Teacher Self-Efficacy and Principal Leadership Behaviors

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More than 30 years ago, the concept of teacher efficacy, teachers' confidence and belief in their ability to promote students' learning (Protheroe, 2008), was first discussed as an imperative in educational outcomes. The impact of school leadership on teacher efficacy was soon discovered as a component to overall teacher effectiveness (Gallante, 2015). While many studies of each factor have been conducted in isolation, few studies have directly examined the relationship between teacher efficacy and principal leadership behaviors (Blase & Blase, 1999). The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between principals' leadership practices and teachers' efficacy. In this mixed-methods study, 144 teacher participants from schools located in an urban school district responded to a 36-item survey instrument and participated in an interview to measure and assess teacher effectiveness and efficacy, as well as the leadership behaviors of their principals. The survey instrument administered to teachers included the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale—Short Form (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001) combined with the Principal Leadership Questionnaire (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). Teacher participants completed this questionnaire to measure their respective principals' leadership behaviors. Results revealed a statistically significant relationship between the teachers' efficacy and principals' leadership behaviors. These findings offer new insights to teachers, principals and other school leaders. Additionally, those who support principals will also gain new leadership practices to positively impact teacher efficacy.

When the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) outlined it principles for effective school improvement, the focus on high-quality leadership and teaching was at the top of the list (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2017). Their 10 principles explain the recommended systems for states to follow under the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, which called for strong teachers in every classroom and entailed innovative approaches for states and school districts to support talented educators (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2017). One of the improvement principles CCSSO identified in its list was the focus on effective leaders and teachers with the talent needed to transform low performing schools. Therefore, the instructional leadership that teachers receive from principals, and the effectiveness of their principals' daily practices, is critical to the enhancement of teaching and learning (Cagle & Hopkins, 2009). Teacher efficacy has been a vital element of teacher effectiveness, and its role in teaching and learning remains of interest to researchers and practitioners (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Moreover, teacher efficacy affects teaching and learning, according to Hoy and Spero (2005), and teachers, administrators, and policy makers continue to be interested in its development, how it is supported, and the factors that diminish it. Researchers have found compelling relationships between various aspects of leadership and teacher quality (Kelley et al., 2005; Waters & Cameron, 2007), and their associations with overall school effectiveness (Waters et al., 2003). Teacher efficacy and leadership behaviors are complex topics that have been studied individually using various methodologies to resolve many questions. Research studies have directly examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and principal leadership behaviors and the impact of those behaviors on teacher practice (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Effective Leadership

Second only to teaching, leadership is the most crucial component of education. Effective leaders are the key to meaningful teacher support and development, which lead to high-quality teachers (Khalifa et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004). Leithwood et al. (2004) also suggested ineffective leadership may cause the best teachers to falter, leave a school, or worse, exit the profession. In a comprehensive meta-analysis, Waters et al. (2003) asserted that effective principal leadership encompasses the what, when, how, and why of doing things, along with a leader who imparts the vision on others in a way that influences them to follow.

The Nature of Self-Efficacy

When facing a challenge, does a person rise to accomplish the goal or give up in defeat? Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully fulfill tasks and obligations, and to overcome challenges, according to Barni et al. (2019). A person's efficacy self-system is central to how situations are perceived and behaviors are demonstrated in response to challenges as it is comprised of a person's attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills (Bandura, 1997). It is further characterized by Mombourquette (2017) as one's belief in positively impacting the lives of others. Cansoy and Parlar (2018) posit that teacher self-efficacy enhances the way teachers view their role in student achievement outcomes and motivates them to put forth more effort to improve their teaching practices. One's performance or task outcome that is perceived as successful, results in increased self-efficacy while those interpreted as failures weaken it (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007a). It is thusly understood that self-efficacy, with the best efforts, impacts the very way a person approaches goals, tasks, and challenges, and yields results that

improve student learning and promote the likelihood of students reaching their potential (Bandura, 1997; Cansoy & Parlar; 2018).

