

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' EFFICACY: A MODEL AND MEASURE

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ABSTRACT

This study advances the research of school administrators' efficacy through the development of an instrument that measures the confidence of school administrators in performing various leadership/management tasks. The instrument, entitled the School Administrator Efficacy Scale (SAES) was based on the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards, developed by the National Policy Board for Education Administration (NPBEA), to serve as a guide for university-based programs preparing school administrators, e.g., principals and superintendents. A factor analysis was applied to survey results from 367 early career principals and principal trainees. Results yielded eight dimensions of school administrator efficacy. Based on Cronbach's Alpha, the instrument has high reliability; thus, it can serve as a consistent tool in evaluating school administrators' efficacy levels.

INTRODUCTION

The usefulness of the self-efficacy construct is backed by research (Bandura, 1982, 1986; Covington, 1984; Dimmock & Hattie, 1996; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Self-efficacy is associated with individuals' persistence, effort, and success on tasks they perform (Bandura, 1986). If one believes that he/she has the ability to determine successful results through effort and perseverance, then this increases his/her performance and self-efficacy level (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1982) and Covington (1984) maintain that the success of self-efficacious individuals tends to lead to greater efforts to achieve and persevere through difficult tasks.

The research on self-efficacy research has primarily focused on teachers. Little information exists on the use of the self-efficacy construct to understand behaviors of school administrators, e.g., principals and superintendents. Henson, Kogan, and Vacha-Haase (2001) indicate that many positive teacher behaviors and student outcomes are associated with teacher efficacy. Efficacious teachers tend to avoid criticism and persist through difficulties (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Moreover, efficacious teachers are more apt to seek outside help in dealing with disciplinary problems, when assistance is needed (Emmer & Hickman, 1990). Because of the benefits of self-efficacy studies among teachers, it is valuable to extend the study of self-efficacy to school administrators. This is especially important since research has shown that principal leadership is vital to the improvement of schools in effectively preparing students (Barth, 2001; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR EFFICACY SCALE (SAES)

The purpose of this study is to advance the research of school administrators' self-efficacy through the development of a unique measurement instrument that targets the confidence of school administrators in performing a variety of everyday administrative tasks. This instrument called the School Administrator Efficacy Scale (SAES) includes tasks derived from the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards. These standards were developed by the National

Policy Board for Education Administration (NPBEA) to serve as a guide for university programs that prepared school administrators (NPBEA, 2002-a; 2002-b; 2002-c). These tasks based in the ELCC standards help support the content and face validity of the scale as well as help ensure the many facets of a school administrator's job are addressed.

METHODOLOGY

Participants included 367 early career principals and principal trainees who were actively in their principal or teaching roles in Houston area school districts. The mean teaching experience was 8.4 years ($SD = 5.66$). The mean administrator experience as a principal was 4 months ($SD = 2.16$). The mean age was 35.83 ($SD = 8.12$) years old. There were 289 females and 78 males who participated in the study. Participant ethnicity included 213 Caucasian, 96 Hispanic, 51 African-American, 2 Asian, 2 Latino, 2 biracial people and 1 other. Participants completed the School Administrator Efficacy Scale (SAES), a 56-item instrument that corresponds to school administrators' tasks as addressed in the ELCC Standards (NPBEA, 2002-b). In completing the SAES instrument, participants responded to a one to seven (1-7) Likert scale, with options ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (completely true of me), noting how true each statement was about them. Also, a demographic survey was used to describe the sample. Factor analysis was the statistical approach used to decide the dimensions of the SAES as well as establish the instrument's construct validity. A principal axis factoring method was used with a varimax rotation with eight factors being extracted and rotated. If SAES items had a factor loading of less than .4, then they were suppressed and dropped, since .4 is a minimum factor loading for statistical significance (Hair, Anderson, & Tatham, 1987).

RESULTS

The results of the factor analysis indicated that the eight factors accounted for 64.57% of the variance in the SAES scores. Factor 1 (Efficacy for Instructional Leadership and Staff Development) accounted for 11.96% of the variance. Factor 2 (Efficacy for School Climate Development) accounted for 11.03% of the variance. Factor 3 (Efficacy for Community Collaboration) accounted for 9.29% of the variance. Factor 4 (Efficacy for Data-based Decision Making Aligned with Legal and Ethical Principles) accounted for 7.40% of the variance. Factor 5 (Efficacy for Resource and Facility Management) accounted for 7.21% of the variance. Factor 6 (Efficacy for Use of Community Resources) accounted for 6.38% of the variance. Factor 7 (Efficacy for Communication in a Diverse Environment) accounted for 6.18% of the variance. Factor 8 (Efficacy for Development of School Vision) accounted for 5.13% of the variance.

Also, an internal consistency (reliability) analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha for each of the eight factors (subscales) on the SAES. The findings were: Factor 1 (Efficacy for Instructional Leadership and Staff Development) had a final alpha calculation of .93. Factor 2 (Efficacy for School Climate Development) had an alpha of .93. Factor 3 (Efficacy for Community Collaboration) had an alpha of .91. Factor 4 (Efficacy for Data-based Decision Making Aligned with Legal and Ethical Principles) had an alpha of .93. The alpha for Factor 5 (Efficacy for Resource and Facility Management) was .89. Factor 6 (Efficacy for Use of Community Resources) had an alpha of .95. The alpha for Factor 7 (Efficacy of Communication in a Diverse Environment) was .81. Lastly, Factor 8 (Efficacy for Development of School Vision) had an alpha of .86.

CONCLUSION

Based on the statistical findings, the School Administrator Efficacy Scale (SAES) can serve as a valuable instrument toward the preparation of effective school administrators. The basis of the

SAES is the ELCC Standards, which serve as a guide for university-based educational administrator programs, e.g., principalship and superintendency (NPBEA, 2002-c). This research demonstrates that the SAES addresses eight interpretable and internally consistent dimensions with subscales' internal consistency ranging from good ($\alpha = .81$) to excellent ($\alpha = .95$). These subscales address knowledge and skills noted in the ELCC Standards, pertinent to the development of an effective preparation program for educational administrators.

The SAES can serve as a useful tool in administrator preparation programs. It can be used as a formative and summative assessment tool to gauge an educational administration program's level of success in preparing school administrators. Moreover, current school administrators can use the SAES as a self-assessment instrument. Using it as a diagnostic tool, results can guide school administrators in planning their annual professional development activities.

This research has resulted in a viable scale for the assessment and development of school administrator efficacy. It can serve as a valuable tool for school administrator preparation programs as well as for current administrators in the field, especially with the scarcity of information regarding school administrator efficacy. Further research on this topic is needed, especially since school leaders hold a key role in the improvement of schools (Barth, 2001; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

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