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The Principal's Behaviors and Job Satisfaction among Middle School Teachers¹

Abstract

This paper focuses on the connection between the principal's behaviors and job satisfaction among teachers. The study was conducted on a sample of 74 five middle school teachers. It was found that: (1) middle school teachers perceived their principals as supportive rather than restrictive, (2) teachers are satisfied with their job in middle schools, (3) the principal's supportive and directive behavior was positively correlated with job satisfaction, (4) the principal's restrictive behavior was found not significantly correlated with job satisfaction and finally (5) the principal's directive behavior was a significant predictor of job satisfaction among middle schools teachers.

Keywords: *teachers, job satisfaction, school culture, organization, school*

Introduction

According to Andevski and Arsenijevi (2012, p. 34), effective work of an education institution implies that employees have some unnecessary characteristics and knowledge, particular competences. Yet, teaching staff, as an important part of employees in education, need also to believe that their ordinary work makes sense not only for them, but also for the others who participate in the process of education. In business and management a lot of attention is still paid to work

¹ The research was carried out as a part of the BSTP 16A/13-I WNP APS project.

satisfaction, the qualities that produce it, the relationships between productivity and workers' satisfaction. However, relatively not much attention has been paid to comparable considerations in schooling. The composite satisfaction of teachers, students, principals, and parents constitutes a significant indication of a school's quality, including achievement (Goodlad, 1984, pp. 30–31). There is a statement that “the only power the principal really has is that of creating a context where everybody, students and adults, can be at their best” (Ramsey, 2008, p. 59). Schools' and teachers' situation should be known better to offer feasible and practical solutions to improve their situation and as a result increase their efficiency and satisfaction in the proceeding of accurate training and education.

Job satisfaction among teachers

Job satisfaction among teachers can be considered a general indicator of feelings connected with teachers' subjective evaluation of their job and their work conditions (Paulik, 2012, p. 139). Hoy and Miskel (1991, p. 392) stated that “in educational settings, job satisfaction is a present- and past-oriented affective state of likes or dislikes that results in an educator's evaluation of her or his work role”. Job satisfaction can be examined from a range of different viewpoints and contexts. A number of studies show that teachers are becoming less satisfied with their job (e.g., Tucholska, 1999). For a long time researchers have been seeking to determine the causes of teachers' job satisfaction in the organization and administration. Studies on a variety of workplaces show that remedying conditions tending to irritate and frustrate the employees increases their productivity and satisfaction. This is equally the case with teachers. There are studies on teacher satisfaction which suggest that supportive conditions, such as sensitive leadership by the principal, availability of help, and involvement in schoolwide decisions tend to be associated with greater professionalism, enthusiasm, and career fulfillment on the part of teachers (Goodlad, 1984, p. 176).

Organizational school culture and climate

Organizational culture provides organization members with shared interpretations, so they know what they are expected to think, how to feel and act. It equips members of the organization with shared patterns of commitment to norms and values, draws a boundary, so members and non-members can be identified, and

functions as a kind of control system, which defines what to do and what not to do (Van Houtte, 2005, p. 79).

Schools as organizations should help all stakeholders find their own voices. But sometimes something in the culture of many schools turns students off, burns out staff members, distances parents, and cools community support (Ramsey, 2008, p. vii). Many authors state that school culture is one of the indicators of school quality. School culture gives meaning both to teachers and students on how to behave and how to develop a positive atmosphere in school and classroom (Brankovic, Rodić, 2012, pp. 45–47). Job satisfaction is higher if there is a good organizational culture (Riswan, 2014). School with positive, non-toxic culture is a place where people are aware of the common goal, which is dominated by the values such as common support, common-decision making, collegiality, innovations and professional development. It is a place where every single success is celebrated.

School is a web of interactions among people who live and work together in a particular way (Khurana, 2013, p. 21). This interaction environment of the institution leads to organizational climate. Organizational climate entails individual needs as well as organizational pressure on students and teachers (Van Houtte, 2005, p. 72). School climate, as a form of organizational energy, has obvious implications for improving the quality of work for those who work in schools. But what exactly does it mean? What is the link between climate and teacher satisfaction and motivation, student achievement, and school improvement efforts? Obviously, there is no simple answer (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 215).

The Role of the Principal

According to MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009), there is substantial evidence concerning the importance of leadership in creating good school environments. The relationships that shape the culture and climate of the school are strongly influenced by the principal. The principal does not seem to directly affect student achievement, but indirectly affects teaching and learning by impacting on the school climate. The way in which the principal behaves, as well as the leadership style that he/she follows, influences the views of the educator with regard to the prevalent work atmosphere and resultantly has an influence on the organizational climate of the school (Hoy et al., 1991, p. 33; Hoy & Tarter, 1997, pp. 15–29). Undoubtedly, principals might well foster teachers' collaboration through their own helping behavior. It is the responsibility of both parties, individual teachers' and the principal's, to develop an atmosphere of collegiality and professionalism.

