The Relationship between Instructional Leadership Style and School Culture (İzmir Case)*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine instructional leadership and school culture in CLS and to determine whether instructional leadership explains the culture of the school. This is a quantitative investigation and the instruments named "Instructional Leadership Inventory" and "Inventory of School Culture" was used for this study. The inventories were applied to 157 urban elementary schools where teachers worked the six Curriculum Laboratory Schools (CLS) in İzmir. The overall statistical findings indicated that teachers tend to perceive the instructional leadership style of their principals (M.=3.39-3.64) and the culture of their schools (M.=3.63.-4.00) positively. There is no significant difference among groups as teachers' age and length of service. There is a positive and high level relationship between the principals instructional leadership style and school culture. The results indicate that instructional leadership statistically has a significant influence upon all factors of school culture. As a factor of school culture, school leadership was most significantly influenced by instructional leadership.

Key Words

Instructional Leadership, School Culture, School Leadership.

Instructional leadership is unique to the field of education and it differs from other types of leaderships because it is related to students, teachers, curricula and learning-teaching processes (Gümüşeli, 1996b). The critical role of "being instructional leader" played by the principals affects teaching and student achievement (Blasé & Blasé, 1999, 2000, 2004; Deal & Peterson, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hart & Bredeson, 1996; Hoy & Hoy, 2003; Gümüşeli, 2001; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Stein-

bach, 1999; Özden 1998; Weber, 1996; Whitaker, 1997). Çelik (1999), Hoy and Hoy (2003) and Şişman (2004) argue that the main aim of schools is to teach, which is an aim accompanied by secondary activities and objectives. Gümüşeli (1996a) determined that instead of leadership behaviours, the principals take more responsibilities such as the bureaucratic and legal barriers, time limitation, insufficiency of education, visions, determination. As a matter of fact, Gökyer (2004) found that these factors affected instructional leadership behaviours of principals.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1989), the duty of a principal is not to create new instructional methods and techniques, but to take a stand against the status quo and support new opinions and applications. In many schools, evidence is mounting that leaders are currently engaging in new practices to help their schools systematically improve student learning (Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, & Thomas, 2007). In this context, the essential role of a leader is to establish and maintain the school culture since it

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is a powerful symbolic tool for influencing teaching and learning in schools (Cafoğlu, 1995; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001; Hart & Bredeson, 1996; Harris 2002; Hopkins, 2000; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Masland, 1985; Peterson, 2002; Slater, Goldring, Bolman, Thurston, & Crow, 1994). Accordingly, the heart of the instructional leadership is the ability of leaders to change schools from cultures of internal accountability to institutions that can meet the demands of external accountability (Halverson et al., 2007).

Values and traditions play an important role in school culture and they are the elements that strengthen the language, meanings, past heroes and present practices of each school (Handy, 1993). In this context, it is important that the language, metaphor, myth and rituals of the school to be manifested in such a way that ensures all participants (principals, teachers and students) are aware of them (Sergiovanni, 1986).

In this cultural context, first, the principal is a role model in their school. The teacher has to notice and interpret the principal's important actions (Fullan, 1992). Likewise, teachers should observe the principal for signs of how things are going with respect to experimentation, risk taking, courage, collaboration, and attitudes towards the necessity of change (Deal & Peterson, 2000). Principals can promote a positive culture, by acting in a certain way that sends signals to teachers and students that they can achieve more (Zepeda, 2003).

Second, collaboration raises the level of collective brainpower and assists in problem solving (Sergiovanni, 2005). Instructional leaders who act within the scope of cooperation, collegiality, expertise and teamwork are hallmarks of a successful improvement (Hoy & Hoy, 2003; Zepeda, 2003). This type of leader enhances the belief that "collaborative practices should be promoted and become a natural part of the daily activities in a school, modeling flexible and diverse teaching methods" (Campo, 1993). Finally, trust is an integral component of the relationship between the instructional leader and the teachers. Without trust, efforts to build a collaborative culture and to ensure school improvement will be diminished, relationships will flounder and people may even be confined to cliques or special interest groups (Blasé & Blasé, 1994; Donaldson, 2001; Zepeda 2003).

