Research Summary:

The research on the roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators in public schools has focused on themes of leadership, mentoring, supervision, governance and instructional development. Much of the research has been on the evolving nature of educator work, in response to changes in pedagogy as well as policy initiatives that have redefined educator roles and responsibilities. As national and state reform elements have changed public schools, some researchers have argued that educator work has remained relatively stable, “it is characterized as individual work, with the governance power situation in the hands of individuals that remain external to the classroom, and instruction that is largely teacher centered” (Kirtman, 2002). However, as additional roles and responsibilities for educators have been developed and assumed by employees, the organizational structure of schools has changed to provide more dynamic career opportunities.

Additional research on human resource development has found a positive relationship between employee motivation and their ability to advance within their career, with the consensus of this research being that employees that have opportunities for career advancement are motivated to improve their work (Barrier, 1996). Research on competency based pay has indicated that in addition to providing “extrinsic rewards for the continued development of skills and knowledge, competency based pay reinforces the creation of an organizational or school culture that values employee growth and development (Lawler, 1995, as quoted in Odden & Kelley, 1997). In a career ladder, where additional competencies lead to advancement to higher levels of a career, competency based pay is used to define both competencies and the advanced role of the employee.

Research Findings

- School leadership can have a significant influence on student achievement.

- Distributive leadership provides opportunities for multiple employees to deepen their expertise and improve learning, as well as advance in their career.

- Mentorship benefits both the mentor and the novice teacher or protégé.

- Mentoring can reduce teacher attrition, improve teaching and student learning and lead to additional leadership roles within a school or school district.
Leadership Roles:

Research on leadership in schools has traditionally focused on the formal leadership roles of principals and superintendents and their role in directing activities in schools and districts. From this research basis, leadership needs have been identified to include seven areas: instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development and micro-political (Portin et al., 2003). School and district leadership is broadened to include staff developers, district coordinators and mentor teachers, as well as principals and superintendents. Distributive leadership is less hierarchal than traditional leadership, with a broader distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities among employees.

School leadership has been recognized to have a sizeable influence on student learning and teaching quality. Some research has concluded that school leadership has significant effects on student learning that are second only to the effects of teacher instruction and the quality of the curriculum (Leighwood & Riehl, 2003). Research on instructional leadership and other leadership roles assumed by teachers has found that building collective leadership through the consensus of teachers rather than mandate is more effective (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb, 1995). Furthermore, when teachers are involved as leaders within a school, shared responsibility can lead teachers to support the larger organizational goals, leading to improved curriculum and instruction (Silins, Mulford, Zarins & Bishop, 2000). Distributive leadership, which is shared by multiple individuals at different levels of the organization, recognizes the necessary leadership roles and responsibilities that can be assumed by different employees to deepen their expertise level (Riordan, 2003).

Mentoring Roles:

Research on mentoring roles has focused on the support and assistance programs designed for the mentoring of novice teachers during induction periods. Most of the focus has been on the effects of mentoring on the novice teacher or protégé, rather than on the role of the mentor. As such, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that teachers are less likely to leave the profession after their first year if they are provided with a mentor in their content area and participate in formal planning and collaboration with other teachers. Similarly, some research has found that beginning teachers who received high-quality induction and mentoring achieved student performance gains equivalent to those of fourth-year teachers who did not have access to comprehensive induction (Strong, 2006).

Some research on the benefits of mentoring for the mentor teachers has also found that the mentor developed “reflective practice, increased professional competency, renewed
commitment to teaching, enhanced self-esteem, increased confidence in collegial interactions and developed capacity for teacher leadership” (Huling & Resta, 2001). Mentors have been found to improve their teaching practice as they engage in self reflection with their protégé, as well as learn new content materials and pedagogical strategies from them (Wollman-Bonilla, 1997). Additionally, mentors often are able to assume additional leadership roles and responsibilities within a school or school district, with Freiberg, Zbikowski and Ganser (1997) finding that it was common for successful mentors to be offered unsolicited leadership positions as a result of their experience and expertise.

Works Cited:


