

**Instructional Leadership:
Principal Perceptions of their
Instructional Leadership Practices**

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Abstract

This study examines the instructional leadership practices of 5 elementary principals as self-reported in recorded semi-structured interviews. The seven claims of instruction leadership as identified by Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou and Kington (2009) were used to frame the interview protocol which is designed to develop a deeper understanding of each principal's practices as instructional leaders in their schools. The data indicated that these principals were committed to their work and undertook specific leadership practices to accomplish school initiatives. However, two leadership practices, distributing leadership and acting as a visionary leader, were not revealed in the data. These findings may indicate a need to study the impact of the dual role of manager and instructional leader and of divisional culture on the work of school principals. In addition, there is no reference within the model with respect to what constitutes good teaching and learning and therefore it is not useful in determining and/or assessing leadership behaviours related to these areas. As such, Leithwood's model may benefit from closer examination in order to provide a broad and clearly articulated set of guidelines for assessing instructional leadership practices.

KEYWORDS *instructional leadership, elementary principals, distributed leadership, visionary*

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Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Principals are believed to have an impact on schools (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Their impact is believed to touch on many aspects of schools such as creating school culture (Deal, 1999), impacting on students' achievement scores and teacher instructional practices (Fullan, 2001), developing community partnerships (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) and building capacity among staff members (Reeves, 2009).

Although there is agreement among many scholars that principals influence certain areas of schools, there continues to be debate about the degree of influence and the areas on which the most impact is experienced. John Dewey (1938) wrote in his book *Experience and Education* that, “It would not be a sign of health if such an important social interest as education were not also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical” (p. 5). Seven decades later, Dewey’s words reflect the current discourse among academics, politicians, parents, and educators about the purpose of education and the responsibility principals must assume if children are to benefit from their education.

Scholars have delved into educational research and explored the different aspects of leadership theory exclusive to school settings. Kenneth Leithwood’s and Daniel Duke’s (1999) review of 121 educational literature articles revealed that 13 articles mentioned instructional leadership. They concluded from their literature review that instructional leadership was the only one of six leadership approaches that did not have a counterpart in non-school literature. This suggested that the role of the principal as the instructional leader is unique and defined through a more narrow body of primarily school based research.

This study drew from the research conducted by Hallinger (2001) and Leithwood and Duke (1999) focused on the role and actions of the school principal as an instructional leader. Specifically, the purpose of the research was to better understand how seven claims of instructional leadership practice are manifested in the work of principals in five elementary schools in an urban school division (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006b; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou & Kington, 2009). I chose Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) model because it provided an organizational framework on which to arrange and understand the participants' comments. The research question that underpinned the design of the study was, "In what ways are Leithwood et al.'s seven claims of instructional leadership manifested in the experiences of five principals in urban elementary schools?"

Rationale

The Role of the Principal in Teaching and Learning

The role of the principal as an instructional leader is often considered to play a significant role in improving student learning (Marzano, Watters, & McNulty, 2005), and has been widely researched in the last 30 years. The field of instructional leadership has its roots in the effective schools movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s in the U.S. (Brookover, & Lezotte, 1977). At that time and in the present, it was seen as the most promising leadership response to the higher student achievement standards the public had come to expect from schools (Jossey Bass, 2007). This form of leadership employed strategies consistent with a control orientation (Rowan, 1996). Over time, the term, instructional leadership, became more of a slogan urging administrators to address the "core technology" (Leithwood, 2007, p. 190) of their schools, which is teaching and learning.

Michael Fullan (2007) identified the “impossible position” (p. 168) of the principalship because of the increasingly unreasonable demands of the job. This study was significant because if principals are to meet the ever increasing demands to ensure that students are academically successful, principals must have a conscious understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing certain things each day that directly impact on improving student learning. Peter Drucker (1992) urges leaders to define and clarify their essential task by considering the questions, “what is the one thing that I and only I can do that if done well will make a difference in this organization?” (p. 345). The research on instructional leadership suggests that this one thing should be supporting the teaching and learning environment. Dufour (2008) urges principals to define their jobs as follows:

... to create the conditions that help the adults in this building continually improve upon their collective capacity to ensure that all students acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions essential to their success (p. 309).

To that end, this study focused on how school principals characterized their role and efforts as instructional leaders.

