

## PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND SCHOOL CLIMATE: A REVIEW OF RESEARCHES

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Theoretically, the equation between the leadership behavior and school climate appears to be relatively simple and straightforward, but practically it is found inherently complex and unpredictable for those who are working with it. It is interesting that in spite of conducting study after study on leadership behavior of school principals, there remain sufficient gaps in the knowledge base. In the present article, the available researchers conducted in India and abroad on leadership behavior in the context of school climate, are reviewed. Here, the gap areas are pointed out and also suggested the appropriate steps to develop an insight among the principals to understand strengths and weaknesses, so that they can improve the climate of their organization.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Principal's Leadership Behavior, School Climate*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the beginning of principalship in education, educators have struggled to define a distinctive role for the position. Theoreticians and analysts, separately dissected the job and its place in the larger social and educational context, urging principals in one decade to be "bureaucratic executives" followed ten years later by "humanistic facilitator" and then "instructional leader" (Beck and Murphy, 1993).

Principals themselves have less time for theoretical debates; however, they struggle with their role definition, on a daily basis. How should I spend my time? What students, teachers, parents and board members expect out of me? What should be at the top of the to-do list? In the past decade, the growth of standard-based accountability has intensified such questions.

The word 'Leader' appeared in the English language as early as the year 1300. Stogdill (1974) defined leadership as 'the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal accomplishment'. Leadership usually begins with a vision of success, a glimmering intuition that solutions are possible. A leader, then, is an agent for change. The leader changes what is to what ought to be (Sergiovanni, 2001)

Cooley and Shen (2003) found that secondary principals reported they were engaged in new roles that had simply been "layered" over the old job. That is, instead of replacing former responsibilities or being integrated into the job, the new duties were simply added to what was already there. Thus, If schools lack clarity and consensus about the principal's mission, they may simply add new duties to an already extensive list, creating job overload.

The multiplicity of demand also creates role conflict. Surveys persistently find that principals feel torn between the instructional leadership that almost everyone agrees should be the top priority and the daily engagement chores that are almost impossible to ignore; often, the managerial responsibilities seem to take precedence (Cooley and Shen, 2003; Goodwin et al., 2003; Ricciardi and Petrosko 2001).

In the standard oriented age, contemporary visions of leadership can easily be found in the professional standards established by policymakers, practitioners and university professors. Foremost among these are the guidelines developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which have gained rapid acceptance. The six key themes are as follows:

- Facilitating shared vision
- Sustaining a school culture conducive to student and staff learning
- Managing the organization for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.
- Collaborating with families and community members
- Acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner
- Influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.

The standards, now used to guide principal preparation programmes in at least thirty-five states, envision these six dimensions as pathways to one overriding goal – student achievement (Council of Chief State School Officers 1996).

Similarly, NAESP's recent guide to professional development for principals emphasizes on leader's role in creating a dynamic learning community by giving the highest priority to student and adult learning, setting high expectations, demanding content and instruction that ensure student's achievement, creating a culture of continuous learning for adults, using data to guide improvement and actively engaging the community (National Association of Elementary School Principals 2001).

The ISLLC and NAESP standard represent a "best-practice" approach based on the judgement of experienced practitioners and knowledgeable observers. Is there research evidence to support this view of the leader's role? While these guidelines have been in place for too short a time to provide much direct evidence, a recent major review of the literature by Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identified a number of "core practices" that seem consistent with the standards were:

- Setting directions, which include identifying and articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals and creating high performance expectations.
- Developing people, who involve offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and providing an appropriate model.
- Redesigning the organization, which includes strengthening school cultures, modifying organizational structures and building collaborative processes?

Beyond the core roles (which are probably similar to leadership roles in many other types of organizations), Leithwood and Riehl (2003) noted that the current education reform environment may require principals to carry out

several roles that are specifically related to accountability.

- Creating and sustaining a competitive school (market accountability)
- Empowering others to make significant decisions (decentralization accountability)
- Providing instructional leadership (professional accountability)
- Developing and executing strategic plans (management accountability)

Finally, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) found that many successful leaders are proactive in promoting school quality, equity, and social justice. Admittedly, it may be misleading to speak of “the” role of principal. Leithwood and Duke (1999), examining all articles on education leadership published in four major administration journals from 1985 to 1995, identified six distinct conceptions of leadership: instructional (influencing the work of teachers in a way that will improve student achievement), transformational (increasing the commitments and capacities of school staff), moral (influencing others by appealing to notions of right and wrong), participative (involving other members of school community), managerial (operating the school efficiently) and contingent (adapting their behaviour to fit the situation). They suggested that each conception reflects a different emphasis that should be viewed in terms of the connections among leaders, followers, organizations outside as well as inside environment.

