Chapter One

Principals and Their Effectiveness

> *Transforming leadership recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower . . . looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.*
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> —Burns, 1978, p. 4

> *Leadership is not magnetic personality—that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not "making friends and influencing people"—that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.*
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> —Peter Drucker, 2001, ¶37

Principal Effectiveness: A Brief Historical Overview

Both scholars and practitioners of educational administration believe that principals play a critical role in schools. Many argue that school

principals can affect virtually all aspects of school life. Yet, empirical research provides few detailed pictures of the everyday social and behavioral dynamics of effective school-based leadership. This is especially true with regard to understanding leadership from the perspective of teachers and, in particular, how school leadership enhances teachers and their overall performance. This book helps fill the gap by adding to the knowledge about how truly effective principals influence teachers and the specific consequences of this influence for teachers.

Fueled by the effective schools research and school reform of the late 1970s and 1980s, the interest in understanding effective principals has increased significantly. Studies conducted during the 1980s highlighted a host of factors associated with effective school leadership. These include initiative, confidence, tolerance for ambiguity, analytic abilities, resourcefulness, vision, democratic-participatory style, listening, problem centeredness, openness, time management skills, high expectations, knowledge of curriculum, and ability to allocate resources effectively (e.g., Blase, 1987; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Brady, 1985; Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Hannaway & Stevens, 1985; Lipham, 1981; Peterson, 1978; Russell, Mazzarella, White, & Maurer, 1985; Wolcott, 1973). However, with few exceptions published more recently (e.g., Blase & Blase, 1998; Reitzug, 1997), concrete descriptions of how effective school principals use a wide range of strategies to influence teachers and their work are notably limited.

A study completed by Russell et al. (1985) at the University of Oregon described effective principal behaviors and linked them to the characteristics of effective schools. These authors noted, for instance, that principals who provide extra academic work for outstanding students or who encourage students to take highly challenging courses contribute to the characteristics of high expectations and clear school goals. These researchers reported more than 100 such effective principal behaviors.

Bossert et al. (1982) contributed greatly to our understanding of the relationship between leadership and teacher performance by introducing a model that links school principals' actions—such as

goal setting, evaluating, monitoring, and modeling—to instructional climate (i.e., staff commitment and discipline) and instructional organization (e.g., academic curriculum and pedagogy). Student achievement outcomes are viewed as an indirect result of principals' actions that affect instructional climate and classroom organization. The theoretical model discussed by Bossert et al. was more recently tested by Heck and his associates (Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Heck & Marcoulides, 1993). They found several behaviors, including communicating instructional goals, working to keep faculty morale high, and establishing an orderly environment, that enhance school climate. Other leadership behaviors—developing school goals, securing resources for programs, evaluating curricular programs—were identified with promoting instructional organization. Heck and his associates demonstrated that the two classes of leader behavior (i.e., instructional climate and instructional organization) positively affected student achievement in the schools they studied. Their conclusions regarding the importance of a range of informal principal behaviors are consistent with the teachers' data we discuss in this book. They write:

> Our results indicate that many of the important instructional leadership variables influencing school achievement are not related to the regular clinical supervision of teachers. . . . While regularly observing teachers and conferencing with them regarding instructional improvement is admittedly an important aspect, our results show that principals' time and attention are focused on a variety of additional activities. Many behaviors, that are more informal and strategic, cluster into the constructs of instructional organization and school climate and impact student achievement as well. Some of these efforts involve clarifying, coordinating, and communicating a unified school educational purpose to teachers, students, and the community. Effective principals appear to build a sense of teamwork at the school. (Heck et al., 1990, pp. 120–121)

In sum, although the study of instructional aspects of leadership and student achievement has been shown to be complex and

empirically challenging (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b), and although a number of scholars have acknowledged the dearth of studies of the relationships among leadership, teaching, and student achievement (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990), some direct and indirect links to student achievement have been found and confirmed by recent work. In fact, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004b) have determined that leadership effects on student learning are actually underestimated, with the total direct and indirect effects comprising about a quarter of total school effects (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). We can conclude, then, that our commitment to enhancing leadership as a prime element in successful school improvement is warranted.

