

Leadership Behaviour of Principals as the Predictor of School Learning Culture: A Regression Analysis

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Abstract:

In the process of administration, principal is the focal point. Principals' beliefs and values, thoughts and actions, his personality and character determine the tone of the institution. Leadership in schools' context has its basic purpose the improvement of the schools. The present study focuses how leadership behavior of principals can act as a predictor of school learning culture. The instructional behavior of principal can bring about strong improvement in instruction and learning. On the other hand, if the culture of the school is not functional, or is weak, new ideas for improvement will quickly wither away. The sample of the study were Principals and Students of 40 Navodaya Vidyalayas of U.P. Leadership Behaviour Scale of Dr. Asha Hinger and a Self-Constructed tool to measure School Learning Culture were used to collect the data. Linear Regression analysis was done to account the prediction of learning culture on the basis of leadership behavior. The findings of the study show that leadership behavior of the principals vary and it influences the school learning culture up to a great extent. The learning culture of a school can be predicted on the basis of leadership provided by the principals. An effective leadership can be assumed as a picture of learning culture prevailing in a school.

Key words: Leadership Behaviour, Principals, School Learning Culture, School Improvement, Prediction, Regression analysis.

Introduction

Napoleon said that, “There were never bad soldiers, only bad officers”. From this he meant that the quality of leadership is all important for any type of organization. It is an important factor for making any type of organization successful. Throughout the history, it has been recognized that the difference between success and failure, whether in a war, a political movement, a business or a team game, can be attributed largely to leadership. A successful organization has one major attribute that sets it apart from an unsuccessful organization; dynamic and effective leadership. The importance of leadership in management of any educational organization can never be minimized. Achievement of organizational goals very much depends on how effectively leadership is exercised in the organization. Organizational leaders are the key figures who can so change the work climate that all the employees are motivated to work hard with the result that the goals are achieved. On the other hand, there may be leaders who are in positions but they achieve nothing.

Educational administration is the process of integrating the efforts of personnel and utilizing appropriate materials in such a way so as to promote effectively the development of the human qualities. It is not only with the development of children and youth but also the growth of school personnel. In the process of administration, principal is the focal point. There is no denying the fact that the whole progress of a school depends upon the principal. Principals’ beliefs and values, thoughts and actions, his personality and character determine the tone of the institution. The management of the schools must be in such a way so as to achieve the educational aims set up by the government and that needs an effective leadership on the part

of principals of the schools. The excellence of a school lies in how its internal processes work to constantly improve its performance. Leadership in schools' context has its basic purpose the improvement of the schools. The major themes of school improvement are the strengthening of teacher skills, the systematizing of the curriculum, the improvement of organizational structures, and the involvement of parents and other citizens in a school. Underlying these major themes are school climate and culture that are of utmost importance in either supporting or destroying the opportunity for these themes to function properly.

The key individual for providing leadership in a school is the principal. Trump's research in the 1950s and 60s, Goldhammer's study of the principal ship in 1960s and the work of Brookover, Edmonds and others on effective schools all points out the principal as being the one individual above all others who is of critical importance in creating an effective school. A principal as a leader has the major responsibility of promoting his institution. But it is not possible for him to work in isolation, he needs the help of his staff members. In other words, the school is a place full of human interactions which include the principal-teacher, teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and also parent-teacher-principal interactions. Thus, the task of a principal seems to be very difficult because on the one hand he has to accomplish the institutional goals and objectives and on the other hand, he has to satisfy his staff members. The relationship which a principal develops with his staff-members helps in the attainment of educational goals.

The behavior of a principal gives rise to certain reactions among the staff-members and these reactions may ultimately be reflected in the teaching-learning situations in the classroom. His behavior can make or mar his institution. The success or failure of the school depends on the ability & skill of the principal as a sound effective educational leader. In the words of Halpin and Croft (1963), "The behavior of the

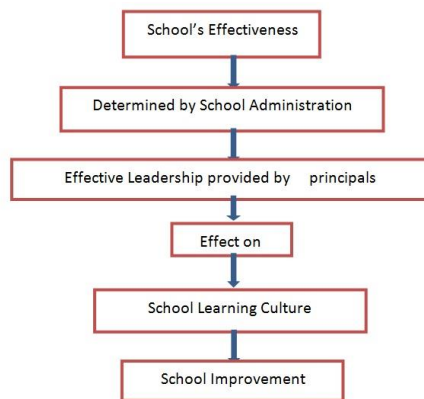
principal represents an appropriate integration between his own personality and the role he is required to play as principal. He does not have to emphasize production; nor does he need to closely monitor the teachers' activities, because the teachers do indeed produce easily and freely. Nor does he do all the work himself; he has the ability to let appropriate leadership acts emerge from the teachers. Withal, he is in full control of the situation and he clearly provides leadership for the staff'.

