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Organizational justice in schools: no justice without trust

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Keywords

Justice, Trust, Leadership, Teachers

Abstract

The concept of organizational justice is defined, and, based on a review of the literature, ten principles of organizational justice are elaborated. Similarly, the elements of faculty trust are conceptualized and discussed. Then, a model of organizational justice and trust is proposed and tested using path analysis. The results underscore the symbiotic relations between trust and justice. The paper concludes with a few suggestions for future research and recommendations for practice.

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There is little question that justice has become a touchstone in contemporary American society. Students of educational administration have seized on the notion of social justice as a topic for discussion, analysis, and reform. One only has to examine the program of the last two meetings of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) to see its pervasiveness. Moral philosophers beginning with Aristotle and continuing with the work of Rawls (1971) have defined and examined justice from a number of vantage points (for a review, see Cohen and Greenberg, 1982). The focus of this analysis is not on the grand scheme of social justice in American society, but rather on the system of justice in schools that educational leaders are responsible for creating. We are concerned with whether teachers perceive that they are being treated fairly. Questions of justice and fairness are fundamental whenever resources are distributed, that is, "Is who gets what fair?"(Greenberg and Lind, 2000).

The topic of organizational justice is not new in the administrative literature (Beugre, 1998; Cobb *et al.*, 1995; Cohen and Greenberg, 1982; Greenberg, 1990, 1996; Greenberg and Lind, 2000), but it is a neglected concept in educational administration. Our essential argument is that matters of justice and fairness in the school workplace should not be taken lightly. Anyone who doubts the validity of this statement simply needs to visit a school and to question teachers about how fairly they are treated on the job; then stand back and listen to the lively discussion that ensues. Explaining the special significance that the concept of justice has taken in organizations, Greenberg (1996) coined the term *organizational justice*, which refers to individuals' perceptions of fairness in organizations – the topic of the present inquiry. We turn to an analysis of the concept in schools by first sketching ten "principles", then developing a measure and a model, and finally, testing the empirical nature of organizational justice in schools.

Principles of organizational justice

Rather than reviewing the literature on organizational justice in detail, we seek to summarize it with a series of principles that capture the essence of that literature. These principles highlight the well-established tenets of *distributive justice* – the fairness of the who gets what – and *procedural justice* – the fairness of the mechanisms of distribution (Greenberg, 1996). The principles discussed below come from two

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sources: Greenberg and Lind (2000) and Levanthal *et al.* (1980).

The equity principle: what individuals receive from the organization should be proportional to their contributions

The rewards that teachers get for their contributions to the school should reflect balance; teachers should not feel that their contributions are undervalued or unrewarded. Although the equity principle is easy to state, it is not as readily applicable as one might suspect. In general, teachers expect that compensation, recognition, and the trappings of status will be distributed commensurate with their work, skill, and responsibility. Justice is a broad principle of which equity is an element. Too much emphasis on a few individual successes can breed jealousy and invidious comparisons. Equity requires an even-handed fairness that balances equity and equality.

The perception principle: individual perception of fairness contributes to the general sense of justice

Justice is both a public event and an individual judgment.Teacher perception of fairness is a key to satisfaction. Objective judgment is not the issue. What is critical is that teachers perceive that their principal is "following the rules" fairly, that is, following the procedures that everyone has tacitly accepted. For example, many districts require teachers to have lunch duty, a task most would rather pass on; however, as long as the teachers see assignments as fair, they will accept them with little criticism. It is important that the principal let everyone know by word and deed that fair procedures were followed. In the final analysis, public perception of justice becomes justice; "justice is in the eye of the beholder" (Greenberg, 1990).

The voice principle: participation in decision making enhances fairness

Participation is especially important when teachers have a personal stake in the outcome because such decisions affect them. Principals should involve teachers in decision making when they have a personal stake in the outcome and when they have the expertise to contribute to the decisions (Hoy and Tarter, 2003). The issue of voice in decision making, however, becomes more problematic when there is a personal stake but no knowledge or when the principal does not trust teachers.

