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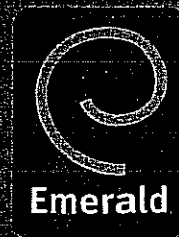
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Organizational learning: teachers' perceptions of the "ideal student" trait system

734

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Abstract This study relates to a setting which approaches organizational learning. The professional ideal student trait system and the personal value system, as perceived by prospective and practicing teachers, are presented as constructs of the belief system. Conclusions are drawn from a comparative analysis of seven samples. Although the constructs of the personal value system and the ideal high school student trait system were similar, their content priorities were different, focusing professionally on academic traits and personally on interpersonal values. The structure of the ideal high school student multivariate system confirmed Schwartz's bipolar continue value model: conservation versus openness to change and self-transcendence versus self-enhancement. Two techniques for organizational learning are presented for promoting, theorizing, and evaluating teachers' perceptions of the ideal student trait system.

Introduction

Organizational learning is a perspective frequently used to better understand non-school organizations, but it has only rarely been applied to schools (Leithwood *et al.*, 1998). With the continuing demands for restructuring, it seems reasonable to view the school as a learning organization (Leithwood and Seashore-Louis, 1998). The last decade has witnessed a wide range of efforts to improve on typical strategies for fostering the individual and collective learning of teachers, as well as to better support, acknowledge, reward, or use teachers' abilities (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 1998). Though teachers enjoy individual autonomy when school values are vague or when there is little consensus regarding what is expected of teachers is low, they cannot count on colleagues to reinforce their objectives. On the other hand, clear shared values and norms maximize the likelihood of teacher success. Values are reflected in practice (Seashore-Louis and Leithwood, 1998). Following this view, the assumption underlying this study is that the "ideal student" trait system, as perceived by prospective and practicing teachers, is an operational definition of teachers' educational goals (Maslovaty and Iram, 1997). The perception of the "ideal student" is influenced by the teachers' personal and social belief systems (Maslovaty and Gaziel, 1997), which greatly influence the way



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