

Principal Leadership Style and Teacher Satisfaction among a Sample of Secondary School Teachers in Barbados

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This study was designed to investigate the relationship between principal leadership style as measured by the independent variables of planning, decision making, communicating, organizing and coordinating, delegating, evaluating, and social and professional support, and the dependent variable of teacher satisfaction. The study focused on four research questions as follows: (1) what are teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style? (2) Is there a relationship between principals' leadership style and teacher satisfaction? (3) Is there a difference in male and female teachers' perceptions of principal leadership style? (4) Is there a difference in the male and female teachers' level of satisfaction? The study employed purposive sampling to survey a cohort of 101 educators as follows: ninety (90) teachers and eleven (11) principals drawn from eleven secondary schools. The study found significant correlations between the dependent variable of teacher satisfaction and principal leadership style as measured by planning $r = .332$ $p < 0.01$, decision making $r = .326$ $p < 0.01$, communicating $r = .325$ $p < 0.01$, organising $r = .360$ $p < 0.01$, professional support $r = .263$ $p < 0.01$, and evaluating $r = .398$ $p < 0.01$. The study also found a significant difference in one of the sub-scales of principal leadership. In the area of delegation was there a significant difference in the way in which male and female teachers perceived principal leadership style. Female teachers ($M = 42.6$, $SD = 6.0$) reported significantly higher means than male teachers ($M = 39.5$, $SD = 5.5$), $t(88) = -2.449$, $< .05$. However, male teachers ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.1$) and female teachers ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .71$) did not differ significantly on levels of satisfaction, $t(88) = .533$, $p = n.s$. The present research findings suggest that every effort must be made by principals to adapt their leadership styles to promote school environments that would engender greater levels of teacher satisfaction. More specifically, principals would need to engage in leadership practices that promote higher levels of teacher empowerment, and teacher professional development.

Keywords: principal leadership style, teacher satisfaction, Barbados, teacher perceptions.

Introduction

Even to the casual observer it is clear that the contemporary environment of the school principal is more complex. Leaders are expected to lead schools through the challenges posed by an increasingly complex environment, curriculum standards, achievement benchmarks, programmatic requirements, and other policy directives from many sources that generate complicated and unpredictable requirements for schools. At the same time principals are also expected to function in the capacity of human resource manager and ensure that his/her members of staff are sufficiently motivated and satisfied to assist in the realisation of school wide goals. The literature has suggested that much rest on the shoulders of the principal, in fact according to

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the literature on high performing schools, principal leadership is key to effective schools. The question therefore is how is the principal able to navigate in an environment where it seems as if he/she is serving several masters and where perceptions of the principal's leadership could be misconstrued by teachers, parents, students, superiors and civil society. Principals have the unenviable task of keeping all stakeholders satisfied in an era of heightened accountability, which one can argue is akin to 'running the gauntlet'. In this paper, the researcher will restrict the discussion to one stakeholder, the teachers, and examine teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and the relationship between their perceptions and their level of satisfaction.

Objectives

The purpose of this study, which employed a survey research design, was to examine the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and teacher satisfaction. The research questions were: (1) What are teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style? (2) Is there a relationship between principals' leadership style and teacher satisfaction? (3) Is there a difference in male and female teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style? (4) Is there a difference in the male and female teachers' level of satisfaction?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study was symbolic interactionism. This approach to social inquiry is based on three major premises:

- (1) *individuals act toward things and people on the basis of the meanings that things have for them;*
- (2) *the meaning of such things are derived from, or arise out of, the social interaction that individuals have with one another; and*
- (3) *these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by individuals to deal with the things and other people they encounter (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934).*

Put another way symbolic interactionism examines perceptions and meanings that people construct in their social settings. In concert with the perspective of (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934), this study was designed to investigate the meanings teachers and principals constructed from their interaction with each other in the context of the teaching, learning and administrative environment. The purpose was to get an idea of the level of congruence or disparity that existed between teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style and the principals' own perceptions of their leadership style and the impact these perceptions had on the teachers' level of satisfaction.