Principals cannot be invisible. They need to cultivate both informal and formal mechanisms to elicit teacher voice. A cup of coffee with teachers in the faculty lounge or simply "walking around" provides opportunities for informal voice. Formal voice occurs at faculty meetings, department meetings, in written communication, and in an authentic "open door" policy. For example, a principal at school every Saturday morning from 9.00 to 12.00 offers formal or informal opportunity for any faculty member to call or just drop by (Hoy, 2003).

The interpersonal justice principle: providing sensitive, dignified, and respectful treatment promotes the judgment of fairness

No one likes bad news, but if given respectfully and with sufficient information, it conveys a sense of fair treatment. One of the most difficult things a principal must do is to communicate negative information to teachers, whether it is about teaching performance or an unpopular assignment. Timing, background, and delivery of such information are crucial; principals must strive to be open, sensitive, and authentic in their treatment of teachers. Buffering teachers from embarrassment and treating them as professionals with respect and dignity are paramount. Sound interpersonal skills and collegial interactions are likely to create a sense of trust in the principal by teachers; consequently, trust in turn should promote a strong sense of organizational justice. These last two propositions will be examined more closely in the empirical phase of this study.

The consistency principle: consistent leadership behavior is a necessary condition for subordinate perception of fairness

Consistency in behavior is not sufficient for the generation of a sense of fairness. Being consistently wrong, arbitrary, or political will not instill confidence, trust, or the acceptance of administrative impartiality. Consistent behavior is not necessarily identical behavior in all situations, but rather it is action that consistently fits the situation. Thus, in one situation the behavior may call for direct action whereas another situation may require a soft touch or a more democratic approach. Effective leadership is matching appropriate leader behavior with the characteristics of the situation (Yukl, 1998). Authenticity and procedural justice should guide consistency. Application of rules, regulations, and policies must be fair, visible, and consistent, yet flexible enough to take into account individual needs and extraordinary circumstances. Teachers should have a good idea of how the principal will react in a variety of situations and believe that his or her judgments and behavior will be both predicable and just. Leaders who "lose their cool" in difficult situations or hide behind their formal position, pass the buck, or manipulate teachers will not command trust, loyalty, or respect (Hoy and Miskel, 2001; Hoffman *et al.*, 1994). To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, nothing gives a

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leader so much advantage over another as to remain cool, unruffled, and fair under all circumstances.

The egalitarian principle: decision making should be free of self-interest and shaped by the collective mission of the organization

No one's interests take precedence over the needs of the collective. Treating everyone equally is not equal. Individuals have different needs and talents; thus, rigidly treating everyone the same is not equal. A balanced treatment, dependent on needs, should be a hallmark of egalitarian decision making. Self-interest is subordinated to the good of the whole.

The mission of the organization takes precedence over individual benefits, which are thought to flow out of the general success of the organization. For example, the practice of assigning beginning teachers to the more difficult classes seems to violate the egalitarian principle. Such practices are not in the best interest of the school or teachers. Rather, they are in the best interests of a few with power. The guiding mission of public schools is to provide a thorough and efficient education for all students, not to benefit the few and compromise the quality of instruction. Self-interest and internal politics are corrosive elements that erode egalitarianism.

The correction principle: faulty or poor decisions should be corrected

Correction depends on feedback and willingness to reverse a bad decision. Some administrators believe that to admit a mistake is to somehow undermine their authority. To the contrary, a willingness to review a poor decision and correct it in all likelihood develops in teachers a trust in the fairness of the principal. The correction principle underscores the need for feedback and accurate information. For example, when teachers disagree with an evaluation, there should be provisions for challenge. New evidence should guide the principal's reappraisal in a fair and balanced way. Two-way communication is critical in any attempt to correct the record.

Flexibility in the structure of the school should explicitly promote feedback and reevaluation of important decisions. Moreover, the principal must have the personal security and confidence to retreat from a poor decision and embrace the possibility of error. A "humble decision making" strategy (Etzioni, 1989) uniting rationality with flexibility emphasizes a series of techniques to deal with error, complexity, and uncertainty; tentative and reversible decisions avoid overcommitment to a course of action based on partial or inaccurate information (Hoy and Miskel, 2001). It behoves all administrators to recognize that virtually all complex decisions are made with incomplete data.

