

MENTORSHIP AND THE CHALLENGES OF NOVICE SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS

A study of the views of selected elementary school principals.

BY

DARRYL A. STEVENSON

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree
of

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Foundations and Psychology
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Darryl A. Stevenson

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree**

Of

Master of Education

Darryl A. Stevenson @ 2008

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing recognition in Manitoba, as in many other jurisdictions, of an impending shortage of teacher leaders to fill vacant administrative positions. Thus, an interest in finding how best to attract, support, and guide novice principals has emerged. The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges identified by selected novice elementary school principals working in an urban, western Canadian public school setting who completed their first year as a school principal, and the extent to which they believed that some form of a formal mentorship program for new principals would have assisted them in meeting these challenges. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions: (1) what key challenges (socialization, technical skills, self-awareness) did new elementary school principals identify in their first year in the position; (2) did new elementary school principals believe that a formal mentorship would be valuable in assisting them to respond effectively to some or all of these challenges; and (3) if new elementary school principals believe that a formal mentorship program would be of value, what would be the key elements of such a program and was there agreement among the principals on these features?

Daresh's (2002) framework, in which he categorizes the challenges encountered by novice elementary principals into three: technical, socialization, and self-awareness was, utilized in this study. Qualitative research methodology was used in this study. Participants were four elementary school principals, who in the 2006-2007 year, were in their second year of appointment as principals of elementary schools. All four novice elementary principals were individually interviewed as well as participated in a focus group session. The results clearly outlined that the challenges identified could be easily

organized into technical, socialization and self-awareness categories, each area clearly of importance to the novice elementary principal.

The study further suggests that Daresh's formulation identifying the categories of technical skills, socialization, and self-awareness was useful in identifying ten themes that represented challenges for the Winnipeg area novice elementary principals. These themes were: (i) communication issues, (ii) the budget and staffing processes, (iii) building management, and (iv) planning (each fitting into Daresh's category of technical skills); (v) adapting to the new role of principal; (vi) brevity, variety and fragmentation of their workload; and, (vii) change and the existing school culture (Daresh's socialization category); and, (viii) recognizing one's newfound authority as principal, (ix) confidence and delegation, and (x) balance in one's professional and private lives (Daresh's category of self-awareness).

The findings in this study also concluded that all of the novice elementary principals thought a mentorship program would be valuable in assisting them in meeting a number of challenges. The participants in the study established and agreed that a major goal of the program was to assist new administrators in successfully filling their leadership roles in their respective schools. Some of the key agreed upon elements of a formal mentorship program included: (i) the program would be voluntary; (ii) novice principals have the opportunity to choose a mentor; (iii) proteges have an opportunity to 'opt' out of the program; and (iv) principals would be in the program for one full year.

As no Winnipeg area school division currently has any formal mentorship program for novice school principals, this study recommends that school divisions in Winnipeg meet with novice administrators to discuss the merits of implementing a formal

mentorship program within the existing divisions and identify what the key elements of such a program, if supported, would be.

It is also recommended that Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth in consultation with the Council of School Leaders continue to explore how best to prepare candidates that move into administration positions across the province, and the role that some form of formal mentorship program might play in such a process.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father. Both, though my mother in spirit, offered me constant encouragement, faith and support as I began and completed this process. To Mom and Dad, "Thank you for being there".

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PREFACE: MY STORY

All of the children who were so special, the colleagues that I admired, the parents with whom I had challenges, and the administrators whom I observed as I worked with them, all influenced the type of school leader that I aspired to become. I had three reasons for becoming a school administrator. First, I loved working with children. Preparing students for life in our democratic society by facilitating a love of learning in our schools was, and still is, very important to me. As school leaders, we are not only responsible for assisting in the teaching of subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics, but also for stimulating and developing in our youth a thirst for knowledge.

Philosophically, I had a strong desire to instil a basic understanding of the values of our society, the difference between right and wrong, the idea that life choices have consequences, and to foster the self-discipline and self-esteem which accompany that understanding. It was critical for me to equip students with the essential tools to become lifelong learners. These tools included fundamental skills in the ability to communicate, manage information, use numbers, think and problem solve. Schools today are faced with challenges of providing an effective learning environment for students who come from a diverse array of ethnic, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds. I strongly believed that in order to meet the needs of all students (including special needs students, whether they be gifted and talented or multi-handicapped), learning needs to be constructive, activity based, include cooperative learning strategies and be reinforced through thematic and integrated learning experiences.

My second reason for becoming a school administrator was because of the experience of working with a number of effective principals and vice-principals during

my tenure as a middle years and high school teacher over twelve years. During this time I observed and reflected on each and every one of them and their skills as effective administrators. Though I preferred the participatory leadership style that most of my school administrators had, it was very easy for me to pick certain positive qualities from all of the school administrators, which helped formulate my leadership philosophy. Most of the school administrators that I worked with were supportive of each and every individual in the school, committed to new initiatives, created a positive school culture, and loved working with students. Another important characteristic that I respected in the school principals and vice-principals with whom I worked with was their high visibility in and about the school. Spending time in classrooms, stairwells, corridors, and throughout the building gave these school administrators a chance to share good news and caring words with the staff, students, community members, and parents as well as overseeing building safety.

I did not embrace a number of negative characteristics that I observed in some of my school administrators, such as having no sense of direction, not supporting risk taking, maintaining the status quo, being confined to the office or having no clear expectations. However, after twelve years of teaching middle years and high school, observing and studying a number of administrators during my tenure, and learning about leadership styles during the completion of the pre-master's phase of my post-graduate program years ago, I believed that I possessed the experience, knowledge, and skills to embark on a journey toward becoming a vice-principal, and eventually a principal.

The third reason why I became a school administrator was because the role of a school administrator had always intrigued me. Based on my teaching experiences, I

firmly believed that school administration was an extension of the classroom. It appeared to provide a further opportunity for me to make more of an impact and difference in the lives of others. The pace of work seemed quite energizing; one was not confined to the four walls of a classroom; there always seemed to be something going on; and the ensuing responsibility was challenging to me. There also appeared to be the unending opportunity to test my professional competency for the problem solving that all school administrators did, coupled with the opportunity to play a more significant role in the overall vision and culture of the school.

I developed my philosophy of educational leadership through my interaction with students, varied experiences as a classroom teacher, pivotal relationships with colleagues, and observations and relationships with school principals and vice-principals. These factors played an important role in my desire to become a school administrator.

Equipped with post-graduate course work, twelve years of teaching experience, and my philosophy of leadership, I was ready for my first administrative position. I had very high expectations of myself and I expected to make a difference. I expected to be successful even though I lacked formal administrative experience. This proved to be a challenging and somewhat turbulent goal for me as a novice administrator.

I was excited when I was offered the vice-principalship at an inner-city school in the Winnipeg School Division. I was born and raised in the "core-area" of Winnipeg in what is now designated the "inner city," and I was fortunate to have the opportunity to "give back" to my community. But becoming an elementary vice-principal was an unpredictable and complicated experience. As a middle years and high school teacher,

largely unfamiliar with the elementary experience, I expected challenges, but I was not prepared for the scope of difficulties that I encountered.

I had worked for twelve years at an inner city high school, teaching a variety of grade seven to twelve subjects during my tenure. I had participated in the school division's Personnel Development Program (PDP), a leadership program for teachers, and I also pursued other leadership initiatives within the school division. I was excited, but surprised when I was appointed vice-principal of an inner city elementary school. I had not taught in an elementary school setting before, let alone served as an administrator. However, during the summer preceding my beginning as a new vice-principal, I quickly immersed myself in school documents, handbooks, policy manuals, directives, curriculum, staff meeting minutes, and parent advisory council minutes. As a new school administrator, I believed it was very important for one to be acutely aware of the history, philosophy, and most importantly, the culture of the school.

Once the school year commenced, the sudden elation and excitement was interspersed with fear and trepidation. The pace of the work quickened, and did not let up. As the school administrator primarily responsible for student discipline (a role inherited by most vice-principals), every day was hectic, and at times chaotic. The daily working of my life as a beginning school administrator was one of brevity, variety and fragmentation. Brevity, in the sense that it appeared as if all of my interactions were brief, non-stop, hectic and often unpredictable. There was always an assortment of things going on. Variety, because my day was filled up with a multitude of short tasks on a broad range of topics. One minute I would be talking to patrols and the next minute to our parent council chairperson. The next moment, a parent group would come into my

office asking how to facilitate the process of having religious instruction in the school, followed by a parent who called complaining that our students were trespassing on a vacant lot across the street. I would be in the middle of planning professional development activities for the staff and would receive a call at the same time from the school division building department asking when they could remove the graffiti from our new play structure. Fragmentation, because I was addressing a continuous flow of issues during an interrupted work schedule responding to the demands, needs, and problems of staff, student, parents, school trustees, and superintendents. Many decisions had to be made rapidly, yet carefully, as I was expected to be, along with the principal, the central problem solver – I was however, always invariably interrupted during these tasks.

Even though I was thoroughly enjoying my experience as a first year administrator, some of the inherent challenges were quite frustrating. Coming to the position, I wish I had known more about the basic technical and managerial skills critical in the role of school administrator such as budgeting and personnel management issues. I also wished that I was more acutely aware of the culture of the school. For me, elementary schools and high schools appeared to be culturally on opposite ends of the spectrum. For example, parents seemed to play a more active role in their children's education. Also, teachers appeared to be more receptive to best practices in teaching in areas such as differentiated instruction. A better understanding of the existing culture of my new school invariably would have helped me fit into my role and responsibilities as a vice-principal. Last, I continued to develop my self-awareness skills, in essence my interpersonal skills, in front of a staff and community, as a new vice-principal. Who was I as a new vice-principal? What did I believe as a new vice-principal? What did others

see and hear when they saw and listened to me as a new vice-principal? I was no longer a "colleague," I was now viewed as a school administrator. Needless to say, the experiences in my personal life, university training, teaching tenure and leadership preparation programs in no way afforded me a glimpse of what life would be like as a novice administrator, I was experiencing a degree of difficulty in socializing to my new role as vice- principal.

As each month passed however, and I began to make sense of my role as a school administrator and to understand the school dynamics and culture of the school, I really began to enjoy my new role as a vice-principal. The brevity, variety and fragmentation of the job did not change, and the pace did not really slow down. Each day began and ended with a high degree of unpredictability and interruptions were constant. I was able however, to adapt to this ever-changing work cycle, and actually understand and appreciate it as the norm. As the year progressed, I also slowly began to acquire those critical skills of a school administrator.

A pivotal and integral part of my transition from teacher to administrator was the informal mentoring relationships that I sought with well-respected and seasoned administrators. I took the initiative to informally visit a number of elementary, middle years and high school principals once a month and dialogue with them about the nature, challenges and intricacies of the job. I embarked on this mentoring sojourn throughout the year and it became a priority for me. Coupled with a great supportive and mentoring relationship with my principal, my informal mentoring experiences allowed me to understand, clarify and develop my role as a school administrator.

My personal interest in the topic of this thesis stems from my first experience of being a vice-principal in an inner city school, and subsequent appointment as an elementary principal in a suburban school within the same school division. I have experienced the transition from teacher to administrator first hand. In retrospect, I enjoyed the process immensely, experienced a steep learning curve and inevitably acquired the broad scope of skills needed to be an effective school administrator. As mentioned, I was very fortunate to have facilitated a number of informal mentoring relationships with well-respected and seasoned principals and be guided by their expertise. But I have often reflected on this question: do most novice administrators take the initiative in establishing informal mentoring relationships with veteran administrators? Or, do they "learn the ropes," on their own through trial and error, precipitating the possibility of them either "sinking" or "swimming" in their roles as school administrator? Having gone through the socialization experience from teacher to school administrator, I have often pondered the kind of supports that novice principals need in the early years of their careers to help them develop into successful educational leaders. What elements of a mentorship program would assist beginning principals with meeting the challenges, obtaining the critical skills, and becoming effective school leaders at the onset of their careers? It is ironic that though the literature states that assisting leaders is now viewed as an important part of ensuring that schools can be more effective, and that effective schools have effective principals, the needs of principals may often be overlooked in our efforts to meet the needs of students and teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This study examines what a small group of novice elementary school principals perceived to be the major challenges that they faced in their new roles, as well as their perceptions of the potential value that a formal mentorship program might hold for them. The elementary principalship has often been characterized as one of the most demanding, satisfying and widely sought positions in education. Frequent and significant interaction with teachers, students, and parents provide elementary principals with more professional and personal intrinsic rewards than may be possible at other levels of school administration. The reasons are twofold: (1) generally elementary principals maintain a closer working relationship with teachers, students, and parents, and therefore (2) have more continuing contact with and impact on instructional programs, curricula, and all operational phases of the school program. And yet, the responsibility placed upon elementary principals is as demanding as those at other levels of administration (Moore, 1999, p. 2), and each year the work of all school administrators appears to grow in complexity. Consequently, as teachers transition into the role of school administrator and its many demands, a question arises: what would be the potential value of a mentorship program in assisting them in meeting these challenges?

1.1.1. The Challenges Facing School Districts/Divisions and Novice Elementary School Principals

New elementary school principals, like their experienced colleagues, are expected to carry out their duties and generally fulfill their multiple roles flawlessly throughout the day. They must excel as managers, instructional leaders, public relations advocates, special education experts, community liaisons, and problem solvers. The challenges confronting new administrators are compounded as they are expected not only to be educational leaders and builders of healthy relationships within the school community, but also to adhere to government mandates and be accountable. School administrators are continuously confronted with societal problems reflected in student populations such as school safety, drug use, teen pregnancy and teen suicide. Isolation on the job, work overload, increased responsibilities, coupled with the lack of technical expertise, role preparation and role clarification have caused stress for many beginning school administrators.

In response to these new demands on principals and vice-principals, the role of the school administrator is in many contexts being re-conceptualized (Browne-Ferrigno & Shoho, 2002), changing from a traditional authoritarian, top-down hierarchical position to dynamic leadership models with management tasks dependent upon contexts or challenges. The effective school administrator of today is one who can address a daily stream of diverse issues needing immediate attention, while concurrently creating school cultures and communities that optimize learning.

Conforming to this new vision, however, leaves many administrators feeling anxious, frustrated and overloaded. Novice administrators often report difficulty in

balancing technical and managerial tasks while also performing as visionary and instructional leaders who must meet the diverse expectations of superintendents and school board members (Daresh, 2002; 1997). As a result, today's school administrators are being pulled in different directions and some are experiencing a great deal of stress (Watters, 1999).

To add to the complexity of the problem, most school administrators who come from the teaching ranks bring with them the knowledge of the classroom environment, adherence to and support of their union's continuing demands, and information that they have acquired in administration preparation programs and university courses. As in the case of most novice vice-principals, they have been confined to a single room with approximately 30 students, and their lives have been directed and influenced by school administrators. They are now, when appointed to an administrative position, thrust into the role of school administrator and are expected to make the emotional leap from supervisor of students to supervisor of students and adults. Moving from the collegial context of their classrooms where they felt secure and competent, into areas that challenge their most basic beliefs about themselves as school leaders, leave many feeling isolated, overwhelmed, and disenchanted with the job (Aiken, 2001). As promising new principals move into these "treacherous waters" of school administration (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1994, p. 42), they find themselves struggling with feelings of isolation, problems of time management, a complexity of student/family problems, and unfamiliar challenges associated with working through the art of political compromise, as they learn how to deal with school boards and teacher unions (Aiken, 2001). As a result,

many novice administrators not only feel that they are inadequately prepared for their new roles, but they also experience difficulties and challenges understanding their role.

It is my belief that novice elementary principals face a number of significant challenges on the job and are not fully prepared to assume their duties without informal relationships, formal mentorship programs, and/or other support networks. Most administrators have known more experienced colleagues who have influenced their careers. They are the mentors –wise and trusted counsellors, coaches and teachers. Most school administrator can name several mentors who have played a key role in helping them socialize to the position and thus advance in their personal and professional lives. Often the relationships are developed naturally and informally through personal relationships. But with fewer teachers applying for administrative positions (Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Moore, 1999; Reninhan, 1999) coupled with many seasoned principals retiring in the near future, what components of a formal mentorship program would assist novice principals in their first years on the job?

The literature emphasizes the importance of a variety of principal preparation and induction programs, and many school districts/divisions are continuing to develop partnerships with universities, there is still a critical need in North America to attract skilled administrators (Gonzalez, 1997). Our current system of public education in Canada is at an important point with a large number of experienced administrators retiring or quickly approaching this milestone. The literature also suggests that there is the potential for a crisis in North America as a result of the reluctance of teachers to step into administrative roles (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001; Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Moore, 1999; Reedy, 2005). With the anticipated turnover of principals and the

purported shortcomings of university preparation, additional and different methods of principal preparation warrant close attention (Podlubny, 1999, p. 7).

1.1.2. Mentoring and the Preparation of School Administrators

The academic and professional education literature identifies a variety of approaches to administrator preparation and induction. The nature and types of administrator preparation and certification program and requirements varies from place to place. However, a consistent feature of administrator certification programs in the United States, albeit less though, in Canada, is participation in graduate studies at the university level. Traditional university coursework characterizes most administration preparation programs in Canada and the United States. Even though it appears that school districts and divisions and universities are now offering evidence of innovative and effective new programs for the preparation, certification and professional development of school administrators, criticism has been heaped on traditional university based administrator preparation programs for not meeting the practical needs of the novice principal. Many universities have been criticized for being overly based in theory and lacking relevant and important clinical experiences for new administrators (Renihan, 1999; Restine, 1997).

For example, in his study, Levine (2005) found the overall quality of educational administration programs at U. S. universities to be poor. He stated:

Their curricula are disconnected from the needs of leaders and their schools. Their professoriate is ill equipped to educate school leaders. Their programs pay insufficient attention to clinical education and mentorship by successful practitioners. The degrees they award are inappropriate to the needs of today's schools and school leaders (p. 23).

This topic, however, will be addressed in more detail in chapter two. A number of other principal preparation programs and induction strategies exist such as apprenticeship and internship programs, mentorship, peer groups, sharing workshops and comprehensive orientation sessions to district procedures - all of which assist aspiring and beginning administrators. In Manitoba, the provincial administrator certification program is currently optional for aspiring and novice vice-principals and principals (Hickcox, 2002).

Given the current scenario of possible large scale retirements of veteran principals, and the reluctance of teachers to move into these positions, can mentoring be an important component of a possible solution? Offering a word of caution, Mertz (2004, p. 541) facetiously states, that "mentoring has been touted to be the 'cure for a thousand ills,' the *sine qua non* of personal development, professional development, and career advancement – not only does everyone who makes it have a mentor, but everyone needs a mentor." Nonetheless, Daresh (2004, p. 496) counters that, "given that the impending shortage of future principals has now arrived, there is value and a need to look at more effective approaches [beyond preparation programs and university courses] for the development of educational leaders" – a formalized mentorship program being a viable alternative. In his study of a mentorship programs for first year school-based administrators, Podlubny (1999) concurs with Daresh but cautions, "formal mentorship programs address many problems but issues still arise with the establishment of such programs, specifically the lack of agreement regarding the components necessary for a successful formal program" (p.6). This study seeks to take up this issue within a single urban school division in the province of Manitoba

1.2. Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

My research focus stemmed from the challenges I encountered not only as a newly appointed vice-principal, but also as a novice elementary principal. Some of the characteristics of the challenges that I recognized and struggled with on the job were brevity, fragmentation and variety (Alvy & Robbins, 1995; Howard, 2000; Lovely, 2004). As well, I experienced workload, time demands and increased requirements for paperwork. I sought a better understanding of my role as a school administrator. I had to become familiar with the school culture. These challenges provided the impetus for me to investigate the challenges and views of novice elementary principals. I have experienced the socialization process during my transition from teacher to principal, and from vice-principal to principal. This personal experience has resonated with me and made me committed to this topic.

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges identified by selected novice elementary school principals working in an urban, Winnipeg-area public school setting in their first year as a school principal, and the extent to which they believe that some form of a formal mentorship program for new principals would have prevented, or assisted them in meeting, these challenges. In this study, the term "challenges" is used to mean expectations and job requirements that new administrators felt unprepared for, and "formal mentorship programs" refer to mentorship programs supported at the school district level.

Specifically, the study will address the following questions:

- (1) *What are the key challenges identified by new elementary school principals in their first year in the position?*

In exploring this question, use will be made of Daresh's (2002) theoretical framework that distinguishes between three categories of challenges: socialization issues, technical skills, and self-awareness.

- (2) *Do elementary school principals believe that a formal mentorship program would be valuable in preventing, or assisting them to respond effectively to, some or all of these challenges?*

- (3) *If new elementary school principals believe that a formal mentorship program would be of value, what would be the key elements of such a program and was there agreement among the principals on these features?*

In exploring research questions two and three, an initial definition of a formal mentorship program will be defined as: a divisionally sponsored mentorship program in which the novice principal is partnered with an experienced and trained veteran public school administrator.

1.3. Research Design

Although the complete research methodology for this research inquiry is described in Chapter Three I will provide a brief overview of the research design at this stage. This research is a qualitative study of the perceptions of four novice Winnipeg area elementary school principals, with regard to the challenges that they have experienced

moving into the principalship, and also their perceptions on whether a formal mentorship program to could reduce, or better support them through, these challenges and what the characteristics of an effective program might be.

