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The relationship between teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards change

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between primary school teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards change. The sample of the study consists of 326 teachers working for primary schools during 2006-2007 academic year in Denizli. To examine relationship, "The inventory of attitudes toward change" developed by Dunham et al. and "Instructional Leadership Inventory" developed by Tanriogen and Polat was used as the data instrument of the research. In this study, statistical techniques such as frequencies, standard deviation, correlation and regression analysis was used. As a result of the analysis of the data collected, teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards organizational change have been found as "moderate" level. According to teachers' perceptions, there was a positive relationship between instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards organizational change.

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Keywords: Change; attitudes towards change; instructional leadership; primary school teacher.

1. Introduction

Organizations are open social systems influenced by environments and dependent on them. Organizations take inputs from environment, transform them and produce outputs. They are complex, dynamic and not static. To survive, the organization must adopt and, to adopt it must change (Hoy and Miskel, 1996: 30,31). The effectiveness of school organization which is an open system depends on adoptiveness to changes in internal and external environment. Schools must change and develop in order to survive and to be effective because of increasingly rapid innovations. In short, change is inevitable process for individuals and organizations.

According to Daft (1982), organizational change is defined as the adoption of a new idea or behavior by an organization (Daft, 1997: 382). Employees are inevitably influenced by changes in organization. Organization

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members notice and react to changes. Their reactions can range from quite positive and supportive to quite negative and very resistant. (Dunham ve Pierce,1989:723). For this reason, the teachers' attitudes towards change has an important impact on the successful change process in schools.

Principals play an important role in teacher's attitudes toward change as well. Fullan (2001) pointed out that principal is "the gatekeeper of change" and noted that principals have been identified critical components in successful educational innovation. Many findings confirmed that principal's leadership plays an important role in teacher attitudes. Dixon (1991) concluded that principals have vital and complementary roles in the change process. The behavior of the principal greatly influences that of the teacher. Effective change in the school setting can only occur by concerted effort on the part of the principal and the teacher. According to Chauvin (1992), principal is a useful variable for understanding teacher's attitudes toward change. Principals as instructional leaders can be effective in their practice provided they attend to the various needs of the policy and their constituents. Bovalino (2007) found that successful inclusionary environments are created by school systems where the principal practices distributed leadership, participates in professional development and continually shares his vision. To implement successful change process, the principal must have the necessary skills and model for staff. Teachers need the support of their principals in terms of the communicator, counselor and facilitator roles (Havlik, 2007: 181 -183).

Principals are instructional leaders in initiating, developing and facilitating positive attitudes toward change in schools. As an instructional leader, principals can promote and support change process. Bredeson ve Johansson (2000) concluded that principals as instructional leaders and learner are critical resources for implementing changes in teachers' classroom practices.

There is no single definition of instructional leadership as what an instructional leader does. Hallinger and Murphy (1985: 217) commented that instructional leadership "has meant anything and everything; an administrator trying to be an instructional leader has had little direction in determining just what it means to do so". Krug (1992) defined instructional leadership as "involving the the strategic application of knowledge to solve content specific problems and to achieve the purposes of schooling through others. Leithwood described instructional leadership as a series of behaviors that was designed to affect classroom instruction (Leithwood, 1994: 3).

Hallinger and Murphy (1987) defines instructional leadership using three dimensions: Defining the school mission, managing the instructional program and promoting the school learning climate. Each dimension is defined by two or more of following 10 job functions:

1. Frame the school goals, 2. Communicate the school goals, 3. Supervise and evaluate instruction, 4. Coordinate the curriculum, 5. Monitor student progress, 6. Protect instructional time, 7. Maintain high visibility, 8. Provide incentives for teachers, 9. Promote Professional development, 10. Provide incentives for learning.

Instructional leaders must be involved in change process. It is assumed in this research that principals who exhibited more instructional leadership traits implemented change effort more effectively and promoted to develop positive attitudes of teachers toward change. Although there are a lot of studies in which leadership and organizational change were handled together in literature (Dixon, 1991; Chauvin, 1992; Fullan, 2001; Yukl, 2002 in Chao, 2005; Bovalino, 2007; Hyland, 2007), very few studies conducted to determine the relationship between instructional leadership behaviors of the principals and teachers' attitudes towards change.

2. Method

The purpose of this quantitative survey was to examine the relationship between primary school teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards change. For this purpose three basic research questions have been asked:

1. What is the level of teachers' attitudes towards change, and what is the level of teachers' perceptions about instructional leadership behaviors of their principals?

