

Heart-Based Principal Leadership: Inspiring Through Empathy

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ABSTRACT

Principal leadership plays a vital role in setting the direction and quality of education in schools. In this context, the heart-based leadership approach becomes increasingly relevant. By emphasizing empathy and concern for the well-being of teachers and students, principals can create an environment that supports academic and emotional development. This approach focuses not only on educational outcomes, but also on the process that involves each individual in the school community. This study has the following objectives: first, to explain the concept of heart-based principal leadership and emphasize the role of empathy in the educational context; second, to assess how the heart-based leadership approach can create a positive school culture, support the learning process, and improve overall educational outcomes; and third, to provide practical strategies for principals to implement this approach in the school environment. With a better understanding of heart-based leadership, this study applies a qualitative approach through a literature study to examine and analyze various sources related to heart-based leadership in education. The research design is descriptive and analytical, with the aim of identifying, summarizing, and evaluating the available literature on heart-based principal leadership. The results of the study indicate that Heart-based leadership, characterized by empathy, compassion, and inclusiveness, plays a significant role in creating a positive school culture, supporting the learning process, and improving educational outcomes. By fostering a supportive and collaborative environment, prioritizing student-centered practices, and integrating emotional and social support, this heart-based leadership can create a positive school culture, support the learning process, and improve overall educational outcomes. The strategies used in heart-based leadership are by providing empathy and compassion, inclusive leadership that is based on values and actively involving students in the decision-making process can increase student motivation and build character.

Keywords: Heart Based Principal. Leadership, Empaty

INTRODUCTION

Principal leadership plays a vital role in setting the direction and quality of education in schools. In this context, a heart-based leadership approach becomes increasingly relevant. By emphasizing empathy and concern for the well-being of teachers and students, principals can create an environment that supports academic and emotional development. This approach focuses not only on educational outcomes, but also on processes that involve every individual in the school community.

Amidst the challenges faced in the world of education, such as curriculum changes and diverse student needs, effective leadership is essential. Principals who are able to implement heart-based leadership will be more sensitive to the needs and aspirations of their team members. Research shows that leaders who have empathy can strengthen relationships, increase motivation, and build a positive school culture. Therefore, this approach is very important in preparing a generation that is not only academically superior, but also has good social skills.

Heart-centered leadership is an approach that emphasizes the importance of empathy and interpersonal relationships in creating a positive and productive environment. Amid the challenges faced by leaders in various fields, the ability to feel and understand the needs of others is increasingly crucial. In this context, leaders who can inspire through empathy focus not only on the end result, but also on the process that each individual in their team goes through. Heart-centered leadership, also known as heart-based leadership, is a concept that emphasizes leading with kindness, compassion, and authenticity. This approach is gaining traction in response to the increasing complexity and competition in the global context, and the declining public trust in leaders. In an increasingly complex and competitive global era, where public trust in public and private organizations and their leaders is diminishing, the concept of kindness-oriented leadership is gaining traction. There is a call for more inclusive, authentic, and

connected leadership that can revitalize human values and give meaning to life and work. Developing heart-based leadership requires a paradigm shift. We have a primary responsibility to our cultural institutions, so it is important to demonstrate and spread kindness through openness, authenticity, empathy, and courage[1]. This calls for a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive, authentic and connected form of leadership that rekindles humanity and enhances meaning in life and work.

Empathy is a critical element of effective leadership. It's not only about understanding how others feel, but also about responding in a way that builds strong, positive relationships. Empathy allows leaders to show individual attention to their followers, recognize the emotions of others, and be aware of self and context. The ability to have and demonstrate empathy is an essential part of effective, servant leadership [2]. Empathy allows leaders to show a level of individual consideration to followers, recognize the emotions of others, and be aware of self and context. In addition, empathetic communication allows leaders to connect with and respond to a variety of stakeholders [3]. Emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership is crucial to developing effective and empathetic leaders. EI encompasses the perception, control, and evaluation of emotions in both oneself and others. Its core components include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-aware leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses, which supports authenticity. Self-regulation helps manage negative emotions, while motivation drives leaders to achieve excellence. Empathy enables leaders to build meaningful relationships and manage diverse teams, while social skills support the building of broad networks. Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to cope with workplace stress, lead diverse teams, and create a positive environment, thereby increasing employee productivity and well-being. As organizations evolve, EI remains a critical factor for effective leadership[4].

