



A framework for effective leadership practices and skills for school principals

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ABSTRACT

This paper extends to inspire a shared vision of leadership at schools and identify the practices and components that describe effective leadership. This research also addresses to identify leadership components and their own interrelationships on leadership practices. This paper examines the current status of school principals and grades the studied components and features in this study. This study was conducted through descriptive method and the sampling was done by simple random. Randomly- Cluster and stratified-relatively sampling, the effectiveness of seven identified components on leadership of elementary schools principals' performance from teachers' perspective. A framework is designed to increase the effective leadership role of principals and school efficiency, develop students' social abilities and promote the senior managers to apply the identified components in selecting principals. The paper reports the principals has the highest performance in responsibility and accountability of staff and the lowest performance in the methods of inspiration, rewarding and creating motivation among staff. The results show that a significant difference exists between these two of the mentioned variables of leadership features i.e. cohesion, correlation and solidary among these six components in the designed framework are a must in order to fulfill the leadership.

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1. Introduction

Efficiency of schools is basically affected by leadership ability of principal and is result of his/her attitude, insight, social and moral character. It is necessary to deal with the most basic role of principal i.e. leadership ability of schools in order to increase the efficiency of education system particularly in social and moral character building. Leader principals pose a vision for their schools and are well aware to achieve mentioned vision. An effective educational environment demands the following basic characteristics of this environment such as dynamic and active cooperation among effective people in education, and reinforcing and supporting their innovative spirits. Since teaching is a core responsibility of teachers and pose the highest rate in the relationship among students and principal, teachers can be the most effective people in the educational environment. Then, being aware of teachers' attitude toward the leadership role of principal is one of the most appropriate methods to evaluate leadership ability of a school principal. This matter requires describing the major practices and components of leadership.

A large and basic stream of literature in the area of principals' leadership has identified independent dimensions of leadership and the effective behaviors of scientific leadership (e.g. Lewin et al., 1951; Likert et al., 1961; Robbins, 2001). Moyer (1995) studied a method of leadership oriented or group oriented method through teachers' attitude on job and personal satisfaction about principal behavior based on one of these two methods. Williafrodin (1973) examined a relationship between principal and staff in primary schools of United States with indirect function components based on the rate of observed effective characters by primary schools teachers. Bayard Sally (2011) conducted a study on quantitative analysis of relations between trust of teachers, automation and educational function of schools. Ghafooryan (2002) assessed the functional components of elementary schools of Tehran city. Khajeyee (2001) evaluated skills and qualification of primary schools' principals to obtain an appropriate management model. Amiri (2007) investigated a relationship between communication skills of managers and staff job satisfaction in Central administration offices of Northern Khorasan (quoted by Grissom and Loeb, 2011).

Saadati (2007) also studied a relationship between dimensions of organizational leadership quality and teachers' creativity rate of boy high

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schools in Maneh and Salmaghan. Grissom and Loeb (2011) studied general leadership skills which have a relationship with school's outcome and showed a skill can constantly predict the rate of student progress and other successes depend on organizational management of principal. The analysis argues for a broad view of principal leadership that includes organizational management skills as a key complement to the work of supporting curriculum and instruction (quoted by Grissom and Loeb, 2011).

Symmetry of social character formation and sociability of children with school going age of 6 -7 makes significant to study primary school period in this research. Guidance and giving directions to educational and training processes depend on quality and the way which human relationship underpin at schools and principals are in charge for that; moreover, sociability can be another responsibility of principals. Hence, it is necessary to pay a special attention to the leadership role of principals and its relevant components and their qualifications for obtaining this responsibility in order to increase efficiency at schools. Leithwood et al. (2008) summarizes the main findings from the wealth of empirical studies undertaken in the leadership field and suggest seven strong claims about successful school leadership. On the other hand, this research extends seven components for effective leadership from teachers' perspective and they might be helpful to principal selection and school performance.

