Presenting a Model That Leads School Leaders' Empowerment

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to present a model that leads school leaders' empowerment, utilizing the following variables: resources to reward, information management, instructional leadership, and knowledge of technology. A survey was sent to school leaders in the United States who were trained to use IBM Change Toolkit software. 304 school leaders answered this survey. A structural equation model was used to create the model. The model shows that the major contributors of school leaders' empowerment are instructional leadership and information management. In addition, knowledge of technology influenced information management, which in turn influenced their empowerment. Similarly, resources influenced instructional leadership, which in turn influenced empowerment.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how does instructional leadership, information management, resources to reward, and knowledge of technology influence the empowerment of school leadership in the United States. Empowerment is an important tool in management sciences used to motivate organizational members for achieving organizational goals. It is involving them in decision making and planning process. Empowering organizational members not only gives them authority but also makes them more responsible and they feel sense of ownership and their commitment to the organizational increases. As we will see in literature review, researchers have already established the importance of empowerment in education and how it helps school leaders. Therefore, it also important to know the factors those contribute towards the empowering school leaders. This study is about finding these factors and explaining how they contribute to the empowerment of school leaders. The empowerment model presented in this study is based on variables instructional leadership, knowledge of technology resources to reward, and information management, which contributed to empowerment.

2. Literature Review

Empowerment is a distribution of power among organizational members to authorize the making a certain kinds of decisions [6]. More precisely, it is the extent to which organizational members are involved in the decision-making, planning and implementing change in an organization [2]. It also refers to extent to which school leadership has the authority of the decision-making and implementing organizational change.

Empowerment also facilitates human capability in an organization to foresee and enhance the prospects for autonomy, authority, responsibility, and choice [9]. It provides a foundation and an important element for school reform. According to the research study of organizational management and sociology of work, empowerment is a change in the distribution of power in a working environment [8]. Empowerment makes people positive not only about themselves but also about their organizations, which results in a positive environment, job satisfaction, greater productivity, and loyalty to the organization [3]. Pearson found that educators who perceived themselves more empowered tend to be more professional and was satisfied with their job. He also found that perceived empowerment and professionalism were highly correlated [10].

Heller and McNulty claimed that empowerment describes leadership and provides essential elements for enhancing a leader's ability to empower staff and students [3]. This ability to empower others in turn results in leadership denseness within the organization. They also described that success needs a conducive-environment for empowerment. Empowering leaders is a change that builds trust in an organization, motivates them into taking risk for innovative decisions for organizational success, and promotes teamwork for problem solving [12].

Instructional leadership is those actions that school leaders take, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning. Instructional leadership involves setting clear goals, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources, and evaluating teachers regularly to promote student learning and growth. Instructional

guidance is utilizing national, state, and district standards by school in planning and implementing instructional programs [2]. Today school leaders are required to be social, political, and instructional leaders to be empowered and influential. This understanding helps them to see beyond the walls of schools to search for opportunities to cause a positive change at multiple levels [11].

Information management is effective and well-timed communication in an organization that is relevant in achieving its objectives and goals. Moreover, it includes related data for decision-making, and also communication, and input from stakeholders [2]. In a study related to nursing profession, Trus and Razbadauskas stated that information and its access was one of the important factors of empowerment [13].

Mary Kelly [4] stated that the institutions needed resources to support and motivate employees' formal and informal systems of rewards to reach the goals. Resources are the extent to which an organization has the financial, material, and human capital to achieve its goals, or the ability to overcome obstacles that may exist in obtaining these items. The availability of resources is necessary for an organization to achieve its objectives and to overcome barriers. It is also a capacity of getting through the barriers in acquiring these substances [2]. Human resources, financial resources, and technological resources play active role for the empowerment of school leadership. These resources are correlated with one another. Financial and human resources are helpful to ensure complete and sustained implementation of the technology plan in schools. Leader can integrate strategic plans, technology plans, and other improvement plans and polices to align efforts and leverage resources.

Different rewards are used as incentives and for motivation in order to achieve organizational goals and to satisfy individual needs and these rewards depend on availability of different resources. Different members in an organization hold different roles, that is, some hold positions of allocators of the rewards and other are recipients. A principal in a school is an allocator who allocates materials, research equipment, grants etc. to the teachers. These rewards are important in motivating the team members to exert the highest level of energy in achieving goals. Allocators with higher level of resources are able to give more rewards to their subordinates therefore able to achieve higher results [7].

