

Original Article

Determining effective leadership qualities of a school principal from the perception of PE teachers in Greece

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Abstract:

Problem statement: Globally, leadership has been identified as a key factor in the improvement and organizational efficiency of schools. **Purpose:** This study aims to: (a) investigate the effectiveness of the school principal using the perceptions of Physical Education (PE) teachers as an indicator, and (b) examine significant statistical differences that exist between the leadership skills that an effective principal must have and those demonstrated by actual principals, which helps determine the aspects of leadership that need improvement. **Approach:** In total, 223 PE teachers in primary and secondary education in the prefectures of Pieria and Imathia, Greece, during the 2017-2018 school year participated in this study. The perceptions of these PE teachers regarding the efficiency of school administration were measured through the questionnaire of Pashiardis and Orphanou (1999). **Results:** Results indicated that PE teachers considered all 54 statements of the questionnaire significant regarding the characteristics of an effective principal. Furthermore, this study showed that PE teachers are generally satisfied with the leadership skills demonstrated by their principals. However, evidence indicated discrepancies in the 54 statements of the questionnaire between what is considered important by the PE teachers and what is ultimately demonstrated by the principals. PE teachers generally believe that when practicing their duties, principals do not meet their expected level of performance and say that the areas that need improving are: (a) human resource management, (b) the development of the school climate, and (c) the application of research findings concerning educational leadership. **Conclusions:** We could argue that, according to the PE teachers, most school principals in the Pieria and Imathia prefectures generally demonstrate a lack of effective leadership skills regarding the different areas of school leadership that need improving. This suggests a need for principals to improve competence through specific preparation.

Key Words: administration, leadership style, improvement, practices, student outcomes

Introduction

Across the globe, several studies have been conducted looking at the relationship between educational leadership and school performance factors, such as quality and efficiency (Leithwood & Rielh, 2003). Recent studies on educational leadership and management have resulted in the accumulation of increasingly convincing findings concerning the impact that educational leadership can have on school performance (Hallinger, 2018). Research also, indicates that school leadership is the cornerstone of an effective school (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2008; Pashiardis, 2004). Consequently, in recent years, school leadership issues have become increasingly debated and explored in an international and comparative context (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012).

Many international studies have focused on school effectiveness in terms of achieving organizational goals and improving academic performance (Pashiardis, 2004), showing strong indications that the dynamic relationship between leadership and school success is vitally important to school improvement (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Hauserman and Stick (2013) suggest that the role of the principal as a leader is the most important factor in school efficiency because they create and maintain school improvement. Heck and Hallinger (2014) claim that the school principal also has positive, indirect effects on academic achievements. Moreover, a recent survey indicated that School leadership indirectly enhances teaching and learning, by improving the status of significant key classroom and school conditions (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020). Furthermore, Doe, Fradale, Lynch, Mason, Quinn and Sell (2017) mentioned that the 'school leader' remains the most influential force in optimising schooling outcomes. According to international research findings, the two factors that mostly affect student outcomes are classroom teaching and educational leadership (Coelli & Green, 2012; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Urick & Bowers, 2011). Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2020) stated that School leadership has a significant effect on features of the school organization which positively influence the quality of teaching and learning. Gurley, May, O'Neal and Dozier (2016) suggest that the principal plays a critical role in establishing and maintaining a focus on learning within a school through his

