

RUNNING HEAD: Developing Trust

Developing Trust between Principal and Teachers

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Abstract

Building trusting relationships in schools is so important that policy makers have made principals responsible for establishing them. In Texas, the second of the official state proficiency requirements for principals states, “The administrator establishes a climate of mutual trust and respect which enables all members of the learning community to seek and attain excellence.” This paper reports the initial stage of a study undertaken to enable the development of a model for building trusting relationships between principals and teachers in their schools. This stage consisted of an exploratory survey of principals and teachers in which they were asked to identify the principles, competencies, and behaviors that gained their trust in each other and, therefore, are important for building trusting relationships.

Importance of Trust

The importance of trusting relationships for organizations has many well stated advocates. Kanter (1997) states that mistrust in an organization sets off a vicious cycle. She also points out that without trust, “It makes success harder to attain, which means someone has to be blamed for the lack of success” (Kanter, 1997, 238). This blaming causes more mistrust. It is critical then for leaders of organizations to create trusting relations within the organization. Hoy (1996) studied the organizational health of 86 middle schools showed results indicating that trust and health complement each other. To have a healthy organization there must be trust.

Deming (1993) wrote in the foreword to John Whitney's book, The Trust Factor, that, “Trust is mandatory for optimization of a system. Without trust there cannot be cooperation between people, teams, departments, or divisions.....The job of a leader is to create an environment of trust so that everyone may confidently examine himself“ (p.viii). Ouchi (1981) perceived trust to be the fundamental feature of superior subordinate relationship in successful organizations. The implications for schools and for the leadership of those schools are important. Without trust, site-based decision making, teaming, and collaboration can not occur. Knowledge of trust--what it is, how it is created and how it is destroyed is critical to creating a positive learning community.

Developing trusting relationships in schools and other organizations is critical. Fukuyama (1995) in his book on Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity states that communities depend on mutual trust to be successful. He describes trust as the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviors, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community. “By contrast, people who do not trust one another will end up cooperating only under a system of formal rules and regulation, which have to be negotiated, agreed to, litigated, and enforced, sometimes by coercive means” (p.27-28). He points out that a high trust society can organize its workplace on a more flexible and group oriented basis, with more responsibility delegated to lower levels of the organization. “ Low trust societies, by contrast, must fence in and isolate their workers with a series of bureaucratic rules” (p. 31).

Fukuyama (1995) further states that professionals tend to be trusted to a higher degree than nonprofessionals do and therefore operate in a less rule-bound environment. “There is usually an inverse relationship between rules and trust: the more people depend on rules to regulate their interactions, the less they trust others, and vice versa” (p. 224). He also points out that people who trust each other and are good at working with one another can “. . . adapt easily to new conditions and create appropriate new organizational forms” (p. 218).

Trust defined

Dictionary definitions pertaining to trust are long and expansive and describe it as a condition in which one is free from doubt, common synonyms most frequently found to define the meaning of trust are, count on, rely on, depend on, be certain of, place confidence in. Golembiewski and McConkie(1975) capture the essence of the commonly accepted definition of trust. They defined trust as “...reliance on, or confidence in, some event, process, or person” (p. 133). Most definitions of trust accompanying empirical

studies have centered around three major foci: (1) the trusting relationship between two individuals (Frost and Moussavi, 1992; Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, & Hoy, 1994; Rempel and Holmes, 1986; & Zand 1972), (2) the trust between the individual and the organization (Driscoll, 1973; Hoy and Kupersmith, 1985; & Zand, 1972) and (3) trust in events or processes (Golembiewski, 1975; Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, and Hoy, 1994). It is interesting to note that while trust in events or processes are frequently included in definitions of trust, no research has been found regarding trust in an event or process.

Trust in the Principal

The literature on the importance of teachers trusting the principal has been sporadic over the last 25 years. Blumberg, Greenfield, and Nason (1978) conducted one of the earlier studies that explored what teachers meant when they spoke of trusting their principal. They were able to identify four factors that they believed contributed to trusting the principal: the principal's personality, interpersonal style, professional role expectation and administrative expectation. Other dimensions were included within the four factors, but Blumberg et al were not able to construct a working definition of trust or to define what teachers meant when they said they trusted their principal.

