Principal trust in students and parents: its relationship with principal burnout

Burhanettin Dönmez[a], Niyazi Özer[a] *, Melike Cömert[a]

[a]InonuUniversity, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences PK.44280 Malatya, Turkey

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the primary school principals' views on trust in students and parents and also, to explore the relationships between principals' levels of professional burnout and their trust in students and parents. To this end, Principal Trust Survey and Friedman Principal Burnout scales were administered on 119 primary school principals (F=7, M=112) working in Malatya, a city located in the eastern part of Turkey. Research results revealed that principals' views on trust in students differ significantly in terms of their level of education and professional experience. Results also showed that principal trust in students and parents is moderately negatively related with principal burnout.
© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords : Organizational trust; burnout; principals; students; parents.

1. Introduction

Trust, as a social phenomenon, has been examined in various disciplines. Organizational theorists, sociologists, behavioral psychologists, and educators claim that trust is important in social transactions and working relationships (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009). There appears to be a general consensus among scholars from different disciplines that trust has a number of important benefits for organizations, at both individual and collective levels (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Kramer, 1999). For example, Fukuyama (1995) points out that people who trust each other can adapt easily to new conditions and create appropriate new organizational forms. It is, also, stated that without trust, there cannot be cooperation between people, teams, departments, or divisions (Ceyanes, 2005). In this respect, trust can be regarded as an essential element for maintaining cohesive relationships and fostering effective cooperation.

We live in a complex and fast-changing society (Hargreaves, 2002; Hargreaves and Fink, 2003). In an ever-changing world like this, schools, like other organizations, must be cooperative, cohesive, and well-managed ever than before in order to be responsive, effective, and productive (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). For schools to be effective in the restructuring process and to sustain new reform initiatives, trust must exist among all stakeholders

* Niyazi Özer. Tel.: +90-422-377-4565
E-mail address: nozer@inonu.edu.tr.

(Bryk & Schneider, 2002). As Meier (2004) stated, no form of curriculum or teaching method can succeed where trust has never existed (Meier, 2004).

School principals have a particular responsibility for promoting trust among all members of the school community (Day, 2009). Because lack of trust between school professionals and parents makes it difficult for these groups to maintain a genuine dialogue about shared concerns (Bryke & Schneider, 2002). Besides, some research results showed that, establishing an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect among school community was correlated with student performance, teacher burnout, increased collaboration, open professional relations, engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors, teachers' employment decisions, and overall school improvement efforts and healthy school climate (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; 2003; Ceyanes, 2004; Ceyanes & Slatter, 2005; Hoy, 1996; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tarter, Sabo & Hoy,1995; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Reeves, Emerick ve Hirsch, 2007). Therefore, building trusting relationships among teachers, school leaders, students, and parents is essential in order to advance the academic mission of a school (Meier, 1995).

There are, however, some times when it is a difficult job for school principals to promote trusting relationships in schools. As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) stated, "trust seems ever more difficult to achieve and maintain" (p. 550). In the absence of trust in school setting, principals may experience some level of stress and burnout. The school principal's professional world is marked by overwhelming responsibilities, information perplexities, and emotional anxiety (Friedman, 2002). As legal leaders of schools, principals may face increasing demands and pressures from various sources including students, parents, teachers, teacher unions, superintendents, governmental agencies etc. (Pierucci, 1985). It is a challenging job for principals to meet these varied, often conflicting demands (Friedman, 2002). Besides, in most cases school administrators begin their profession without adequate preparation. Hence, principals may experience some difficulties and stress in response to these demands and pressures, which, in turn, lead principals to suffer burnout.

When principals, teachers, students, and parents trust each other and work together cooperatively, a warm and positive school climate is likely to occur (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), which may prevent principal-experienced burnout. Hence we assumed that principals' sense of burnout may be associated with their trust in parents and students. In this regard, the primary aim of this descriptive study is to determine the primary school principals' views on trust in students and parents. It was, also, aimed to explore the relationships between principals' levels of professional burnout and their trust in students and parents.

2. Methodology

The participants of the study comprised a total of 119 (F=7, M=112) primary school principals, attending an in-service training program arranged jointly by Inonu University Faculty of Education and TED Malatya College, during 3-5 May, 2009. Principals' views on trust in students and parents were measured by an adapted version of Principal Trust Survey (PTS), originally developed by Garies and Tschannen-Moran (2004). Turkish version of the PTS includes 15 items in three sub-scales: trust in teachers, trust in students, and trust in parents. For the research purposes, only trust in students and trust in parents sub-scales of PTS were used in this study. The data regarding principals' views on trust in students and parents by level of education were analyzed using t-test. For the professional experience and student population in school variables, One-Way ANOVA analysis was used. To determine the relationship between principal burnout and principal trust in students and parents, correlation analyses were done.

3. Findings & Results

The findings of the study are presented and interpreted respectively for each of the research variables.