Four of six novice elementary school principals in the school division were chosen to take part in this research study. An e-mail was sent out to all six elementary school principals in September, 2006 asking them if they were interested in taking part in the research study. Five out of the six principals expressed an interest in participating in the study, and I selected two females and two males to be the four novice elementary principals in my research study.

Data for the study came from semi-structured, interviews conducted with each of the four principals in February 2007, and from a focus group interview with all four participants conducted in May 2007. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

In order to address the first two research questions, data collected from the interviews were analyzed and each interview segment coded according to its content. These codes were then clustered into themes derived from the literature review and the emergent data. These themes were further grouped into Daresh's three categories of technical skills, socialization, and self-awareness. This analysis is presented in Chapter Four. In the individual interviews each participant indicated that they believed that some sort of formal mentorship program could have been helpful to them in adjusting to their role as elementary school principal. The focus group interview therefore provided the opportunity for the four participants, collectively, to identify what that viewed as some of the critical elements of a useful formal mentorship program. This is reported in Chapter Five.

1.4. Definitions

In this study the following terms will be used as follows.

School Principal: Manitoba Regulation 468/88 *Educational Administration Miscellaneous Provisions Regulation* states (section 27) that “a school board shall designate a principal for every school”, and that (section 28.1) “subject to the *Public Schools Act* and the instructions of the school board, the principal is in charge of the school in respect to all matters of organization, management, instruction, and discipline”. In this study the school principal refers to the person so designated by the school board.

School Administration, Management and Leadership: In the mentorship literature reviewed in this study school principals are variously referred to as “school/educational administrators”, “school/educational managers”, and “school/educational leaders”, and often these terms appear to be used interchangeably. In the literature review of this study the term used by each author cited is adopted, but in the rest of the study the term “school administrator” is the primary term used to describe and include the role of the school principal. While the term has broader application than school principal – extending to the vice-principalship as well as school system positions such as superintendent – it is used here to subsume both the technical dimensions of principals’ school management tasks as well as the visionary and change oriented aspects of school leadership (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Wirt (2004), and serves to highlight the moral and political core of the principal’s work (English, 2003; Hodgkinson, 1999).

Challenges: The term “challenges” is used to mean expectations and job requirements that new administrators felt unprepared for.

Mentoring: For the sake of consistency and clarity, Southworth's (1995) definition of *mentoring* as, "the process of bringing together experienced, competent administrators with beginning colleagues as a way to help them with the transition to the world of school administration" (p. 19) is used in this study.

Formal Mentorship Programs: In this study attention is given those mentorship programs that have official status within the school system as opposed to those established individually and informally. As such, "formal mentorship programs" refer to mentorship programs supported at the school district/division level.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This is a study of the perceptions of only four novice elementary school principals working within a single urban Manitoba school division. This small number of participants provides little scope for examining differences in the perceptions of challenges that might occur between sub-groups of novice elementary school principals, such as, for example, those of gender, ethnicity, or prior teaching experience. Furthermore, since many school divisions have their own recruitment, appointment and training strategies, the challenges identified in this study and the level of support reported for a formal mentorship program for new school principals might be quite different in other jurisdictions.

The focus of this study is also on elementary school principals' perceptions of the challenges they face, and their perceptions of the merits of a formal mentorship program to support them through these perceived challenges. As such it draws heavily on the work of John Daresh (1995; 1998; 2002; 2004). What Daresh's work does not do, and what

this study does not do, is to link the issue of support for new school principals to an outcomes focus on some notion of “improving students’ school success or student learning”. Since Manitoba does not have mandated standards for school principal certification, the issues of challenges and supports analysed in relation to notions of effective school administration embedded in formulations such as the American Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards (Murphy, 2005).

1.6. The Significance of the Study

This study has implications for practitioners, policymakers and researchers. The current average age of school-based principals employed in North America school jurisdictions is skewed toward the age of retirement (Hickox, 2001; Lovely, 2004; Podlubny, 1999). A large turnover within the principalship is currently occurring and demographic trends suggest that this trend will become more problematic in the near future.

It has been suggested (Daresh 2002; Daresh & Playko, 1993) that new administrators’ challenges can be clustered in three distinct areas: (a) problems with self-awareness (understanding who they are, now that they are administrators, and how they are supposed to make use of their authority); (b) limitations on technical expertise (how to do the things they are supposed to do, according to job descriptions); and (c) difficulties with socialization to the profession and individual school systems (learning how to do things in a particular setting – “learning the ropes”). How novice administrators make sense of their new roles and experiences, and how they can be assisted in their transition and socialization as elementary principals has implications on

the creation of support networks that could be implemented to ensure new administrators' success.

This study in Winnipeg, Manitoba offers an insight into the challenges and views of novice elementary principals. It was my intention through this study to determine the kind of support principals need in the early years of their careers, such as a formal mentorship program. The results will be of interest to school districts because they would suggest specific challenges, views and concerns that can be taken into account when developing programs that provide support networks for novice elementary principals.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

In order to gain a better understanding of the challenges for new elementary principals and determine what key elements of a formal mentorship program might assist in developing them into competent school administrators, an examination of the literature was first conducted. The review of the literature is divided into four main sections: first, this chapter examines the preparation of school administrators in terms of traditional university based programs and their effectiveness. In the second section the challenges facing both school districts and novice principals including the lack of teachers looking to assume administrative positions and the critical skills needed to succeed in them are reviewed. The third section of this chapter presents a conceptual framework for considering the challenges of novice school administrators based upon the work of John Daresh. Finally, the chapter looks at the literature on formal mentorship programs.

2.2. The Preparation of School Administrators

Though the nature and types of administrative certification programs varies from place to place, in North America – particularly the USA - a consistent feature of administration preparation and certification programs is the participation in university-based graduate studies (Brundett, 2001; Van Meter & McMinn, 2001).

2.2.1. The United States of America

In the USA the requirements for certification of school administrators are established by each state and all but one state, Michigan, requires the completion of an established principal preparation program beyond a Bachelor's degree either prior to appointment or soon thereafter (Hickcox, 2002). Nearly all states require at least a Master's degree along with teaching experience and/or a passing score on a standardized test to meet the requirements of certification (LeTendre & Roberts, 2005).

In the last ten years, there has been a move in the United States toward the development of standards for principal certification on a nationwide basis. To this end the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was established in 1994, and derived from research on the characteristics of effective leaders (Murphy, 2005). These six standards, are intended to "represent the broad, high-priority themes that education leaders must address in order to promote the success of every student" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 2). These standards are: (i) developing a shared vision, (ii) developing a productive school culture and instructional program, (iii) managing the school efficiently and effectively, (iv) enhancing collaboration with stakeholders, (v) administering in a legal and ethical fashion, and (iv) influencing the socio-economic, legal, political and cultural contexts of school through proactive leadership. To date, these standards have been adopted in 43 American states, and not surprisingly, they have been used to accredit university programs in educational administration (Van Meter & McMinn, 2001; Reinhartz & Beach, 2004). This document was recently revised and the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 was

adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration on December 12, 2007.

The ISLLC has been applauded for shifting the focus from school management to the school leader's role in ensuring the success of all students, but there is also a body of work that problematizes the ISLLC standards and the new national exam designed to enforce them (Cibulka, 2002, p. 2). McCarthy (2005), for example, states, "critics are concerned that the standards overlook important leadership characteristics such as cultural competence, and that an emphasis on the standard will reduce preparation to a single 'approved' method, which perpetuates the status quo."

Criticism directed towards a number of university-based administrator preparation programs is related in part to the transferability of theory to practice in the workplace of new school principals. Some traditional pre-service and preparation programs have been criticized for being too theoretical (Ketterman, 2002) and for having little to no effect on the preparation of principals (Daresh, 2002; Heller, Brent & McNamara, 1994, as cited in Ketterman, 2002).

In his critical and highly controversial report, *Educating School Leaders* (2005), Levine concluded that the overall quality of university educational administration programs in the United States was poor. The majority of programs, in his assessment, ranged from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the country's leading universities (p. 23). According to Levine (2005), the typical course of study for the principalship has little to do with the actual job of being a school administrator. In his Principals' Study, only 63 percent of students in educational administration programs found the university courses valuable.

Levine also asserts that full-time faculty university members greatest shortcoming is being disconnected from practice (p. 37).

Though Young et al (2005) agreed with many of Levine's concerns, they found his report to be troubling in many respects. They believed that Levine's report overlooked "the aggressive and complex changes underway in leadership preparation programs. It leaves the impression that efforts to improve leadership programs are non-existent or barely underway" (p.1). Further, they argued, "recent years have witnessed many focused, effective efforts to improve leadership preparation, led by professional associations as well as states, foundations, and other key players in educational leadership" (p.1).

Hart (1993, p. 8), however, claims that despite attempts to round out training programs, the concept of school administration seems ephemeral. She adds, "students and instructors alike recognize a gap between formal instruction in the practice of administration and the demands of practice." Her view is supported in other studies (Gonzalez, 1997; Milstein & Kruger as cited in Murphy, 1998; and Restine, 1997).

A consistent theme running through this American literature is the requirement that programs designed to prepare school administrators – whether they take place in universities or not - need to speak directly to the actual demands of administrating schools in the twenty-first century. Browne-Ferrigno & Muth (2004) make this point arguing that, "pre-service preparation provided through a university-based program is only the first step toward the making of principals. Practicing and aspiring principals need opportunities to work together in meaningful ways to foster development of collegial relationships that can sustain new and novice principals during the often

difficult early years in new positions of leadership” (p. 48). Formal mentorship programs offer one such opportunity.

2.2.2 Canada

In Canada, certification of school administrators is currently required only in Ontario. All other provinces and territories have no provincially mandated requirements beyond basic teacher certification (Dyck, 2001; Hickcox, 2002). Ontario regulations include two types of certification: *Principal Qualification* and following this, *Supervisory Officer Qualifications* for those in leadership roles such as superintendent or director. Certification is granted by the Ontario College of Teachers based on its administration of the provincial regulations.

In Manitoba, school administrator certification is optional. It consists of two levels, each requiring varying amounts of credit hours of work that can be achieved through professional development sessions or coursework in a Master’s program in Educational Administration. Courses and professional development activities must be submitted for the approval to the Professional Certification Section of Manitoba Department of Education, Citizen and Youth.

For the *Level 1: School Administrator’s Certificate* a valid Manitoba Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate is required plus a minimum of three years of teaching experience, and one of the following requirements:

- i) 120 contact hours of accredited professional development; or

- ii) a maximum of 6-credit hours of approved university course work at the 500 level or above, plus 60 contact hours of accredited professional development activities; **or**
- iii) 3-credit hours of approved university course work at the 500 level or above, plus 90 contact hours of accredited professional development activities.

A Level 2: *Principal's Certificate* is also available for educators. To obtain the *Level 2: Principal's Certificate*, a valid *Level 1: School Administrator's Certificate* is required plus two years as Vice-Principal or Principal. In addition the following are required:

- i) 180 contact hours of requisite university coursework in educational administration and accredited professional development combined
- ii) The requisite is 9-credit hours of approved university coursework in educational administration, plus 90 contact hours of accredited professional development activities; **or**
- iii) 18 credit hours of approved university courses in educational administration.

Contact hours are achieved through a combination of accredited professional development activities and approved university course work in educational administration at the post-baccalaureate level (500 level or above). A minimum number of contact hours are required in each of four competencies (Leadership, Instruction, Management and Personnel) towards both certificate levels. School divisions in Manitoba may choose to hire those who hold, or those who may qualify for the above certificates;

however, these certificates are not required in order to be appointed an administrative position (Manitoba Education Training and Youth 2007).

There are over eight hundred schools in the province of Manitoba, and as of 2001, fully certified administrators (those holding both Level 1 and Level 2 certification), headed fewer than 15% of them (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2001 as cited in Dyck, 2001, p. 8). This situation, where certification is not provincially mandated and the majority of existing school principals do not hold Level 2 certification, suggests that either administrator preparation is taking place in other places, or that across the province teachers are moving into administrative positions with very little formal preparation.

The Manitoba Council for Leadership in Education (MCLE) in association with Brandon University, the Council of School Leaders (COSL), the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, St. Boniface College, University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba offers a relatively small Principal Certification credited - *Peer-Assisted (PAL) – Mentoring of School Leaders Program*. In an environment which has both a non-judgmental and inquiry-based approach to leadership development, PAL partners work together for a period of over 4 to 8 months, shadowing and interviewing each other to collect data and analyze their leadership activities (MCLE, 2003). The design of the PAL program envisions that a growing mutual trust will provide fertile ground for candid exchanges of ideas, deep reflection, and self-analysis among candidates, while its framework will help participants to see the big picture of schools as systems. Participants also meet as a group, learning and practicing a variety of skills such as interviewing, shadowing and the identification of themes. A major goal of the

Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) – Mentoring of School Leaders Program is to provide a supportive forum for professional dialogue that reduces isolation, deepens understanding, and supports change (MCLE, 2003).

The Council of School Leaders (COSL) of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, in a document prepared by Bill Cann (2005), *Leading Educators and Educating Leaders: Professional Standards and Guidelines For Successful Leadership in Manitoba's Public Schools*, continues to engage in the process of developing recommended professional standards for school leaders. Though these recommendations are currently at the consultation and discussion stage within the Manitoba Teachers Society, COSL continues to pursue a dialogue with the Province of Manitoba, MECY (Certification Branch) to not only determine the criteria and process of accreditation, but also to establish province-wide professional standards for school administrators.

All but one of the Winnipeg-area school divisions currently has some sort of in-house formal leadership training program for aspiring administrators. In addition three of them – Seven Oaks, Louis Riel and St. James-Assiniboia – have in recent years partnered with the University of Manitoba to have a Master of Education program in Educational Administration delivered to a cohort of around twenty of their employees interested in school administration (Bryant & Young, 2007). These programs are discussed in a little more detail in Appendix A.

2.2.3. Summary

A small, yet growing body of research is offering evidence of innovative and effective new programs for the preparation, certification and continued professional

development of school administrators. New professional standards and expectations for school leadership in the USA and elsewhere are forcing many university-based programs to redesign curricula and delivery formats (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004, p.468). Milstein & Kruger (as cited in Murphy, 1998, p.23) identified a number of innovations brought to programs during the last decade to improve administration preparation programs. Their argument focuses on the need for a shift from the traditional preparation programs to include approaches that are more proactive, complex, and intensive and that have a major influence on the subsequent long-term leadership practices of graduates. Their research also validated the importance of clinical experiences such as mentorship, learning in cohorts, reflective seminars, and internship experiences. According to Browne-Ferrigno & Muth (2004), clinical experiences are a critical component in the preparation of new administrators as they both acclimate students to their future roles and give them confidence to exit preparation programs directly into administrative posts. The continued design and implementation of these new and innovative approaches is, they argue, necessary to deal not only with the impending retirement of senior principals and attract teacher leaders, but to also assist, support and nurture these new administrators.

2.3. The Leadership Challenges Facing School Districts/Divisions and Novice Principals

Two major challenges facing school districts/divisions across Canada and the United States are an impending shortage of principals and the reluctance of many teachers to seek the position of school administrator. As many principals are reaching retirement age, there is increasing evidence pointing to a decline in the number of teachers applying for administrative positions (Grimmett & Echols, 2000). The literature

about potential administrator shortage estimates that as many as one-half of all public school principals in the United States are at retirement age (West, 2002). This shortage is occurring in rural, urban, and suburban schools in all levels of the education system – elementary, junior high/middle, and high school (Adams, 1999). Stelck (1997), as cited in Murphy (1998, p. 17) cautions: “a large percentage of experienced school administrators are approaching retirement age,” and that this could result in an influx of inexperienced school administrators leading to problems of lack of stability within organizations and increasing the need for administrator training programs.

The literature on current conditions in Canada also indicates that turnover rates for principals are also on the increase. Montgomerie, Ward and Peters (1991 as cited in Murphy, 1998 p.17) make reference to “the greying of leadership” in education in the province of Alberta and express concern over a dearth of younger people involved in leadership positions in most schools and jurisdictions. Renihan (1999) adds, “it [the impending principal shortage and the difficulty finding candidates to assume administrative positions] has emerged as a serious source of concern among senior officials, teachers and trustees in Saskatchewan.” Grimmett & Echols (2000, p. 331) assert, “the potential shortage of school administrators in the near future constitutes a serious problem for the school system of Canada and British Columbia.”

The province of Manitoba is not immune to the shortages in principals as a result of impending retirements. As Table I illustrates, over 38% of principals currently employed as principals in the province are close to, or eligible for, retirement. Also, over 50% of principals in the City of Winnipeg are of, or close to retirement age. These data led

Hickox to assert that a severe shortage of school principals and vice-principals at the elementary and secondary level in Manitoba is looming (Hickcox, 2001, p. 2).

Table I
Distribution of Principals in Manitoba and Winnipeg According to Age

Age	Province Wide		Urban (Wpg. Only)	
	Prin. N=684	V.Prin. N=290	Prin. N=254	V.Prin. N=161
21-45	36	47.6	19.7	43.5
46-50	25.4	24.8	28.8	24.2
51-55	30.7	20.7	42.5	23.6
55 PLUS	7.7	7.2	8.7	9.3

Source: Manitoba Department of Education, Training and Youth, as cited in Hickcox (2001).

The second, related, challenge facing school districts across North America is the difficulty in finding enough well-qualified candidates willing to assume administrative positions. In order to address the potential shortage of administrators, it is important to delve into the reasons why many teachers are not attracted to the role of school administrator. Although the rationale for each individual may be different, there appear to be plenty of factors contributing to their decision. In the literature, time and work overload, and salary were commonly cited reasons deterring teachers (Grimmett & Echols, 2000; Moore, 1999; Renihan, 1999). Lovely (2004, p. 3) identifies time overload, increasing responsibilities, work-related stress, salary, and institutional interference as detrimental factors preventing teacher leaders from assuming the

principalship. Grimmett & Echols (2000, p. 330) concur with Lovely, but add: “the increased work load, low hourly pay, the adversarial conditions, and the managerial nature of school administration all combine to make administration unattractive and potentially harmful to personal health and lifestyle – consequently, experienced teachers rarely seek administrative positions.”

Moore (1999), in his article *Where Have All The Principals Gone?* cites a number of “inhibitors” identified by graduate students in administration. The three factors that were identified by graduate students inhibiting them from not pursuing an administrative career were: increased time commitment and additional expectations; the influence by outside groups into the everyday functioning of the principal; and, too much paperwork.

Teachers and principals in a focus group conducted by Renihan and the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (1999), ranked the following reasons according to frequency of mention as to why teachers are not coming forward: perceptions of hassle/overload; apprehension regarding work time and demands; poor incentives; poor compensation; just ‘not interested’; excessive responsibility; perceived lack of support and isolation; and, reluctance to take on parental/community issues.

Undoubtedly, the issue of attracting new teacher leaders to the principalship is a problematic one, and one that deserves more study. Hickcox (2001) proclaims:

The challenge in meeting the anticipated shortage is broader than simply filling empty positions in the schools. It is, rather, an opportunity to redefine this important role in ways designed to equip professional administrators with the tools to lead schools toward excellence in an increasingly complex environment. The key to doing this is to focus on what is required to practice administration in schools in the coming

decades. Whatever the solution to the problem of the shortage of school principals, it is rooted in the practice of administration.

The practice of administration offers many challenges to novice and veteran principals alike. The role of the principal is one which is multi-faceted, and one in which principals are responsible for managing complex organizations with a plethora of challenges and a myriad of often unpredictable demands. Gerald Tirozzi, Executive Director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and Vincent Ferrandino, Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary Principals in the United States echoed these sentiments:

the principal must be legal expert, health and social services coordinator, fundraiser, public relations consultant, security officer, who is technologically savvy, diplomatic, with top-notch managerial skills, whose important duty is the implementation of instructional programs, curricula, pedagogical practice, and assessment methods (Tirozzi and Ferrandino, 2001, p. 18).

If experienced and veteran principals find their jobs full of challenges and exhausting with the many hats that they wear, beginning principals are likely to feel overwhelmed. The role of the principals is so complex, that there exists no clear-cut description or reliable standard to gauge one's preparedness for the role, or leadership abilities. As Ellis (1998, p. 1 as cited in Pristash, 2001, p. 3) puts it, "beginning school principals are confronted by an inevitable dilemma: they never know exactly what it is like to be a principal until they actually become one. "

Two immediate challenges confronting new administrators are the daily realities of principals' work that is characterized by brevity, fragmentation and variety (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lovely, 1999; Lovely, 2004; Peterson, 1999; Robbins & Alvy, 1995) and

work overload. The increase in workload has been a pivotal issue for novice and veteran administrators alike. Studies conducted in British Columbia (British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, 1996) and Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1998) provided a glimpse into the workload of a vice-principal or principal's day. In the B.C. study, it was noted that the school principals and vice-principals worked an average of almost ten hours day, and approximately fifty-four hours a week including their weekends. More than seventy-five percent of the respondents did not take any break of fifteen minutes or more during the noon hour. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (1998) conducted a similar study on the workload and work life of Saskatchewan principals. The study found that principals worked an average 9.5 hours a day, Monday to Friday, and 8.5 hours on Friday. Average weekly hours (including weekends), was approximately 49 hours. This significant increase in the workload of the novice administrator can be problematic at best as they try to make sense of their new role and authority, and serves to highlight the importance of structures that can prepare new administrators for, and support them through these challenges.

