

Evaluating the performance of educational groups using Effective Professional Learning Communities (EPLCs) model

Sedigheh Shamshiri

MA in Educational Management, Department of Education, Bushehr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate and review the performance of educational departments using effective indices of educational groups (Effective Professional Learning Communities, EPLCs) in Bushehr Province. Materials and Methods: The study is applied with descriptive-surveyed method. The population of this research was 550 of department managers of three grads schools in Bushehr on 2013-2014. Statistical sample was 226 subjects that were calculated using Morgan table. Data were analysed using paired samples t-test. Results showed that common views and values in schools enhanced performance of educational departments. In addition, supportive participative leadership style provides enhanced performance of educational groups ($p < 0.5$). According to data from the two main components of the research, we note that in order to improve the performance and efficiency of educational groups, they have to assist them in establishing and strengthen the areas of vision and common values, promote supportive and collaborative leadership style to boost efficiency and improves their performance and efficiency.

Keywords: Education, Learning, Professional Effective Training Group, Learning school, Learning organization.

Introduction

The international evidence pointed out that the progress mechanism of education reform depends on teachers' individual and collective capacity and align its relation to the overall capacity of schools to improve the learning of students. Therefore, capacity building is an essential and vital matter. Talent is composed of a complex mixture of motivation, skill, positive learning, culture and supportive infrastructure conditions (1). All of these factors together provide the capability to individuals;

educational groups and the entire community, schools and school systems to be active in learning areas and keep it over time. It seems that developing professional effective educational groups creates significant potential for sustainable improvement therefore is heated debate in many countries (2). For that to deal with the effects of globalization and rapidly changing world in learning field, it seems that a new approach is necessary (3).

On the other hand, individual learning will not last long. To succeed in a world with increasing change and complexity, it seems that the whole school community must work together and learn to respond to environmental changes and be able to discover the best way of promoting the learning of young people (2). Perceiving the rolls of effective professional educational groups in schools and research in the field of nature, performance and effectiveness in many countries are still in the early stages of its development. However, evidences have shown that effective educational groups (Effective Professional Learning Communities, EPLCs) have had a positive effect on promoting and improving schools. Creating operational capability of theoretical ideas and prescribing them to schools based on this evidence may be due to differences in national contingency faced with limitations. The current survey also must be reviewed and completed with more studies to evaluate its applying capability and determines if other factors and processes are important (4).

Therefore, understanding the role of effective professional educational groups in schools and research on the nature, performance and effectiveness in many countries are still in the early stages of its development. However, evidence has shown that effective educational groups (Effective Professional Learning Communities, EPLCs) have had a positive effect on promoting and improving schools.

In the field of education, educational groups as educational organizations, educational and research has emerged with the idea that by effective communication between teachers, they must provide the use of experiences and scientific, technical and training in teaching methods, the development of professional information, use for education and training, the correct application of the principles and methods of evaluation of academic achievement, foster research, investigating the causes of educational failure and educational problems in order to improve student learning and success at the end of step. Educational groups are established with a focus on improving the process of teaching, training and promotion of teachers learning and ultimately continuous and improving learning and more success of students. The key idea in professional education group is continuous participation of educators in learning process and is emphasized on learning rather than teaching (1).

There are several posts about professional effective educational groups in the country, below is mentioned some background research within and outside the country. First, in the study entitled the role and impact of educational groups (high school) in the education and development of appropriate patterns and increase productivity performance in the 27 districts of Tehran province has been done. In this study, researchers surveyed the heads of the educational and training managers seek to determine the extent of performance compliance of educating groups with the establishment objectives and concluded that teachers and group heads have had a more favorable opinion about the performance of these educational groups compared with managers (5).

Another study entitled "Internal efficiency of educating groups in secondary schools and its relationship with academic performance of high school students in Khuzestan province" has been done. The results showed that administrators and teachers believe that educational groups have failed to provide appropriate field to learn skills related to instructional design. Also, they stated that educational groups have failed to

familiar teachers with pedagogical approaches and educational groups have failed to foster creativity and develop them to new ideas on education issues. While, based on teachers' opinion, educational groups have been successful in appropriate use of valuation methods. In addition, teachers and administrators also believe that these educational groups have structural defects and problems. Finally, assumptions regarding the relationship between internal performance of educational groups and student achievement have been confirmed and also they found that there is a significant positive correlation between three indicators of academic performance and the effectiveness of internal educational groups (6).

