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Assessment of Emotional Competencies in Educational Leaders: Applying Daniel Goleman's Work in Emotional Intelligences as a Means of Evaluating Dispositions Related to the Work of the School Leader

Paul T. Hackett and James W. Hortman

The study of best practices related to educational leadership is an emerging area for universities with programs training leaders in school improvement. Practices taught in educational leadership programs have long been related to the technical issues of school operations with emphasis in the areas of finance, law, organizational theory, and strategic planning. More recently, educational leadership programs have begun to focus on the skills required of a leader of instruction (Hallinger, 2003; Jason, 2001). Among areas of concentration for the instructional leader are assessment, collaboration, professional development, and curriculum design.

Although the focus of educational leadership programs has changed, the resulting levels of student achievement in the public schools in reading and mathematics have been reported as lukewarm with younger students improving since 1971, but seventeen-year-olds showing no improvement (Perie & Moran, 2004). Moreover, these student achievement results have been perceived by the public as less than desirable. According to survey results released by the Educational Testing Service in June of 2004, only 22% of adults surveyed gave American schools a grade of B or above (Parents Take Schools, 2004).

Although it is true that fifteen years of emphasis on the concept of school leader as instructional leader have not yielded the expected results nationwide, there are schools in which reform models centered on instruction have been successfully implemented. In these schools, "principals contribute to school effectiveness indirectly through actions they take to influence what happens in the school and in classrooms" (Hallinger, 2003, p. 333). The work of the leader is to influence the actions of others as they engage in

assessment, collaboration, professional learning, and curriculum design.

The standards that presently guide university educational leadership programs in the preparation of instructional leaders are often based on those developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and accepted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). These standards are based on best leadership practices originally identified and adopted by the consortium (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Associated with these standards in the ISLLC work were leadership dispositions. Dispositions were identified as leader beliefs and values that informed their interactions with colleagues. As defined by Perkins (1995), dispositions are proclivities that move us in one direction rather than another. Dispositions were given a central role in the ISLLC Standards along with knowledge and skills (performances). Without dispositions to drive the work, asserted the consortium in its document, technical expertise would amount to very little. At the same time, the consortium expressed reservations regarding the difficulty of assessing the dispositions included in the standards.

In 2004, faculty in the Columbus State University Educational Leadership Program developed an assessment instrument for educational leaders that incorporated the ISLLC dispositions. Educational leadership faculty developed this instrument based on the assumption that it was the intention of ISLLC to assess dispositions and then develop learning modules that would improve the dispositions of candidates and the educational leadership program itself. After piloting this assessment with candidates in the educational leadership program, faculty found the instrument to

be woefully inadequate in assessing the dispositions of candidates. The leadership dispositions as articulated by ISLLC proved difficult to assess quantitatively, making evaluation and professional development based on that evaluation problematic, a fact that rendered the disposition model difficult to implement as a teaching tool.

The work of Goleman (1998) in the area of emotional intelligence offers promise for the assessment and evaluation of leader behaviors not related to a technical skill set such as those related to finance, data analysis, curriculum alignment, law, or strategic planning. Goleman's work in the corporate sector shows significant correlation between a set of competencies he identifies as emotional competencies and the performance of leaders in terms of corporate performance measures such as return on investment, profit, and performance in the stock market.

According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence is defined as awareness of emotion and using emotions to make good decisions in life. Using emotions effectively requires the ability to manage distressing moods, control impulses, attain a high level of motivation, and remain hopeful and optimistic in the face of reversal. Emotional intelligence involves empathy, managing emotions in relationships, and persuading others (O'Neil, 1996). Basing his assertions on empirical data, Goleman states that the competencies associated with emotional intelligence are more important in effective job performance than cognitive ability and expertise (1998; Salopek, 1998). The higher one rises in an organization, the more important emotional competencies become, making them crucial to the success of a leader.

In the Goleman model, there are twenty-one emotional competencies divided among four dimensions: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). This model provides a framework for the assessment of these competencies in the workplace by an individual who completes a self-assessment and by co-workers and/or subordinates who complete assessments of the emotional competencies of the individual. The

results of these assessments may then be compared with the results of assessments of leadership style and job performance.

Despite the fact that empirical data exist that establish a correlation between emotional competence and job performance in the corporate sector, very little work has been done to ascertain whether such a correlation exists between emotional competencies and job performance indicators in the field of education, particularly in regard to educational leadership. In the business world, the assessment of emotional competencies and the resulting development of professional learning experiences have been used to improve emotional competence. As yet, this approach has not been widely applied in education, despite the fact that those familiar with work in this area assert that emotional competence can be improved (Goleman, 1998).

Many of the emotional competencies articulated in the Goleman work align closely with the dispositions included in the ISLLC Standards. Goleman's belief that emotional intelligence involves using emotions to make good decisions in life parallels the ISLLC view that dispositions involve proclivities that move us in one direction rather than another. The fact that the emotional competency construct embodies many of the same non-technical leader behaviors as the ISLLC disposition model, along with the fact that it has a proven correlation with effective leader behaviors, albeit in non-educational settings, makes it an intriguing subject for study by researchers in the field of education. The advantage regarding the assessment of emotional competencies related to successful leadership is that instruments associated with emotional competence yield quantitative data that can be correlated to other job performance indicators.

Researchers in the Columbus State University Educational Leadership Program propose initiating a project that will examine the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between emotional competence and leadership style among professionals serving in the area of educational leadership?

2. What is the nature of the relationship among emotional competence, leadership style, and job performance among professionals serving in the area of educational leadership?

In order to investigate these two questions, researchers have designed a study to be conducted with a partner school district. The purpose of the proposed study will be to examine the correlations that exist among the four dimensions of emotional intelligence as defined by Goleman et al. (2002) and measured by the Emotional Competency Index (ECI), the six factors of leadership as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and leadership effectiveness as measured by a survey of teacher and school administrator perceptions. Learning more about these interrelationships could have important implications for the professional development of current and future school leaders. Specifically, this study could contribute to a better understanding of how leadership dispositions (as defined by emotional intelligence and leadership style) relate to the effectiveness of a school leader.

Specifically, all assistant principals (approximately 45) at the elementary, middle, and high school levels within a local school district will participate in the study. Demographic information collected will include gender, years experience, years in a leadership position, educational preparation, and level of current school assignment. Data analyses will yield descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation analyses, multivariate correlation analyses, and multivariate discriminant analyses. These data will reveal any relationships within and among the different dimensions of emotional intelligence, leadership style, and leadership effectiveness. Such relationships could have implications for improving the training and performance of educational leaders.

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