

Georgia Educational Research Association

*In Progress (Data collection is scheduled to begin Fall 2014)

Proposal Title:

Emotional Intelligence and its role in the process of informing how effective school leaders lead in urban elementary K-5 schools.

Purpose:

The purpose of this instrumental qualitative case study is to explore how urban K-5 educational leader's emotions affect/effect their work particularly, how they identify, use, understand, and manage their emotions to better inform their daily decisions and practice (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

Research Question(s):

How do K-5 urban educational leaders understand their emotions and the effects on the ways in which they lead their schools and make daily decisions?

Sub Question (s):

1. How do educational leaders use emotions to inform daily decisions?
2. How do educational leaders identify their own and other's emotions and feelings?
3. How do educational leaders express their emotional self in their work environment?
4. How do educational leaders harness their emotions to motivate themselves and others?

Theoretical Framework: Emotional Intelligence Ability Model

(Salovey, and Mayer, 1997)

For the purpose of this qualitative study Mayer and Salovey's (1997) four-branch ability model of emotional intelligence will be used. This particular model focuses on four interrelated core abilities: Identifying/Perceiving Emotions, Using Emotions, Understanding Emotions and Managing Emotions (as cited in Riggio & Lee, 2007, p.421). Researchers Riggio & Lee (2007) further explain the four core capabilities as follows:

1. Identifying emotions is the ability to identify accurately one's own and others emotions and feelings, as well as possessing the ability to express these emotions. Identifying emotions is composed of specific skills, including: emotional awareness which allows individual to distinguish different emotions; expression of emotion, involving the ability to effectively communicate how one feels; reading other people's emotions (from facial expressions and other behavioral cues; and reading between the lines (when a person expresses one emotion but feels another) (p.421).
2. Using emotions involve the thinking process by using emotion to inform decisions; while paying attention to another's perspective; thinking differently and using emotions to problem solve (p.421).
3. Understanding emotions is the skill in comprehending complex emotions and how they operate in the social world. A foundation of understanding emotions

involved possessing an accurate vocabulary of emotions and understanding the cause and effect relationship of emotions.

4. Managing emotions involves both self-awareness of the emotions one is experiencing, the ability to harness emotions for the purpose of motivation or inspiration, the ability to control emotions so that emotions do not overwhelm the individual or govern inappropriate or undesirable actions (p.421).

Theory Selection Rationale:

My experience as a former Assistant Principal and Interim Principal in a K-5 urban elementary school, has led me to study how emotional intelligence competencies effect urban educational leadership, hence, urban principal's success in challenging environments. Researchers (Sternberg, 1985; Salovey and Mayer, 1990, 1997; Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1995, 1998, 2006; Goleman, 2002) have provided new insights into the correlation between emotional and social intelligence competencies related to highly effective urban leadership. Interested in how urban leaders' emotional intelligence informs their leadership style and leadership effectiveness, I have chosen to use Salovey and Mayer's, 1997 Emotional Intelligence Ability Model.

Methodology: Research Design

This study will rely heavily on capturing and deeply understanding the daily experiences of four educational leaders, who work and lead in urban K-5 learning environments. As such, a qualitative exploratory case study approach will allow the researcher to further establish positive interactions with the participants throughout the study while retaining a holistic and real-world perspective (Yin, 2014 p.4).

Furthermore, the collection of several forms of data will include interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and observations, which will provide robust insights into the emotional life of urban K-5 leaders (Creswell, 2012, p.100).

Research Paradigm

Researchers “Denzin and Lincoln, 2011 (as cited in Creswell, 2012) consider the philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology) as key premises that are folded into interpretative frameworks used in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2012, p. 22-23). As such, an interpretive social constructivist paradigm will be used as the philosophical framework for this study. Individuals seek to make meaning of their lives, and do so by developing subjective meanings of their experiences (Ibid, p.24). Due to the variety of their experiences, the researcher has an obligation to look for the complexity and nuances in these experiences rather than accepting superficial, narrow meanings (Creswell, 2012, p. 24). Therefore, it will be vital that the participant’s (educational leaders) emotional selves are fully observed in various contexts and their work environments thoroughly investigated and critically understood. Suffice it to say, the constructivist researcher, “...focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2012, p.25).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher will be an active participant, whereby; the researcher will engage and build positive and respectful relationships for the duration of the study. Furthermore, the researcher will work diligently to co-construct meaning between the participants of

the study; to deeply understand the context of their work life and to learn how their emotions inform their daily practice and decisions as urban K-5 educational leaders (Creswell, 2014). Please note, that the researcher will openly share and honestly discuss biases held regarding emotions and educational leadership due to her former positions as an urban K-5 Assistant Principal and an Interim Principal.

Participants

The four to six (voluntary) participants recruited for this study will be full-time K-5 elementary school principals who will be selected to participate in this study from the following criteria:

a) Effective school leadership as identified by their direct supervisors (in areas of school climate, student achievement, community relationships, communication with stake-holders, teacher retention and leadership development);

b) Participants must be either an Assistant Principal or Principal with 5-10 years work experience leading in a K-5 urban Title 1 elementary school;

c) Participants must be between 35-55 years old; (rationale for specific age group is emotional and cognitive maturity).

d) Participants must hold a Georgia certification in educational leadership and a Master's, Specialist or Ed.D/Ph.D degree in Educational Leadership.