Relevant Literature

Principal Leadership

A look at the literature indicates that initially, researchers focussed primarily on developing operational definitions of leadership. Cawelti (1982) defined leadership as a product of an environment made up of people and suggested that leaders must be expected to lead, offer a sense of direction, motivate others towards the accomplishment of goals and be concerned with helping others.

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) defined leadership as a process of influencing the

activities of a group or individual in efforts toward goal achievement. Newstrom and Davis (2002) see leadership as the process of influencing and supporting others to work enthusiastically toward achieving objectives. It is the critical factor that helps an individual or a group identify its goals and then motivates and assists in achieving the stated goals.

Over time the researchers shifted their focus to treat the concept of effective schools, effective teachers and by extension effective principals. According to this view, principals in effective schools are assertive leaders, who are willing to act independently in the interest of the school, are committed to school improvements, emphasize instructional leadership and communicate their wishes to their staff and stress academic standards (Shoemaker and Fraser, 1981).

Other researchers have considered the impact of the principal's leadership style on the school as a whole. In this vein are Maehr and Braskamp (1986) who opine that school principals can manipulate the culture, climate and effectiveness of an organisation, and these manipulations affect the job satisfaction of people within the organisation. They maintain that by exercising certain leadership behaviours principals can influence their school's instructional environment, a complex constellation, involving the attitudes and behaviours of teachers, students, parents and the community at large toward education.

Griffith (2000) takes the concept of the overarching principal's influence and suggests that it can be encapsulated in six metaphors, Master Teacher, Administrative Agent, Gamesman/Politician, School Manager, Maintenance Manager and Missionary. As Master Teacher, Instructional Leader and Principal Teacher, he/she makes frequent visits to classrooms and provides detailed suggestions for improving the quality. Secondly, as Administrative Agent, he/she sets clear and high achievement goals, maintains an orderly school environment, encourages the teaching of the 'basics', monitors student achievement progress, and is actively immersed in day-to-day school activities.

The principal also emphasizes curriculum and student achievement, provides a positive instructional environment, evaluates student performance, develops instructional improvement plans, supports teachers, and facilitates communication.

In addition he/she maintains a strong task orientation where the focus is on the development of curriculum and instruction rather than on management or human relations activities. Thirdly, he/she is Gamesman/Politician, negotiating and satisfying the many and divergent needs and demands internal and external to the school, is concerned with discerning the needs of the external environment (parent and community), providing a bridge between the external environment and the school, and facilitating coordination among classroom teachers. Fourthly, as School Manager, he/she creates conditions to achieve consensus on instructional programmes, goals, and academic standards; maintains student discipline; allocates school resources effectively; buffers classrooms from outside interferences; knows community power structures; and maintains appropriate relations with parents.

Fifthly, as Maintenance Manager, he/she is concerned with well-designed and operating school support functions, such as programme planning and budgeting, business operations, and differentiating job tasks and positions. He/she is also concerned primarily with resource allocation and student discipline. Sixthly, as Missionary, he/she is concerned with meeting the social needs of students, school staff, and parents through positive school climate; manages interpersonal relations, providing a supportive environment, one in which teachers may make mistakes, not feel at risk, develop open professional, collegial relations, and trust the principal and other teachers.

Research by Harris, Day and Hadfield (2003) while supporting the basic principles of effective schooling, and by implication effective principals, point to some other variables which must be considered in any analysis of principal leadership. Their research showed that the principals who were effective achieved that success because they held and communicated clearly, visions and values which were shared by all the stakeholders in the school, they empowered staff by developing climates of collaboration, by applying high standards to themselves and others, by seeking the support of various influential groups within the school community and by keeping 'ahead of the game' through ensuring that they had a national view of what is and what is to come.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the role of principal is not an easy one; in fact, Newstrom and Davis (2002) make the point that the principal in today's school is expected to be a type of super person to meet all the demands on his expertise and time.