or her continual and routine engagement in instructional leadership behaviours. Leithwood et. al. (2004) argues that educational leadership is second only to classroom teaching among all school-related factors. For the PE teachers, the leadership style and behaviour of the principal are the top factors that impact the effectiveness and quality of their health and exercise courses (Whipp & Sallin, 2018). Multiple approaches have been used to study the dimensions of educational leadership. Many international studies, for example, have investigated the characteristics and style of an effective school principal (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) while others have studied this role in relation to intra-school factors (Kythreotis, Pashiardis, & Kyriakides, 2010). Hallinger and Liu (2016), for instance, explore the effectiveness of a school principal by using teacher perceptions as indicators. There is strong evidence that specific leadership behaviours are more likely to be effective in promoting student learning (Bush, 2018). The debate over the most appropriate leadership model for principals has mostly been dominated by the instructional, transformational, participative and distributed leadership conceptual models. Numerous studies showed that the said leadership models all have their advocates, supported by some convincing empirical evidence and continue to be the most studied models of leadership (Bush, 2018; Gumus, Bellibas, Esen & E. Gumus, 2018). Hauserman and Stick (2013) state that teachers strongly preferred principal behaviours that are “*aligned with selected aspects of transformational leadership.*” However, Brauckmann and Pashiardis (2012) conclude that there is no best leadership style mix that can apply to all school leaders because “*school leadership is highly contextualized not only at the system level but also (and particularly) at the school level.*”

Moreover, evidence suggests that the managerial role is the catalyst that directly or indirectly impacts several variables at a school, including the classes taught there. In particular, the leadership style of the principal and his or her behaviour is indirectly related to the performance of students (Heck & Hallinger, 2014) through the principal’s effect on the school climate and how he or she relates to the teaching staff. Concerning the staff, this includes their professional satisfaction, working with the principal, how motivated they feel, and their organizational commitment. Numerous researchers have studied the perception of teachers concerning the role of the principal (Pashiardis & Orphanou, 1999; Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Hallinger & Liu, 2016; Hariri, Monypenny, & Prideaux, 2016). This is probably because, according to Pashiardis, Costa, Mendes, and Ventura (2005), the effectiveness of a leader depends on how others view him or her in that role, particularly in the undertaking of administrative duties. However, there are no studies that explore the perception of PE teachers on the personality and leadership style of their principal, even though they are faced with various challenges and problems that differ from their teaching colleagues who specialize in other subjects (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, Laakso, & Whipp, 2014; Whipp & Salin, 2018). This study aims to enrich the current literature by focusing on the perception of PE teachers towards school principals, identifying the administrative and educational skills that PE teachers believe principals must have in order to be effective. We will also highlight the leadership areas that PE teachers think need improving to create a more effective school environment.

The general evidence indicates that principals play a critical role in the school environment. With regard to PE teacher perceptions, our findings show that a gap exists between the leadership skills considered effective and those that are presently demonstrated by school principals. The results of this study are likely to determine the leadership skills and practices that effective principals should acquire. Therefore, the present study suggests the use of these results by those responsible for formulating educational policy in order for the principals to receive proper preparation and training to effectively perform their leadership duties. This study aims to (a) investigate the effectiveness of the school principal using, as an indicator, the perceptions of PE teachers, and to (b) determine the leadership areas where school principals need improvement.

Material & methods

Participants A total of 223 PE teachers in primary and secondary education during the 2017-2018 school year from the prefectures of Pieria and Imathia, Greece, participated in this study (see Table 1), which was approved by the Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education as well as from the Institute for Educational Policy of Greece. The prefectures we focused on are part of the Regional Directorate of Central Macedonia of Greece.

Table 1. The demographics of PE teachers.

Demographics	PE Teachers N (%)
Sex	
Male	128 (57.3%)
Female	95 (42.7%)
Age	
> 40 years old	208 (93%)
Experience	
< 10 years	15 (6.8%)
Years of service in the same school	
<= 4 years	107 (48%)
Grade	
Primary	130 (58.4%)
Area	
Urban	121 (54.5%)

Using a questionnaire derived from the research of Pashiardis and Orphanou (1999) as our data collection tool, we asked PE teachers to rate the characteristics of an effective principal. Their responses were then measured anonymously.

