
The Role of Efficient and Successful Educators on Improving Teaching Quality and Student Achievement

Sadollah Moradi kor^{1*}, Yedollah Moradi²

¹Educator of Ali ebn Abitaleb High school, Kerman Province, Rabor City, Iran

²Chairman of Shahid Chamran High school, Kerman Province, Baft City, Iran

*Corresponding Author E-mail: S.moradikor@chmail.ir

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ABSTRACT

Special education presents one of the major challenges facing school leaders in this era of comprehensive school reform. Today, schools must provide students with disabilities appropriate access to the general curriculum and effective instructional support. Student progress must be monitored closely and demonstrated through participation in assessment efforts. Research suggests that the principal's role is pivotal in the special education process; however, few school leaders are well prepared for this responsibility. School leaders across the nation are exploring ways to better educate students and improve school performance. School-based management offers a way to promote improvement by decentralizing control from central district offices to individual school sites. It attempts to give school constituents administrators, teachers, parents and other community members more control over what happens in schools.

Keywords: Managers, Teaching Quality, Student Achievement.

Introduction

Effective leadership is widely accepted as being a key constituent in achieving school improvement (Ofsted, 2000). Research findings from diverse countries and different school contexts have revealed the powerful impact of leadership in securing school development and change (Van Velzen et al, 1985; Hopkins, 2001a; West et al, 2000). A major reason for the interest in the links between leadership and student outcomes is the desire of policy makers in many jurisdictions to reduce the persistent disparities in educational achievement between various social and ethnic groups, and their belief that school

leaders play a vital role in doing so (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development, 2001). The confidence of the public and politicians in the capacity of school leaders to make a considerable difference to student outcomes is supported by qualitative research on the impact of leadership on school effectiveness and improvement. The literature on sustainability also sees the quality of school leadership as a key to continued organizational learning and improvement (Datnow, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). However, the picture one gains from the qualitative evidence for

the impact of leadership is very different from that gained from quantitative analyses of the direct and indirect effects of leadership on students' academic and social outcomes. Most subsequent quantitative research has conceptualized the relationship between leadership and student outcomes as indirect, with leaders establishing the conditions (e.g., provision of teacher professional learning opportunities, forms of student grouping) through which teachers make a more direct impact on students. In the only published meta-analysis of such research, Marzano reports an average effect of approximately 0.4 between leadership and student academic outcomes (Marzano et al., 2005). The typical conclusion drawn by quantitative leadership researchers is that school leaders have small and indirect effects on student outcomes that are essentially mediated by teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Thus, there seems to be a contradiction between the evidence that leaders have a weak indirect effect on student outcomes and the expectations of the public and policy makers that leaders make a substantial difference. What explains this paradox? Do public expectations reflect attribution bias and a romantic view of leadership (Meindl, 1998)? Do quantitative researchers systematically underestimate the impact of leadership through research designs and assessment tools that miss the ways in which particular practices of particular leaders are powerful? Is it possible that both views are partially correct? By focusing on types of leadership, rather than on leadership as a unitary construct, we are recognizing that leaders' impact on student outcomes will depend on the particular leadership practices in which they engage. If empirical research indicates that some

leadership practices have stronger impacts on student outcomes than others, then both researchers and practitioners can move beyond a general focus on the impact of leadership, to examining and increasing the frequency and distribution of those practices that make larger positive differences to student outcomes. Two quite different strategies were used to identify types of leadership and their impact. The first strategy involved a comparison between the impact of transformational and instructional leadership. These two leadership theories were chosen because they dominate empirical research on educational leadership and their research programs are mature enough to have yielded sufficient evidence for analysis. Although there have been several reviews published that include discussions of the evidence about the impact on students of these two types of leadership, those reviews have not quantified the impact, and thus it has been difficult to compare them systematically against this criterion (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996). The second strategy for identifying types of leadership involved a more inductive approach based on a detailed analysis of the meaning of items included in the measures of leadership used in studies of the leadership outcome relationship. All survey items, regardless of the underpinning leadership theory, were listed and grouped to reflect common sets of leadership practices. Five groupings or leadership dimensions emerged and their relationship with student outcomes calculated. In today's world science has advanced rapidly, we are not able to keep pace with the science of motion and it passed on to students. Five major benefits were identified for most students in the

