

# **Invitational Leadership: Teacher Perceptions of Inviting Principal Practices**

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*The quality of adult relationships within a school has more to do with the quality and character of the school and with the accomplishments of students than any other factor. (Barth, 1990, p.163)*

This study focused on invitational practices of principals and the correlation between a principal's inviting behaviors and teachers' perceptions. It was hypothesized that there was a positive correlation between a principal's actions and teacher affective outcomes such as feelings of trust, respect, job satisfaction, and perceived principal effectiveness. The principal-teacher relationship was studied in an effort to elucidate the importance of positive human interaction in educational settings.

A thorough review of the literature on the subject of Invitational Education from 1970 through 1991 revealed that little had been written on the application of Invitational Theory to administrative practices. Although Purkey and Warters (1986), Common (1983, 1984, 1985), Chambers (1983), and Cogar (1987) addressed the subject and offered suggestions for the application of Invitational Theory to the administration of schools, Invitational Leadership was not a primary focus of the founders and followers of Invitational Education.

Dr. William Purkey introduced the concept of Invitational Education in the early 1970s and the theory was more fully described in the first edition of the book *Inviting School Success* (Purkey and Novak) in 1978. Invitational Education is a theory of practice that is a viable process for improving schools. Numerous books, articles, and dissertations have been written that have expanded and explained Invitational Theory.

In 1991, the term “Invitational Leadership” was coined by the Alliance for Invitational Education, and an international conference was held with the same theme. Invitational Leadership is a form of leadership based on the theory of Invitational Education that is designed to intentionally create collaborative, cooperative school cultures with a focus on human relationships and human growth and development.

After 1991, numerous articles and chapters appeared on the topic of Invitational Leadership (Novak, 1992; Paxton, 1992; Strahan & Purkey, 1992; Purkey, 1992; Fink, 1992). However, little empirical research was conducted to specifically assess the effects of Invitational Leadership in schools. Effective schools research had shown that a principal can have more of an impact on school change than any other one factor (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979a; Kelly, 1981; Lezotte et al, 1980; Sergiovanni, 1987). There existed a need to study the impact of principals and their use of invitational practices.

The application of Invitational Education theory to leadership is consistent with much that has recently been written throughout leadership literature in both business and education. This provided further reason for pursuing a study of this nature.

Current trends in leadership literature reflect a paradigm shift from old bureaucratic managerial styles that are power-based with top-down control to a different leadership style that respects human dignity and promotes collaboration in the decision-making process. Invitational Leadership is consistent with this current trend toward a less hierarchical, more collaborative management style. Although Invitational Leadership has much in common with these leadership models, there are certain aspects that make this theory unique. This reason supported the rationale to study how the application of Invitational Education theory can enhance leadership practices of principals.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The major problem was the paucity of information in the literature related to the application of Invitational Theory to leadership, and little empirical research on the use of inviting practices by building principals. This study tested some basic assumptions of Invitational Theory as applied to the elementary principalship. There was a need for empirical data to establish the validity of this theory.

### **Purpose of the Study**

According to Purkey, Invitational Education is unlike any other model reported in professional literature because it provides an overarching framework and guiding theory for a variety of educational approaches that fit with its four basic assumptions of trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality (Purkey, 1992). Human interaction that promotes positive relationships and develops human potential is the underlying theme (Amos, 1985).

The application of this theory to the daily practice of principals can have a significant impact on the school setting and on those who work and study there. Research indicates that the principal is in a position to powerfully impact the school setting in a positive or negative way each day (Austin, 1979; Mojkowski, 1991). Studies have shown that most of the principal's day is spent interacting with others (Sayles, 1979; Stogdill, 1974). Principals affect the education process through their actions, interactions, reactions, and inactions. If a constant intentional effort is made by those in leadership positions to follow the tenets of Invitational Education as they relate to others, it could be postulated that schools could become more responsive and productive places.

Although research had been conducted on the effects of inviting practices in classrooms and schools, a study was needed to specifically examine inviting practices by elementary principals based on teacher perceptions. The purpose of this study was to highlight the importance of personally and professionally inviting principal practices in the elemen-

tary school. The following questions, related to inviting practices by principals were answered:

1. Is there a positive relationship between professionally inviting principal practices and teacher job satisfaction?
2. Is there a positive relationship between personally inviting principal practices and teacher job satisfaction?
3. Is there a positive relationship between the principal's Invitational Quotient (I.Q.) (Purkey, 1982) and teacher perceptions of principal effectiveness?
4. Is there a correlation between the principal's Invitational Quotient (I.Q.) and teacher perceptions of the principal as an agent of transformation in their school?
5. Is there a significant difference between the Invitational Quotients (I.Q.s) of male and female principals as perceived by teachers?
6. Is there a significant difference between the Invitational Quotients (I.Q.s) of principals of schools that have been selected for the Inviting School Honor Roll and principals of schools not involved in the Invitational Education process?