It is inevitable that principals will continue to retire. Also, it appears evident from the literature that in many jurisdictions that fewer teacher leaders are looking to assume the role of school administrator due to the many challenges inherent with the job. If this is not to present a serious problem for schools then it is important that these challenges are well understood and that strategies developed to alleviate at least some of them. John Daresh is a researcher who has done considerable research on the beginning principal over more than a decade, and has categorized the challenges that they face into three broad categories of, technical skills, socialization, and self-awareness. It is these

categories and the work of Daresh and others using these categories that is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

2.4. The Challenges of Novice Principals: A Conceptual Framework

The scope of my research in examining the challenges faced by novice administrators draws primarily from the work of Daresh & Playko (1993) and Daresh (2002). Daresh and Playko thematically divide the challenges into three broad categories: technical, socialization and self-awareness. Daresh (1997; 2001; 2002) has published a number of articles related to the critical skills necessary for an effective principalship. In his opinion, the research findings are consistent:

- a) Beginning principals have experienced frustration over not knowing as much as they thought they should know about basic technical and managerial skills.
- b) Beginning principals wish it were less problematic to become socialized to their new roles and responsibilities, and as a result be more aware of the culture of the school.
- c) Beginning principals needed to be aware of one's values, ethics and vision of what is possible and desirable for the school. Having a sense of self is critical.

Gaudet (2002) used Daresh's three categories to conduct a study examining the critical skills of a beginning principal in the Eastern School District in Prince Edward Island, and to explore what professional development opportunities would meet the needs of his participants. In his study, he found that self-awareness and socialization

outdistanced the technical skills deemed necessary to be successful. Despite this imbalance, Gaudet added, "the literature comments strongly that principals need to pay attention to all three areas" (p. 87). He concluded, "beginning principals who ignore one area so they can become proficient in another, will quickly find this is not possible if they are to be effective in their new role. Balance in all three areas is the key, and awareness of where the majority of skill building needs to take place is also helpful" (p.88).

McGrevin & Schneider (1993) also conducted a study exploring critical skills and the challenges of the principalship. Their findings indicated a strong agreement among and between principals and superintendents regarding the skills that new principals need. Both groups said that conceptual, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills were more important than knowledge of technical skills. However, both superintendent and principal groups also identified the novice principal's greatest challenge as creative fiscal management and working with a wide array of interest groups.

Blair (1997) conducted a similar study that sought to examine the degree of congruence between the perceptions of principals and superintendents regarding critical skills needed by novice principals. The study was designed to replicate McGrevin & Schneider's study completed in 1993. This study differed however, from McGrevin & Schneider's in that the critical skills were organized into Daresh's three categories: technical, socialization, and self-awareness, which were used to determine whether principals and superintendents agreed on the skills that were important. Other factors such as ethnicity, gender and school district size were also examined. The study also differed in that two ancillary questions were added. The purpose of these questions was

to match more precisely how the actual needs of the position might be better incorporated into pre-service preparation for principals.

The results of the findings for the two ancillary questions indicated a belief that pre-service courses should be taught by instructors familiar with the day-to-day operations of public schools, and that instructors should connect the theoretical base of principal preparation with a practical perspective. Superintendents and principals also agreed that shadowing and mentoring would be valuable components for principal preparation programs.

In Daresh's research, socialization and an awareness of the role that culture plays within any organization is a major theme of principal effectiveness that represents a challenge for novice administrators. Becoming an effective principal requires more than the completion of educational and credentialing requirements. It requires the professional and organizational socialization of the novice to the new position. Organizational socialization, according to Van Maanen (1976, p. 67) refers "to the process by which a person learns the values, norms, and required behaviours which permit him or her to participate as a member of the organization."

In her study of new principals, Aiken (2002) wanted to build an understanding of the socialization of new principals and how these administrators made the necessary cultural transitions that continued to sustain them in their work. Specifically, Aiken (2002) wanted to learn about the experiences of new principals that could inform the kind of professional development school principals need in order to support their successful socialization into the profession of school administration. Her findings led to a number of themes that shaped how her respondents were influenced by the cultures of their

schools and became socialized to their roles. Those respondents who were deemed successful in the socialization process exhibited a number of common characteristics. First, many of the interviewees talked about connections between their sense of community and the kinds of community and cultures they wished to enact in their schools. Second, the respondents recognized the importance of vision, but they were also able to bring many voices to the table to build shared understanding of that vision. Third, the ability of the interviewees to integrate their personal lives and professional lives in a way that supported a less stressful transition to their new roles, and allowed them to lead from a more authentic and genuine place that reflected their leadership identity was also evident in the respondents. A final observation that emerged was the ability of these principals to form networks and alliances that allowed them to move from custodial positions, maintaining the status quo, to those of innovative leaders. Some of the recommendations as a result of the study were: administration preparation programs need to integrate more clinical field work into their programs, graduate and post-graduate formal mentorship programs and critical friends groups need to be created and formally implemented for both aspiring and new principals, and districts should look to "growing their own" and offer more formalized "on the job" training.

While the culture of the organization may not be readily observable, learning the culture is critical for new principals. For most of us, the most poignant awareness of organizational culture arises when we perhaps inadvertently transgress some cultural code, norm, or belief even though culture is conveyed to us on an almost daily basis by organizational policies, standard operating procedures, organizational stories, and organizational ceremonies (Lawson & Ventriss as cited in Langston et al., 1998).

In Bayko's (2005) dissertation *Building Positive School Culture: The Principal's Journey*, conducted in Edmonton, Alberta, every principal in her study believed that one single factor that most influences school culture was the leadership of the principal (p.160). Principals in her study defined school culture as, "being the environment, the personality of a school, the sense of community, the feeling in a school, the ambience, that which defines a place, the ethos, the thoughts, behaviours, attitudes, traditions and relationships and interactions between people (p.76). Principals believed that "the principal" was a key factor in influencing school cultures; however, they all agreed they could not have accomplished what they did without the help of others (p. 182). Bayko's (2005) recommends that principal education programs involve some kind of mentorship program where aspiring leaders have an opportunity to explore the theoretical aspects of understanding and building school culture.

Daresh's third major theme of principal effectiveness that represents a challenge for novice administrators is the recognition and development of their self-awareness skills, coupled with bringing clarity to their new roles as new principals. Role definition and role ambiguity are challenges for beginning principals. Many novice administrators experience difficulty in understanding who they are and how they are to make use of their authority (Daresh, 1997). Crow and Matthews (1998) indicate that most principals know they have been given much responsibility, faced as they are with managing and supervising faculty and staff, programs, and resources that affect young people's lives. With this responsibility, they are surprised to learn how little control they often have. They learn they are responsible for everything in the building and everyone expects them to "make it right." Hart and Bredeson (1996, as cited in Crow and Matthews, 1998, p.

123) contended that responsibility without control creates role ambiguity and role anxiety for principals.

“Anne,” in Watters’s (1999) study, commented on her transition from teacher to administrator, “All of a sudden, one day you’re a teacher, the next you’re an administrator, it’s like people look at you differently. You know, you have to be much more careful about what you say, how you say things, how you conduct yourself, you know, to everyone” (p. 128).

The first year in a new position seems to be a series of events that serve to redefine individuals in terms of their role and personal adjustments (Murphy, 1998). Daresh (1997) adds, “we have a strong case for assuming that effective leadership will emerge when individuals have a clear definition of their own interpretation of being designated as the leader” (p.4). Knowledge of personal values and ethical stance have also been the center of much research, leading to the conclusion that developing vision, and an appreciation of personal values and an ethical orientation are essential to new principals (West, 2002, p. 17). Lending support to this premise were Davis and Wilson (1994, as cited in West, 2002, p. 17) who believed that one of the most important aspects of principal preparedness was the development of self. Developing and knowing one’s self encompasses a capacity to take risks, to listen to others, to be authentic in relationships, and to be aware of whom one is as a person. Daresh (2002) adds, ““knowing one’s self” is viewed as an even more critical responsibility than knowing how to do the job or fitting in (p. 6).”

2.5. Mentoring

In meeting the key challenges (socialization, technical skills, and self-awareness) identified by Daresh, of central importance in this study is the concept of mentoring. But what is mentoring, and can elements of it assist novice administrators in their transition in becoming successful school administrators?

The literature suggests that mentoring can be used as an effective tool in assisting novice principals in meeting the challenges as new school administrators. According to the Wallace Foundation (2007) article, *Perspective: Getting Principal Mentoring Right – Lessons from the Field*, no longer is there a mindset for new principals to “sink or swim. Principal mentoring is an emerging national trend with increasingly popularity. The Wallace Foundation added, “The growing popularity of mentoring can also be reasonably taken as a sign of heightened appreciation and understanding by education policy-makers and funders of the critical role school leaders can play in sparking improvements in learning. And by extension, it signals an acceptance of the idea that the professional development of new principals is a worthwhile public investment.” (p.6.).

But there is a wide array of mentorship programs currently in existence in the United States (Villani, 2006). Should mentorship experiences be “arranged “ and mandated by school districts, or should they be “naturally evolved”? Unfortunately, there has been a lack of systematic analysis of mentoring that might answer such questions in the research literature (Daresh, 1995; Seidl-Mello, 1998). Mentoring has its weaknesses and pitfalls, but on the other hand, numerous studies are supportive about the positive merits of mentoring.

2.5.1. Defining Mentoring and Mentors

The lack of standardization of the definition of a mentor, mentoring, and mentorship has caused much consternation amongst researchers (Mertz, 2004; Podlubny, 1999; Restine, 1997). Southworth (1995) talks about mentoring being a somewhat “opaque” term, with only a degree of “transparency”. The lack of the standardization of the term “mentor” has been responsible for a lack of congruency with respect to the term “mentorship relationship,” (Podlubny, 1999). Noller (1982, as cited in Podlubny, 1999, p. 9) stated, “there would be less confusion if the word ‘mentor’ meant the same thing to everybody.” Mertz (2004) also believes that defining mentoring is made more complicated by the confusing, often contradictory, roles associated with mentoring. The absence of a shared definition of mentoring and of boundaries for distinguishing mentoring from other types of supportive relationships makes it difficult to talk to one another, within or across contexts, with any sense of certainty that we are talking about the same things – researcher to researcher, researcher to participant, practitioner to researcher, practitioner to practitioner – or to maximize the potential benefits of mentoring or any other kind of relationship (p. 543). For the sake of consistency and clarity in this research study, Southworth’s (1995) definition of *mentoring* as, “the process of bringing together experienced, competent administrators with beginning colleagues as a way to help them with the transition to the world of school administration” (p. 19) is used. It is Kram’s (1980, as cited in Podlubny 1999, p. 9) contention that mentorship takes place when a mentor fulfills a number of key functions: exposing protégés to new opportunities, coaching and sponsoring the protégé, protecting

and challenging them, as well as providing four psychosocial functions: role modelling, counselling, accept-confirming, and befriending the protégés.

What elements of mentoring can be used as an effective tool in assisting novice principals in their transition in becoming successful school administrators? The notion of mentoring as a powerful tool in assisting novice administrators with their career, professional and psychosocial development is found frequently in the literature. Although the concept of mentoring has been supported in numerous research studies (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 1997; Ehrich, Hansford & Tennent, 2004; Gonzalez, 1997; West, 2002), it also has its problems and pitfalls. It has been touted as the “cure for a thousand evils” (Mertz, 2004, p. 541), as well as potentially a costly and unnecessary added expense to the budget lines of a number of school districts (Daresh, 1995). Southworth (1995), writing from a United Kingdom perspective, succinctly states, “mentoring has the capacity either to be a vehicle for stimulating reflective leadership which is critical, developmental and learner oriented, or to be a means of handing down conservative assumptions about the role of heads. I know which I prefer, but I also know which one is likely to prevail, and they are not the same” (p. 26).

There are informal mentoring relationships and formal mentorship programs, pre-service mentorship programs and in-service mentorship programs, and with these established programs, there are a variety of hybrids of models, each purportedly established and implemented to meet the unique and diversified needs of specific school districts. Podlubny (1999) helped implement a mandatory formal mentorship program in Edmonton, Alberta while Southworth (1995) participated in the implementation of a

country wide voluntary formal mentorship program for first year heads in the United Kingdom. Mendez-Morse (2004) provided an interesting example of a non-traditional idea of mentoring as a constructed phenomenon by Latina administrators who have not sustained guidance from a particular individual. Studying Latina administrators in Texas, Mendez-Morse found that mentoring did not need to be a formally directed experience. Identifying it as a "constructed mentoring" concept, Mendez-Morse suggested that aspiring and novice principals obtain skills and whatever else necessary to become effective school leaders from a variety of sources. Mothers provided the first role models for these participants, and respected friends or family members contributed valuable information and support. Constructed mentoring, thus, was neither a relationship nor a shared set of assumptions, but an opportunity for participants to create their own leadership path. This new way of looking at mentoring decontextualizes the concept, rather than looking at it from an understood and somewhat bounded form of formalized support network.

Should mentorship experiences and programs be "arranged" and mandated by school districts, or should they be "naturally-evolved," allowing people with common interests or needs to hopefully come into contact with other people of similar common interests and needs? Restine (1997) asserts, "there is no consensus whether mentoring relationships should evolve naturally or should be structured" (p. 126). Informal mentoring relationships have been valuable for mentoring new principals, but they can also have the tendency toward "like producing like," which, she argued, meant that women and minorities frequently fell by the wayside. Formalized mentoring programs may help correct these inequities and provide many opportunities for previously

marginalized groups, such as women and minorities, to participate in mentoring relationships from which they ultimately learn and receive career help and psychosocial support.

Villani (2006), in her book *Mentoring and Induction Programs That Support New Principals*, reports on her research into the myriad of formal mentorship programs currently in place in the United States. She developed a template to gather and present the greatest amount of relevant information about each program in a consistent format. Among key questions raised in the designing of her template were: (a) history of the program, (b) goals of the program, (c) program design, (d) program administration, (e) participation in the program, (f) who provides the mentoring and induction, (g) what is expected of mentors, (h) what supports are available for mentors, (i) what is expected of new principals regarding their participation in the mentoring program, (i) are additional supports available for new principals, (j) funding, (k) evaluation of the program, and (l) recruitment, hiring, and retention of new staff (pp. 35–40).

It is not, however, the intent of this research study to do a comparative analysis of formal mentorship programs that currently exist in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the world. Nor is an in-depth analysis of the selection and training process of mentors, challenges of forming mentor-protégé relationships, the pairing of mentors and protégés, or the length of the mentor – protégé relationships a necessary focus. The comparative analysis of mentorship programs is a topic worthy of detailed analysis in its own right. Similarly, the nature and training of mentors and protégés warrants examination and evaluation. However, in this research study, the central purpose is to explore elements of a mentorship program that could

assist novice elementary principals with the three main challenges identified by Daresh (1997), Daresh and Playko (1993); self-awareness, limitations on technical expertise, and difficulties with socialization to the profession. In doing this Villani's (2006) work on the key elements of mentoring programs provided an initial framework for the focus group discussion in this study.

2.5.2. The Research Evidence on Mentorship Programs in Education

Despite repeated and persistent recent suggestions that mentoring programs might serve as a central part of initial pre-service programs, induction schemes, and continued in-service and professional development activities, there has been a remarkable lack of systematic analysis of mentoring in the research literature (Daresh, 1995; Seidl-Mello, 1998). In response to the few published descriptions of research related to the structure, implementation, evaluation, or outcomes of mentoring programs designed in the context of education, Daresh (1995) conducted a systematic review of existing research on the nature of mentoring programs for aspiring and novice administrators. The purpose of his research review was to determine the current status of mentoring research relative to the following questions:

- 1) How have issues related to mentoring for aspiring and practising school leaders typically been studied?
- 2) What have been the predominant purposes and most frequent findings of the existing research?

Reports on research from *Dissertation International (Humanities and Social Sciences)* from 1984 to 1994 were reviewed. Daresh (1995) found that the most popular

design for studies of mentoring was the descriptive survey, while other strategies included action research methods. Most studies also made use of the questionnaire as the primary data collection technique. In most cases, the questionnaire was a researcher-designed instrument that had been developed for use in only one specific study. In his research review, Daresh (1995) found that the majority of work conducted on mentoring was "atheoretical" in nature, and directed primarily toward problem solving. After reviewing the methodologies used in the research, he made the following conclusions:

- 1) The topic of mentoring has not served as the focus of much systematic research over the years, despite its apparent importance as a feature of more effective leadership development efforts.
- 2) The majority of research has been carried out through the doctoral (Ph.D or Ed.D) dissertations written by university graduate students. As a result, this issue is not markedly different from any other under-investigated issues in education over the years.
- 3) Widely-disseminated professional education journals contain few reports of original research on mentoring for educational administrators.
- 4) Most recent studies have been descriptive surveys that made use of researcher-designed questionnaires.
- 5) The majority of research is directed towards solving local school-based problems; there is a virtual absence of theory-based research related to mentoring for educational leaders.

When reviewing the purposes and findings of mentoring research, Daresh (1995) concluded that:

- 1) Assumed patterns of mentoring in terms of matching mentors with protégés were not typically discovered. Whether it was same-gender or cross-gender mentoring relationships, it was not determined if same-gender matches were more effective in assisting mentors and protégés reach their goals.
- 2) The majority of mentoring relationships studied in Daresh's research review were what may be called "arranged" mentorships. They were arranged by the school district or other agency. They were not "naturally-evolved" mentorships where people with common interests or needs happen to come into contact with others with similar interests or needs.
- 3) The mentoring schemes of greatest interest to researchers in the United States involved pre-service administration preparation program mentoring relationships. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, mentoring was typically studied in the context of formal induction schemes.

In reference to program evaluation, Daresh (1995) found that little, if any formal evaluative procedures took place in most of the studies. Researchers just contacted former protégés and asked them to describe their perceptions of the benefits of the programs. In most cases, participants indicated great satisfaction with their mentoring experiences. However, few researchers questioned the mentors or organizations that

sponsored the mentoring programs for their feedback. Another area absent in his review of the studies was the lack of clarity of actual goals or desired outcomes. Daresh (1995) felt that researchers either over generalized their conclusions from limited findings, or situations where the purposes of the studies were probably unclear in the first place. Daresh (1995) suggested that for future investigation into mentoring programs, the primary purpose of researching mentoring programs should be to assess "what is" and not dwell on "what should be," but concluded that there is sufficient emphasis on the potential value of mentoring as a feature of professional development of school administrators to warrant the development of additional policy and research activities in this area.

Murphy's (1998) study, *Novice Principals' Perceptions of Preparedness* conducted in Alberta, Canada, examined the perceptions of newly appointed principals about their succession experiences and attempted to gain insights regarding how educational and training programs could be enhanced and made more comprehensive for those starting in the principalship. Based on her findings, she recommended that school jurisdictions implement mentorship programs. Murphy reasoned that formal mentorship programs involved the development of intense, consistent, and professionally-centered relationships in which a veteran principal guides, advise and assist novice administrators in a variety of ways. Participants in her study also suggested that a mentor of the participants' choosing with a similar personal style would lead to greater contact between the parties, increase trust and sustain collaboration.

Seidl-Mello's (1998) dissertation study, *An Investigation of The Nature and Adequacy of Mentoring Experienced By Beginning Elementary School Principals,*

investigated the nature and adequacy of mentoring as it related to individuals in their first year of appointment as elementary school principals. Specifically, the study was concerned with exploring the extent to which elementary principals perceived a need for mentoring in their first year as novice administrators. The results of her study concluded that principals involved in the study regarded mentoring as a process that was helpful in meeting certain elements of their professional needs as first-year principals. Almost without exception, the professional needs for which the principals thought mentoring would be helpful had to do with fulfilling their technical and managerial role. Most frequently cited were needs having to do with complying with district policies and procedures, handling financial matters, dealing with personnel, handling student discipline problems, and managing time (p.148).

West's (2002) dissertation study, *A Case Study Of The Formal Mentorships Of Novice Principals In One School District* in Virginia, asked participants, "how do school administrators who have participated in a formal administrative mentoring program describe their experiences" (p.4)? The data that emerged from her study demonstrated that a formal administrative mentoring experience provided her participants with a greater clarity of role, developed their understanding of the organization thus facilitating their socialization into it, and helped with diminishing their feelings of isolation. Protégés and mentors alike also reported that mentoring helped reduce their feelings of isolation through the development of camaraderie with one another as well as through a network of colleagues.

Dukess (2001) interviewed mentors, protégés, and program supervisors in a new principal mentoring program in six New York City community school districts. The

participants reported that the program's greatest benefit was having someone to talk with and consult for advice, thus lessening their feelings of isolation. The program also benefited the experienced school leaders who served as mentors, stretching their thinking about teaching and learning. On the basis of the participants' reports, Dukess (2001) also recommended that principal mentors have relevant expertise as instructional leaders, strong interpersonal skills, a ready supply of ideas to meet the challenges faced by protégés, and good organizational skills.