The principal plays a major role in forming and maintaining the school culture (Açıkgöz, 1994; Bart, 2002; Campo, 1993; Chrispeels, 1992; Çelik, 2002; Deal & Peterson, 1999, 2000; Harris, 2002;

İbicioğlu, 1999; Lambert, 2002; Pehlivanoğlu, 1999; Schein, 1996, 2004; Slater et al., 1994). The relationships between school culture and leadership styles were determined in researches (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Haris, 2002; Leithwood et al., 1999; Lucas, 2001; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Şahin, 2004).

School culture undertaken as conditional elements is generally evaluated to be positive. While some of the most explored subjects are collaboration and collegiality (for example, Canizo, 2002; *Fowler, 2006;* Giles, 1998; Gruenert, 2005; Horn-Hasley, 2007; Leonard, 2002; Lima, 2006; Lucas, 2001), another important subject is the affect of school culture on student achievement (for example, *Fowler, 2006*; Giles, 1998, Lima, 2006; Marcoulides & Heck, 1993; Smith, 2006). Findings indicate that that there are positive relationships between the school culture and the commitment, motivation, job satisfaction, communication leadership skills of teachers (Canizo, 2002; Jones, 1998).

In the 1990s, school culture researches in Turkey emerged and continued increasing in numbers after 2000. Among the first studies conducted using the quantitative method were those by Şişman (1994) on issues like collaboration, consensus and improving culture. Other researches include studies conducted by Terzi (1999) on power, evasion, helpfulness and affiliation culture; Çelik (2002) on originality, collaboration and trust; Celep (2002) on learning culture and instructional improvement; Şahin (2004) on collaboration and improving culture, traditional culture and social-educational culture; Şahin-Fırat (2007) on democratic management, participation, collaboration, and also school culture and school size by Şahin (2010) and Şahin-Fırat (2007). Studies on school culture and leadership styles have also been conducted by Koçman (2005) and Şahin (2004).

In Turkey, instructional leadership were specifically examined. According to Aksoy and Işık (2008), Balcı (1993), Bayrak (2001), Can (2007), Cerit (2007), Çalık and Şehitoğlu (2006), Dağlı (2000), Gümüşeli, (1996b), İnandı and Özkan (2006), Şişman (2004), Çelikten (2004) and Kaykanacı (2003) the principals have a limited afford of instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership and school culture were examined on variables such as academic achievement, length of service, teaching level, gender and SES (Aksoy & Işık, 2008; Atay, 2001; Gökyer, 2004; Koçman, 2005; Özden, 2002; Şişman, 2004; Tanrıöğen, 2000; Şahin, 2004, 2010; Şahin-Fırat, 2007). Most of the researches focus on how instructional lead-

ership and school culture affect academic achievement. As these, high achievement schools have high achievements both in instructional leadership and school culture (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Demirtaş, 2010; Gruenert, 2005; Giles, 1998; Şahin, 2008a, 2008b; Şişman, 2004; Taylor, 2004; Wagner, 1999).

The relationship between instructional leadership and school culture were examined by (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Budhal, 2000; DuPont, 2009; Hunter, 1995; Lord, 2001; Miles, 2002). Among reviewed literature, the effect of instructional leadership on school culture was examined by DuPont' (2009).

Due to the fact that there is a lack of research that focuses on the relationship between school culture and instructional leadership in Turkey, this study aims to explore the relationship between school culture and instructional leadership in MLO's. The significance of this study is two-fold: First, it analyses school principals' instructional leadership behaviors and school culture. Also, it will be the first study (considering the studies that have been reviewed) that focuses on the relationship between school culture and instructional leadership as well as the effects of instructional leadership on school culture. It is also expected that the analysis of instructional leadership and school culture in MLOs will contribute to the literature with regard to the effectiveness of the development efforts in these schools.