The accuracy principle: decisions should be based on accurate information

Correction is inextricably tied to accuracy. The accuracy principle promotes a sense of justice by demonstrating that decisions are based on sound evidence. Research has shown that fairness of performance evaluations is enhanced by procedures such as diaries that insure the accuracy of performance judgment. Rumor and innuendo are poor substitutes for accurate information. Principals who base their judgments on systematic evidence rather than stories or fragmentary hearsay are likely to reinforce the belief that the principal is searching for the truth and is open to new information. Accuracy promotes fairness in the same way that correction insures that the organization can respond justly in the light of new information.

The representative principle: decisions must represent the interests of concerned parties

Organizational decisions affect many constituencies. Decision making that elicits the opinions of those affected fulfills the representative principle. For example, changing curriculum in the school affects what teachers teach. This is a case where teachers should be represented in the decision-making process because they not only have a personal stake in the outcome but they have also the knowledge to contribute to a good decision. Indeed, it is imperative that teachers have a strong role in such decisions especially if they are guided by the egalitarian principle that makes them willing to subordinate their self-interest to the good of the school. Representation is achieved, as teachers believe their ideas are being represented and have influence on outcomes.

The ethical principle: follow prevailing moral and ethical standards

Justice is preeminently an ethical standard. Honesty, integrity, authenticity, sincerity, equality, impartiality, trustworthiness, and honor are contemporary ethical and moral standards that should guide behavior in decision making in school organizations. Some might argue about the need to include other standards, but few would disagree with the proposed ethical standards. School administrators will not go far afield in creating a just school climate if they have the courage to adhere to these ethical standards. A commitment to the other principles of organizational justice is a commitment to an ethical principle of fairness. Indeed, one standard for training prospective educational leaders underscores administrative action characterized by integrity, fairness, and

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ethical behavior (available at: www.ccsso.org/standrds.html).

In summary, a sense of justice in the school workplace is dependent on leader behavior that is consistent with these ten principles. Leader behavior that is equitable, sensitive, respectful, consistent, free of self-interest, honest, and ethical is likely to create a perception of fair and balanced treatment. Moreover, the principles of voice, egalitarianism, and representativness are crucial in any attempt to empower teachers. Teachers want to participate in decisions that affect them (voice), but they must be willing to put the interests of the school ahead of their own (egalitarianism) and yet feel that their views are being authentically represented in the process of deciding (representativness). These three principles work together to promote a sense of fairness among teachers. Finally, leaders must have the good sense and confidence to reverse and correct poor decisions as they get feedback and more accurate information.

Faculty trust: the keystone to organizational justice

Trust is a little like air – we all pay little attention to it until it is not there. Yet, if schools are to prosper and succeed, trust is essential. Trust, like credibility, is a perishable commodity within any organization; it must be continually nurtured and renewed if it is to survive and grow (Schulman, 1993). Too often, however, trust is reduced to a slogan. Principals admonish teachers, "just trust me", and teachers exhort parents to trust them because they "know what is best for their children". Trust can be an empty slogan or a fundamental aspect of a school's culture. We plan to demonstrate in this inquiry that trust is fundamental to organizational justice in schools. We focus on two important aspects of organizational trust – faculty trust in the principal and faculty trust in colleagues, but first we must develop the conceptual underpinnings of trust in schools.

Most people have an intuitive sense of what is meant when we say that we trust someone, yet trust is complex with many layers. Despite its complexity, there are reoccurring themes that emerge from a review of the philosophic, economic, organizational, individual, and empirical literature on trust.

Vulnerability is a general element that surfaces in most discussions of trust (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The comfort a person or group feels in the midst of vulnerability speaks to the degree of trust; in fact, there is little need for trust without a sense of vulnerability. Comfort is confidence that another party is concerned with protecting the well-being of the trusting party and that the other party will be reliable and competent in fulfilling one's expectations (Mishra, 1996). For example, when it comes to schooling parents often feel vulnerable to teachers because teachers have the power to make life difficult for their children. Conversely, teachers feel vulnerable to parents because they have the power to make life difficult for teachers. Thus, it should not be surprising to learn that trust is critical in student-teacher-parent interactions concerned with student learning (Bryke and Schneider, 2002; Goddard *et al.*, 2001; Hoy, 2002). Honesty, openness, benevolence, competency, and reliability are other aspects of the trust relationship. Our earlier analyses of trust in organizations led to the following multifaceted definition of trust:

> Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Hoy, 2002; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 1998).