In past decades, many researchers conducted studies to find out the best suitable style of leadership. The most extensive and comprehensive research programmed was initiated by Ohio State studies in 1945. These studies aimed at identifying independent dimensions of leadership behavior. Beginning with over a thousand dimensions, the description of leadership behavior was narrowed down to two dimensions, i.e. (i) initiating structure (ii) consideration. Initiating structure refers to the extent to which a leader is likely to define and structure his/her role and those of the subordinates, in the search for goal attainment. Whereas, the consideration is described as the extent to which a person is likely to have job, relationships that are characterized by mutual trust, respect for subordinates, ideas, and regard for their feelings. A leader, high in consideration could be described as one who helps subordinates in their personal problems, is friendly and approachable to everyone and treats all subordinates as equals.

Reddin (1970) offered managerial grid with 3-D managerial style theory. He added the dimensions of ‘effectiveness’ to the task-concern and relationship-concern dimensions, in recognition of the fact that the effectiveness of the leaders depends on how their leadership style interrelated with the situation in which they operated. When the style of a leader is appropriate to a given situation, it is termed ‘effective’. When the style is inappropriate then it is termed as ‘ineffective’. The difference between the effective and ineffective styles was often not the actual behavior of the leader, but the appropriateness of the leader’s behavior to the environment in which it was used.

One very popular approach to identify the leadership style was “Blake and Mouton’s classic managerial grid (1978)”. The two dimensions of the grid are ‘concern for people’ (or relation) along the vertical axis and ‘concern for production’ (or task) along the horizontal axis. These two dimensions are equivalent to the ‘consideration’ and ‘initiating structural’ functions identified by the Ohio State studies. These are used as the ‘people-centered’ and ‘task-centered’ styles in Michigan studies

In an organizational setting- parents, teachers, and principals have always sensed something special yet undefined, something powerful yet difficult to describe about school’s inside environment or school climate refers to the deep patterns

of values and beliefs and traditions that have been formed over the course of the school's history and which are understood by the members of the school community (Deal and Peterson, 1980; Heckman, 1993; Schein, 1985; Stolp and Smith, 1995) and which is the one of the important factors that affect the quality of education imparted in schools. A number of researchers have brought out its importance as one of the factors affecting students learning, teacher's behavior, their personality and qualities such as their attitude and accountability towards school teaching and other work along with the achievements of the organization.

A number of researchers have been conducted which demonstrates that the organizational climate is related to several aspects of school life such as leadership, organizational ideologies, students and teachers characteristics. In the study made by Hall (1971) the organizational climate was found to be related with the leadership of the school principal.

Wright and his associates (1951) and Perkins (1951) have clearly brought out the significance of classroom climate as related to students learning and development. According to Norton (1984), a school climate plays a direct and critical role in determining what the school is and what it might become. The climate sets the tone for the school's approach to resolving problems, trust, and mutual respect and generating new ideas.

Sharma (1973) specified that school climate is the resulting condition within the school of social interaction among the teachers and between the teachers and the Principal. He had used both the R-technique and the Q-technique and identified six types of climates – open, autonomous, familiar, controlled, paternal and closed climate. The hypothesized relationship between principal's leadership behavior and school climate can be justified for psychological point of view that principal as a leader influences the behavior of teachers and other persons working in the school. In view of his desirable and undesirable behavior, people may develop good or bad relations with each other as well as with him. Thus, principal's leadership behavior generates a unique kind of atmosphere or climate in school and influences the work culture of the organization, its production and output quantitatively and qualitatively.

Theoretically, the equation between the principal's leadership behavior and organizational climate appears to be relatively simple and straightforward, while, in practical; it is inherently complex, messy and unpredictable for those who are working on it. Although, often this field is repleted with largely descriptive studies of effective leadership. These studies have rarely tracked or explored with significant ingenuous designing, the relationship between leadership and organizational climate. It is interesting that in spite of conducting study after study on leadership of school principals in various guises, there remain sufficient gaps in the knowledge base. We don't know, for example, what exactly the forms of principal's behavior result in school climate across different school contexts, and in different types of schools? We don't know what particular combination of training and professional development that benefits most principals, wishing to improve their schools. But the most concern fact is that we have very few studies that have explained the relationship between principal's leadership and school climate in any depth.

