

The Relationship between Principal's Years of Experience, Instructional Supervision Style, and Teachers' Perceptions of Collaboration during the Instructional Supervision Process
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Abstract: This study seeks to examine the relationship between principal's years of experience and teachers' perceptions of collaboration during the instructional supervision process. In addition, differences between supervision style, comprehensive and non comprehensive, and teachers' perceptions about collaboration are analyzed. A total of 97 surveys were returned from the respondents. We found that principals with comprehensive styles tend to use a more collaborative style. An independent sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether the teachers' perceptions of collaboration in instructional supervision differ between their principals instructional supervision style. Correlation results indicate there is an inverse relationship between some items that measure collaboration and the years the principal has been in the position.

Target Audience: School building leaders of the twenty first century looking to adopt a collaborative style of instructional supervision

Description of Presenters: Danielle DeLorenzo, Gloria Jackson, and Guirlene Louissaint are doctoral degree students at Dowling College, Oakdale, NY. Danielle DeLorenzo is an elementary principal in Long Island, New York. Gloria Jackson is a first grade teacher in Long Island, NY. Guirlene Louissaint is a special education teacher in New York City.

Purpose

Culturally diverse learning communities provide both challenges and opportunities for educators. Principals must create learning environments that promote strong collegial relationships that are

conducive to collaboration. Collaboration fosters groups of people who work together to create opportunities for the adaptations and learning of new practices while increasing the likelihood that individuals internalize new skills and ways of thinking (Levine & Marcus, 2007). This study seeks to examine the relationship between leadership experience and teachers' perceptions of collaboration during the instructional supervision process. The following questions were proposed for the study: How does principal's years of experience and supervision style, relate with teachers' perceptions of collaboration in the instructional supervision process? And is there a relationship between the principal's years of experience and the principal's instructional supervision style? In this study we divided leadership style into comprehensive and noncomprehensive. Kramer (2008) defined comprehensive as utilizing more than one of the following instructional supervision models: clinical supervision, development; supervision, peer coaching, professional portfolios, action research, and professional growth plans. Non comprehensive is defined as using one of the aforesaid instructional supervision models (Kramer, 2008). For the purpose of this study principalship is defined as, occupying the position of principal in a school. An experienced principal has five or more years of experience in his / her current position. An inexperienced principal has less than five years experience in his / her current position.

Theoretical Background

Kramer (2008) examined elementary teachers' perceptions of effective instructional supervision based upon purpose, collaboration, trust, feedback, continuity, reflective thinking, and instructional improvement. Recommendations from the study include the advocacy for administrators to engage in a comprehensive instructional supervision model. Kramer (2008) indicates that collaboration promotes instructional improvement and is a necessary component to implementing a comprehensive instructional supervision plan. There is little literature which explores the correlation between new principals, experienced principals, and teachers' perceptions regarding their willingness to collaborate. This study seeks to examine the relationship between leadership experience and teachers' perceptions of collaboration, during the instructional supervision process.

Teacher Learning and Professional Growth Plans: Implementation of a Provincial Policy examined the role of supervisory policy and practice in fostering collaborative learning communities in Canadian schools. Fenwick (2004) asserts that policy should reflect the vision of the district while honoring the mediated learning process of diverse professionals. Instructional supervision that supports learning must encompass the needs of the teacher as well as the polis' demand for accountability systems. Teacher professional growth plans attempt to meet the needs of both requisites. The professional growth plans enable pedagogues to establish goals, monitor progress, and encourage district commitment to future professional development initiatives (Fenwick, 2004). A qualitative study examined teachers' and administrators' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in the implementation of a policy which supported teacher professional growth plans (Fenwick, 2004). Fenwick used the Canfield School District as the primary focus of the study however a small sample of five other districts was used for district level perspective. The study was divided into two parts. The first part of the study examined three Canfield School District which had one year of experience with the implementation of teacher professional growth plans. The superintendent of Canfield School District selected one elementary school, one junior high school, and one high school that had a homogeneous staff and

learning community to participate in the first part of the study. Teachers were asked several questions regarding the implementation and effectiveness of comprising and implementing professional growth plans. Principals were asked about the outcome and value of teacher professional growth plans. The second part of the study focused on both teachers and administrators. Both teachers and administrators found that the professional growth models fostered learning; increased focus and accountability; and some increase in collaboration (Fenwick, 2004).

Zepeda (2004) examined how two newly appointed administrators' used a comprehensive instructional supervision model to promote the development of a learning community in an elementary school. Ms. Deci, the newly appointed principal at Plymouth Elementary School, replaced a principal who had been in the position for nine years. Mr. Jackson, assistant principal of Plymouth Elementary School, replaced an administrator who had been in the position for seven years. Both of the newly appointed administrators were concerned about teachers' feedback regarding the lack of district sponsored professional growth opportunities. Prior to Deci's and Jackson's arrival the staff had only participated in district level staff development. However, the processes inherent in supervision, staff development, and teacher evaluation were not connected and were unrelated to meeting objectives in the site-level school improvement plan or the five-year strategic plan (Zepeda, 2004). Deci and Jackson used the following methodology:

A case-study approach was used to generate detailed descriptions of how the principal used supervision as a "glue" to promote the development of a learning community. Data were collected during a two-year period through multiple methods: on-site observations, interviews with teachers and administrators, and artifact collection and analysis. The constant comparative method of analysis was used to enable concurrent collection and analysis of data. A coding and notation process was used to classify and further define and categorize concurrent themes in the data. Clarification of data was achieved through comparison of findings across data sets and follow-up discussions with a random sampling of participants (Zepeda, 2004).

