

**Improving the Emotional Intelligence Competencies of
Principals and Vice-Principals in an Educational
Organization: An Exploratory Study**

A Dissertation submitted by
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ABSTRACT

Research has recognized that the principal is second only to the teacher in regards to impact on student learning (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006) and the importance of emotional intelligence competencies of school leaders has been highlighted by Fullan (2014). As school districts strive to improve student learning and achievement, the emotional intelligence competencies of the principal/vice-principals can play a critical role in leveraging this influence.

While studies have shown that emotional intelligence competencies can be improved upon over time (Groves, McEnrue, & Shen, 2008), research has not focused on whether all individuals benefit from specific training or what other factors may be influencing any improvement. This research study examined both of these aspects by investigating whether the emotional intelligence competencies of principals and vice-principals improved through participation in a focused professional development training program and what factors influenced any change. Participants in the study held positions of educational leadership within specific publically funded school districts in Ontario, Canada.

In this study, a mixed method research approach was utilized with a two phase sequential design. Phase #1 involved quantitative data collection using the EQ-360 measurement tool (Bar-On, 2006). Participants completed a pre-test prior to engaging in the professional development training program and post-test following the training. Demographic information permitted participants to be sorted into sub-groups and statistical comparisons to be drawn between these groups.

Phase #2 involved qualitative in-depth interviews with a probability sample group of participants who had been surveyed in Phase #1. Five key factors that also impacted emotional intelligence capacity emerged from the analysis of the Phase #2 interview data: Journey of Learning; Way of Being; Past Experience; Personal Supports and Professional Networks; and Way of Working.

The findings presented in this study reaffirm that emotional intelligence competencies can be improved through professional development training. As well, variables that impact the ability of principals and vice-principals to improve their emotional intelligence competencies were identified and described. It was then illustrated how these variables interact with one another to support the individual's journey of learning. These variables included Journey of Learning, Way of Being, Past Experience, Personal Supports and Professional Networks, and Way of Working. Whilst these variables were not in the design of the professional development training, they did contribute to the improvement of the participants' emotional intelligence development. The identification and exploration of the interrelationship of these variables provide new knowledge, not previously identified in the literature.

Further, the study presents a framework for developing emotional intelligence competencies. This framework focuses on fostering commitment, adopting a professional learning model, developing readiness, targeting audience and promoting supports. It is from an exploration of this framework that a number of recommendations were made which will assist school districts in becoming more aware of the effectiveness of professional development training programs and better able to support the development of the emotional intelligence competencies of its principals and vice-principals.

Whilst this study focused on the experiences in a professional development training program of a group of principals and vice-principals in five Ontario school districts, the general findings should have significance to other school districts that provide similar large scale professional development training. Consideration and implementation of the recommendation from the findings from this study have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of similar professional development training in their education district, region or system.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Signature of Supervisor

Date

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