Heller and McNulty stated that knowledgeable leaders were good at deciding what was important in a school and their thinking-level was raised which helped these leaders in understanding the school environment and day -to -day matters [3]. High-level thinking makes the leadership visionary, proactive, and future oriented. High-level thinking is learning something with experience and gaining familiarity through knowing and with association. It is knowledge of the technology required to use as a tool in one's professional exercise.

This study defines the terms used in this study as follow:

Resources to Reward: The leadership of an organization needs resources to support and motivate employees. It should have formal and informal systems of rewards to reach the goals.

Instructional Leadership: Instructional leadership consists of direct or indirect leadership behaviors that significantly effect teacher instruction, and, as a result, student learning.

Information Management: It is ability of collecting, organizing, and sharing of information. This ability helps the leaders to utilize data and information in a timely and effective way for organizational planning and decision-making.

Knowledge of Technology: It is knowledge of standard and advanced technologies including Internet, computers, digital devices, software, and other professional equipment. It includes set of skills required to operate these technologies.

Empowerment: It is the process of increasing capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how does instructional leadership, information management, resources to reward and knowledge of technology influence the empowerment of school leadership in the United States. In order to answer this research question, we first apply correlation among the variables; once we identify the relations we proceed to create a model using Structural Equation Model (SEM).

The 304 participants in this study worked in various schools settings throughout the United States as school district leaders or school building leaders. The data used in the study is a part of a large survey conducted by Kelly for her doctoral dissertation at Dowling [4].

The population of this survey was school leaders in the U.S. who received training for using the IBM Change Toolkit. The data collected using an online survey tool, Zoomerang. IBM collaborators sent these emails to all registered users of IBM Change Toolkit. This software was used for leading and managing change, planning for particular initiatives or projects, developing online collaboration, and communicating among organizational members. It is a diagnostic tool that provides a capacity to monitor and evaluate the change progress. IBM sent 20,000 invitation emails.

Participants responded to the survey questionnaire rated on Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

The validity of the survey was established using a jury of administrators to evaluate the instrument. The jury consisted of seven public school administrators, each of whom had at least five years' experience in the area of school administration. The jurors were given the survey questions, along with definitions of the specific terms. In addition, variables were factor analyzed and refined. The questionnaire evaluated the following variables for reliability. Instructional leadership (α = .940), information management (α = .870), resources to reward (α = .787), and Knowledge of technology (α = .875) were all positively contributing to the empowerment.

4. Results

1) Correlations among the variables

Table 1 shows correlations among the variables empowerment, instructional leadership, information

Instructional leadership was highly correlated with empowerment (r = .776, r^2 = 60.22%), followed by information management (r = .737, r^2 = 54.32%), resources to reward (r = .498, r^2 = 24.80%) and lastly with knowledge of technology (r = .246, r^2 = 6.05%).

2) Structural Equation Model (SEM)

A structural equation model (Figure 1) found that there was an influence of the instructional leadership (β = .61) and information management (β = .38) on the dependent variable empowerment. This model depicts 54% of empowerment by using instructional leadership, information management. This model also found the influence of the resources to reward on instructional leadership (R^2 = 38%) and that knowledge of technology influences information management (R^2 = 5%). Please note that resources influence instructional leadership, which in turn influences empowerment. Similarly, knowledge of technology influences information, which in turn influences empowerment.

Table 1
Correlations among Empowerment, Instructional Leadership, Information Management, and Resources to Reward

		1	r^2(%)	2	r^2(%)	3	r^2(%)	4	r^2(%)
1. Instructional Leadership	r								
	p								
	N								
2. Empowerment	r	0.776	60.22						
	p	0							
	N	202		235					
3. Information Management	r	0.777	60.37	0.737	54.32				
	p	0		0					
	N	201		215		220			
4. Resources to Reward	r	0.607	36.84	0.498	24.80	0.598	35.76		
	p	0		0		0			
	N	203		227		213			
5. Knowledge of Technology	r	0.270	7.29	0.246	6.05	0.223	4.97	0.261	6.81
	p	0		0		0.001		0	
	N	192		206		203		204	

