Public Abstract

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Title:THE ROLE THAT DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP PLAYS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The purpose of this study was to focus on distributing leadership activities of an elementary school through a diverse group of stakeholders in the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). This investigation was guided by the theory of distributive leadership (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001) and the impact that this plays on school improvement initiatives. In this multiple case study, the researcher focused on the school improvement initiative known as professional learning communities (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many, 2010; Fullan, 2006; Schmoker, 2004). The study sought to gather insight on the role of distributive leadership contributes to implementation of professional learning community.

This multiple case study examined three Midwestern elementary schools identified as having successfully implemented professional learning communities. It explored responses from school principals as well as teachers from each building to gather insight on perceptions of school administrators and staff regarding leadership style. From the data, themes emerged indicating there are key components to successful leadership in implementation of the school improvement initiative.

The implications of this inquiry for application in elementary schools directly influence school leader behaviors and actions to create certain elements within the organizational members. These items would include a value of collaboration time, a role in school leadership decisions as well as a narrow focus on discussion around student achievement. The findings in this study demonstrate that successful leaders create a collaborative culture, shares in leadership and decision-making practices and has a narrow focus on student learning. The use of distributive leadership ideals create the opportunities for successful implementation of professional learning communities.