

Invitational Leadership: Does It Make a Difference?

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This study investigated the relationship between professionally and personally inviting behaviors of high school principals in the state of Mississippi and: (a) Teacher Job Satisfaction, (b) Principal Effectiveness, (c) Principal as an Agent of School Improvement, and (d) Principal's Invitational Quotient, and (e) The Computed Accreditation Performance Index of their respective school district. The foundation for this study evolved as an extension of earlier research (Asbill, 1994) that examined the value of Invitational Education Theory (IET) as a workable theory for educational leaders in the school setting.

Invitational Education Theory

At the time this study was conducted, Asbill's (1994) research was the only documented research on principals' behaviors based on the tenets of IET. Asbill (1994) examined the literature on IET and determined that few studies addressed the application of IET to educational administrative practices. Asbill (1994) noted that the few studies that did exist focused on suggestions for IET's application to the administration of schools. The research on the effects of IET in the educational administrative process is relatively new as compared to other theories pertaining to leadership. Invitational Leadership is a refreshing change from the standard theories of leadership that emphasized the process of influencing others through the use of power to an alternative leadership style that promotes collaboration and shows consideration and respect for individuals in the educational system. Barth (1991) noted that improving the interactions among teachers,

and between teachers and principals is a significant factor in the school improvement process.

According to Purkey and Novak (1996), IET is a theory of practice that offers a systematic approach to the educational process and it provides strategies for making schools more inviting. IET furnishes educators with principles of practicing behaviors that seek to integrate, in creative and ethical ways, research, theory, and practice. Other researchers (e.g. Amos, 1985; Amos, Purkey & Tobias, 1985; Novak, 1992; Purkey & Collins, 1992; Purkey & Novak, 1984, 1996; Purkey & Stanley, 1991; Stanley, 1992, 1996; Strahan & Purkey, 1992) have expanded this theory of education and have seen a broader level of acceptance and practice during the past quarter century.

The goal of IET is to create schools with a climate that invites everyone in the school to experience success. According to Strahan and Purkey (1992), the school climate should reflect a sense of excitement and a sense of satisfaction for both students and staff. Purkey and Novak (1984) believe that educators should operate from a consistent stance of (a) trust, (b) respect, (c) optimism, and (d) intentionality. The literature concerning the role of school climate is widespread with findings that support school climate as a variable that has an effect on in improving student achievement and the relationships within the school setting (Anderson, 1982; Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Howe, 1985; Lezotte, Hathaway & Miller, 1980; Stronge & Jones, 1991).

The findings from effective schools research (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Kelley, 1981; Sergiovanni, 1987, 1992) indicated that the educational leader possesses a greater influence on education than any other factor. Other researchers such as Deming (1986), Wissler & Ortiz (1988), Leithwood (1992), have created models of leadership that are examples of

current and progressive leadership styles that function quite well in the complex world of educational leadership. The currency of leadership lies in personal resources of people. Leadership styles have become a primary concern as a means to produce patterns of interactions and to provide meanings that other participants attached to organizational events.

Purpose of the Study

There has been no study involving Invitational Education Theory (IET), related to principals, in the state of Mississippi. There is no empirical evidence that the tenets of IET, if practiced, has a measurable effect on principal effectiveness as perceived by the teachers. In addition, there is no research that has examined the effects of principals' behaviors and school effectiveness as reported by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Performance Index.

This study investigated the relationship between professionally and personally inviting behaviors of high school principals in Mississippi and serves as a follow up study to Asbill's research. Asbill (1994) investigated the basic assumptions of IET as related to the teacher-principal relationship in elementary schools. Further research using different participants and introducing new variables of interest, may validate or modify earlier findings. In addition, further research of IET can be a productive way of extending previous research and may add to the body of knowledge in the area. Ary, Jacob, and Razavieh (1985) have suggested that one study should not stand-alone. They contend that the desirability of replication to confirm, refute or modify previous findings is one of the most important characteristics of research. According to Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989), scholars have recognized that new ideas, research concerning the quality of leadership, and how that leadership affects organizational

performance deserve investigation. An understanding of the application of IET can extend our knowledge base of how teachers' perceptions are related to the presence of principals' leadership behaviors.

Methodology

Subjects for this study were drawn from 149 school districts in the state of Mississippi that had a performance index rating assigned to their district. Agricultural schools and school districts on probation were excluded from the study. The school districts were grouped according to performance ratings: Level 1 and 2 (36 school districts); Level 3 (80 school districts); Level 4 and 5 (33 school districts). Out of 149 school districts invited to participate, 77 districts agreed to be involved in the study representing a 52% participation rate. Overall, 509 surveys were distributed to high school teachers in the school districts agreeing to participate and 283 surveys were returned and usable. This represents a 55.6% response rate for the study.