Podlubny's (1999) dissertation study, *Support For Success: A Mentorship Program For First Year School-Based Administrators*, conducted in Alberta, Canada focused on the creation of the "Support for Success" Mentorship Program. The mandatory in-service model mentorship program was an extension of the existing internship Leadership Development Program. The rationale for mandatory participation was in keeping with the "Support for Success" Mentorship Program's commitment to and perception of the worth of mentorship and to also alleviate any dissonance in understanding between program participants and program administrators. Part of the rationale for the formation of the mentorship program was based on: (a) an aging administrator population reaching retirement, and the need for a process of succession, (b) the belief that school administrator academic preparation alone did not totally prepare individuals to assume the role of administrator, and (c) that mentorship provided a vehicle for collegial and individualized support in light of the District's move towards site-based management practices.

The goals of the program were threefold: (1) administrators were expected to become more efficient and effective through mentorship program participation, (2) the

program was expected to provide for increased skill development in a safe, supportive and non-evaluative environment, and (3) school-based administrators were expected to acquire new knowledge and skills more rapidly than they would have independently. The results of his study indicated that mentors and protégés overwhelmingly agreed that school district support was essential to newly appointed administrators. The protégés perceived the following to be the strongest elements of the "Support for Success"

Mentorship Program: (a) having support and knowing someone is there when and if one needs them, (b) it gave new administrators the confidence to lead and make them realize that they were capable, and, (c) participants enjoyed having an opportunity to meet, share, and discuss issues they were experiencing as new administrators. Some suggestions that protégés proposed were: (a) allow protégés to choose their own mentors, (b) provide more hands on training (in specific areas like budgeting), and, (c) have fewer lecture style sessions and theoretical jargon.

Reedy's (2005) study examined the link between administrative program design and the relationship between the mentor and protégé. Specifically, first-year principals were asked to identify what they perceived to be their most significant events in regards to the administrative mentoring programs that in turn, enhanced their learning. Her data identified these four core areas as: (1) time (to build and sustain the first year/mentor relationship); (2) immediacy (both in a perceived emergency or ongoing questions); (3) a high level of trust (confidentiality); and (4) a personalized focus (individual plan of action) for the first-year principal that is driven by the mentor and/or culturally promoted by the district (p. 80).

Southworth's (1995) critical analysis of a voluntary formal in-service mentorship program in the United Kingdom provided another valuable insight into the advantages and weaknesses of mentoring. In his article, *Reflections On Mentoring For New School Leaders*, he gives a brief outline of the context of mentorship in the United Kingdom, explains the rationale for mentoring, and critically reviews the advantages and disadvantages that could be identified from the mentoring process in action. In response to focusing on the needs of new or beginning headteachers, the School Management Task Force, established in 1989, recommended two ways of assisting heads: induction programs, and, as part of the induction scheme, mentoring programs. Both programs were already being implemented in various parts of the country, but a national focus was lacking. In 1991, the Department for Education (DfE) established a pilot mentoring program for new heads in England and Wales. The purpose of the program was for experienced heads to provide support for novice heads. The program was to assist novice administrators in the transition phase of assuming leadership in a school and becoming a head. Consequently, the funding was only for the first year of one's headship. Another purpose of the program was to reduce the anxiety, self-doubt, loneliness and isolation of the job that so many novice heads experience during the onset of their administrative careers. In his evaluation of the mentoring program, Southworth stated, "although there are both advantages and disadvantages, the evidence from evaluation and research reports suggests that there is an overwhelmingly positive response from participants in the process" (p. 21). He identified four main benefits of mentoring programs that are briefly outlined:

- 1) The first advantage of mentoring was that the process facilitated peer contact and support for the beginner, thus reducing the isolation.
- 2) Mentoring played a key part in the transition the newcomer made from their previous post to the new one as headteacher, thus helping clarify the role.
- 3) Mentoring was beneficial to both the new head and their mentors.
- 4) The process of mentoring was reflective which enabled both the new head and the mentor to consider, and reconsider recent events and issues.

Along with these advantages, Southworth highlighted three disadvantages:

- 1) The pairing of new heads and mentors was problematic. He found the selection of mentors and matching them with a new head as a "hazardous and challenging" business.
- 2) Although mentoring was established, it was set up during a period of major reconstruction in education in England, and at a time when the role of the headteacher was becoming more complex. A richer understanding of the current needs of new heads in the 21st century needed to be studied.
- 3) Though it was possible to characterize mentoring as help from veterans, and while this characterization may be true, it is not necessarily the most appropriate. Given all the recent changes in education and schooling in England, was it sensible or helpful to support new heads by a process that socializes them into occupational norms of the "old hands"?

Southworth concluded in his paper that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages of mentoring. But because most of the benefits of mentoring were

primarily participants' anecdotal reports, he believed that there was very little observation of mentoring in action and no third party analysis of partnerships at work. Southworth added,

thus we may have a strong rationale for mentoring and a supporting rhetoric from participants but no other evaluatory data to triangulate these two strongly positive positions. Maybe I am being overly pessimistic, but I suspect from the anecdotal data I collect that the reality of the process incorporates rather more in the way of advice and survival strategies than has so far been made public (p. 27).

It must be noted, that since Southworth's (1995) critical analysis, The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has been established, and with it, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). The NPQH is NCSL's highly successful flagship provision for aspiring headteachers, which is rooted in and underpinned by the National Standards for Headteachers. It is mandatory to hold or have a place on NPQH in order to apply for a headship.

Crow & Matthews (1998), Daresh (2004), and Daresh & Playko (1993) have also identified numerous advantages and benefits, as well as weaknesses and pitfalls of formal mentoring programs. Some of the benefits to protégés were: protégés felt more confident about their professional competence; mentoring programs assisted newly appointed principals in seeing daily translations of educational theory into practice; communication skills of new administrators increased; mentoring provided new administrators with opportunities to learn some of the tricks of the trade of colleagues; mentoring made people feel as if they belong in their new settings; mentoring provided protégés with opportunities for challenging and risk-taking activities; mentoring protected protégés from potentially damaging situations, and also improved their sense of

reflection. Benefits to mentors were: a renewed enthusiasm for the profession; new insight into job; the opportunity to critically evaluate their intuitive processes; a network for ideas and opportunities for promotion; validation of their importance and the importance of their work; and the ability to gain long-lasting and meaningful relationships. Benefits to the school district were: the development of more capable staff, lifelong learning norms, and higher levels of employee motivation; greater productivity; and district administrators gained better recruits and candidates for school administrative positions.

A number of weaknesses, disadvantages, and pitfalls have also been identified by Crow & Matthews (1998), Daresh (2004), and by Daresh & Playko (1993). Some of the weaknesses were: mentoring relationships may become too protective and controlling; mentoring may restrict problem-solving and decision-making perspectives – a mentor may be so committed to a particular style of leadership, that other possible approaches are not considered; mentors can encourage cloning; and mentors can constrain innovation and using only established veterans as mentors virtually guarantees the reproduction of existing roles

2.6. Summary

As previously mentioned, Ellis (1988, as cited in Pristash, 2001, p. 3) asserts, “beginning principals are confronted by an inevitable dilemma: they never know exactly what it is like to be a principal until they actually become one.” Moore (1999) added that, in particular, the elementary principalship has often been characterized as one of the most demanding positions in administration. Green and Knicker (1994; 1998, as cited in

Pristash, 2001, p. 12) both consider elementary principals to play an especially critical role in education. But novice elementary principals face a number of significant challenges on the job, and many are not fully prepared to assume their duties without the appropriate support networks. Mentoring is a popular means of having experienced principals assist novice administrators in meeting the challenge of transitioning into school leaders. Specifically, research studies have indicated that certain elements of the mentoring process can help newly appointed principals with technical skills, socialization to the profession, self-awareness skills and role clarification, and with the problem of isolation (Daresh 2002; Daresh & Playko, 1993; Gonzalez, 1997; Southworth, 1995; West, 2002).

Mentoring, however, has its pitfalls. There is a remarkable lack of systematic analysis of mentoring in the research literature, there is no universally accepted definition, and there is no consensus on whether mentoring relationships should “naturally evolve” or be structured. Because formal mentoring programs in the context of educational settings are, for the most part, fairly recent developments the wide scale availability of formal mentoring is somewhat limited. Mandatory participation, unclear criteria, inadequate preparation of mentors and protégés, methods of selecting mentors and assigning protégés, and lack of insight and value of mentoring are also commonly cited problems in mentoring programs (Daresh, 2004; Kram, 1985; Restine, 1997). Mentoring is not the “cure for a thousand ills,” as Mertz (2004) cautioned, and a formal mentorship program is unlikely meet all of the needs and challenges of novice principals.

It is against this backdrop of research findings about the challenges faced by novice school administrators and the potential for different forms of mentorship programs

to prepare administrators for these challenges, that this study now turns its attention to the reporting the perceptions of four recently appointed Winnipeg area elementary school principals on these issues.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

The research method for this study was designed to explore and examine the challenges that novice elementary principals identified in their new positions, and to ascertain their level of support for some sort of a mentorship program during the early years of their career to help them develop into successful leaders. The chapter is divided into five sections: (i) the qualitative research design, (ii) the research participants, (iii) the context of the school division, (iv) data collection, and, (v) data analysis.

3.2 The Qualitative Research Design

As this study dealt with views of novice elementary principals, a qualitative, phenomenological research design was used. The purpose of conducting a phenomenological study was to describe and interpret the experiences of participants in order to understand the “essence” of the experience as perceived by the participants (McMillan, 2004). The basis of phenomenology is that there are multiple ways of interpreting the same experience, and the meaning of the experience to each participant is what constitutes reality. Researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The participants in a phenomenological study are selected because they have lived the experiences being investigated, are willing to share

their thoughts about the experiences, and can articulate their conscious experiences (McMillan, 2004).

3.3 The Research Participants

The target group for this research was novice elementary principals, that is, principals with less than two years experience at the helm of a Nursery to Grade 6 school. I purposefully selected four of the novice elementary principals according to the level of their school and gender from the pool of second year elementary principals. To maintain a gender balance, two women and two men were recruited as participants in the study. All principals involved in the study had tenures as vice-principals before their appointment to the principalship. The respondent group thus consisted of four novice elementary principals.

In February 2007 these four principals working in a Winnipeg area public school division were invited to participate in individual interviews and then to participate in a focus group session the following May. The purpose of both the interviews and focus group session was to examine the challenges identified by participants in their first year as a school principal, and the extent to which they believed a formal mentorship program would assist them in meeting these challenges. The following profiles provide a brief description of each research participant:

Gerry is a male in his late thirties and is in his second year as principal of a school (Nursery to Grade 6) of approximately 200 students. This principalship is his first experience after a successful stint as vice-principal in a large elementary/middle years school in the school district. Gerry actually began his career with the school district as an

educational assistant until he decided to go back to university and obtain his education degree. After teaching for a short number of years, he actually thought about leaving the teaching profession. He had little desire in pursuing administration when one day, his principal strongly recommended that he apply for the vice-principal pool. He applied, and was accepted. Ironically he became a vice-principal at his original school. After five years as a vice-principal, he was appointed principal of his current school.

Joanne is a female in her mid forties in her second year as principal of a school (Nursery to Grade 6) of approximately 325 students. This principalship is her first experience after a variety of educational roles. After a number of years as a grade one teacher in a job share situation (she was the primary caregiver of a young family), Joanne transferred to the school where she would, six years later, become principal. After a year of teaching grade one at this school, she was encouraged to pursue administration by a principal who saw her leadership abilities. She was a Resource/Support teacher for two years before being appointed vice-principal of a neighbouring school. Three years later, she was appointed principal of her current school.

Greg, a male in his early forties, is also in his second year as a principal at a school (Nursery to Grade 6) with a population of 250 students in an area of the city that has many inner-city characteristics. Greg was a long serving vice-principal at one of the school district's largest elementary schools, and he accepted this position with excitement and vigour. He started his teaching career in an inner-city school and became involved in a variety of school and divisional committees, as well as the local teacher union. He was strongly encouraged by his principal and colleagues to pursue administration. Even after being accepted into the school district's administrator assessment centre, Greg was

still not sure if he wanted to become an administrator. "My goal still wasn't to be a principal, but I thought, whatever happens, happens."

Lois is a female in her forties. She is in the second year of her principalship at a school (Nursery to Grade 6) with a population of 375 students. Lois originally taught in another province for seven years before teaching in her current school district. She was in the classroom for several years, became a Resource/Support teacher, and then specialized in Reading Recovery. Like Joanne (with a young family), she was involved in job-sharing opportunities as her children were growing up, and eventually became a vice-principal of a French Immersion school. She came into her present school halfway through last year when the previous principal retired.

3.4. The Context: An Urban Winnipeg School Division

The study was conducted in a single Winnipeg area school division. Winnipeg is the largest city in the province of Manitoba, and is home to just over half of the total population of the province estimated at 1,184,600 in 2007 (Conference Board of Canada, 2008). Since 2001, when the province went through a process of modest amalgamation of school divisions, the city of Winnipeg has been divided into six public school divisions: Winnipeg School Division; Louis Riel School Division; St. James-Assiniboia School Division; Pembina Trails School Division; Seven Oaks School Division and River East Transcona School Division. In total the six divisions operate some 238 schools and educate some 96,003 students (see Table II), with Winnipeg School Division constituting

the largest division with some 33, 193 students and St. James-Assiniboia School Division the smallest with 8,857 students (Manitoba Education and Citizenship, 2008).

Table II

*Winnipeg Area School Divisions by Schools, Teachers,
and Student Enrolments (2007)*

Division	Schools	Teachers	Enrolments
Louis Riel SD	39	1,001	14,859
Pembina Trails SD	33	968	12,917
River East- Transcona SD	42	1,202	17,121
Seven Oaks SD	20	684	9,056
St. James-Assiniboia SD	25	645	8,857
Winnipeg SD	79	2,398	33,193
Winnipeg Total	238	6,898	96,003

Source: Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth (2008). *Manitoba Schools Directory*.

As noted in Chapter two of this study, in Manitoba there are no provincially mandated standards for school principals (other than holding a valid Manitoba teaching certificate), school administrator certification is optional, and there is no provincial preparation program for school administrators.¹ At the level of the School Division a wide variety on “in-house” administrator preparations programs have been established

¹ University graduate programs in Educational Administration do exist across the province, and some employers expect that people applying for principalships will either have such a qualification or be enrolled in such programs, but these are a relatively small number of employers and most school principals in the province do not hold graduate degrees.

each with their own content, structure, and target populations. Among Winnipeg-area school divisions all but one (not the division where the principals in this study are employed) have some form of formal administrator training program. None have, as yet, incorporated any form of mentorship program into their preparation or principal induction strategies. A brief summary of administrator preparation programs in Winnipeg area school divisions is included as Appendix A.

3.5. Data Collection

A pilot study was conducted during the winter of 2004, as part of my Master's Degree course requirements in a course *EDUA 7840 Qualitative Research Methods in Education* at the University of Manitoba. This provided the opportunity to refine the interview schedule and to develop a preliminary framework for recording and analyzing data in preparation for this study. The pilot study involved conducting semi-structured and in-depth interviews with three novice elementary vice-principals on their views related to the challenges of administration and the perceived need for mentoring supports. It did not take up the issue of identifying the key characteristics of a mentorship program that is the third research question in this study. This experience allowed me to alter the interview schedule design in terms of rephrasing questions and reorganizing the sequence of questions. (See Appendix B for the Education/Nursing Ethics Review Board [ENREB] approval certificate.)

This research study focused on the novice elementary principal's experience and relied on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with individual participants as well as one focus group interview with all of the principals. The semi-structured approach provided a

framework for gathering comparable information as well as an opportunity to deviate from the interview format when it appeared that the participants had relevant information to clarify and elaborate beyond the scope of the predetermined questions. As the researcher, however, I also made use of an interview guide to assist me with the structure of the conversation. (See Appendix E.) I conducted the individual interviews with the principals at their school sites during February 2007. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 70 minutes. An audiotape recording was made during each interview. Prior to the interview, each participant was provided with written documentation identifying the nature and purpose of the research study (Appendix C), and each participant was asked to provide written informed consent (Appendix D). Each interview was transcribed within 72 hours of the interview. Audiotapes were stored in a secure place and were erased when the transcripts were completed.

This research study also employed the use of a focus group session. The focus group technique is most useful for encouraging subjects, through their interaction with one another, to offer insights and opinions about a concept, idea, value, or other aspects of their lives about which they are knowledgeable (McMillan, 2004). The purpose of the focus group was not only to allow the participants to identify components of a formal mentorship program that might be of value in assisting them in responding effectively to some, or all, of the challenges identified by the novice administrators; but also to ascertain to what extent they would agree on key features of such a program. (The protocols for the focus group session are included in Appendices F and G.) The focus group session interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. An audiotape recording was made during the focus group interview. The focus group interview was transcribed

within 72 hours of the interview. Audiotapes were stored in a secure place and were erased when the transcripts were completed.

All of the participants were asked to review and comment on their interviews. They were given electronic and hard copies of their individual transcripts. Participants in the study were given one week to peruse their transcripts and change, delete and/or revise any comments they made during the interview process. In one case, a participant requested that I omit the name of a principal who was working until 8:00 p.m. most weekday evenings. The principal's name was deleted from the transcript. In a second case, a participant in this study inadvertently named a teacher who was being monitored and disciplined for work-related issues. The name of the teacher was removed from the transcripts.

3.6. Data Analysis

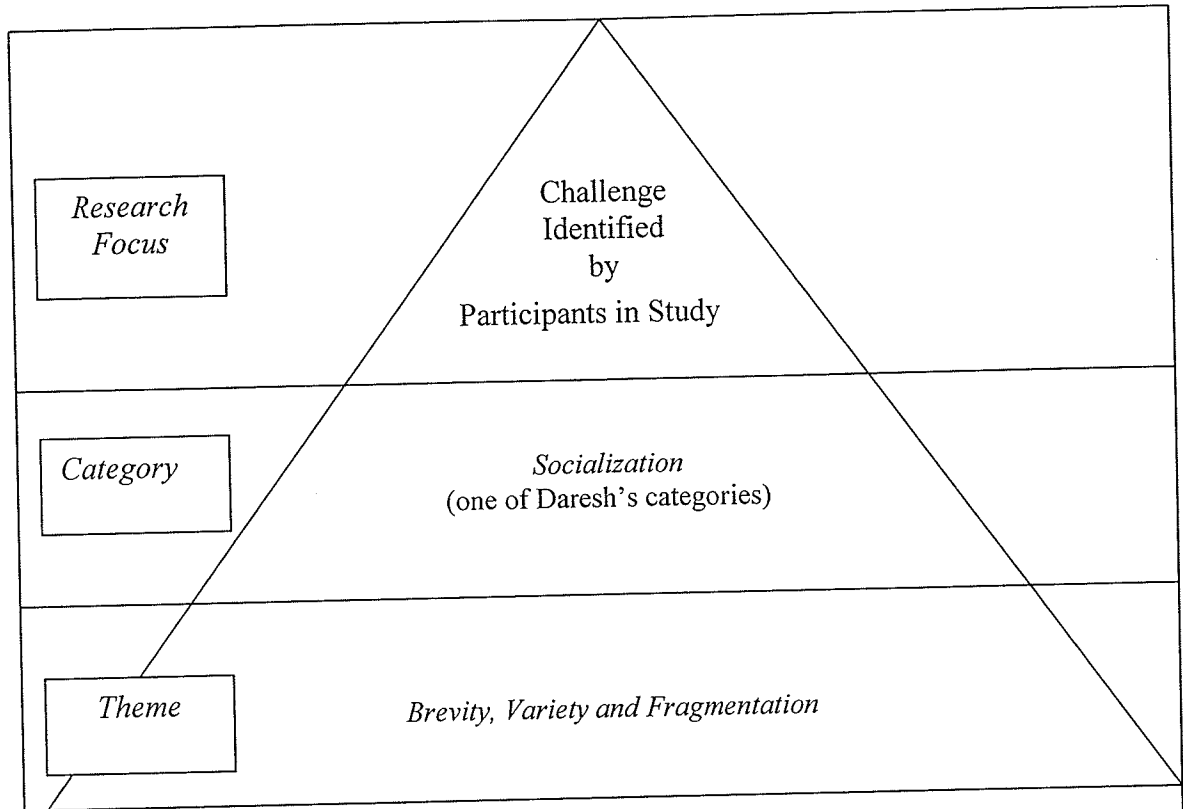
Data collected from the individual interviews were initially analyzed and individual segments of each interview coded according to the content addressed and indexed according to the participant and the transcript page (McMillan, 2004). (For example, a segment of Joanne's interview in which she talked about the experience of always having people wanting to talk to her about one issue or another was coded as "People are at you all of the time" [Joanne, 9].) In total some 131 such *codes* were generated from the four interviews. A second stage of analysis was to cluster these codes into broader groupings, informed by the literature, which appeared to be reflective of recurring *themes*. (For example, "People are at you all of the time" [Joanne, 9], was grouped with some 15 other coded segments such as "I am jumping all over the place"

[Gerry, 21] into a theme of *Brevity, Variety and Fragmentation* – an aspect of principals work described in the literature by authors such as Deal and Peterson (1999) and Lovely (2004).) Ten such themes were developed and each was then grouped into one of the three of Daresh's *categories* of novice administrator challenges (i.e. technical skills, socialization, or self-awareness). (For example, the theme of *Brevity, Variety and Fragmentation* was included in Daresh's category of Socialization. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.

