

Question One

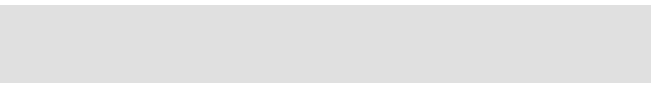
Introduction

A research article was carefully read and a review was conducted based on the article.

The research article title was:

Hans W. Klar & Curtis A. Brewer (2014). Successful leadership in a rural, high-poverty school: the case of Country Line Middle School. Journal of Educational Administration, Vol. 52 No. 4, 2014.

The review report was structured in the manner where the review began a summary of the article followed by the strengths and limitations of the article and lastly the usefulness of the article to school leaders in Malaysia.



Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the case study was to initiate and enforce the idea of context-responsive leadership in schools. The aim of the case study was to identify how this particular leadership idea, strategies and beliefs were adapted to increase the achievement of County Line Middle School (CLMS) a rural, high poverty school in the southeastern USA.

Methodology

The research methodologies that were used to collect information for the case study were interviews, observation, collected documents, field notes, online survey questionnaires and analysis frameworks from the International Successful School Principalship Project. These research methodologies helped to create a multi-perspective case study of principal leadership practices at the school.

Findings

Based on the case study the main findings focused on how the school principal created a successful leadership in the school.

The first finding illustrated on how the principal used leadership strategy ‘Setting Direction’ to change the school from the lowest performed in the district to a higher performed school in terms of public exams, and increased the participation of the school in service learning activities and charity occasions.

The second finding indicated on how the principal used leadership strategy ‘Managing the Instructional Program’ to monitor school activities, to provide instructional support and to encourage innovation which helped to confront the school’s negative self-image and created a wide transformation. The third finding explicitly showed how the principal adapted leadership strategy ‘Developing People’ to enhance students learning and motivate teachers as educators.

The last finding highlighted on how the principal implemented the leadership strategy ‘Redesigning the Organisation’ and created a family like bound with his low income rural community and utilized the connection with the local community to guide his leadership practices in the school.

In sum, the findings of this case study provided ample samples on how a school principal in a rural high-poverty middle school managed to consider the school and community context and successfully made leadership decisions and implemented the leadership decisions into practices.

Critiques

Strengths

According to Edge (2006), “The basic function of any title is to provide a terse summary of the content. It may also inform the reader most novel finding of a study. Therefore it should be specific, concise and informative” (p:2) . Hence, the first strength of the research paper is that the title “Successful leadership in a rural, high-poverty school: the case of County Line Middle” (Klar,2013,p.422) clearly and accurately described the research paper. The title of the research paper was also stated as the first line in abstract “In this paper, the authors present a case study of successful school leadership at County Line Middle School” (Klar,2013,p.422) . The important keywords like “Rural areas, and Middle school” (Klar,2013,p.422) were also presented in the research title.

The second strength of the research paper is that the introduction of the research paper made a clear outline of the research purpose. For example, “Our core argument through the presentation of this case is that successful school leadership is responsive to the socio-political context of schools and their communities.” (Klar,2013,p.422) . Another example, “As such, in this study we endeavoured to identify the way particular leadership practices and beliefs were adapted to increase student achievement in this rural, higher-poverty middle school.” (Klar,2013,p.422). This clear outline presents the research paper to be user friendly not only for readers under the Comparative Education field but also for general readers.

The next strength of the research paper is the way the discussion was written. The research paper had a clear and specific theoretical framework and the theoretical framework was described in detail. As stated in the research paper “ These core strategies and their associated practices, which we used as a framework for understanding successful leadership, can be seen in Table I.” (Klar,2013,p.424).

Core categories	Practices
Setting directions	Building a shared vision Fostering the acceptance of group goals Creating high-performance expectations Communicating the direction
Developing people	Providing individualized support and consideration Offering intellectual stimulation Modeling appropriate values and practices
Redesigning the organization	Building collaborative cultures Modifying organizational structures to nurture collaboration Building productive relations with families and communities. Connecting the school to the wider community.
Managing the instructional program	Staffing the instructional program Monitoring progress of students, teachers, and the school. Providing instructional support Aligning resources Buffering staff from distractions to their work.

In addition, by allocating subheadings like “Setting direction, Developing people, Redesigning the Organisation and Managing the Instructional Program” (Klar,2013,p.424) based on the framework while discussing the research findings enabled the research to present more indebted about each leadership strategies. Therefore, as readers we can read and understand the research paper faster and better based on the discussion framework.

The forth strength of the research paper is that the literature review is relevant to the research study. The literature review included a lot of recent researchers on the field of successful leadership. For example, “In more recent research, Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011) described how successful school principals in urban, high-poverty schools lead in concert with their contexts” (Klar,2013,p 425). Moreover, the literature review supported the need for the research because the literature review stated the theoretical background “core leadership categories and practices” (Klar,2013,p 426). and provided sample case studies related to the research like “The case study reported below offers an example of how a principle practiced context-responsive leadership in a rural area” (Klar,2013,p 426). Furthermore, the literature review was very comprehensive because at the end of the literature review the researchers have done a summary. Evidences from the research, “ In this literature review...Therefore if we are to understand the contribution school leadership can make to positive school change in rural communities, we must look at the nuances of how a school leader can enact leadership strategies while remaining context-responsive” (Klar,2013,p 427).