A Leadership Survey Instrument developed by Asbill (1994), was a 45-item Likert-type instrument designed to measure teachers' perceptions of administrators' personally and professionally inviting behaviors as related to IET. The Leadership Survey Instrument also addressed the teachers' perceptions of the principal as being an effective agent of school improvement. In addition, the Leadership Survey Instrument yields an invitational quotient that reflects the professionally and personally inviting practices of principals as perceived by the teacher. Validation of the instrument has been assessed and the reliability was tested using the Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The Leadership Survey Instrument has a .97 level of reliability, which indicates a high degree of internal consistency (Asbill, 1994).

Principals from participating districts were provided with a packet of information for each teacher to be surveyed. The packet contained information and instructions detailing the necessary steps needed to gather the desired teacher data and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The principal was instructed to have teachers complete the survey and return to the researcher in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Teachers were asked to rate their administrators' behaviors on 44-items by selecting the response that best describes their perceptions. Item 45 was an open-ended question that allowed the teachers to express additional comments concerning their principal's leadership style and behaviors. Items 1-37 reflect the components of invitational stance of: trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality. These components comprise the definition of personally and professionally inviting behaviors. Items 38-40 indicate the relationship of the administrators' Invitational Quotient and principal effectiveness. Item 41 indicates the relationship of the administrators' Invitational Quotient and the principal as an agent of school improvement. Items 42-44 rate the teachers' satisfaction with the administrator and with their jobs.

Data from the Leadership Survey Instrument were used to address five research hypotheses. The hypotheses were analyzed using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance of the relationship of the variables studied. Table 1 provides a visual of the five hypotheses and the survey items that correspond with the variables of interest in this study.

Hypothesis #1 (H1) investigated the relationship between the 17 variables that represent Professionally Inviting Behaviors of the principal and the 3 variables that represent Teacher Job Satisfaction.

Hypothesis #2 (H2) investigated the relationship between the 9 variables that represent Personally Inviting Behaviors of the principal and the 3 variables that represent Teacher Job Satisfaction.

Hypothesis #3 (H3) investigated the relationship between the 37 variables that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principal and the 3 variables that represent Principal Effectiveness.

Hypothesis #4 (H4) investigated the relationship between the 37 variables that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principal and the 3 variables that represents the principal as an Agent of School Improvement.

Hypothesis #5 (H5) investigated the relationship between the 37 variables that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principals and the Performance Index of the school districts. Level 1 and 2 school districts were combined. Level 3 school districts stood alone. Level 4 and 5 school districts were combined. This provided three levels to determine if a relationship existed between the Invitational Quotient of the principals and the Performance Index of their respective districts.

Results

Based on analysis of the data, all five of the null hypotheses were rejected. The Pearson product-moment correlation indicated a statistically significant relationship existed for each. The results of each hypothesis are discussed in Table 1.

A statistically significant relationship was found between Professionally Inviting Behaviors of high school principals and Teacher Job Satisfaction as measured by the Leadership Survey Instrument [$F(1,282) = 286.63, p < .001, r = .504$]. The correlation coefficient .50 indicates a moderate positive relationship between Professionally Inviting Behaviors of high school principals and Job Satisfaction of high school teachers. The moderate positive correlation coefficient of .50 suggests that as teachers rated principals higher on professionally inviting behaviors, they also rated themselves as more satisfied with their jobs. The $R^2 = .25$ indicates that 25% of the variable for teacher job satisfaction is explained by one or more of the professionally inviting behaviors of the principal.

A statistically significant relationship was found between Personally Inviting Behaviors of high school principals and Teacher Job Satisfaction as measured by the Leadership Survey Instrument [$F(1,282) = 335.35, p < .001, r = .54$]. The correlation coefficient .54 indicates a moderate positive relationship between Personally Inviting Behaviors of high school principals and Job Satisfaction of high school teachers. The moderate positive correlation coefficient of .54 suggests that as teachers rated principals higher on personally inviting behaviors, they also rated themselves as more satisfied with their jobs. The $R^2 = .29$ indicates that 29% of the variable for teacher job satisfaction is explained by one or more of the professionally inviting behaviors of the principal.

