

Title: Longevity in Independent School Heads: From Organizational Change, Educational Beliefs, and Leadership Styles Perspectives

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Few articles have been written concerning longevity of heads in independent schools. Heads of schools are asked to leave each year in independent institutions, and boards of trustees spend an increasing amount of effort, time, and money on changes in their leadership. Independent school administrators move approximately every 5.5 years, the national average according to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) in their 1999 annual report.

In response to this concern, this study was undertaken to identify the factors that relate to the tenure of heads of independent schools, which, if changed or modified, may increase the longevity of these heads and help reduce the disruption in the schools caused by the heads' premature departures. This study examined three constructs of Organizational Change, Educational Beliefs, and Leadership Styles, as they relate to the longevity of independent school heads.

One thousand fifty surveys were sent to the heads of NAIS member schools in the United States and their response rate was 384, a 37% return. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of independent school heads and their perceptions

of three theoretical constructs. Chi-square data tests were also used to determine how the three constructs influenced longevity issues.

The survey results indicated that the average tenure of those heads was 6.45 years. In the area of Demographics, the age of the heads was found to link to longevity. In the construct area of Organizational Change, change was not linked to longevity, nor was input into strategic plans significant to longevity. In the construct area of Educational Beliefs, education during board meetings was not linked to longevity. In the construct area of Leadership Styles, heads' competency (solvency) was related to longevity, as was a partnership between heads and trustees.

These findings encourage the need for additional research which studies change in the schools as a positive or negative, collaboration and trust between constituents of the schools, length of service of trustees, and learning preferences and visions of both trustees and heads.