Hence, the researchers identify leadership components and examine their interrelationship and relationship with leadership role. Leadership is second only to teaching in its impact on student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004). Principals play an essential role as school leaders to achieve. The principal objective of the present research is to identify the practices and components that describe effective leadership. Leader practices are the actions, behaviors and functions found through research and professional experience to have a positive impact on school achievement from teachers' point of view. Leader components are the skills of effective principals. The framework is not intended as a job description for the leader, or as a checklist against which to assess performance. Rather, it provides framework for growth, which are sufficiently detailed to describe good leadership. Structure of the framework is made up of a major part: leader practices and components.

This research was studied through descriptive and literature review survey with applied purpose. This study was conducted in government elementary schools in 19 districts of Tehran education organization.

2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in 2013-2014 in Tehran, Capital city of Iran. The data were collected through researcher-made questionnaire. Items

identified from literature review helped in the construction of the survey instrument.

2.1. Sample

In the light of the objectives of present study, the survey population was identified as teachers of government-primary schools in Tehran in 2013 - 2014. A convenience sample of 10838 woman teachers and 764 men teachers was drawn using systematic sampling of Krejcie & Morgan Table. As increasing need for a representative statistical sample in empirical research, Krejcie & Morgan Table (1970) has created a demand for an effective method of determining sample size. Present researchers selected this table in order to determine sample size for a given population for easy reference. According to Krejcie & Morgan Table, the sample size for given population of 15000 people determines 375 sample size including 350 female teachers and 25 male teachers. The sample size of present study is 379 (quoted by Leithwood et al., 2004).

Sampling methods are clustered randomized and class proportional. Initially, Tehran city has divided into five sectors of north, west, east, and center. Next, accidentally regions number of 3, 8,9,11, and 16 are selected for sampling and schools of these regions are selected as analyzing units. Sampling was carried out based on gender regarding number of female to male teachers' ratio to the population of total number of teachers each region of Tehran in primary school section.

The researchers attempted to select the schools from different urban areas for further standardizing in sampling of statistical population.

High volume of the required samplings in each region made call many schools and teachers for responding the questionnaires. Hence, the number of participating schools in each region regarding the required sample volume of each region reaches over 50 schools.

2.2. Instrument survey

The researcher-made questionnaire contained two following information sections:

- a- Personal profile and demographic information
- b- Questionnaire questions according to study problems

Present questionnaire includes 70 questions in 7 sections in 5 scales that evaluate principle's behavior in each specific case with 10 descriptive questions. The limits of scales are as follows very low, low, medium, high, and very high. Over 50 relevant standard and researcher-made questionnaires has been studied to provide present questionnaire e.g. "Standards of school principals" questionnaire by educational board of New York City. This questionnaire determines some standards for government school principals of New York and the first priority of these standards is "educational leadership standard" of principal.

For descriptive analysis of data, frequency indexes, frequency, standard deviation, percent, skewness, elongation, and for inferential analysis of data univariate chi-square, Kruskal-Wallis, Whitney U, and Friedman test has been used. The reliability of questionnaire examined and confirmed by research guide and consultant professors, and expert

professionals. Utilizing Cronbach's alpha coefficients validity and reliability of present questionnaire has been summarized (See Table 1). Cronbach's alpha in each component and total components approves popularizing, reliability and repeatability of current test.

Table1: The reliability of questionnaire

Components	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients	No. of Item
Building Trust	0.98	10
Rewarding and creating motivation among staff	0.98	10
Supporting innovation	0.98	10
Communication	0.97	10
Increasing responsibility and accountability among staff	0.96	10
Applying leadership ability of students	0.96	10
Compliance of justice and fairness	0.98	10
Total indicator (leadership and guidance of Principals)	0.99	70

In descriptive statistics section, firstly assessment of responses to questions breakdown of each component has been studied and in the next step, an index is created from the sums of questions of an index for the considered component. Average of respondents' assessment of each of questionnaires' questions are indexed in the scale of 1 to 5 and average of components (sums of questions related to each component) are stated in the scale of 1 to 100. For studying method of variables distribution Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S test or KS test) is used. If significant scale of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (sig) is lower than 0.05; it shows that variable distribution is abnormal. Since all questions are descriptive and the distribution of all variables is abnormal, Single Variable Chi-Square test was used which is a subset of non-parametric tests.