Self-Efficacy Theory Applied to Teaching

Self-efficacy theory is related to the context of teaching. When teacher behaviors are common in those with a strong sense of self-efficacy, performance is improved (Bandura, 1977 as cited by Kodden, 2020). Cansoy and Parlar (2018) asserted that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are highly linked to the use of effective instructional strategies, as well as to students' academic progress and learning outcomes. Zee and Koomen (2016) posited similar findings, adding that teacher self-efficacy has also been linked to students' own self-efficacy. Teachers with a high level of self-efficacy tend to exhibit greater levels of planning and organization, are more willing to try new methods of teaching, persist and demonstrate higher levels of resiliency when things do not always go as planned, are less critical of students when they make errors, and are less inclined to refer students to special education (Bandura, 1997). Hoy (2000) viewed the school setting according to how new teachers are inducted into the profession and socialized by their colleagues. These experiences, Hoy (2000) posited, have the potential to powerfully impact a teacher's sense of efficacy.

Not all researchers agree that higher self-efficacy equates to positive influences. Wheatley (2002) proposed that lower levels of self-efficacy have benefits as well as the notion that teachers who doubt their skills and abilities are more inclined to reflect on their practice than those who are sure of their performance. Wheatley (2002) also suggested that teachers with lower self-efficacy have shown a greater motivation to learn and are more likely to engage in collaboration with other teachers who strive to improve in their practice.

The role of self-efficacy in teaching and learning continues to be of interest to researchers and practitioners (Hoy & Spero, 2005). For principals, experiences that provide for collaboration and the exchange of ideas tend to positively impact teachers' sense of efficacy (Goddard et al., 2000). Self-efficacy beliefs are, in sum, individuals' estimation of their ability to perform, conceived as a dynamic set of beliefs that are linked to particular performance domains and activities (Bandura, 1997).

Teacher Perceptions of Principal Leadership Behaviors

Principal leadership has been connected to teacher self-efficacy for many years (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The principal is the one individual uniquely positioned in the school as the formal leader and whose influence is directly tied to teacher performance (Hipp, 1996, as cited by Prelli, 2016). Allowing teachers time for professional learning that involves active participation and collaboration, and goes beyond "sit and get" are most meaningful, according to Matherson & Windle (2017, p. 29). Pearson and Moomaw linked teacher autonomy to empowerment, and asserted that exalting teachers as professionals requires them to be granted freedom to "prescribe the best treatment for their students as doctors/lawyers do for their patients/clients" (2005, p. 38). Teachers believe they are the most qualified authorities in the instructional process, which is credited to their specialized expertise and understanding of students' needs (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Strong leaders pave the way for a common purpose and vision for the school. They create a safe, orderly environment where teachers have a greater level of efficacy (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995). Finally, teachers who perceived fewer impediments to teaching and access to resources to

enhance their classroom had a stronger sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). According to Blase and Blase (1999) as cited by Sahin (2011), teachers reported positive outcomes on their efficacy and collaboration with one another as a means of improving teaching experiences in the classroom and student performance. Working through challenges toward growth in teaching can increase collegial trust and encourage teachers to rely on one another toward a common goal (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018).

Teacher self-efficacy and student achievement have been strongly related as evidenced by standardized test scores, particularly in reading and mathematics (Hipp, 1996; Shaukat & Iqbal, 2012). Also, principal behaviors were found to significantly influence teacher motivation and student achievement in the following ways: (a) recognizing and supporting efforts, (b) clarifying roles and expectations, (c) encouraging a sense of competence and confidence in teachers and students, (d) empowering teachers in decision-making, (e) protecting the staff from external pressures and intrusions, and (f) building bonds of community within the school. Simply stated, principals influence student learning through their work with teachers (Marzano et al., 2003). With the growing demands and rising expectations facing principals in their daily work, their leadership is at the center of school improvement and can be a predictor of teachers' self-efficacy (Derbedek, 2008 as cited by Calik et al., 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Bandura (1997) theorized the concept of self-efficacy as a person's attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills that comprise the self-system, which plays a major role in the perception of situations and response behaviors. Self-efficacy is an essential part of this self-system. According to Bandura (1997), the four major areas of self-efficacy are mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses. These areas are the sources from which self-efficacy derives.