2. What is the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards change and principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers?

3. What is the predictiveness of teachers' attitudes towards change related to teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals?

2.1. Participants

The population of this study consists of 1821 teachers working for primary schools during 2006-2007 academic year in Denizli. The instrument was administered to 360 primary school teachers selected by random sampling technique. But 326 teachers' responses were involved to the study. Accordingly, the representation of this sample for the population is %17,90.

2.2. Instruments

This study required the collection and analysis of data regarding two variables: (1.) instructional leadership behaviors and (2.) attitudes towards change. In this study, "The inventory of attitudes toward change" developed by Dunham, Grube, Gardner, Cummings and Pierce (1989) was used to determine teachers' attitudes towards change. This instrument contains 18 items and 3 dimensions towards change. The reliability coefficient of original instrument was 0.80 (Cronbach Alpha). Tanrioglu translated this instrument into Turkish and performed factor analysis. The reliability coefficient of translated instrument was calculated as 0,96. As in the original version the Turkish instrument includes 3 dimensions of change: Cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes. There were six items composed of positive and negative sentences in each dimension. Each item enables the respondent to assess the frequency which he or she agree that particular item. Items are rated on a Likert type scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Total scores on this inventory could range from 18 to 90.

The instrument used to collect instructional leadership behaviors data was the "Instructional Leadership Inventory" which was developed by Tanrioglu and Polat (1996). We constituted a new inventory by removing some items and adding new items to the instrument. To find the validity and reliability of this inventory, it was directed a pilot group of 200 teachers. The results were tested for internal consistency by calculating Cronbach alpha coefficient. The alpha coefficient was .984. When the item total correlations of items checked, the results of these analyses indicated there was no item under the minimum acceptable standard of .20. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .962 according to Principal Component Analysis. The result was 10516,384 for Bartlett's Test. The instrument has a six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. First factor explained %55.26 of the variance in the construct measuring instructional leadership behaviors. But items could not load onto particular subscale. Because of this, it was assumed that "Instructional Leadership Inventory" has a single factor to measure instructional leadership behavior. Factor loading values of items could range from .595 to .844. The difference between the highest two factor loads must not be lower than .10 (Buyukozturk, 2004: 119). The scoring equated to: 5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 no opinion, 2 disagree, 1 strongly disagree. Total scores on the 53 item "Instructional Leadership Inventory" could range from 53 to 265.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

The data gathered was analyzed by the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. This study used statistical techniques such as standard deviation, mean, correlation, linear regression analysis to investigate the relationship between teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards change. Significance level was .05.

3. Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between primary school teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards change. In order to achieve this purpose, this study addressed three research questions. The first research question addressed by this study was: What is the level of teachers' attitudes towards change and what is the level of teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals. The dependent variable was the teachers' attitudes towards change. The independent variable was teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals. The results obtained from analysis concerned with this question are shown in Table 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. The Attitudes towards change and perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of principals

	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>Sd</i>
Attitudes towards change	326	70.28	7.53
Perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of principals	326	198.92	31.52

The mean scores to the responses of the teachers were measured and the attitudes and perceptions of the teachers were examined using a special method. According to the findings given in Table 1; one standard deviation were added and subtracted to the attitude and perception scores of the teachers and a new level was performed by this way. The levels to the scores of the teachers' attitudes and perceptions were administrated as: high, moderate and low. The frequencies are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. The levels of attitudes towards change

<i>Mean Score of the Attitudes</i>	<i>The frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The level</i>
77.81 and over	37	11.3	high
62.75 – 77.81	243	74.5	moderate
62.75 and below	46	14.1	low
Total	326	100.0	

According to Table 2, the levels of the teachers' attitudes towards change are %74.5 moderate, %14.1 low and %11.3 high.

As shown in Table 3, the levels of the teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals are %77.9 moderate, %10.4 low and %11.7 high. When teachers' attitudes towards change compared with their perceptions towards instructional leadership behavior; it is easy to say that teachers' attitudes and perceptions are in "moderate" level.