As Larson (2010) stated that “the research instruments are the main means for gathering the data that will answer the questions and test the hypotheses explain” (p.32). Thus, the last strength is that the research paper had used an effective and appropriate research methodology to collect data for the research. As stated in the research paper “We chose to study CLMS following a multi-step selection process. The research team conducted interviews, collected data, observed normal school activities, collected documents , took field notes and sent online surveys” (Klar,2013,p.428). Concisely, these methodologies contributed to a fruitful way of examining the application of the four core leadership strategies in action and had contributed ample amount of data to be analysed for the study.

Weaknesses

The components that need to be included in an abstract is “purpose, methods, findings and conclusion” (David,2011,p 250). However this research abstract is poorly written. It seems to be lengthy, wordy and long rather confusing. The abstract is compressed with a lot of information regarding the research paper besides the four main items like “research limitations, practical implications, originality value, keywords and paper type”(David,2011,p 250). It does not briefly and directly summarize and highlight all the important points in the research paper rather functions more like a conclusion. As Kitty (2007), stated that “Since abstracts are generally very short, it’s important that you don’t get bogged down in a summary of the entire background of your topic” (p.10).

The research paper did not seem to have any research questions to function as guidance for the researchers. Research papers do need to have research questions at least one because “once you have a good research paper question, you can then begin to generate a testable hypothesis or research question, and construct your paper around this”(Landrum, 2008, p.192) Concisely, the research questions can be generate a clear guideline for constructing a good research paper.

Another weakness of the research paper is that the findings were purely presented in words form and for each finding, interview evidences were mainly used as supporting evidences since “information collected from the interviews served as the primary source of data for this study” (Klar,2013,p.430). The research paper did not present the research findings in other forms like tables or graphs although the researchers collected data through online survey because “we do not consider this research to be generalizable in a statistical sense” (Klar,2013,p.430). Nevertheless, the online survey findings can be presented in chart or tables or graphs form as supporting evidences for the findings. As Savitri (2002) claims that “Thus the use of quantitative procedures in analysing qualitative information can also lend greater credibility to the research findings by providing the means to quantify the degree of confidence in the research results”(p.1). Briefly by presenting the findings in various forms it can actually assist readers to quickly capture the leadership ideology “context-responsive leadership” (Klar,2013,p.420) and see the varied level of success in implementation.

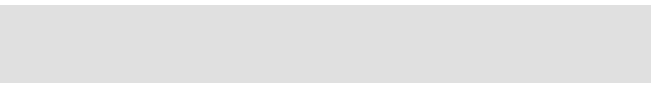
The forth weakness is that the limitations were presented in the abstract of the research paper but were not further discussed in depth in the research paper. The researcher should have stated the research limitations because it would have indicated readers that the researcher had thought critically about the research problems and acknowledged it for future further research rather than ignoring it. The last weakness it that the research is only conducted based in southeastern USA. The researchers have not taken into account or discussed other places around the world.

Personal response on the usefulness of the article

I believe that this research paper is applicable in my country because it stresses on successful leadership and this research might help in “ preparing aspiring leaders for rural schools as well as for supporting the current leaders of one-third of the nation schools”(David,2013,p.440).

In my opinion, in Malaysian school leaderships, factors like work environment , good communication and good relationship between school principal, administrators , teachers , students and the surrounding community within an educational institution are considered crucial Hence, this research study is very useful for Malaysian school leadership context because the research suggests that “aspiring principals need to learn how to assess a community’s values in order to effectively lead change” (Klar,2013,p.441) and Malaysia also encourages school principles to implement context-responsive leadership strategies to form a successful leadership (Tony,2011).

Lastly, according to Tony (2011) “principals an educational administrator is an individual who creates a good conducive working environment for his staffs to strive towards excellence” (p.25). Hence, I will suggest this research paper because it is very useful in terms of creating a conducive environment in Malaysian schools . This is because, school principles need to know how and what strategies to be used and this research is rich with that knowledge Therefore, this research will be a good reading material for Malaysian school principle since they can become aware and adapt or adopt the strategies to implement a successful leadership .



Conclusion

In conclusion although this research paper had its merits, it too had its weaknesses which needed to be reconsidered and revised by the researcher. Overall, the research article was comprehensible, had an important message on “context-responsive” (Klar,2013,p.420) leadership and might be an eye opener for all school principals regarding successful leadership practices.

References

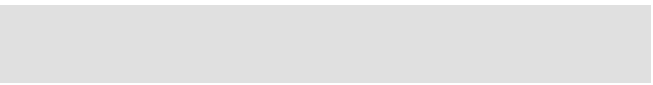
David.B and Hoogeveen.J (2011) *Writing: A manual for the Digital Age,Brief*
Boston :CENGAGE

David.B, Dunford.J ,and Fawcett.R (2013) *School Leadership: National and International
Perspective* New York : Routledge.

Edge (2006). *Writing an Effective Title-How to Write a Research Paper*. The Center of Writing
Resource :Cipton.

Kitty (2007) *Research Abstracts* Wisconsin :MADISON

Klar.W.H and Brewer.A.C (2013) *Successful leadership in a rural, high-poverty school: the case
of County Line Middle School JEA 52(4) 422-445.*



Larson.A.M. (2010). *Technical Guidelines For Research*.Bogor :CIFOR.

Landrum.R.E. (2008). *Undergraduate Writing in Psychology*. US : American Psychology Association.

Savitri.A (2000) *Quantitative analysis approaches to qualitative data: why, when and how*
Reading: Statistical Service Centre.

Tony.T and John.M (2011) *International Handbook of Leadership for Learning*
Glasgow:Springer.