Leadership Behavior as the Predictor

The present study focuses how leadership behavior of principals can act as a predictor of school learning culture. A school culture is one of the most difficult to describe and yet one of the most important elements in the success or failure in educating its students. The culture building is the component, developed and encouraged by quality leadership. The instructional behavior of principal can bring about strong improvement in instruction and learning. On the other hand, if the culture of the school is not functional, or is weak, new ideas for improvement will quickly wither away. Descriptors of functional school learning culture include encouragement for educational experimentation on the part of the staff, high expectations for students and staff, tangible support for resources reaching out to the knowledge base for new ideas and methods, protection of the important beliefs of the school, and the development of traditions that support academic quality. Kerry Barnett et al (1999) in the annual conference of Australian Association for Research in Education suggested that leadership behavior of principals is helpful in developing higher potential in teachers and students and in turn a learning culture can be developed in the schools. The concept of "School Learning Culture" probably derives most immediately and directly from the oft-repeated observation; schools differ one from the other in the way they work as well as in the

'effects' that they have on the lives of children (Sashkin and Walberg, 1993). It embraces a wide variety of beliefs, goals, purposes, thoughts, knowledge and expectations. However, the focus of this study is on a particular set of perceptions, thoughts and beliefs that have been found to be critical in determining motivation and student learning. A decade of research has underscored the importance of perceptions of purpose in the determination of the nature and quality of investment in a task. Simply put, it is possible for schools to define teaching, schooling and learning in different ways and the choice of definitions has profound effects on motivation and student learning (Maehr and Midgley, 1991).

It is evident from the above discussion that the role of principal in any educational organization is well recognized. He acts as a potential agent of social change which is the ultimate goal of the education. In India, the educational system suffers from several such limitations which prevent it from becoming an effective instrument of social change. The administration of many educational institutions is still undemocratic and reflective of bias and prejudice and, generally, has failed to promote good human values. It is important to strengthen the system of education in India in order to transform the society and to keep pace with the fast changing world.



Conceptual Model of the Study

Emergence of the Problem –

India is amongst the ten fastest growing economies in the world, though it still has a third of the world's illiterates. According to global education report of 2004, India's ranking was 106 out of 127 countries in the education sphere. With 34 percent of the illiterate population in the world, India has the largest no. of illiterates by far. With second placed China at 11 percent. Sixty years after independence, with 40% of its population under-18, India is confronting the perils of its failure to educate its citizens. The condition of education hence, is pathetic in India. Except for 2 or 3 states, all the Indian states have poor educational statistics. The quality of government schools has sunk to spectacularly low levels. The children in these schools come from the poorest of families-those who cannot send away their young to private schools elsewhere, as do most Indian families who have the means. Even though many children attend schools, they remain ill-equipped. A survey in 2007 which was conducted across 16000 villages, found that, while many more children were sitting in class, vast numbers of them could not read, write or perform basic arithmetic, to say nothing of those who were not in school at all. The ineffective administration seems perhaps the foremost cause for this pathetic and heartrending situation. It is often pointed out that a number of drawbacks in Indian education have crept due to administrative weakness. A principal as a designated leader of the school has the major responsibility of promoting his institution. The tone or the atmosphere of a school is determined to a large extent by the intelligence, personality, imagination, scholarship and initiative of the principal and his healthy interaction with his staff-members. Thus, the behavior of the principal has relationship with the 'inner life' of the schools which is very closely related to the 'learning culture' of school which indicates the sum of all perceptions and emotions attached to the school, which helps in

improving the quality of instruction and quality of the achievement of the students. The investigator guessed that it is necessary to know the extent to which leadership behavior is related with learning culture of schools.

Definition of the Terms-

The problem of the study consists terms which requires precise definition and classification in relation to the present study:

Leadership Behavior-

According to Carter V. Good (1992), "Leadership is the ability and readiness to inspire, guide, direct or manage others". According to Terry, "Leadership is the activity of influencing people to strike willingly for group objectives. According to Keith Davis "Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor, which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals."

