Rural Alberta Educational Leaders' Perspectives on Accountability

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Exploratory Multicase Study

- How some rural Alberta school superintendents and principals make sense of accountability
- The implications of the superintendents and principals' understanding of accountability on their leadership practices to improve student learning
- The effect of the evolution of Alberta accountability policy on leadership practices

Context

- Alberta Education Renewed Funding Framework, 2003
- From *Statement of Responsibility* to *Statement of Accountability*, 2004
- Accountability Pillar Overall Summary Report
- Rural disparity in income, occupations, and educational attainment
- Rural-urban reading gap
- Rural de-population
- Remote, rural, countryside

Research Methodology

- February to May 2008
- Qualitative research
- Exploratory multicase study
  - 34 Semi-structured interviews
  - 4 Alberta Education officials
  - 10 Superintendents
  - 10 Principals
  - 10 Teachers
  - Document analysis

Conclusions

- Leaders' perceptions of accountability and leadership practices are reciprocal in nature
- Leaders, who are recognized for improving learning, have a shared meaning of accountability and similar leadership practices
- Mediated accountability may be distracting leaders from developing more suitable accountability models to improve learning

Recommendations

- Balanced approach to accountability focused on learning
- Acknowledgement of professional responsibility
- Balancing of professional and bureaucratic accountability – accounting to the student/parent and the public/state
- Capitalize on the collaborative relationships already in place to build trust, capacity, and a balanced accountability framework