Chapter 40
Self–Assessment of Principals Based on Leadership in Complexity

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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to provide a picture of principal leaders in the school. The focus of this study is to identify and describe the characteristics of principal's leadership process in complex situation based on self-assessment. The study conducted by qualitative approach consisted of volunteer principals working in the city center of Ankara, Turkey. We discuss how these findings provide a deeper understanding of the latest principals' leadership process in complexity based on principals' self-assessment. The researcher gathered and analyzed data in an effort to create a template of essential leadership characteristics that could be utilized at other schools or in other educational environment. The results likely to suggest that self-assessment of principals in complexity are well worth revealing how the principals perceive their leadership process and what leading characteristics are viewed when they have complex situation.

INTRODUCTION

Education nowadays is in a mode of change, these changes result in expecting much not only from education but also from educational leaders and moreover the paradigm for school leadership is undergoing a profound change, this result in significantly raised expectations for school leaders. Therefore school leaders face rapidly changing conditions both in the external environment and within the educational leadership field. These changing conditions pose formidable challenges for educational leaders (Hannah, Balthazard, Waldman, Jennings & Tatcher, 2013; McCarthy, 2002; Tobin, 2014). This leads educational leadership to challenge to engage in a broader conceptualization of its purpose (Tobin, 2014; Tillman, 2002). In addition to their traditional role as school managers, administrative leaders are increasingly expected to help teachers adopt risky new instructional strategies, to engage stakeholders in change through participatory decision making, and to collect and analyze data as they lead their constituents through the comprehensive school improvement process (Henning & Robinson, 2002).

Stakeholders from every field of study have concluded that leadership is defined as a central variable in the organizational success (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007). Especially for education, there is parallel evidence that leadership is considered as the keystone element in school to define student achievement (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). Over the last three decades it is an assertion that not a particular leadership is equal but all types of leadership is especially visible in high performing schools (Murphy, Elliot, Goldring & Andrew, 2007).

Many researches appear to confirm that principal leadership can have an essential but largely indirect effect on student learning or student success (Blandford, 2013; Hallinger, 2010; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Raja & Palanichamy, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010; Ward, 2013). Principals have an impact on student learning by creating conditions at school that would have a positive impact on teacher practice and students learning (Hallinger, 2010; Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). Still many researches on leadership, school leadership and/or successful school leadership have been being done to expand these earlier researches (Blandford, 2013; Hallinger, 2010; Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). For these reason much efforts have given to study the impact of principal leadership and to identify professional leadership dimensions of the principal's role that had an impact on school success (Hallinger, 2010, p.61).

It is an undeniable fact that there is a correlation between the school leaders and students success (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). There are many researches providing lists of the practices and characteristics of effective school leaders. Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005), developed a list of 21 categories of behaviors (responsibilities) of school leaders, such as *knowledge of current curriculum, instructional, and assessment practices* in their meta-analysis of over 300 studies regarding school leadership as practiced by principals. All these behaviors were found to be positively correlated to student achievement. Since the last decade there has been an increased interest in raising a global interest in educational reform centering on student learning led, to a focus on school leadership in general (Hallinger, 2010, p.61). This results in exploring the sources, means and implications of viewing school leadership more broadly than that which is exercised by the principal (Gronn 2002; Harringer, 2010; Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, 2009; Ogawa & Bossert 1995).

Principal as the school leader in traditional structure is seen as knowing everything and is the only person who takes the decisions for the school. This kind of leadership style no longer meets the needs of changing complex school. School leaders are expected to have the capability to understand the need to change and they need to embrace unpredicted situation in educational environment. This makes complexity leadership worth exploring in educational leadership as complexity leadership offers much for school leadership (Morrison, 2015). Complexity leadership focuses on complex system and processes comprising leadership (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007).

Underpinning this approach, this study is an attempt at making self-assessment of principals based on leadership in complexity. The shift to school based-management seems to require educational leaders having knowledge, skills and attitudes that are different from those of the past to manage unpredicted complex situation. Thus, to learn the answer of the question "what the knowledge, skills and attitude needed for educational leadership in today's complex schools are" is seems to be valuable from the practitioners working at schools as principals. Knowing that leadership occurs at all levels of management, whether principals are aware of the role of leadership in complexity and how they assess their own leadership activities and what leadership skills they have are really worth studying. Self-assessment

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