Bandura's social cognitive theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. Social cognitive theory is based on the idea that individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own learning (Bandura, 1986). Key ideas within this theory are that individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to control their thoughts, feelings, and actions. The idea that an individual has the potential to influence change, regardless of skill, is central to the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986, 1997) also asserted that behavior, both cognitive and other personal factors, interacts with an individual's environment to influence through a process known as reciprocal determinism. This term, identified by Bandura (1997), refers to the relationship between cognition, behavior, and the environment.

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) further developed these concepts, stating that the perception of one's capabilities is more influential on one's performance than the actual level of ability. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) have proposed an integrated model of teacher self-efficacy that considers the research contributions of Rotter (1966) and Bandura (1997). This model includes the analysis of both teaching tasks and the context in which these tasks exist. Hence, both internal and external factors can influence a teacher's perception of a student's capacity to accomplish a given task (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Further explained, self-efficacy is a cognitive process and, therefore, the process of performance, reflection, and assessment are repeated. As efficacy increases, so does effort and persistence. On the contrary, negative experiences mirror the same effect; failed tasks leading to lower self-efficacy lead to less effort, persistence, and resilience (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Efficacy is a predictor of success and achievement in teaching.

Discovering the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and principal leadership behaviors was the goal of this study.

This study examined the relationship between principals' leadership behaviors and teacher self-efficacy and was guided by the following questions:

(a) Are teachers' perceptions of their principal leadership different by years of experience?

(b) Do teachers' ratings of their principals' leadership predict their own level of self-efficacy?

(c) What are teachers' perceptions of principal leadership behaviors?

Method

Research Design

An explanatory mixed-methods design was utilized in this study. Participants responded to a survey to determine their perceptions of their principal's leadership as well as their level of self-efficacy. After analyzing the quantitative data, the qualitative portion of the study was initiated to better explain the quantitative results.

Participants and Setting

A purposeful sample of ($n = 144$) teachers from 11 combined-level schools in a large urban school district in Texas was solicited to complete the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001) and the Principal Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). The sample of teachers was drawn from the district's combined-level campuses that serve students from kindergarten through eighth grade. At the end of the survey, teachers were then invited to volunteer to participate in a face-to-face interview. Only teachers classified as full-time employees were included in the study. The sample of teachers possessed a range of experience and taught various content areas and grade levels. The majority of the participants were female (83%), white (37%), and were 40-49 years old.

Instrumentation

The TSES was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) to determine teachers' beliefs in their ability to make a difference in student learning as well as the ability to successfully teach students who are difficult to manage or are unmotivated. The TSES asked teachers to assess their ability related to instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). This study used the short 12-item version of the TSES, designed for in-service teachers with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86.

The PLQ was used to measure and assess principal leadership behaviors as observed by the teacher participants. The six PLQ leadership practices consist of Provides Vision, Fosters Commitment, Provides Individual Support, Provides Intellectual Stimulation, Models Behavior, and Holds High Performance Expectations. The 24-item survey includes a 5-point Likert response scale that incorporates specific behaviors to assess in each competency area (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). The Cronbach's alpha for the PLQ ranges from .77 to .88 (Mees, 2008). The PLQ has been used in studies examining principal leadership practices, particularly focusing on instructional and/or transformational leadership (Blase & Blase, 1999; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection phase began by contacting the school principal at each of the combined-level schools regarding teacher participation in the study. Once the researcher received approval from the principal, an e-mail was sent to the teachers to introduce the study. The TSES and PLQ online surveys were administered using Qualtrics, and an anonymous link was sent to the teachers via e-mail. At the end of the survey, teachers were asked to volunteer to participate in an interview. A total of 13 teachers participated in an interview. The teachers were asked nine questions regarding their level of self-efficacy and their principals' leadership behaviors and practices. The interviews were 30 to 45 minutes in length, audiotaped, and transcribed at the conclusion of each interview.

Data Analysis

To determine if teachers' perceptions of their principal leadership were different by years of experience, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if teachers' years of experience significantly predict their perceptions of their principals' leadership skills. Teachers' years of experience was treated as a categorical variable in the analysis. A simple linear regression was calculated to determine if teachers' ratings of their principals' leadership behaviors significantly predicted their own self-efficacy. The dependent variable or outcome measure was the teacher's sum score on the TSES survey. The independent variable was the PLQ sum score.