We turn to a brief examination of each of these facets of trust.

Vulnerability

A necessary condition for trust is interdependence. Trust is important when the interests of one party cannot be achieved without reliance on another. Without interdependence there is no need for trust (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998). Parents depend on teachers to act in the best interests of their children and teachers depend on the good will and cooperation of students and parents in the teaching and learning process. Interdependence produces vulnerability in the relationship, and vulnerability leads to reliance and risk. Risk moderates the trust relationship – trust is supported and buttressed when expected behaviors occur but is diminished and undermined when they do not. Trust ultimately rests with the degree of confidence one holds in the face of vulnerability and risk (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998).

Schools ask for the trust of parents in assuming the responsibility in protecting their children and in shaping their thinking, learning, and behavior. Schools also ask their communities to risk vulnerability by requesting millions of dollars of resources in the form of tax dollars for buildings, supplies, curriculum materials, and the employment of professional staff. Administrators and teachers in turn invest their talents and professional lives in the hope of earning the confidence, good will, and trust of the community (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2002).

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Benevolence

Perhaps the most commonly recognized facet of trust is a sense of benevolence, that is, *confidence that one's well being or something one cares about will be not harmed by the trusted party* (Cummings and Bromily, 1996; Hosmer, 1995; Mishra, 1996). Trust is the assurance that another party will not exploit one's vulnerability and that one can rely on the good will of the other to act in one's best interest. In an ongoing relationship, there will be a mutual attitude of good will even though future actions may not be specified (Putnam, 1993). Benevolence is the "accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will" (Baier, 1986, p. 236). Parents who trust educators to care for their children are confident that teachers will be consistently fair, compassionate, and benevolent. Likewise, teachers who trust students and parents believe that neither will undermine the teaching-learning process nor do them harm.

Reliability

Trust also has to do with predictability, that is, consistency in knowing what to expect from others (Butler and Cantrell, 1984; Hosmer, 1995). However, predictability alone is unsatisfying as an aspect of trust. One can expect a person to be invariably late, consistently malicious, self-serving, or dishonest. Clearly, when our well-being is diminished in a predictable way, trust is undermined. Reliability is more than dependability; in fact, it combines a sense of dependability and predictability with benevolence. In brief, *reliability is confidence that others will consistently act in ways that are beneficial to the trustee.*

Competence

Good intentions often are not enough to produce trust. When a person is dependent on another and expertise and skill are required, individuals who mean well are not always trusted (Baier, 1986; Butler and Cantrell, 1984; Mishra, 1996). Many school tasks require competence. When a teacher's or team's project depends on the contribution of others, trust will depend on an "assured confidence" that deadlines will be met, the task will be accomplished, and the work will be of adequate quality to meet goals.

Principals and teachers depend on one another to accomplish teaching and learning goals. Students rely on the competence and skill of their teachers. A student may feel that her teacher wants to help her learn, but if the teacher lacks knowledge or skill, then student trust will likely wane. *Competence is the ability to perform as expected and consistent with standards appropriate to task, and is a critical ingredient of trust.* If the public loses confidence in the competence of an administrator or a teacher, then trust in the school is eroded, regardless of good intentions and benevolence of those involved. Just as people are unwilling to trust a surgeon with a poor performance record so, too, are they reluctant to trust administrators and teachers whose competence is questionable.

Honesty

Not surprisingly honesty is another critical facet of trust (Baier, 1986; Cummings and Bromily, 1996); in fact, Rotter (1967, p. 651) defined trust as "the expectancy that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon". *Honesty is the truthfulness, integrity, and authenticity of a person or group.* A consistency between words and actions is the heart of truthfulness and integrity. Moreover, accepting responsibility for one's actions and not distorting the truth in order to shift blame is the essence of authenticity (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 1998). Honesty is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for trust.

