Teachers’ Perceptions of School Principals’ Leadership Behaviours in the UAE

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Definition

Leadership is frequently regarded as an aspect of management. Bennis and Nanus (1985, p. 21) advise that “Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing”.

According to Bush (2003, p. 5), “there is no agreed definition of the concept of leadership”, while Yukl (2002, pp. 4-5) argues that “the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective”.

In sum, Northfield (1992, p. 100) stresses: “For the principal as for any educative leader, the key features are the leader (as learner) providing opportunities for participants to develop personal understanding and encouraging the conditions for reflection in practice”.
Literature Review

Skills for Educational Leaders:

• Sass (1989), Stanton (1994) – interpersonal communication skills, human relations, and leadership

• Harrill (1990), Harrison (1993), Hutchinson (1988), Rouss (1992) and Jolly (1995) – human relations, interpersonal skills
Flawed Leadership Behaviours

• Bulach (1998) - assessed 51 school leaders – conclusion: 50% weaknesses in human relations

• Kramer (1993) - 35 studies: similar findings

• Hogan, Raskin and Fazzini (1990) – investigated 3 types of flawed leadership: conclusion - individuals could possess well-developed social skills and an attractive interpersonal style, yet still exhibit flawed leadership behaviours
Mistakes Practised by Principals

Bulach, Boothe, & Pickett (1998), surveyed 375 teachers and produced 15 categories of perceived mistakes practised by principals:

- Poor human relations skills
- Poor interpersonal communication skills
- A lack of vision
- Failure to lead
- Avoidance of conflict
- Lack of knowledge about instruction/curriculum
- A control orientation
- Lack of ethics or character
- Forgetting what it is like to be a teacher
- Inconsistency
- Showing favouritism
- Failure to hold staff accountable
- Failure to follow through
- Making snap judgements
- Interrupting instruction with public-address system announcements
Other Ineffective Behaviours

- Lack of trust and openness
- Failure to circulate with staff
- Not calling teachers by their names
- Failure to delegate
- Failure to compliment staff
- Failure to motivate and empower staff
Leadership Style in UAE Schools

- The leadership style that prevails in schools can be defined as **transactional** which is characterised by the following:
  - The leader or leadership team sets the standards and monitors performance
  - Commitment is implicit in the role: individuals are expected to follow the system
  - Positive and negative feedback is given from ‘above’
  - The system seeks efficiency in meeting targets (Busher & Harris, 1999); (Drodge & Cooper, 1997)
Research Methodology

The Participants

100 male and female teachers who participated in this study were teaching in primary and secondary schools in the UAE.

Data Collection Instrument

The quantitative instrument used in this study was a survey (Bulach, Boothe, & Michael, 1999). The instrument consists of 19 positive and 29 negative behaviours. The participants were asked to respond on a Likert five-point scale ranging from never (scored as a 1.0) to always (scored as a 5.0) in terms of how frequently their principal practised each behaviour. Negative behaviours were reversely scored.
Findings

An analysis of the data indicated flawed leadership behaviours in **three** domains:

- human relations
- trust
- instructional leadership
Recommendations

- Establish, implement and achieve academic standards
- Be an instructional source for your staff
- Create a learning-oriented school culture and climate
- Communicate your school’s vision and mission to staff and students
- Set high but attainable expectations for your staff and yourself
- Develop educator leaders
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with students, staff, and parents (McEwan, 2003)
Limitations of the Research

- Level of understanding of the instrument items by participants (positive and negative behaviours)
- Trust in the anonymity of the results
- Lack of qualitative component
10 Principles for Principals

Listen
Empathise
Advise
Delegate
Empower
Respect
Share
Help
Inspire
Praise

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