  To determine teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership, an inductive coding process was applied to find emergent themes in the teachers' interview responses. The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed throughout the collection process. The researcher transcribed the responses to the individual interviews and analyzed them to determine the themes and codes. The coded data were framed to provide general, identified themes and more abstract, complex themes. After the coding was completed, the researcher transferred the data into categories to support leadership principles, practices, and strategies.

  To ensure reliability, the researcher documented the procedures of the study, including as many details within each step as possible (Yin, 2003). The reliability procedures of checking transcripts for accuracy, as well as comparing data with the codes and memo writing, were followed (Gibbs, 2007). Themes that provided overarching commonalities between the perceptions of the principals' leadership behaviors were developed and summarized. To ensure quality and validity of the data gathered from the interviews, Creswell (2009) recommends the following strategies: triangulation; member checking; rich, thick description; bias; discrepant information; and peer debriefing.

Results

An ANOVA, which was conducted to determine if teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership skills were different by years of experience. Analysis of variance was used because the independent variable, years of experience, was treated as a categorical variable (1-5 years, 6-10 years, etc.) The results indicate that teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership skills were not different by years of experience, $F(3, 96) = 1.56$, $p = .20$.

  Simple linear regression was used to determine if teachers' rating of their principals' leadership behaviors significantly predicted their own self-efficacy. The calculations revealed that

the PLQ score significantly predicted the teachers' sense of efficacy scores, $F(1, 98) = 9.3$, $p = .003$.

With regard to the parameter estimates for TSES scores as predicted by the PLQ score, findings suggested that when the PLQ score was 0, the TSES score would be 73.4. For every unit increase in PLQ score, there was an increase of .17 in the TSES score, meaning, as teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership increased, they had an increase in their own self-efficacy.

In order to ascertain the perceptions teachers held about their principal's leadership, an inductive coding process that was applied to find emergent themes in the teachers' interview responses. Four major emergent themes were identified across the teachers' interviews, regardless of teaching assignment or content area: (a) autonomy, (b) trust, (c) leading by example, and (d) professional development. Themes unique to the four correlated factors of self-efficacy, instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management, also emerged. These themes were organized through the aspect of principal leadership behaviors that enhanced or diminished teacher self-efficacy in the three related factors. Common themes, which were reported across the teacher interviews, will be reported first followed by the themes that were unique to instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. Themes that emerged from teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership strengths and weaknesses were also reported.

Autonomy

Autonomy was a recurring factor that teachers connected to their perception of principal leadership behaviors, both positively and negatively. This theme emerged in nearly two-thirds of the participants' responses. From most responses, the teachers felt that principals' ability to release control and give them freedom in the classroom made a positive impact on the way they approached their job as a teacher. An example of the teachers' opinions who felt their principals allowed the participants to operate autonomously included,

> She generally allows us to be autonomous and take responsibility for our classrooms. I really appreciate that. I don't have to do any sort of asking [or getting permission] about my curriculum, or what I want to teach, or really how I want to teach…I feel like I have a lot of control over my classroom most of the time.

Two of the participants felt that allowing too much autonomy adversely impacted their perception of their principals' leadership behaviors. Leon shared, "We're trusted to do what we're there to do, but we need a national system for some things. Maybe there's too much delegated power for some things. We do need some strictness and guidance."

Overall, the interview participants shared positive perceptions of their principals' leadership when they allowed them to work autonomously and independently in their daily efforts. However, too much autonomy resulted in negative perceptions of principal leadership as two participants equated excess freedom to a lack of rules, structure, and direct principal involvement in key school activities.

Trust

Another common theme that emerged from the teacher interviews was trust as a leadership behavior. The teachers who mentioned trust in their responses all described it in the positive sense and perceived their principals' leadership as stronger for this reason. This theme was present in five of the participants' responses. There were recurring comments centered on principals who demonstrate trust in their teachers' classroom performance.

> Darla stated,
> I do sense that my principal has a great deal of trust in the teachers' ability to teach and in their knowledge of the content. I feel there is trust because he hired us and thinks we are capable of doing our jobs. I also feel an increased level of respect that I have for my principal, knowing I'm supported and trusted to do my job well.

Teachers perceive trust from the principal as confidence in their knowledge and abilities.