Hoy has been the most persistent researcher regarding the role of trust. He, with others, has made several attempts to define trust. Kupersmith and Hoy (1989) identified three characteristics that engendered teacher trust: (1) the principal took responsibility for their behavior; (2) the principal was perceived as a person first and one who performed role expectations second and (3) the principal was non-manipulative. These characteristics and behaviors were given the term "principal authenticity".

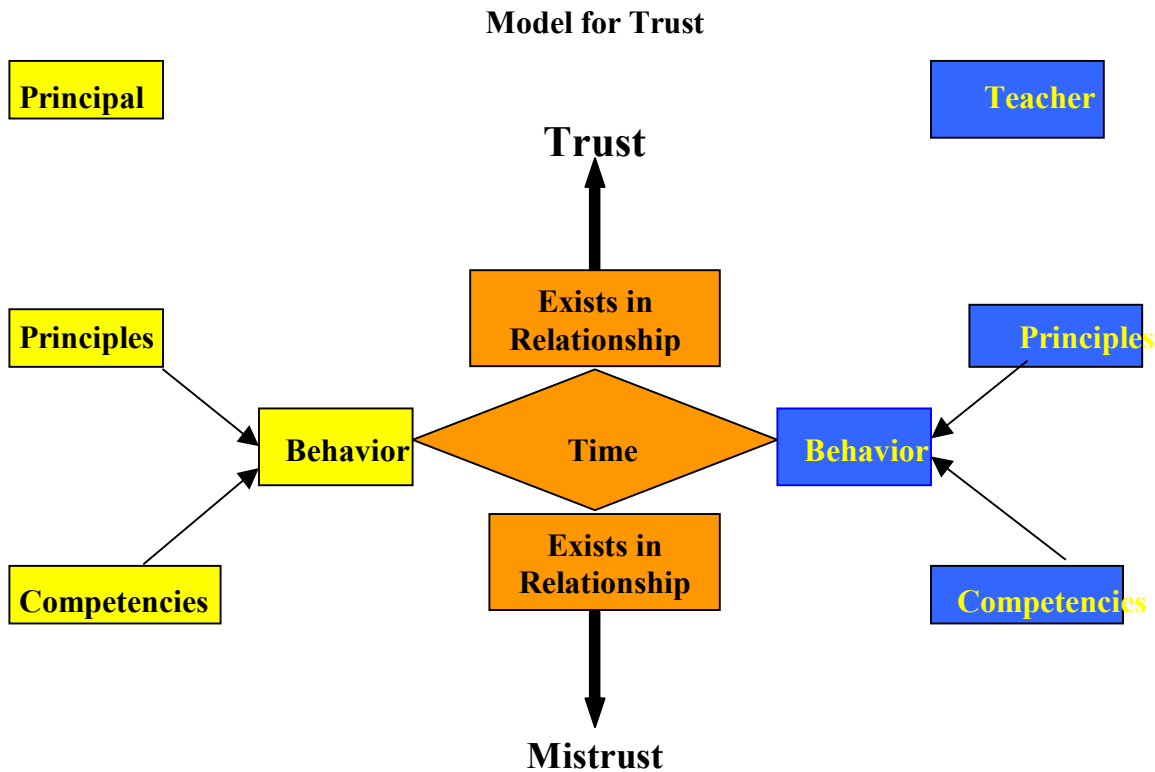
Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, & Hoy (1994) defined trust as a "general confidence and overall optimism in occurring events; it is believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve." Specifically, Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, & Hoy (1994) defined trust in the principal as, "The faculty (having) confidence that the principal will keep his or her word and act in the best interest of the teachers." (p. 486

MacNeil and Blake (1998) believe that trust between the principal and teacher is considerably more involved. A model for trust (see Figure 1) explains the components defining trust as the *reliability of the relationship that exist between people, developed over time*, caused by the behaviors that are formed by the principles and competencies of a person. The definition as proposed by MacNeil and Blake add two important distinctions: that trust is a reliable relationship and that trust occurs over a period of time.

MacNeil and Blake (1998) report the results for a study on principals creating trust with their teachers as follows: be kind, considerate, and principled; be competent, use power wisely, make sensible decisions; promotes curriculum and professional growth; be confident and focused and empower teachers.