The Purpose of the Research

The goal of this study is to analyze the perceptions of elementary school teachers regarding instructional leadership and school culture. This study will be based on the following research questions: *(i)* How do teachers perceive the instructional leadership and the school culture in CLS? *(ii)* Do demographic descriptors (teaching level, academic achievement and social-economic status –SES) influence teachers' perceptions of the instructional leadership and the school culture? *(iii)* Is there a relationship between the instructional leadership and the school culture? *(iv)* Does instructional leadership explain school culture?

Method

Design

This was a quantitative investigation using survey instruments Karasar, (1999) that involves demographic descriptors and items on instructional leadership and school culture.

Participants

The research was conducted during the 2005 -2006 academic year in İzmir. Data were collected from the 16 Curriculum Laboratory Schools (CLS) in Izmir. The sample was selected using a stratified sampling design of student achievement and social-economic level. This research instrument was applied to 157 teachers (6 schools) in İzmir.

CLS in Turkey: In Turkey this study was carried out in CLS that were leading the educational development process. In 1994, 208 elementary and secondary schools were chosen as pilot schools in 23 provinces within the scope of National Education Development Project (NEDP). CLS are pilot schools in which new education and management approaches, technology and curricula are tested before they are applied to the whole educational system. The model defines areas of competency of supervisors, principals and teachers together with the competencies of the students and the skills that the students are envisaged to gain. The plan was that the CLS model would be applied in all schools by the end of 2005 and the Department of Education Research and Development (Eğitimi Araştırma ve Geliştirme Dairesi Başkanlığı [EARGED], 2005, 2010) passed the responsibility of the implementation to the related units (Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, 2008). Although limited, some researches are done about CLS (Dönmez, 2002; Şahin, 2006).

Research Instruments

The data collection tool was the *Instructional Leadership Inventory* developed by Alig-Meilcarek (2003). The questionnaire was based on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly agree, …5=strongly disagree). Three factors were identified from the results of the exploratory factor analysis of the original version of the inventory. The Turkish version internal consistency coefficients of the inventory for the total of the items was .95 and for each factor scale the range was from r=.81 to r=.88. As seen in Table 2, the Turkish version corresponds to the original inventory (Büyüköztürk, 2009).

The School Culture Inventory: It was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was developed referencing the surveys created by Camburn, Goldring, Supovitz, Spillane, and Barnes (2005) and Cavanagh, MacNeill and Reynolds (2004). In addition, the interviews were conducted with teachers. The survey was prepared with both demographic descriptors and Likert-type items rang-

ing from 1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree. The survey was face and intent validated by six of the researchers. The survey consisted of 37 items and the data were organized into five factors. Reliabilities for the total items is 0.93, and for each factor scale ranged from r=.73 to r=.89. The Turkish inventory's reliabilities for each factor scale ranged from r=.64 to r=.91, and the total items was calculated as 0.95.

Two studies were conducted to evaluate the Turkish versions of *The Instructional Leadership Inventory and* **School Culture Inventory.** First, the researcher and two Turkish graduate students translated the questionnaire into Turkish from English. After this process, two other graduate students translated the Turkish version back into English to test the translation. In this process, both the English and Turkish questionnaires were examined in terms of cross cultural characteristics (Savaşır, 1994). Second, a bilingual design was used to compare the Turkish and English questionnaires. 23 bilingual Turkish teachers completed the questionnaires that were then analyzed to check the test-retest correlation of the English and Turkish version of the instrument (The Instructional Leadership *Inventory*: r= 0.83; School Culture Inventory: r=0.86).

Data Collection

Two assistants handed out the questionnaires, meeting teachers personally to assure accurate and prompt data collection. Participation in this study was voluntary. Questionnaire was administered in a manner to protect individual confidentiality. The questionnaires were given to 198 teachers (84%) from a total of 236 teachers in Turkey and 165 questionnaires (83%) were returned to the researcher. Of the questionnaires returned, 157 were useable for the study (79%).

Analysis Procedure

The analysis was guided by the research questions. The questionnaire data were analysed using an SPSS program. The arithmetic means and *standard deviation* were calculated, analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) and t-test were used to draw inferences about differences between the means of two or more groups. For all statistical tests the level of significance was set at *p*<0.05.