Overall, teachers expressed a positive perception of their principals' leadership when there was a recognizable level of trust that was demonstrated by the principal. The teachers also perceived a high sense of trust from the principal when they believed they were allowed to perform their job duties as capable and effective professional educators.

Leading by Example

Another common perception that teachers had of their principals' leadership behaviors was their ability to lead by example. This referred to the principal's ability to model behaviors and what they wish to see in others within the school community. Modeling desirable behavior is perceived as the most impressionable approach to setting an example for others. Alicia expressed optimism and inspiration from her principals and shared her perceptions of her principal leading by example when she stated:

> She [my principal] is super active. She is always really positive by greeting the students and kissing them on the forehead. She models the behavior I know I should be exhibiting to the students, even on their worst days or even on my worst days. She also is super understanding with the demographics and the situations we have here.

Maria described ways her principal leads by example by stating, "My principal definitely does everything that he asks us to do. Everything is about the students. For example, student involvement - he's there, he's involved, he's a role model."

The overall consensus among the teachers was that principal leadership behaviors can be modeled for others to follow. They elevate the teachers' level of buy-in and support for the principal as they see the principal committing to the very acts that he or she says are important.

Professional Development

The fourth common theme in teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership behaviors was access

to and encouragement to attend professional development. The teachers' responses indicated that they view professional development as an opportunity to learn more about teaching methodologies or resources, and improve their teaching practice. Moreover, principals who willingly offer these opportunities and encourage teachers to attend were demonstrating a commitment to supporting their achievement toward individual professional goals. Martha Kate shared her thoughts on access to professional development by stating,

> She [my principal] provides access to a lot of resources, and that definitely enhances and has been very helpful to me because it's my first year. She's given me the access to go to trainings during the school day. She's been generous with budget for trainings in content areas that I'm not familiar with.

Teachers feel valued when their principal demonstrates a commitment to their development and improvement.

There were several factors that were associated with professional development and teachers' perceptions of principal leadership. Factors such as having access to quality professional development and the principal encouraging teachers to attend workshops was prominently discussed. Teachers believed that their principal was committed to their growth and quest to achieve their professional goals when they encouraged them to attend professional development, use what they learned in the classroom, and share those practices with each other.

Enhancing and Diminishing Leadership Behaviors

Participants were asked three questions regarding the constructs, or correlating factors, of self-efficacy: In what ways does your principal enhance or diminish your ability to implement effective instructional strategies? The question was posed similarly for student engagement and classroom management as correlating factors of self-efficacy. Themes related to the principal enhancing or diminishing instructional strategies included professional support and resources, and the principal's instructional leadership. Two unique themes that emerged when discussing student engagement were positive relationships and classroom expectations. Emergent themes from participant responses regarding classroom management included consistency and support.

The teachers stated that professional support and resources were important aspects of their principals' leadership, and ways their instructional strategies were enhanced or diminished. Martha Kate shared, "My principal provides access to a lot of resources and to needed trainings." Leon also commented on resources from the principal enhancing instructional strategies in his classroom by stating, "She shares information with us regularly from the district that we can use with our students. We're also given freedom to teach how we need to teach using various resources that are available to us." Katherine extended the ideas around resources to further include,

> Instruction in my classroom is enhanced by the environment the principal has created. He has invested in instructional support such as a math coach, a reading specialist, and dyslexia specialist. He values these human resources to support instruction and I like having these experts around to help me get better as a teacher.

Amy commented on principal leadership behaviors that diminish her ability to implement effective instructional strategies. She said, "Having too many programs to focus on at once makes me lose traction." Her comment aligned with the ideas that teachers perceive principal leadership to be a major factor in their ability to deliver high-quality instruction. Moreover, they realize how the impact of principals' instructional leadership ties into their success.

Another theme that emerged when the teachers discussed principal leadership behaviors and student engagement was relationships with students. Two teachers described the importance of student relationships in their school and the emphasis their principal placed on them. Alicia stated,

> I see my principal and the relationships she has with our kids. It pushes me to keep having those relationships as well and to engage my students by understanding what's going on in their lives…and to know their interests. I think that keeps it going in my classroom, as far as my instruction.

Alicia believed strong relationships with the students in their school was one of her principal's most emphasized imperatives. Alicia discussed her principal's interactions with students, the importance of knowing the students, and maintaining a relationship with every student.