Table 3. The levels of perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of principals

	<i>The frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The level</i>
230.44 and over	38	11.7	high
167.40 – 230.44	254	77.9	moderate
167.40 and below	34	10.4	low
Total	326	100.0	

In order to determine the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards change, its dimensions and principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers, the Pearson correlation coefficients are calculated. The findings obtained data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The correlations between teachers' attitudes towards change, its dimesions and principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers

	Attitude towards change	Cognitional attitude towards change	Affective attitude towards change	Behavioral attitude towards change
Instructional leadership	.245**	.330**	.134*	.115*

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

According to Table 4, there was a significant positive relationship ($r = .245, p < .01$) between teachers' attitudes towards change and principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers. A significant positive relationship was found ($r = .33, p < .01$) between teachers' cognitional attitudes towards change and principals' instructional leadership behaviors. There was also a significant positive relationship ($r = .134, p < .05$) between teachers' affective attitudes towards change and principals' instructional leadership behaviors. Furthermore, there was a significant positive relationship ($r = .115, p < .05$) between teachers' behavioural attitudes towards change and principals' instructional leadership behaviors.

In this study, the dependent variable was the teachers' attitudes towards change and the independent variable was teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals. In order to determine the predictiveness of teachers' attitudes towards change, the linear regression analysis was used. Findings are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The predictiveness of teachers' attitudes

Variables	B	Standart Error	β	T	p
Constant	58.645	2.60		22.64	.000
Instructional leadership	.059	.013	.24	4.55	.000
R= .245	R ² = .060	P = .000			

As shown in Table 5, the results found that principals' instructional leadership behaviours as perceived by teachers was a significant predictor ($R = .245, R^2 = .060, p < .01$) of teachers' attitudes towards change. In other words, the results indicated that principals' instructional leadership behaviours as perceived by teachers explained about % 6 of total variance in the teachers' attitudes towards change.

4. Discussion

This study examined the relationship between primary school teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals and teachers' attitudes towards change. The first question was "What is the level of teachers' attitudes towards change, and what is the level of teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals?" The findings about this research question support that teachers' attitudes toward change are in modereate level. It can be seen that the teachers working for primary schools in Denizli do not pay enough attention to organizational change which is an important factor at school development and their self improvement. This situation can prove that the concept of change is not well established in the climate and culture of the schools in which the teachers work. At this point, school principals have important responsibilities. Therefore principals should inform and train their teachers about the changes at schools and they also should discuss the importance of the organizational change for the school system with them. Thus, teachers can have more positive

attitudes towards organizational change. Teachers' resistance towards change can be lessened by informing them about the organizational change which has vital importance for healthy schools.

The level of the teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals are in moderate level as well. This finding can show that the school principals do not display enough instructional leadership behaviors which is very important for school effectiveness. Effective schools have principals who are viewed by their teachers as the primary instructional leader in the school (Bamburg and Andrews, 1990). It is impossible for the principals who do not display instructional leadership behaviors to improve the teachers and students in their schools. Such an important problem needs solving by the system managers immediately. So, it would be beneficial for the system managers to support school principals by giving courses, seminars and in-service trainings on instructional leadership. Otherwise, schools can face with the problem of negative entropy.

The second research question was "What is the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards change, its dimensions and principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers?" Correlational analysis was used in order to answer this research question. Results showed that there is a positive relationship between the instructional leadership behaviors of principals and the attitudes towards change ($R = .245$, $p < .01$). Also, there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' cognitive, behavioural and affective attitudes towards change and principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers. The dimensions of organizational change were correlated significantly with principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers. Yukl (2002) indicated that relationships exist among leaders, followers and organizational change. And perception of leadership is a very important area to focus on during quickly developing organizational change because in order to be effective, leader need to improve the organization, adapt to a changing environment and change the organization's way of doing business (Chao, 2005). Leaders can help employees cope with organizational change by displaying a broad range of leadership behaviors (Hyland, 2007). According to Bredeson ve Johansson (2000), principals as instructional leaders have a vital role for implementing changes in teachers' classroom practices.

The third research question was "What is the predictiveness of teachers' attitudes towards change related to teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals?" The linear regression analysis was used in order to determine the impact of principals' instructional leadership behaviours as perceived by teachers on teachers' attitudes towards change. According to the results, principals' instructional leadership behaviours as perceived by teachers was a significant predictor ($R = .245$, $R^2 = .060$, $p < .01$) of teachers' attitudes towards change. In other words we can assert that when teachers' perceptions towards instructional leadership behaviors of their principals increase, the levels of their attitudes towards change are expected to increase as well. This finding can support that the principals' instructional leadership behaviors have a considerable role in organizational change process. According to Smith and Andrews (1989), the instructional leader; "*creates a positive climate for change and nurtures creative approaches to change; uses skills needed to manage; and evaluates the effectiveness of change.*" In order to implement effective and successful educational change, principals must have required instructional leadership skills

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