Procedure

The research for this study was conducted between October 2017 and January 2018. Cluster sampling was used to ensure the representation of every population segment, the existence of a sufficient number of subpopulation subjects, and the reduction of the estimation error. The questionnaire each PE teacher received was accompanied by a letter that explained the feasibility of the research and the expected benefits, as well as assurances (based on guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Education) of anonymity. Moreover, information regarding informed consent was provided to the participants. The possibility of interruptions during their participation was explained to the PE teachers, and an informative note was sent to every principal of the schools selected for this study. The note explained how the research would be conducted and detailed scheduled of visits to all schools (e.g., the days, visiting hours, and work time involving the target group). The questionnaire was delivered in two ways: (1) personally, by one of the study’s researchers, and (2) by electronic mail. The completion of the questionnaires was carried out in the teachers’ lounge of each school during a break or between teaching hours. They were required to respond to each statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

Research Method - Measurement Instrument

The questionnaire used to conduct this study came from the work of Pashiardis and Orphanou (1999). This specific perception-measuring instrument was considered highly dependable, with a reliability index of $\alpha=0.94$ (Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.94$). Moreover, it was initially translated into Greek, with the method of translation and back translation, by two experienced translators. Subsequently, a thorough study of the questions was carried out to ensure that they were in accord with the Greek educational system and fulfilled our research objectives. Before the questionnaire was sent to the participants, a pilot survey was conducted using a sample of 190 PE teachers. A total of 54 questions were eventually retained, divided into nine (9) leadership areas: (1) school climate, (2) school leadership and management, (3) curriculum development, (4) personnel management, (5) administration and fiscal/facilities management, (6) student management, (7) professional development and in-service training, (8) relations with parents and the community, and (9) problem-solving and decision-making.

Statistical analysis

For the statistical analysis of data, the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics v25 was used. Descriptive statistics included means, averages, standard deviations, frequencies, and t-tests. These measures were used not only to identify the leadership skills that PE teachers consider ideal and effective in a principal but also to determine the extent to which PE teachers value the leadership skills demonstrated by the principal at their respective schools. The questionnaire had two columns with the same Likert scale on one side of every listed item—54 statement in total. The first column asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they consider each statement significant in expressing the leadership skills of an effective principal. The second column allowed respondents to assess the degree to which these statements had been implemented by the principal at their respective schools. The method of "gap analysis" was used to identify the areas or dimensions that principals need to improve. The two means for each statement in the questionnaire were subtracted from each other; the greater the difference, the larger the gap, which indicated a greater need for improvement. Specifically, the average of "significance" is deducted from the average of "degree of implementation" of the same statement (see figure 1). The resulting difference represents the gap.

The paired, sample t-tests were used to accept or reject the null hypothesis (H0) that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean values of the "degree of significance" and of the "degree of implementation" of the dependent variables (questions of the questionnaire) (m significance = m implementation, $p<0.05$) in the perception of PE teachers. The statistical significance level was an alpha (α) level of $p<0.05$.

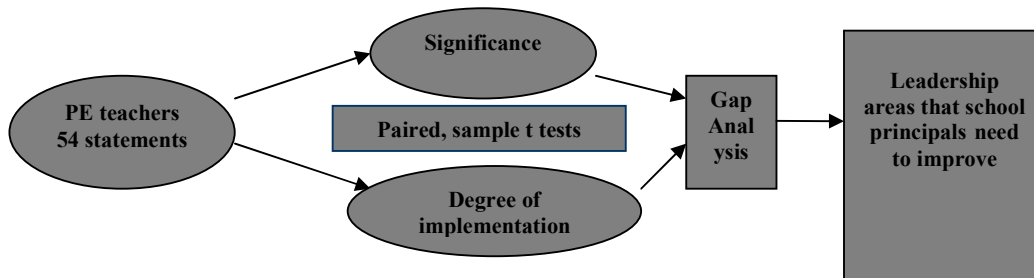


Figure 1. Statistical analysis.

Results

Examining the degree of significance regarding the leadership skills that an effective principal must have, according to PE teachers.

Our initial results indicated that PE teachers gave high ratings to all of the 54 statements that express the ideal principal, with high average values (see Table 1). Table 1 presents the ten (of the 54) most significant leadership skills an effective principal should have.

