

Analyzing Perceptions of Leadership Capacities After a Year-Long Leadership Development Training: An Exploratory Study of School Leaders in South Africa

Authors : Norma Kok, Diemo Masuko, Thandokazi Dlongwana, Komala Pillay

Abstract : CONTEXT: While many school principals have been outstanding teachers and have inherent leadership potential, many have not had access to the quality of leadership development or support that empowers them to produce high-quality education outcomes in extremely challenging circumstances. Further, school leaders in under-served communities face formidable challenges arising from insufficient infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, socio-economic challenges within the community, and insufficient parental involvement, all of which put a strain on principals' ability to lead their schools effectively. In addition few school leaders have access to other supportive networks, and many do not know how to build and leverage social capital to create opportunities for their schools and learners. Moreover, we know that fostering parental involvement in their children's learning improves a child's morale, attitude, and academic achievement across all subject areas, and promotes better behaviour and social adjustment. Citizen Leader Lab facilitates the Partners for Possibility (PfP) programme to provide leadership development and support to school leaders serving under-resourced communities in South Africa to create effective environments of learning. This is done by creating partnerships between school leaders and private-sector business leaders over a 12-month period. (185) OBJECTIVES: To explore school leaders' perceptions of their leadership capacities and changes at their schools after being exposed to a year-long leadership development training programme. METHODS: School leaders gained new leadership capacities e.g. resilience, improved confidence, communication and conflict resolution skills - catalysing into improved cultures of collaborative decision-making and environments for enhanced teaching and learning programme based on the 70:20:10 model whereby: 10% of learning comes from workshops, 20% of learning takes place through peer learning and 70% of learning occurs through experiential learning as partnerships work together to identify and tackle challenges in targeted schools. Participants completed a post-programme questionnaire consisting of structured and unstructured questions and semi-structured interviews were conducted with them and their business leader. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and thematic content analysis was undertaken. The analysis was inductive and emerging themes were identified. A code list was generated after coding was undertaken using computer software (Dedoose). Quantitative data gathered from surveys was aggregated and analysed. RESULTS: School leadership found the programme interesting and rewarding. They gained new leadership capacities such as resilience, improved confidence, communication and conflict resolution skills - catalyzing into improved cultures of collaborative decision-making and environments for enhanced teaching and learning. New networks resulted in tangible outcomes such as upgrades to school infrastructure, water and sanitation, vegetable gardens at schools resulting in nutrition for learners and/or intangible outcomes such as skills for members of school management teams (SMTs). Collaborative leadership led to SMTs being more aligned, efficient, and cohesive; and teachers being more engaged and motivated. Notable positive changes at the school inspired parents and community members to become more actively involved in the school and in their children's education. CONCLUSION: The PfP programme leads to improved leadership capacities and improved school culture which leads to improved teaching and learning and new resources for schools.

Keywords : collaborative decision-making, collaborative leadership, community involvement, confidence

Conference Title : ICEOLTP 2022 : International Conference on Education, Organization, Leadership Training and Practice

Conference Location : Sydney, Australia

Conference Dates : December 02-03, 2022