Principal Leadership and Teacher Satisfaction

Henderson and Henderson (1996) in a survey of Texas public school teachers in 1996 found that 44 percent of respondents were seriously considering leaving the profession. According to a 2004 report from the National Centre for Educational Statistics, 7.4 % of teachers left the profession between 1999 and 2001. An increase as compared to previous Teacher Follow-Up Surveys; while approximately 9% and 23 % of public and private school teachers left the profession between 1999 and 2002, (Latham and Vogt 2007).

This state of affairs in schools brings into focus the role of the principal and teachers' perception of his/her leadership style. An examination of the Caribbean situation reveals a comparable picture to what obtains in the American and British educational jurisdictions. Wilson (1980) studied the effects of administrative resource factors on teacher satisfaction and found that principals' communication patterns, school climate, school size, workload and availability of resources influenced the teachers' job satisfaction among a sample of Jamaican teachers.

Brown (1983) in Jamaica also looked at job satisfaction and principal leadership style among a sample of college teachers and found that leadership style was a factor influencing teacher satisfaction. Likewise Dunn (1986) and Jones (1988) in Jamaica investigated leadership style and its relationship to various school variables. Dunn (1986) found that the teachers' perception of leadership style and group cohesion influenced job satisfaction while, Jones (1988) discovered among other things, that delegation, which is in the domain of principal leadership was significantly related to job satisfaction.

Supersaud (1993) looking at the Trinidadian experience found that there was a correlation between the level of participative decision making exercised by the principal and the level of commitment and morale among teachers. Simmonds (1994) in Jamaica revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between teachers' perceived leadership behaviour of principals and teacher performance, while James (1998) in St Vincent identified a relationship among selected teacher factors and levels of job satisfaction.

Bogler (2001) also reported some findings that point to principal leadership style. The most salient findings are as follows: teachers' occupational perceptions strongly affect teachers' satisfaction. However, teachers' occupational perceptions are influenced by principals' transformational leadership and by participative decision making style. Principals' transformational leadership affects teachers' satisfaction both directly and indirectly through teachers' occupational perceptions. Principals' transactional leadership affects teachers negatively and teachers' satisfaction increases as they perceive their principals' leadership style as more

transformational and less transactional.

Based on the foregoing it follows that the way in which teachers perceive principal leadership style is worthy of closer examination. But what exactly is perception? Perception as a psychological construct is defined as the selection, organisation and interpretation of sensory input. It involves organising and translating sensory input into something meaningful (Weitan, 2007).

When applied to the relationship between the principals and the teachers, the sensory input could be regarded as all those symbols, clues and messages, verbal and non-verbal, that teachers receive from principals in the exercise of their leadership function. Earlier work by Pashiardis (1998) suggested that the effectiveness of leaders is mainly dependent on how others view them as leaders, and how the principals themselves perceived their leadership style. Principals may have some ideas about themselves and the way they lead their schools, consequently they act and perform their duties based on these ideas and also based on their perceptions of themselves as leaders, however if their staffs perceive them in different ways, then it is almost certain that the leaders will have problems in performing their duties. If the views of the principals match the views of the staffs, things work out fine. Pashiardis (1998) therefore, concludes that it is important to find out whether the teachers' views are in congruence with those of the principals regarding principal leadership and management of the daily affairs of the schools, since all involved behave according to their own perceptions and not according to the way things really are, therefore perception is reality.

To a large extent, it would be reasonable to argue that there are many parallels between the American and Barbadian education jurisdictions. Preliminary discussions with members of the teaching fraternity seem to suggest that there is a high degree of frustration, dissatisfaction and, in some cases, cynicism within the teaching profession. According to these members of the teaching fraternity, there are many factors which have led to this state of affairs. These include: the ever increasing workload of teachers, inconsistent support from the Ministry of Education, and the emergence of a litigation conscious parent and student body.