In Single Variable Chi-Square test, the observed statistical frequency for each item is compared to the predicted statistical frequency of that item and also, being significant or insignificant differences between them is studied. For example, if frequency is 379 and 5 choices exist to respond each question, the

predicted frequency for each choice will be 75.8 and the observed frequency i.e. answer to each question will be compared to 75.8, and then being significant or insignificant differences between these two numbers will determined through Chi-Square test. To rank the seven components of leading and guiding of principals from teachers' perspective, Friedman test is used. In this test, mean differences between the scales of some variables in a correlated sample is measured and their significances are studied. This study shows that function of which principals have been better in one or more observed components.

3. Results and findings

Kolmogorov Smirnov test was carried out and the corresponding significance with test (KS) in all indicators is less than 0.05 and the results show that the distributions of studied components are abnormal (See Table 2).

Table 2: Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (KS) for checking the status of variable distribution of the study

Components	Statistics		Test values		Dist. Status
	Mean	Standard deviation	K-S	Significance Level	
Building Trust	81.2	24.1	4.230	0.000	Abnormal
Method of reward, encouragement and motivate staff	74.5	24.7	2.933	0.000	Abnormal
Supporting innovation	78.0	24.0	3.487	0.000	Abnormal
Communication	82.7	24.2	4.608	0.000	Abnormal
Increasing Staff's accountability	83.2	20.7	4.034	0.000	Abnormal
Applying leadership ability of students	78.3	22.9	3.314	0.000	Abnormal
Compliance of justice and fairness	80.9	24.3	4.166	0.000	Abnormal
Total indicator (leadership and guidance of Principals)	79.9	21.7	3.443	0.000	Abnormal

This study reports the main question of this study, which is identified the components of leadership and their relations with the role of leadership and guidance of principals as below:

Current status of the role of "leadership and guidance" of elementary school principals from primary school teachers' perspective: 86.8% of respondents assess the leadership and guidance of

elementary school principals in very good and good levels, 7.1% examine this component very low and low, and 6.1% of respondents have average opinion. Respondents' assessment average is 79.9%; therefore, teachers assess the role of leadership and guidance of principals in a very good level.

Value of Chi-square test is 474.391 and its correspondence significance is 0.000. As a result, the test rejected the null and a hypothesis of this study is confirmed (Table 3).

Table 3: Respondents' distribution based on leadership and guidance assessment of School's Principal

Components	Statistics		Test values		Dist. Status
	Mean	Standard deviation	K-S	Significance Level	
Building Trust	81.2	24.1	4.230	0.000	Abnormal
Method of reward, encourage and motivate staff	74.5	24.7	2.933	0.000	Abnormal
Supporting innovation	78.0	24.0	3.487	0.000	Abnormal
Communication	82.7	24.2	4.608	0.000	Abnormal
Increase Staff's accountability	83.2	20.7	4.034	0.000	Abnormal
Applying leadership ability of students	78.3	22.9	3.314	0.000	Abnormal
Compliance of justice and fairness	80.9	24.3	4.166	0.000	Abnormal
Total indicator (leadership and guidance of Principals)	79.9	21.7	3.443	0.000	Abnormal

Leadership view of teachers about the primary schools principal's leadership roles is as follows:

"Trust Building" Component: 86.9% of respondents assess trust building of principals in very good and good level, 8.8% assess this component in low and very low level, and 4.3%

posed average opinion on this issue. Assessment average is 81.2%. Value of Chi-Square test is 513.761 and its correspondent significance is 0.000. Hence, teachers assess Trust Building of principals as very good. As a result, the test rejected the null and a hypothesis of this study is confirmed (Fig. 1).

