Stakeholder Empowerment: Research Results on Adaptive Leadership During Change

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Overview

• The Problem: Seeing The Forest for The Trees
• Theoretical and Empirical Research on Leadership
• Study Design
• Research Results
  • Survey
  • Multiple Case Study
• Stakeholder Empowerment Self Assessment
• Q&A/Reflection/Feedback
Empowerment could be considered both as a structural concept in terms of addressing intraorganizational power-sharing, and as a psychological concept in terms of revealing the feelings of those who end up sharing power.

(Tsang, K.K. et al., 2022)
Pandemic problems and opportunities
Related Research

Empowerment Leadership (Bandura, 1977)
- Persuasive Communicator
- Supportive Emotionally
- Foster Initiatives
- Create Positive Culture
- Outcomes: Increase job satisfaction, trust, resilience

Crisis-Responsive Leadership (Boin et al. 2013)
- Sense-maker
- Coordinator
- Strategic Communicator
- Promote Organizational Learning
- Outcomes: Org thrives, stakeholders persevere

Adaptive Leadership (Heifetz et al 2009)
- Systems Level View
- Interpret
- Reflect
- Include Stakeholders in Change
- Outcomes: People mobilized, context considered
Research Design: Phase 1

- Stress & Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Job Satisfaction & Organizational Capacity
- Work-Life Balance & Change
Research Design: Phase 2

Multiple case study sample (6)

Data Sources:
- 14 educator (teachers, teaching assistants, school psychologists, social workers, and counselors) focus groups
- 27 interviews with teachers about instructional practice innovations
- 15 interviews with school and district leaders
- documents (e.g. lesson plans)
Survey Research Results for Overall Sample

I have felt that I was unable to control important things related to my job (never or almost never) - 24%
I have been angry because of work-related problems that were outside of my control (never or almost never) - 33%
I have had opportunities to weigh in on decisions impacting my work. (Strongly Agree or Agree) - 36%
My colleagues and I shared strategies for communicating with students's families (everyday or 1-2 days a week) - 59%
Phase 2 Empowerment Study Research Question

What behavioral, cognitive, and affective/motivational approaches do school and district leaders with relatively better educator responses to crisis share as they engage diverse stakeholders in adapting to crisis and novel challenges? (Baard et al., 2013)
Stakeholder Empowerment
Approach 1:
The Communicator and Coordinator

And then there was the hybrid decision-making... it was tricky going into that second year to figure out what the best option would be. We were all hoping BOCES would have a solution for us. We were hoping there might be some sort of regional solution. And when that didn't come about, this really was the only option [to turn to] ... the committee – which included a lot of stakeholders... at every level... (Lake George, district leader)
Stakeholder Empowerment Approach 2: The Sense-Maker and Knowledge-Builder

We have (two district leaders) and they have a lot of autonomy... we try as much as possible to empower them and then guide them as needed. They're the experts in their areas... a lot of times what we'll do is... sit down and go through everything and figure out who's doing what, how is it going to be done; when is it going to be done by.... (Whitesboro, district leader)
Stakeholder Empowerment
Approach 3: The Empath and Cheerleader

My take is I felt that I needed to be protective of the staff and the principals in some cases, and some people didn't like some of the decisions. So, I just try to hear them, listen to them, try to understand, try to have them have empathy for us, to let them know that we were trying to find the balance between their wants... and see people are really scared and nervous and have some real concerns...

(Tamarac, district leader)
**Empowerment self assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cheerleader &amp; Empath</th>
<th>I focus on this a lot (2)</th>
<th>I focus on this sometimes (1)</th>
<th>I focus on this hardly ever (0)</th>
<th>Challenges that arise for me in focusing on this are...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Humility</td>
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<td>Encouraging Others</td>
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<td>Practicing Self Care</td>
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<td>Showing Empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cheerleader/Empath Total</strong></td>
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<td>Sense-Maker &amp; Knowledge-Builder</td>
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<td>Organizational/Professional learning</td>
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<td>Prioritizing Flexibility/Innovation</td>
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<td>Distributed decision-making</td>
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<td>Shared problem-solving</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sense-Maker/Knowledge Builder Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicator &amp; Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
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<td>Coordinating Efforts for Consistency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fostering autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communicator/Coordinator Total</strong></td>
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**Turn and Talk**
- What do you notice that is similar or different in your challenges?
- Discuss why you think those areas are or have been a challenge?
The “lost trust” pathway

Impact
(+) Stakeholders feel seen and valued
(-) Stakeholders lose confidence in leader decision-making

Sense-maker and Knowledge-builder
- Share problem solving
- Distributed decision-making
- Org. Learning

Cheerleader and Empath
- Show Empathy
- Practice Self-Care
- Encourage Others
- Express humility
The “lonely soldier” pathway

Cheerleader and Empath
- Show Empathy
- Encourage Others
- Express Humility

Sense-maker and Knowledge-builder
- Share Problem-Solving
- Distribute Decision Making
- Organizational Learning
- Prioritize Flexibility

Impact
(+) Stakeholders have sense of direction
(-) Stakeholders feel undervalued, unseen, and unheard
The “captain-less ship” pathway

- Sense-maker and Knowledge-builder
  - Share Problem-Solving
  - Prioritize Innovation
  - Organizational Learning

- Coordinator and Communicator
  - Foster Autonomy
  - Collaborate
  - Coordinate Consistency
  - Communicate Frequently

Impact
 (+) Stakeholders know what behaviors are expected
 (-) Stakeholders do not know why those behaviors are valued
Reflecting on NYKids research on stakeholder empowerment

1. What did we learn about ourselves as leaders?
2. What ideas did we get from other schools and districts about empowering youth, families, and staff?
3. What is one thing I will commit to doing more of…? One thing I will commit to doing less of…?
Implications

• In the context of the pandemic, inviting the perspectives of and listening to the needs of all children, families, and staff was critical to meeting a wide range of needs in new ways and bringing the right resources from inside and outside of the schools to bear on solving new problems and exploiting new opportunities for innovation.

• Leaders can engage a wide variety of stakeholders in understanding problems holistically (how problems were affecting the school or district or community overall) as well as specifically (how problems were affecting individual children, families, and staff) and use stakeholder empowerment strategies strategically and responsively to address challenges.

• This study offers insights into the relationships of stakeholder empowerment to educator behavior and feelings toward work and their leaders. We are limited in our understanding at the point as to the impacts on children and families in the long run – this will take continued research.
Thank you!

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Key References