An indication of the desire to get out of teaching in Barbadian schools can be seen in the large number of teachers who were prepared to resign to take up teaching stints in New York City schools. According to the Chief Education Officer, reported in Barbados Advocate dated Thursday May 03, 2001, the Ministry of Education in Barbados had only agreed to grant 20 teachers leave to teach in the New York schools, however more than 300 persons had applied. Significantly, statistical evidence sourced from The Barbados Ministry of Education, indicated that during the period 2001 and 2002, 45 teachers resigned from the teaching service. Whilst over the period 2001 - 2003 at least 131 persons opted for early retirement. There is a paucity of research in Barbados that speaks to whether principal leadership correlates with teacher satisfaction, or indeed what are the factors that are forcing teachers in Barbados to be desirous of exiting the service; therefore, this research paper is quite timely.

Method

Participants

In Barbados there are 23 secondary schools. To determine the schools from which the teachers and principals would be drawn, the researcher applied a purposive method of sampling to ensure a high degree of representativeness. As a result schools were chosen from the rural, urban and suburban areas as well as schools with low, medium and high levels of student academic ability (as determined by the Barbados Secondary Common Entrance Exam). After the schools were

selected a random sample methodology was used to select a representative sample of junior and senior teachers from each school. This process yielded a sample of one hundred (100) teachers and eleven (11) principals; however, only 90 of the teacher questionnaires were usable.

Of the 101 respondents in the study 60.4 percent were female and 39.6 were male. In terms of age 32.7 percent of the respondents were in the 40 - 49 age group, while 25.7 percent of respondents came from the 50 - 59 age group. In addition 82.2 percent of the respondents were appointed and 41.6 percent of the respondents were teaching for at least ten years.

In terms of qualifications and school location, 70.3 percent of the respondents were trained graduates, while 63.4 percent and 50.5 percent represented those respondents who were drawn from newer secondary schools and the rural areas respectively.

Instrumentation

The variables for leadership, and job satisfaction were measured using questionnaire items produced by Jones (1988) in a study entitled "Principal Leadership Style its Expression on Teacher Satisfaction". Cronbach's alpha index of internal consistency reliability were computed and indicated that the questionnaire items did effectively measure what they were supposed to measure. The average item score on the Cronbach's alpha was 0.94. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of twenty teachers and two principals in the target population of the study. These persons were asked to comment on the clarity and appropriateness of the items, and to highlight any evidence of ambiguity. At the end of the exercise, some minor changes were made. The revised questionnaire was found to be highly reliable, receiving a Cronbach's alpha score of .91.

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to a group consisting of eleven (11) principals and one hundred (100) teachers from public secondary schools in Barbados. All of the principals' questionnaires were completed; however, ten of the teacher questionnaires were not completed, and were therefore not usable. Thus the response rate for the questionnaires was 100 % and 90 % for principals and teachers respectively.

Data Analysis

Research question 1 was analysed using descriptive statistics, namely Means and Standard Deviations, research question 2 was analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and research questions 3 and 4 were analysed using the Independent t test.

Results and discussion

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style?

Descriptive statistics were employed to determine the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style. As it relates to teacher perceptions the findings presented in Table 1-1, suggest that there is a low spread of scores around the mean as it relates to the variables, professional support, evaluating, and delegating. There was a moderate spread of scores around the mean as it relates to planning, communicating, and organising. While on the variable decision making, there was a greater spread of scores around the mean. Furthermore, a comparison of the means and the maximum scores on the variables indicate that the scores are relatively close which suggests that the teachers in the study scored the principals quite highly on the leadership variables.

The findings indicated that in general teachers' perceptions of principal leadership style were similar.

Table 1-1 Simple descriptive statistics: teacher perceptions of principal leadership style

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Planning	74.8	14.0
Decision Making	101	20.8
Communicating	74.2	13.6
Organizing	76.9	14.1
Professional Support	56.2	6.8
Evaluating	49.0	9.2
Delegating	41.4	6.0

These findings were consistent with the findings of Jones (1988) who also reported that teachers considered the principals to be performing above the average in all cases except delegation. The principals were assessed as performing below the mid-point on that variable. In contrast, in this study the principals were assessed as performing above the mid-point on the variable delegating. This begs the question as to whether the secondary school principals in this study were more in favour of leadership density than their counterparts in Jamaica, as evidenced by their higher scores on delegation. The apparent disparity in scores on delegation can be regarded as a function of the increasing workload of the modern day principal. It can be argued that the study by Jones was completed in 1988, an era when arguably, there were less demands on the time of the principals, while today, as was reported in the literature, Leithwood and Riehl (2003), the principal must be a virtual super leader. Hence, in the interest of effective leadership, the principal is well served by promoting greater levels of leadership density and delegation.