Openness

Openness is the *extent to which relevant information is shared.* In the process of being open, people make themselves vulnerable by sharing personal or organizational information. Openness is a giving of oneself (Butler and Cantrell, 1984; Mishra, 1996); it signals reciprocal trust and a confidence that the shared information will not be exploited by either party. Furthermore, individuals who are guarded in their interactions often provoke suspicion because people wonder what they are hiding and why. Openness breeds trust, just as trust creates openness. People who are unwilling to extend trust through openness end up living in isolated prisons of their own making (Kramer *et al.*, 1996). Principals in closed school climates engender distrust by unsuccessful attempts to spin the truth to make their view of reality the accepted standard (Sweetland and Hoy, 2001). In contrast, productive organizations have cultures of openness in which mistakes are freely admitted and addressed rather than hidden and ignored (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001).

Trust: a complex and integrated whole

In sum, trust is a multifaceted phenomenon with at least six faces. Although all of these faces of trust are significant, their relative importance is dependent on the situation, the nature of the interdependence, and the vulnerability of the relationship. For example, one is differentially vulnerable to a stranger, a friend, an investment broker, or a surgeon. Notwithstanding, in schools all these facets of trust are important; in fact, they combine into an integrated whole. Vulnerability, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and

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openness form a single, unitary and coherent concept of trust in schools whether the referent is trust in teachers, principal, students, or parents (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Hence, administrators who neglect any of these facets of trust are jeopardizing the entire trust relationship.

Organizational justice and faculty trust: an explanatory model

Thus far, our analysis has been on justice and trust – two constructs that we argue are pivotal properties of schools. We now turn to the development of a model that links them and suggests their antecedents. The relationship between organizational justice and faculty trust is a reciprocal one: we postulate that faculty trust promotes organizational justice, but that justice in return reinforces trust. The notion of organizational justice that we are attempting to explain in this analysis is circumscribed; that is, it pertains to the just and fair treatment of the faculty. Two sets of questions are addressed:

(1) What school characteristics are necessary for organizational justice?
(2) What are the antecedents that promote these school characteristics?

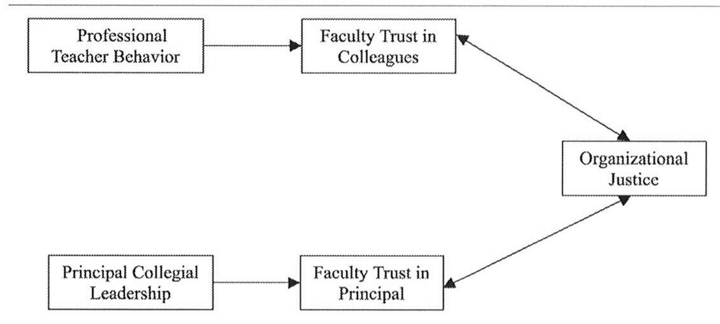
Two referents of faculty trust are of special significance to our theoretical rationale. First, faculty trust in colleagues is central to and, perhaps, a necessary condition for organizational justice. Trust is an important component of interpersonal relationships; in fact, the very survival of a social group may depend on the members' willingness to exercise trust with one another (Rotter, 1967). When colleagues trust one another, it enhances the openness and authenticity of interpersonal relations (Hoffman *et al.*, 1994), and provides a climate where members will likely treat one another with respect, honesty, and altruism – all aspects of a just and caring workplace. The ability to establish a sense of self-worth, to enjoy healthy social relations, and to have the respect of colleagues is anchored in trust (Hodson, 2001). Thus, it should come as no surprise that we predict that faculty trust in colleagues promotes a fair and just workplace; and in turn, that justice in the school workplace reinforces an atmosphere of trust among teachers.

Second, faculty trust in the principal also seems central to the emergence of a sense of justice in the school workplace. Just as teachers trusting one another is important in generating fairness in the workplace, so too is faculty trust in the principal; in fact, the rationale for predicting a close connection between faculty trust in the principal and organizational justice is similar. When teachers trust the principal, it promotes open interactions between teachers and the principal (Hoffman *et al.*, 1994) and signals that the principal is dependable, honest, competent, and concerned about teachers (Geist and Hoy, 2003). When principals earn the trust of the faculty, they bolster a sense of human dignity in the workplace (Hodson, 2001). We hasten to add that the relationship is reciprocal, that is, faculty trust enhances school justice, but justice promotes trust. Our argument thus far is that faculty trust in colleagues and faculty trust in the principal are independent sources of organizational justice in schools, and that such justice reinforces both aspects of faculty trust.

