

Public Abstract

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Title:A STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PLANNING PROCESS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Currently, in the United States 75%, of school buildings are in need of repair or renovation. The current physical condition of those school buildings and the effect they have on educational achievement has been a major topic of concern among policymakers, community members, parents, taxpayers, and educators. Just to bring the United States' existing schools into acceptable conditions would take an estimated \$127 billion (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000). Along with concerns related to a school's adverse physical environment, many school districts are facing facility issues due to overcrowding. Significant increases in student population brought about by immigration, migration, suburban sprawl, and the baby boom echo have led many schools to exceed the student capacity they were designed to accommodate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). These current issues of overcrowding and adverse physical conditions of schools make it clear that educational leaders and the school community as a whole must be prepared to address and plan for school districts' facilities needs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000).

The extensive need to renovate, replace, and plan educational facilities may sound like an overwhelming task, but it also presents a great opportunity for educational leaders to plan and design schools that will meet the needs of students being educated in the 21st century. In order for leaders to successfully address the planning and design of educational facilities, research should be undertaken that examines the authentic context of the planning process. Examining the educational facilities planning process may provide insight into the social and political dimensions that are present within the context of the planning process. Insight into the political and social dimensions of change may allow leaders to successfully guide stakeholders through the social and political dimensions of change.

The purpose of investigating this planning episode was to develop an understanding of how an educational leader guided stakeholders through the social and political dimensions that existed within the authentic context of the planning process. Three major themes emerged from the in-depth interviews and data analysis. First, the leader engaged key stakeholders to create a collaborative and meaningful planning process. Second, the effective actions of the leader contributed to a meaningful planning process. Third, the leader successfully shaped the context of the planning process.

In reference to engaging key stakeholders to create a collaborative and meaningful planning process, the data analysis resulted in the emergence of three themes: (1) involving key stakeholders, (2) listening to key stakeholders, and (3) developing a flexible planning process. In reference to the actions of the leader contributing to a meaningful planning process, four themes emerged from the data: (1) establishing credibility, (2) envisioning the future, (3) empowering key stakeholders, and (4) ensuring parity. In reference to the leader shaping the context of the planning process, one specific theme emerged from the data: (1) shaping the context of the planning process.