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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined faculty/staff perceptions of their principals' leadership styles, with a focus on their use of shared-governance approach. Data were gathered through a survey of 32 faculty and 20 staff members in four county schools in Tennessee and North Carolina. A majority of the sample reported that their principals provided personal autonomy and a cooperative environment, practiced shared-governance behaviors, and demonstrated effective leadership. There were no statistically significant differences between faculty and staff or between men and women respondents. Overall, the data showed a correlation between respondents' perceptions of shared-governance behaviors and satisfaction with their work environments. Five tables are included. (LMI)

CAN PRINCIPALS SHED THEIR TRADITIONAL STYLE OF GOVERNANCE?

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Introduction

Traditional concepts of leadership and management have undergone vast changes. In recent years, American corporations have restructured their organizations by replacing traditional hierarchies with team-approach models. Traditional layers of management have been eliminated to include workers in decision-making processes.

Thus, the concept of decentralization has also influenced how educational environments should be organized. Many public schools adopted a site-based management approach to include the professional judgment of teachers (Conley & Bacharach, 1990). The role of the principal has taken on a new collegial meaning and function. Not only are principals expected to be instructional leaders, but they are expected to share their leadership governance with teachers and parents as well.

Conversely, however, some public school administrators have experienced great difficulties with functioning with a shared-governance model. In some instances, a collegial role has widen the gap between principals and teachers (McNeil, 1988; Martin, 1990). Some principals are uncertain about their leadership role with teachers. Still other principals do not want to share this traditional power with teachers (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Maeroff, 1988; Timar, 1989).

Some effective leadership studies have shown when principals empower teachers to become decision makers, teacher effectiveness and high achievement are likely to occur. Other studies have found that principal effectiveness is often influenced by faculty and staff perceptions (Brittenham, 1986; Pinkney-Maynard, 1986). That is, when faculty and staff feel they have a professional relationship with the principal, their moral and performance is high. It is also evident that when teachers feel they have some input into policy making and curriculum and instructional programs, teacher effectiveness is likely to occur.

Purpose of Study:

This study examined whether or not some faculty/staff perceive their principal applying a shared-governance method. The study also examined gender and faculty/staff differences with shared governance.

Method and Analysis:

A fifteen-item agreement survey was designed to ascertain shared-governance behaviors of the principal. Nine of the item statements consisted of whether or not faculty/staff perceived their principal creating an autonomous, comfortable, cooperative, encouraging, and trusting environment. Another two-item statements measured perceptions of shared decisions. One item statement from environment was also included with shared-decision making behaviors. Finally, the last four-item statements measured effective leadership perceptions.

The survey instrument was administered to 52 faculty/staff located in four county schools in Tennessee and North Carolina. Sixty-two (N=32) of the respondents were faculty, and 38% (N=20) were staff. Females represented 63% of the respondents, and males represented 37% of the sample. The participants were asked to respond to a 4-point Likert agreement scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4).

The item statements were clustered into site-based management categories to describe the working environment as autonomous, comfortable, cooperative, encouraging, and trusting. Other items were clustered into a shared-decision making category. One item was categorized as leadership ability. The data were analyzed using chi-square statistical procedures to determine significant perception differences between the groups.

Data Results:

Working Environment

Some data results revealed that a majority (78%) perceived their principal creating an autonomous, comfortable, cooperative, and encouraging environment. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the faculty/staff's work environment. Four item statements assessed whether or not the principal permitted faculty/staff autonomy with job performances and autonomy to make decisions about the work. In Table 1, it can be observed that more autonomy (Autonomous[3]) was perceived when the principal assigned a task and permitted the members to handle it. Seventy-three of the respondents said the principal lets them do their work the way they

think is best (Autonomous[2]), while 70% said the principal allows them complete freedom to do their work (Autonomous[1]) and isn't reluctant to allow them freedom of action (Autonomous[4]). Overall, however, 30% did not feel this freedom from the principal. The respondents also strongly agreed and agreed (91%) the principal encourages autonomy.

The professional autonomy perception was more pronounced when the respondents were asked if the principal trusted them to make work decisions. An overwhelming 88% of the respondents perceived the principal's trust in them, while 12% did not.