In relation to present study leadership behavior can be operationally be defined as the actual behavior of the leader i.e., principals, as perceived by the followers i.e., teachers.

Predictor-

It is the forecaster or foreteller. In the present study, leadership behavior will be taken as the predictor variable.

School Learning Culture-

According to Dictionary of Education (1959), "School culture is the pattern of fundamental beliefs and attitudes that powerfully affects members' behavior in and around the organization, persists over extended periods of time and pervades the organization (to different extents and with varying intensity). It is transmitted through a network of rituals, rites, myths, communication and interaction patterns;

is enforced and reinforced by group norms and the organizations' system of rewards and controls.

In the present investigation, it can operationally be defined as the sum of all perceptions and emotions attached to the school, both good and bad held by students, faculty, administrators, parents and the community at large which have been found to be critical in determining motivation and student learning.

Variables Used in the Study

The variables studied in the present study are given as follows:-

Independent Variable-In the study leadership behavior of principals has been taken as an independent variable as its impact will be seen on dependent variable of the study.

Dependent Variable-In the study school learning culture has been taken as dependent variable as it will be predicted on the basis of leadership behavior of principals.

Objectives of the Study:-

1. To study the leadership behavior of the principals in terms of effectiveness.
2. To study the school learning culture in relation to leadership behaviour of principals.
3. To predict the regression equation among independent and dependent variable of the study.

Hypotheses of the Study:-

1. There exists no significant difference in the leadership behavior of the principals in relation to their level of effectiveness.
2. There exists no significant effect of leadership behaviour of principals on the school learning culture.

3. There exists no variance in the school learning culture predicted on the basis of leadership behavior of principals.

Delimitation of the Study:-

1. The present study is delimited to the Navodaya Vidyalayas which have been opened by Ministry of Human Resource and Development.
2. The leadership behavior has been identified on the basis of perception of Principals of Navodaya Vidyalayas themselves. So all the inherent limitations of perception of own behaviour of the principals might affect the findings of the study.
3. School learning culture has been identified on the basis of perception of students.
4. The sample of the study consists 40 Principals and 400 students of XIth class of Navodaya Vidyalayas of U.P. only.

Methodology of the Study- Descriptive Survey Method has been used.

Tools Used in the Study:-

Tools used in the study are Standardized as well as Self-constructed.

1. Leader Behaviour Scale (LBS) - This scale was developed by Dr. Asha Hinger (2005). It helps in identifying various dimensions of leadership behaviour in terms of effectiveness on the basis of self-perception.

2. School Learning Culture Scale- This scale was developed by researcher himself. It measures the learning culture of school on the basis of perception of higher secondary students.

Analysis and Interpretation

1. To Study the Leadership Behaviour of Principals in Terms of Effectiveness.

In relation to study the leadership behavior of Principals, the investigator has categorised the data of leadership behavior into three categories such as Most effective, moderately effective and least effective and examined significant differences among the Principals in relation to their effectiveness of leadership behavior. The mean, S.D. and t-values has been obtained and are given in the table below-

LB Effectiveness	N	M	S.D.	t-value	Level of significant
Most	12	128.75	3.84	7.06	Significant at 0.01
Moderate	17	118.06	4.13		
Moderate	17	118.06	4.13	9.92	Significant at 0.01
Least	11	97.36	6.95		
Most	12	128.75	3.84	13.56	Significant at 0.01
Least	11	97.36	6.95		

It is clearly seen from the above table that out of 40 Principals most are falling in the “Moderately Effective Leadership Behaviour” category. To study the significant difference in each level of leadership behavior, investigator has performed t- test and t-values have been found significant at 0.01 level of significance for all the three categories of leadership behaviour. Hence it can be said that there exists significant difference in leadership behavior of principals and this may be because not

every person born with the similar kind of leadership qualities. All vary in their personality characteristics and environmental exposure and this is why not all principals are found highly effective, some are moderate and some are least effective leaders. It can be supported by study of **Cheupalakit, P. (2002)** where significant difference was found among the leadership behavior of principals and also in the study by **Pingle, T.L. & Cox, E.P. (2007)** in which also there was a statistically significant difference between the leadership practices of principals in academically successful schools and academically unsuccessful schools.