Results

The overall statistical findings of the study indicated that teachers had positive perceptions about the instructional leadership style adopted by the principals of the schools (3.53). However, the dimensions of "promotes professional development" (3.64), providing feedback on the teaching and learning process" (3.57) were perceived at positive level, but "monitors and provides feedback" (3.39) were perceived at moderate level. The findings indicated that teachers tend to perceive the culture of their schools as positive (3.79). Moreover, all other dimensions were perceived as positively (4.00-3.63). There is no significant difference among groups with teachers' age and length of service. There is a positive and high level relationship between the principals instructional leadership style and school culture. The results indicate that instructional leadership has a statistically significant influence upon all factors of school culture. As a factor of school culture, school leadership was most significantly influenced by instructional leadership.

Discussion

The overall statistical findings indicated that teachers tend to perceive the culture of their schools as positive in CLS. While the principals are evaluated most positively on the promotion of professional development, they are evaluated on a moderate level for providing feedback on the teaching and learning process. Also, DuPont (2009) determined that principals have limited afford on providing feedback on teaching and learning processes. In this context, principals take teachers' professional development into account in these schools in improvement process.

On the other hand, the findings indicated that teachers tend to perceive the culture of their schools positively in CLS. The results of other studies are mainly consistent with the findings of the present study in terms of the positive perception about the school culture (Celep, 2002; Koçman, 2005; Şahin, 2004; Şahin-Fırat, 2007). Teacher collaboration is evaluated as the most positive one in school culture. This finding is consistent with findings of some other researches (Celep, 2002; Çelik, 2002; Şişman, 1994; Şahin-Fırat, 2007).

One of the other important findings of the study is that teachers' age and length of service are not effective determinants on their views related to principal's instructional leadership and school culture. While these findings are consistent with some

other instructional leadership researches (Aksoy ve Işık, 2008; Koçman, 2005; Özden, 2002) and school culture researches (Koçman, 2005; Şahin, 2010; Şahin-Fırat, 2007), the other ones are not consistent with other instructional leadership researches (Gökyer, 2004; Şahin, 2004; Şahin-Fırat, 2007; Tanrıöğen, 2000).

There is a positive relationship between instructional leadership and all the dimensions of school culture. There is also a strong positive relationship between the three dimensions of instructional leadership and the school leadership aspect of school culture. It was found out that the relationship between the other dimensions of instructional leadership and school culture is at a moderate level. These findings suggest that administrators/principals should exhibit instructional leadership behaviours as these skills help develop the unity of vision and mission, and improve the culture of progress as well as the culture of education. These findings are consistent with findings from previous studies (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Blase ve Blase, 2004; Budhal, 2000; DuPont, 2009; Lord, 2001; Miles, 2002; O'Donnell, 2003).

Among the variables, giving feedback and supervision and identifying and delivering purpose were found to be predicting school leadership. Furthermore, school leadership is the most predictive dimension of school culture. Identifying and delivering purpose, teacher collaboration and unity of vision are important predictors of the culture of development. Therefore, it is obvious that principals' focus on purpose will contribute to the establishment of unity of purpose and vision, collaboration and development culture in schools. Moreover, identifying and delivering purpose and conducting feedback and supervising were found to be predictors of the culture of instruction.

Principals' roles of identifying and delivering purpose, conducting feedback and supervision can be good predictors of the following: Teachers meet the needs of their students' individual differences, they believe that that every student can learn, and they value moral education and take risks towards achieving this goal. These findings are congruous with that of DuPont's (2009) study in which similar research tools were used.

Suggestions

Administrators should provide opportunities for teacher collaboration, sharing of leadership and professional development in order to create a positive and collaborative school culture. Administrators should be provided with training opportunities that will enable them to improve their instructional leadership, taking into consideration its positive effects on creating a positive school culture. Also, the factors that restrain instructional leadership should be eliminated. In this study, it was found that principals' feedback on the process of instruction is limited in comparison to the other factors. The reasons for this finding should be investigated and necessary measures should be taken accordingly. The relationship between instructional leadership and school culture could be further studied in primary and secondary schools.

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