Table 1. The ten most significant leadership skills a principal should have, from the most significant to the least significant, according to PE teachers.

Administrative Skills		M	SD
1	His/her authority is presented through his/her knowledge and abilities instead of his/her position authority	4.65	0.65
2	Mediates and facilitates effective resolution of conflicts in a timely fashion	4.63	0.69
3	Ensures that school rules are uniformly observed and that consequences of misconduct are applied equitably to all students	4.62	0.64
4	Manages all school facilities effectively; efficiently supervises their maintenance to ensure clean, orderly, and safe buildings and grounds	4.62	0.66
5	Solves problems in a cooperative way with teachers	4.62	0.68
6	Gives teachers enough autonomy to organize their teaching program	4.61	0.64
7	With the staff's cooperation, creates a common vision for school improvement	4.61	0.7
8	Effectively develops and communicates to students, staff, and parents school guidelines for student conduct	4.6	0.65
9	Monitors the use, care, and replacement of capital equipment	4.59	0.71
10	Tries to listen to many views and ideas before solving important problems	4.57	0.71

Note: M = mean value, SD = standard deviation.

These findings indicate that PE teachers in Greece are in general agreement with the characteristics of an effective principal as described by the 54 statements of the questionnaire.

Examining the principals' perceived effectiveness, according to PE teachers.

The results suggest (see Table 2) that PE teachers are generally satisfied with the leadership skills demonstrated by their principals, particularly in the undertaking of daily duties. This is indicated by the high values recorded in all 54 questionnaire statements on the scale of actual implementation. Table 2 presents the ten leadership skills demonstrated by principals in the greatest degree.

Table 2. The ten leadership skills demonstrated by principals in the greatest degree, according to PE teachers.

Administrative Skills		M	SD
1	Gives teachers enough autonomy to organize their teaching program	3.99	1.06
2	Manages all school facilities effectively; efficiently supervises their maintenance to ensure clean, orderly, and safe buildings and grounds	3.99	1.09
3	Complies with educational policies, as well as laws and regulations, in pursuing the mission of the school	3.99	1.11
4	Makes sure that different reports to the Ministry of Education are accurate and are timely submitted	3.98	1.08
5	Ensures that school rules are uniformly observed and that consequences of misconduct are applied equitably to all students	3.92	1.09
6	Effectively develops and communicates to students, staff, and parents school guidelines for student conduct	3.88	1.09
7	Displays respect for other people's time by being punctual to district and committee meetings; responds to time limits for breaks and gives attention to proceedings	3.85	1.08
8	Monitors the use, care, and replacement of capital equipment	3.84	1.14
9	Is effective in scheduling activities and the use of resources needed to accomplish determined goals	3.83	1.05
10	Protects learning time and teachers from outside and unnecessary interruptions	3.77	1.1

Note: M = mean value, SD = standard deviation.

The paired, sample t tests for the comparison between the two columns of the questionnaire showed that all questions have statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that there is a substantial difference between the PE teachers' perceptions about the characteristics that the ideal principal must have and the managerial behavior they have witnessed. Even though PE teachers gave the ideal leadership skills high values (indicated by high averages, 3.56 to 4.65, in all the questions regarding the ideal situation), the information they provided suggests that these ideal skills are not actually implemented in the school setting (indicated by lower averages, 2.44 to 3.99, in all questions involving the PE teachers' assessments). This was shown by testing the null hypothesis in the investigation of the statistically significant differences between the mean values on the two axes.

In summary, our findings show that a discrepancy does indeed exist between the degree of ideal leadership skills principals hold and whether these skills are actually implemented by the principals, according to the PE teachers surveyed. We also highlight the managerial behaviors that offer the least satisfaction to these PE

teachers (the greater the difference in average values between the two axes, the less satisfaction) and the behaviors that need improvement for the principals to be considered effective.