For more detailed information from exemplary research on the positive correlations between school leadership and student achievement, see Waters, Marzano, and McNulty's (2003) study, *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement.* Waters et al. highlight 21 key leadership responsibilities related to higher achievement according to effect size; primary among these are situational awareness, intellectual stimulation, being a change agent, gathering input, developing the culture, and monitoring student learning. It is important to stress that Waters et al.'s research is consistent with that of others with respect to the basics of successful leadership and, as such, underscores the importance of a transformational approach to leadership (e.g., Hallinger & Heck's, 1999, categories of leader practices include purposes, people, and structures and social systems; Conger & Kanungo's, 1998, categories include visioning, efficacy-building, and context-changing strategies; and Leithwood's, 1996, categories include setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization).

Transformational Leadership

The meaning of transformational leadership evolved from Burns's (1978) conceptualization of leaders who motivate followers to accomplish goals that represent shared values and beliefs. Unlike

transactional leadership which is based on an exchange, transformational leadership changes the level of follower commitment to organizational goals. Burns views leadership as a moral enterprise. Bass (1985, 1988, 1990) first operationalized Burns's constructs of transformational and transactional leadership with his Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ has undergone several revisions but generally measures four dimensions of transformational leadership (charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) and two dimensions of transactional leadership (management by exception and contingent reward), plus nonleadership or the absence of leadership.

More relevant to the field of education has been the extensive work of Kenneth Leithwood (1994) and his colleagues (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood et al., 1996b) who created surveys based on the MLQ to measure leadership in education. They also are credited with numerous studies demonstrating the relationship between the use of transformational leadership and teacher motivation, school climate, and student achievement (Leithwood et al., 1996b, 2004a, 2004b). Leithwood's conceptualization includes previous factors of both transformational and transactional leadership. Both he and Bass contend that these two types of leadership build on one another rather than compete as distinct styles. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) identified seven dimensions of transformational school leadership: (1) building vision and establishing goals, (2) providing intellectual stimulation, (3) offering individualized support, (4) modeling best practices and organizational values, (5) demonstrating high performance expectations, (6) creating a productive school culture, and (7) developing structures for shared decision making. Considerable overlap with Bass is obvious but there is clearly no emphasis on charismatic leadership in Leithwood's work. In later chapters we discuss the role of charisma in leadership as well as how our findings about how effective principals positively influence teachers—findings produced by using grounded qualitative research protocols—are related to Leithwood and his colleagues' findings generated through survey research.

Principals' Influence on Teachers: A Brief Historical Overview

Studies conducted during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s of how school principals use power and influence in their interactions with teachers have helped to advance understanding of school-based leadership. In this group of studies, principal effectiveness has been associated with the use of positive forms of influence with teachers rather than formal authority. Isherwood (1973) found that principals who demonstrate charisma, expertise, and human relations skills heighten teachers' loyalty to the principal and improve teacher satisfaction. Studies have shown how principals have granted teachers direct participation in decision making and consistently professed confidence in teachers' abilities; the latter often include initiation of teacher leadership in schools (Allen, Glickman, & Hensley, 1998; Crow, Matthews, & McCleary, 1996; Riordan & da Costa, 1998). Furthermore, building trust has been shown to be a key leadership behavior (Short & Greer, 1997), just as principals' use of persuasion is significantly related to the degree of consensus that teachers perceive in schools (Muth, 1973). Hanson (1976) discovered that in innovative schools, public praise by administrators results in desired modifications of teacher behavior. Hanson also found that principals who describe appropriate professional conduct positively influence teachers.

Studies of principal influence have shown how important informal power is to working effectively with teachers. Treslan and Ryan (1986) learned that teachers are much more responsive to principals' influence attempts based on human relations skills and technical expertise than to the use of hierarchical authority. Administrators' attempts to define school values (Firestone & Wilson, 1985), interpersonal competencies (Blase, 1987; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Bredeson, 1986), support (Brady, 1985; Hoy & Brown, 1988; Reiss & Hoy, 1998), and vision (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986), for instance, were found to be very effective in influencing teachers. Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) and Blase and Blase (1998) found that principals who rely on such strategies as staff development, communication about values, power sharing, and the use of symbols are able

