

An open systems model of successful school leadership

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This paper presents an 'open systems model of successful school leadership'. The model builds on previous models of successful school leadership that have resulted from twenty years of research in the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP). The ISSPP is an international network of collaborative researchers. Established in 2001, the project included eight countries: (Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and the United States) but has expanded to twenty countries (including Spain, Brazil, Mexico, Israel, Turkey, Cyprus, Singapore, Indonesia, New Zealand). The project has produced many publications including four project books, eight special issues of academic journals, and more than 200 journal articles and book chapters. The project explores successful school leadership from several perspectives including characteristics of successful leaders, sustainability of performance, context, instructional leadership, and organisational learning. Most relevant to this paper is that it has generated numerous models of successful school leadership. The models were developed through multi-perspective case studies that explored successful school leadership. Data were collected through individual interviews with principal, senior staff and school board members, group interviews with teachers, parents and students, and collection of appropriate documents to inform the cases.

Leadership Models

Models or frameworks can make a major contribution to theory and practice because they can help to make sense of complex data. The value of a model is its level of usefulness, veracity and capability to identify and demonstrate the relationship between key variables.

In this paper we present and explain the *Open Systems Model of Successful School Leadership*. It builds on thirteen previous published models from the ISSPP developed from 33 complex multiple perspective cases studies and survey data from the ISSPP which was used to frame and construct the models.

The new open systems model was developed to show the pathway to school improvement and sustainability by integrating the internal and external environment into a leadership model. The aim of the model is to show how successful school principalship impacts on school outcomes. A systems perspective helps show how various elements form an organised whole. The model depicts schools as a continuous cycle of input-transformation-output with feedback loops that inform each stage of the cycle. The inputs include characteristics such as the leader, students, community and school factors. The transformational stage shows the strategic interventions and leadership skills that successful leaders use to build capacity of teachers to improve teaching and learning. The third stage is the outcomes stage and identifies the positive student and school outcomes that are a result of the input and transformational stages. They are connected through a feedback loop.

The model will be unpacked in the presentation