Another emerging theme related to student engagement and the teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership was modeling the expectations. Katherine stated,

> There is a high expectation in the school as to what goes on in a classroom. We have a common practice of using visuals to make our classrooms engaging spaces, and our principal has set a bar for reimagining how classrooms look and operate.

These teachers realized their principals emphasize strong student relationship and the interrelatedness of strong relationships to student engagement.

The discussions around classroom management drew comments on principals enhancing and or diminishing teachers' ability to effectively manage their classroom. The teachers' perceptions of principal leadership varied in both areas. Support from the principal enhances classroom management. Three teachers connected classroom management and principal support in their responses. An underlying theme herein was mentoring, which one teacher coupled with support. Darla stated,

> Consistency and support are the key. It's nice to have a behavioral management system that is uniformly implemented across the school. Plus, the leadership team provides support on these kinds of issues immediately. They address it with urgency.

Two teachers described their principals' support in classroom management similarly as "having their back" in student and or parent situations. The teachers believed their ability to manage their classroom effectively was enhanced when they had their principals' support. On the contrary, three teachers shed light on principal leadership behaviors that diminished their ability to effectively manage their classroom. Amy candidly described how her principal's inconsistent approach to student behavior diminished her ability to effectively manage her classroom. She said,

"In terms of classroom management, we do not get a lot of support from our principal at all. There's really not a discipline system in place in our school that has any regularity."

Leon discussed the inconsistencies in school-wide behavior management when he said, "We need more guidance on mid-level classroom management issues. For example, how to handle those behaviors that are worse than being tardy [to class], but a student who won't stop talking." From their responses, it is apparent that consistency in school-wide rules and consequences is very important, as well as providing support when tense student or parent situations arise.

Key Leadership Behaviors

The participants were asked to reflect on their principals' leadership behaviors as identified by the Principal Leadership Questionnaire (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). Six leadership qualities were described in detail along with characteristics that are central to each. The first part of the question focused on the teachers' perception of the area in which his or her principal was most skilled and ways these practices increased their sense of self-efficacy. Conversely, the participants were asked about their principals' weakest leadership behavior and how it diminished their level of self-efficacy.

There were commonalities in teachers' perceptions of their principals' key leadership strengths. Themes emerged as nearly one-half of the teachers interviewed discussed two areas in which their principal was most skilled, which included providing vision and fostering commitment. Four teachers referred to their principal providing a vision for the school, while two teachers described their principal as most skilled in fostering commitment. Teachers shared perceptions of these behaviors and their sense of self-efficacy.

The teachers stated that knowing the vision for the school was important, citing it as an essential aspect to forecasting their future and giving them a sense of direction as a school community. Having a strong vision provided teachers with a sense of direction for all members of the school community. Similarly, two teachers perceived the area of fostering commitment through demonstrating an understanding for personal life situations to ensuring ongoing communication and accessibility to be their principals' strongest leadership skill.

As perceived leadership strengths were highlighted, principals' leadership weaknesses were also discussed. Two central themes emerged as leadership behaviors that were perceived to be the principals' weakest areas, including principals' inability to provide individual support and holding high expectations for all.

Providing individual support to a teacher was cited as an area that was lacking in principals' leadership practice. Darla commented, "My principal is so far removed from my classroom. He approaches everything in the school, issues and problems, from a large scale." The teachers' responses indicate their thoughts about individualized support and attention to their class or content area, and to their overall performance as a teacher.

The other area that was perceived as the principals' weakest leadership skill was related to demonstrating high performance expectations for all staff members. According to these teachers, high performance expectations were lacking most when the principals did not hold teachers accountable for maintaining excellence in their teaching practice, or overall job performance, resulting in mediocre performance.

