

DO LEADERSHIP QUALITIES DETERMINE COMPETENT PRINCIPALS

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ABSTRACT

There has been limited research on how leadership potential is influenced by leadership quality of school principals. The purpose of this quantitative study is to present some of the findings derived from the study of teachers' perception on leadership qualities and leadership competencies of their principals. This study utilized questionnaire titled 'Leadership attributes of my principal' developed by Sharma (2010). This questionnaire comprises of two variables – leadership qualities and leadership competencies of principals. Leadership qualities have eight dimensions while competencies have five. The questionnaire was administered on 154 teachers from reputed private schools in India. The data obtained was subjected to analysis of descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regressions. The findings indicated that principals were rated to be excellent in leadership qualities and competencies by their teachers. Furthermore all the eight dimensions of leadership qualities are proved to be significant determinant for leadership competencies

Keywords: School Principals, Leadership, Leadership Qualities, Leadership Competencies

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades the area of leadership has been studied more extensively than any other aspect of human behavior (Kets de Vries, 1993; Goffee and Jones, 2000; Higgs and Rowland, 2000). However leadership has been the most significant area of research in education especially principal ship. Many researchers (Caldwell, 1998; Cheng, 1994; Hallinger (2005), Hoy and Miskel (2008), Mulford and Silins, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008) have investigated the contribution of school leadership to school improvement and effectiveness. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) have identified 21 specific leadership responsibilities that provide a concrete framework of responsibilities, practice, knowledge, strategies, tools, and resources that principals must accept in order to be effective school leaders. DeFranco and Golden (2003) developed a set of standards that specify the knowledge and skills necessary for school administrators. However these technical skills are also debated by researchers. In view of Sharma (2011), successful leadership is not the result of simply obtaining a position, but rather possessing the knowledge and understanding of successful leadership skills along with the personal ability to effectively implement those skills. Hence, "school leaders need impressive skills to provide effective leadership in our diverse school environments". Such skills are not technical but humanistic. The humanistic skills for effective leadership are supported by various researchers like (Cooper and Sawaf 1997; Ryback 1998 and Dulewicz and Higgs 1999). Research conducted by Sharma (2010), revealed that out of sample of four hundred teachers in Malaysia, over 380 teachers preferred humanistic skills of principal than technical skills. These humanistic skills preferred by the teachers are communication skills, comfort, empathy, decision making, influence, time management, self-management and commitment. According to Sharma (2010), such skills not only strengthen the principal in carrying out his mundane work but attract followers towards his leadership that blends transformational and charismatic leadership. Many researchers in past have studied on elements of effectiveness of leadership in terms of skills and competencies (Higgs and Rowland 2001; Luo and Najjar 2007; Sharma 2010).

However Leadership is not a concept for self but it should be rightly perceived by followers, Sharma (2011). Various researchers Scotti Jr. and William (1997), Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) have linked principals' competencies with perception of teachers. Luo (2004)

stated that perceptions about principals as leaders by their teachers indicate an important dimension to evaluate the leaders capacities. According to him, understanding how teachers perceive their principals leadership capacities has a great significance and providing evidence for improvement of school leadership. Research has also demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of their principals' capabilities and their working conditions will determine the organizational climate and culture of the school. Such perceptions will also impact on the performance of the school.

In a study in America, Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) found that majority of the principals were rated as ineffective by their teachers. This reflects that there is a big discrepancy between the principals' real self and their perception by the teachers. They however reasoned that because teachers do not have leadership experiences and cannot fully understand principals' work, they make subjective judgments, character assessment and stereotypical comments about principals who are dissimilar to themselves. And in Hong Kong, the images of the principal in the mind of pre-service primary teachers were found to be negative. Lee, Walker and Bodycott, (2000). A study by Luo and Najjar (2007), investigated Chinese principal leadership capacities as perceived by master teachers as moderately negative. However researches conducted by Sharma (2010), Sharma, Sun and Kannan (2012) have found the positive ratings for principals by teachers in Asian countries like India, China and Malaysia.