A study made by Loisres (1979) revealed a significant relationship between organizational climate and principal's leadership behavior, however, no matter how teachers perceived their school organizational climate, they still perceived their principal, as an effective leader but Lojoz (1987) found that they were insignificantly related. He found that representation demand, reconciliation, persuasiveness, initiating structure, role assumption, consideration, and production emphasis, predictive accuracy, integration, superior-orientation, tolerance of freedom and tolerance of uncertainty were not

significantly related to school effectiveness.

Chang (1991) in his study investigated the leadership styles in the context of Hong Kong. This study took up the two basic dimensions of leadership style: Relation and Initiation structure. An organizational process was measured in terms of teacher-teacher interactions, principal-teacher interactions and perceived organizational effectiveness by employing organizational effectiveness scale developed by Halpin and Craft (1963). The results supported the traditional belief that there is a strong relationship of leadership to organizational process.

Further, Barnett, McCormick, and Conners (1999) conducted study with the purpose to investigate; i) the validity of the transformational/transactional leadership model proposed by Bass and Avolio (1997) in New South Wales state secondary schools; ii) the validity of the school learning culture model proposed by Maehr, Midgley, Hicks, Roeser, Anderman & Kaplan (1996) in New South Wales state secondary schools; iii) the relationship of transformational and transactional leadership behavior of school principals with teacher outcomes – extra efforts, effectiveness and satisfaction; and iv) the relationship of transformational and transactional leadership behavior of school principals with aspects of school learning culture. The sample comprised 54% female and 46% male teachers, of which 75% were aged between 30-50 years. The investigators used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1997) to measure leadership style and Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) developed by Maehr et.al. (1996) to measure the dimensions of school learning culture. As the statistical techniques, factor Analysis and stepwise multiple regression analysis were used. This study investigated that first, in practice; teachers don't distinguish between charisma, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. Second, the teachers did not distinguish between the transformational leadership behavior, individual concern and the transactional leadership behavior contingent reward. Third, the positive teacher outcome of extra efforts, satisfaction and effectiveness were found to be closely related to the transformational leadership behavior of individual concern. Fourth, the relationship was found to exist between transformational leadership behavior of the school principal with aspects of school learning culture.

Further, a study made by Ireh and Bailey (1999) examined the relationship among Ohio Superintendent leadership styles, style adaptability and certain distinct characteristics identified as change oriented. Survey data from 611 superintendents showed that only per student district expenditure was significantly and positively related to leadership style adaptability. Years of administrative experience influenced the use of a participatory style.

A survey by Daresh et. al.(2000) over 30 'expert' southwest principals, revealed several characteristics of effective principals: possessing technical skills, influenced by human relations and legal mandates, creating an inviting culture, building community, being an ethical practitioner and understanding relationships.

Mendal et. al. (2002) published their research report on the study of leadership styles of elementary school principals in a Southwest Missouri school district. The purpose of the study was to examine the principal's leadership styles and also was to examine which leadership styles are related to a positive school climate. Data for the study were obtained through a survey of 169 teachers in 34 schools. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of principals practice a collaborative leadership style (based on the teacher's perceptions). These collaborating principals also contribute to the highest average scores on positive school climate. The most desirable leadership style to help contribute to a positive school climate ,therefore, is collaborative.

The study made by Tintavee, Patee (2010), emerged the behavior measurement model of eight factors with 28 behavioral indicators and revealed that nine behaviors were confirmed as common principal leadership behaviors of all study contexts. They are (1) envision future goal and directions for school, and clearly communicate to staff (Buranajant, 2007; Yukl, 2002); (2) be highly charismatic, role modeling and self-sacrificing (Kusol, 2000; King, 2006); (3) persistently pay attention to both people and works (direction, vision, and goals) (Leksansern, 2006; King 2006); (4) promote the school/relation in the community effectively (Sirisunhirun, 2004; Valentine & Bowman, 1988); (5) strongly believe in clear structure and a chain of command to goal achievement (Sirisunhirun, 2004; King, 2006); (6) team working and team development (Kaewmesri, 2002; Sirisunhirun, 2004; Yukl, 2002); (7) provide suggestions and coach or mentor for improvement, new working paradigm and personal matters (Srisunhirun, 2004; Yukl, 2002); (8) commit to instructional improvement and missions (Buranajant, 2007; Valentine & Bowman, 1988); and (9) delegate and empowering (Kusol, 2000; Kaewmesri, 2002; Yukl, 2002).

