Learning Leadership in Education

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Agenda for this session

1. Last year: the leadership capabilities that count
2. This year: learning these capabilities
3. Links to other research on professional learning
4. Implications
The Effective Principals’ Study

- Existing professional capability framework
- 322 effective principals identified
- 1:1 interviews to calibrate the survey
- Online survey
  - Importance & performance
  - Previous leadership development programs & learning experiences
  - Case studies and analogies to describe their daily world
Framework Professional Capability

A  STANCE (EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE)

B  WAY OF THINKING

C  DIAGNOSTIC MAPS

D  GENERIC SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

E  PROFESSION SPECIFIC SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE
Findings: Analogies
The role of principal is like being:

- The captain of a ship (or something similar)
- A juggler
- A duck with alligators
- Head of a family or similar group
- Someone trying to build a plane while flying it
- On a roller coaster or being a white water rafter
- A conductor/circus ringmaster/director of a play
- A ‘roadie’ for a rock band
- A bus driver
- On a trek in Nepal
Top ranking items on importance

- Remaining calm when things go wrong (A1)*
- Having a sense of humour, keeping work in perspective (A1)
- Clear vision of where the school must head (A + B)
- Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations (A2)
- Wanting the best outcome possible (A1)*
- Being able to bounce back from adversity (A1)
- Being able to work with diversity (A2)
- Ability to take a hard decision (A1)
- Being able to set & justify priorities (B)*
- Willingness to listen first then lead (A2)
- Being willing to face & learn from errors (A1)*
- Being able to see the key issue in messy situations (B)
- Being able to contribute to team projects (A2)*
- Being able to ‘read and match’, trace out consequences (B)
Learning Leadership: findings from the Effective Principals Study

Sources of Learning

• Formal qualifications
  – medium link at the PG level, especially if WBL-based

• Short courses for principals
  – relatively low link – main focus on D & E

• Informal learning
  – higher link
Learning strategies & resources seen to be most productive (rank order)

- Focused informal interaction with effective peers – just in time and just for me
- Mentoring & coaching: especially against a proven framework for reflection
- Learning from experience
- Participation in colleague networks
- Practical problem-based workshops
- Shadowing
- Induction programs
- Professional reading on one’s experienced problems
- Post graduate degrees: focused on work problems
- District Office meetings and seminars
- Visits to other schools
Links to other research on professional learning

- Successful university graduates:
  Accounting; Architecture; Engineering;
  I.T.; Law; Nursing; Sport Management
- **CEQuery**
  150,000 comments on national HE course experience questionnaire
- Alan Tough & Adult Learning research over the past 25 years
Key findings from this parallel research

• It is the total experience that shapes professional learning
  – Change is learning
  – Context counts
  – Culture is a key element of context
  – The peer group is a key transmitter of culture
  – System synergy can help or hinder willingness to engage (tri-level solution)
  – What is rewarded in promotion & other ways shapes ones focus on professional learning
Professional Learning is most productive when it is

- Relevant to one’s known gaps in performance - diagnosed by using a proven capability framework
- just in time, just for me
- easily accessed
- peer supported

- Mentored by an effective practitioner giving targeted feedback
- problem based & practice-oriented
- networked to the learning of ‘fellow travellers’ further down the same change path

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Implications: the next steps

Good ideas with no ideas on how to implement them are wasted ideas

• Self-diagnosis: reflection on experience
• More focus on workplace learning, mentoring & 360 degree review
• Use the case studies in new principal orientation programs
• Ensure promotion criteria are valid & the processes of judgement are reliable
• Extend & apply the productive learning research more directly in leadership development programs
• Context counts: so focus on the tri-level solution & explicitly reward the ‘long lever of leadership’
More details of the Effective Principals’ Study

See