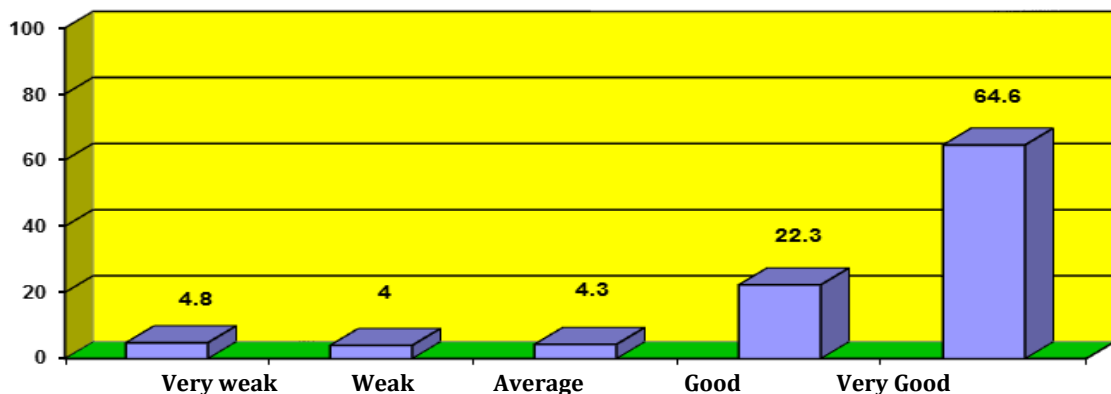


Fig. 1: Respondents' frequency based on assessment of trust building of principals

"Method of reward, encourage and motivate staff" Component: 76.9% of respondents assess method of reward, encourage and motivating staffs component of primary schools' principals in very good and good level, 10.4% assess this component in low and very low level, and 12.7% had average opinion on this issue. Assessment average is 74.5%. Value of Chi-Square test is 245.268 and its correspondent significance is 0.000. Therefore, teachers assess method of reward, encourage and motivating staffs by their administrators as very good (Table 4).

correspondent significance is 0.000, which shows teachers assess supporting innovation component of their principals as very good. As a result, the test rejected the null and a hypothesis of this study is confirmed (Fig. 2).

"Supporting innovation" component: 80.6% of respondents assess supporting innovation component of primary schools' principals in very good and good level, 8.5% assess this component in low and very low level, and 10.9% had average opinion on this issue. Assessment average is 78.0%. Value of Chi-Square test is 340.053 and its

"Communication" component: 87.8% of respondents assess communication component of principals in very good and good level, 8.2% assess this component in low and very low level, and 4.0% had average opinion on this issue. Assessment average is 82.7%. Value of Chi-Square test is 562.138 and its correspondent significance is 0.000. Teachers assess communication of their principals as very good. As a result, the test rejected the null and a hypothesis of this study is confirmed (Table 5).

"Increase accountability of staff" Component: 89.6% of respondents assess "increase accountability of staff" component of principals in very good and good level, 4.8% assess this

component in low and very low level, and 5.6% had average opinion on this issue.

Table 4: Respondents' frequency based on assessment of reward, encourage and motivating staff by principals

Description	Frequency	Frequency Percentage	Valid Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Very weak	18	4.7	4.8	74.5	24.68	-1.26	1.29
Weak	21	5.5	5.6				
Average	48	12.7	12.7				
Good	115	30.3	30.5				
Very Good	175	46.2	46.4				
No respond	2	0.5	-				
SUM	379	100.0	100.0				

