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How Can Comprehensive School Reform Models be Successfully Implemented?

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Abstract :

This text uses the Theory of Policy Attributes developed by Porter in the 1980s to demonstrate that the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) in the United States must be specific, consistent, powerful, stable and authoritative in order to ensure successful, lasting implementation. This reform pertaining to comprehensive schools proposes a practical view of changes to the education system and better understanding of how school reforms need to be implemented.

History and Definition of the CSR

The author begins by going back over the two "waves" of school reforms in the U.S. since the 1980s. She considers the CSR to be a third-wave reform designed to be more comprehensive, i.e. a whole-school reform rather than a group-specific reform. The CSR is not limited to specific subjects, programs or teaching methods, but rather is meant to find a school's failings and solutions for these. These failings are identified based on literature showing the main characteristics of successful schools.

Importance of Implementation

The author stresses the importance of implementation. She explains that the degree of implementation needs to be evaluated before results can be linked to a specific plan. To evaluate implementation, the scope of the measures introduced by schools and the extent of the schools' support of the CSR objectives should first be determined. However, the degree of implementation can vary considerably from one school to the next or within the same school. Reform is a real challenge to take up and constitutes a slow process. That is why the degree of implementation needs to be measured properly before rushing to establish links between reform plans and students' academic results. What is more, successful implementation can come in several different shapes and be analyzed in several different ways. According to this theory, the five policy components required for implementation to be successful are specificity, consistency, authority, power and stability.

Key Words :

Implementation, Whole-School Reform, Theory of Policy Attributes, Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), School Environment

Monitored Countries :

United States