Significance of the Study

It was important to study instructional leadership practices for a number of reasons. The research shows that school leadership, especially by the principal, is the second most important factor (next to the teacher) when it comes to having an impact on student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In addition, principals have never before been under the immense pressure they feel today to ensure that students are learning (Jazzar, & Algozzine, 2007). Goldring and Pasternak (1994) and Heck, Larson and Marcoulides (1990) shared that today’s principals who demonstrate instructional leadership behaviours impact on student learning by shaping the school’s

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instructional climate and instructional organization (Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Heck et al., 1990) and Marcoulides' and Heck's (1993) research indicated that the principal's instructional leadership in the school in the areas of building school climate and organizing instructional programs are significant predictors of academic achievement. As principals work to shape the school's instructional climate and the instructional organization they must inherently engage in decision making in their role as instructional leaders. Principals must understand and be able to articulate both the rationale and motivation for their decisions and more specifically the potential impact the results will have on student learning. Murphy (2002) in Jazzar and Algozzine (2006a) shared that if "student achievement is to significantly improve, close, consistent, and coordinated communication between instructional leaders is essential" (p. 104). As principals at all levels make decisions that impact the organization, and ultimately may influence the students' performance, it is essential that school principals understand how to be effective in their instructional leadership practices.

Secondly, the principal is often faced with critical issues to which he/she must respond effectively. As well, school administrators are evaluated on the results of their decisions (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008) and therefore the quality of the decisions they make related to teaching and learning is important.

Finally, the study of principals' instructional leadership practices could provide important input for curricula development for leadership preparation programs and mentorship programs designed to support new and aspiring principals. Professional organizations such as the Council of School Leaders (COSL), the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), school divisions that offer local administrative preparation programs and universities that house leadership programs could all benefit from understanding more about how principals characterized and enacted their roles as

instructional leaders, and the circumstances under which support for effective practices might be developed.

Defining Instructional Leadership

Principals, as educational leaders, are expected to fulfill many roles in schools. Over the past two decades, in the area of educational leadership literature, instructional leadership has been one of the most popular areas of study. According to Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999), instructional leadership is the most frequently mentioned educational leadership concept in North America. Within the construct of instructional leadership, many attempts have been made to define instructional leadership. In the research on school leadership, the principal's role as a school leader has sometimes been defined through the relationships that exist between leaders and followers. More specifically, it is defined by the relationship that exists between the principal's vision and a classroom teacher's classroom practices (Murphy, & Seashore Lewis, 1999).

More specific definitions that attempt to define the nature of the relationship are provided by scholars such as Cuban, Leithwood, Murphy, and Hallinger. Cuban's (1984) image of the principal as an instructional leader portrayed the administrator as being "hip-deep" in instruction. This image focused on the principal's efforts to develop a vision and see it to fruition. By establishing school goals, aligning curriculum, developing a safe school environment, and supervising classroom instruction, the principal acts as an instructional leader.

Leithwood and Duke (1999) defined instructional leadership as an approach to leadership that emphasizes "the behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (p. 47). Others, such as Sheppard (1996) distinguished between "narrow" and "broad" views of instructional leadership because other versions of instructional leadership have included additional

organizational variables such as school culture, which may have important influences on teacher behavior.

Probably the “most fully tested” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 48) model conceptualizing instructional leadership is that of Hallinger and Murphy (1987) who determined that “instructional leadership must be defined in terms of observable practices and behaviors that principals can implement” (p. 55). In 2007, Leithwood in Jossey-Bass (2007) cited Hallinger et al.’s (2000) found evidence concerning the nature and effects of a model of instructional leadership derived from 125 studies reported between 1980 and 2000. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) outlined three categories of practice considered to be important in affecting the growth of students:

- Defining the school’s mission which includes framing the school’s goals and communicating the school’s goals;
- Managing the instructional program which includes supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress; and,
- Promoting a positive school learning climate which encompasses protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning.