The study found that the instructional supervision model utilized by the new administrator's transformed the building into a collaborative learning community. Since professional growth cannot be obtained without administrative support, the growth observed at Plymouth Elementary is largely attributed to the newly appointed administrators. The supervision that promoted the development of a community of learners at Plymouth Elementary School centered on changing leadership paradigms that lead to inquiry, generative problem solving, dialogue, and reflection (Zepeda, 2004). Deci and Jackson eliminated the clinical supervision model that was used by the more experienced administrators that they replaced. The data revealed that the principal's years of experience plays an integral role in using professional growth models to create learning communities. The collaborative approach used by the new administrators is solely responsible for this outcome.

Collaborative leadership is an integral component to comprehensive instructional leadership which positively impacts the teaching and learning process. Leadership for collaboration: An affective process examines the necessary skill set that leaders need to collaborate effectively. Slater found that collaborative leadership is linked to emotional intelligence. Although this style of leadership may not be consistent with the experience and training of most administrators (Haskin 1995), the success of collaborative reform efforts and the

improvement of student learning rely on the leader’s skilful implementation of the collaborative process (Slater, 2005).

Data Sources

A Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to randomly generate a list of elementary school within in Westchester County, New York by Kramer (2008). The principals of 41 schools were contacted by phone, and asked to distribute the surveys to their teachers. Four principals chose not to participate in the study. A total of 1200 surveys were sent to the 37 participating principals. The survey examined teachers’ perceptions of the model of instructional supervision implemented by their principal. Part I identified supervision styles. Part II determined teachers’ perceptions based upon collaboration. Demographic information was collected such as years the principal had been in position. A total of 97 surveys were returned from the respondents.

Method

Correlation tests between the numbers of years the principal has been in her/his current position and teachers’ perception of collaboration during the supervision process was performed. An independent sample t test was employed to evaluate whether the mean of the collaboration was significantly different from the principal’s supervision style (comprehensive vs. non comprehensive style).

Results

Table 1
Correlation Between Collaboration and Years of Principalship

1. My principal often speaks to me regarding my performance.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.113 .307
2. In my school, supervision involves more than just the principal's opinion.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.218 [*] .049
3. I am provided with opportunities to participate in the Supervision process.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.311 ^{**} .005
4. My principal encourages me to identify relationships Between my teaching strategies and outcomes.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.114 .311
5. My principal encourages me to work with colleagues during the supervision process.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.183 .101

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results indicated that there is no relationship between collaboration and the principal's years of experience ($r = -0.189$). A more detailed item analysis is shown in table one. The results of the correlation analysis presented in Table 1 show that there is a negative significant relationship between Item 2: In my school, supervision involves more than just the principal's opinion; and Item 3: I am provided with opportunities to participate in the supervision process. The results indicate there is an inverse relationship between collaboration and the number of years that the principal has been in the position.

Table 2
Collaboration: Comprehensive vs. Noncomprehensive Instructional Supervision Styles

Comprehensive & Noncomprehensive	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
Noncomprehensive	42	14.381	4.450			
Comprehensive	41	18.601	3.734	-4.69	79.22	.000

An independent sample t test was conducted to evaluate the differences between principal's supervision style (comprehensive and noncomprehensive) and teachers' perceptions about collaboration during the instructional supervision process. The test was significant, $t(81) = -4.69$, $p = .000$. Principals with comprehensive leadership styles tend to collaborate more ($M = 18.60$, $SD = 3.73$), than principals with noncomprehensive style ($M = 14.38$, $SD = 4.45$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means is 4.22.

Educational Importance of the Study

The results from this study some implications for experienced principals and their need to collaborate during the instructional supervision process. The two of the five items that measure collaboration indicates that experienced principals are less likely to involve more than just their opinion in the supervision process and provide opportunities for participation in the supervision process. These findings suggest that experienced principals need ongoing professional development which addresses the need for collaboration as an integral component of the instructional supervision process. Leadership training programs should provide increased professional development opportunities for principals who have held their positions for more than five years. In addition, principals need to maintain partnerships with teachers. Principals' values and leadership style should be compatible with teachers and stakeholders. Teachers and principals have to agree on the most effective supervision approach. Based upon the study, teachers perceived principals with comprehensive instructional supervision styles more collaborative than principals with noncomprehensive instructional supervision styles. Policy

makers should implement programs that integrate collaboration and comprehensive instructional leadership styles.

In the Fenwick study (2004), four administrators attributed the teacher professional growth models to increased collaboration. Three of the four administrators discussed concerns of teacher vulnerability in revealing goals. All administrators affirmed the importance of accepting teachers' professional goals. Yet, one administrator raised a poignant concern. The administrator believed that through the collaboration process, the expectations were lowered. The administrator didn't always agree with the teacher's plan but was fearful of the consequences of rejecting the plan. The senior administrators in the other five districts were most frequently concerned with accountability. Two senior administrators were concerned that marginal teaching would not be addressed as effectively as clinical observations. One senior administrator was very concerned that the teacher professional growth plans were vague. Two wondered if teachers were capable of detecting areas that needed improvement without the support of an administrator. Two were concerned that parents may not perceive that the teacher's goals are benefiting the students. The aforementioned concerns of the senior administrators in Alberta support the potential hesitancy that veteran administrators may have toward implementing comprehensive instructional supervision models.

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