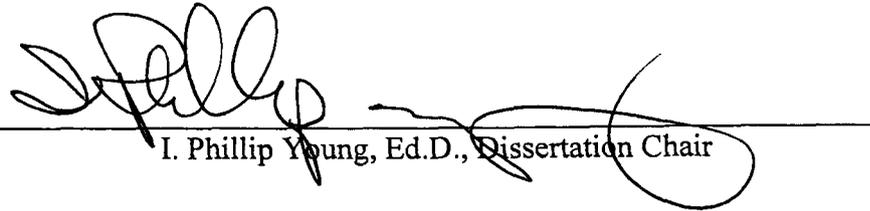


Effects of Student Achievement on the Job Satisfaction of Public
Elementary School Principals

ABSTRACT



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Principals' leadership practice has been identified as integral to successful school outcomes (Fullan, 2001; Fullan 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Rammer, 2007; Reeves, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2006). The intersection of leadership expectations and the current iteration of high-stakes, test-based accountability situates principals in a wholly unique space, ultimately responsible for materializing the student outcomes called for by external mandates but without overtaxing the capacity, faith, and loyalty of their staffs and immediate school communities. As occupying a position of singular responsibility in a time of amplified accountability is not a costless exercise, as evidenced by cases of principal removals for failure to meet student achievement targets (McGhee & Nelson, 2005), research demands a closer look at the price of student achievement on principals' job attitudes.

The present study contributes to the small but growing body of research on principals and job satisfaction. More specifically, it focuses squarely on the relationship between public elementary school principals' perceptions of job satisfaction and student achievement within the reform state of California. Hierarchical regression analysis was

performed on data from a statewide sample of principals (n=261) to explore the relationship between student achievement (School Academic Performance Index or API) and principals' job satisfaction (scores on the Job Descriptive Index's (JDI) Sub Scale "Work on Present Job") when controlling for organizational variables (Model 1= building enrollment and per pupil expenditures) and for human capital endowments (Model 2= level of education, years as teacher, and years as principal).

Results indicated that the covariates building enrollment, per pupil expenditure, education level, experience as teacher, and experience as principal—individually and as part of their respective models—failed to emerge as significant predictors of the criterion variable job satisfaction. The main predictor variable student achievement (School API) when entered last into the regression equation failed to emerge as a significant predictor of the criterion job satisfaction. As none of the three models (Model 1= per pupil expenditure and building enrollment; Model 2= years as teacher, years as principal, and education level; Model 3= School API) emerged as significant predictors of principals' job satisfaction, a fail to reject decision was reached regarding the null hypothesis which states that there will fail to be a relationship between student achievement and principals' job satisfaction when controlling for organizational characteristics and personal capital endowments.

Design limitations were introduced as possible explanations for the results. Future recommendations included exploring job satisfaction as it relates to change over time and a reconsideration of instrumentation to better capture appraisals of job satisfaction as a function of changing work demands and contexts in a culture of high-stakes accountability.