While collegiality and professionalism are thought of as school characteristics, they are actually a function of individual teacher actions (Marzano, Frontier, Livingston, 2011, p. 48). The principal can build a positive school culture which serves everyone.

A large number of researchers came to the conclusion that the principal's behavior constructed as the principal's leadership style is the most important factor of teachers' job satisfaction (cf., Josanov-Vrgovic & Pavlovic, 2014, p. 43). There are many conceptions of leadership: (1) servant (Greenleaf, 1996; cf. also Bezzina & Madalińska-Michalak, 2014); (2) instructional (cf., Glickman, 1989); (3) transformational (cf., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990); (4) transactional (cf., Bogler, 2001); (5) integrated (cf., Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 370). Fullan (2001) argues that the concept of instructional leader is too limited to sustain school improvement and suggests that school principals should serve as change agents to transform the teaching and learning culture of the school (MacNeil et al. 2009). A competent principal with leadership competences has a great impact on teachers (Josanov-Vrgovic and Pavlovic, 2014, p. 44; Gołębiowski & Kępa, 2014). According to Sergiovanni (1991, p. 215), school principals can play key roles in directing climate energy into productive channels. Principals must also pay more attention to increasing teachers' job satisfaction. Research on teachers' job satisfaction suggests that teachers who work with principals who share information with them, who encourage them to get involved in decision-making processes, and involve them more in management decisions are more satisfied with their daily work than the teachers who do not have such experiences (Hui et al, 2013). In other words, teachers report greater satisfaction in their work when they perceive their principal as someone who keeps open channels of communication with them, delegates authority, and shares information with others (Bogler 2001, p. 666).

Purpose of the study

Principals' behaviors and teachers' satisfaction are two very important factors of school work. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the principal's behaviors and job satisfaction among middle school teachers. The particular objectives of this study were: (1) to investigate teachers' perceptions of principals' behaviors, (2) to study teachers' job satisfaction and (3) to determine the relationship between principals' behaviors and middle school teachers' job satisfaction. We expected that principals' behaviors would affect teachers' job satisfaction.

Research Methodology

Sample: 74 teachers of five middle schools in the Podkarpackie and Mazowieckie Regions in Poland were the study group of the research. Table 1 presents the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic profiles of respondents

Respondents' Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender (N=71)	Female	46	62.2
	Male	25	33.8
Age (N=66)	Under 30	3	4.5
	30–39	26	39.4
	40–49	19	28.8
	50–59	18	27.3
Qualifications (N=73)	Bachelor's Degree	4	5.5
	Master's Degree	69	94.5
Professional degree (N=72)	Without	1	1.4
	Contract teacher	8	11.1
	Appointed teacher	19	26.4
	Certified teacher	44	61.1

Measures

A quantitative research method was used in the study. For research data collection the following two questionnaires were used:

(1) “Teachers Job Satisfaction Scale”: The scale consisted of 5 items describing different aspects of the nature of the teaching profession. The statements were prepared based on the instruments which measure symptoms of burnout (Smulczyk & Rycielska, 2013). Based on a scale of five scores (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree), the respondents showed their feeling toward a given statements. The highest score represented the highest job satisfaction. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was .75.

(2) “The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire - Middle Level”: To determine the teachers' perceptions of the principal's behaviors, “The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire - Middle Level” (OCDQ-ML, Hoy et

al., 1996) was used. This questionnaire consisted of 50 items. The teachers' task was to comment on statements using a four-level scale, ranging from 1 – rarely occurs, 2 – sometimes occurs, 3 – often occurs and 4 – very frequently occurs. The questionnaire contained six dimensions: "Supportive Principal Behavior", "Directive Principal Behavior", "Restrictive Principal Behavior", "Collegial Teacher Behavior", "Committed Teacher Behavior" and "Disengaged Teacher Behavior". In this study three dimensions of organizational school climate were taken into account related to principal behaviors: (1) "supportive principal behavior" is directed toward both the social needs and task achievement of faculty; (2) "directive principal behavior" is rigid domineering behavior; and (3) "restrictive principal behavior" is behavior that hinders rather than facilitates teacher work. In the dimension "Supportive Principal Behavior" there were 11 items and the Cronbach alpha coefficient for this dimension was .94. In the dimension "Directive Principal Behavior" there were 6 items and the Cronbach alpha coefficient for this dimension was .76. In the dimension "Restrictive Principal Behavior" there were 4 items and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .71. This instrument was translated into Polish by the researchers and had been used for the first time in Poland.

The study was done in the second half of 2013.