The findings generated from this process of synthesizing the participants' views on the challenges that they faced in their first year as a school principal are reported in Chapter Four, with Daresh's three categories of challenges forming the major sections of the chapter and each of the ten themes developed from the interviews constituting further sub-sections. This data also provides the basis for the discussion in Chapter Five of the participants' views on the extent to which they believed that some form of formal mentorship program would have assisted them in responding to some or all of the challenges that they faced. In the second part of Chapter Five data from the focus group interview are used to present what the participants agreed upon to be key elements of a formal mentorship program, drawn from Villani's (2006) program framework.

Figure 1

An Example of the Data Analysis Process: Codes, Themes and Categories



Codes: (Examples - 11 of 16 codes clustered into the Brevity, Variety, Fragmentation theme.)

Joanne

- People are at you all the time.
- There isn't a regular daily routine, you just take things as they come.
- Everything is brief, we have so many different interactions all day long. They come in various ways.

Lois

- You just never get from point A to point B un-interrupted.
- You truly are at the whim of whomever happens to walk in.

Greg

- There is always something different every day.
- These things that just sort of all of a sudden come out of the blue and it may come once, and never again.

Gerry

- You could be running a cafeteria and food services, you could be overseeing lunch program, before and after school programs, daycares in the building.
- I am jumping all over the place.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS [1]: THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES OF NOVICE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges identified by selected novice elementary school principals working in a Winnipeg area public school setting in their first year as a school principal, and the extent to which they believe that some form of formal mentorship program for new principals would have assisted them in meeting these challenges. In this study, the term “challenges” is used to mean expectations and job requirements that new administrators felt unprepared for. Data for the study were collected by means of both a series of interviews and a focus group session with four elementary school principals over a sixteen-week period during the 2006-2007 school year. The transcripts from these interviews were analyzed first to generate a large number of coded segments of administrator talk which were then clustered into larger themes which were then further categorized using Daresh’s three categories of technical skills, socialization and self-awareness. In addition data from the interviews and the focus group transcripts were used to examine the participants’ views on the potential merits of a principal mentorship program. In this chapter attention is focused on reporting the challenges that the participants reported facing in their first year as a school principal.

Based on data from the interviews, it was apparent that of the 131 codes/ statements that were categorized into thematic responses, the participants clearly gave

socialization to the profession (47%) the most emphasis. This was followed by technical skills (34%). Self-awareness received the lowest amount of responses (18%).

Table III

Administrative Challenges Identified by the Four Participating New Elementary School Principals by Category and Themes

CATEGORY		THEME
1. <i>Technical Skills</i> (34% of all labelled statements)	1.1	Communication - dealing with challenging parents and at-risk staff. (16% of all labelled statements)
	1.2	Budget and Staffing Process (7% of all labelled statements)
	1.3	Building Management (6% of all labelled statements)
	1.4	Planning (5% of all labelled statements)
2. <i>Socialization</i> (48% of all labelled statements)	2.1	Adapting to the New Role of Principal (25% of all labelled statements)
	2.2	Brevity, Fragmentation and Variety in Workload (12% of all labelled statements)
	2.3	Change and the Existing School Culture (10% of all labelled statements)
3. <i>Self-Awareness</i> (18% of all labelled statements)	3.1	New Found Authority as Principal (9% of all labelled statements)
	3.2	Confidence and Delegation (5% of all labelled statements)
	3.3	Balance in Life (4% of all labelled statements)

The administrative challenges identified by the four participating new elementary school principals by domains and themes in this study differed somewhat from that of the literature. Gaudet (2002), who also used Daresh's Framework in his study, examined the critical skills of a beginning in the Eastern School District in Prince Edward Island. He found that the domains of socialization and self-awareness outdistanced that of technical skills.

In McGrevin & Schneider's (1993) study exploring critical skills and challenges of the principalship, their findings indicated that conceptual, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills were more important than knowledge of technical skills. However, when they created a taxonomy of skills devised from Daresh's framework they opted to not include or incorporate interpersonal skills (communication) into the domain of technical skills. Blair's (1997) study, which was designed to replicate aspects of McGrevin & Schneider's study (1993), yielded different results. Superintendents identified inadequate financial resources, lack of technical expertise, and an increasingly diverse students population as the top three challenges confronting novice principals.

In retrospect, one need not necessarily expect to find common findings across jurisdictions and research sites. Different jurisdictions are likely to have different hiring strategies - for example, related to equity, required experience, desired personal characteristics - and different preparation programs. Also, the most pressing expectations of school principals may also shift from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and over time. For example, an increase in the importance attached to student achievement on local, national, and international standardized tests, or to the role of parents in local school

governance might be expected to create a new balance of challenges for new administrators.

Table IV

Administrative Challenges Identified by the Four Participating New Elementary School Principals by Principal, Category, Theme and Frequency

THEMES	Joanne	Lois	Greg	Gerry	Total
Technical Skills					
1. Communication	3	5	5	8	21
2. Budget and Staffing Process	3	2	2	2	9
3. Managing Physical Plant	1	4	1	2	8
4. Organization and Planning	2	1	2	2	7
<i>TOTAL</i>	9 (26%)	12 (36%)	10 (32%)	14 (44%)	45 (34%)
Socialization					
1. Socialization to the New Role of Principal	8	11	7	7	33
2. Brevity, Variety and Fragmentation in Workload	4	2	5	5	16
3. The Ability to Recognize Change and School Culture	5	3	4	1	13
<i>TOTAL</i>	17 (49%)	16 (48%)	16 (51%)	13 (41%)	62 (47%)
Self-Awareness					
1. New Found Authority	3	3	3	3	12
2. Confidence and Ability to Delegate	4	1	1	1	7
3. Life Balance	2	1	1	1	5
<i>TOTAL</i>	9 (26%)	5 (15%)	5 (16%)	5 (16%)	24 (18%)
<i>OVERALL TOTAL</i>	35 (100%)	33 (100%)	31 (100%)	32 (100%)	131 (100%)

4.2. Challenge #1: Technical Skills

Technical skills are described by Daresh and Playko (1993, p. 2) as “the formal and informal requirements of the job”. The formal part includes the deadlines and mandates one must adhere to, while the informal tasks are the ones experienced principals have found make the school year run smoothly and reduce stress and tensions in the school community. Some of these technical skills they identify include: school-community relations (i.e. parents); personnel management issues (i.e. school staff); developing and monitoring a budget; organization and planning; and knowledge and management of the building plant. Table V, below, reports the technical skills that the participants in this study identified as challenges for them in their first year.

Table V

The Challenges of Participating Elementary Principals: Technical Skills by Frequency for Individual Principals

MAJOR THEMES	Joanne	Lois	Greg	Gerry	Total
Technical Skills					
1. Communication	3	5	5	8	21
2. Budget and Staffing Process	3	2	2	2	9
3. Managing Physical Plant	1	4	1	2	8
4. Organization and Planning	2	1	2	2	7
TOTAL	9	12	10	14	45

4.2.1. Communication - Challenging Parents and At Risk Staff

The challenge of dealing with demanding parents and at risk staff was mentioned repeatedly by all four administrators. In fact, the interview responses made more references to this challenge (21 responses) than any other responses that were categorized as technical skills.

All of the participants talked about a lack of experience and preparation in dealing with the daily issues of demanding parents and staff who were not meeting performance expectations. Gerry (eight responses) talked about dealing with staff issues and having to mediate conflict, as well as feeling vulnerable in his role as principal:

First and foremost, a major challenge I had would be dealing with staff issues. Issues that are difficult in nature where I had to perhaps deal with a staff member coming in late, perhaps not following the curriculum, perhaps complaints from some parents about something that a staff member did. That was incredibly difficult, and I felt very unprepared for conflict mediation amongst staff members, whether it be teacher assistants or teachers themselves.

Another challenge (for me) is parents, staff, and people that come up to you with ideas. They just give you an idea and they expect you to follow through. "February is *Black History Month*, what are you going to do about it? It's *I Love to Read Month*, what are you going to do? Firefighters, they lost their lives, we'd like you to do something for the whole school." So all of a sudden, how do you balance everything? You can't do it all. I didn't think that there would be so many difficult situations to deal with. We're servants of the community. We are very vulnerable.

Greg talked about his lack of experience in dealing with “at risk” staff. He did, however, add that he believed that one’s interpersonal skills are a crucial element of success as a novice administrator:

I wasn’t prepared for having to deal with a staff member, or staff person that was not performing up to standards. I guess by saying unprepared, I mean I didn’t have strengths in dealing with these things that would come up. I will say that the most important thing for someone in this job is probably interpersonal skills, because you have to deal with so many different people on different levels. You deal with kids, you deal with teachers, you’re dealing with parents, and you have to be able to create relationships with all these people. So that probably is the most critical thing.

Joanne’s first year as principal at her current school proved to be a very challenging one regarding her interactions with support staff:

Coming into a new school as a principal is so completely different. I thought that I would be more prepared. As a new principal, I had difficulties with a member of our custodial staff. I spent lots of time with the custodial staff in terms of evaluation. And so not only was I trying to keep on top of everything in the school, I was having to make sure that he was doing his job and having to document everything that he wasn’t doing. We also added an additional staff member for the year, and that has also been a struggle as well because the new clerk that came in was placed, and just doesn’t have the skills that are necessary to work in a busy office.

Having also to conduct a performance evaluation on an at-risk teacher, coupled with what she perceived as a domineering parent who confronted her on several issues, only exacerbated the challenges that confronted Joanne in the first year:

Due to an increase in enrolment, we opened up a new classroom at the end of September. So that was a challenge as well, because we got a teacher who was not up to standards and so throughout the course of when she was here, I had to do a lot of documenting, as well as share information with my superintendent. We were beginning a Teacher Improvement Plan on this at-risk teacher when she ended up leaving part way through the year. So then I had to begin interviewing new teachers all over again for her position. I think parents can be another challenge. We have a very strong parent council and our parent council chairperson was part of the hiring process for my current position. There was one instance in particular where she came at me when we had decided that there would be no soft drinks in our school. She wanted to continue to sell soft drinks. So that was a huge issue. She also thought that we did not have phys. ed. time in school. So struggling to stay positive, talking to her in a friendly manner, and knowing full well that she's saying things behind your back was a struggle.

Joanne also stressed that dealing with these aforementioned issues in a school where she was the only administrator made the challenge even more difficult. She added, "I think the biggest part of that was there wasn't anybody else to talk with, and that everything had to be so confidential. Not having a vice-principal in my school made that difficult."

4.2.2. Budget and Staffing Process

Understanding and completing the budget and staffing process received considerable attention (9 responses) from the research participants. A majority of the participants found the budget and staffing process during their first year somewhat of a perplexing task. Lois made the comment, "I found the budget process more challenging

than staffing . . . even though I had had some exposure to it.” She also stated that obtaining grant monies from the school district and province further complicated the process. “That is what complicates our budget lines. When you get grant money, it gets dumped into different budget lines, so it has to be tracked carefully.” Joanne commented:

Although I knew how to match the numbers and make everything add up, I’m not sure that the way the school budget was set up was exactly how I would have done it. Knowing that we had a lot of funds in our school account, I wasn’t concerned, and certainly did not track every penny. I had done the budget at River Rose School, but creating the whole budget when it’s your responsibility is a lot different then when you doing it, and assisting the principal.

For Gerry the process of doing the budget largely in his opinion depended on the experience of one’s head clerk. He stated, “It depends a lot on the office clerk. During my first year as an administrator, I had a very experienced clerk who knew the budget inside and out. This year having a new clerk, who is obviously inexperienced, I found that impacted on my comfort level.”

Greg’s easy-going attitude, predisposition and prior experience as a vice-principal however, allowed him to comfortably navigate the budget and staffing process to a degree. Knowledge gained in the school district’s new administrator program also assisted him with this endeavour:

I was familiar with doing the budget based on the new administrator program and what I had done in my previous school. I had the background and the knowledge about the budgeting process, so I sort of went along with the flow of what was already laid down to try to make sense of it. I don’t think it would be reasonable and probably not possible for me to know where every penny is at every point in time.

Lois felt much more comfortable going through the staffing during her second year as principal compared to her first year. Developing her own system aided her in the process. She added:

I found that the key to doing staffing was having a way to chart it . . . a system. What do you get from the division? What comes from the Special Education Dept.? So you just have to chart something that works, and if someone would have showed me that to begin with, it would have sped up the process. Now I use it. I used it this year, but last year I felt like I was starting from ground one. And then there's always that fear, am I doing it right?

4.2.3. Building Management

The challenge of knowing and managing the physical plant of the school proved to be an onerous one for all of the participants. Switching hats from educational leader to construction worker was an arduous task at best for the novice elementary principal. As Gerry noted:

When I first started [at his present school] we were having our water supply redone. We had foundation work and we had barricades all over. We had to close an entrance because our front staircase was being done. We had painters all over the place with equipment. We had to make up schedules. I was not prepared for that. I had no idea. I joked around and said, "If somebody told me I needed a hardhat," you know, I wouldn't have believed them.

Joanne inherited the renovation of an existing staffroom and thought that the process would be a fairly easy one. She added, "Blueprints, consulting with the Building

Department, Workplace, Safety and Health people, staff input, it was a long and convoluted process, which I had never experienced, yet I was expected to know.”

Lois was quite vocal about her struggle and desired to know as much about her building and custodial staff as possible. She resigned herself, however, to the fact that she could not possibly know everything about the physical plant of the building, or her custodial staff workload:

When I rate myself, technical skills, I think is my lowest area. I’ve always prided myself in my knowledge of curriculum and so on. But the custodial team, I don’t know my building well enough to tell you where everything is, and every little piece of equipment, and sometimes we will get people coming in asking where this is located and I’m really struggling to tell them. So, I think just that whole piece of managing the building and custodial team was a struggle! I’m trusting they’re doing their job. I’m trusting that the dynamics between my head custodian, and my cleaner, and my evening custodian are fine. But I don’t really think that I have a strong feel of everything that’s going on here.

4.2.4. Planning

Not surprisingly, the ability to organize and plan received attention in both the individual interview and focus group sessions. Of interest, most of the comments did not reflect conversations about long-range decisions and planning. Rather, the conversations focused overwhelmingly on managing the day-to-day tasks, being organized, finding an organizational system that best suited the individual, meeting deadlines, and reading and completing the relentless onslaught of school district policies and paperwork. As Greg asserted, “you have be able to manage your time and organize. Not necessarily to be

super organized, but you have to be able to manage time and organize in a way that works for you.”

Gerry was quite overwhelmed, not only by the large amount of paperwork, but the overall multitude of tasks in any given day:

I could not believe the amount of paperwork everyday. Time management is a big issue. In today's day and age, we get e-mails, we have to answer them, we have phone messages, we need respond to them. You have a mailbox at school, and people are constantly asking things of you. You have something from the Dept. of Education, well, who gets this, where does it go? That whole area of organization, I felt ill-prepared.

Joanne was more concerned about not missing any of the school division's deadlines:

One needs to be organized in terms of . . . there is so much paper that comes through schools in a day. Not only the mail, the stuff that comes from the school board office – policies, your administrative handbook. There are policy changes, and all kinds of requests from people throughout the administration building. You have to have some kind of format so that you're going to make sure that you're getting the job done that you need to. You need to make sure that you are sharing all the information that you need to share. Also, that you're organizing it in some way so that you will have your due dates, and know when things are due so that you are not going to miss anything. That was a big thing for me, you know, I didn't miss any deadlines and I worked really hard to make sure that I didn't.

While there are general themes related to technical skills, the specifics were different for each principal. For example, the school that they were moving into, whether or not there was a vice-principal, and their own experience and personality. were

important factors. Providing these technical skills raises questions of appropriate training prior to taking on the position as well as support and training – including mentoring – in the position.

Given that we know the importance of application and timing - the literature talks of “theory to practice” and the importance of learning being timely and contextual - training and support that is provided ‘in position’ may be more important than prior training. A mentor and mentorship program would offer one possible way of acquiring the aforementioned skills. Benefits of a mentor might be (i) one-one-one teaching, (ii) timeliness (“I need this school division policy now”), and (iii) comfort in a non-judgemental relationship that might not be the same as asking for one’s superintendent’s help. However, other strategies, such as shadowing, workshops, professional development sessions and subject specific resource people offer other possibilities for providing this support.

4.3 Challenge #2: Socialization

Research on problems faced by novice principals show that a constant dilemma faced by first-year principals is how to fit into new environments and social systems (Daresh, 2002). Research also suggests that beginning principals go through a series of stages in this process, but their eventual level of socialization is likely to be determined in their first year (McGrevin & Schneider, 1993, p.1). Some challenges identified by the participants in this study in the areas of socialization were: difficulties with socialization to the profession and fitting into the new environment (this may include loneliness and isolation); experiencing for the first time the brevity, variety and fragmentation that is

part of the daily realities of the principalship; the ability to recognize school culture and change; and coping with an increased workload and the challenges that that brings with regard to balancing one's professional and private life.

Table VI

The Challenges of Participating Elementary Principals: Socialization Themes by Frequency for Individual Principals

Socialization Themes	Joanne	Lois	Greg	Gerry	Total
1. Adapting to the New Role of Principal	8	11	7	7	33
2. Brevity, Variety and Fragmentation in Workload	4	2	5	5	16
3. The Ability to Recognize Change and School Culture	5	3	4	1	13
TOTAL					62

4.3.1. Adapting to the New Role of Principal

This theme received considerable attention from the research participants with 33 of the 62 responses falling into this category. The conversations focused on an increased workload with not enough time to complete the day-to-day- tasks, an increased sense of responsibility, and, the importance and necessity of seeking peer support and informal mentoring relationships. As Gerry succinctly stated, "I think we could work fourteen hours a day." Part of the challenge of Joanne becoming socialized in her new role of

principal involved her trying to continue to prioritize what was deemed important but nonetheless putting in many more additional hours in her job:

I am still learning how to prioritize what is important, and sometimes you just can't get to all those little things. We shouldn't have to feel that we have to do everything. I know that was hard for me because I was taking things home and I was working hours and hours and hours at school and after school. And that makes it tough. And then you come back to school the next day and you're exhausted.

Greg echoed the sentiments of Joanne regarding the increased workload in his new role as elementary school principal. He concluded, however, that this increase in workload was just part of the nature of the job:

The job never ends. I'm chipping away at this task, and chipping away at this other task, and I'm going to come back and do a little bit of this one, and then I'm going to do a little more of this other one. You could keep taking on more things all the time, and you could stay as late as possible. There is always something new to do . . . always. It's the nature of our job.

Detailing the multitude of tasks in an average school day, Gerry described some of his challenges:

The balance, the time management, the organization, and really, I don't feel anybody told me what this job entails, because at every school it is a little different. It could be a staff member coming in my office with this child who is not behaving well – fix it! A parent coming in and saying this parent was rude to my child – fix it! A Lunch Program Coordinator coming in and saying, "This family hasn't paid their bill; we're going to kick them out and call Child and Family Service unless you fix it!" Having parents coming in and saying we're re-doing the steps and kids are getting through the barricades, and it's unsafe. Is the school safe? Fix it!

Having community members call and say, "we're tired of having dogs on your field, fix it!" I was very ill-prepared for the number of things we deal with. Getting called on a bus, from the bus driver because a student got sick and "brought-up." And him saying, "somebody's got to clean this up." The amount of responsibility that we have as an administrator, I don't think there are any limits, really.

This heightened sense of responsibility was evident in all of the participant's responses. Simply put, Greg noted, "with the job comes increased responsibility." Lois added, "I feel it's ultimately my responsibility and so that's where the change is, it may not necessarily be the workload, it's more the worries and the responsibility for everything that happens in the building." Joanne concludes, "I absolutely love my job, but I have an overwhelming sense of responsibility in my school. Whether it is a dog on the loose at recess, someone pulling the fire alarm, a parent complaining about dandelions on our front lawn, or simply making sure that all of our children arrive safely home after school – I feel overwhelmingly responsible for everything."

To better deal with the challenges of being novice administrators, all research participants found it necessary and beneficial to seek support from peers and create informal mentor relationships. As Greg stated, "you have to find someone to talk to, to get help and advice or bounce your ideas off of. He added, "I have a variety of people that I will call. I will call people first that I know of course. And then, I will call certain people depending on the situation."

Lois added, "things will fall into place, especially if you have a support network. And you know, I've got my friends, who are not my mentors, but they're my peers. So I call them on things that have helped me through." For Gerry, it was a former colleague

and fellow vice-principal he worked with during his appointment as a vice-principal who proved to be providing valuable support to him. "Pam, as an informal mentor, was so important because she had experienced so many things that I was just going through, and she could give me answers right away."

