

A Study on Staffs' Emotional Geographies in an Elementary School: Focusing on the Principal

Summary

Introduction

With the frequent face-to-face interactions in school, the principal and school staffs must confront the challenges of dealing with intense emotional labor in areas of leadership and bureaucratic actions, teaching responsibilities, and parental demands. These challenges are becoming more intense than ever before. Therefore, the analysis of emotional geographies of school personnel is very important for the improvement of school climate and its innovation. In this study, we explored the emotional geographies of the principal and school staffs and provided suggestions that can be used to facilitate the morale within the school.

Method

Using the perspective of emotional geographies, this study explored the emotional distances and their relations between the principal and the staffs in “the Rising Sun Elementary School”. The participatory observations and interviews were adopted in this study. The researchers analyzed the interactive process among 12 members of the school on six critical events and focused on the principal as a center in the school. These school events included the arrangement of curriculum and distribution of class hours, the missing teaching materials, the outside school teaching activities, the setting up of “Reading Professional Community”, the forms of communicating channels, and the issue of students' class re-arrangement. We hoped these data could be used to analyze the categories of emotional distance among members of the school and their emotional relations in the school.

Results

1. The Event of the Arrangement of Curriculum and Distribution of Class Hours

- (1) Three types of personal distance among the principal and five members of school were formed due to the principal cared only about the teachers' needs on this event.
- (2) One member had an extremely far personal distance from principal due to the heavy work loaded in school that the principal assigned. And two members showed a middle-level political distance with the principal because the principal took the flexible actions on this event.

2. The Event of Missing Teaching Materials

- (1) The extremely far political and sociocultural distances were formed between one member and the principal when the principal adopted the actions of command and sarcasm on this event. Two members who had different opinions with the principal on the responsibility in the missing teaching materials created a far moral distance with the principal and was shown a close moral distance with the principal respectively.
- (2) There was an extremely far political distance between the principal and one member because of power oppression by the principal on this event. And it was also found the far and close moral distances among three members and the principal because they argued on the principles of safekeeping and on the rules of compensation in the teaching materials.

3. The Outside School Teaching Activities

- (1) Three members who were responsible for the curriculum design and insisted their own ground on it created two types of moral distances and one type of sociocultural distance with the principal.

- (2) One member developed the close moral and personal distances with the principal because they reached the consensus on students' learning and the principal took the coordinate and kind actions toward him.

4. The Setting Up of “Reading Professional Community”

- (1) Two members created far professional distances with the principal because of their disputes on the issue of professional autonomy in this community. And there was a far sociocultural distance between one member and the principal because the principal had a hard-to-communicate stereo-impression to her.
- (2) The extremely close professional distances were developed among two members and the principal because of the members' positive participations on the activities of Reading Professional Community and the principal's assistances toward it.

5. The Forms of Communicating Channels

- (1) The close personal distances were found among two members and the principal when the principal helped them at the right time and communicated with them in a humorous manner.
- (2) Two members who got the room for professional dialogues with the principal and the principal's assistances developed extremely close professional distances with the principal. Moreover, there was an extremely close physical distance when one member received feedbacks timely from the principal.

6. The Issue of Students' Class Re-arrangement

- (1) A far moral distance between one member and the principal was found because of their disagreements about the issues of justice and the questions of students' learning accommodation. And one member who

was respected by the principal showed a middle-level political distance with the principal.

- (2) The constant discussions among two members and the principal on this event and the unexpected rewarding results created the close moral distances among the principal and members. Besides, there were extremely far political distances by reasons of two members' uncompromised attitudes to the principal and resistance to the oppressive actions from the principal on this issue.

Conclusions and Suggestions

1. Conclusions

- (1) The major categories and their relations among the principal and school members were moral distances, personal distances, political distances, and professional distances, and the least shown relations were sociocultural and physical distances.
- (2) Between the principal and the staffs, the relations of moral and professional distances were developed easily on the teaching affairs. The administrative matters were easy to help creating the personal, moral, and political distances.
- (3) The close moral distances were shown between the principal and division directors; on the contrary, the principal and the teachers appeared to have relatively close professional and personal distances.
- (4) The main connotations of moral distance included the questions of distributive responsibility, building up the operative principles, keeping on the one's own stance, and developing mutual consensus through constant dialogues.
- (5) The influential factors of personal distance were taking care of members' needs, ignoring the workload, adopting the friendly actions, and demonstrating a sense of humor.
- (6) Flexible actions, careful power exercises, and respective teaching practice and attitude constituted the operative principles of political distance.

- (7) Valuing teachers' professional autonomy, the principal's assistances and members' participation, supplying a dialogue room could shorten the professional distances among the principal and school members.
- (8) The relations of the various emotional distances among the principal and school members in this school were shown a slightly interdependent nature.

2. Suggestions

- (1) Principals must recognize the reasons of causing emotional distances occurred in schools in order to lead the school effectively.
- (2) Principals can set up various communicative channels to develop the consensuses on administration and teaching in school.
- (3) Principals who care the individual teachers' needs can construct the close relations among members of the school.
- (4) Principals can emphasize the importance of the attitude of dialogues in order to take one step ahead to create a school culture of reciprocal trust.
- (5) Principals who provide the opportunities of collegiality can promote the teachers' professional development in school.
- (6) Principals can develop gradually the other types of close relations of emotion in school by way of communicating ideals, developing learning communities, and constructing positive relations.
- (7) We can develop a more comprehensive research picture on the issue of emotional relation of school by expanding the inquiries of time and space of emotional geographies in school.

參考文獻

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