## **Methodology**

This section will describe the methodology that guided the study. It will outline details about the study that include instrument development, the research design, and the analyses for each research hypothesis.

Instrument. For the purpose of this study, a leadership survey was developed by the researcher and validated with input from a panel of experts. This Likert-type instrument was derived from a review of leadership literature and Invitational Education theory. The questionnaire was an adaptation of the Invitational Teaching Survey (ITS) developed by Amos, Purkey, and Tobias (1985). Items from the ITS were modified and additional items were added to reflect an assessment of an elementary school principal's Invitational Quotient (I.Q.).

The survey is a 45-item scale designed to assess teacher perceptions of personal and professional practices of elementary principals. Although this instrument was designed to be “The Invitational Leadership Survey” and was used to calculate the Invitational Quotient (I.Q.) of educational leaders, it was simply called, Leadership Survey” for the purpose of this study. This was done in order to eliminate bias that might have surfaced when surveying teachers from schools familiar with Invitational Education.

After the assessment was completed, Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. This coefficient gave an estimate of the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Items 1-37 on the survey, which were used to determine the I.Q. score, were found to have a .97 level of reliability, indicating a high degree of internal consistency for this instrument.

## **Research Design**

To achieve the stated purposes, data were collected from two groups of respondents concerning their perceptions of their principal. Teachers from two groups of schools were invited to participate in the study. Group A teachers were selected from schools that had been chosen by the Alliance for Invitational Education as exemplars of inviting schools. Elementary schools were selected from the Inviting School Honor Roll list. This award, which is given by the Alliance for Invitational Education, provides a mode of recognition to promote, propagate, and recognize inviting practices in schools throughout the world.

In order for a school to qualify for inclusion in Group A of this study, it was necessary for the current principal to have been serving as principal when the Inviting School honor was bestowed.

Group B teachers were chosen from schools that had not received the Inviting School distinction. School personnel directories from state departments of education and the U.S. Department of Education were used to randomly select matching schools in the same general vicinity as Group A schools.

Forty-six schools met the criteria for inclusion, and therefore, forty-six matching schools were also selected, making a total of 92 schools being surveyed. Three randomly selected teachers from each building were asked to complete a survey.

In order to obtain a high survey return rate, the researcher utilized the Total Design Method (TDM) for survey research. This method, created by Dillman (1978) provided a step-by-step process for conducting the study.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of the two hundred seventy-six (276) questionnaires were returned. After removing the surveys that did not meet the stated criteria, there were one hundred fifty three (153) usable surveys utilized for statistical analysis. Twenty-four (24) Inviting Schools and thirty-three (33) matching schools were included in the sample. There were 76 surveys indicating that a female principal was rated by the respondent and, coincidentally, the same number indicating that a male principal was rated. One survey did not indicate gender. A total of 16 states were represented in the results. Written comments, which provided additional information, were included on 86% of the surveys.

The statistical analyses of Hypotheses 1-4 were calculated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. This procedure was utilized to investigate the linear relationship between inviting principal practices and teacher affective outcomes and perceptions. The statistical analyses of Hypotheses 5-6 were calculated using a t-test for uncorrelated means. This procedure was utilized to determine if there were significant differences between the means of the Invitational Quotients (I.Q.s) of two different designated groups of elementary principals.

## **Results**

### **Research Hypothesis 1**

For the population of elementary principals, there is a positive correlation between professionally inviting principal practices and teacher job satisfaction. The correlation coefficient for Hypothesis 1 was .72 ( $p = .0001$ ), indicating a strong positive relationship and suggesting that as teachers rated principals higher on professionally inviting behaviors, they also rated themselves and others as more satisfied with their jobs and their principals.

### **Research Hypothesis 2**

For the population of elementary principals, there is a positive correlation between personally inviting principal practices and teacher job satisfaction. A correlation coefficient of .66 ( $p = .0001$ ), was found for Hypothesis 2, showing a high positive relationship, and indicating that as teachers ranked themselves higher on personally inviting behaviors, they also ranked themselves and others as more satisfied with their jobs and their principal.

### **Research Hypothesis 3**

For the population of elementary principals, there is a positive correlation between the principal's Invitational Quotient (I.Q.) and teacher perceptions of principal effectiveness. The analysis for Hypothesis 3 demonstrated that the total score of items 1-37, which gave the Invitational Quotient (I.Q.) score on the Leadership Survey, was highly correlated with the total score of teacher perceptions of principal effectiveness (Items 38-40). The correlation coefficient was .70 ( $p = .0001$ ) for I.Q. and the total effectiveness score. This was a strong positive correlation, suggesting that as teachers rated their principals higher on inviting behaviors, they also rated the principal as more effective.

### **Research Hypothesis 4**

For the population of elementary principals, there is a positive correlation between the principal's Invitational Quotient (I.Q.) and teacher perceptions of the principal as an agent of transforming the school. The

correlation analysis of Hypothesis 4 showed that the total of items 1-37, which reflected the Invitational Quotient, and item 41 that assessed teacher opinion of the principal as an agent in positively transforming the school indicated a strong positive relationship. The correlation coefficient was .72 ( $p = .0001$ ). This high correlation indicated that as teachers rated their principals higher on behaving in personally and professionally inviting ways, they also rated the principal as an agent of positive change in the school.