Joanne talked about the importance of building relationships with other administrators. She found comfort in the fact that all administrators as novice principals probably experienced similar challenges:

I think you need to, as a new administrator, build relationships with other administrators. Everybody has so much great information to share and they have all been very helpful. You can call them and feel confident that you know, everybody probably has had a time when they weren't sure how to do something or another. I don't think I've ever had anyone look at me in a weird way or make me feel incompetent in any way. They're always willing to share. So, I think that it important to be able to talk with people and ask questions when you're not sure.

Gerry also very much appreciated the informal mentoring relationships and peer supports. However, he also alluded to the possible need of a more formalized mentoring process:

I don't mind calling Steve Jackson, who has years of experience at Landmark School where he knows policy inside and out, and being vulnerable to him by saying, "I have no idea, what do I do in this position?" So, I really appreciate my colleagues. In an informal way, I would just call people. There wasn't a formal process to, say, line you up with this person that you can call. I would have appreciated that, I just kind of did it on my own. And if you don't have that, I think this job could have been very difficult, increasingly.

4.3.2. Brevity, Fragmentation and Variety

A major challenge facing novice administrators were the daily realities of principals' work, brevity, fragmentation, and variety (16 responses). All of the research study participants, but in particular Joanne and Lois, were quite vocal in how their day-to-day existence on the job was fraught with a varied, fragmented and interrupted work schedule. This was clearly evident in Joanne's testimony:

Technical skills ... are important at different times. Doing the budget also has its importance, but it is a two-week flurry and it's gone. And staffing ... the same thing. But the day-to-day things we deal with continuously. The second you walk in the door, you don't even put your coat away, and actually sometimes I don't even finish getting out of my car, and there are people asking me a question. To me that is the most difficult part. Everything is so brief; we have so many different interactions all day long. They come in various ways. We're dealing with a parent who's upset, a child who is having behaviour difficulties, and then somebody comes running in and we have this dog that lives on the corner at the street, and the dog's loose, and running at the kids, and you're trying to balance all of these things at the same time.

Greg succinctly added, "there is always something different every day. You know, these things that come that are not the regular expected things."

Lois noted, "You walk in and you're at everybody's whim from the moment you walk in till the moment you leave, and that includes lunch hours. I go step out of my office and someone asks, 'can I talk to you for a minute'. Well, yes you can. Or you walk down the hall and you have forty people stop, well, that's an exaggeration, but five different people stop you with whatever their requests are. So, you are always on".

Gerry attempted to try to find some “quiet time” in his often hectic and busy day schedule, and it was to no avail:

Gerry, this is going on and Gerry, this person just got sick or got into a car. And the number of times people will knock on your door, “do you have a minute?” You don’t want to be rude, and you need to address their concern. So all of a sudden, A, B and C don’t get done. Try to find quiet time being in a big school, I would try. I tried coming in at 7:00 a.m. but there’s those people that love to come early. Then you try to get some work done after school and there are teachers that like to stay till 6:30 p.m. and guess what, they come to your office and want to chat.

4.3.3. Change and the Existing School Culture

As every school is a unique organization with its own traditions, rituals and cast of characters, the importance of novice administrators adjusting to a new school culture can at times prove to be challenging. The importance of school culture and the ability to recognize, acknowledge, and respect it within the realm of change, received considerable attention amongst the research study participants. Thirteen responses were characterized under this theme. Comments consistently included having the patience to “sit back and watch” during one’s first year, being aware of the culture of the school and community, having some feel for the thoughts and direction of the teaching staff, and honouring the principal that you have replaced. Lois reflected back on her first year as principal of her school and how she had some difficulty in trying to understand the staff and climate of her school.

I think getting to know the staff and realizing how important knowing the staff and the climate were the things I felt unprepared for. I know that’s an important piece. I think for me to stand back and watch to see how the

dynamics of the interpersonal things that happen in the school, was probably my greatest challenge because that is what affected the culture and the climate within the building that I was in, and I don't really think I had a way to do it.

Another challenge for Lois involved her coming into the position half way through the year. The previous administrator, a well-respected principal, had retired at Christmas break. With systems already in place, she was very careful not to infringe on any cultural norms:

I came in January. The person I was following had been there for eight years and was a very respected and strong administrator. So there was already a history and a culture of things running smoothly, of parental support, and of a very well run building. I had to respect culture and climate of the building, and to just stand back and watch.

Lois understood that she had a different skill set than her predecessor, and believed that the smartest thing that she could do in bringing about change was to sit back and slowly nurture her relationship with the staff:

It's hard because you have to live up to somebody else's standards. So I've had to adapt by saying that I'm not going to have the same skill sets, but I'm bringing my own strengths. I think the smartest thing I ever did was just sit back for six months and didn't change anything. And then just kind of slowly, as people got to know me, I brought in change and worked with them to bring in that change.

Greg's comments were very similar to Lois's in that he recognized and acknowledged the school culture that he inherited, and even though he did not agree with many things that were going on in the school, he also chose to sit back and observe:

There's a long history in this school. There are staff that have been here a long time. There's a previous administrator that was here for a long time.

I think last year when I came in, I knew and was aware of things that took place in the school that I didn't necessarily agree with. Now there are some things that I still don't fully agree with. But it comes with the culture of the school, and culture of the community. So that first year, I was watching, and there were things that I didn't necessarily agree with, but I lived with those things. But then as time goes on I think that you sort of chip away at those things.

Joanne, like Lois, also found it difficult coming in after a popular and well-respected principal. As she stated, "coming in after a principal who was so well respected and had so many positive interactions within the school was very difficult because I felt that I was always being compared to him and to the legacy that he's left behind." But not unlike Lois and Greg, Joanne chose not to change things, and similarly just sit back and watch and nurture her relationships with her staff.

You can't come in and change things right away. People need to know that you are there to watch, and I guess build relationships. That's one of the key things you have to do when you first come in. Getting to know people, having people know you, and just watch and observe. It takes a long time to do that, and it's hard. Sometimes you want to do things, and the first year you can't. You need to sit back, you need to watch, and unless it's a safety issue, sometimes we need to back off and let things happen, and see how they go.

Overall, socialization issues provided the most numerous and talked about challenges for the novice elementary principals. Similar to the research of Aiken (2002) the participants talked about the challenge of balancing their personal and professional lives and the importance of developing their own informal support networks, both to help them solve specific problems and also to provide psychic support in the face of the unending

demands of the principal's job. As the participants talked about the challenges of socialization and their responses to these challenges, their comments often overlapped into areas of self-awareness that is discussed below.

4.4 Challenge #3: Self-Awareness

Self-awareness about one's duties and responsibilities in a job comes about largely as the product of a reflective process that matches the requirements of the job with a personal value system (Daresh & Playko, 1997, p.22). Daresh (2001) adds that novice principals "need to learn how it will feel to be viewed as the boss, the prime decision maker, the person in charge, or a whole range of other roles assigned to a leader as a result of changes in self-perceptions and the perceptions of others in an organization" (p.6). As shown in Table VII below, self-awareness for the participants included an awareness of their newfound authority, confidence, vision, and the ability to delegate and make decisions.

4.4.1. New Found Authority as Principal

Twelve of twenty-five responses were in the area of newfound authority as principal. The themes expressed in the responses relating to the newfound authority that research participants experienced at times bear a resemblance to themes expressed in the area of

Table VII

The Challenges of Participating Elementary Principals: Self-Awareness Themes by Frequency for Individual Principals

Self-Awareness	Joanne	Lois	Greg	Gerry	Total
1. New Found Authority	3	3	3	3	12
2. Confidence and Ability to Delegate	4	1	1	1	7
3. Life Balance	2	1	1	1	5
TOTAL					24

socialization. These themes, however, differ as they centered on the research participants' perceptions of what it was like to be a principal after a successful stint as vice-principal. Even though our participants had experience in their tenure as vice-principals, their subsequent authority appeared to be markedly different and unique only to their new role as principal. Again, the heightened sense of responsibility was consistent in their responses. Like Anne in Watter's (1999) study, Gerry noticed that people saw him differently, as a new principal, "I was not very prepared, to realize that people would say, 'you're the principal,' and the way people said it like, 'ohhhhh, you're the principal of the school,' as if you emit this special kind of aura. I was not prepared for that." Lois offers a poignant view of asking her peers what they believed to be the major differences in one

becoming a principal compared to that of being a vice-principal. She noted that no one could articulate the difference in words besides saying that it would be more work. But it was apparent she added, that more responsibility would be a corner stone of the job:

When I asked my peers who got their principalships how it was different, nobody could tell me it was different. They just said it was way more work. Again, it's that feeling of being overwhelmed! Every decision, every piece, everything that happens in that building is your responsibility, and you're the one who is ultimately is going to be accountable for it. So that's how I would articulate it, but people could not put it into words. They just said it is way more work, and it is more responsibility, and you'll see once you get there. I wasn't prepared for that, because nobody really put it into words for me, and I don't think you can.

Joanne thought that with her previous principal's guidance going over the day-to-day tasks of such as budgeting and staffing, coupled with her three years of experience as a vice-principal in the same school, made her ready in assuming the role of principal:

Well, I remember when I was given the task of being a principal, when Kate (her superintendent) called and congratulated me. I was very excited and apprehensive at the same time thinking I've had lots of experience as a vice-principal. I thought that my principal that I had worked with had walked me through the process of you know, staffing, budget, all those kinds of things. And I thought I was involved in everything. But when things hit you and you're going from the time you get here till the time you leave, with questions upon questions, and people coming at you, I didn't feel as prepared as I thought I would be.

Lois, noted, "the work load hasn't changed, I think that I work just as hard as I had as a vice-principal. But I'm sleeping less soundly than when I was a vice-principal, because I know eventually it was all going to come and haunt me, and it's the big

picture.” Greg succinctly concluded, “I had a greater sense of my responsibility (as a principal) for what I did. Hence, when someone asks me something, I want to make sure that I’m doing the right thing, so I’ll check the policy, or you know, all of that.”

4.4.2. Confidence and Delegation

This important area was the second most talked about issue in the category of self-awareness with seven responses. Much of the discussion not only centered around the participants’ fluctuating levels of confidence as well as on the necessity of delegating authority to others - in particular for the three participants who had no vice-principal in their schools.

Gerry shared this comment; “I find that it [confidence] depends on the day. Some days I’m thinking, okay, I’ve got it and then you go down the hallway. And then other days, it’s like ‘Ooooooh. They didn’t like the decisions that I made, or that I eventually had to make.’” Joanne added, “As your day went well and things were going well, you felt confident and self-assured. But if things didn’t go well, it made you feel like you were incompetent at times.” She continued, “when it’s your first year, you are going through everything the first time, and you’re not sure what you’re supposed to be doing.”

Greg shared his thoughts on the fear of incompetence in the focus group session, “the fear of incompetence is probably true for lots of people, especially if you’re new on the job. You may lack the self-confidence in yourself, and I’m sure that everyone has gone through that.” Regardless of the challenging days, all of the research participants found it necessary and beneficial to delegate authority to members of their staff. As Greg

pointed out, "you have to have the confidence of some people. Or you have to be able to find key people."

Joanne added, "I think you need to delegate. You can't do everything on our own. If you are lucky enough to be in a school where there is a vice-principal, I think that you have a lot more support because you are able to share the workload. Otherwise, find the leaders within your school and allow them the space, and encourage them to take on those leadership roles, because that helps you."

4.4.3. Balance in Life

The challenge of balancing one's life at home and the job often can be a struggle for novice administrators. The balance often involves the sacrifice of important time with family members and friends. All participants admitted, and in particular Lois and Joanne, at times the struggle to maintain a balance in their lives. Lois and Joanne were the primary caregivers in their respective families. As Greg noted, "everyone chooses how much of a sacrifice they're going to make in their job. I definitely have to make more." For Joanne and Lois, the issue of life balance was more problematic. Joanne remarked:

Lois and I have spoken before, and I'm sure it's the same for male administrators, and that is the whole family sacrifice and balance. To me that's the number one challenge [balance]. I can't leave things half done, I'm just a perfectionist and I struggle with that because what ends up happening is that I'll take it home and I'll be with my family for a short time. Then I'm working until midnight or one o'clock, and then I get up in the morning and I'm exhausted, and I start that whole process again.

Lois added, "that for me is the biggest challenge, the balance of home, school and giving up so much of my family time, and personal time. Time with my family has changed. And so that is my own personal struggle - balance, balance, balance."

Interestingly, because of Gerry's past commitment to school sports amongst other things, being a novice principal had less impact on his balance between home and school than was the case for his research study participant colleagues:

I did come from a very busy school where I chose to do a lot coaching and extra-curricular activities. I was very busy as a teacher and so there were a lot of evenings and weekends. In fact, in some ways, not having to coach after school hours and on weekends in an elementary school, and being closer to home has actually allowed me to spend a little more time (at home). It's been a great transition for me personally, because now my kids are going to dance, doing soccer ... and since this school finishes at five to three, I can put in a whole hour and a half after work. I leave by twenty to five, and I am still at home so we can do activities and have dinner together as a family.

Nonetheless, evening meetings involving the school still affected on how much Gerry saw his children. As he explained, "but I can say that last night when I had a meeting at 6:00 p.m., board meeting with 'Before and After' (program), and then a Parent Council meeting at 7:00 p.m., I didn't see my kids as much as I'd like."

In the domain of self-awareness, the participants expressed a significant change in how they were perceived by staff and friends. They all agreed that inherent to the job as principal was more responsibility. At times most of them suffered from a degree of non-confidence, but that was largely dependent on the day-to-day operations of the job, coupled with the slow and steady acquisition of more experience. With more experience

towards identifying a range of challenges recognized by the participants rather than measuring the intensity of the challenge or prioritizing them. These challenges, raised by these Winnipeg area principals, now provides the basis for examining the extent to which a formal, divisional, mentorship program was seen by them as being of potential value.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS [2]: THE MERITS OF A FORMAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR NOVICE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

5.1. Introduction

Having discussed in Chapter Four the participants' perceptions of the challenges that they faced in their first year as an elementary school principal, this chapter reports on the participants' views on the value of formal administrator mentorship program as a way of supporting new administrators in meeting these challenges. Given the variety of meanings attached to the concept of mentoring (Metz, 2004) and forms of mentoring programs (Villani, 2006), the chapter also examines what the participants considered to be some of the essential agreed upon features of a worthwhile mentorship program.

Some information on the principal's views on the value of a formal mentorship program and the ways in which such a program might address the challenges that they faced was obtained from the initial interviews with each of the four participants. Additional information on these issues was also obtained through a focus group interview conducted with all four of the participants. However, since the individual interviews had established that each of the participants saw potential value in a formal mentorship program the main purpose of the focus group was to explore, collectively, what the principals agreed to be the essential elements of a good formal mentorship program.

In the rest of this chapter attention is first given to the ways in which the participants' thought that a formal mentorship program might assist them address the challenges that they had experienced as new elementary school principals, and then to the

participants' views of what might have constituted an effective mentorship program for them.

5.2. Participants' Views on the Potential of a Formal Mentorship Program to Assist in Meeting the Challenges Facing New Elementary School Principals

While the interviews and focus group meeting clearly illustrated the fact that each participant brought to their position as a novice elementary school principal unique backgrounds and experiences, and that the challenges that each faced was shaped by the specific context and culture of the school that they were assigned to, all four of the participants felt that some form of formal mentorship program had the potential to assist them in responding more effectively to these new demands. Below, the participants articulate ways in which a formal mentorship might assist with challenges associated with the acquisition of new technical skills, socialization to the new role, and the development of self-awareness. In doing so they also foreshadow what they see as essential characteristics of a good mentorship program and the dilemmas associated with attempting to construct such a program to meet the varied needs of a group of new school administrators.

5.2.1. Technical Skills

Lois indicated that she believed that a formal mentorship program could have assisted her acquiring a variety of necessary technical skills. She stated, "a formal mentoring program would greatly assist in areas such as the budget, the staffing process, and organization and planning because the process does not involve emotions. A formal

mentor can provide templates approved by the school division as well as explain the systematic way of dealing with technical challenges.”

Gerry agreed with Lois in seeing an advantage of a mentorship program providing systems for new administrators in areas such as budget, staffing, and planning, as well as managing the school building. He said, “it would be a great opportunity to network formally with seasoned veterans and dialogue with them about the appropriate systems that they have put in place with budgeting, staffing, and paperwork”. In continuing to discuss the value of a mentor with regards to the specific matter of building construction and renovation, he raises the possibility of the selection of a mentor being connected to the challenges of a particular administrative priority and a particular period of time. He comments, “in managing the building, the school division needs to assist new administrators as much as possible. For example, if you are renovating or constructing a new building, it would be appropriate for the school division for assign a mentor to you who has extensive experience in building management.”

Joanne believed that a formal mentorship program could help with many technical facets of the job of a novice administrator. However, the caveat that she put on this assessment, a theme that dominates the literature on administrator mentorship programs and which this chapter returns to later, is the requirement that she be able to pick the mentor and that the mentor be someone she could trust and be comfortable with. She commented:

Whether it is staffing, being on your own, dealing with staff not up to standards, or just figuring out what to do, when you don't know what to do in a particular situation, an organized, formal mentorship program would help me with lots of things that I have to deal with. I would just like to be

able to pick my mentor. I would welcome that, as long as it's someone that you can trust and feel comfortable with, and has time for you. Being alone as a single administrator can be a challenge.

Greg added to Joanne's comments on the added challenge of working in a school where there was no vice-principal. He commented, "unless you have someone to talk to, unless you have a mentor, or a formal mentor, or someone you trust, you do feel totally isolated. And this feeling that the 'buck stops here,' and you can't hide behind anyone else, because you are the person that's responsible, that weighs heavily on people's shoulder, I think it does on me. To be able to pick up the phone and ask them (a mentor) about a situation would be helpful."

Joanne also stated, "a formal mentorship program could assist administrators in budget and staffing as well as organization and planning. A formal mentor would help with the tricks of the trade, and showing the ropes, little details that one may not get in an informal setting." She added, "a formal mentor would provide new information, how to begin something with the following process, provide you with support, especially in the first year. It would be someone consistent that could assist you in the first year."

In the area of communication, in particular with parents and staff, Gerry believed that a formal mentorship program would assist novice principals. For new administrators who, he thought, may be too eager to please and who may not yet have their own informal support network, a mentor could be a valuable source of advice to be patient and to reflect carefully on situations. It was his view that:

New administrators are eager to please and a program may teach them to be more patient. It would help by having people within the organization who already have experience with staff and parents that are challenging

who can provide insight and a “step” approach. A formal program would aid immensely because you may not have an informal mentor.

Greg agreed with Gerry as he stated, “in dealing with staff and parents, a formal mentor program would provide a person (new administrator) with information from an experienced administrator who likely would have dealt with personnel issues before. That would be invaluable.” Lois added, “a formal mentor program would provide a consistent person to assist new administrators in staffing issues and challenging angry parents, beyond their informal or peer support relationships.”

5.2.2. Socialization

Issues of socialization, fitting in to a new environment and social system (Daresh, 2002), constituted the most frequently cited challenges for this group of new elementary school administrators. Included under this category in the literature, and in the participants’ comments, were challenges of isolation related to the transition from teacher to administrator (Dukess, 2001; West, 2002); challenges in managing and adapting to the brief, varied, and fragmented nature of the principal’s work (Watters, 1999); and, challenges in understanding the existing culture of the school (Bayko, 2005). As each of the participants discussed the need to cope with, manage, and/or overcome these sorts of challenges, they talked about the potential benefits of a formal mentorship program in the division.

Isolation: In the previous section of this chapter Greg talked about the sense of isolation he felt moving into the principalship in a school where there were no vice-principals and how a formal mentorship program could be valuable psychological support

in providing a professional colleague to discuss matters with. This was a point also made by Joanne who, again with the provision that the mentor was someone that she trusted and was comfortable confiding in. She added, "once you are appointed, then in some ways, you are virtually on your own. With so many things coming at you, to have possibly someone besides your peers and informal mentors there to assist you, I think it would provide a safety net. But again, it depends on the match."

Brevity, variety, and fragmentation: In discussing this area of socialization, there was some ambivalence among the participants as to whether a formal mentorship program could assist with the day-to-day brevity, variety and fragmentation of the job. Recognizing what Ellis (1988, cited in Pristash, 2001, p. 3) refers to as "an inevitable dilemma": that beginning principals never know exactly what it is like to be a principal until they actually become one", Joanne stated, "I don't know if a formal mentor program would assist with the challenges of the day-to-day unpredictability of the job. The pace, the change, the unpredictability. You learn that on your own". Nevertheless, she points to the potential benefit of a mentorship relationship and continues, "But a formal mentor may give you suggestions that you can't deal with everyone, and that you must prioritize." Lois, focusing on the reflective contribution of a mentor, added, "I think a formal mentor can help you in those day-to-day situations with debriefing and common sense suggestions." Gerry, who appeared to agree with both Lois and Joanne, again highlighted the benefits of a formal mentorship program for new administrators who did not have some other support network, concluded, "I don't know if a formal program could help with the day-to-day things that go on. You just somehow get used to it. But it

would help school administrators who have not established informal networking relationships.”

