

*Successful School Leadership:
Linking with Learning and
Achievement* by C. Day, P.
Sammons, K. Leithwood, A.
Harris, D. Hopkins, Q. Gu, E.
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Successful School Leadership focuses on the “most extensive empirical study of contemporary leaderships in primary and secondary schools in England” (p. xvii) and the findings that were concluded based on empirical works. This book is a great resource for individuals who either are seeking a leadership role or currently practicing in the educational setting. In other words, the authors have primarily targeted this book for school leaders and senior teachers, educational policy makers and individuals interested in leadership. As data driven decision making process is one of the key driving forces in education, this book acts as a great resource for today’s leaders to make decisions based on a valid and credible empirical study.

Organized into 12 chapters, the authors presented their findings from their research, which was to identify the specific practices that should be implemented touching on areas such as the unique

values, qualities, and behaviors related to each phase of school improvement. In the book, the authors presented the methods and strategies used in successful schools in order to create a model for other schools and school leaders to follow. Through their research, the authors attempted to identify and describe the unique values, qualities, and behaviors related to each phase of school improvement. One of the central claims is that “there is a core set of practices that almost all successful (school) leaders use” as well as “to have their desired effect; these practices must be enacted in ways that are sensitively appropriate to the context in which leaders find themselves” (p. 3). The authors did a great job at conveying their findings in a well-structured way that other leaders can easily follow; additionally, all of their work was researched based in order to add to the credibility and validity of the findings.

The authors presented their findings based on statistical analysis of the main variables that have an affiliation with student outcomes such as teacher performance, teacher's motivation, teacher's abilities and the work setting. This consistent formula was used to quantify their data for comparison. Their research design was aimed to identify the specific practices that should be implemented to make a school successful. The researchers were able to describe the unique values, qualities, and behaviors related to each phase of school improvement that should be implemented based on a large sample size and ample successful models. In order to support their findings, and add validity to their claims, the authors used both quantifiable data as well as qualitative data; they created a model for variable interactions at different phases of the work to constantly adjust and modify the surveys and results.

The authors impetus for *Successful School Leadership* was to build upon the results from the research in order to "refine existing models of school leadership" by creating a successful model that can be followed by other schools looking to raise pupil success. In order to create this model, the researchers aimed to provide ample, reliable data that would add validity to their claims in identifying the largest influences in successful leadership practices. The research was geared towards schools that demonstrated significant increases in pupil attainment levels during a relatively short period (in this case three years). With over 200 peer-reviewed articles acting as support for the research of this book, the authors clearly invested ample time to supporting their findings as well as the research itself with the findings of many others.

There are 3 parts and 10 chapters in this book. The first part lays the foundation of the book and summarizes main research findings; this section is labelled context for success. The second part focuses on leadership actions and learner outcomes, which focus on linking the two entities to identify their relationship. The third part focuses on the leadership component; this section talks about who the heads are in a building and how they play a role in building and sustaining success. The fourth and final part talks about future progress and prospects as well as identifies the ten key claims as mentioned earlier.

In the first two chapters, the authors identified the primary aim of the leadership research project that was to discover what successful school leaders do. Then, the authors presented a variety of theories for school leadership; these theories presented a nice foundation to show the reader

different ways that leadership is implemented today. Most of this section spoke about how the research was done, and how each component of the research was connected and therefore analyzed.

In chapter 3, the authors mentioned the methods used for data collections. As they said, the aim was "to identify and map empirically grounded direct and indirect causal and associative relationships between effective leadership and pupil outcomes" (p. 36). This section included the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative findings in order to support the findings with a solid data component. Chapter 4 then identifies various connections between primary and secondary leaders; this includes components such as direction, values, school improvement plans and more.

Chapter 5 deals with characteristics and practices of leaders in schools. The authors share their findings about the observed leaders in a school setting; they spoke about the leadership involvement in the building and how these leaders achieved the desired growth they worked towards such as "improving and enhancing teacher quality" (p. 112). Chapter 6 states the core values and practices of leadership, learning and other topics such as school improvement. Amongst the many core values that the authors identify as important, they found high expectations related to pupil behavior to be particularly imperative. The authors also identified that these values cannot be implemented at random but rather "For these to be successful...it is crucial to learn how the sequencing, timing, ordering and combinations of these strategies many be applied in different contexts" (p. 132).

In chapters 7 and 8, the authors mention the phases of school improvement and leadership strategies for successful school improvement. Referred to as the "line of improvement", the authors dedicated specific focus groups on identifying the strategies and practices in order that contributed to school improvement. In chapter 7 they concluded that "The selection, timing and timeliness of combinations of strategies and the accumulation, intensity and sustained application of these were a result of the heads' contextually sensitive diagnoses of changing individual, organization, community and national policy concerns and needs" (p. 151). Chapter 8 then builds on these lines of improvement, by further specifying the actions and decisions the surveyed leaders made that led them to their success. With these exemplar schools they did find one consistent component that was introduced during the early foundational phase

and continued throughout the remainder of phases which was always ensuring quality of teaching and learning and consistency of teaching practices and performance management of teachers” (p. 187). Additionally, the researchers identified school-wide policies for high expectations regarding behavior and attendance was found to be an essential value. This topic extends to investigate the stages of turning a school around.

In the last two chapters (Chapters 9 and 10), the authors presents the context, climate, trust and distribution of leadership. For a quick reference guide, Chapter 10 offers the key components of the findings in a clear, organized way to easily reference. The authors also shared the strategies that were observed to implement a democracy of leadership in schools. This section elaborates on the claims that the researchers have identified as the most valuable components for schools growth. The authors have supported all their claims with all of their research from a variety of forms to further substantiate it and support its meaningfulness.

Successful School Leadership is written with an extensive use of data usage like research journal articles. The abundance of qualitative data, quantitative data and ample references makes this book one of a kind. In terms its information presentation, this book is not reader-friendly for general readers. The book reads more like a journal article than a book for the average educators. With that being said, since the targeted audience being teachers and administrators, the book would be more beneficial if it was written in a slightly simpler form conveying the same information. Also, the book is written with educators with the UK readers in mind, this book may not be equally useful for readers who have different experiences in American schools and colleges. However, the authors are not failed to present research-based models of school leadership and school improvement. Overall, this is a well-written, useful book that presents some amazing insight for both administrators and teachers alike that want to make academic progress in their school.