to foster collaborative relationships among teachers. Johnson (1984) and Blase and Roberts (1994) indicated that expertise, personal example, distribution of resources, and expressed interest favorably affect teachers. Johnston and Venable (1986) linked participatory decision making to greater teacher loyalty to principals. High and Achilles (1986) concluded that such behaviors as enabling, norm setting, and expertise are effective means of influence with teachers in high-achieving schools. With regard to effects on teachers' commitment, involvement, and innovativeness, Sheppard (1996) learned that promoting teachers' professional development is the most influential leadership behavior at both the elementary and the high school levels. Lastly, studies of transformational leadership—a broad approach to school leadership—found a relationship between principal behaviors and the existence of an effective, collaborative, innovative school culture (Conger & Kanungo, 1994; Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996a; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Recent scholarly work focusing on critical aspects of principal influence on teachers has emphasized (1) developing shared understandings about the school as an organization, its activities, goals, sense of purpose, or vision (this is derived from goal-based theories of human motivation which indicate that people are motivated by compelling, challenging, and achievable goals from which a sense of identity is gained) (Bandura, 1986); (2) developing people (i.e., the need for principals to be instructional leaders who have not only knowledge of the technical work that teachers do but also the emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002) to utilize teachers' capacities, increase their enthusiasm, reduce their frustrations, and convey a sense of mission); and (3) redesigning the school (this is derived from empirical work about the nature of professional learning communities, which emphasizes strengthening the school culture, modifying its structures, and building collaborative processes) (Leithwood et al., 2004a).

Some Concluding Remarks

During the past several decades some noteworthy gains have been made toward understanding the principal-teacher relationship, especially as it relates to influence. Most of the studies noted, however, focus on teachers' and/or principals' perceptions of the types of power that principals use. These studies correlate types of administrative power with a limited number of variables, such as teacher satisfaction or loyalty, rather than focusing on effective principals per se. One qualitative study examined the "general" perspectives of effective principals (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986); it did not investigate how principals influence teachers. Another qualitative study focused specifically on the communication styles of principals vis-à-vis teachers (Bredeson, 1986). More directly, qualitative studies completed by Hanson (1976) and Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) explored different aspects of principal influence in relation to teachers; each generated some data regarding strategies. In contrast to the study discussed in this book (with the exception of studies by Blase & Blase in 2001 and 2004), few studies have produced detailed descriptions of the range of strategies that effective principals use to influence teachers' growth and development.

The data presented in the following chapters were taken from a larger qualitative study that investigated teachers' perceptions of the strategies used by all types of principals to influence them. This total database was subsequently divided into strategies employed by open and effective principals and those used by principals whom teachers viewed as closed and ineffective.

The data discussed throughout this book focus specifically on understanding teachers' perspectives regarding only the strategies used by open and effective principals. Consistent with open-ended research methods, no definitions of "open and effective" were presented on the questionnaire that teachers completed for the study. Doing this would have limited teachers' freedom to discuss their own views of open and effective principals. The study also explored teachers' views about why they considered the strategies used by principals to be effective, as well as the purposes (goals) they attributed to principals' use of such strategies.

In addition, our study examined the effect of school principals on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of teachers' work. To our knowledge, no research has used qualitative research methods to investigate the full range of strategies that principals typically employ in their work with teachers or the consequences of such strategies for teachers themselves. A large sample of teachers participated in the study, thus adding to the credibility of the findings. The open-ended questionnaire used to collect data was administered to over 1,200 teachers. Of these, 836 focused on the strategies used by open and effective principals. Analysis of the questionnaires produced detailed descriptions of 1,323 strategies used by effective principals. It is this portion of the total database from which this book was written. (See the Resource starting on page 130 for a full description of the research problem, sample, and procedures.)

This book discusses the strategies used by effective transformational principals and how such strategies positively influence teachers. Generally speaking, the strategies appear here in terms of the frequency with which they were reported, from most frequent to least frequent. Chapters 2 through 9 describe the effective strategies and related tactics and practices, and their effect on teachers. Guidelines for reflection drawn from the research data are presented in the closing pages of each chapter. Although each chapter focuses on only certain influence strategies, we must emphasize that effective and open principals used most of the strategies described throughout this book. In the final chapter (Chapter 10), we present conclusions from our research and challenge the reader to reflect on the applicability of the strategies of open and effective principals in restructuring the schools of tomorrow. The methods used to collect and analyze the data we used for this book are discussed in the Resource.

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