The vast literature on leadership qualities and capacities reflects the attributes of school principals from the perspectives of public school system which is indicative of either presence or absence of attribute or rates low to high. The effectiveness of private school education compared to government schools has been reported by many researchers like (Govinda and Varghese 1996; Murlidharan and Kremer 2007; Kingdon 2007 and Chaudhary 2013). Since 2009, private school enrollment in rural areas has been rising at an annual rate of about 10 percent. If this trend continues, by 2018 India will have 50 percent children in rural areas enrolled in private schools (Chaudhary 2013).

The increase in enrolment in private schools is direct consequence of inability of government schools in providing quality education to students as is evidenced by the following statement from a parent as cited by Chaudhary 2013.

"It is not a question of how much the fees is. We want a good education for our children. The main thing is discipline, which is absent in government schools. Teachers themselves are missing in government schools... Our children's future is unsafe in a government school. Not only is it far away, I feel no one is serious about education there."

Since leadership is linked to effectiveness, principals of private schools are no exception hence should be the focus of study. Though the earlier studies carried out across the globe either talked about leadership qualities or competencies, the purpose of present cutting edge study is four-folded from ratings of leadership attributes of reputed private school principals to identification of influences of qualities on competencies, along with contributing to literature of leadership effectiveness and opening new avenues of research through private schools.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore the rating of teachers on attributes of leadership (qualities and competencies) of the principals of reputed private schools in India, correlation relationships between attributes and influence of leadership qualities on leadership competencies. This study therefore answers the following questions

- What is the rating of principals' leadership attributes?
- Is there any correlation relationship between eight dimensions of leadership qualities of principals?
- What is the influence of dimensions of leadership qualities on leadership competencies of school principals?

Methodology

This quantitative study utilized survey method by administration of questionnaire on the sample drawn from population of private schools in India.

Sample

As stated earlier the focus of study is on leadership qualities and competencies of principals of private schools in India. There are a vast number of private schools in India which are run and managed by big industrial houses or reputed educational groups. These schools are not only recognized for their academic excellence but also students' achievements in co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities, post school admissions in reputed professional colleges besides high reputation in society for teachers' and principals' stability, conduct and quality of produce. Also these schools are open for all irrespective of caste and creed, religion or socio-economic status. All these schools charge very less fees and the maximum financial input comes from the charitable trusts owned by the industrial houses. Fifteen such schools were randomly selected for survey. All these schools have principals on current position for almost ten years and above. Around 154 teachers were selected from these schools while considering their tenure of over ten years

Table 1: Mean & Standard Deviation for Leadership Qualities & Competencies

Leadership Qualities	M	SD	Leadership Competencies	M	SD
Communication Skills	4.24	0.64	School Vision	4.38	0.75
Comfort	4.36	0.47	Instructional Leadership	4.48	0.69
Empathy	4.26	0.46	Organizational Leadership	4.57	0.42
Decision Making	4.39	0.74	Community Leadership	4.32	0.66
Influence	4.6	0.68	Moral & Ethical Leadership	4.27	0.82
Self-Management	4.63	0.5			
Time Management	4.55	0.53			
Commitment	4.33	0.56			
Overall	4.42	0.52		4.4	0.63

The correlation relationships between dimensions of leadership qualities are presented in Table 2. From table 2 it is evident that none of the eight dimensions of leadership qualities have significant

with the principals. All these teachers are Master degree holders with Bachelor of Education. In this study the demographic profile of respondents is not taken into consideration.

