



TITLE The Relationship Between Principals' Leadership Behaviors and the Development of Professional Learning Communities in Schools with Teacher Study Groups

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OBJECTIVE This study examined the strength and the direction of the relationship between principals' leadership behaviors and the development of professional learning communities, specifically teacher study groups.

METHODOLOGY

Participants for the study included K-12 teachers who were participating in teacher study groups and whose schools were recent recipients of the Montclair State University Teacher Study Groups Grant. There were 119 participants (55% response rate) from 17 schools. Respondents completed the Leadership Practices Inventory Observer (in regards to their school principal), the School Professional Staff as Learning Community Questionnaire (Hord, 1996), and provided demographic information. The typical respondents were female (89%), elementary school teachers (64%), with a graduate degree (68%), and having an average of 15.2 years of work experience.

KEY FINDINGS

Teachers reported that their principals engaged most frequently in Model, followed by Encourage, Challenge, Inspire, and then Enable, with responses being on average in the "fairly often" response range. Multiple regression analysis results indicated that none of the demographic variables (gender, degree, experience, and level taught) showed a statistically significant influence on teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership behaviors ($R^2 = .026$).

There was a significant strong positive relationship between all five leadership practices and the SPSLC subscale for the dimension of Supportive and Shared Leadership. Additionally, there was a significant strong positive relationship between the Enable and the SPSLC subscale dimension Shared Values and Vision and significant moderate positive relationship for the remaining four leadership practices. The only other

significant moderate positive relationship was between Inspire and the SPSLC dimension of Shared Personal Practice. There was a significant but weak positive relationship between Model, Challenge, Enable and Encourage and the SPSLC dimensions of Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions. In addition, there was a significant but weak positive relationship between the SPSLC dimension of Collective Learning and Application and the leadership practices of Model, Challenge, and Encourage.

Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that the total leadership (LPI) score accounted for 23.1 percent of the variance around SPSLC, with level of school taught accounting for an additional 9.2 percent, with gender adding only .5 percent increase, and degree and work experience contributing only .1 percent more in explained variance. The subscale Supportive and Shared Leadership is most influenced by the five practices, with leadership accounting for nearly 34 percent of the variance. Leadership accounted for 18.8 percent of the variance on the subscale Shared Values and Vision, 12.7 percent on the subscale Collective Learning and Application, 8.5 percent on Shared Personal Practice, and 6.5 percent on the Supportive Conditions subscale.

The author offers these conclusions: “Significant relationship between principals’ leadership behaviors and the development of professional learning communities in schools that were recipients of a teacher study group grant were identified (p. 124).... The results from this study suggest that participating schools with successful teacher study groups are led by principals who demonstrate a strong presence of leadership practices that are consistent with transformative and shared leadership practices. Being cognizant of this, school leaders who wish to develop PLCs within their schools might want to consider the development of a comprehensive understanding of the elements of shared and distributive leadership (p. 132)... This study demonstrated that in schools where there are established and successful teacher study groups, the school principal exhibited moderate to high levels of transformational leadership practices. These characteristics involve leadership that is distributed, or shared. In fact, the findings of this study demonstrate that the PLC dimension most associated with principal leadership practices is the *Supportive and Shared Leadership* dimension. This dimension emphasizes the importance of the school principal's willingness to share in the leadership responsibilities of a school” (p.148).