EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR – A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Mrs. S. NANDHINI
UGC – NET Junior Research Fellow, School of Management, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore - 641 046.
E-Mail: bhuvanaa.suresh@gmail.com

Dr. RUPA GUNASEELAN
Professor, Bharathiar School of Management and Entrepreneurship Development, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore - 641 046.
E-Mail: rupaguna@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Educational leadership is the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils, and parents toward achieving common educational aims. International evidence suggests that educational reform’s progress depends on teachers’ individual and collective capacity and its link with school wide capacity for promoting pupils’ learning. By reviewing the related literature (Hallinger & Heck, 1996 et al.), Leadership research emphasizes that leadership effects operate indirectly to promote student outcomes by supporting and enhancing conditions for teaching and learning through direct impacts on teachers and their work. Leadership in this sense is considered, a driver of change and a catalytic agent for improvement in student learning. This review is suggesting future researchers that, there is a need for existence of systematic knowledge about the characteristics, roles, behaviors and relative effectiveness of local educational authorities in terms leading and supporting school improvement in developing countries as a scope. Also the study concludes thus educational leadership as an applied discipline of learning offers tremendous opportunities for educators, academics and policy makers to establish overt and covert connections between the different components or sub systems that constitute the system of education.

KEYWORDS

Educational leadership, Leader behaviors, existence of systematic knowledge, student learning, system of education.
INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership is the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils, and parents toward achieving common educational aims. Values, morals and ethics are the very stuff of leadership and administrative style. The leader is the one who can best perceive and best resolve value conflicts. If there are no value conflicts then there is no need for leadership. International evidence suggests that educational reform’s progress depends on teachers’ individual and collective capacity and its link with school-wide capacity for promoting pupils’ learning. Building capacity is therefore critical. Capacity is a complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organizational conditions and culture, and infrastructure of support. Put together, it gives individuals, groups, whole school communities and school systems the power to get involved in and sustain learning over time. Developing professional learning communities appears to hold considerable promise for capacity building for sustainable improvement. As such, it has become a ‘hot topic’ in many countries.

The role of leadership has been highly touted as necessary for improving schools for the benefit of all students (Hallinger & Heck, 1996 et al). Efforts to understand the school improvement process and how it works to enhance students’ academic achievement have flourished recently. Yet, despite all we know about effective school improvement and leadership, sustainable school improvement is not happening in many schools (Elmore, 2000). Particular type of leadership is especially visible in high performing schools and school districts. This type of leadership can best be labeled ‘leadership for learning’, ‘instructionally focused leadership’ or ‘leadership for school improvement.’

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on characteristics of effective school managers and leaders focuses primarily on principals, despite a growing interest in models of shared or distributed leadership. The evidence about successful principals in developed countries explores practices, behaviors and competencies associated with positive indicators of quality and improvement in teaching and learning. Generally, there is convergence in a set of key leadership practices associated with principal effectiveness when enacted in a coherent goal-focused way (Louis et al, 2010; Robinson et al 2009; Day & Sammons 2013): e.g., developing consensus on school goals focused on student learning; developing teacher knowledge and skills to effectively teach; creating workplace conditions and relationships that support teaching and learning (e.g., time for teachers to plan and learn together, parent/community involvement); and managing the instructional program to support pursuit of school goals (e.g., resourcing, staffing, monitoring and use of assessment data for decisions about improvement in teaching and learning, and ensuring an orderly climate conducive for learning).
The professional development of effective school managers and leaders is an area accompanied by increasing evidence in the last decade. Common findings from international research on effective principal development programs (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2007; Mitgang, 2013; Mendels and Mitgang, 2013) include the following: (a) principals need pre-service and ongoing development for both management and instructional leadership responsibilities; (b) effective principal programs are linked to principal competency standards and develop practices associated with school success (e.g. cultivating a shared vision, leading instructional improvement, developing organizational capacity, and managing change); and (c) principal development programs delivered by universities are most effective when they are integrated with provisions for mentoring of new principals and with ongoing professional learning supports provided by local education authorities.

Research on school leadership development programs in developing countries, although less available and accessible, focuses more on the general preparation for school leadership than on evidence program effectiveness. The research describes training and development for principals occurring in different forms, including indirect preparation through performance of previous leadership roles, participation in in-service training courses, and attending conferences, as well as personal initiatives of individual principals. In many developing countries (e.g. Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, South Africa) there are no system-wide provisions or funding for initial preparation of principals and in-service courses and programs are few and irregular in terms of quality. As a consequence, most of their preparation is informal, practical and happens within the workplace (Bush & Oduro, 2006; DeJaeghere, Williams, and Kyeyune, 2009; Ibrahim, 2011). These seem is the case for secondary school principals as well, where preparation for school leaders is unsystematic and most are ill prepared for the job (Leu et al. 2005).

Research on school principals and their work in developing countries typically deals with issues concerning their limited authority, autocratic leadership styles, the role of principals on teacher evaluation, low degree of change initiation, and lack of management or instructional leadership functions and capacity (Oplatka, 2004; Oduro et al., 2007). Few studies explore elements hindering or preventing leaders to implement more effective practices in their schools on their own or in response to principal training initiatives. As previously noted, no systematic knowledge exists about the characteristics, roles, behaviors and relative effectiveness of local educational authorities in terms leading and supporting school improvement in developing countries.