Research Results

First of all, the respondents' perceptions of the principal's behaviors were calculated. Findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the principal's behaviors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supportive Principal Behaviors	70	1.00	4.00	2.9429	.69857
Directive Principal Behaviors	68	1.17	3.83	2.4412	.57213
Restrictive Principal Behaviors	71	1.00	3.50	2.1338	.65032

As presented in Table 2, supportive principal behavior is the highest (= 2.9429) and restrictive principal behavior is the lowest (=2.1338).

Then, the teachers' job satisfaction was calculated. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of teachers' job satisfaction

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers' Job Satisfaction	70	2.20	5.00	4.2429	.55835

Based on the obtained data we can say that the job satisfaction of middle school teachers is high (over 4 on a 5-level scale).

The next step of analysis was to calculate the correlations between the principal's behaviors and job satisfaction among the teachers. The results of Pearson's correlation is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation between independent and dependent variables

	Teachers' Job Satisfaction
Supportive Principal Behaviors	.322**
Directive Principal Behaviors	.355**
Restrictive Principal Behaviors	-.120

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

As shown in Table 4, supportive principal behaviors and directive principal behaviors were positively related to teachers' job satisfaction. It means that the teachers who perceived their principal as supportive as well as directive were significantly more satisfied with their professional role. There was no significant relationship between restrictive principal behavior and teachers' job satisfaction.

To determine the effect of the principal's behaviors on the job satisfaction of teachers, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Factor "restrictive principal behavior" was excluded from the model (due to lack of linear relationship). Table 5 shows the results of the analysis.

Table 5. Regression analysis

Model	Beta	t	sig
Constant		7.420	.000
Supportive Principal Behaviors	.102	.640	.525
Directive Principal Behaviors	.328	2.076	.043

The results of the regression analysis regarding the relationship between the principal's behaviors and job satisfaction among the teachers show beta coefficient of .328 indicating a positive relationship between directive principal behavior and the teachers' job satisfaction, so it is a significant predictor of job satisfaction among the teachers. The results of the regression analysis regarding the relationship between supportive principal behaviors and teachers' job satisfaction the p value is greater than .05 indicating no statistical significance.

Discussion

Many researchers have investigated the relationship between principals' leadership styles and decision-making processes and teacher satisfaction, so to find out how teachers perceive their principals' behavior and how it is related to their work satisfaction is significant. Focusing on the chosen categories of the principal's behavior, our study is different from many others, which are mostly concentrated on the principal's management.

The main aim of this research was to study the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of their principals' behavior (not the principals' actual behavior) and the teachers' job satisfaction. We have found that:

First of all, the results of the analysis indicate that the teachers perceived their principal as supportive rather than restrictive. It means that the principals are helpful and genuinely concerned with the teachers. They perceive their principals as leaders who cooperate with the teachers and support them rather than give orders or simply judge them. The role and position of the principal in the process of cooperation are emphasized. Korzeniecka-Bondar (2014) interviewed a group of middle school teachers, and concluded that – according to teachers' testimony – they want principals to “wisely manipulate the teacher” and at the same time they perceive him/her as the only one who can solve every teacher-to-teacher problem. In our study, the teachers perceived their principals as people who pay attention to the needs and interests of the teachers, help them to develop the professional judgement, build collegiality and support the teachers' effort to build a community whose members view learning and teaching as central to their lives.

Secondly, the middle school teachers are rather satisfied with their job. Generally, worker job satisfaction is linked to work conditions. According to the teachers' declarations, structural and administrative factors at their schools, including the physical aspects of their workplaces, promote opportunities for professional

development, or individual growth, and finally in a positive way affect their satisfaction from work.

Thirdly, the results indicated that principal behaviors and job satisfaction among teachers were associated with each other. Supportive and directive principal behaviors were found to be positively correlated with job satisfaction, on the other hand, restrictive principal behavior was found to have no relationship with job satisfaction. These findings lend support for the findings by Ozen (2013). He found that supportive and directive principal behavior is positively related to primary teachers' job satisfaction in Turkey. A quite interesting result is that only directive principal behavior is a significant positive predictor of job satisfaction among middle schools teachers. It means that the principal who maintains close and constant monitoring over virtually all aspects of teachers' behaviors in the school has a greater impact than, e.g., a supportive principal. We found it quite interesting that on the one hand, the teachers declared a necessity of autonomy at work, which is related to the teaching profession, as well as teacher development, but on the other one, they need to be directly guided by principals in their daily work. From this perspective we can see leadership as a determinant of teacher organizational commitment.

The presented study results provide an interesting backdrop for reflections on the issues of the relationship between school principals' behaviors and teacher job satisfaction.

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank Wayne Hoy for giving permission to use and adapt "The Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire – Middle Level".

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