

RESEARCH ISSUES IN MANAGEMENT OF DEFENCE FUNDED SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Educational Leadership is identified as an important factor for quality education. 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 Principals need impressive skills to provide effective leadership in diverse school environments. Throughout the world, education policy makers are constantly looking for ways to prepare school leaders to deal with the complex challenges facing public education in the 21st century. Research has demonstrated a clear correlation between effective school leadership and student achievement. The purpose of this Paper is to explore and highlight research issues in Defence funded Schools related to management, identifying leadership styles ,emotional intelligence and impact on overall performance and Students achievement.

Key words: Leadership, Leadership Style, Defence funded Schools, Emotional Intelligence.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays an indispensable role in effectiveness of an educational institution, right from the setting of goals to accomplishment of goals. In absence of leadership goal accomplishment and school effectiveness is never guaranteed. In order to achieve change and effectiveness in education, the role of Principal is often crucial. The Principal is challenged to create the culture of quality that penetrates to the smallest elements, processes and the systems of an institution. It is common experience that under the same set of rules and regulations, with same set of teaching staff and students from similar background, an educational institution degenerates or maintains status quo, or rises to prominence with a change of Principal. This is also borne out by large number of research studies on management of change in Education.

Leadership is a complex phenomenon. A great number of definitions have been offered over the years. Day (2000) states that leadership is creating and maintaining a sense of vision, culture, and interpersonal relationships. Hersey and Blanchard (1969) claim that leadership is a broader concept than management. Management is a sub skill of leadership in which achieving organizational goals is of paramount importance. Leadership involves working with and through people so as to accomplish goals but not necessarily organizational goals. Thus referring to the tasks and functions of the Principals, who are regarded as effective by both staff and school board members focus on both organizational goals and staff members' needs. The first characteristics can be labelled as "initiating structure" which endeavours to create a well-defined organization with clear tasks. At the other end of the continuum, there is "consideration" which entails sustaining a friendly relationship between the leader and the group, building mutual trust, respect and teamwork. For school administrators both types of leadership are essential. They should have the initiative and consideration for others at the same time. The two important elements of effective school leadership are establishing a school vision and fostering positive interpersonal relationships. Developing a school vision takes time and the Principal should have the ability to determine the status of the school, identify important aspects of improvement and have a contingency plan to solve problems. In addition to this, they should be knowledgeable about theory and especially those focusing on organizational behaviour and leadership. They should possess technical skills needed for managerial responsibilities and the

ability to reflect upon their practices in which they skilfully integrate knowledge and skills with experience.

BACKGROUND

Defence funded schools are the schools which are fully or partially funded Govt of India through the defence allocations in the budget. There are three kinds of schools which fall under reference, such as Rashtriya Indian Military College, Sainik Schools(24) and Rashtriya Military Schools(05). These schools are modelled on Public School lines and admissions are open to the sons of defence personnel and civilians and are member of the Indian Public Schools Conference (IPSC). The Rashtriya Indian Military College and Rashtriya Military Schools are commanded by Army Officers but the Sainik Schools are commanded by Officers from Army, Navy and Air Force and commonly referred to as Principals. In last couple of decades the defence funded schools such as Rashtriya Military Schools (05), Sainik Schools (24) have not been able to deliver the envisaged results as desired and failed to feed adequate number of cadets to countries armed forces academies especially National Defence Academy. This has generated a debate in all the circles of decision making bodies of the government as well as the military think tank to take a stock of the situation and address the issues however super facial level changes were brought about and the community failed to pin point a variation of results in terms of the performance of cadets ,teachers and the leaders like school Principals. Thus there is an urgent need to determine the factors responsible for the drop in performance and the study proposes to determine the gaps. The task of the Principals are clearly defined. In spite of having similar infrastructure, resources, financial aid, resource personnel and envisaged objective, there is a tremendous variation in the results. The reason in question is the leadership style adopted by the Principals. Therefore it is extremely important to determine the leadership styles adopted by the Principals of these schools and examine the impact on the performance of the schools. Moreover the involvement of parents, inculcating emotional intelligence training programmes for principals and other related aspects compel educationists to carry out an investigation in this regard.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various researchers have tried to interpret school leadership in different manner. Peretomode (1991) stated the importance of Leadership in school for accomplishment of school programmes,

objectives and attainment of educational goals. Cheng (1994) proposed that leadership in educational institutions compose of five major dimensions, namely: structural leadership, human leadership, political leadership, cultural leadership and educational leadership. These five dimensions describe the role and functions of school leader. In an attempt to explain the requirements of a competent Principal, Cranston (2002) explained the skills and capacities which Principals are expected to possess. Principals' competencies can be measured from various dimensions; from the perceptions of students, teachers, parents, communities and their employers. For instance, Scotti Jr. and William (1997) agreed that teachers' perceptions of their Principals' leadership is one of the many variables, which affect a school's productivity. Teachers' perception of Principals' leadership behaviour is also positively related to teachers' morale Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995). Luo (2004) further contended 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 provides 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 what the Principals' are and how they are perceived by the teachers. 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. Principals who are regarded as effective by both staff and school board members focus on both organizational goals and staff members' needs (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996). The first characteristics can be labelled as "initiating structure" which endeavours to create a well-defined organization with clear tasks. At the other end of the continuum, there is "consideration" which entails sustaining a friendly relationship between the leader and the group, building mutual trust, respect and teamwork. For school administrators both types of leadership are essential. They should have the initiative and consideration for others at the same time (Halpin,1966). Davis (1998) states that two important elements of

effective school leadership are establishing a school vision and fostering positive interpersonal relationships.