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to: first, explain the concept of heart-based principal leadership and emphasize the importance of empathy in the context of education; second, explore the impact of heart-based leadership on teachers and students; and third, provide practical strategies for principals to implement this approach in the school environment. With a better understanding of heart-based leadership, it is hoped that principals can become effective agents of change in improving the quality of education in schools.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is defined as a methodology that aims to explore and describe the complexity of human beliefs and experiences. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not primarily focus on hypothesis testing, but rather seeks a deeper understanding of the perceptions that influence individual behavior. [5] through literature studies to research and analyze various sources related to heart-based leadership in education. The term qualitative research refers to a set of methods that are primarily non-numerical to describe, analyze, and interpret people's lived experiences in their daily lives [6]. The design of this study is descriptive and analytical, with the aim of identifying, summarizing, and evaluating the available literature on heart-based principal leadership. The data sources that will be used in this study include journal articles published in the fields of education and management. The criteria that must be met by the sources analyzed are publications within the last ten years and relevance to the theme of heart-based leadership and empathy. Data collection will be carried out through systematic searches using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scencedirect., and ERIC, Scoopus, as well as secondary data collection from references contained in selected articles and books.

RESULTS

1. Conceptual Explanation

The results of the study indicate that the heart-based leadership of school principals consists of several key dimensions, including empathy, open communication, and emotional support. Principals who implement this approach are successful in creating an environment that supports both academic and social growth for students and teachers.

Empathy

Empathy is an important component of emotional intelligence (EI) and is positively related to effective leadership style. Leaders who demonstrate high levels of empathy tend to foster healthy relationships with their subordinates, which is essential for effective leadership. This article presents new insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) dimensions and leadership styles in Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA). The results of multiple regression analysis indicate a significant negative relationship between EI and leadership styles in three main dimensions of EI, namely self-awareness, motivation, and empathy. In addition, stepwise regression analysis reveals a significant positive relationship between self-regulation and social skills dimensions on leadership styles in

ASEZA. Additional findings indicate that there is no significant difference between EI dimensions and demographic factors, as well as between leadership and the demographic factors studied [7].

Heart-based principal leadership emphasizes the importance of empathy and strong interpersonal relationships in the educational setting. This concept combines the emotional and social aspects of leadership to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Empathetic principals are able to understand the perspectives and feelings of others, which helps in building better relationships with students and staff. Empathy is the ability to adopt another person's perspective and experience their thoughts and emotions. [8]. Empathetic principals can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments that focus on the individual needs of students. The role of school leadership in improving learning and teaching to achieve better outcomes for children and young people is recognized in most education systems. The definition and specification of this role has become increasingly important as principals and school leaders have been reconceptualized as primary learners or learning leaders within the school community[9].

Based on the results of the study, it was found that the literature reflects an increasing and intensive interest in the topic of school leadership over time. In addition, a series of emerging subtopics have been identified. These subtopics include the relationship between school culture and principal professional identity, the influence of ethical and personal factors on principal professional development, the dilemma of balancing educational policy with personal experiences, and the relationship between gender identity, racial identity, career experiences, training, and leadership identity [10].

Open Communication

Open communication helps to build trust and a supportive school culture, which are necessary for successful school-based development and the well-being of the school community as a whole. This UK study suggests that leaders need a holistic understanding of the development process to manage and support progress; leadership needs to be distributed. Further research into leader learning in relation to school-based development could produce knowledge that can serve as a thinking tool, informing leaders' actions in supporting such development [11].

Emotional Support

Providing emotional support is essential to creating a positive school climate. Leaders who manage their own emotions well and understand the emotional state of their staff can foster a supportive and professional ethos. Emotional support from leaders can improve educator job satisfaction and performance, thereby contributing to overall school effectiveness. The study findings suggest that school leaders need more training in emotional intelligence and other psychological factors that influence attention. The Department of Basic Education needs to address the negative impacts of inadequate infrastructure and resources on the educational experiences of educators in previously disadvantaged communities [12].

2. Improving the Quality of the School Environment: Assessing how a heart-based leadership approach can create a positive school culture, support learning, and improve overall educational outcomes.

To improve the quality of the school environment, a heart-based leadership approach can make a significant contribution to creating a positive school culture, support learning, and improve overall educational outcomes. Here are some key insights from the abstract provided:

Creating a Positive School Culture

Supportive Leadership: Effective school leaders can develop a supportive and respectful culture, which improves teacher morale and retention rates. The quality of leadership in schools has a significant impact on improvement and evaluation outcomes. Competent leaders ensure that teachers have the resources they need to achieve success. They also create a positive environment, where teachers feel supported and valued, which contributes to improved morale and higher retention. In addition, effective leaders are able to clearly communicate the school's vision to all stakeholders, ensuring that each individual has the same goals and is working toward them. Restructuring leadership for school improvement and reform explores aspects of collaboration, staff development, resource provision,

transparency of vision, workplace stress management, and professional development for school leaders as strategies for creating a healthy school culture[13].