But what are the antecedents of each aspect of faculty trust? Earlier research has shown that faculty trust in colleagues is best predicted by characteristics of the group, whereas faculty trust in the principal is best predicted by the leadership behavior of the principal (Geist and Hoy, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2001). Thus, we predict that professional faculty behavior marked by competence, commitment to students, autonomous judgment, and respect for colleagues (Smith *et al.*, 2001) is positively related to trust in colleagues. Similarly, principals generate trust by behaving in ways that foster both the achievement of school goals and social needs teachers. Such principal behavior has been termed collegial leadership (Geist and Hoy, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2001) and is characterized by warm, supportive expressive behavior as well as the instrumental behavior of setting clear teacher expectations and standards of performance. These hypothesized relationships are summarized in the model depicted in Figure 1.

The model predicts that professional teacher behavior is directly related to faculty trust in colleagues, which in turn promotes organizational justice in the workplace and reinforces trust. The collegial leadership of the principal generates faculty trust in the principal, which independently enhances organizational justice in the school and reinforces trust. Thus, both teacher and principal behavior develop a system of organizational justice, and trust is pivotal in the process.

Figure 1 Proposed trust-justice model



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Method

Having developed a model of organizational justice, the next step was to develop a research plan to test the model. We turn to the sample, instruments, and data collection.

Sample

Data from 75 middle schools in the state of Ohio were collected to test the model. The schools were distributed in 11 counties. Although the sample selected was not a random one, care was taken to insure participation of urban, suburban, and rural schools. Currently, the distribution of middle schools in Ohio is 39 percent rural, 34 percent urban, and 27 percent suburban. Correspondingly, the study's schools are distributed across 19 percent rural, 41 percent urban, and 40 percent suburban settings. Of the 612 school districts in the state, 43 participated in the study. Staff completed a total of approximately 2,600 usable surveys. The sample was also similar to the population of middle schools in Ohio in terms of student enrollment, average teacher salary, average teacher experience, and the size of the faculty. In brief, the sample of schools was fairly typical of middle schools in Ohio.

Data collection

Data were collected from the middle schools at regularly scheduled faculty meetings. A member of the research team explained the general purpose of the study, assured the confidentiality of all responses, and asked teachers to complete the questionnaires. Because this project was part of a larger study of organizational properties and because the unit of analysis was the school, two random groups of teachers responded to different surveys. One set of teachers responded to a climate index that included measures of collegial leadership of the principal and professional teacher behavior, and the second random group of teachers described other school properties, including trust and justice. The unit analysis was the school; hence, all data were aggregated to the school level. No attempt was made to gather data from faculty who were not present at the meeting, but virtually all teachers returned usable questionnaires.

Measures

Five organizational behaviors were measured in this research – organizational justice, faculty trust in the principal, faculty trust in colleagues, collegial leadership of the principal, and professional teacher behavior.

Organizational justice index (OJI)

An organizational justice index was created by summing responses to items based on organizational justice principles. Teachers were asked to describe the behavior of teachers and administrators along a seven-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree; the higher the score, the greater the extent of behavior in the school. Examples of items included the following: "Teachers are involved in decisions that affect them (voice principle)", "The principal adheres to high ethical standards (ethical principle)", "The principal treats everyone with respect and dignity (interpersonal justice principle)", and "educators in this school follow courses of action that are generally free of self-interest (egalitarian principle)".

Factor analysis of the ten items of the index indicated a strong single factor of organizational justice with all the items loading strongly on that factor. All the items had factor loadings greater than 0.77 and explained 78 percent of the variance. The results of the analyses supported the construct validity of organizational justice. Moreover, the alpha coefficient of reliability was 0.97.

Faculty trust in the principal and trust in colleagues

The two referents of organizational trust were measured with the Omnibus *t*-Scale, a trust scale developed by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999).

A ten Likert-item subtest of the *t*-Scale that tapped the facets of trust discussed earlier measured faculty trust in the principal. Sample items for trust in the principal include: "Teachers in this school trust the principal", "The principal doesn't really tell teachers what is going on (score reversed)", "The principal in this school is competent in doing his or her job". The alpha reliability coefficient for the subtest with the current sample was 0.98.