In the overseas also some studies have been done in related educating groups which some of them are summarized in this section. Dufour (2004) in their study on "establishing and maintaining effective educational groups (Effective Professional Learning Communities, EPLCs)" concluded that the idea of the establishment of professional effective educational groups based on the characteristics of these educational groups is one of the most important tools to achieve sustainable success in improving student learning and success and eight important feature of these educational groups are common views and values, group and individual professional learning, collective focus on individual and collective learning for students, support, respect and confidence, general and vast participation, opening and dynamic, networks and partnerships and professional learning (7). In this context, research and Hord & Hrish (2008) studied " professional learning in effective schools: the seven principles of highly effective professional learning" and showed that investing in professional education is a key factor in ensuring schools change to collection of educating groups that teachers work together and learn from each other and share with others best practices in the field of teaching and learning (benchmarking) and only through team work of teachers and the establishment of knowledge collaborative success and continuous improvement of schools be ensures.

Thus, this study evaluated the performance of educating groups in Bushehr and compares the findings with professional effective educational groups' performance (Effective Professional Learning Communities, EPLCs) to identify the weak and strength points and providing appropriate solutions based on related authorities and responsible views. The ultimate goal of this study was to help restructuring of schools culture to create a strong participatory culture that encourages learning through serious interaction and participation of members of the educational groups in the process of effective path to the effective professional educational groups and support from workers and managers and authorities will be achieved. Strengths and weaknesses and strategies from the perspective of their members and the relevant authorities are identified. The study seeks to provide a road map for the professional educating groups of province to reduce distance between current status and normal level about the strategic objectives of the educational groups and increase the success rate of students' learning and development in national level.

Materials and Methods

Based on purpose, this is an applied research because it aims at identifying the importance of effective educational groups (Effective Professional Learning Communities, EPLCs) to promote learning and knowledge of teachers and students. Based on data collection type, this is a descriptive non logistic study. In this study, the population was all head of educational departments in different disciplines and levels of Bushehr with the number of 550 teachers. Sample size was 226 subjects that were obtained using Morgan table through random sampling method. In this study, secondary data have collected by library studies and self-administered questionnaires. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the validity of questionnaire which

was obtained 73.6. Inferential statistics (paired samples t-test) was used to test research hypotheses on SPSS software.

Results

Some of descriptive information such as educational level and job level of respondents are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics related to education level job level of subjects.

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Educational level		
Diploma & associate	62	27.43
Bachelor	120	53.10
Master	44	19.47
Total	226	100
School grade		
Elementary	42	18.58
Secondary (I)	73	32.30
Secondary (II)	111	49.12
Total	226	100

Table 2 shows dispersion statistics and central indicators of the studied variables.

Table 2. Distribution of statistics and indicators of variables.

	Mean	Max	Min	R	n	SD
Hyphotesis 1 (current)	1.80	2.18	1.45	0.73	226	0.197
Hyphotesis 1 (exist)	4.185	4.55	4.82	0.73	226	0.197
Hyphotesis 2 (current)	1.738	2.11	1.44	0.67	226	0.187
Hyphotesis 2 (exist)	4.261	4.78	0.89	0.89	226	0.214

Statistical analysis of research questions are shown in table 3.

Table 3. The results of paired t-test.

1. Is supportive and collaborative leadership enhances performance of educating departments?									
n	Mean	SD	Mean of error	T	df	p	MD	Interval confidence of 0.95	
								Lower limit	Upper limit

226	Optimal 4.18 Current 1.8	0.29	0.19	121.6	225	0.00	2.38	2.34	2.42
2. Is shared vision and values in schools enhance performance of educating departments?									
n	Mean	SD	Mean of error	t	df	p	MD	Interval confidence of 0.95	
								Lower limit	Lower limit
226	Optimal 4.26 Current 1.73	0.26	0.017	142.46	225	0.00	2.52	2.48	2.55

Results of paired t-test related to the first question showed that with regard to the level of statistical significance that is less than 0.05, null hypothesis is rejected and because the average of ideal situation is 4.18 and is higher than current situation (1.8), so supportive participative leadership style provides enhanced performance of educating groups.

