

IMPROVING SCHOOLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: SOUTH AFRICAN AND GLOBAL EVIDENCE

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Factors influencing learner outcomes

- Socio-economic factors (SA remains one of the most divided societies in the world)
- The policy framework (continuity, not frequent policy shifts)
- Classroom practice (a good teacher in every classroom – avoid within-school variation)
- Leadership – responsible for up to 27% of variation (if focused on MTL)

Developing High Quality Leaders

- How do leaders acquire the knowledge and skills to be effective?
- Leadership is a distinct role and requires specific preparation
- Huge global interest in how leaders should be prepared and developed
- This is also a major issue in South Africa

Arguments for leadership development

- School leadership has expanded (e.g. SGBs)
- Learner demography has changed due to migration
- To avoid the 'culture shock' when moving from teaching to leadership
- Preparation is a key part of socialisation
- Preparation makes a difference

The SA: ACE School Leadership Programme

- Piloted from 2007 and operates through universities
- The ACE includes modules, lectures, mentoring, and site-based assessment
- Zenex Foundation evaluation from 2007-2011, including an impact study
- The CEM decided that all new principals should take the ACE within three years of appointment

Research Methods

- Four phases – baseline, mid-term, end of course, and impact
- The impact study involved scrutiny of SLC (matric) results from 2006-2010, comparison of ACE and non-ACE schools' data, interviews with ACE candidates, and their role sets

Analysis of school attainment data

- Data from 299 ACE schools compared with data from all 640 secondary schools
- ACE schools improved their matric results by 9.1% (overall 7.2%)
- 16% of ACE schools scored 70+ (overall 7%)
- 38% of ACE schools on an upward trend (overall 23%)
- ACE schools improved their matric results twice as fast as non-ACE schools

How Schools Improved?

- Strong focus on teaching and learning (Robinson 2007)
- More time spent on learning (monitoring attendance and punctuality)
- Extra classes for matric learners
- Monitoring learners' and educators' books
- Structured programme of classroom visits
- Motivating learners and educators
- But also tighter progression criteria

Why some schools failed to improve

- Failure to sustain improvement initiatives
 - Disunity and factionalism among educators
 - Frequent changes in management
 - Apathy in response to socio-economic challenges
 - 'Blame the 'learner' attitudes
- These problems show the fragility of leadership and management in some SA schools

Conclusion

- ACE schools improved faster than others
- Training principals leads to improvement
- The SA CEM has mandated the ACE
- The ACE is to be replaced by the ADE but progress is slow
- The DBE needs to show leadership to promote and sustain this national programme and avoid fragmented provision

Thank you

- The presentation is available from:
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