Moreover, in all the statements of the questionnaire, discrepancies were observed between what is considered the ideal principal by the PE teachers and what is ultimately demonstrated by principals in a real-world setting (see Figure 2). Responses to the 54 questionnaire statements are presented in Figure 2. The top line indicates the degree to which PE teachers regard the specific statement as important to being an effective principal, whereas the lower line indicates the degree to which PE teachers perceive these skills demonstrated by principals in the actual school setting. The greater the gap between significance and implementation, the bigger the need for improvement.

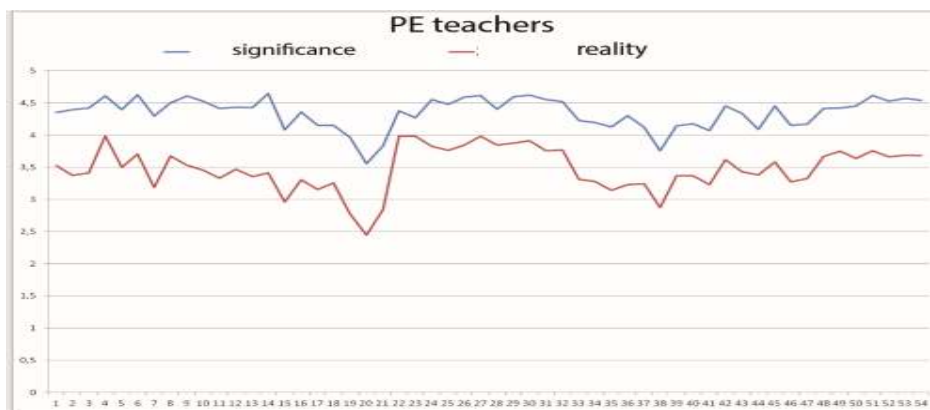


Figure 2. Differences between leadership skills that are considered important by PE teachers and those that are applied by school principals in an actual school setting.

The ten statements with the greatest difference between the two columns of the questionnaire are presented in Table 3. We should note that, according to the PE teachers who took part in this study, principals in actual school settings generally demonstrate a lack of effectiveness and leadership in these specific areas, which they should work to improve.

Table 3. The ten leadership skills with the greatest difference between the degree of significance and the degree of actual implementation.

Statement-Leadership Skill	<i>M</i> “signif.”	<i>M</i> “implem.”	<i>M</i> Difference	<i>t</i> -value and Significance
1. His/her authority is presented through his/her knowledge and abilities instead of his/her position authority	4.65	3.41	1.24	<i>t</i> (219) = 14.114, <i>p</i> < .001
2. Confers with subordinates regarding their professional growth; works jointly with them to develop and accomplish improvement goals	3.96	2.78	1.18	<i>t</i> (218) = 13.319, <i>p</i> < .001
3. Identifies, analyzes, and applies research findings (e.g., effective school research correlates) to facilitate school improvement	4.09	2.96	1.13	<i>t</i> (218) = 12.433, <i>p</i> < .001
4. Uses a specific teacher observation instrument and ensures that evaluations clearly and accurately represent staff performance	3.56	2.44	1.12	<i>t</i> (217) = 12.705, <i>p</i> < .001
5. Promotes open communication and flexibility in relations with the staff as opposed to strict adherence to bureaucratic hierarchy	4.30	3.19	1.11	<i>t</i> (218) = 13.400, <i>p</i> < .001
6. Presents his/her vision for the school to all educators in the school	4.42	3.33	1.09	<i>t</i> (219) = 12.794, <i>p</i> < .001
7. With the staff's cooperation creates a common vision for school improvement	4.61	3.53	1.08	<i>t</i> (219) = 13.884, <i>p</i> < .001
8. Encourages and is a good example of lifelong learning, using new ideas as well as successes and failures as examples	4.30	3.23	1.07	<i>t</i> (217) = 13.200, <i>p</i> < .001
9. Encourages staff to be actively involved in the planning and implementation of the overall vision	4.53	3.46	1.07	<i>t</i> (219) = 13.675, <i>p</i> < .001
10. Supports a culture where experiments and innovations are encouraged	4.43	3.36	1.07	<i>t</i> (219) = 12.792, <i>p</i> < .001

Note: *M* = mean value.

