Using Collaboration and Agency to Reimagine Leadership in Education

They ensured continuity of learning and the well-being of students and families.

The COVID-19 pandemic placed teachers and school leaders as education’s front-line responders.

The pandemic, in places, forced a redistribution of power, enabling teachers and school leaders to re-evaluate priorities and make decisions about how best to support their communities.

What can we learn from how professional collaboration and the capacity to exercise agency were manifested throughout the pandemic?

The pandemic created locally responsive and diverse approaches to curriculum and teaching methods.

There was a decrease in models favouring performativity and standardisation.

There was an increase in teachers and school leaders designing their own forms of collaboration for purposes and goals determined by the results of their self-evaluation, and reflection on community needs.

Professional expertise and community knowledge in decision-making had a positive impact.

Teachers and leaders with greater agency were able to make more informed decisions, develop greater professional capital and build an even more sophisticated understanding of their professional identity and self-efficacy.

Collaboration thrived when relationships and trust were emphasised and commonalities were sought across language used, organisational cultures and social systems at play.

Teachers, school leaders and education systems are key to building better societies, but to achieve these laudable goals, broader consideration of the systemic structures and mechanisms that frame their work is required.

Results from this study, using Scotland and Hong Kong as contexts of study, revealed...

- Professional collaboration that enables responsive approaches to emerging community needs requires critical reflection on the forms it takes, the drivers behind it, and the influences on it.
- Teachers, school leaders and education systems are key to building better societies, but to achieve these laudable goals, broader consideration of the systemic structures and mechanisms that frame their work is required.
- This review won the ICSEI/JPCC Innovation Award 2021.

Rethinking professional collaboration and agency in a post-pandemic era

Professional Capital and Community

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