Table 1
Faculty/Staff Perceptions of Working Environment Created by the Principal

Environment Type	N	%	M	SD
Autonomous[1]	37	70	2.18	.67
Autonomous[2]	38	72	2.17	.57
Autonomous[3]	43	81	2.08	.61
Autonomous[4]	37	70	2.77	.74
Comfortable	46	87	1.74	.68
Cooperative	50	96	1.81	.48
Encouraging	48	91	1.81	.65
Trusting	45	88	1.92	.67

Note. Autonomous[1] refers to the item statement that the principal allows the faculty/staff complete freedom in their work.
Autonomous[2] refers to the item statement the principal lets the members do their work the way they think best.
Autonomous[3] refers to the item statement that the principal assigns a task, and then lets the members handle it.
Autonomous[4] refers to the item statement that the principal is reluctant to allow the members any freedom of action.

Faculty/Staff Differences with Working Environment

Chi-square statistics were used to examine possible differences between the faculty and staff. The level of significance was set at .05. To a large degree, faculty/staff perceptions of the principals were similar. No significant differences were found. As Table 2 shows, no significant perception differences existed with the principal demonstrating a shared-governance environment. Yet, it could not be overlooked that ten percent of the faculty had a lack of trust perception of the principal, compared to less than 1% of staff.

Table 2
Faculty and Staff Differences with Working Environment

Environment Type	N	df	X^2	p
Autonomous[1]	52	3	0.70	.87
Autonomous[2]	52	3	1.96	.58
Autonomous[3]	52	3	2.05	.56
Autonomous[4]	52	3	1.00	.10
Comfortable	52	2	2.34	.31
Cooperative	51	2	0.51	.78
Encouraging	52	3	1.87	.60
Trusting	50	3	1.47	.69

Note. Autonomous[1] refers to the item statement that the principal allows the faculty/staff complete freedom in their work.
Autonomous[2] refers to the item statement the principal lets the members do their work the way they think best.
Autonomous[3] refers to the item statement that the principal assigns a task, and then lets the members handle it.
Autonomous[4] refers to the item statement that the principal is reluctant to allow the members any freedom of action.

Gender Differences

Table 3 shows when the data were further analyzed for perceptions with gender, gender differences were similar to faculty/staff findings. Hardly any significant findings existed between female and male respondents. It can be observed that male and female group held similar views about their working environment as male did. Although not significantly, more of the females (21%) than males (10%) felt less freedom in their work. In addition, descriptive statistics previously revealed that females and males disagreed as to whether or not the principal lets them do their work the way they think best. Comparatively, 16% of the females perceived the principal not letting them do this, whereas only 13% of the male group held this perception. Yet, both groups agreed the principal encourages initiative.

To some degree, the data clearly showed the male and female perceptions disagreed as to whether or not the principal needles them for greater effort [$X^2(3,52) = 6.75$, $p < .10$]. More females (52%) than males (17%) largely accounted for the difference. That is, more of the females disagreed that the principal needles them for greater effort.

Overall, the female and male respondents tended to hold similar perceptions about the principal's behaviors with them.

Table 3
Gender Differences with Working Environment

Environment Type	Females N	Males N	df	X^2
Autonomous[1]	33	19	3	2.51
Autonomous[2]	33	19	3	2.05
Autonomous[3]	33	19	3	0.74
Autonomous[4]	33	19	3	4.23
Comfortable	33	19	2	0.22
Cooperative	32	19	2	1.00
Encouraging	33	19	3	1.00
Trusting	31	19	3	1.17

Note. Autonomous[1] refers to the item statement that the principal allows the faculty/staff complete freedom in their work.
Autonomous[2] refers to the item statement the principal lets the members do their work the way they think best.
Autonomous[3] refers to the item statement that the principal assigns a task, and then lets the members handle it.
Autonomous[4] refers to the item statement that the principal is reluctant to allow the members any freedom of action.
$p>.05$.

Shared-Governance Behaviors of Principal

Three item statements addressed shared-governance behaviors of principals. A majority (89%) of the respondents perceived the principal using suggestions made by the group. The principal also included faculty/staff in program changes by giving them advanced notices. Therefore, faculty/staff felt the principal respected them as professionals. Perceptions of shared-governance behaviors could also be observed. A large percentage (81%) of the respondents saying when the principal assigns a task, he/she permits them to handle it.

Faculty/Staff Differences with Shared-Governance Behaviors

Chi-square statistical procedures were also used to examine faculty/staff and gender differences with the principal's shared-governance behaviors. Three item statements focused on shared-governance behaviors of the principal. As with previous differential findings, the data clearly showed no significant perception differences between the two groups. Eighty-nine percent of the faculty/staff said the principal uses suggestions made by the group. Similarly, both groups (77%) said the principal notifies them of program changes, and 81% perceived sharing responsibilities when the principal is not afraid to assign a task, and let them handle it. However, 14% percent of the staff did not feel the principal included them in changes.