Discussion

The present study builds on a previous study aiming to identify the main leadership functions that school principals must improve in order to contribute to school organization and to the job satisfaction of PE teachers. Specifically, in our previous studies we revealed the critical role of school principals based on the perceptions of PE teachers and we showed a disagreement over the views of school Principals and PE teachers regarding the administrative competence of Greek Principals (Deligiannidou, Athanailidis, Laios, & Stafyla, 2019a; 2019b).

In this study, our findings show a discrepancy between the degree of ideal leadership skills principals hold and whether these skills are actually implemented by the principals, according to the PE teachers surveyed. We also highlight the managerial behaviors that offer the least satisfaction to these PE teachers and the behaviors that need to be improved for the principals to be considered effective. Moreover, this study examined the effectiveness of school principals utilizing the perceptions of PE teachers as an indicator. Numerous researchers have studied teachers' perceptions on the role of principals; however, the perception of PE teachers regarding the personality and leadership style of their principal has not yet been examined.

By having the PE teachers who took part in our study rank effective leadership skills in terms of their significance, we were able to see that this particular group of teachers considered all of the questionnaire's leadership statements highly significant, with a general average of 4.29 (scale 1-5). This proves the validity of these characteristics of the effective principal-leader (as described in the questionnaire). This is consistent with the findings of Bauckman and Pashiardis (2012), who adopted a similar plan in their research to explore the training needs of principals in the commonwealth states. Moreover, the ten most significant leadership skills, according to the PE teachers, express the characteristics of transformational leadership. This finding is in agreement with previous research by Hauserman and Stick (2013), who suggest that teachers strongly prefer transformational leadership.

This study also found that PE teachers are generally satisfied with the leadership skills demonstrated by their principals in the performance of daily duties. This fact results from the high values recorded in all 54 questionnaire statements on the scale of actual implementation, with an overall mean of 3.48 (scale 1-5). The above finding is in line with our previous research where we also provided evidence that PE teachers are, in general, satisfied with their Principals in terms of school administration and in terms of each of the factors displaying main leadership functions of efficient leadership (Deligiannidou, Athanailidis, Laios, & Stafyla, 2019b). However, this overall mean is significantly smaller than the scale of significance and indicates that a gap exists between the leadership skills PE teachers consider significant and the degree to which they see them demonstrated by school principals daily.

Although assessed as very significant, leadership skills in the area of problem-solving and decision-making are not actually demonstrated by principals to the same extent, according to the statements of PE teachers (see Table 1 and Table 2). This finding suggests that PE teachers may believe that the principals they work have not considered the benefits of implementing participatory processes in problem-solving and decision-making—that they instead have adopted an authoritarian way of administration where the principal makes decisions. It has been found that this practice typically leads to a counterproductive and inefficient school (Meyers, Meyers, & Gelzheiser, 2001). However, other studies have found that the participatory process of problem-solving and decision-making binds teachers and encourages them to make every effort towards the implementation of organizational goals (Kastanidou & Tsikaderi, 2015; Antonio, 2008; Athanasoula-Reppa, 2008). At the same time, one of the ways the principal impacts the organizational effectiveness and development of the school is by providing decision-making opportunities for the staff (Theofilides & Stylianides, 2002). The above process is crucial to PE teachers because it helps foster the self-confidence needed to earn the respect of the administration and their colleagues, as they generally feel isolated and marginalized in the school community (Richards, 2015).

