

FACTORS IMPACTING TEACHER EFFICACY IN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:  
THE CASE OF THE READING FIRST INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of educational innovations is a complex endeavor influenced by any number of individual and organizational factors (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Elmore, 1978, 1979; Guskey, 1988; Huberman & Miles, 1984). Even as implementation research findings indicate policy success is most directly impacted by two broad factors – local capacity and will (McLaughlin, 1987), “policy-directed change ultimately is a problem of the smallest unit” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 171). Inasmuch, however, as individuals have influence over factors impacting implementation so too do organizational dynamics affect how individuals act in response to policy initiatives (Elmore, 1978; 2004; Huberman & Miles, 1984).

The focus of this study, implementation of the Reading First initiative, offers a complex context in which to examine the impact of environmental factors on the individual *will* to change teaching practices. As the focus on implementation of federal education policies shifts from compliance to learning outcomes, it is imperative that research efforts focus on individual perception of environmental factors impacting such outcomes. In that sense, teachers may act as “informants and guides” to more effective policy design and implementation (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 15).