Donnelly, Sean Niles. (April, 2012) provided evidence that transformational leadership, relational trust, professional learning communities, and collective teacher efficacy are all related to student achievement. It was found that teachers at the schools studied here tended to view their principal as more competent in terms of a relational trust if they also perceived that their principal had been a successful teacher in a core content area. Principals were also perceived as more trustworthy in terms of reliability if they were consistently visible, not only in classrooms, but also in common areas. Principals who practiced transformational leadership contributed to student achievement by having a positive effect on teachers. This study's findings supported prior researchers indicated a relationship between professional learning communities and student achievement.

In India, Darji (1975) conducted an investigation in 100 schools in order to study the leadership behaviour patterns of principals, the overall organizational climate and other school variables. The results of this study showed that; (i) Leadership behaviour dimensions and patterns played a crucial role in organizational climate, staff morale, academic motivation, school innovativeness and academic status; (ii) The percentage of principals manifesting the HH (Highest and High relationship) pattern of leadership behaviour was the highest (49%); (iii) All the principals of open climate school manifested the HH leadership behaviour patterns; (iv) The leadership behaviour dimensions and patterns were found to be significant, in relation to variables of climate morale and innovativeness but not in relation to pupil motivation towards schools and academic status of schools.

Further, Gupta (1978) conducted a study to examine the leadership behavior dimensions of the headmasters of secondary schools in Rajasthan, having different types of school climate and examining the dimensions of leadership behavior and the factors of the personality of secondary school headmasters, which may be used as predictors of the school climate. The researcher found significant positive relationships between school climate and all the different dimensions of LBDQ. Thus, the results of all above researchers revealed that leadership behavior significantly affects to school variables.

Attri (2002) conducted a study to know the effect of principal's administrative background on school climate and pupil's achievement. The major findings of the study were i) school climate was found open, running under principals, who had administrative background and there was closed climate in the schools which were running under the administration of principals without administrative background; ii) the teachers were found enthusiastic in schools under the administration of principals, who had previous administrative experience; iii) it was found that academic achievement



of students is effected by school climate. 80% open climate schools scored above average results, whereas only 20% closed climate schools achieved satisfactory results and 80% below average.

Few researchers were conducted to find out the relationship of leadership and school climate / culture. In their original study Halpin and Croft (1963) administered their OCDQ in 71 elementary schools in various parts of the country. It was found that the schools varied in their climate profiles. However, later in his study conducted by Hall (1971) organizational climate was found to be related to the leadership behavior of school principals. It was concluded in this study that leadership behavior characterized by high homothetic and high ideographic orientations may lead to more open school climates. The study tended to show that the climate of an organization is very much as a function of leadership style and qualities. Further, principal's non-verbal behavior was found associated with the organizational climate of the elementary schools.

In their research article, Barnett et. al. (1999) quoted that if we are serious about school reform, making a difference to the learning and motivation of students, we need a much better understanding of school culture and educational leadership, and the ways they are interrelated, because research indicates that both are critical to reform and improvement of schools (Sashkin and Walberg, 1993; Sergio Vani, 1996; Stoll & Fink, 1996)

Also in India Sharma, (1973), and Sharma et.al (1973) found a significant positive relationship existing between school climate and structural behavior and the consideration behavior of school headmasters. Further, Sharma (1975) studied the relationship of school climate with school effectiveness, principal's effectiveness and teacher's satisfaction along with other variables. Lochana (1981) studied the relationships among administrative behavior, organizational climate, teacher's morale and the traditional or progressive character of the school. He found that there was no significant relationship between the administrative behavior of principals and organizational climate of schools and the administrative behavior of school principals influenced the traditional or progressive character of schools.