Faculty trust in colleagues was similarly measured with a separate eight Likert-item subtest of the Omnibus T-Scale. Examples of the items included: "Teachers in this school trust each other", "Teachers in this school are open with each other", Teachers in this school do their jobs well", and "Teachers in this school are suspicious of each other (score reversed)". The alpha reliability coefficient for the subtest with the current sample was 0.94. Further reliability evidence as well as predictive and construct validity for both measures of faculty trust are provided by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999, 2003).

Collegial leadership and professional teacher behavior

Teacher and principal behaviors were measured with subtests from the organizational climate index (Hoy *et al.*, 2002).

Collegial leader behavior is measured by a seven-item subtest, which gauges the extent to

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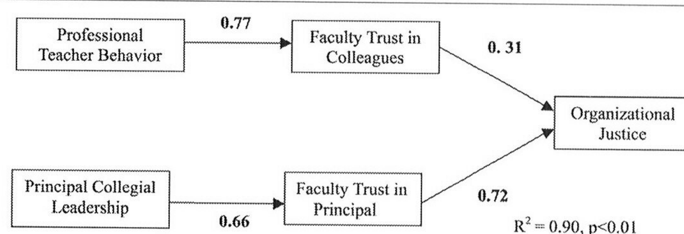
which the principal helps teachers meet their needs and treats them as professional colleagues while simultaneously setting clear goals and standards of performance. Examples of the Likert items include: "The principal treats all faculty members as his or her equal", "The principal is willing to make changes", "The principal lets faculty know what is expected of them", and "The principal is friendly and approachable". The alpha coefficient of reliability for the current sample is 0.96.

Teacher professional behavior was also measured by a subtest of the OCI, a seven-item subtest that determines which faculty engages in professional behavior such as respect for colleague competence, commitment to students, autonomous decision making, and mutual cooperation and support of colleagues. Examples of items include, "Teachers respect the professional competence of their colleagues", "Teachers help and support each other", and "Teachers in this school exercise professional judgment". Predictive and construct validity is provided in a factor analytic study by Hoy *et al.* (2002) for both OCI subtests. Reliability is typically strong; in the current study the alpha coefficient of reliability was 0.98.

An empirical test of the trust-justice model

The trust-justice model was tested using multiple regression techniques and path analysis. As predicted, both aspects of trust – faculty trust in the principal (beta = 0.72, $p < 0.01$) and faculty trust in colleagues (beta = 0.31, $p < 0.01$) had significant independent effects on organizational justice; that is, faculty trust in the principal was significantly related to organizational justice controlling for trust in colleagues, and faculty trust in colleagues was significantly related to organizational trust controlling for trust in the principal. Moreover, as expected, professional teacher behavior was significantly related to trust in colleagues (beta = 0.77, $p < 0.01$) controlling for collegial leadership, and collegial leader behavior was significantly related to trust in the principal (beta = 0.66, $p < 0.01$) controlling for professional teacher behavior. The results of the path analysis are summarized in Figure 2. The adjusted R^2 for organizational justice is 0.90, $p < 0.01$, that is, faculty trust in colleagues and trust in the principal explains 90 percent of the organizational justice variance. The path model was supported by the empirical data.

Figure 2 A test of the trust-justice model: a path analysis



Note: All the regression coefficients are significant

Discussion and conclusions

Even though we predicted the strong relationship between trust and justice, we were surprised to discover its strength. The data demonstrate that trust and justice are inextricably linked; you cannot have one without the other. Although we used faculty trust in colleagues and faculty trust in the principal to predict organizational justice, the relationship clearly can be seen as going the other way, that is, as justice producing trust. On the one hand, if teachers trust the principal, then they are likely to perceive the principal as acting in a fair and just way (believing is seeing); on the other hand, if the teachers perceive their principal as acting ethically and fairly, then they are more likely to trust him or her. The conceptual facets of trust – benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness – are certainly consistent with the underlying conceptual foundations of organizational justice – equity, equality, voice, fairness, dignity, and consistency. In fact, the two sets of conceptual underpinnings are so consistent that they vary together in harmony; they are different but they are intertwined and likely not separable.