3.1. Principals' trust in parents and trust in students by education level

One of the purposes of this study was to investigate whether there would be a significant difference between teachers' views by educational level. To this end a t-test was used. Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis of principals' trust in parents and trust in students by education level

Scale	Educational level	N	$\overline{X}$	Sd	t	p
Trust in Parents	Associate Degree	28	15,36	4,69	2,110	,04*
	Undergraduate/Graduate Degree	91	17,29	4,08		
Trust in Students	Associate Degree	28	17,60	3,53	2,398	,02*
	Undergraduate/Graduate Degree	91	19,49	3,53		

*p<,05

As seen in Table 1, results showed that principals' mean scores on trust in students and parents differ significantly in terms of level of education. Considering the participants' mean scores, it was revealed that compared to the principals with associate degrees, principals with an undergraduate and/or graduate degrees get higher scores from *trust in parents* and *trust in students* subscales.

3.2. Principals' trust in parents and trust in students by professional experience

Table 2. Analysis of principals' trust in parents and trust in students by professional experience

Scale	Professional Experience	N	$\overline{X}$	Sd	F	p	PostHoc (Scheffe)
Trust in Parents	1) 1-5 years	17	17,94	4,62	888	47	
	2) 6-10 years	28	16,96	4,23			
	3) 11-15 years	21	16,57	5,51			
	4) 16-20 years	19	17,63	3,38			
	5) 21 years and over	34	15,88	3,74			
	Total	119	16,83	4,29			
Trust in Students	1) 1-5 years	17	21,76	3,15	5,570	,00*	1>5
	2) 6-10 years	28	19,89	3,09			
	3) 11-15 years	21	18,57	4,13			
	4) 16-20 years	19	19,21	4,26			
	5) 21 years and over	34	17,20	2,88			
	Total	119	19,05	3,71			

*p<,05

Given the professional experience, results showed that principals' views on trust in students differ significantly. Considering the mean scores of participants, it was revealed that principals up to 5 years professional experience get the highest scores from "trust in students" subscale, while principals with 21 years and more professional experience get the lowest.

3.3. Co-relational analysis results about principals' trust in parents, trust in students and professional experience

Co-relational analysis results concerning principal trust in students, parents and burnout are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlations between principals' trust in parents, trust in students and principal burnout

Scales	2	3	4	5
1) *Trust in Parents*	,568**	-,281**	-,299**	-,061
2) *Trust in Students*	1	-,288**	-,333**	-,052
3) *Exhaustion*		1	,611**	,155
4) *Depersonalization*			1	,373**
5) *Accomplishment*				1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Correlation analyses of the data showed that principal trust in parents was slightly negatively related to exhaustion (r=-.28) and moderately negatively related to depersonalization (r=-.30). Similarly principal trust in students was slightly negatively related to exhaustion (r=-.28) and moderately negatively related to depersonalization (r=-.33), at nearly the same levels.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

Building and maintaining trusting relationships within school settings plays an important role in efforts towards promoting school effectiveness and improvement. This study offers new insights into the importance of principal trust in students and parents, and its relationship with principal burnout, but should be considered with its limitations. As a result of the study it was concluded that, compared to the principals with associate degrees, principals with undergraduate and/or graduate degrees trust more in students and their parents. In addition, it was revealed that principals' trust in parents and students correlated with principal burnout.

References

Adams, C., Forsyth, P. & Mitchell, R. (2009). The formation of parent-school trust: A multilevel analysis. Education administration quarterly, 45(1), 4–33.

Bryk, A.S. & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational Leadership*, 40-44.

Bryk, A.S., &Schneider, B.L. (2002), Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, NY.

Ceyanes, J. W. (2004). An analysis between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout as identified by teachers in selected Texas public schools. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Texas A&M University-Texas

Ceyanes, J. W., & Slater, R.O. (2005, April). *Does Teacher Trust in the Principal Influence Teacher Burnout?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

Day., C. (2009). Building and sustaining successful principalship in England: the importance of trust. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 47(6),719–730.

Dirks, K. T. & Ferrin, D. L. (2001). The role of trust in organizational settings. *Organization Science*, 12(4), 450-467.

Gareis, C. R. & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2004, April). *Principals' sense of efficacy and trust.* Paper accepted to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego.

Kramer, R. M. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 569–598.

Maele., V., & Houtte, V. (2009). Faculty trust and organizational school characteristics: An exploration across secondary schools in Flanders, *Educational Administration Quarterly,* 45(4), 556–589.

Meier, D. (1995). *The power of their ideas: Lessons for America from a small school in Harlem.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Meier, D. (2004). Creating schools we can trust. In C. Glickman (Ed.), *Letters to the Next President* (pp. 18-26): Teachers College Press.

Reeves, C., Emerick, S., & Hirsch, E. (2007). *Creating an atmosphere of trust: Lessons from exemplary schools.* Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission. Retrieved November 14, 2009, from http://www.ncptsc.org/trust%20brief.pdf

Tschannen-Moran, M & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(4), 547-593.

Tschannen-Moran, M. (2004, November). *What's trust got to do with it? The role of faculty and principal trust in fostering student achievement.* Paper presented at the University Council for Educational Administration annual convention, Kansas City, MO

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research, 71,* 547-593.

Wahlstrom, K., & Louis, K. (2008). How Teachers Experience Principal Leadership: The Roles of Professional Community, Trust, Efficacy, and Shared Responsibility. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(4), 458–495.