Similarly, Darji and Dongre (1982) confined their study to 25 secondary schools, to identify the leadership patterns of schools principals as well as the organizational climate, type of schools and the nature of organizational health of schools, through the leadership behaviour patterns of principals The findings of the study reported that close organizational climate was prevalent in 32% of schools, open climate in 18% schools and autonomous climate in another 18% schools and open as well as closed climate was more prevalent in district schools than city schools.

Further, Sampuran Singh (1985) in his study aimed at determining the pattern of organizational climate, leadership behaviour and moral development in the elementary and secondary schools, reported that elementary and secondary schools were found to be similar in teacher behaviour in a task oriented situation, elementary school teachers were higher in spirits and intimacy than secondary school teachers; initiating structure as a dimension of leadership behaviour was significantly related to the dimensions of school climate.

Baraiya (1985) also conducted a study on 500 teachers, 100 headmasters, and 75 management members of 100 higher secondary schools of Gujarat state to find out the organizational climate in relation to leadership behavior, sex and age of head masters and management. The tools were used – Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) developed by Halpin and Croft, Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) and Multifactor Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (MLBDQ) developed by the investigator. The study revealed that a number of schools having a closed climate are more than the number of open climate schools. The management members

having poor consideration, sex and age of management members does not influence the climate of schools.

Dhulia (1989) conducted a study on the role of administrative style, a teacher's job satisfaction and student's institutional perception, in determining the nature of school climate. In the study, researcher inferred that the school climate was found to be positively and significantly correlated to the teacher's satisfaction. Similarly, Chakraborty (1990) conducted a study on the organizational climate of secondary schools of West Bengal and its correlation with other related variables. Significant and positive correlations were found between the school organizational climate and the leadership behavior of the principal, the job satisfaction of teachers and school effectiveness. Further, Jayajothi (1992) conducted a study on organizational climate and leadership behavior of principals in relation to teacher's morale in central schools and concluded that – i) the central schools of the Madras region differed in their climate. 18.75% had open climate, 12.5% had controlled climate, 6.25% had familiar climate, 06.25% had paternal climate and 37.54% had closed climate, ii) experience and age did not discriminate the perception of school climate, teacher morale and leadership behavior, iii) the open climate related best to the perception of leadership behavior of the principals by the teachers and the autonomous climate had the least relationship, iv) leadership behavior differed with climate.

Barnett, McCornick and Conners (2000) again studied the leadership behavior of school principals, teachers outcome and school culture. This study was based on the investigation of Bass's conception of transformational and transactional leadership with teacher outcomes and aspects of school culture within the Australian secondary school setting. Forty-one randomly selected government secondary schools participated in the study.. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: (MLQ), developed by Bass and Avolio (1997) was selected to measure leadership style. The findings of the study revealed that -

- Most of the variance in leadership behavior occurred at the teacher level
- A significant relationship was found between transformational and transactional leadership with teacher outcomes and school learning culture.
- Transformational leadership behavior management by exception passive was negatively related to teacher outcomes and school learning culture.
- The Transformational leadership behavior (individual concern) had significant positive direct and indirect effects on teacher outcomes and school learning culture, at the teacher level. In conclusion, this study suggested that transformational leadership was more facilitative of positive transformational and transactional leadership helped to explain variation in teacher outcomes, task focus goal and excellence in teaching.

Further, DeMoss (2002) offered a typology of a spectrum of school leadership styles across four matched pairs of schools within the same high stakes testing environment (climate), examining the role leadership played over a decade in framing how schools would respond to the testing environment. Principal's philosophies about their staff and roles as leader reflected teacher's approaches to instructional changes and school's long-term achievement gains.

Marshall et. al. (2004) also studied on the relationship among these variables - school distinct health, total quality, principal's behavior of school organization and student achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine the congruence among W.E Deming's 14 points for total quality management (TQM), the organizational health of school distinct and students achievements They found a high correlation (0.88) between the number of Deming's points



implemented within school districts and overall organizational health and also found a significant relation ( $p < 0.01$ ) between organizational health and students 'achievement.

## CONCLUSIONS

In brief, above researchers conducted on the relationship of leadership behavior and climate of organization revealed contradictory results and thus, it is not possible to draw any definite inference on the basis of the findings of these researchers. Therefore, there is a need to conduct some more researchers with more rigorous designs to know the impact of principal's leadership behavior on the various aspects of organizational climate responsible for improving the quality of education as well as the environment of the organization.

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