Collaborative Leadership: Emphasizing collaborative leadership styles, such as valuing diversity and providing support for staff, can lead to positive outcomes in school improvement. Data analysis identified four leadership attributes: (1) respect for diversity, (2) support for staff, (3) collaborative leadership style, and (4) respect for teacher professional learning. Each of these attributes was shown to influence decision-making and sentiment, which resulted in improved school quality in the two case study schools. These findings have the potential to contribute to professional learning that can deepen understanding of how leadership attributes can improve school quality in these contexts[14].

Supporting the Learning Process

Prioritizing student-focused practices and learning development can help identify and address barriers that hinder student progress and shift attention from isolated performance to continuous improvement. A study describes the success of a leadership plan implemented by a middle school in Center Point, Alabama, in response to a Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) designation due to its performance in the bottom 5% in the state. The school's leadership, with support from Studer Education, focused on improving the school's culture and engaging in a continuous improvement process to support student achievement. By prioritizing student-centered practices and learning progression, leaders were able to identify barriers that were interfering with student progress and shift attention away from isolated performance. Drawing on three effective implementation practices—individual accountability, reliability, and consistency—the strategy helped the middle school leverage transparent data to strategically implement continuous improvement[15].

Professional Development: Providing opportunities for professional development for teachers and leaders is critical to maintaining high-quality learning environments. Effective leadership preparation programs can develop the skills needed to meet the diverse mental health needs of students, supporting their overall well-being and learning. Research shows that effective school leaders demonstrate behaviors that align with efforts to promote core issues in teaching, learning, and school improvement. However, little is known about what the science says about the effectiveness of professional development and leadership preparation programs in developing the competencies needed to meet the diverse mental health needs of students.[16].

Improving Educational Outcomes

Emotional and Social Support: Integrating emotional and social support into leadership practices can have a significant impact on student well-being and academic achievement. For example, responsive leadership in early childhood education settings promotes holistic development by meeting emotional, physical, cognitive, and social needs. Research shows that this type of leadership is vital to providing high-quality educational experiences that prepare children for lifelong learning and development. The analysis concludes that responsive and effective leadership in early childhood education is critical to creating supportive and enriching environments, which are essential to the optimal growth and success of young students[17].

Wellness-Focused Education: Implementing wellness-focused education that addresses trauma and encourages self-soothing routines, trusting relationships, and compassion can create a sustainable classroom climate. This environment supports individual and community development, leading to better educational outcomes. Wellness-focused education addresses trauma by helping students develop self-soothing routines, build trusting relationships, foster compassion, and expand the collective imagination. Wellness-focused education supports student development through developmental components and a holistic educational approach. A sustainable, wellness-focused classroom climate offers more than just a good learning environment or a caring classroom[18].

3. Key Strategies for Heart-Based Leadership

Caring and compassionate leaders can make the people they work with feel happy and emotionally healthy. They also help everyone work together and stay united. Many studies have shown that servant and caring leaders can make people feel better and happier at work. When people feel happy and appreciated, they are more loyal and want to stay with the company. They are also less likely to change jobs. So, good and compassionate leaders not only help people

feel calm and happy, but they also make the work atmosphere better and everyone can work together well because the leader understands and feels what others are feeling. [19] This approach not only improves organizational performance but also improves the overall school environment.

Inclusive Practices: Inclusive leadership that is values-based and actively involves students in decision-making processes can increase student motivation and build character. Leadership education must be implemented actively and inclusively. This book explains how youth leadership models, reward systems, risk-taking, well-being strategies, and the application of a growth mindset can increase student motivation by creating aspirations, realizing dreams, and building character. In addition, this book also provides practical advice and resources[20].

DISCUSSION

Heart-based leadership, characterized by empathy, compassion, and inclusiveness, plays a critical role in creating a positive school culture, supporting learning, and improving educational outcomes. By fostering a supportive and collaborative environment, prioritizing student-centered practices, and integrating emotional and social support, heart-based leadership can create a positive school culture, supporting learning, and improving overall educational outcomes. The strategies used in heart-based leadership are to provide empathy and compassion, inclusive leadership that is based on values and actively involving students in decision-making processes can increase student motivation and build character.

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