Recognizing the new culture: Greg felt that a mentorship program would assist in the challenge of dealing with a new school culture:

People really need to be aware of the culture of a school. Culture deals with the personality of people, the school and the community. A mentor program can help you with a very important question – ‘Are you coming into a school to be part of a community, or are you coming into a new school to create a new community’? You really need to reflect upon and understand this.

Gerry added this comment, “culture and change, and knowing it, happens naturally and intrinsically. But sometimes people do need to be aware that certain things can be happening culturally in a school that may not be good. I think that we all hope that new administrators learn these things intrinsically, but guidance from a mentor program would help.” Gerry continued in the area of socialization by stating, “being a new principal of a school can be overwhelming. To have someone say, ‘relax,’ and just to make you aware of the range of responsibilities such as documentation, who to talk to, etc., I think would be of benefit to new principals.

5.2.3 Self-Awareness

In the area of self-awareness, there was general consistency that one’s balancing home and work was largely due to one’s personality. A formal mentorship program could possibly assist individuals with issue of balance, but the research study participants also believed that one’s issue of balance depended on the personality of the novice

administrator. As Gerry stated, "a program may help with the issue of balancing work and home, to a certain degree. A mentor may say, hey, 'this is what works for me.' But if principals by nature are high strung and high stressed, and that is their personality, I am not sure how much a mentor's guidance would help."

Joanne countered that a formal mentor might just take the opportunity to sit down with someone who is having a challenging time with balance and say, "you can't do everything, and you can let some things go." But she also added that this depends on one's personality and that it may or may not help certain novice elementary principals.

In area of confidence and ability to delegate, the research study participants were not consistent in their agreement of whether a formal mentorship programs could assist them in meeting this challenge. Lois felt that one's confidence increases with one's experience. Joanne, on the other hand, believed that confidence and the ability to delegate are connected. She stated, "being new, you feel like you have to know everything, do everything, and obviously you can't do it all. A formal mentor program would allow a mentor to give you concrete suggestions on what you should or could delegate and give away. And that would increase your confidence."

Gerry added, "a mentor program will give you a pool of expertise to help you make a good decision. The mentor program would be able to present "systems" and a network of principals that have their areas of expertise." Greg agreed with Gerry and stated, "I remember being appointed as a vice-principal and Grace (his principal) introducing me to a new circle of colleagues. Well, that circle of colleagues changes a bit when you become a principal. In a formal mentor program, there would hopefully be a person who knows that it is their responsibility to help a new principal with the day-to-

day aspects of the job, as well as provide networking opportunities with a new circle of colleagues.”

All research study participants agreed that a major advantage in establishing a school district administrator mentorship program would be to assist those administrators who may not have informal networking or peer support relationships. As Gerry indicated, “for people who may not have many colleagues as friends, or are afraid to admit that they don’t know something, or maybe it may be just their personality, it is important to have a formal mentor system in place.” Greg added, “a formal mentor program gives people who do not have established relationships a chance to connect with a mentor.” Lois commented that, “a formal mentor is another person whom one can call beyond an informal network.” And Joanne added, “if there is no formal mentorship program, I often wonder how some people find someone on their own?”

Last, Gerry succinctly summarized the value of a formal mentorship program, “the value of a mentorship program is connecting with people who have experienced some of your challenges, and this will save you time and energy.”

5.3 A School District New Administrator Mentorship Program

As there was general support for the establishment of a formal mentorship program in this school division by the research study participants, the primary purpose of the focus group session was to have all of the research study participants discuss what they believed to be key features and elements of a formal mentorship program. It was explained to the research study participants, that the purpose in the creation and establishment of formal mentorship program would be to assist them in meeting some or

all of the challenges that they identified in the individual interviews and focus group session. Research participants were presented with an opportunity to review questions regarding the creation of a formal mentorship program based on the work of Villani's book, *Mentoring and Induction Programs That Support New Principals* (2006). In addition, participants in this research study viewed a template of the Extra Support for Principals (ESP) Principals Mentor Program created by Carl J. Weingartner of Albuquerque Public Schools. The participants in this study then collaboratively created a hypothetical formal mentorship program with agreed upon features. The rest of this chapter summarizes the participants' design for an effective new administrator mentorship program. While it is not implied that such a program could be fully constructed in 90 minutes by four new administrators, their comments provide an important Winnipeg-based starting point, along with the literature reviewed in this thesis, for such a project.

5.3.1 The Goals of a Mentorship Program

All of the participants in this study believed that a formal mentorship should be implemented. As Gerry commented, "the transition from vice-principal is huge, and though we have a support program for vice-principals, it would be of great benefit to have one for new principals." The participants in this study were also adamant that the program be voluntary, with the option to "opt out" of the program. Lois, in particular, led this discussion, and cited the problem of "incompatibility with a mentor" as a primary reason for the formal mentorship program to be a voluntary one.

The focus group established and agreed on three main goals for the program. These were: (i) assisting new administrators in successfully filling their roles in their respective schools; (ii) helping principals transition into a more positive leadership roles; and, (iii) utilizing the expertise and experience of practiced principals in a supportive and mentoring relationship with novice principals. Joanne shared with the group, "though these goals seem a bit general in their application, they need to be in order to cover most facets needed in the one's transition from vice-principal to principal." Lois added, "I agree, what each new principal needs will be different based on their skill set and one's own expectations...it is good to have general goals." The following represents elements of a formal mentorship agreed upon by all participants in this study.

5.3.2. Program Design

The task of designing a formal mentorship program would, the participants agreed, be a collaborative effort involving an Advisory Board consisting of divisional superintendents, principals, and the Human Resources Department. The participants wanted both relatively new as well as experienced principals to be members of the Advisory Board. Joanne stated, "I think that you need a variety of administrators on the Advisory Board with a wide range of experience, especially new administrators. They will have a perspective of what the transition was like in their first few years as new principals." Lois added, "Yes, ... but, you will also need seasoned veterans because they would have the ability to reflect and share how they would be able to support new administrators."

There was much discussion and debate regarding the components and recommended schedule of the program. The novice principals generally agreed that the mentorship program would be a collaborative effort between the existing school division and the Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association. As Greg stated, "it is very important that we involve our professional association of school administrators. If it is just the school division wanting to implement a mentorship program, it may be perceived as coming 'top down' and it may not be well received."

New principals were to be assigned to the mentorship program based on the timing of their appointments into the role of school principal. An assigned program coordinator would make initial contact with the new principals by phone to explain the program, answer questions, and discuss such matters as: administrative style; type of support expected and provided; inservice training programs or possibilities. In October each year the coordinator would bring the mentors and proteges together for an orientation. As Joanne stated, "the coordinator would make initial contact by phone with the new principal and get a better picture of what they are like, ask them about their administrative style, and find veteran administrators who may be a good match." She added, "but I think that it would be beneficial if the new principal could have the option of suggesting someone that they may like in the school division to be their mentor."

Information about the mentorship program would be shared with fellow administrators through administrative bulletins, memos, newsletters and e-mail. The coordinator would also be responsible for organizing the integration of this program with other professional development opportunities and requirements of the school division.

5.3.3 Participation in the Program

The participants in the program agreed that new principals who have been assigned to the position of principal for the first time would be those served by the program. As previously mentioned, participation in the program would be voluntary, and proteges would also have the opportunity to 'opt out' of the program. This could be done in consultation with the program coordinator. All of the novice principals came to consensus that the mentorship program should have duration of one year. As Lois stated, "I agree that the formal mentorship should last for a full school year. But if that critical connection is made, and a friendship is cultivated, the relationship can last a life time."

5.3.4 Who Would Provide the Mentoring?

There was general agreement amongst the participants in this study that mentors should be qualified experienced principals with preferably a minimum of four years of experience. Joanne, however, felt that there may be qualified principals who would be effective mentors without the minimum requirement of experience. She stated, "I think that if you have a principal in their third year on the job and they are doing a great job and are willing to be mentor, well, they may be keen and willing to assist with the mentorship program."

The novice principals debated whether the mentors should be full-time or retired principals. Lois was concerned about retired principals being "current" and "in-the-know" with up to date issues. Joanne agreed with Lois's concern. She stated, "some of our issues need immediate attention such as a new form or division policy. I

think that retired principals who are out of the loop may have difficulty being able to assist new principals.”

Mentors selected to be part of the program would be from the same school division. New principals would be able to make recommendations for the selection of their mentors. The coordinator would review their requests and hopefully honour the vast majority of them. The coordinator would then contact and meet with the selected mentor to explain the program, responsibilities, time commitment, in-service training program, and inform them of the compensation for their time and expertise.

5.3.5 What is Expected of Mentors?

The job responsibilities identified by novice administrators were numerous but also focused on mentors establishing initial contact with the protégées to let them know they are there to provide support whenever new principals felt that they needed help. Lois shared, “a major responsibility of a mentor is communication, and communicating on a regular basis, depending on what support is needed.” Gerry added, “mentors need to make themselves immediately available. They need be available and approachable and take the first step by calling or e-mailing the new principal.” Joanne concluded, “a mentor should be a phone call or e-mail away. I would like them to provide support, offer advice, share their expertise, and sometimes give me an opportunity to vent.” Other expectations of mentors would include communicating with the program coordinator as needed and participating in year -end evaluations.

All participants agreed that the relationship between the mentor and new principal would remain confidential and that mentors would have no role in the evaluation of the

new principals. Though the meetings between the mentors and new principals were to be arranged at mutually convenient times, the participants agreed that the mentors should contact their new principals at least every week, to conduct as Joanne stated, “a temperature check.”

5.3.6 What Supports are Available for Mentors?

The novice principals in this study believed that an honorarium of \$500.00 should be given to mentors involved in the program. As, Joanne stated, “this would be a good idea. An honorarium would indicate a show of good faith from our school division in its support of new administrators. It may also entice more veteran administrators to be part of the program.”

The program coordinator would assist in the training of mentors clearly outlining the program, its expectations, and the necessary commitment of the mentors. After the initial training session, it was the desire of novice principals for the program coordinator to meet at least on two occasions throughout the year.

5.3.7 What Should be Expected of New Principals?

Similar to mentors, new principals are expected to communicate with their mentors at least every other week in person, or by phone or e-mail. Also, new principals may, if desired, meet with the program coordinator.

The establishment of a library of leadership books and DVD's was of great interest to the participants in this study. Greg stated, “a library of leadership books, videos, and other resources would be great. The resources could be loaned out at our

request.” Joanne, added, “it would be nice to have access to a professional development library as part of the program, a library with resources on becoming a successful and effective school administrator, or establishing professional learning communities,”

5.3.8 Resources and Funding of the Mentorship Program

It was agreed that a retired principal assume the role of coordinator of the program. A salary of approximately \$12, 000.00 would be available for the coordinator. Mentors would be remunerated the sum of \$500.00 for their participation in the program. Other incidentals included: professional development materials, supplies; materials; room rentals; lunches, the creation of a handbook; and uses the services perhaps of an independent research company.

5.3.9 Evaluation of the Program

The novice principals wanted an independent research company or the school division’s research and technology department to conduct an evaluation of the program. A survey would be sent out to the mentors and another one to the new principals. Results would then be tabulated and shared with the Superintendent, senior-level administrators, school administrators, and be posted in a handbook or memo, so that everyone could see the evaluation of the previous year’s progress.

CHAPTER SIX:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

A feature of contemporary public education in Manitoba is that, like many other jurisdictions (West, 2002), it is entering a phase in which many of its current school principals are approaching retirement age while at the same times fewer numbers of teachers appear interested in moving into administration (Renihan, 1999). A further feature, in this case setting it apart from many international contexts (Levine, 2005; Southworth, 1995), is that Manitoba has no mandatory certification requirements for school administrators (except that they hold a valid Manitoba teaching certificate) and no province-wide administrator preparation program. Given the important role that school principals have been shown to play in the development and maintenance of high quality schools (Leithwood et al., 1994), these contemporary features raise important questions as to how Manitoba school divisions might best attract, prepare, and support a new generation of school principals for their schools. This study has attempted to contribute to an exploration of this issue by examining the challenges that a small group of novice elementary school principals identified during their first year as a principal and their views on a formal mentorship program as one possible strategy for supporting new administrators. This final chapter offers a brief summary of the study and its findings and some concluding comments and recommendations.

6.2 Summary

6.2.1. The Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges identified by four novice elementary principals working in an urban Winnipeg area public school division during their first year as a school principal, and the extent to which they believed that some type of formal mentorship program would have prevented, or assisted them in meeting, those challenges. In this study, the term “challenges” was used to mean expectations and job requirements that new administrators felt unprepared for, and “formal mentorship programs” refer to mentorship programs developed and supported by the school division.

Three research questions formed the basis for the study:

1. What are the key challenges (technical skills, socialization, self-awareness) identified by new elementary school principals in their first year in the position
2. Do elementary school principals believe that a formal mentorship program would be valuable in preventing or assisting them to respond effectively to some or all of the challenges?
3. If new elementary school principals believe that a formal mentorship program would be of value, what would be the key elements of such a program, and was there agreement among the principals on these features?

The conceptual framework used in the study to examine the challenges faced by new administrators was based on the work of John Daresh (1997; 2001; 2002) and his colleagues (Daresh & Playko, 1993; 1997). While the challenges - those expectations and

job requirements that new administrators felt unprepared for – are always likely to be in part contextual, related to the specific expectations of individual school systems and to the types of preparation programs and experiences of that jurisdiction, Daresh's research clusters the challenges of novice school administrators into three broad categories: (a) limitations on *technical expertise* (how to do things they are supposed to do, according to requirements of the job description); (b) difficulties with *socialization* to the profession and individual school systems (learning how to do things in a particular setting – “learning the ropes” – and the skills to effectively socialize into their new profession); and (c) problems with *self-awareness* (understanding who they are, now that they are administrators, and how to make use of their new authority). In his opinion, his research findings are consistent: beginning principals experience frustration over not knowing as much as they thought they should know about basic technical and managerial skills; beginning principals wish it was less problematic in becoming socialized to their new roles and responsibilities – this also involves being more aware of the culture of the school; and, beginning principals need to be aware of having a sense of self regarding one's responsibility, values, and vision of what is possible and desirable for the school.

A substantial amount of literature on mentoring and mentorship programs was reviewed in this study. Daresh's (1995) work in the USA was again influential as was Southworth's (1995) analysis from the United Kingdom, but it was Villani's (2006) review of formal mentorship programs currently in place in the USA, that provided the initial framework from which the participants in this study outlined their design for a preferred formal mentorship program.

Four novice administrators – two male and two female – participated in the study.

Each administrator was interviewed individually, using a semi-structured format, during February 2007 and all four participated in a focus group interview in May 2007. The individual interview, which ranged in length from 45 – 70 minutes, focused attention on administrative challenges and the potential value of a formal mentorship program, while the focus group interview, which lasted around 90 minutes, had the four principals collectively identify what they considered to be some important elements of a mentorship program. All of these interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

The first step in analyzing these data was to code each segment of an interview based on content – a process that generated some 131 different codes or interview segments. The second step, based on the researcher's reading of the interviews and on the literature reviewed for the study, was to cluster these codes into 10 broader themes that appeared common to each of the codes. (For example, some sixteen different segments of interviews that referenced the intense, hectic, and 'multi-tasking' challenges that new principals experienced were grouped into the theme of "Brevity, Variety and Fragmentation".) Where there was uncertainty as to where to place a particular coded segment of interview the relevant parts of the transcript were re-read to confirm the context and coding and the placement reviewed by the researcher. Since the primary focus of this part of the study was to identify clusters of challenges that new administrators identified rather than to quantify precisely and measure the frequency of occurrence of these challenges, this element of ambiguity was not seen as a significant problem in the data analysis process nor a limitation to the findings of the study. These ten themes were finally grouped under Daresh's three categories of technical skills, socialization, and self-awareness.

6.2.2. The Research Findings

Since all participants in the study indicated that they thought a formal mentorship program could have been helpful to them in their first year as a principal, the presentation of the findings from the study centered on the first and third research questions. These questions involved reporting on the challenges that they experienced and on the agreed upon characteristics of what they thought would be a beneficial formal mentorship program that their school division might implement.

Administrative Challenges: This study reported on ten themes drawn from the Winnipeg area principals' discussion of challenges. These were: (i) communication issues, (ii) the budget and staffing processes, (iii) building management, and (iv) planning (each fitting into Daresh's category of technical skills); (v) adapting to the new role of principal; (vi) brevity, variety and fragmentation of their workload; and, (vii) change and the existing school culture (Daresh's socialization category); and, (viii) recognizing one's newfound authority as principal, (ix) confidence and delegation, and (x) balance in one's professional and private lives (Daresh's category of self-awareness).

While, as noted earlier, one would expect the specific challenges faced by new school principals to be significantly influenced by the jurisdiction and context within which they are working, the types of challenges experienced by the principals in this study appeared to be consistent with Daresh's research and much of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. I found that when examining the challenges of the novice elementary school principals in this study, socialization and technical skills outweighed self-awareness skills as the areas that they perceived as providing them the greatest challenges. (See Table III, p.

62.) However, Gaudet (2002) in his study stated, “despite this apparent imbalance [between Daresh’s three categories of challenge], the literature comments strongly that principals need to pay attention to all three areas” (p. 87). I am in agreement with Gaudet and, I believe that my findings support this statement. In order for novice elementary school principals to be proficient in their role as school leaders, it is important for them to be aware of the importance of acquiring the necessary skills in all three areas. Daresh & Playko (1997) added, “a review of these broad areas – technical skills, socialization, and self-awareness - often leads a person to try and understand and generalize along the lines of deciding which area is most important if one is to succeed in the principalship. One of the things we want to emphasize here is that research on beginning principals has shown consistently that all three areas are important. In some ways, that fact makes your job even harder” (p.13). Balance in all three areas is critical and an awareness of where the majority of skill building needed is also crucial to one’s success.

A formal mentorship program. All participants in this study indicated a desire to be formally mentored. In order to assist them with meeting the challenges of novice elementary principals, and perhaps in the absence of a formal mentorship program, they relied heavily on peer support groups and informal mentoring relationships. These informal relationships provided a lifeline for the participants to acquire the technical skills, assisted them in experiencing the socialization process, and helped them become more self-aware as they continued to grow as school leaders. In essence, the participants in this study already had – to varying degrees - informal support networks that appeared to provide sources of direction, and assisted them in coping with the demands placed on them. After lengthy discussion and dialogue during the focus group session, all four of the research participants

agreed that a formal mentorship program would assist them in responding effectively to many of these challenges, and gave evidence accordingly.

However, a consistent response shared by the research participants regarding how a formal mentorship program would prevent them from responding to some or all of the challenges identified was in the area of the matching process of mentor to protégé. The research participants were all firm in their conviction that the success of any formal mentorship program rested largely in the matching process involving the mentor and protégé. The participants were adamant that novice administrators in any formal mentorship program must be allowed to pick their mentor.

6.3 Conclusions

Currently, in the province of Manitoba, educators are moving into new administrative positions with a wide variety of different levels of preparedness for this demanding position. In the absence of mandated administrator certification requirements, some will enter the position with preparation associated with the Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth voluntary Level 1 and Level 2 Administrator/Principal Certificates, some will enter with a Master's Degree in Educational Administration, and some will enter after extensive school division preparation programs. Some may enter with all of the above, some may enter with none of them. In Winnipeg area school divisions all but one have some form of administrative/leadership training program, and most give preference to candidates who have completed, or are in the process of completing administrator certification or a graduate degree. Whether this situation is adequate to prepare and support a new generation of high quality school principals for the province's schools is a topic of

interest for the Manitoba Council of School Leaders (COSL) (Cann, 2005) and for Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) (2002). This study has attempted to contribute to that discussion.

Despite the widespread development of administrator mentorship programs in other jurisdictions such as the USA (Villani, 2006) and the United Kingdom (Southworth, 1995), and the positive reception given to the relatively small *Peer Assisted Learning – Mentoring of School Leaders Program* that the Manitoba Council for Leadership in Education (MCLE) has sponsored across the province (MCLE, 2003), there are no formal administrator mentorship programs for principals currently in place in any Winnipeg area school division. The exception being Pembina Trails School Division. The school division is the only district that has hired a “Consultant of Administrative Coaching and Mentoring.” This consultant works directly with new administrators and also facilitates a smooth transition for the new administrators from teacher leaders to vice-principals. This study, based on the responses of four new elementary school principals, suggests that such a program, carefully designed by the school division and its administrators might be seen as a valuable support mechanism for new administrators. Participants in this study reported a number of areas where they thought such a program would have been valuable to them, while at the same time identifying a number of potential limitations to such programs and elements of a program that would have to be present for them to see it as valuable. The most important of these elements identified by the participants was that involvement in any mentorship program should be voluntary and that the new administrator must have a large say in the selection of the mentor. This is identified as a critical issue in the mentorship literature (Daresh, 1995), and is significant in as much that ultimately a mentorship

relationship is designed to help shape the identity of developing school administrator. In as much as control over the choice of mentor is, to some degree, control over the shaping of the school administrator's future identity, Southworth's (1995) cautionary comment is worth repeating. He comments:

Mentoring has the capacity either to be a vehicle for stimulating reflective leadership which is critical, developmental and learner orientated, or to be a means of handing down conservative assumptions about the role of heads. I know which I prefer, but I also know which one is likely to prevail, and they are not the same (p. 26).