In addition to this, they should be knowledgeable about theory and especially those focusing on organizational behaviour and leadership. They should possess technical skills needed for managerial responsibilities and the ability to reflect upon their practices in which they skilfully integrate knowledge and skills with experience (Kowalski, 1995). According to Cruz (1995), effective principals should communicate with parents, teachers and students and be team builders by building coalitions between these stakeholders. The school culture and leadership styles are significantly related to student achievement (Elizabeth A. Le Clear 2005).

Many studies that have been conducted in the past emphasize on parental involvement at home (Entewisle & Hayduk, 1981; Lockheed, et al., 1989; Israel, et al., 2001; Ho-Sui Chu & Willms, 1996; Baker & Stevenson, 1986) and at school (Grolnick & Slowiacek, 1994; Hill, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003; Lareau, 1987; Ramsay, et al., 1992; Reay, 2004; Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Milne, et al., 1986; Epstein, 1995; Lareau, 1987) in providing positivity either at home or at school are often associated with the parent's background. Family background variables such as job, education, income, race and family structure feature prominently in studies related to the child's education (Milne, et al., 1986: 125). In fact, the influences of family background on educational experience of a child become increasingly vital in the field of sociology of education (Lareau, 1987: 73).

Emotional intelligence has been studied intensively during the past several decades, particularly its application in the workplace (Cherniss & Adler, 2000; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Researchers have advanced beyond early ways of perceiving emotions which characterized thinking and feeling as polar opposites and emotion as something chaotic and immature and not capable of assisting reason (Salovey & Slouyter, 1997). Emotional intelligence abilities may account for a large difference between effective top leaders and non-effective leaders' performance (Goleman, 1998). Application of EI based training programmes with respect to leadership in Indian defence sector is yet to fructify.

The review of literature has revealed that a very small number of studies in Indian context have studied the impact of leadership styles of School Principals of residential public schools as perceived by themselves and by their teachers. Studies related to levels of Emotional Intelligence levels of Principals and teachers of such residential public schools are also not available with respect to India. More over there have been no specific research carried out on defence funded schools regarding leadership styles adopted by Military Principals and their impact on overall performance of the school including organisational climate, culture ,students achievements and job satisfaction. A very small number of studies in Indian context have studied the impact of Parental involvement in residential public Schools in India. More over there have been no specific research carried out on defence funded Schools regarding impact of parental involvement on overall performance of the school including students achievements. Therefore the gaps in research are required to be filled by investigating the leadership styles, leadership behaviour, Emotional Intelligence levels , impact on overall performance, degree of involvement of parents and the students achievements in defence funded schools in India.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research issues emerge which needs investigation:-

- What kind of leadership styles are adopted by the Principals of Defence funded Schools?
- Are the Principals and teachers sensitive towards emotional and spiritual needs of the students?
- Do Principals consider themselves as effective leaders and administrators?
- Do teachers consider their Principals as effective administrators and leaders?
- Does the School Management have a mechanism of involving the Parents for attaining envisaged students achievements?
- If not then how Parents can be taken on board to maximise benefits?
- Can a leadership model based on EI and SI be developed and implemented to prepare future military commanders?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study lies in its exploratory nature as it attempts to unveil the vast aspects such as leadership styles, involvement of parents, EI based training programmes and related issues employed in Defence oriented and funded schools in India. This study if taken by any research scholar will be innovative in the sense that it will be the first study to unveil the leadership styles of the Military Principals and shall study the impact on overall performance of the schools in general and students achievement in particular. This research will provide an additional evidence to Military authorities in choosing and training their future Military leaders.

CONCLUSION

Townsend (2004) mentioned that the leadership style is based on the ability and experiences of the leader and it is not depending on the type of organization. The leadership and the leadership style play a major role in achieving the goals and the success of the organization. Voon et al (2011) mentioned that the effective leadership style can influence the job satisfaction level of the employees, motivation level, organization's productivity and commitment of the employees in the organization. Therefore, any change, adjustment, innovation and behavioural pattern, has to emanate from the top leadership and flow down the hierarchy to spread into the system. Analysis of the data pertaining to cadets reveals that over 40 % of the cadets joining Defence Forces come from defence funded schools. The most crucial element which manifests organizational climate is the quality of its leadership. Thus to achieve the envisaged objectives set by authorities with respect to the defence funded schools in India it is imperative that gaps in research may be investigated by survey study and the results shared with Military authorities for initiating necessary measures to improve the quality of its leadership.

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