### **Research Hypothesis 5**

For the population of elementary principals, there is a significant difference between the Invitational Quotients (I.Q.s) of male and female principals as perceived by teachers. A t-test for uncorrelated means was used to determine if a significant difference existed between the Invitational Quotients (I.Q.s) of male and female principals. Depicted in Table 1, a statistically significant difference was not found between the two groups. For Hypothesis 5 the variances were found to be unequal ( $F = 1.79$ ,  $df = 75, 75$ ,  $p = .01$ ). Therefore, the t-test was used which was suggested by Cochran and Cox, using the degrees of freedom formula suggested by Satterwaite (Hinkel et al., 1988). The t-test resulted in a value of .76,  $df = 138, 8$ , and  $p = .45$ . Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that the null hypothesis was retained at the .05 level of significance. In this study, there was no significant difference between the average Invitational Quotients (I.Q.s) of male and female principals as perceived by teachers responding to the questionnaire.



**Table 1**  
Statistical Analysis of Hypothesis 5 :  
Invitational Quotients of Males vs. Females

Group	N	Mean	SD
Male	76	4.4	.52
Female	76	4.3	.69
Inferential Statistics			
t score	.76		
df	138,8		
p	.45		

### Research Hypothesis 6

It was projected that for the population of elementary principals, principals that have been selected for the Inviting School Honor Roll will have a higher Invitational Quotient (I.Q.) than principals of schools not selected. A t test for uncorrelated means was used to determine if a significant difference existed between the Invitational Quotients (I.Q.s) of principals in these two groups. The probability of .01 is less than the .05 alpha level, indicating that a statistically significant difference existed between the two groups of schools. The mean I.Q. for the Inviting Schools was higher than the mean I.Q. for the matching schools. (See Table 2). Principals of schools that had been selected for the Inviting School Honor Roll were rated higher by teachers on the Invitational Quotient than were principals of matching schools.

**Table 2**

Statistical Analysis of Hypothesis 6:  
Invitational Quotients of Inviting School Principals vs.  
Matching School Principals

Group	N	Mean	SD
Inviting	68	4.5	.45
Matching	85	4.2	.70
Inferential Statistics			
t score	2.63		
df	144,7		
p	.01*		

\*  $p < .05$

The empirical results of Hypothesis 1-6 indicated that the use of inviting practices by principals had a high correlation with teacher job satisfaction and teacher perception of principal effectiveness and teacher perception of the principal as an agent of transformation. No difference was found between the rating of male and female principals on inviting practices. Principals of Inviting Schools were found to have more inviting practices than those of matching schools. Written comments by teachers concerning the leadership behaviors and effectiveness of their principals supported the statistical findings on the survey.

## Summary

One objective of this study was to test some basic assumptions of Invitational Education as applied to the principal-teacher relationship in elementary schools. This study attempted to add to the knowledge base concerning the relationship between principals and teachers.

This was a study of teacher perceptions of principal practices. It was appropriate that teacher perceptions be used for this study of Invitational Education theory because this theory had its grounding in a foundation of perceptual psychology. The perceptual tradition is a belief that people

behave according to how they see themselves and the situation that they are in (Combs et al, 1978). There is an emphasis on understanding behavior as a product of the unique way that people view the world at the moment of behaving (Purkey, 1992). A study of teacher perceptions of principal practices was valuable because teacher perceptions of principals can have an effect on teacher thinking and behavior.

Invitational Education and Invitational Leadership are espoused by the Alliance for Invitational Education as a means for transforming classrooms and climates in schools. This research was undertaken to study that theory. This theory of practice is believed to be a process for improving schools.

Data from the study indicated that personally and professionally inviting behaviors of elementary principals were correlated with teacher satisfaction. The maintenance of high staff satisfaction and morale has long been an important objective for educators. Employee satisfaction is an attitudinal variable that reflects positive or negative feelings about particular persons or situation. High satisfaction on the part of school personnel is viewed as a desirable goal for school organizations.

The findings of this study illuminated the importance of the daily actions and interactions of the principal in relation to the teachers. Principals that behaved in a dependable inviting manner were more likely to have a satisfied staff.

The recommendation of the researcher, based on the results of this study is that the principles of Invitational Education be taught in leadership preparation programs and universities. The influence of the principal in the educational setting has been shown through the review of the literature and a difference has been found in schools where principals practice the theory of Invitational Leadership. If principals are taught the theory of Invitational Education and *intentionally* practice it in their personal and professional lives, schools can become the most inviting places in town for teachers, students, and all who enter them.

When principals consciously choose to behave in a dependably inviting manner, positive principal-teacher relationships will be created, teacher job satisfaction will increase, school climate will be enhanced, school effectiveness will be augmented, and total school settings will be positively transformed.

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