

Public Abstract

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Title:The Impact of High Stakes Accountability on Instructional Leadership and Data Driven Decision Making

This qualitative, multi-case study was designed to examine the impact high-stakes accountability and data-driven decision making has had on administrators and teacher leaders. Serving as the conceptual framework, instructional leadership theory is defined as a multitude of relationships, behaviors, and responsibilities that directly impact student achievement (O'Donnell & White, 2005; Bottoms & Fry, 2009). The researcher utilized instructional leadership theory as lens to explore the participants' thoughts, feelings and perceptions with respect to the implementation of these tenets (Mertens, 2005). The focus of this study is to analyze how administrators and educators are directly responsible for students' performances and with the rigors of accountability from the principles of NCLB, educators are having to turn to new approaches such as data-driven decision making (King, 2002) and quick-paced instruction to meet the needs of students.

A qualitative multi-case study approach allowed the researcher to examine how principals and teachers were affected by tenets of the No Child Left Behind Act and high-stakes accountability (Creswell, 2007). For this research study, four single cases (i.e., individual subjects) as well as four focus groups (containing 5-7 participants) were selected to "capture multiple realities" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 72) and open-ended, emerging data (Creswell, 2003). Through data analysis, three themes emerged: 1) Changing Culture, with a subtheme of Collaboration; and 2) Changing Evidence with subthemes of Data-Driven Input and Purposeful Goals; and 3) Increased Rigor with subthemes of Aggressive Pace and Performance and Individualized Instruction. These themes provide an understanding of the impact high-stakes accountability and data-driven decision making has had on public school principals and educators.