Results of paired t-test related to the second question of the study showed that with regard to the level of statistical significance that is less than 0.05, null hypothesis is rejected and because the average of ideal situation is 4.23 and is higher than current situation (1.73), so common views and values in schools enhanced performance of educational departments.

Discussion and conclusion

In this study, we examined and assessed the current state of performance of educational groups in the field of education of Bushehr province. The results showed that in promoting supportive and participative leadership style support in educational groups that are very important factors in improving the performance and efficiency of their educational groups, the main problem is that most people are do not cooperate spontaneous in this educational groups area and decision making is mainly individually and opportunity for individuals changing is not provided. Administrator and moderators do not use the different leadership styles and management of reward and punishment in correct way do not encourage and support the participation and creativity of the members do not share others in information. The results are supported with the findings of research conducted by Bolam in 2005 at the high school. Based on Bolam statements, if the educational groups be deployed based on the principles of effective educational groups and find characteristics of these group in their performance will lead to improvement. One of these most important characteristics is leadership support and participation that all members must have the spirit of the supportive leadership and the leader of the group must be selected and raised inner the group. The findings of the research also are consistent with the findings of Dufourr (2004) because they think that one of the main tasks of the educational groups is responsible for monitoring and guiding the training and the improvement of teaching and learning process (7).

Looking at the other results that evaluated the role of having common vision and values on the effectiveness of specific educating groups, it is clear that the most difficult of educational groups in this

issue is that Schools have short-term and quantitative vision about evaluating not long term and qualitative vision. So, short-term decisions and plans do not provide in line with long-term and comprehensive policies. Another problem of educating groups is that there is not strong team intention to create and maintain shared values in line with landscape among the members and they act Personalize about short-term decisions and programs which can not necessarily move in line with long-term prospects. According to research conducted by Strunga in 2015 and Chen in 2013, if members have a common vision and values, teachers' performance in the implementation of educational strategies will be more and cause successful students (1,6). In another study by the Tahir in 2013 that was conducted among educational groups in secondary schools was also determined when educational groups have common understanding about the goals and philosophy of teaching, they also have improving in school education and training status and provide good patterns of productive (2).

In general, based on the current findings, since the ultimate goal of formation and development of educational groups in education system of schools is increase the level of learning and success of students, they should try align with creating an effective school to create an efficient way that leads to performance improvement of training educational groups and finally results in promotion of learning, knowledge and student achievement.

References

1. Strunga A. Using virtual learning communities in shaping the professional identity of primary and preschool pedagogy specialization students: a knowledge management approach. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2015,(180),460–467.
2. Tahir LM, Haruzuan MN, Said M, Fazli Ali M, Samah NA, Daud K, Mohtar TH. Examining the professional learning community practices: An empirical comparison from Malaysian universities clusters. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2013,(97),105–113.
3. Persico D, Milligan C, Littlejohn A. The Interplay between Self-Regulated Professional Learning and Teachers' Work-Practice. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2015,(191),2481–2486.
4. Garcia-Morales VJ, Jiménez-Barrionuevo MM, Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez L. Transformational leadership influence on organizational performance through organizational learning and innovation. *Journal of Business Research*, 2012,(65),1040–1050.
5. Chao RJ, Chen YH. Evaluation of the criteria and effectiveness of distance e-learning with consistent fuzzy preference relations. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 2009,(36),10657–10662.
6. Chen HR, Tseng HF. Factors that influence acceptance of web-based e-learning systems for the in-service education of junior high school teachers in Taiwan. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 2012,(35),398–406.
7. Dufour R. What is a "professional learning community?". *Educational Leadership*, 2004: 61(8).
8. Tang C, Ding X. Graduate students' creative professional virtual community behaviors and their creativity. *Computers in Human Behavior* 2014,(41), 464–470.

Acknowledgements

This study had not any financial support. We fully appreciated all managers of educating groups in Bushehr province who helped us in all parts of the research.