

An Investigation of the Impact of Educational Networks On Formal Leadership Behaviour

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Electronic copies of a short article on the study and of the complete graduate paper are available from any of the authors.

Abstract

In the past, educators often worked in isolation. More recently, with the advent of such initiatives as professional learning communities, there has been a movement towards a collaborative approach to professional growth. Paralleling this shift from isolation to collaboration is the shift in leadership styles from managerial to distributive. Educational networks are evolving in an attempt to expand the circle of collaboration and growth. This research paper addresses the question: **Are there changes in the leadership behaviour of elementary school principals and vice-principals after participating in the Network of Performance Based Schools (NPBS) for two or more years?**

To set the stage the researchers carried out literature reviews on networks, professional development and leadership. A qualitative survey of principals and vice-principals involved in the NPBS for a minimum of two years was conducted. To further explore their understanding of professional development and leadership the researchers selected and interviewed principals and vice-principals who participated in the NPBS.

Following are the major conclusions the researchers reached after analyzing the results. The NPBS promotes and facilitates collaboration between teachers and administrators and furthermore encourages a collaborative approach to professional development. It can encourage a change in principals' and vice-principals' beliefs and actions regarding the delivery model of professional development, relying more on expertise within their schools. Involvement in the NPBS encourages elementary school vice-principals and principals to build their schools' capacities for learning through structural changes. Participation in the NPBS strengthens an administrator's instructional leadership. The success of a network may depend upon its focus on one topic that is seen as an essential need within the system that it supports. The NPBS is seen as a powerful network because of its ability to connect people in various locations to share ideas.

Subsequently, the researchers recommend that districts should: consciously create educational networks in order to support principals' and vice-principals' behavioural changes in the areas of leadership and professional development, promote the implementation of learning communities within schools as a form of professional development and provide support and structures to develop instructional leadership skills.