Leithwood (Jossey Bass, 2007) also contends that administrators are obligated to choose to act on the best available evidence, figure out how to use it for their school improvement purposes, and make the case for its use with the staff, students, parents and other colleagues. He claims this form of action requires a “level of sophistication about the implications of research for practice that is one of the next frontiers for leadership development” (p. 193). In the combined work of Leithwood et al. (2009) the seven claims of instructional leadership are identified and provide school principals with a

framework to support the undertaking of fulfilling their role as instructional leaders in schools. These claims are fully described in chapter two and form the basis of the questions that will inform the research for this study.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are related to the participant selection process, the target participant group, the data collection method and the lack of generalizability of the findings. The subject pool from which the participants were derived for this study included all elementary principals in English schools in an urban division in Manitoba. The recipients of an invitation to participate led to the subsequent selection of the first five participants who were willing to participate in the study. A number of factors impacted on the opportunity and the participants' desire to respond to the invitation to participate, such as work load issues, sense of importance of the study, perceptions of their own efficacy in instructional leadership, and whether they could afford the time to engage in this work. Additionally, the subject pool of five elementary principals provided a limited focus for the study to minimize the number of variables that potentially impacted the practice of principals, but the small sample size made generalizability impossible. By selecting only elementary principals (K-8) as the focus of the study, high school principals' input was absent and thus any differences that occurred as a result of school composition were not included in the study.

In addition, this study included principals from one urban school division, and therefore excluded representation from other urban or rural school divisions which may have had unique contextual elements that affected the practice of principals. Although this study, as with qualitative studies, was not intended to be used to generalize an understanding of principals' leadership behaviors,

the study was representative of the responses from five principals in one urban division in Manitoba and was hoped that their input resonated with other principals in similar contexts.

The nature of the research method of using interviews as the only data source, did not permit the opportunity to observe the principals in the context in which the principal enacted his/her role as an instructional leader, thus eliminated the important features of the climate and culture of the school as experienced and observed by the researcher or informed by others. The data was based on the self-report of school principals themselves, and therefore, their biases and reflections on their own work were interpreted with caution. It was for that reason that some questions that asked for specific examples of practice attempted to ensure that how principals characterized themselves as instructional leaders were corroborated by examples they provided from their leadership practice.

In qualitative studies, researchers are concerned with the effect their biases may have on the data they interpret and the papers they produce (LeCompte, 1987). They take into account their biases and by doing so attempt deal them with them (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). My biases in this study were influenced by my belief that principals need to be strong instructional leaders and their focus remain on the teaching and learning environment. I had a desire to learn about how other school principals conceptualized their work in schools. Prior to being formally engaged in the research associated with this study, I was an avid reader of professional journals and books about instructional leadership and more specifically the endeavors of school administrators. In my work in an urban school division, I had the opportunity to have professional conversations with my colleagues but the conditions under which these conversations took place and my relationship with my colleagues influenced the degree that I was able to probe and sought to develop an in-depth understanding of their practices.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of a study are those characteristics that defined the boundaries of the inquiry.

In this study, the delimiting characteristics were:

1. There was a limit of five elementary principals who were interviewed.
2. The study took place in an urban school division in Manitoba.
3. The method of data collection was taped semi-structured interviews.
4. The seven claims of instructional leadership as defined by Leithwood et al. (2006b) provided the conceptual framework for the study.
5. The study focused on the daily work of elementary school principals.

Organization of the Report

This research paper includes five chapters. Chapter one identifies the purpose and significance of the study and identifies the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter two provides a review of the literature as related to instructional leadership with its focus on the work of Hallinger (2001), Kenneth Leithwood, Christopher Day, Pam Sammons, Alma Harris and David Hopkins (2006a). Chapter three provides an explanation of the methodology and the specific methods used in the study, including the interview protocol. Chapter four reveals the analyses of the findings and chapter five provides a summary of the findings, the conclusions, and implications for further research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This review examined the current research on the influences of principal leadership practices on student learning. The work of Philip Hallinger (2001), the combined work of Kenneth Leithwood et al. (2006b) in *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*, and Leithwood et al. (2009)

The Final Report of The Impact of School Leadership on Student Learning were some of the main sources of research cited for this literature review. The chapter will conclude with the conceptual framework used for this study, which is an amalgam of the work of Hallinger (2001), and Leithwood and Duke (1999).

The Evolution of the Instructional Leadership Concept

Over the past 30 years, instructional leadership has been widely studied. Initially the research on student success was commissioned by the U.S. government which sought to understand why some students were more successful than others. Coleman, an educational researcher, was commissioned in the 1960s to conduct research and concluded that the main influence on whether a student is successful is attributable to the students' family background and the background of their classmates (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, Mc Partland, Mood, York, & Weinfeld, 1966). This finding was not readily accepted as a conclusive finding by other educational researchers, although there was support from other researchers that suggested family background does indeed make a difference in student achievement (Coleman, et al., 1966).