Table 1

Hypothesis #1 (H1) investigated the relationship between the 17 variables that represent Professionally Inviting Behaviors of the principal and the 3 variables that represent Teacher Job Satisfaction. $r = .50$ significant at the .05 level

Hypothesis #2 (H2) investigated the relationship between the 9 variables that represent Personally Inviting Behaviors of the principal and the 3 variables that represent Teacher Job Satisfaction. $r = .54$ significant at the .05 level

Hypothesis #3 (H3) investigated the relationship between the 37 variables that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principal and the 3 variables that represent Principal Effectiveness. $r = .59$ significant at the .05 level

Hypothesis #4 (H4) investigated the relationship between the 37 variables that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principal and the 3 variables that represent the principal as an Agent of School Improvement. $r = .57$ significant at the .05 level

Hypothesis #5 (H5) investigated the relationship between the 37 variables that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principals and the Performance Index of the school districts as assigned by the Mississippi Department of Education. $r = .39$ significant at the .05 level

Leadership Survey Items Included in Each Construct

Construct 1: Professionally Inviting Behaviors: Survey Items 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 30, 34, 35, 36

Construct 2: Personally Inviting Behaviors: Survey Items 3, 7, 19, 20, 21, 27, 31, 32, 33

Construct 3: Invitational Quotient: Survey Items 1 - 37

Construct 4: Teacher Job Satisfaction: Survey Items 42, 43, 44

Construct 5: Principal Effectiveness Survey Items: 38, 39, 40

Construct 6: Performance Index as assigned by Department of Education: 1 - 5

Construct 7: Agent of School Improvement: Survey Item 41

A statistically significant relationship was found between the Invitational Quotient of high school principals and perceptions of high school principal effectiveness by high school teachers as measured by the Leadership Survey Instrument [$F(1,282) = 403.46, p < .001, r = .59$]. The correlation coefficient .59 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the Invitational Quotient of high school principals and the perception of high school Principal Effectiveness. The moderate positive correlation coefficient of .59 suggests that as teachers rated the Invitational Quotient of principals higher, they also rated the principal more effective. The $R^2 = .35$ indicates that 35% of the variable for principal effectiveness is explained by one or more of the behaviors that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principals.

A statistically significant relationship was found between the Invitational Quotient of high school principals and perceptions of the principal as an Agent of School Improvement by high school teachers as measured by the Leadership Survey Instrument [$F(1,282) = 367.47, p < .001, r = .57$]. The correlation coefficient .57 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the Invitational Quotient of high school principals and the perception of the principal as an Agent of School improvement. The moderate positive correlation coefficient of .57 suggests that as teachers rated the Invitational Quotient of principals higher, they also rated the principal higher as an Agent of School Improvement. The $R^2 = .32$ indicates that 32% of the variable for principal as an Agent of School Improvement is explained by one or more of the behaviors that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principals.

A statistically significant relationship was found between the Invitational Quotient of high school principals and the Performance Index of their school district as measured by the Leadership Survey Instrument [$F(1,282) = 177.71, p < .001, r = .39$]. The correlation coefficient .39 indicates a weak positive relationship between the Invitational Quotient of high school principals and the

Performance Index of their school district. The weak positive correlation coefficient of .39 suggests that as teachers rated the Invitational Quotient of principals higher, the Performance Index of their school district was also rated higher. The $R^2 = .15$ indicates that 15% of the variable for the Performance Index of the school district is explained by one or more of the behaviors that comprise the Invitational Quotient of the principals.

Summary

The statistical analysis revealed a statistical significance for each of the five hypotheses. The statistical significance indicates that a relationship does exist for each of the five hypotheses and that the relationship was positive. Of practical significance, the results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between the professionally and personally inviting behaviors of the principals and the perceptions of the teachers in their schools.

Based on the results of the study, several inferences were made. The relationship between the teacher and the principal is supreme in the educational setting. Research into the perceived relationships of teachers and educational leaders is an important area for investigation. Teacher job satisfaction was found to be positively correlated with the professionally and personally inviting behaviors of the principals. This confirms previous research on the powerful influence of the leadership within the organizational setting (Barth, 1991; Louis & Murphy, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1992). In addition to teacher job satisfaction, a positive relationship was found to have occurred between the principals' Invitational Quotient and the perception of principal effectiveness as an agent for school improvement. Principals who were perceived as being effective exhibited more aspects of professionally and personally inviting behaviors.

This study indicates that the tenets of IET may a worthwhile theory that can be applied to the preparation programs for future administrators as to the dimension of people orientation. Daft (1999) contends that people and task orientation behaviors are important leadership variables that require our attention. Daft also reports that leadership, with concern for people, tends to be related to higher employee satisfaction and fewer personnel problems across a wide variety of situations.

In addition, the findings of this study extended and supported the research of Asbill (1994) in which she contends that IET has merit in transforming the school setting. These contributions add to the understanding of IET of leadership, especially on the relationships that develop among the participants in the leadership relationship. This is in concert with other researchers that have found that organizational quality can be improved by focusing on the interactions of the various individuals within that setting (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995).

Several recommendations are made based on the findings of this study. Replication of this study should be conducted in other areas of the United States, as this study was limited to the state of Mississippi. Research studies similar to this one should be undertaken to examine elementary and middle schools. A study should be conducted to determine the correlation of the tenets of IET and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards. This research was concerned with people, which is only one of the five major areas IET may play a valuable role in the educational setting.

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