The Trust-Communication Connection in the Implementation of Race-to-the-Top Policy Innovations

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The Espoused Policy Theory of Action

Three Innovations: CCSS, APPR, & DDI

Implementation Moves from District Offices to Schools & Results in Performance Adaptations

Students Gain Equitable Access to Teachers, Learning Resources & Gain Important Knowledge

More College- and Career-ready Students Graduate from High School with Demonstrated Competencies

Elmore, 2000; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Johnson, Marietta, Higgins, Mapp, & Grossman, 2015; Zavadsky, 2009; Zahra & George, 2002
Background of Study

Elementary Schools in Sample
## The Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Odds-Beating</th>
<th>% Economically Disadvantaged Students</th>
<th>% White Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Bluff</td>
<td>&gt;43%</td>
<td>&gt;89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Creek</td>
<td>18-43%</td>
<td>&gt;89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starling Springs</td>
<td>18-43%</td>
<td>&lt;73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Valley</td>
<td>&gt;43%</td>
<td>&lt;73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay City</td>
<td>&gt;43%</td>
<td>&lt;73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goliad</td>
<td>&gt;43%</td>
<td>&lt;73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Typically Performing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Economically Disadvantaged Students</th>
<th>% White Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wolf Creek</td>
<td>18-43%</td>
<td>&gt;89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Hollow</td>
<td>18-43%</td>
<td>73-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paige City</td>
<td>&gt;43%</td>
<td>73-89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relational Trust
(Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; McAllister, 1995; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Day & Gu, 2014)

Leadership and Organizational Communication

Reciprocal Trust
(Akermann & Bakker, 2012; Fullan 2006; Lawson et al, 2016)

Trust-Communication Connection
(McAllister, 1995; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis 2015; Bryk & Schneider, 2002)

Framing This Study
Research Questions

What can we learn about the association between trust and communications during policy innovation implementation?

A. How do district leaders communicate with principals and teachers as policy innovation implementation proceeds?

B. What is the relationship between these implementation-related communications and trust?

C. How does this trust-communication connection influence leadership for innovation implementation?
Methods

• Multiple Case Study Design
  • Two-day site visits
  • Larger study included interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, surveys, interpretive memos, documentary evidence, case studies and member checking

• 69 Semi-structured interviews, 45 focus groups with superintendents, district leaders, principals, and teachers

• Analysis using NVivo 10, coding by a priori categories, identification of patterns

  (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; QSR International, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Yin, 2014)
Relational Trust and Communication

Trust and communication within the school building
• Bi-directional communication throughout the school buildings
• Open and diverse methods of communication
• Use of teams to gather and spread information
• Trust in professional expertise

“Some people have a little bit of experience and some people have a lot of experience. All of them are highly motivated to do well in the classroom and push themselves”- Eagle Bluff Principal

“She’s very supportive of teachers and she trusts us”- Eagle Bluff Teacher
Mutual trust and communication between

- District leaders and School Leaders
  - Frequent and Regular Meetings
  - Data Use
  - Shared Expectations and goals.
- District Leaders and Teachers
  - Teacher Expertise
  - Professional Judgment
  - Collaborative work with district leaders

“What’s informing me the most are the conversations I’m having with individual teachers...When you are a learning leader, you are humble and you are learning with everyone else. I don’t see myself as part of an org chart where I'm at the top. I'm in the center of a web of connections and collaborations. I'm a facilitator of conversations” -Starling Springs Superintendent
Recommendations

• Communication is a never ending priority.
• Communication fosters and builds trusting relationships
• Remember the emotional side of change
• Support teachers in their work by providing resources; providing and communicating a clear vision
• Anticipate change and communicate expectations, goals, and shared mindset frequently
• Explicitly express trust
Conclusion and Discussion

Relational Trust

Reciprocal Trust

Communication
Thank You!

This presentation and abstract can be downloaded at:
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