

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF PRINCIPAL ON TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION

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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on two interrelated areas: The principal's leadership style and teacher job satisfaction. In the field of education most principals are unable to run the school in an efficient manner. Their role as principals has drastically changed over time. Responsibility of developing an effective school lies with the school principal. In order to achieve this responsibility, self-motivated teacher support is very important. It has been revealed that positive leadership behavior of the principal and the decision making process have made an impact in developing teachers' interest on school activities, loyalty and job satisfaction. (Hettige, 1996)

Although a principal is expected to perform the role of a "Professional Leader", his/her enacted role is confined to that of an "administrator" (New Education Act for General Education in Sri Lanka, 2009:p137). The report further states that, this problematic situation has spread island wide. Such situations will create problems in school management and leadership. It is also questionable whether most school principals have a clear understanding of their role as a principal.

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of education, principals and teachers should render their service with commitment. "It is almost a truism to state that no education system is better than the commitment of the teacher community. Good education requires a contented community of teachers." (New Education Act for General Education in Sri Lanka, 2009:p10) Teachers are the largest professional body in the school, their input towards the school could influence the school greatly. When teachers are satisfied with their job, they perform well. The reverse will impact the school in a negative manner.

It was identified that the majority of the graduate teachers are dissatisfied with their profession. (De Zoysa, 1983) Teachers might be dissatisfied due to different reasons. However, school leadership style could influence and change their attitudes and behaviors.

Reports reveal that social respect towards the teaching profession has deteriorated over the years.

All educational reforms have tried to enhance the professional respect of teachers, and incentives have been suggested to improve their job satisfaction.

It was also stressed that there is an urgent need of organizing professional training for both principals and teachers. Their misunderstandings make the problems more complicated. When principals are unable to have a clear idea about their leadership, their leadership styles may tend to negatively influence teacher job satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Identify leadership styles practiced by school principals
2. Identify expected leadership styles by teachers in order to improve their job satisfaction
3. Examine steps taken by principals to improve teacher job satisfaction
4. Examine steps taken by teachers to improve their job satisfaction under existing leadership of principal.

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METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out with a stratified random sample of twelve schools in the Jayawardhanapura Zone in the Colombo district. The sample is 12% of the total population of schools in Jayawardhanapura Zone. These schools represented the four types of schools namely 1AB, 1C, Type 2 & Type 3. Three schools of each type were included in the sample. From the selected schools, randomly selected 225 teachers and 12 principals were included in the sample.

Questionnaires and interviews were the main instruments of data collection. Both instruments were executed among teachers and principals. The questionnaire had three main parts. Part A captured general information about the subject. Part B had direct questions with answers to select from and Part C consisted with open ended questions. All questions were in line with the research objectives. The questionnaire executed among Principals focused on achieving 1st and 3rd objectives. Questionnaire executed among teachers focused on achieving 1st, 2nd and 4th objectives. The interviews were conducted with all principals and focus group discussion was carried out with 25% of teacher sample in each school.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to tabulate data and simple descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyze and presented using percentages and graphs. Data obtained through open ended questions and interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study the researcher focused only on four major leadership styles. Those were Participatory, Democratic, Laisser-faire and Autocratic leadership styles. Most of the principals identify themselves as participatory and democratic leaders. In practice they have followed all the four types of leadership styles according to the context and situations. It was revealed even most democratic leaders have shown totally autocratic behaviour in particular instances.

In the case of teachers, about 90% of them have stated that their principals are democratic and participatory leaders.

It was also revealed that the majority of teachers agree that their principals were not practicing neither laissez-faire nor autocratic leadership styles, and the teachers were not supportive of such leadership style.

About 90% of teachers expressed that they want their principals to be more democratic and participatory in order to improve their job satisfaction. This finding was supported by many other studies (Hettige: 1996, Bogler: 2001, Barnett *et al*: 2005) that confirmed positive relationship between leadership style and teacher job satisfaction.

This study brought out evidence that most of the principals are concerned about the job satisfaction of their teachers'. They also understood the need to be democratic and participatory to enhance the teacher performance and job satisfaction. However the focus group discussion revealed that about 30% of teachers believed that the principals were unconcerned and biased.

The study revealed that a substantial number of teachers (44.7%) were not satisfied with the leadership style of the principal and expressed their desire to get a transfer to another school due to job dissatisfaction.

There is evidence in this study that most of the school principals remain as mere administrators and failed to understand their important role, that of being academic leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prescribed leadership training should be conducted for principals in order to improve their leadership qualities.
- Principals should be encouraged to update their leadership knowledge by following different training programmes while being in service.
- A proper mechanism should be developed in identifying job satisfaction of teachers.
- Different short term professional training programmes should be introduced in order to improve professional development of teachers.
- In order to improve the teacher job satisfaction, the attitudes towards the teaching profession among teachers should be changed. Training programmes should focus on developing positive attitudes among teachers.

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