Evidence to support the above assertions comes from John and Taylor (1999) whose study also reported that teachers were consistent in their perceptions of principal leadership and regarded the principals' leadership as characterised by high consideration and high initiating structure. Significantly, a leader who is high in initiating structure emphasizes schedules and specific work assignments, establishes channels of communication and sees to it that the followers are working up to capacity, while the leader high in consideration listens to staff and is approachable, (Lunenburg and Orstein 1991).

Put differently, the type of leader outlined would be keen on the promotion of leadership density and delegation. The findings were also in accord with those of Persico (2001) who found that teachers were quite consistent in their positive perceptions of the level of leadership provided by their principals.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between principal leadership style and teacher satisfaction?

Teacher satisfaction showed significant correlations with planning $r = .332$ $p < 0.01$, decision making $r = .326$ $p < 0.01$, communicating $r = .325$ $p < 0.01$, organising $r = .360$ $p < 0.01$, professional support $r = .263$ $p < 0.01$, and evaluating $r = .398$ $p < 0.01$.

The results which showed that there were statistically significant correlations between the independent and dependent variables are consistent with those observed by Jones (1988). The results of the study revealed that for teachers there were significant interrelationships among the variables which measured leadership style. Delegation was found to be significantly related to job satisfaction while decision making, social and professional support and evaluation were significant correlates of morale.

Table 1-2 Summary of intercorrelations of principal leadership and teacher satisfaction

<i>Measure</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Planning	1							
2. D.Making	.869**							
3. Communicating	.834**	.910**						
4. Organizing	.859**	.877**	.893**					
5. P. Support	.389**	.484**	.444**	.526**				
6. Evaluating	.616**	.643**	.617**	.669**	.419**			
7. Delegating	.428**	.405**	.426**	.462**	.205**	.608**		
8. Satisfaction	.323**	.326**	.325**	.360**	.263**	.398**	.177	1

Note. Intercorrelations for teacher participants (n=90). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Again, these findings accord with those of Jones (1988) who found that teachers' perception of principals skills in planning, delegating, organising and coordinating, communicating, and social and professional support were significantly related to their job satisfaction.

Speaking to the link between satisfaction and communication, Kottkamp, Mulhern and Hoy (1987) pointed out that in an open climate, where principals are perceived as democratic managers, who maintain channels of communication with the staff; teachers would be more satisfied with their jobs as compared to schools where principals exhibit harsh and authoritative attitudes.

The nexus between decision making and job satisfaction was addressed by Imper, Neidt and Reyes (1990), who provided evidence to suggest that the greater the involvement of teachers in decision making processes, the higher the level of job satisfaction. Perie and Baker (1997) found that administrative support and leadership among other things were conditions associated with teacher satisfaction. The more favourable the working conditions were, the higher the job satisfaction scores.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in male and female teachers' perception of principal leadership style?

The Student 't' test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in the scores of male and female teachers, on the principal leadership variables. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in one of the sub-scales of principal leadership style. In the area of delegation was there a significant difference in the way in which male and female teachers perceived principal leadership style. Female teachers (M = 42.6, SD = 6.0) reported significantly higher means than male teachers (M = 39.5, SD = 5.5), $t(88) = -2.449, < .05$, see Table 1-3 below.