This study proved that PE teachers generally consider a principal's skills and abilities on issues such as facilities, infrastructure, and equipment care significant. It also observed that PE teachers viewed the leadership skills being implemented with regard to school administration and fiscal/facilities management as adequate. This may be due to a relatively centralized and bureaucratic Greek education system that requires control and accountability for financial and organizational issues. It may also stem from the economic crisis in the country that requires proper management of limited financial resources. Research findings are in line with the above findings (Pashiardis & Orphanou, 1999; Pashiardis, 1995, 2001; Pashiardis et. al., 2005).

The existence of statistically significant differences between the average values of "the degree of significance" and "the implementation in the reality" in all of the 54 statements in the questionnaire leads to the conclusion that the principals, in the performance of their duties, are not so effective as to meet the expectations of the PE teachers. Furthermore, it showcases a deficit of management skills as well as a need for improvement in the Greek principals' managerial capacity. This is consistent with the findings of Hallinger and Ko (2015) who claimed that the teachers consider their principal's leadership relatively weak.

The ten statements with the largest deviation between the two measurement scales were identified by this study. This deviation indicates a lack of efficiency in specific leadership skills, as it has been shown that the expectations of the PE teachers are not met. Moreover, discrepancies existed between what is considered ideal

by the PE teachers and what is ultimately applied by the principals. According to the perceptions of PE teachers, the leadership skill with the greatest difference between the two scales of the questionnaire (significance-actual implementation) was the principal's ability to display their power through their knowledge and not through their position of authority.

Furthermore, PE teachers generally believe that principals do not meet their expected level of performance while at work and claim that the areas in most need of improvement are: (a) human resource management, (b) development of the school climate, and (c) the application of educational leadership skills based on research findings. These findings are consistent with the results of other researchers (Bauckman & Pashiardis, 2012; Lazaridou & Iordanides, 2011; Pashiardis et al., 2005). Similarly, evidence from our previous research indicated a lack of administrative competence in "human resource management" resulting from examining the perceptions of PE teachers in conjunction with their principals' perception of the skills an effective principal must have (Deligiannidou, Athanailidis, Laios, & Stafyla, 2019 b). Additionally, research indicated that male PE teachers displayed higher satisfaction regarding the principal's skills in human resource management (Deligiannidou et al., 2019a). Finally, Alatzoglou, Athanailidis, Laios and Zaggelidis (2014) stated that teachers' perceptions regarding the Principals' efficacy and their efficient administration vary based on the experience and the age of teachers. It is therefore evident that this demanding work requires a wide range of skills as well as intentional and consistent training to obtain a job as a school principal.

It should be stressed that, in broad terms, the PE teachers' perception regarding the degree of significance of each questionnaire statement (which expressed the effective school leadership) recorded higher values than the values of the "actual implementation" scale (leadership skills demonstrated by the principal's administrative performance). Also, in broad terms, a deviation between what PE teachers believe is ideal for being an effective principal and what is actually happening does indeed exist. In their statements, PE teachers state that principals do not respond to their jobs based on expectations. These findings are in line with the results of other relevant studies that indicate a lack of efficiency in the administrative role of principal, which is greater in the teachers' perceptions (Theofilides & Stylianides, 2002; Kyriakidis, 1997). Evidence indicates that while PE teachers prefer a transformational style of leadership, their principals typically adhere to a more bureaucratic style.

This study presents some limitations and it is, therefore, difficult to generalize its results. The biggest limitation is that, while there are several studies exploring teachers' perceptions of their principals, there are no similar studies focused on the perception of PE teachers. Because of this, our findings cannot be compared with other studies. Another limitation is that the findings of this study can not be generalized to all PE teachers because the PE teachers in our sample are geographically limited to the prefectures of Imathia and Pieria, and these findings cannot be generalized for the whole country. Our study did not take into account the views and perceptions of all the participants in the educational process (e.g., students and parents) regarding the principal's administrative style, as well as the views and perceptions of senior administrators (e.g., consultants or directors in the field of education). The study showcased the views and perceptions of teachers at a specific time when data was collected. The findings highlight the specific skills that principals need to improve to be considered effective and provide professional satisfaction to teachers in the view of the PE teachers surveyed. Finally, it should be mentioned that this study would be more complete if it had looked at additional aspects of effective school leadership exercised by principals, as well as have included the views of students and parents regarding effective school leadership. Future studies should explore the perception of teaching staff and senior administrators (e.g., teachers, directors, educational consultants on physical education) with regard to the effectiveness and quality of leadership in Greek schools.