The strong influence of principal trust on organizational justice was not surprising. Clearly, the principal is the single most important person in developing a sense of organizational justice in school. The principal of the school is much more important than the faculty in creating a just and fair school at least with respect to professional interactions; however, trust of teachers in their colleagues is not an inconsequential factor. Faculty trust in colleagues makes a substantial independent effect on the school's justice system. Even so, it is within the principal's power to forge a climate of justice by demonstrating in word and deed a commitment to the ten principles of justice articulated earlier. The leader leads by example, and there may be no more important role than fair and just interactions with teachers, students, and parents, that is, to be a moral leader.

Our results also suggest that the principal can lead in a way that directly influences faculty trust in the principal and indirectly affects a sense of organizational justice through such trust. Collegial

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principal leadership captures three critical concerns of leadership – concern for people, concern for the task, and concern for change. The principal whose behavior is expressive, instrumental, and change-oriented, that is, who leads with friendly, supportive behavior, sets clear teacher expectations and standards of performance, and is open to change, is likely to be successful (Yukl, 1998). Moreover, such collegial principal behavior cultivates a culture of trust and justice.

The faculty clearly has an independent role to play in generating a culture of trust and justice in the school workplace. The principal gets the starring role, but the faculty gets a strong supporting role. The faculty through its professional behavior – treating one another as competent professionals, making autonomous judgments, showing a commitment to students, and engaging in cooperation and support – learn to rely and trust one another, which also indirectly influences a sense of organizational justice in the school.

In sum, the collegial leadership of the principal is critical in fostering a trusting relationship with the faculty and such trust is pivotal in nurturing a sense of organizational justice. Professional teacher relationships are significant in facilitating trust among teachers, which in turn enhances a sense of fairness in the school. Although the trust-justice relationship for faculty was not as strong as for the principal, faculty trust in colleagues does make a significant independent contribution in the explanation of organizational justice. Perhaps the most surprising finding of the study was the strength of the trust-justice relationship; both aspects of trust combine to explain 90 percent of the variance in organizational justice. Faculty trust and organizational justice are inextricably related and perhaps inseparable, which leads to our final caveat: the relationship between trust and justice is clearly reciprocal with each influencing and reinforcing the other.

Implications

Although this is one of the few studies to examine organizational justice in the school workplace, there are a number of practical and research implications that can be sketched. First, the concept of organizational justice as it was defined and measured in this research seems useful, especially the ten principles of organizational justice that we articulated at the beginning of this inquiry. Those ten principles serve as a framework for guiding the administrative behavior of principals. Principals who are guided by them will not go far afield in generating a sense of fairness and justice among their teachers as well as cultivating a culture of trust.

The research on faculty trust continues to grow. This study focused on only two aspects of faculty trust – in colleagues and the principal. If principals are to command faculty trust, they must demonstrate behavior that is collegial, enabling (Geist and Hoy, 2003), and supportive (Hoy *et al.*, 2002). The generation of faculty trust in colleagues, however, is more closely related to the interactions among teachers themselves and only indirectly related to the principal's behavior (Geist and Hoy, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2001). Principals who can create a climate with high morale and strong teacher professionalism can set the stage for the growth trust among teachers. There is little evidence that principals can directly facilitate faculty trust in colleagues.

This study did not deal with the generation of faculty trust in parents and students because attention was on fair and just relations between the principal and teachers and among teachers themselves. The concept of organizational justice should be expanded to relationships between teachers and students. Here we predict that the teachers will have the starring role and the principal the supporting one and that faculty trust in students will be inextricably related to organizational justice for students. The moral leadership of teachers is no less important than the moral leadership of the principal.

We conclude with a few suggestions for principals based on our analysis of organizational justice, trust, and leader behavior:

- be equitable, sensitive, respectful, unbiased, honest, and ethical in your relationships with teachers and parents;
- involve teachers in decisions that affect them, especially when they are willing to put the interests of the school ahead of their own and they have the knowledge to improve the quality of the decision;
- have the good sense and confidence to reverse and correct poor decisions as feedback informs the decision;
- show concern for the needs of teachers;
- show concern for the task at hand;
- show concern for the need to change;
- help teachers cultivate a sense of trust among themselves by trusting them to make autonomous decisions in the best interests of their students; and
- remember that justice and trust are inseparable; you cannot have one without the other.

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