Discussion

The quantitative data indicated there was not a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership behaviors by years of experience. These findings are indirectly reinforced by the interview responses that indicated teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership, of which skills and characteristics were identified without respect to years of experience. Several research studies indicated the importance of leadership practices such as allowing teachers autonomy and flexibility, providing a common purpose and vision for the school, and creating a safe school environment (Moore & Esselman, 1992; Hipp & Bredeson, 1995; Marzano et al., 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; and Cansoy & Parlar, 2018). Pearson and Moomaw (2005) linked teacher autonomy to teacher empowerment, stating that teachers are empowered when they are granted the freedom to make instructional decisions in their classroom. Hipp and Bredeson (1995) asserted that leaders who establish a common purpose for the school and create an orderly environment enhance teachers' efficacy. Additionally, teachers' perceptions of fewer impediments in their work and access to resources had a stronger sense of efficacy (Moore & Esselman, 1992).

The PLQ score significantly predicted the teachers' sense of self-efficacy scores. These results are supported by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2007) findings regarding verbal persuasion, in which they asserted that a teacher's success extends from many sources, including administrators, colleagues, parents, and persons from the school community. Similarly, Bandura (1977) asserted that through social persuasion, principals can influence teachers' level of self-efficacy by sharing persuading words to help them overcome self-doubt and focus on their skills, attributes, and giving their best effort. Hoy's (2000) research tied this together by finding that such persuasion is likely to lose its positive impact if subsequent experiences repeatedly yield defeat.

The findings here revealed that there was a significant relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and principal leadership behaviors. These findings are supported by conclusions Guskey (1987) reached in a study involving elementary and secondary teachers in which he concluded that neither years of experience nor teaching assignment was significantly related to any of the perceptual or attitudinal variables of new program implementation. The variable differences did not associate with teachers' experience or the grade level at which they taught, according to Guskey (1987). On the contrary, Wolters and Daugherty (2007, as cited in Klassen & Chiu, 2010) conducted a study that showed modest correlations between years of experience and self-efficacy for instructional strategies and classroom management, and no effect for self-efficacy in student engagement and years of experience. The qualitative data indicated that teachers' perceptions of principal leadership were significantly related to leadership behaviors they demonstrate on a daily basis, the support principals provided to the teachers, and the leadership strengths and weaknesses they possess. These perceptions are highly correlated to the research presented by Marzano et al. (2003) in which principal behaviors were found to significantly influence those of teachers, particularly through actions such as encouraging a sense of competence and confidence in teachers and empowering teachers in decision-making.

One of the themes that emerged in the qualitative analysis was teacher autonomy to perform one's job. Factors that teachers discussed included being free to make decisions in content materials and lesson sequence, and the positive impact this made on the way they approached their job as a teacher. This was consistent with research that identified autonomy as one of the most important aspects of teacher success. A lack of autonomy may upend a teacher's level of efficacy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Pearson and Moomaw (2005) cited the lack of teacher autonomy as a critical

component of teacher motivation and a reason teachers leave the profession.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews around teacher perceptions of principal leadership was trust. The teachers revealed their perceptions of their principals' level of trust in them, while also describing the trust they have in the principals, which was based on actions the principals had consistently demonstrated over several years. This aligns with the research of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998), which concluded that trust should exist in school leadership, in particular, teachers' trust in the principal. These conclusions are also supported by the research findings of Bryk and Schneider (2003) who stated that the principal needs to be trusted to be able to lead the school staff, to collaborate with members of the faculty, and in other efforts such as providing guidance, resources, and support.

Other evidence of trust pointed to principals demonstrating trust in their teachers to perform effectively in the classroom as these comments recurred in multiple interviews. Moreover, teachers perceived trust from the principal as a testament of their confidence in their knowledge and abilities.

This study also found that teachers have a strong perception of principals leading by example, or modeling behavior, and value it as an asset that undergirds their own success. Another commonality among the teachers in the study was that modeling behavior was perceived as the most impressionable approach to setting an example for others to follow. Muhammad's (2009) research supported these ideas in which he concluded that the human factor of schools, particularly through school leaders, immensely impacts the way things are done in a school. Teachers pointed out observations of their principals' interactions with students, parents, and other staff members. The overall consensus among the teachers was that principal leadership behaviors can be modeled for others to follow. Giles et al. (2005) and Griffith (1999) recognized these dynamic observations in their research, stating that principals function in social, economic, and political contexts that are diverse in nature.