The concept of trust building is equally if not greater than the importance of principal leadership. In the absence of trust, it does not matter what the principal's leadership skills or professional competence may be, trust must be established first. Trust as defined must also be examined from the reciprocal reaction of the persons involved in the relationship. This paper reports the results from a study of principals identifying the factors that develops their trust with the teachers in their school.

Figure 1. A model for developing trusting relations for teacher and principal



Teachers Who Build Trust with their Principal

Population and Sample

The population under study is principals and assistant principals in the Houston/Gulf Coast region of Texas. Questionnaires were sent or delivered to 225 individuals and 119 were returned. The 225 individuals selected for study were a convenience sample rather than a random sample, and the 53% response rate limits generalizability in any event. Still, an assessment of the demographic information related to respondents suggests that the respondent group is diverse, and if not representative of the population, at least includes individuals from the major demographic groupings by age, race/ethnicity, gender, school level (high school, middle school, elementary school), school size and location. The results of this study must therefore be interpreted with the understanding that the sample may not be fully representative of the population under study.

Instrument

The items in this interest were derived from the literature, definitions of trust and previous research on trust. After an item pool was generated, students enrolled in a

principalship course were asked to review the item pool and make a judgment about whether in their view each item represented an element of trust for teachers and principals and whether in their view any significant elements were omitted from the list. Twelve principals in the Southeast of Texas were also asked to review the items and comment. Based on this input, the item set was revised in wording and a few items were added and omitted. Through this process, the content validity of the item set was established.

The remainder of the study can be viewed as an assessment of the construct validity of the instrument as the dimensions of trust are extracted through the use of factor analysis and compared with theory about trust. No reliability coefficients were calculated and of course, none will follow from this data set on extracted factors, as they are derived based on the level of intercorrelation and therefore would naturally be expected to have a high level of internal consistency.

Factor Analysis

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotations was run to assess the underlying factor structure related to trust. Since this was an exploratory analysis, several factor solution sets were examined. Ten rotations had Eigenvalues exceeding one and step-down rotations from ten to two were examined. Our intent was to see how many factor solutions were robust across various rotations. It turned out the four of the factors were stable over rotations of four or more factors and so the four factor solution was selected for further consideration; we are reasonably confident that at least these four factors exist within the data set. It is possible that additional factors are worthy of additional consideration and further research may document this. The four-factor solution explained a total of 61.4% of the variation in the item set.

Tables 1 through 4 show the items that are associated with each of the first four rotated factors along with the factor loading. Only loadings greater than .60 are shown. The directors for each of the items asked principals to respond to “teachers I trust” on a 1 to 5 scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The first factor, Table 1, lists items that describe a teacher who is student oriented and competent in the classroom, one who is committed to their students and student learning. From this we can conclude that principals trust teachers who are committed to and doing a good job within their classrooms,

Table 2 lists the items and loadings associated with factor 2. Here we see that principals trust teachers who are fair, sincere and honest in general, but toward their students in particular, these are teachers who are respectful of others and individuals of integrity.

The third factor is presented in Table 3 and includes items that describe teachers who are supportive of policies and administrators, who make good decisions and follow through on assignments. Principals trust teachers who they see as supportive, open, aligned with school policies, and rational.

Included in Table 4 are the items and loadings associated with the fourth factor. This factor includes items which reflect an out going, friendly, and likable individual. Principals trust teachers who are pleasant to work with, friendly and have a good sense of humor.

Table 1. Teachers who are committed to their students and student learning:

Item	Factor Loading
Empower students as independent learners	.765
Are able to motivate students to be successful learners	.735
Encourage student success	.721
Are knowledgeable on how students learn	.707
Are able to influence students	.700
Prepare students for the future	.675
Are able to encourage students to do their best	.646
Are knowledgeable in their content area	.644
Keep organized and efficient records	.610

Table 2: Teachers who are sincere and honest toward students

Item	Factor Loading
Are fair to their students	.794
Are honest	.790
Are trustworthy	.788
Are respectful toward students	.760
Are sincere toward students	.744
Are sincere toward administrators	.695
Do not mislead students	.661
Are patient with students	.569

Table 3: Teachers who are loyal, supportive and rational

Item	Factor Loading
Are supportive of administrative policies and procedures	.735
Follow through on assigned tasks	.721
Make sensible decisions	.694
Relate to administrators	.676
Do not mislead administrators	.663
Relate to parents	.619
Make logical decisions	.610
Admit mistakes to administrators	.581