Practical Applications

There is growing evidence that holding a school principal position is a specialized and demanding occupation that requires special training. There is also strong evidence that systematic preparation, rather than inadvertent experience, is more likely to create effective leaders (Bush, 2018). However, in many countries, including Greece, leadership training is neglected and teachers can become principals without specialized training. They begin their career as teachers and are promoted to a managerial position through a series of moderate and senior leadership and management roles (Bush, 2018). Therefore, they lack the skills and knowledge on the administrative field and practices as well as dealing with the human factor (Saitis & Gournaropoylos, 2001). Moreover, they are not well-equipped, nor do they receive any training regarding the tools and the assessment methods prior to the undertaking of the managerial position.

Taking into account the results of this study and, specifically, the finding that Greek PE teachers require principals with a deep knowledge of organization and management skills in order to be effective, we suggest the following:

Improving and upgrading the selection method of principals focusing on their essential qualifications and their good knowledge on organization and administration and not on their years of service. Specifically,

qualifications such as additional studies and diplomas, Master's degrees or even PhDs must be highly appreciated and not underestimated (Pashiardis & Orphanou, 1999).

According to Pashiardis and Orphanou (1999), a one-year (academic or training) program prior to accepting promotion to an administrative position will equip principals with sufficient strategies and an academic background.

Improving the principals' leadership skills and practices by designing useful training program for future principals specializing in the organization and administration of education developed by the Ministry of Education.

Although our findings are in line with other studies, making generalizations regarding all school units within Greece must be more carefully examined and different tools must be used. Thereby, future studies could use a mixed qualitative and quantitative model that is likely to better outline the profile of an effective school principal in relation to the expectations of PE teachers. Interviews with PE teachers and principals as well as designing case studies would assist in a deeper understanding and examination of the different aspects of educational leadership. Furthermore, a longitudinal model in which the researcher uses data from teachers and students or an experimental intervention would shed light on the profile analysis of an effective principal able to provide job satisfaction to PE teachers.

The said specialization in PE concerns teaching a subject with special aims and different structure and organization compared to the other subjects in the school curriculum. Within this framework, PE teachers are faced with challenges and problems that require special treatment and contribution of the principal of the school unit in order to be overcome. Specifically, the school principal can play an important role by creating a positive supportive environment and encouraging the status of PE teachers in the school (Whipp & Sallin, 2018), which will enhance their self-perception and self-confidence that are wrecked by their marginalization in the workplace.

Through this attitude and behavior, the school leaders contribute to reducing the stress of PE professionals, enhancing trust within the school organization and gaining satisfaction from their job. The final recipient of their positive professional behavior is the student and the student outcomes (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2011). Furthermore, our findings require further replication with a larger sample of school units in Greece. Finally, it is recommended that the state invests in resources aiming to develop and improve future principals following intentional and intensive preparation on organizational and administrative issues.

Conclusions

PE teachers are generally satisfied with the management and leadership style of their principals. However, they state that there are leadership skills that principals need to improve to effectively perform their jobs. The statistically significant differences between the two scales (significance-implementation) show a deficit in the efficiency as well as a need for improvement in the Greek principals' managerial capacity in the broader leadership areas, (a) human resource management, (b) development of the school climate, and (c) the application of educational leadership skills based on research findings.

The evidence suggests that there is an urgent need for proper training and preparation of future principals in organizational and administrative issues. The responsibility to invest in resources for the proper preparation and training of future principals as well as to determine a set of specific qualities for successful and efficient school leaders lies with policymakers and decision-makers.

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