Leaders in high-performing schools devote considerable energy to ‘the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community’ (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 10; see also Murphy & Hallinger, 1985; Wilson & Corcoran, 1988). On the
development end of the continuum, leaders ensure that the vision and mission of the school are crafted with and among stakeholders (Brookover et al., 1979). They also ensure that a variety of sources of data that illuminate student learning are used in the forging of vision and goals (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). In particular, they make certain that (a) assessment data related to student learning, (b) demographic data pertaining to students and the community, and (c) information on patterns of opportunity to learn are featured in the development process (Wimpelberg, 1986).

While there are ongoing debates about the relative effectiveness of alternative models of school leadership (e.g. transformational versus instructional/pedagogical), critical literature on this topic supports the greater impact of instructional leadership on students’ outcomes (Robinson et al, 2009; Day & Sammons, 2013). Leadership scholars caution, however, that leadership styles are not mutually exclusive, and are generally inclined to promote a combination of approaches to ensure school success. Leadership research emphasizes that leadership effects operate indirectly to promote student outcomes by supporting and enhancing conditions for teaching and learning through direct impacts on teachers and their work (Day & Sammons, 2013; Robinson et al., 2009). Leadership in this sense is considered a driver of change and a catalytic agent for improvement (Bryk et al., 2010) in student learning not a direct causal influence.

There are different approaches to school leadership development. The effective programs evidence suggests offering an array of opportunities for learning grounded in practice including problem-based learning; action research; field-based projects; journal writing; portfolios based on feedback and ongoing self, peer, and family assessment; and activities to develop skills such as supervised internships, analysis of classroom, on-the-job observations, establishing collegial learning networks with other principals, mentoring and peer coaching (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Mendels and Mitgang, 2013).

THEORY BEHIND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership is seen as a prime factor in improving school effectiveness. Leadership makes a difference. Effective leadership improves schools. Learner achievement in a school rarely exceeds the quality of its leadership. Three (of the many) factors that influence learners’ achievements are: parental involvement, the quality of teaching, and school leadership. Leadership is strongly associated with school performance. Inspection reports from organizations such as OfSTEd (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills in England) suggest that there are no instances of a failing school being ‘turned around’ in the absence of good leadership. Good leadership is not only important in itself; it is also a powerful way to improve classroom teaching.
The diversity of views about leadership results in a number of perspectives. These include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>Focuses on the school’s core business: teaching, learning, pupil’s progress and achievements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>It is concerned with the commitment of colleagues, leading change, improving performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Leadership</td>
<td>Emphasizes the importance of values, vision and ethical leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative Leadership</td>
<td>Stresses the importance of including colleagues, shared decision-making and social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Leadership</td>
<td>Focuses on the importance of defining functions, tasks and behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Leadership</td>
<td>Highlights how leaders respond to the particular organizational circumstances and challenges they face and encounter over time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEADERSHIP MODEL**

The leadership framework as a model of educational leadership begins at the left-hand side of the model where the leadership behaviors are heavily shaped by four major conditions: (a) the previous experiences of a leader; (b) the knowledge base the leader amasses over time; (c) the types of personal characteristics a leader brings to the job (e.g., achievement need, energy level); and (d) the set of values and beliefs that help define a leader (e.g., beliefs regarding the appropriate role for subordinates in decision processes).

Leader’s behaviors as impacting on factors both at the school level and the classroom level. Model describes the impact of leader behaviors in terms of a number of valued outcomes at three periods of time: indicators of in-school achievement (e.g., grades on common final exams), measures of performance at exit from school (e.g., graduation), and more distal indices of accomplishment (e.g., college graduation). The model also posits that outcomes be viewed using ‘a tripartite perspective’—high overall levels of student achievement (quality), growth or gain (value added), and consistency of achievement across all subpopulations of the student body (equality)’ (Murphy et al., 1986, p. 154). Finally, the model acknowledges that context plays a significant role in the exercise of leadership for school improvement.
Consistent with the best literature in this area (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2003), we see that the impact of leadership behaviors in terms of valued outcomes is indirect. That is, it is mediated by school operations and classroom activities. Or more to the point, leaders influence the factors that, in turn, influence the outcomes (e.g. student graduation).

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The literature on school managers and leaders, particularly in developing world contexts, focuses attention primarily on school principals. Research on school management leadership practice in developing world contexts has not explored the practice and potential for shared and distributed school leadership to accomplish school goals.

Leadership models and styles described in the literature suggest a common set of competencies and skills across countries. This might be the result of researchers around the world using the same models of leadership (instructional, transformational, and distributed) (Oduro et al, 2007). Future research may contribute to theory as well as to policy and practice through further exploration of effective leadership beliefs and practices that are sensitive to contextual differences.

Few studies explore elements hindering or preventing leaders to implement more effective practices in their schools on their own or in response to principal training initiatives. As previously noted, no systematic knowledge exists about the characteristics, roles, behaviors and relative effectiveness of local educational authorities in terms leading and supporting school improvement in developing countries.
CONCLUSION

This review has summarized a broad range of related literature. Our purpose was to summarize the starting points for a major new effort to better understand the links between leadership and student learning. Of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence led us to the conclusion that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction. Furthermore, effective leadership has the greatest impact in those circumstances in which it is most needed. This evidence supports the present widespread interest in improving leadership as a key to the successful implementation of large-scale reforms. Thus Educational leadership as an applied discipline of learning offers tremendous opportunities for educators, academics and policy makers to establish overt and covert connections between the different components (or sub systems) that constitute the system of education. By studying the interconnectedness between sub systems, it provides frameworks that are more inclusive and accepting of multiple needs of the various actors in the education system.

REFERENCES