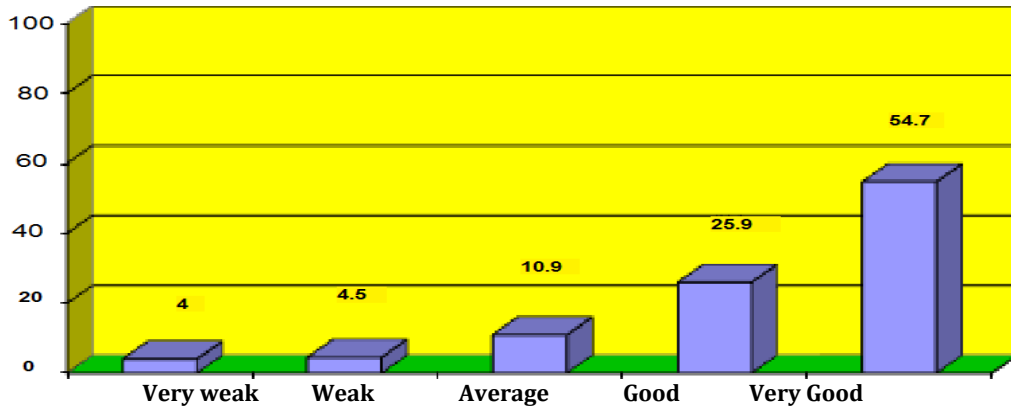


Fig. 2: Respondents' frequency based on assessment of principals' supporting of innovation

Table 5: Respondents' frequency based on assessment of principals' communications

Description	Frequency	Frequency Percentage	Valid Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Very weak	18	4.7	4.8	82.71	24.18	-2.04	3.78
Weak	13	3.4	3.4				
Average	15	4.0	4.0				
Good	78	20.6	20.7				
Very Good	253	66.8	67.1				
No respond	2	0.5	-				
SUM	379	100.0	100.0				

Assessment average is 83.2%. Value of Chi-Square test is 491.520 and its correspondent significance is 0.000.

Teachers assess success of "Increase accountability of staff" of their principals as very good level (Fig. 3).

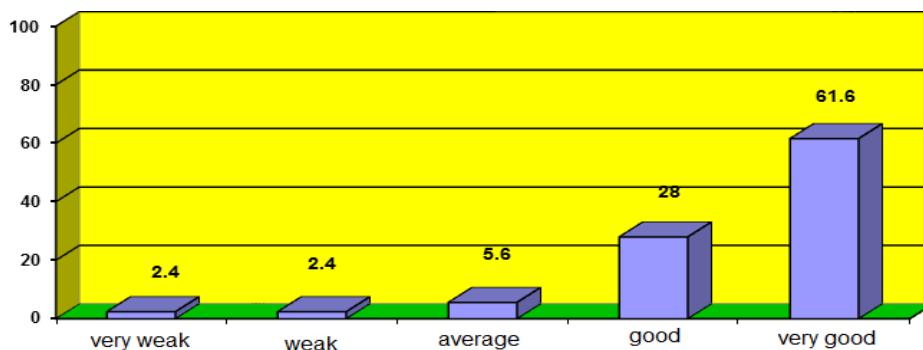


Fig. 3: Respondents' frequency based on assessment of increase accountability of schools' staffs

"Taking advantage of the ability to lead of students" Component: 81.0% of respondents assess "taking advantage of the ability to lead of students" component of principals in very good and good level, 7.7% assess this component in low and very low level, and 11.4% had average opinion on this issue. Assessment average is 78.3%. Value of

Chi-Square test is 330.149 and its correspondent significance is 0.000.

Teachers assess "taking advantage of the ability to lead of students" component of principals very good. As a result, with the rejection of the null, hypothesis test of this study is confirmed (Table 6).

Table 6: Respondents' frequency based on assessment of taking advantage of the ability to lead of students by principals

Description	Frequency	Frequency Percentage	Valid Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Very weak	11	2.9	2.9	78.3	22.85	-1.38	1.82
Weak	18	4.7	4.8				
Average	43	11.3	11.4				
Good	105	27.7	27.9				
Very Good	200	52.8	53.1				
No respond	2	0.5	-				
SUM	379	100.0	100.0				

“Justice and fairness compliance” Component: 85.5% of respondents assess “Justice and fairness compliance” component of principals in very good and good level, 8.3% assess this component in low and very low level, and 6.2% had average opinion on this issue. Assessment average is 78.3%. Value of

Chi-Square test is 430.686 and its correspondent significance is 0.000.

Thus, from the teachers’ view point “Justice and fairness compliance” is very good. As a result, with the rejection of the null, hypothesis test of this study is confirmed (Fig. 4).