Instrument

The instrument titled 'Leadership Attributes of My Principal', developed by Sharma (2010) was used to collect data. This instrument comprises of eight dimensions of leadership qualities which are communication skills, comfort, empathy, decision making, influence, time management, self-management and commitment, and five dimensions of leadership competencies which are school vision, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, community leadership and ethical and moral leadership. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is 0.885 for overall questionnaire. Respondents are required to rate the indicators of leadership attributes utilizing a five point Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is never, 2 is rarely, 3 is sometimes, 4 is usually and 5 is always. For the interpretation means are graded as follows

Means	Indicator	Interpretation
1.00-1.80	Never	Little qualities/ competencies
1.81-2.60	Rarely	Somewhat qualities/competencies
2.61-3.40	Sometimes	Moderate qualities/competencies
3.14-4.20	Usually	Strong qualities/competencies
4.21-5.00	Always	Excellent qualities/competencies

The data collected from administration of questionnaire were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS programme to compute means and standard deviations, correlations between dimensions of qualities and competencies and multiple regression analysis for observing extent of influence of eight dimensions of leadership qualities on competencies. Since the purpose of this paper is not to study significant differences among the variables hence demographic variables are not considered here in analysis.

Analysis & Findings

The means and standard deviations (SDs) calculated for the leadership qualities and leadership competencies are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1 the overall mean for leadership qualities of school principals is 4.42 and for leadership competencies is 4.4. These means are above the theoretical average of 4.21 that indicates that the school principals have excellent leadership qualities and leadership competencies. From the eight dimensions of leadership qualities self-management has the highest mean (M = 4.63; SD= 0.5), while communication skills has the lowest mean (M=4.24; SD = 0.64). From the five dimensions of leadership competencies, organizational leadership has the highest mean (M =4.57; SD=0.42) while moral and ethical leadership has the lowest mean (M=4.27; SD = 0.82).

correlation with each other, hence individual dimension of leadership qualities can be subjected to multiple regression analysis to find their influence on leadership competencies

Table 2 : Correlation between dimensions of leadership qualities.

	Communication skills	Comfort	Empathy	Decision Making	Influence	Self-Management	Time-Management	Commitment
Communication skills	1	0.304	0.252	0.427	0.417	0.431	0.294	0.362
Comfort		1	0.331	0.49	0.402	0.425	0.334	0.35
Empathy			1	0.339	0.404	0.42	0.403	.440*
Decision Making				1	0.213	0.22	0.384	0.416
Influence					1	0.219	0.214	0.305
Self-Management						1	0.207	0.211
Time Management							1	0.301
Commitment								1

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the communication skills factor of leadership qualities is related to the dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table 3. The results are statistically significant ($R^2= 0.86$, $F[1,154]= 54.483$, $p< .001$), indicating that the communication skills factor of

leadership qualities account for 86% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that communication skills factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Table 3: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of communication skills

Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential					
Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
Communication Skills	0.93	0.86	0.82	0.34	
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.979	1	6.979	54.483	.000
Residual	20.097	154	0.13		
Total	27.076	155			

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the comfort factor of leadership qualities is related to the dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table 4. The results are statistically significant ($R^2= 0.79$, $F[1,154]= 49.79$, $p<$

.001), indicating that the comfort factor of leadership qualities account for 79% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that comfort factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Table 4: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of comfort

Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential					
Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
Comfort	0.89	0.79	0.78	0.32	
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.979	1	6.615	49.79	.000
Residual	20.097	154	0.133		
Total	27.076	155			

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the empathy factor of leadership qualities is related to the dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table 5. The results are statistically significant ($R^2= 0.68$, $F[1,154]= 56.133$, $p<$

.001), indicating that the empathy factor of leadership qualities account for 68% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that empathy factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Table 5: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of empathy

Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential					
Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
Empathy	0.83	0.68	0.64	0.33	
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.233	1	7.233	56.133	.000
Residual	19.843	154	0.129		
Total	27.076	155			

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the decision making factor of leadership qualities is related to the dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table 6. The results are statistically significant ($R^2= 0.86$, $F[1,154]= 78.001$,

$p< .001$), indicating that the decision making factor of leadership qualities account for 86% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that decision making factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Table 6: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of decision making

Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential					
Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted	Std. Error of the	
				R Square	Estimate
Decision Making		0.93	0.86	0.84	0.32
		ANOVA			
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9.103	1	9.103	78.001	.000
Residual	17.973	154	0.117		
Total	27.076	155			