2. To Study the School Learning Culture in Relation to Leadership Behaviour of Principals.

To study school learning culture in relation to leadership behavior of principals, researcher calculated mean, S.D., t-test etc.,. The values are given in the table below-

It is notable that the mean of the school learning culture having principals with most effective leadership behavior is more than those with moderate and least effective leadership behavior.

The investigator has obtained t-values to study the significant difference in school learning culture having principals with most, moderate and least effective leadership behavior and all are significant at 0.01 level of significance. The t-value for school learning culture having their principals with most and least effective leadership behavior is highest which implies that the learning culture differs significantly with reference to the effective leadership. If the leader is highly effective the learning culture also is highly adaptive and where there is least effective leader the learning culture also is maladaptive.

LB Effectiveness	School learning culture			t-value	Level of significant
	N	M	S.D.		
Most	120	130.72	3.94	6.94	Sig at 0.01
Moderate	170	125.44	8.76		
Moderate	170	125.44	8.76	7.12	Significant at 0.01
Least	110	119.67	4.69		
Most	120	130.72	3.94	19.38	Significant at 0.01
Least	110	119.67	4.69		

Hence, it can be said that the leadership characteristics of the principals influence the learning culture of their schools. It may be due to the reason that the effective principal provides all kind of support and guidance to their staff as well as students so that an environment of disciplined and constructive learning establishes. It can be also supported by the study of Reed, T.G. (2005) where enabling leadership of the principal promotes enabling school structure. When such structures are combined with openness in interpersonal functions, it seems reasonable to expect that a culture of academic optimism is not only possible, but likely, and that such a culture can overcome the drag of low socio-economic status and promote higher levels of student achievement. In a study by Kruger, A.G. (2003) also it was found that though the principals' direct involvement in instructional matters was very limited, virtually non-existent, and they influence the culture of teaching and learning in a more informal way.

3. To Predict the Regression Relationship between Independent Variable i.e., Leadership Behavior and Dependent Variable i.e., School Learning Culture.

To obtain regression relationship to predict the dependent variable with the help of the independent variable i.e., leadership behavior of the principals, the investigator has obtained the coefficients of correlation of leadership behavior with the school learning culture then calculated the value of R-

square and percentage of R-square to account the common variance. The coefficients of the correlation, R-square and percentage of R-square are given in the table below-

Dependent variable	R	R-Square	% of R-square
School learning culture	0.539	.290	29

It is clearly indicated from the above table that the school learning culture has accounted 29 percentage of common variance with the leadership behavior. In the next step the investigator has obtained linear regression equation between leadership behavior of principals and school learning culture.

Dependent variable	Beta value	constant	Regression relationship
School learning culture(X4)	5.518	114.26	$X4=5.518 +114.26$

It is revealed from the above table that the beta value for dependent variable is 5.518 which indicate that leadership behavior has major composite part to predict school learning culture which implies that learning culture may not solely depend on the leadership behavior of principals but it has a major impact over the school learning culture. If an effective leadership is being provided on the part of principals then it can be predicted that there would be an adaptive learning culture where students are motivated towards constructive learning.

Hence, it can be said that school learning culture can be predicted with the predictor variable i.e., leadership behavior. Similar result was found in the study of Bulach et al (2006) where the authors concluded that the survey can be used to measure a principal's leadership behavior, as an early indicator of what is happening to a school's culture and climate. In an another study by Olaley, F. O. (2008) it was found that leadership behaviour of a school principal affects the school

learning and learning culture of school can be predicted on its basis.

Conclusion

The above discussion makes it to conclude that there exists significant difference among the leadership behavior of principals. All principals cannot be assumed effective some of them could be moderate leaders and some could be the least effective as a leader. The leadership behavior varies as it is somewhat inborn and up to some extent environmental depending on how the person was grown and reared and what kind of environmental exposure he was provided. Secondly, it is concluded that leadership behavior has an influence over the school learning culture. If a school is provided with effective leadership on account of their principals they have been found highly adaptive and constructive with respect to learning .It is just like a family structure where if the father is a good leader to make his family move in a good direction the children automatically moves in constructive direction. Lastly, it is concluded that learning culture of the schools can be predicted on the basis of leadership behavior. If one conducts a survey of just effective leadership provided to the schools on account of their principals one can assume about the learning culture persisting in the school. Moreover, on the basis of the leadership style prevailing learning culture can be decided whether it is self-motivated or forced, adaptive or maladaptive.

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