As a result of Coleman et al.'s (1966) sweeping generalization and the response by fellow educational researchers such as Edmonds, Brookover, and Lezotte (1979), the effective schools research movement began. In response to Coleman et al.'s (1966) work, Edmonds et al. (1979) conducted research in many cities across the United States and in particular in neighbourhoods where students lived in poverty and who had high achievement versus low achievement scores. They observed and documented the characteristic of both types of schools. They concluded that public schools do make a difference and that students of poverty can learn at high levels.

The research of Edmonds et al. (1979) and others has been replicated over the years with studies showing that there are strong correlates between schools with high student achievement and principals who are highly engaged as instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2001). Additionally, some of the earliest effective schools studies by Edmonds et al. (1979) and Purkey and Smith (1983) revealed that as the school's instructional leader, the principal influences both staff and students resulting in significant increases in student achievement. Principals play a key role in the creation of social relations in schools which are important in teachers' professional development and learning, in turn, impacting the school and classroom levels (Lieberman, & Miller, 1984; Lortie, D., 1975). Further research also revealed that principal relations with teachers support change and professional development (Goldring & Rallis, 1993, Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Rosenblum, Louis, & Rossmiller, 1994).

Other studies (Bossert, Dyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Davis, 1998; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003) found that principals who focus on instructional leadership ultimately shape the instructional organization and the school's academic culture. Therefore, the principal's leadership skills are significant predictors for academic achievement (Marcoulides & Heck, 1993).

The effective leadership research on instructional leadership included work from a variety of scholars. Earlier work by Smith and Andrews (1989) identified four dimensions or roles of an instructional leader: resource provider, communicator, instructional resource and visible presence. The principal as resource provider ensures that teachers have the materials and resources they require to carry out their duties. The principal acts as an instructional resource through modelling of desired behaviours, participating in professional development and giving instructional concerns first priority, while supporting the daily instructional activities and programs in the school. As communicator, the

principal clearly articulates goals to the staff. Lastly, as a visible presence in the school, the principal makes frequent classroom observations and is highly accessible to the staff (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Others who added to the body of literature on instructional leadership are Brewar (1993), Cheng, (1994), Hallinger and Murphy, (1985), Heck, Larson and Marcoulides, (1990), Kleine-Kracht (1999), Hoy and Hoy (1995), and Blase and Blase (1999). Brewar (1993) found in his study conducted in secondary schools that the leadership behaviours of principals have a measurable effect on student achievement through teacher selection and academically oriented goal-setting. In Cheng's study (1994), the results of a cross-sectional study of 190 Hong Kong elementary schools, the data showed strong leadership is associated with high organizational effectiveness, strong organizational culture, positive teacher-principal relationships, and positive teacher and student performance.

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) examination of effective schools revealed that the following leadership behaviours are practiced by effective principals: clearly and simply defining the academic agenda for the school; establishing consistency and control in the school's instructional practices and curriculum; controlling and coordinating the set of consistent principles; and contacting staff frequently and purposefully, thereby attending to staff accountability. Heck et al. (1990) found in their study of elementary and secondary school principals that school governance, instructional organization, and school climate indirectly positively affected student achievement.

Blase and Blase (1999) conducted their study by seeking out the perspectives of 800 teachers on principals' instructional leadership strategies and interactions and their impact on dimensions of classroom instruction. As a result of their study, these researchers presented their Reflection-Growth (RG) model which consists of two major themes: talking with teachers to promote reflection and

promoting professional growth. The first theme, talking with teachers to promote reflection, included making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions, and giving praise. The second theme of promoting professional growth with respect to teaching methods and collegial interactions about teaching and learning, included the dimensions of: emphasizing the study of teaching and learning; supporting collaboration efforts among educators; developing coaching relationships among educators; encouraging and supporting the redesign of programs; applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development; and implementing action research to inform instructional decision making.