co-taught classrooms: improved academic performance, more time with and attention from the teacher, increased emphasis on cognitive strategies and study skills, increased emphasis on social skills, and improved classroom communities (Timperley et al., 2007). Co-teaching partnerships provide unique opportunities for many special educators to share their knowledge and expertise about effective cognitive strategies (e.g., paraphrasing, mnemonics, and reading comprehension) and study skills (e.g., notebook organization, homework completion, and time management). A number of co-teachers, particularly those who worked with upper elementary and middle school students, reported that the increased attention to the development of study skills and cognitive strategies had helped improve many students' classroom performance (Guarino et al., 2006). Many teachers reported that the social skills of students without disabilities also improved in inclusive classrooms. Participants provided a broad array of behaviors as examples of improved social skills, such as fewer fights and verbal disagreements, less name calling, better problem solving, "overt acts of kindness," better materials sharing, fewer classroom cliques, and more cooperation during group work assignments (Coburn and Stein, 2010). As noted earlier, many of the co-teacher emphasized social skills development through direct instruction, practice opportunities, and feedback. Many participants reported teaching their students various communication, coping, and problem-solving skills. In addition, these teachers posted classroom rules and other reminders that emphasized students' responsibilities to "show kindness, respect others and remember feelings (Hannay et al., 2010). The benefits for general and special education teachers

that were reported by both teacher participants and administrator participants included increased professional satisfaction, opportunities for professional growth, personal support, and increased opportunities for collaboration (Little, 1982). This often happens when there are observers or volunteers who come into the classroom with no specific function or assignment. Co-teaching is not happening when the ideas of one person prevail for what is to be taught or how it will be taught. This type of structure often occurs when a group of would-be co-teachers defer to the eldest, to the person with the most presumed authority, or to the person with the most convincing voice. Finally, co-teaching is not simply the assignment of someone to act as a tutor. For example, the early schoolmistresses and schoolmasters in one-room schoolhouses were known to use older students to help teach younger students.

The function of managers and student achievement

For many years, educators and researchers have debated which school variables influence student achievement. As policymakers become more involved in school reform, this question takes on new importance since their many initiatives rely on presumed relationships between various education-related factors and learning outcomes. Some research has suggested that "schools bring little influence to bear upon a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context" (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 325; see also Jencks et al., 1972). Other evidence suggests that factors like class size (Glass & Smith, 1978; Mosteller, 1995), teacher qualifications (Ferguson, 1991), school size (Haller, 1993), and other school

variables may play an important role in what students learn. As new standards for student learning have been introduced across the states, greater attention has been given to the role that teacher quality plays in student achievement. While some evidence suggests that better qualified teachers may make a difference for student learning at the classroom, school, and district levels, there has been little inquiry into the effects on achievement that may be associated with large-scale policies and institutional practices that affect the overall level of teachers' knowledge and skills in a state or region. This paper reports on one such study, which combines state level case studies and quantitative analyses of state-level achievement data to examine whether and how state policies may influence teachers' capabilities and student learning. Cooperative learning is one of the most remarkable and fertile areas of theory, research, and practice in education. Cooperative learning exists when students work together to accomplish shared learning goals. Each student can then achieve his or her learning goal if and only if the other group members achieve theirs. Collaboration in teaching methods are such as team effectiveness design, team member teaching design, assessment of performance, brainstorming technique, anonymous brainstorming technique, subject classification, individual learning procedure with the help of a team, research group, development groups and discussion method. In the past three decades, modern cooperative learning has become a widely used instructional procedure in preschool through graduate school levels, in all subject areas, in all aspects of instruction and learning, in nontraditional as well as traditional learning situations, and even in after-

school and non-school educational programs. There is broad dissemination of cooperative learning through teacher preparation programs, in-service professional development, and practitioner publications (Goddard et al., 2007). The development of understanding will take place in stages, as the depth of knowledge increases. Shallow understanding will generally result from single-loop learning (Argyris, 1992), but double-loop learning will be needed if deep understanding is to be achieved. Commitment will start to develop provided the knowledge is perceived as meeting the needs of the individual and the organization (Maslow, 1942, Herzberg et al., 1957). This desire cannot be directed, but must come from within the individual. However, it can be nurtured and encouraged. To be most effective, learning at this level must be pulled by the individual, not pushed by the organization. Also, the barriers preventing the transition from commitment to enactment can be formidable. Usually, they will require the individual to change behavior. Often this will bring into play a powerful, inbuilt, and unconscious defense mechanism. This is probably the most important part of the learning process which is often missing in taught organizations. This is where actions, outcomes and theories are evaluated, and deep learning takes place. The compliant nature of taught systems often means that individuals are not encouraged to question or challenge theories, and inappropriate actions continue to be taken long after those theories have been discredited. In extreme cases of operant conditioning, where actions are a result of learning by rote, the difficulties in achieving a change in behavior needed to enable deep learning to take place should not be underestimated. When effective, reflection