management, resources to reward, and knowledge of technology. Empowerment correlates highly with all the variables.
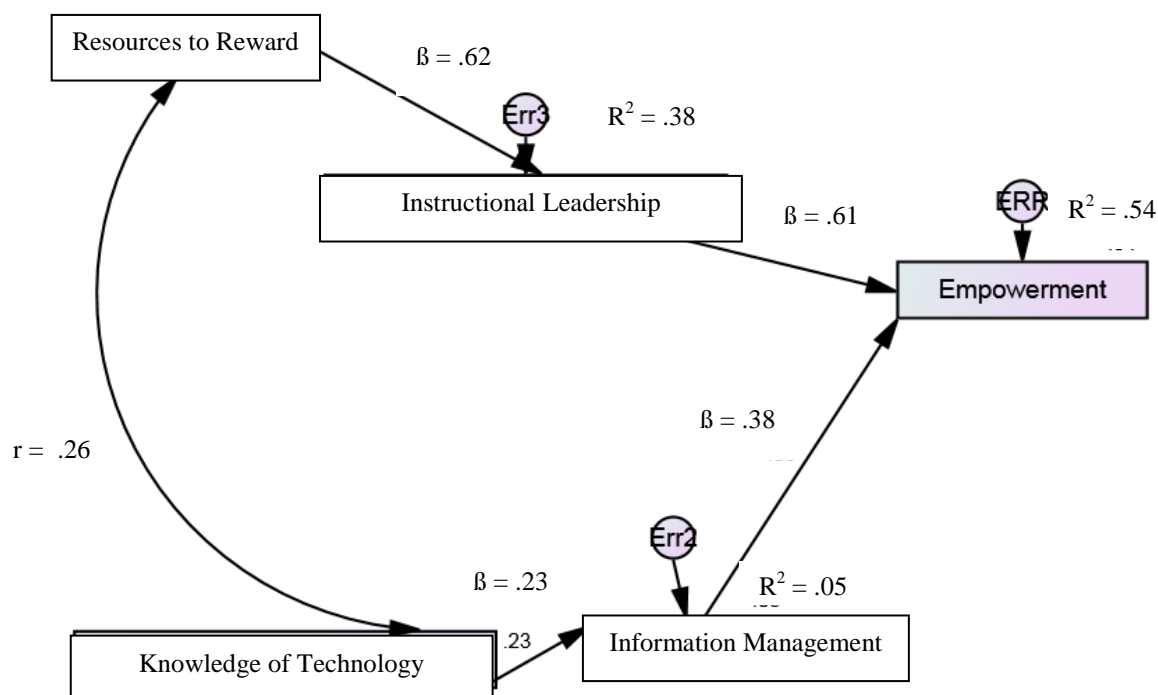
Figure 1: Structural Equation Model – Predictors of empowerment of school leaders

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

The present study was involved 304 school leaders who were given a survey to determine whether resource to reward, information management, instructional leadership and knowledge of technology influence school leadership empowerment. A structural equation model reveals that these variables depict 54% of a dependent variable empowerment of school leaders. It is also worth mentioning that empowerment has strong and significant relationships with instructional leadership, information management, and resources to reward. Thus, the empowerment correlates highly with these variables.

In this study, the model among resource to reward, information management, instructional leadership, and knowledge of technology influence school leadership. The analysis of relationship in structural equation modeling was in two phases: (¡) resources influence instructional leadership which in turn influences empowerment (¡¡) knowledge of technology influences information which in turn influences empowerment. The findings obtained in this phase of study can be summarized such:

- Resource to rewards positively influence both instructional leadership and empowerment of school leaders
- Information management enable school leaders to influence the empowerment

- Knowledge of technology also has a positive effect on information management and empowerment
- A structural equation model reveals that these variables depict 54% of a dependent variable empowerment of school leaders

Our findings are parallel to the deduction obtained from the research in literature concerning the relationship among resources to reward, information management, instructional leadership, and knowledge of technology. School leaders' empowerment can be enhanced through involvement in the decision-making process is supported by Kim [5] who stated that empowerment is a distribution of power among organizational members to authorize the making a certain kinds of decisions through instructional leadership, information management, resources to rewards, and knowledge of technology. An improvement in these aspects might result in more empowerment of school leaders. Heller and McNulty [3] argued that empowerment makes people positive not only about themselves but also about their organizations which results in a positive environment, job satisfaction, greater productivity, and loyalty to the organization that is also aligned our findings.

A further implication is that empowerment of school leaders might result in their motivation, responsibility, and sense of ownership. Empowered school leaders are willing to empower teachers and to take risk for innovative and future oriented

decisions. Well-informed and well-trained school leaders are more empowered. Resources positively influence both instructional leadership and empowerment whereas knowledge of technology also has a positive effect on information management and empowerment.

This study could be useful in future planning and decision-making to empower school leaders. The features like instructional leadership, information management, resources to reward and knowledge of technology are considered for enhancing empowerment of school leaders.

Future research can be conducted to understand how principals decide to adapt their leadership practices in schools obtaining empowerment by instructional leadership, information management, resources to reward, and knowledge of technology.

6. References

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