During the 1990s, the body of research on effective instructional leadership led to a greater understanding of the effects on instructional leadership based on personal characteristics such as: gender, training, experience and the school context, school level, school size, and school socioeconomic status (SES). For example, Hallinger and Heck (1996), studied the school principals' effects on reading scores in 87 elementary schools in the United States. The study found that principal leadership is influenced by both personal and contextual variables of the school's SES, parental involvement, and the principal's gender.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) used both school level SES and parental involvement as two measures of community context. These dimensions were selected because both parental involvement and school SES have been linked to the type of leadership principals exercise in their daily work (Goldring, 1986, 1993; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986a, 1986b; Heck et al., 1990), and they also impact on student learning (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Hallinger et al.'s (1996) study revealed that parental involvement had a positive effect on principal leadership and schools. Where teachers perceived principals to be active instructional

leaders, parents were more involved in the education of their children. The nature of the relationship between these variables was not determined in this study; however, a correlation did exist. The instructional behaviour of principals also differed in schools of high SES. It was found that principals in lower SES schools practiced less active instructional leadership than those in higher SES schools. These results are supported by studies conducted on leadership and school context (Goldring, 1990, 1993; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Heck et al., 1990; Scott & Teddlie, 1987).

Personal characteristics such as gender and years of experience were also studied. Teachers surveyed were found to perceive that female elementary school principals exercise more active leadership in the areas of curriculum and instruction than their male peers. Although the explanation of this effect is not explicitly known, some explanations have been offered to account for this phenomenon. Firstly, female administrators often spend more years in the classroom and hence gain instructional experience and expertise that serves them well in their leadership role. Secondly, female administrators are often working with a predominantly female staff in the elementary school setting and may be able to more effectively communicate with female teachers. Thirdly, the incentive systems employed by female principals differ from those of male principals and may be more aligned with student learning.

In the 2000s, given the introduction of *No Child Left Behind* (2001) in the United States with its emphasis on student achievement, Phillip Hallinger (2005) suggested that the instructional leader construct was worth further attention by those interested in understanding how leadership influences student learning and achievement. He sought to define the characteristics of an evolved model of instructional leadership, and report on the empirical evidence of its effects. He proposed that the instructional leader focuses on the following responsibilities:

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- creating a shared sense of purpose in the school, including clear goals focused on student learning;
- fostering the continuous improvement of the school through cyclical school development planning that involves a wide range of stakeholders;
- developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture aimed at innovation and improvement of teaching and learning;
- coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student learning outcomes;
- shaping the reward structure of the school to reflect the school's mission;
- organizing and monitoring a wide range of activities aimed at the continuous development of staff; and
- being a visible presence in the school, modeling the desired values of the school's culture.

(Hallinger, 2005, p. 13)

He resolved that these responsibilities be included in the instructional leadership construct as a part of “shared instructional leadership” where the work that is demanded of a principal must be shared among others in the organization (Barth, 2002; Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Lambert, 2002; Marks & Printy, 2004; Southworth, 2002). Hallinger's (2001) findings were based upon the use of an instrument called the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale, PIMRS, (Hallinger 2001). Hallinger (2005) found that instructional leadership has multiple effects on organizational factors such as school mission and goal, expectations, curriculum, teacher selection, and teacher engagement. Most important to this study is Hallinger's finding that instructional leadership also has direct and indirect effects on student achievement and a variety of school outcomes.

Indirect effects on student achievement were found in schools where principals establish a clear mission. Leithwood (1994) and Heck (1993) found that reading achievement was measurably impacted by principals who identified and clarified their school vision by shaping teachers' expectations and students' opportunities to learn. These study results focus on the importance of the influence of principals' behaviours and their possible impact on student learning.

In addition to the shared responsibility model of instructional leadership, consideration must be given to a variety of variables which Heck and Hallinger (1996a, 1996b) identified as creating the context of a school. These variables are comprised of student background, community type, organizational structure, school culture, teacher experience and competence, fiscal resources, school size, and bureaucratic and labour features of the school (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). For example, in a school where a number of children are underachieving, regardless of the view that leadership must be shared, the principal would set clear academically based goals and operate in a "hands-on role in organizing and coordinating instruction" (Hallinger, 2005, p.15). Accordingly, considering the context must be a key factor for principals when deciding upon leadership practices that best meet the needs of the students in their care.

Hallinger (2005) also suggests that the "contingent characteristic of school leadership" must be included in theoretical models (p. 15). Here, Hallinger conceptualized leadership as a mutual influence process, rather than a one way process. Within this view of instructional leadership, school principals understand that their behaviours are shaped as a result of the context of the school in which they work and respond accordingly.

Current Conceptions of Instructional Leadership

In 2006, a three year study was commissioned in England by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the National College of School Leadership. This study was important to the English government because it was concerned with improving student performance as well as developing its understanding of school leadership in order to better develop a range of strategies for leadership recruitment, selection, training and development.