increases understanding, which, in turn increases commitment and action, and a virtuous cycle of learning is unleashed. My experience has shown me that success in achieving the learning company vision depends greatly on the effectiveness of managers and team leaders in creating an environment where individual, team, and thereby, organizational learning is facilitated. In order to do this they will need a deep understanding of the learning process, to be able to identify an individual's position on the stages of learning model, to understand the driving and restraining forces applicable to the individual at that time, and have intervention strategies to facilitate movement through the stages. The models and processes outlined have been developed following many years' experience in managing change and process improvement in a large organization. On the other hand, as the depth of understanding increases, it may start to challenge deeply held beliefs and values, which either overtly or subconsciously may limit the move to commitment. Commitment will not be achieved without intrinsic interest and curiosity. If this is not present, the move to action may not take place. Many training courses do not have the desired effect because they are imposed, and are not attended because of an intrinsic desire to learn. All managers have experiences of actions which produced successful outcomes, and actions which failed. So often, however, we omit the reflection stage of the learning process, and continue to take inappropriate actions, destined to fail. Worse still, we copy initiatives which have worked elsewhere, and do not understand why they do not work for us. Instead, it will be more useful to view the models using a discovery learning process, to help evaluate successful initiatives, and

experiment with other ideas which are of interest, always adding a reflection stage to our thought process. Ideally managers will be stimulated to follow up some of the references, to increase their depth of understanding. In today's uncertain economic times, it is essential that our capacity to improve and innovate exceeds the rate of change imposed on our organizations. It is essential, therefore, that managers understand the learning process and know how to facilitate its application throughout their areas of responsibility. Such a partnership is a highly effective way to strengthen the education of university students preparing to teach elementary school. Obviously, prospective elementary school teachers need to learn how to teach. Perhaps less obviously, though, prospective teachers also need to learn a significant amount of math beyond what they learned in high school. And even more, they need to learn how to use that mathematical knowledge to serve their students in the classroom. They seek to provide an explanation why some initiatives were successful, while others were less so. They should not be considered as models to be rigidly followed, in a taught manner, but rather as a framework against which past experience can be assessed. The use of student teams can be an especially effective teaching strategy for several reasons. First, it allows the instructor to support students in learning a valuable skill that employers continually rank as critical to workplace success: how to work together and support each other in learning and discovery. Second, becoming effective and productive team members allows students to develop their independent learning skills by working individually on a portion of a group project that makes them accountable not only to the instructor but also to team members.

And finally, integrating teamwork into a course can result in adding structure to out-of-class time and increasing student accountability for their learning. Obviously, team-based learning is not appropriate for all content, but it can usually be adopted in some form in any course. The use of cooperative learning so pervades education that it is difficult to find textbooks on instructional methods, teachers' journals, or instructional materials that do not mention and utilize it. In psychology, where cooperation has received the most intense study, cooperative learning has its roots in social interdependence, cognitive-developmental, and behavioral learning theories (Guarino et al., 2006). It is rare that an instructional procedure is central to such a wide range of social science theories. Cooperative learning is more elaborate than group work activity. Cooperative learning can be incorporated into your classroom management system. If you train your students to work effectively in groups, the results can be a very productive and fun learning environment. While a variety of different ways of operationalizing cooperative learning have been implemented in schools and colleges, there has been no comprehensive review of the research evidence validating the cooperative learning methods. The wide spread use of cooperative learning is due to multiple factors. Three of the most important are that cooperative learning is clearly based on theory, validated by research, and operationalized into clear procedures educators can use. The research on cooperative efforts, furthermore, has unusual breath, that is, it has focused on a wide variety of diverse outcomes. Over the past 100 years researchers have focused on such diverse outcomes as achievement, higher-level reasoning, retention, time on

task, transfer of learning, achievement motivation, intrinsic motivation, continuing motivation, social and cognitive development, moral reasoning, perspective-taking, interpersonal attraction, social support, friendships, reduction of stereotypes and prejudice, valuing differences, psychological health, self-esteem, social competencies, internalization of values, the quality of the learning environment, and many other outcomes (Herman et al., 2008). There may be no other instructional strategy that simultaneously achieves such diverse outcomes. The diverse and positive outcomes that simultaneously result from cooperative efforts have sparked numerous research studies on cooperative learning focused on preventing and treating a wide variety of social problems such as diversity (racism, sexism, inclusion of handicapped), antisocial behavior (delinquency, drug abuse, bullying, violence, incivility), lack of prosocial values and egocentrism, alienation and loneliness, psychological pathology, low self-esteem, and many more. For preventing and alleviating many of the social problems related to children, adolescents, and young adults, cooperative learning is the instructional method of choice (Kardos and Johnson, 2007). School-based management is an organizational approach that expands the local school site responsibility and authority for the improvement of school performance. Ideally, it provides local mechanisms for the introduction of new approaches to education that result in enhanced outcomes and that better fill the needs of the local community. The implementation of school based management represents a fundamental and systemic organizational change to increase the local presence of four key resources: power, information, knowledge

and skills, and performance-based rewards. In schools, school-based management has been approached largely as a political phenomenon involving the transfer of power to local councils.

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