The final common theme that emerged across the teacher interviews was professional development and principals who promoted the opportunity to attain meaningful professional learning. Providing access and support for personalized professional learning with direct links to the classroom is necessary for teachers' ongoing growth and development over time (Dolighan & Owen, 2021). Fullan (2005) confirmed that supporting teachers and building their capacity are core features of effective principal leadership. The teachers in this study felt valued when their principal demonstrated a commitment to their development and improvement. Further aligned with these findings was principals' responsibility for ensuring coherent, relevant professional development experiences that is sustained over time from a firmly-laid foundation they can build upon, which promote teacher competence and confidence (West Ed, 2000; and Matherson & Windle, 2017).

Implications

Teacher self-efficacy is a critical factor in a teacher's success in the classroom. According to Bang and Frost (2012), teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy will be resilient, solve problems with greater effectiveness, and most importantly, learn from their experience. These ideas align with the social cognitive theory, the theoretical framework of this study (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (1986), an individual possesses self-beliefs that enable him or her to control their thoughts, feelings, and actions. The conclusion that teachers with higher efficacy are "more open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs

of their students" (Protheroe, 2008 , p. 43), as well as more committed to teaching (Coladarci, 1992) is supported by the social cognitive theory. Recent research promoting teacher effectiveness has been conducted, finding that leadership practices and behaviors have the potential to positively affect teachers' lifelong professional development in the school context and to empower them toward a commitment to change (Emmanouil, et al., 2014). Moreover, effective leadership has a key role in motivating teachers toward success (Emmanouil et al., 2014).

These findings are important and have the potential to inform teacher and leadership preparation programs, as well as professional development and training that is tailored to meet teachers with varied skill sets in teaching. Although teachers can recover from negative experiences they attribute to their principals' leadership practices and experience success in the classroom, their performance is higher overall when their principal demonstrates one of the six leadership behaviors as described in the PLQ (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1997; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Principals should first become aware of these leadership practices, reflect on those they possess or lack, and gain a deeper understanding of how these practices can positively impact their teachers' performance if exercised consistently.

Additionally, the level of confidence teachers possess, and the extent to which the teachers believe in their ability, greatly influences student behavior and academic achievement (Friedman & Kass, 2001). Teacher preparation programs that do not bring this matter to the forefront should provide opportunities for teacher candidates to know the correlation exists and help them develop strategies to overcome them. Similarly, principal leadership programs and professional development initiatives should also raise awareness around the impact, both positive and negative, that leadership practices can have on a teacher's overall effectiveness in the classroom. With rising expectations of teachers and principals, it is imperative that teachers experience success in the classroom and possess a high level of efficacy to move beyond the many obstacles they may face in teaching.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations are presented for future research. First, this study should be extended to first year teachers whose level of self-efficacy is compared to the same teacher three years later. The classroom experiences, teaching assignments, school climate, and other factors would need to be considered in the data collection and analysis.

Secondly, student achievement data of teachers who possess a high level of self-efficacy could be compared to that of students of teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy since research has shown a correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student achievement outcomes. Such a study would refute or affirm previous studies with findings pointing to the direct associations between teacher self-efficacy and student achievement.

Another recommended research study focuses on principal leadership practice, in which an instrument such as the PLQ would be applied with principals to gather feedback and promote self-reflection as opposed to using it as an evaluative tool to increase the likelihood of principals learning from the feedback as a means of improving their effectiveness as a leader. Because the PLQ is intended to be completed anonymously and can be used as a 360-feedback tool, principals would gather the unique perspectives of their subordinates, peers, and superiors. In addition, it could be used as self-assessment tool to allow the principal to reflect on the leadership practices observed by others and compare them those completed by the teachers.

Conclusion

The findings of this research study affirm the importance of effective teachers and principals. Every classroom needs a strong teacher. Teacher quality is the single most impactful school characteristic that significantly impacts student achievement. Arguably as important as an effective teacher is an effective principal, for they select and cultivate strong teachers. Principals who are instructional leaders create a school culture that promotes the very qualities teachers are expected to possess - resilience, problem solving, risk taking, lifelong learning, to name a few. They intentionally create opportunities for growth through purposeful interactions among the key stakeholders in the school community. Moreover, such interactions promote teachers' freedom to take risks and learn together, thus, contributing to a positive school culture. Conclusively, the relationship between effective teachers and effective principals is compelling and they are infinitely connected in their associations with overall school effectiveness.

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