The study aimed to firstly establish how much variation in pupil outcomes is accounted for by variation in the types, qualities, strategies, skills and contexts of school leadership, in particular those of heads as ‘leaders of leaders’; and secondly to determine the relative strengths of the direct and indirect influences of school leadership, especially that of the head, upon teachers and upon pupils’ outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2009, p. 20).

The first phase of the research included a comprehensive literature review which was undertaken by Leithwood et al. (2006b). The second phase included further visits to schools to probe the findings of phase one. Two surveys, a Wave 2 questionnaire and a researcher-administered pupil attitudinal survey were implemented and analyzed. The third phase of the study included analysis of the data and a final report was developed which provided evidence of support for the initial seven claims made in the literature review undertaken at the onset of the study.

In their review and subsequent discussion of the literature on which they based their seven claims about effective school leadership, Leithwood et al. (2006b) stated that they could not find a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership. They concluded that leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen. These findings were included in the interim report that was

developed and through the review of literature the seven claims first made by Leithwood et al. (2006b) were updated.

Claim 1. School Leadership is Second Only to Classroom Teaching as an Influence on Pupil Learning

To support the first claim that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning, Leithwood et al. (2006b) examined five sources of data: qualitative case studies, large-scale quantitative studies of overall leader effect, large scale and quantitative studies examining the effects of specific leadership practices, studies examining the leadership effects on pupil engagement, and leadership succession research and the implications of succession planning on student learning.

Leithwood et al. (2006b) found that in the large scale qualitative studies, generally conducted in exceptional school settings, results usually indicate above or below average pupil learning and achievement. However, as a result of the nature of the exceptional school settings selected, the results cannot be generalized or validated externally.

In the examination of leadership effects on pupil engagement, the authors found that pupil engagement is a strong predictor of pupil achievement. Lastly, the leadership succession research revealed the importance of succession planning of school leaders. In fact, a lack of succession planning is one of the most significant factors in schools failing to succeed, in spite of what teachers might do.

Claim 2. There are Basic Repertoires of Leadership Practices upon Which Almost all Leaders Draw

The second claim is that there are basic repertoires of leadership practices upon which almost all leaders draw. These practices are organized in four categories: building vision and setting

directions; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organization; and managing the teaching and learning program (Leithwood et al., 2006a).

In the analysis of the data, Leithwood et al. (2006b) compared it to that of Yukl, a professor at Management and Leadership at the State University of New York and a well-known scholar and author on leadership. Yukl (1982) outlined leadership characteristics through the roles of a leader, a follower, and the situation. Although Yukl's (1982) work primarily studied behaviours of management leaders in non-school contexts, he proposed that because there are similar leadership roles for both managers and school principals, there is a basis for generalizing from one kind of leader to another.

Yukl (1982) found that leadership studies fell into a few distinct approaches. The trait approach emphasized the characteristics and qualities of a leader that contribute to the leader's success. Yukl (1982) believes that principals engage in work that is similar to managers, fast paced and hectic, and require high energy and stress tolerance. Principals, because of the numerous and varied interactions they have in their work, benefit from being persuasive, tactful, empathetic, charming, and socially sensitive. They also should have vision and self-confidence, and a need for power that manifests itself in the principal seeking out the support and involvement of teachers to design and implement new programs. Principals also need technical skills, such as expert knowledge of pedagogy, learning processes, curriculum planning and program implementation (Smyth, 1980). Lastly, principals must have highly developed interpersonal skills (Gordon & McIntyre, 1978) to influence teacher commitment and exert their limited power to enact the change they want.

The power influence approach is focused on the way in which a leader exercises power and the amount of power the leader possesses. The research suggests that effective principals exercise their

power by being non-manipulative and tactful, demonstrating understanding, and providing calm, professional and confident leadership. When exercising power in these ways, teachers feel a greater sense of loyalty, commitment and satisfaction to their work. Lastly, the research supports that principals have less ability to distribute rewards to teachers due to a number of factors. However, principals who are able to discreetly and with skill work around the bureaucratic restrictions on giving rewards can accrue support and obligations from teachers.