As Table 4 indicates, no significant differences with faculty/staff perceptions were found with whether nor the principal includes and shares with them.

Table 4
Faculty and Staff Differences with Shared-Governance Behaviors of Principal

Behavior	N	%	df	X^2
Shares Decisions	46	89	2	0.32
Shares Responsibilities	42	81	3	2.05
Communicates Inclusion	40	77	3	4.15

p>.05.

Gender Differences with Shared-Governance Behaviors

More females (60%) than males (29%) perceived the principal using their suggestions. Yet, the chi-square coefficient did not support this percentage difference ($p > .05$) as indicated in Table 5. Surprisingly, there were no significant differences with shared-governed perceptions.

Despite no significant differences between gender groups, the descriptive data were observed, particularly with the principal sharing responsibility. A smaller percentage (1%) of males than females (14%) did not perceive being left alone to handle an assigned task. Perhaps this finding suggest that males and females perceive empowerment differently.

Nevertheless, the data did show a large percentage of female and male respondents perceived the principal demonstrating shared-decision making behaviors.

Table 5
Gender Differences with Shared-Governance Behaviors of the Principal

Shared-Governance Behavior	Females		Males		df	X^2
	N	%	N	%		
Shares Decisions	31	60	15	29	2	3.06
Shares Responsibilities	26	50	16	31	3	0.74
Communicates inclusion	27	52	13	25	3	3.33

p>.05.

The Principal's Leadership Ability

The study was also interested in ascertaining perceptions of the principal's leadership abilities. As with previous findings, perception with the principal's leadership ability yielded no significant difference between the groups. Ninety-two percent of the respondents perceived being able to keep the group in good standing with higher authority. Eighty-five percent was confident the principal is able to make accurate decisions. A large percentage (83%) of respondents also viewed the principal as one who knows how to exert leadership power when it is needed, compared

to the 17% who perceived the principals lacking this leadership quality.

It was interesting to find that despite the shared-governance behaviors of the principal, a majority (76%) of the respondents did not feel the principal lets some faculty/staff take advantage of him/her.

Correlation Results

Some of the findings of the study influenced the researchers to further analyze the data for correlation results between the working environment, shared-governance, and leadership ability variables.

Surprisingly, most correlation coefficients between variables were positive, moderate, and high. It was evident from the data results that the more the respondents perceived a shared-governance environment, the more they perceived the principal to have leadership abilities to make decisions and when to assume the leadership role and responsibility. For example, high positive coefficients were found between the principal allowing respondents any freedom of action, and the principal not letting faculty/staff take advantage of him/her ($r = .90$), making accurate decisions ($r = .89$), and standing firm ($r = .80$). Other working environment variables also had positive coefficients as high as .91 with leadership ability, particularly with the principal trusting members to exercise good judgment and the principal being able to make accurate decisions ($r = .90$).

Similar correlation findings were found with shared-governance decisions. That is, high positive coefficients existed between principal allowing faculty/staff the freedom of action and the principal trusting faculty/staff to exercise good judgment ($r = .94$), and the principal using the group's suggestions ($r = .87$). There was also a high positive relationship between the principal inclusion behaviors and letting faculty/staff handle the assigned task ($r = .93$).

Overall, the results from the correlation data showed that shared-governance behaviors were highly correlated with how faculty/staff felt about their working environment.

Conclusions

The findings from the study enabled the researchers to draw several conclusions from the study. It was evident that when faculty/staff feel good about their working environment, they can accomplish their instructional goals with students. This conclusion could be reached regardless of position or gender, for there was no significant perception differences between groups.

Teachers' success with student learning can be largely influenced by principals who apply a shared-governance approach. That is, when faculty/staff feel they are treated an equal partner in the profession, and the principal respects them as a competent profession, the group members are more likely to maintain a high sense of motivation to excel. It was also evident from the data that faculty/staff preferred shared-governance approach did not imply they expect a principal who is unable to assume an

authoritative leadership position. The decision-making processes can me mutually shared by faculty/staff without the principal feeling threatened by members of the group.

Since most of the correlation coefficients with shared-governance behaviors were moderate and high, the findings strongly suggest that further research studies are needed to examine principals' shared-governance behaviors in relationship to teacher effectiveness and student learning.

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