Table 1-3 T Test for male and female teachers' perception of principal leadership

	Sex		t	df
	Males	Females		
Delegating	39.52 (5.5)	42.64 (6.0)	-2.449*	88

Note. $P < 0.05$. Standard Deviations appear in parenthesis below means. Males N = 34, Females N = 56

The statistically significant difference on the variable of delegation may be due to a multiplicity of reasons. On the one hand, one can argue that men tend to like to function on their own, and therefore dislike micro management. In an Irish study of teachers Johnston (1986) found differences according to gender interplay of teachers and leaders. Male teachers preferred female leaders to be facilitative and directing, while female teachers, preferred female leaders to be coordinators and controllers. Male teachers preferred male leaders to be directors and coordinators, while female teachers preferred them as facilitative and authoritative.

On the other hand, it may also be argued that women function better or prefer micro management. Thirdly, one can also advance the cultural context argument. Barbados, like most other Caribbean countries was shaped by a culture that tended to promote male domination. For example, males traditionally have been the persons who have been in leadership roles, hence it is quite plausible to argue that men, having been socialised to be in charge, may have a greater need for laissez- faire approaches from principals as this would allow them greater freedom to use their initiative. Since it was the male teachers rather than the female teachers who scored the principals lower on the issue of delegation, there are implications for principals in the area of delegation.

The fact that male teachers scored lower than their female counterparts, on the variable, delegation, is also worthy of further discussion, as it relates to distributive leadership. According, to Gold, Evans, Earley, Haplin and Collarbone (2003) there is a relationship between the level of satisfaction recorded by teachers and delegation as practised by the principal. In one large secondary school which formed part of a case study of ten effective school leaders, one staff member was reported as extolling the virtues of the principal, mainly because of the fact that delegation was practised. Gold et al (2003) concluded that one way of encouraging teachers to stay in teaching was by giving them the opportunity to take on leadership roles.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in the male and female teachers’ level of satisfaction?

The Student t was used to determine if there was a significant difference in the level of male and female teacher satisfaction. Male teachers (M = 3.10, SD = 1.1) and female teachers (M = 3.00, SD = .71) did not differ significantly on levels of satisfaction, $t(88) = .533$, $p = n.s.$, see Table 1-4 below.

Table 1-4 T Test for male and female teachers’ satisfaction

	Sex		t	df
	Males	Females		
Satisfaction	3.10 (1.1)	3.00 (.71)	.553	88

Note. Standard Deviations appear in parenthesis below means. Males N = 34, Females N =56

This finding was in concert with that of Eldred (2010) who conducted a similar study and found that there was not a significant difference in the male and female teachers’ level of job satisfaction. This finding was also significant in terms of the low mean scores for satisfaction. The low mean scores therefore indicate that satisfaction levels were extremely low.

When one considers this finding on its own, it is not surprising and would suggest that male and female teachers are impacted in similar ways by the school environment and therefore experience similar levels of satisfaction. However, when one considers the finding in light of the finding on teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership, it appears quite enigmatic. In research question 1, the teachers according to the mean scores rated the principals quite highly, yet when the teachers were asked to indirectly evaluate the principal through the satisfaction variable the mean scores were quite low. The teacher satisfaction variable was measured using a five point Likert scale, with twelve items that asked them how satisfied they were with things such as the measures used to deal with misconduct, the expectations of the principal, advice given by the principal, involvement in decision making, and opportunities for training and professional development. The maximum possible score for respondents was therefore sixty (60), while the minimum was five (5). This therefore suggests that there are other variables which are impacting on teachers’ perception of principal leadership style, and teacher satisfaction.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings in this study confirmed the positive correlation between principal leadership style and teacher satisfaction. The question that needs to be answered is what can be done to engender greater levels of satisfaction among teachers? A good starting point would be the facilitation of teachers in the areas of professional development, leadership density, and involvement in decision making. At the same time, the findings also suggest that there are other intervening variables which are impacting on the level of teacher satisfaction. These findings point to the need for a further study that would examine the construct of teacher satisfaction and seek to explore some of the possible intervening variables. Indeed, one may even have to consider the extent to which out- of- school factors impact on the level of teacher satisfaction and teachers perceptions of leadership style.

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