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the influence factor of leadership qualities is related to the dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table 7. The results are statistically significant ($R^2= 0.74$, $F[1,154]= 54.122$, $p<$

$.001$), indicating that the influence factor of leadership qualities account for 74% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that influence factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Table 7: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of Influence

Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential					
Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted	Std. Error of the	
				R Square	Estimate
Influence		0.86	0.74	0.72	0.36
		ANOVA			
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8.231	1	8.231	54.122	.000
Residual	18.845	154	0.127		
Total	27.076	155			

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the self- management factor of leadership qualities is related to the dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table 8. The results are statistically significant ($R^2= 0.68$, $F[1,154]= 147.23$,

$p< .001$), indicating that the self -management factor of leadership qualities account for 68% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that self-management factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Table 8: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of Self-Management

Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential					
Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted	Std. Error of the	
				R Square	Estimate
Influence		0.83	0.68	0.64	0.33
		ANOVA			
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.234	1	13.234	147.23	.000
Residual	13.842	154	0.9		
Total	27.076	155			

Table 9: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of Time Management

Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential					
Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted	Std. Error of the	
				R Square	Estimate
Influence		0.80	0.64	0.62	0.30
		ANOVA			
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	17.203	1	17.203	268.302	.000
Residual	9.874	154	0.064		
Total	27.076	155			

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the time management factor of leadership qualities is related to the

dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table 9 The results are statistically significant ($R^2= 0.64$, $F[1,154]= 268.302$ $p< .001$), indicating that the time management factor of leadership

qualities account for 64% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that time management factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which the commitment factor of leadership qualities is related to the dependent factor of leadership competencies is presented in Table

10. The results are statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.74$, $F[1,154] = 82.600$, $p < .001$), indicating that the commitment factor of leadership qualities account for 74% of variance in leadership potential. These results indicate that commitment factor of leadership qualities of school principals influence their leadership competencies.

Table 7: Multiple Regression -Relationship between factors of leadership competencies and the leadership qualities factor of Commitment

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Leadership Potential			
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Influence	0.86	0.74	0.72	0.37
		ANOVA		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Regression	9.453	1	9.453	82.6
Residual	17.624	154	0.114	
Total	27.076	155		
				Sig.
				.000

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The results of this study significantly add to the literature in the context of understanding on leadership qualities and competencies of school principals. Being first of its kind on principals of reputed private schools in India, this cutting edge study opens a discussion forum on preference of humanistic skills over technical skills for school effectiveness. The schools selected as sample for this study are not high fees or selectively permeable for bright students but open for any kind of students irrespective of socio- economic status and family reputation. As observed earlier that the principals as rated by teachers are having excellent leadership qualities with mean (4.42) and leadership competencies with mean (4.40) compared to previous studies by Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995), Lee, Walker and Bodycott, (2000) and Luo and Najjar (2007) where the principals are rated negative by their teachers. This excellent rating of principal could further be linked to the effectiveness of their schools as linked by researchers (Caldwell, 1998; Cheng, 1994; Hallinger (2005), Hoy and Miskel (2008), Mulford and Silins, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008). This finding further supports Barth (1990) who stated, "Show me a good school and I'll show you a good principal".

The relationship between humanistic skills and leadership styles have been discussed a lot in researches carried out in business sector by (Kets de Vries, 1993; Goffee and Jones, 2000; Higgs and Rowland, 2000) and these researchers have advocated qualities of leaders as significant determinant of effective leadership. As evident from Table 3 to Table 10, all of the eight dimensions of leadership qualities have significant influence on leadership competencies, confirms that leadership qualities of principals as significant determinant of leadership competencies. It implies that whether it is leadership in school or business sector effectiveness is outcome of leadership qualities and competencies.

However this study concludes with the new findings like leadership qualities of principals and r being determinant for leadership potential, the findings of this study could further be confirmed by similar type of research on effective and ineffective schools, government and private schools cross national studies taking school categories as moderating variables.

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