The argument made in this study would be that no mentorship program will effectively meet all of the needs of all beginning school administrators but, as part of a comprehensive administrator preparation and career support package it is something that Manitoba school divisions should give careful consideration to.

6.4 Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

6.4.1 Recommendations for Practice

1. Based upon the responses of the participants in this study, it is recommended that each school division in Winnipeg meet with its school administrators to discuss with them the merits of implementing a formal mentorship within the division, and what the key elements of such a program, if supported, would be.
2. That Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth in consultation with the Council of School Leaders continue to explore how best to make sure that there continues to be a well-prepared cadre of candidates ready to move into school

administration positions across the province and the role than some form of formal mentorship program might play in such a process.

6.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

1. This study of challenges focused on first-year elementary principals as a group. The small number of participants and the elementary focus prevented the examination of difference that might be found among other groups of administrators (such as administrators in middle or senior years schools), or differences that might exist between sub-groups of school principals based on such characteristics as gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, or prior preparation. Larger studies that examined the priorities given to different challenges across these sorts of groups would be valuable in addressing the ways in which strategies and programs could be developed that are responsive to the particular needs of specific groups of administrators.
2. Daresh's research, and this study based on his categories of challenges does not link the issue of support for new principals to an outcomes focus that connects support for new principals to enhancing their effectiveness in improving student learning (Murphy, 2005). Further research could usefully make this connection in order to identify those challenges and supports that held the most potential for school improvement.
3. Given the general lack of divisionally run formal administrator mentorship programs in Manitoba it is difficult to recommend a program of research on the impact of existing programs, but as such programs are developed it would be

important to see that they are subject not only to carefully designed evaluations but also to research programs that can contribute to the international body of research that currently exists.

6.5 A Final Comment

This study set out to examine the challenges identified by selected elementary school principals working in an urban, Winnipeg area public school setting in their first year as school principal, and the extent to which a formal mentorship program for new principals would have prevented, or assisted them in meeting, those challenges. Where does it all lead? Hopefully, the findings, conclusions and recommendations will provide concrete suggestions and ideas on how to improve support to novice elementary school principals. Additionally, it is desired that school divisions will take a closer look at how they can better prepare new administrators perhaps through the creation and establishment of a formal mentorship program. It comes with recognition that novice elementary school principal talent is just that – a talent that may need more than to simply “learn the ropes,” or “sink or swim,” or become involved in “naturally evolving” informal relationships.

It is well known that principals do make a difference in schools. This study has served to highlight for me both the complexities of the job of elementary school principal and the complexities associated with developing some form of a formal mentorship program to support the range of challenges faced by different principals with different needs working in different contexts. No single mentorship model can be “a cure for a thousand ills”, nor are they likely to be effective in isolation from other preparation and support practices. Nonetheless, providing novice school administrators with support by a

mentoring relationship and a cogent plan to attain excellence seems well worth the effort, and ultimately likely to benefit students and their learning.

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Appendix A

Winnipeg Area School Division Leadership Preparation Programs

1. Winnipeg School Division

The largest school division in Winnipeg, the Winnipeg School Division offers two programs for its educators regarding leadership development. The Personnel Development Program (PDP) is for aspiring leaders who are teachers, and the New Administrators' Group (NAG) is a leadership development program assisting novice first and second year vice-principals. The Personnel Development Program requires teacher leaders to commit to a school year of relevant session topics that will assist them in their growth as leaders. Participants in the program must have a minimum of five years teaching experience as well as successful leadership experience. Topics covered in the program include: Communication Skills, Learning Styles, Conflict Resolution, The Decision Making Process, Leadership in Aboriginal Education, and the Operation of the Winnipeg School Division. Being a participant in the PDP does not guarantee anyone a position as a school administrator. On occasion, individuals not in the PDP have been appointed as vice-principals in the school division.

The New Administrators' Group Program (NAG) is a two-year program for novice vice-principals and principals. It is a program that covers a wide array of topics that assist the novice vice-principal during the onset of their careers. Topics include Expectations of Principals and Vice Principals, An Overview of Special Education and the Child Guidance Clinic, Staff Performance Assessment and Development, School Finances, and Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment.

The members of the New Administrators' Group (NAG) are also expected to visit other schools and programs that are unique to the Winnipeg School Division. NAG also provides its participants with an opportunity to develop peer support relationships that often last the entire duration of a school administrator's career.

Teacher leaders in the Winnipeg School Division who are interested in pursuing a career as a school administrator need not have a Master's Degree or hold a Level 1 or Level 2 Principal's Certificate.

2. River East-Transcona School Division

River East Transcona School Division requires Level 1 and Level 2 provincial certification for prospective school administrators. A Master's Degree in Education is also an expected requirement of those teacher leaders who aspire to become vice-principals. There is a Leadership Development Program for teacher leaders who are interested in developing their leadership skills. There is no minimum number of years of experience required when one applies to the program, but prospective candidates are rigorously screened through an interview and selection process. The Leadership Development Program focuses on a series of sessions at night that focus primarily on leadership and school administration issues.

Participation in the Leadership Development Program does not guarantee an administrative position. Also, the division, albeit rarely, will on occasion hire applicants that were not part of the Leadership Development Program, or those who may be only beginning their Masters' Degree and/or provincial certification.

River East Transcona School Division supports its new administrators over a three to five year period with a series of professional development workshops geared to assist the new administrator. Topics include, What It Means To Be A School Administrator in River East Transcona School Division, and Performance Assessment.

3. Louis riel School Division

Louis Riel School Division is the city's third largest school division with close to 15,000 students. Teachers venturing into school administration must hold Level 1 and Level 2 provincial certification. A Master's Degree in Education Administration is also preferred. Aspiring teacher leaders with minimal experience can apply to be part of the school division's Leadership Cohort. This program is not necessarily for teachers wanting to become school administrators, rather, it is for teacher leaders who want to explore more

leadership experience and opportunities. Teacher can apply to the Leadership Cohort, be invited by senior administration, or enter the Cohort based on their respective principal's recommendation.

The Leadership Cohort meets ten to twelve times in a school year, and sessions, many of which are conducted by Superintendents include: Leadership and Followership, Distributed Leadership, Shaping School Culture, and Shared Vision.

Support for new vice-principals exists in the form of a full day of professional development sessions on a variety of topics such as Budgeting, Interviewing Prospective Staff, and Performance Assessment. There is also a Leadership Council held approximately every six weeks on a variety of topics related to best practices in leadership. All administrators in the Louis Riel School Division are expected to participate in the Leadership Council sessions.

4. Pembina Trails School Division

The fourth largest school division in Winnipeg is Pembina Trails School Division with approximately 12 900 students. Teacher leaders interested in pursuing the role of school administrator do not need a Master's Degree in Educational Administration or provincial certification. The school division does have a Leadership Development Program that involves eight sessions throughout the school year. Topics include, Professional Standards, School Planning, and Instructional Leadership. There is no minimum requirement of teaching experience for applicants, and being in the program does not guarantee an administrative appointment. Also, the school division will hire people who have not been part of the Leadership Development Program.

Unique to Pembina Trails School Division is the half-time position of "Consultant, Administrative Coaching and Mentoring." The individual in this position works directly with new administrators and helps to facilitate a smooth transition for the new administrators from teacher leaders to vice-principals.

5. Seven Oaks School Division

In Seven Oaks School Division neither professional certification nor a Master's Degree in Education Administration are formal requirements for prospective administrators. There is no formal leadership program within the school division but there are a number of division-wide initiatives that emphasize divisional priorities that include the participation of school administrators. Many of these professional development sessions are facilitated by the school division's Assistant Superintendents. In addition in recent years the division has partnered with the University of Manitoba to have a Master's Degree program in Educational Administration and in Curriculum Leadership delivered to cohorts of educators from the division.

6. St. James-Assiniboia School Division

St. James School Division is Winnipeg's smallest school division, servicing over 8850 students. St. James School Division does not require individual's that express an interest in school administration to have a Master's Degree in Educational Administration. Nor does it require applicants to school administration to have provincial certification. However, the school division expects all applicants to demonstrate a commitment to professional development, work towards acquiring a Master's Degree in Educational Administration, or begin working on and completing their Level 1 and Level 2 provincial certification requirements.

St. James School Division does have an Educational Leadership Course which is offered to any teaching staff with 5 or more years experience and who also have an interest in pursuing school administration. Teacher leaders apply directly to the Chief Superintendent to gain admittance into the program. The program involves 5 three-hour evening sessions the span of ten weeks. Strands (Leadership, Management, Program and Personnel) are used as outlined by the province of Manitoba. Teacher leaders who successfully complete the course can use the fifteen hours from the program towards specific areas in the provincial certification program.

Taking the Educational Leadership Course does not also guarantee an administrative position. Interested teaching staff can also apply to be part of the

administrative pool. This process takes place every two to three years. Teacher leaders can be part of the administrative pool while not having been part of the Educational Leadership Course.

Appendix B

The Education/Nursing Ethics Review Board Approval Certificate



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APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

14 December 2006

TO: **Darryl Stevenson** (Advisor J. Young)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Stan Straw, Chair**
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: **Protocol #E2006:105**
**"The Challenges of the Novice Elementary Principal: Can a Formal
Mentorship Program Help? The Views of Select Winnipeg
Elementary Principals."**

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Kathryn Bartmanovich, Research Grants & Contract Services (fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

Bringing Research to Life

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate

Date

(Principal)

(School)

(Address)

Dear (Principal)

My name is Darryl Stevenson and I am presently working on my M. Ed at the University of Manitoba in the Department of Educational Administration. Through my experience as an educator, I have learned that there is much to learn from others. Did you realize that you are one of only 6 elementary principals in the Winnipeg School Division who entered the principalship last year? Because you and your four colleagues are just now in the middle of your second year of being a principal, I am sure the memories of your first year are still very fresh in your minds. That is why I am contacting you and making the following request.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study examining the challenges identified by selected novice elementary school principals working in an urban, western Canadian public school setting in their first year as a school principal, and the extent to which they believe that some form of a formal mentorship program would have prevented, or assisted them in meeting these challenges.

I am interested in finding out what assistance you would have liked to have had and what assistance you actually received in meeting the challenges that confronted you in your first year of the principalship. It appears that many people think they have the answer to these questions, but no one has specifically asked second-year principals these questions.

In this study, you are requested to meet with me for one 45 – 75 minute interview session (a subsequent shorter interview may be necessary to gather additional data), be part of a focus group interview that will be no longer than 90 minutes, and complete a fifteen minute questionnaire. Our conversations will be recorded, the contents transcribed, and I will give you a copy for your editing, and/or changing, or approval. No one and no school will be identified at any point during the research. At the end of the study, the data will be archived for three years and then destroyed.

Your participation is voluntary. Your responses will be confidential and there will be no risks associated with your participation. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your wishes will be honoured.

I appreciate your participation in this research study. In order for me to be able to continue this process, your signature is required to authorize my use of the information derived from the interview, focus group and questionnaire. Please sign the attached consent form to indicate your agreement.

I hope that you will enjoy this opportunity to talk and share your insights. If you have any questions, please contact me. I can be reached at _____ or by e-mail at dstevenson@wsdl.org. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Jon Young, at 474-9017 should you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your assistance.

Appendix D

Research Participant Consent Form

Title of the Study:

The Challenges of the Novice Elementary Principal:
Can a Formal Mentoring Program Help?
A Study of the Views of Select Winnipeg Elementary Principals

Researcher: Darryl Stevenson

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges identified by selected novice elementary school principals working in an urban, western Canadian public school setting in their first year as a school principal, and the extent to which they believe that some form of a formal mentorship program would have prevented, or assisted them in meeting these challenges. This study is being undertaken to complete the requirements of the Master of Education Degree in Educational Administration at the University of Manitoba.

Role of the Participants: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to assist the researcher in investigating the challenges of the novice elementary principals by sharing your stories and experiences through personal interview(s) and a focus group interview, both of which will be audio-taped and then transcribed. The transcripts will be returned to you for editing and/or changing. The questions which you will be asked to discuss will be topics related to your role as a novice elementary principal administrator.

Duration of Participation: The initial interview should require approximately sixty to ninety minutes of your time. A subsequent interview may be necessary to gather additional data. The focus group interview will require approximately sixty to ninety minutes.

Potential Risks, Discomforts, or Inconveniences: It is not expected that participants will experience any risk or discomfort during the interview(s). If you do, you may withdraw at any time.

Potential Benefits of Participation: There are no direct benefits to participants other than the knowledge you may acquire about the topic and the research process. You may find the study interesting and personally relevant to your experiences.

Confidentiality of Data and Withdrawal from the Study: Ethical considerations are extremely important in this study, and the nature of the personal data will be handled with

respect in order to guarantee anonymity and ensure confidentiality. Consent forms will be stored separately from the data. In the report of the study, appropriate pseudonyms and altered details will be used when referring to participants and their experiences. Any segment of the transcripts which might identify a participant will be reworded or removed. All raw data will be held in safekeeping throughout the course of the study and will only be accessible to the researcher and research supervisor. Transcriptions and audiotapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. Your decision to participate is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the course of this study without question or penalty.

Information about the Study: All participants in this study will be sent a brief summary of the results and investigations and will also have access to the completed thesis document through the University of Manitoba Education Library. This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Manitoba. If participants have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as research participants they may contact the Coordinator of the Research Ethics Board at (204) 474-7122. If the participants have any questions regarding the study, they may contact the researcher or the supervisor at the numbers listed below.

Consent: Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood the information provided and agree to participate in this study through an audio-taped interview and focus group interview. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You will be given a copy of this form.

Participate Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: Darryl Stevenson Telephone: (204)

Supervisor: Dr. Jon Young Telephone: (204) 474-9017

Appendix E

Interview Schedule and Protocol

Before we begin, I would like to ask your permission to audiotape this interview so that I may have an accurate record of your responses. Also, I would like to assure you that neither you nor your school will be identified by name in my study. As I explained in my initial letter, my study is aimed at examining the challenges identified by selected novice elementary school principals, and to what extent do they believe that some form of a formal mentorship program for new principals would have prevented, or assisted them in meeting these challenges. So before proceeding, I'd like to explain what I mean when I use certain terms in my interview questions. I am using the term "challenges" to mean expectations and job requirements that new administrators felt unprepared for. I am using the term "mentoring" to mean a process whereby an individual instructs, counsels, guides, and/or in some manner facilitates the personal and/or professional development of another person. "Formal mentoring" is a program sponsored by your school district to assist you in your first year as a principal. A "formal mentor" is an individual designated by your school district to carry out these functions. "Informal mentoring" is a voluntary relationship between you and another person. An "informal mentor" is the person who voluntarily serves as your mentor. If you would try to keep these same definitions in mind as we proceed, it would be very helpful. And, if at any time you would like me to repeat these definitions, please do not hesitate to ask. Are you ready to proceed?

1. Please identify yourself and take a couple of minutes explaining the journey you have embarked upon, beginning as a teacher, in becoming an elementary principal.
2. What are the major challenges that you experienced in your first year as a principal? In this study, I am using "challenges" to mean expectations or job requirements that you felt unprepared for.
3. What do you believe are some of the critical skills new principals need in order to be successful school leaders?
4. How skilled did you believe you were in the following technical skills?
 - a) Evaluating staff (i.e. procedures for the task, and also the substance).
 - b) Facilitating group meetings.
 - c) Designing and implementing a data-based improvement process.
 - d) Developing and monitoring a building budget.
 - e) Organizing and conduct parent-student-teacher conferences.
 - f) Establishing a scheduling program for students and staff.
 - g) Awareness of issues related to local school law.
 - h) Managing food service, custodial, and secretarial staff.

5. How skilled did you feel you were in the following areas of socialization:
 - a) Establishing a positive and cooperative relationship with other district administrators.
 - b) Determining who is what in a school setting.
 - c) Knowing how to relate to board members and central office personnel.
 - d) Knowing where the limits exist within the district or building, and balancing that with one's own professional values.
 - e) Understanding how the principalship changes family and other relationships.
 - f) Developing interpersonal networking skills that may be used with individuals inside and outside the system.
 - g) Ability to encourage involvement by all parties in the educational community.
 - h) Develop positive relationships with other organizations and agencies located in the school's surrounding community.
6. How skilled were you in the area of self-awareness in the following areas:
 - a) Demonstrating an awareness of what it means to possess organizational power and authority.
 - b) Demonstrating an awareness of why one was selected for a leadership position in the first place.
 - c) Portraying a sense of self-confidence on the job.
 - d) Having a vision along with an understanding needed to achieve relevant goals.
 - e) Demonstrating a desire to make a significant difference in the lives of staff and students.
 - f) Being aware of one's biases, strengths, and weaknesses.
 - g) Understanding and seeing that change is ongoing, and that it results in a continually changing vision of the principalship.
 - h) Assessing job responsibilities in terms of the "real role" of the principalship.
7. In your first year of appointment as principal of this school, did you feel the need to be mentored? (If "yes") What personal or professional needs did you have that you perceived mentoring would be helpful in addressing?
8. How has the history and culture of the school affected how you have adapted and adjusted to administration during the first five months of this school year?
9. What areas would you have liked to explore prior to entering the principalship?
10. Do you have any advice for first-time principals?

Appendix F

Focus Group Interview Protocol and Schedule

Protocol for Focus Group Discussion

1. First, there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in understanding perspectives about gender and education.
2. Second, you shouldn't feel that you have to agree with everyone else in this room if that's not how you really feel. There are 4 people in this room, so we expect that people will have different views. And it's important that we learn about all of the views that are represented here. But if you find yourself feeling upset about the talk, you can leave at any time.
3. Third, we want you to feel comfortable saying good things as well as critical things. We're not here to promote a particular way of thinking about gender and education. We just want to understand how students coming into this university make sense of it.
4. Fourth, we ask that you talk one at a time so that we can be sure to hear everyone's views and get them on tape.
5. Fifth, when you say something, please say your name first so that the person transcribing the tape will know who is talking. You could say, "This is Molly." Or, "This is Jennifer speaking."

Opening Script for Facilitator of Formal Mentorship Focus Group

Hi everyone! Thanks so much for coming. During this focus group we will be looking at what features of a formal mentorship program each of you believe would have prevented, or assisted you in responding effectively to some, or all of the identified challenges.

If each or some of you believe that a formal mentorship would be of value, to what extent do all of you agree on the key features of such a program. I am interested in how your ideas are grounded in your individual experiences. I am interested in details that might seem unimportant to you.

I've developed a series of preliminary questions that all of us will start following, but we will also let the tone of the group determine where the questions go.

Promise of Confidentiality

This form is intended to protect the confidentiality of what members of this discussion group say during the course of this study. Please read the following statement and sign your name indicating that you agree to comply.

I promise that I will not communicate or talk about information discussed during the course of this focus group with anyone outside of my fellow focus group members and the facilitators.

Name _____

Signature _____

Facilitator Signature _____

Appendix G

Principals' Mentorship Program Template Villani (2006)

Would mentoring be mandatory for new principals in the Principals' Mentorship Program?

Why would a program be implemented?

Goals

What would be the goals of the program?

Program Design

Who would design the mentor program?

What would be the components and recommended schedule of the program?

Are there any programs that would complement the mentor program?

Program Administration

Who would coordinate the program?

How would information communicated to shareholders?

Who would coordinate the integration of this program with other professional development opportunities or requirements in the school or district?

Participation in the Program

Who would be served by the program?

Would participation of new principals be voluntary or mandatory?

How long would the program last?

Who Provides the Mentoring and Induction?

What would be the criteria for being a mentor?

Would mentors be full-time principals or retired principals?

Would mentors be from the same district as new principals?

How would mentors be selected?

How would matches be made between mentors and new principals?

What would be expected of mentors?

What would be the job responsibilities of mentors?

Would the relationship between the mentor and the new principal be confidential?

Would observation and coaching be requirements of mentors?

Would mentors formally evaluate new principals?

How much time would mentors be expected to work with new principals (weekly, monthly, and for how long)?

When would mentors meet with new principals?

What Supports would be available for mentors?

Would mentors be remunerated?

Would mentors be trained? If so, by whom?

Would there be any professional development for mentors after the initial training? If so, who would provide it?

Would mentors meet regularly with other mentors? If so, how often and for how long?

Would there be any other ongoing support for mentors? If so, who would provide it?

Would there be any other resources available for mentors?

Would mentors be supervised? If so, by whom and how frequently?

What Should be Expected of New Principals Regarding Their Participation in the Mentoring Program?

How often would new principals meet with their mentors and for how long?

Would there be other people with whom the new principal meets for mentoring and support?

Would formative assessment of new principals be required? If so when, how, and by whom?

Would new principals required to prepare a portfolio?

Would there be Additional Supports Available for New Principals?

Would there be any other professional development provided? If so, when and by whom?

Would new principals meet regularly with other new principals?

What resources would be required for the mentoring program?

Funding

What would be the funding sources?

Who would request the funding?

Evaluation of the Program

Would the program be evaluated formatively? Summatively? Who would do the evaluation?

Who would see the results?

What would be the indicators of program success?

