for one example at school district level). In short, school leadership must be doable and rewarding. It must offer opportunities to learn on the job and to give heads the feeling that they are part and parcel of a larger effort to make a difference in society as a whole. One of main caution as important as the principal is, quality teachers are obviously even more important. Thus, policy development must enhance the status, role and accountability of the teaching profession. First, quality teachers make quality heads. The stronger the pool of good teachers, the stronger that future heads will be as they come from the pool. In numbers, heads will be only as strong as the teaching force is in the first place. Secondly, because schools are organizations and because the principal is the head of the organization, it falls to him or her to focus on school-wide capacity which is essential to bringing out the best in teachers. Leaders need to be skilled in facilitating dialogue and coaching in order to effectively lead learning communities. A leader should be cognizant of: outside influences such as new state standards, her own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of her colleagues, different perceptions of collaboration, different perspectives of the topic of study, and research pertaining to adult learning.

4. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to investigate the principals' and educators' perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader in creating a quality learning environment. The results of administering the three school principal questionnaire to 60 students and 10 teachers indicated that all six factors i.e., leadership ability ($M = 2.92$, $SD = .37$), ingredients of leadership ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .54$), interacting with faculty ($M = 2.80$, $SD = .46$), communication

techniques ($M = 2.74$, $SD = .44$), principal of school ($M = 2.72$, $SD = .37$), and culture ($M = 2.57$, $SD = .55$) affect scholastic achievements since the mean of all six factors were above the median, 2. Besides, as the mean scores show, the first important factor was leadership ability; the second was ingredients of leadership; the third was interacting with faculty, followed by communication techniques, and principal of school, and then culture. Besides, analysing the teacher questionnaire revealed that 83.30 percent of the teachers stated that teachers should be directed to improve teaching methods and techniques. The findings of this study coincides with Desrochers (1992) study in which he found that principals of education organization/institutions have an important leadership role to play in forming young minds and bodies, future citizens and society —our educational institutions ... should become agents of change and find ways and means to educate the students towards social awareness and concern for the less privileged. Furthermore, this study lends support to Harris' (2008) research carried out in South Africa. He discovered that the role of the principals in South Africa was to transform their schools and transform learning. The researcher believes that through distributing leadership school principals will be able to achieve this. Also, the researcher believes that successful schools sustain their performance by sharing leadership responsibility and involving educators in decision making. In order for attaining this there must be a shift away from hierarchical leadership to a flatter leadership structure that employs the skills and knowledge of many rather than a few.

Five principals participated in the open ended interviews. A common set of interview questions was used in each interview and each of the questions was designed to be open ended so as not to create a finite response. The interviewees were encouraged to include anything they felt related to the question. As the interviewer, researcher only guidance to them was to try to keep their comments on the general topic of the role of principal. Each of the principals appeared willing to participate and tried to answer the questions as completely as possible. Each of the participants was given an opportunity to review his or her own handwriting and an opportunity to request the omission of any or all of the material. The participants in this study all agreed that the role of school principal requires an extraordinary commitment, and all noted that the principal, ultimately, is held accountable for everything that happens in a school.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study have led to the following conclusions:

1. It is clear that principals must create and maintain an environment that encourages continued professional development for teachers and also for themselves in order to ensure the success of their schools.

2. School divisions must be very selective in their search for principals, since it is the principal that plays a big part in the success of the school and, ultimately, the school division.
3. Principals should undergo a very broad training process in order to be ready for the diversity of the positions that they enter. Their knowledge should include not only academic preparation and teaching experience, but a well tuned ability to deal with people.
4. One of the most rewarding aspects of the job is the fact that it is continually evolving. The job cannot become stagnant if principals continue to search for ways to improve the educational process.
5. One of the least rewarding aspects of the job is the expansion of information processing. If not kept in check, this aspect of the job can seriously encroach upon the two main goals that principals should have: learning and teaching.

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