Table 4: Teachers who are friendly and cheerful

Item	Factor Loading
Are friendly toward administrators	.825
Are kind toward administrators	.723
Have a pleasant and cheerful disposition	.701
Like administrators	.666
Are friendly toward students	.642
Are kind toward students	.629
Have a good sense of humor	.622
Like students	.613

Comparison to Factors of Teachers Trusting Principals

The seven factors related to teachers trust of principals was presented earlier. The first factor for teachers trusting principals appears similar to factor four above – teachers and principals trust individuals who are friendly toward them and others, who are kind and have a good sense of humor and are cheerful.

Factor two of principals trusting teachers focused on the general character of the teacher, basically that they were honest and sincere. Some of these concepts are imbedded in factor one of teachers' trust of principals; teachers trust principals not only who are kind and friendly but who also are persons of integrity. Principals seem to differentiate these concepts when analyzing their trust of teachers – friendliness as one thing and integrity as another.

The second factor for teachers trusting principals had to do with how they did their job, that they were effective and efficient, good supervisors and made rational decisions. The factor in principals' trust of teachers which seems to relate most closely is factor one, which dealt with how teachers did their job, and in the case of teachers focused on their student centeredness and effectiveness in the classroom. Both teachers and principals seem to trust others who they perceive as being competent and doing a good job.

From the third factor on, there does not appear to be a direct correspondence between the factors related to teachers trusting the principal and that for the principal trusting teachers. These factors for teachers trusting principals had much to do with their leader behavior. Factor three focused on the principals' support for the professional growth and development of teachers. Factor four related to organizational focus and commitment, that teachers perceived of the principal as being committed to the school, as having a positive self concept and a sense of what the school should be doing for students. Factor five focused on teacher empowerment, while factor six was concerned, inversely, with autocratic leadership, and the last factor reflected achievement of school goals.

Collectively, factors three, four and five, might be interpreted as principal support for them as teachers and the school and this comes close to capturing what is in factor three of principals trusting teachers, i.e. that they are loyal and supportive of them as principals and school policies.

Building Trusting Relationships: Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

For those of us who prepare present and future school leaders using the reflective practitioners approach (Schon, 1987) the importance of trust has critical implication for theory and practice. As reflective practitioners the principal's goal is to lead the school in ways that develop the school as a learning community. Creating community has at its root trusting relationships. Creating a learning community means moving away from the management approach by rule to leading the learning community. As Speck (1999) points out trust is the “. . . ingredient to developing a learning community . . . without trust, the learning community cannot function” (p. 59).

Barth (1990) clearly outlines the critical role of the principal in leading the school. He claims that although much has been written about school reform in the past decade, insufficient attention has been given to the important relationships among the adults within the school. He further asserts that adversarial relations exist among adults and attacks on the ideas of others are common. Many schools have a climate of competition that creates

an environment that interferes with a desire for all in the school to succeed. He demonstrates how this adversarial position exists by the lists of “mind boggling” rules and regulations that schools produce. Fullan (1997) also points to the importance of the body of research and practice that advises principals to be inclusionary leaders who recognizes the need for relationships of caring that are strengthened by collaboration and community-building. Seyfarth (1999) says that principal's leadership involves creating and sustaining trust.

Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that “community” rather than “organization” is the better metaphor for schools. Beck (1994) suggests that leaders should think of a model of governance as a circle instead of as a pyramid, implying a whole new set of relationships. These relationships to work would have to be based on trust or as Mertz and Furman (1997) observed that educational leaders have never really conceptualized schools in new ways, reforms have become simply the substitution of one bureaucracy for another. Building trusting relationships as Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, and Slack (1995) claim is “. . . the backbone of community-building in schools.

Building trusting relationships between teachers and principals needs to start with principals being kind, considerate, and principled toward teachers. Principals need to demonstrate competence, use power wisely, make sensible decisions; promote curriculum and professional growth. They need to be confident and focused and they need to empower teachers. Teachers build trust with their principals when they demonstrate commitment to their students and student learning need. Teachers need to demonstrate sincerity and honesty toward students. Teachers need to be loyal, supportive and rational and they need to be friendly and cheerful.

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