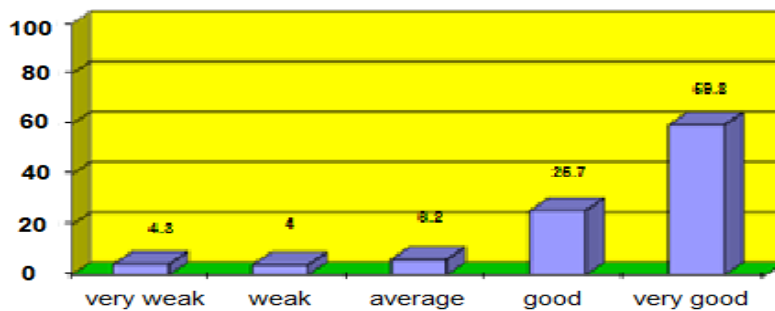


Fig.4: Respondents’ frequency based on assessment of Justice and fairness compliance of principals

Ranking Seven Components of Leadership and Guidance in Statistical Population: Highest average rank is “increase accountability of staff” with average rank of 4.66 and after that “communication” component with average rank of 4.64 is placed. The value of Friedman Test is equal to 280.651 and its correspondent significance is 0.000. This shows that, an observed difference of average ranks between seven components is significant and hence it is generalizable to the population. Therefore, it can be

stated that from the viewpoint of teachers, primary school principals in sample population has better condition in “increase accountability of staff” and “communication” compared to other components. Also, from the teachers’ perspective, principals of primary schools in the sample population do not have good condition in “method of reward, encourage and motivating staffs” compared to other components (Table 7).

Table 7: Respondents’ frequency based on assessment of leadership and guidance of schools’ principals

Description	Frequency	Frequency Percentage	Valid Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Very weak	16	4.2	4.2	79.9	21.71	-1.69	2.83
Weak	11	2.9	2.9				
Average	23	6.1	6.1				
Good	95	25.1	25.1				
Very Good	234	61.7	61.7				
SUM	379	100.0	100.0				

Considering theoretical principles, literature and findings of the present study, a framework is suggested; where each component has mutual effect with leadership role. I.e. each component has a direct effect on leadership role of principal and also, leadership style of that principal has effect on that regarded element. It also establishes a mutual relation among all elements; although, some of the components have greater impact on each other. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the components of this proposed framework in terms of ranking but it is important that each element placed between those two elements that have most interactions with that component

compared to the other components. Elements which have the greatest impact on each other have placed side by side on a circle and connected to each other with small two-way arrows. Leadership role is also placed in the center and connected to each element with two-way arrows. Choosing a polygonal shape for leadership role provides this opportunity to add further components in future. These types of connections are more like relation between components of a system; In other words, the leadership role of principals and its components can be assumed as a system (Fig. 5).

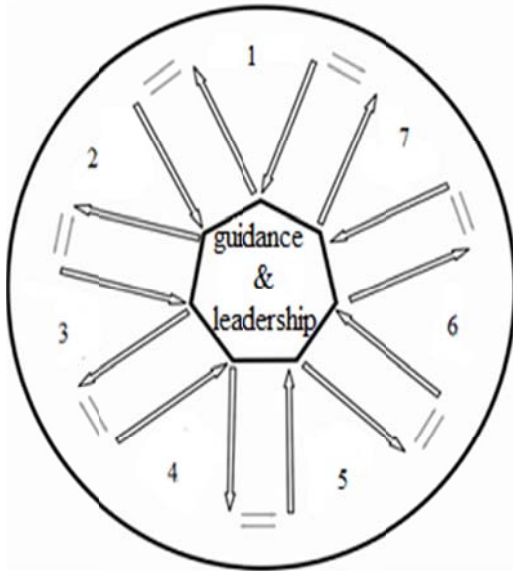


Fig. 5: Conceptual framework of guidance and leadership role of principals

Conceptual framework of guidance and leadership role of principals is shown with seven elements including: 1. Building Trust; 2. Increasing responsibility and accountability among staff; 3. Compliance of justice and fairness; 4. Rewarding and creating motivation among staff; 5. Supporting innovation; 6. Communication and 7. Applying leadership ability of students.

Ebrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012) studied the leadership style of principal with performance level of school and its effectiveness. The researcher has distributed MLQ questionnaire in three levels of primary: secondary and high school. Results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between leadership style of principal and effectiveness of his-her role, but any significant relationship has not found between leadership style and performance of school. Current study deals with studying managerial factors and leadership role of principals from the viewpoint of elementary school teachers.

Li (2012) investigated multiple leadership methods of leaders noticing perceptions of justice and values of their followers in Chinese structures. This researcher has assessed and analyzed four organizational factors of procedural, personal, informational, and distributive justice along with their role in leadership. Results showed that all four mentioned organizational justice dimension in transformational leadership and only the informational justice dimension can be seen more in patriarchal leadership. Transactional leadership poses the most powerful direct effect on the performance of followers regarding their tasks and patriarchal leadership receives little effect on performance of followers regarding their tasks. In the current study, justice is one of the seven factors of principals which have been studied.

Nickoukar (2006) studied the relationship of successful educational leadership in school with students' learning. The results imply that leadership

of principal is effective on quality of educational curriculum of school and this leadership has a considerable effect on learning of students. Researchers of present study have evaluated the components which are effective on success of principals in their leadership role. Taghvaye and Langaroudi (2003) studied triple technical, human, and perceptual practices of male and female principals of elementary schools. Results show that there is a significant relationship between these practices. On the other side, leadership components have been studied in this research which these factors have a noticeable effect on human skills of principal. Gholami (2005) studied the rate of establishment of knowledge management in Isfahan Ministry of Education from the perspective of female teachers. Gholami assessed six factors include encourage and reward system and communication system of knowledge management. The results imply that the amount of the factors according to participants' responses is lower than average. In present study, three effective elements among discussed leadership factors are "encourage and reward system" and "communications".

Results indicate that success of principals in presenting encourage and reward method factor is placed in the lowest level compared to other components but in case of communication, success of principals is placed in the second level compared to other components. In present research, questions about these seven guidance and leadership components have been asked teachers. Findings showed that principals have acceptable condition from the teachers' viewpoint on these components in.

4. Limitation of the study

Researches being undertaken in the field of human studies often face complexity, and ethical and human limitations. Some of these limitations are restrictions of tools and research techniques which avoiding them seems impossible. Methodology of this study is survey and its tool is researcher made questionnaire. In this case, the personal judgment of people can be involved in the collected data. Judgment of people is based on their perceptions that may create some damages in the accordance of truth with responses of individuals, but since sampling is done randomly, this means and methods' error are dramatically reduced.

5. Conclusions

In this study, a framework is presented for effective leadership components and practices of principals. Productivity of schools depends on realizing effective educational environment. Establishing such an environment depends on quality of human relations on that. Principals design and shape these relationships at schools. Based this aim, the principals utilize role and leadership task of managers. Therefore, to study effective components

and practices of leadership is necessary. Principals should be aware of what these elements are, how their relationship together should be and how the mentioned elements effect on their leadership role. For this purpose, seven components and their relations to principals' leadership from perspective of teachers have been studied in the present study. These seven components includes method of reward, encourage and motivate staff, building trust and supporting innovation, communication, increase accountability of staff, taking advantage of the ability to lead students, justice and fairness compliance, overall indicator (leadership and guidance of Principals).

Results show that teachers recognized the success of their principals as very good level in all seven components as well as the overall index of leadership. The teachers evaluated principals in two responsibility and accountability and also in communications as best performance and in encourage and motivate staff compared to the other components had weaker performance. Results indicate that findings of this research are generalizable to the population.

Present recommended framework in this study shows principals who play leadership role have to notice a systematic or semi-systematic relation between components and leadership and should know that weakness in any of the components has not only effect on leadership but has effects all other components. Hence, poor performance of each component undermines the role of leadership. Also, senior managers should pay special attention to this point for selecting their manager thus organizational efficiency increase or at least does not decrease. It is recommended to perform further researches to identify other important effective factors on managers' leadership and study the practicality of this framework for other organizations through scientific methods.

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