The behaviour approach identifies the behaviours and activities in which the successful leader engages. Like their counterparts in the business world who work in relatively self-contained, autonomous environments, the principal (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980) attends to routine organizational demands in an efficient manner. This allows for time to focus on important aspects of the principal's role such curriculum planning and teacher development. Yukl (1982) concluded that principals need to monitor subordinate activities, solve problems, handle disturbances and maintain discipline. Principals also need to develop teachers professionally, delegate discretion and responsibility, and oversee the development of new programs. The majority of a principal's work takes place in the day to day workings of the school. It is through the daily interactions that the principal must create a climate where support for new programs and initiatives exists. The principal behaviours that foster the development of this climate are: setting high expectations, defining clear roles, working cooperatively and developing shared norms about order and discipline (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer & Wisenbaker, 1979).

Lastly, situational leadership emphasizes how aspects of trait, behavioural and power approaches are important depending on the situation in which the leader is working. Of the leadership theories examined by Yukl (1982), he considered situational theory to be the optimal theory to guide

principals' behaviours in schools as the role of the principal changes due to declining enrolments, mounting public criticism and the impact of government regulations.

Within Yukl's (1982) studies, which had been conducted in non-school contexts, Leithwood found support for the conclusions he developed from his analysis of the school based data. The following sections will further develop these four areas of leadership practice.

Building vision and setting directions. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) suggest that effective principals develop a shared purpose among teachers by building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals and demonstrating high-performance expectations. His conclusions extended Yukl's (1982) managerial taxonomy which included motivating and inspiring, clarifying roles and objectives, and planning and organizing.

In the school groups in Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) study, the way principals built vision and set direction varied depending on the stage of the school in the process of being turned around. For schools in the early stages, or the crisis stabilization phase of turnaround, principals were more in control and worked on short term goal attainment. In schools in the later stage of turnaround, the staff was more participatory in the turnaround process and in crafting the school's direction.

Understanding and developing people. In the second element, understanding and developing people, the focus of improvement is not limited to the knowledge and skills teachers possess. It also includes the leaders' dispositions (commitment, capacity and resilience) to persist in applying the knowledge and skills. Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) research was supported by the managerial behaviours of supporting, developing and mentoring, recognizing, and rewarding as identified in Yukl's (1989) work. These findings brought to the forefront the skill and importance of integrating the functional

and personal aspects of leadership. In Leithwood et al.'s study (2006b), the importance or the intensity of developing people remained a constant despite the stage of turnaround of the school studied.

Redesigning the organization. The third effective leadership element as identified by Leithwood et al. (2006b) focused on redesigning the organization which is concerned with establishing effective working conditions. Specific practices include: building collaborative cultures, restructuring and reculturing the organization, building productive relations with parents and the community, and connecting the school to its wider environment. Again, Yukl's (1989) taxonomy revealed similar behaviours including: managing conflict and team building, delegating, consulting, and networking.

Leithwood et al. (2006b) found that redesigning the organization played a key role in effecting turnaround schools. Here, the leader's focus is on reculturing, improving communication and developing new norms to pave the way for more distributed forms of leadership which will sustain high levels of performance.

Managing the teaching and learning program. In the last of the repertoire of leadership practices, managing the teaching and learning program, the leader's work is focused on fostering organizational stability and strengthening the school's infrastructure, staffing the teaching program, providing teaching support, monitoring school activity and buffering staff against distractions from their work. Yukl (1989) identified monitoring as an additional behaviour of successful leaders. In Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) view, when leaders manage the teaching and learning program, the focus is on ensuring that the recruitment of staff must be attended to carefully to ensure that staff capacity exists to continue and sustain the turnaround process.

At the end of the British study, the second of the initial claims that almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices was supported by further analyses of past and

current research. It was found that instructional leadership practices or direction setting leadership practices have a significant effect on student learning as they engage teachers in initiatives directly related to student learning. This is in contrast to transformational leadership practices which are more teacher than student focused.

Claim 3. The Ways in Which Leaders Apply these Leadership Practices, Not the Practices Themselves, Demonstrate Responsiveness to, Rather than Dictation by, the Contexts in Which they Work

Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) third claim is that it is the ways in which leaders apply these leadership practices, not the practices themselves that are important. Like Hallinger (2001; 2005), Leithwood (2006b) comments on how leaders demonstrate responsiveness to situations in the contexts in which they work. A leader's application of each of the four leadership practices is dependent on the context in which they are applied. The third claim that successful leaders enact the core leadership practices in contextually appropriate forms was adapted as a result of the review of findings of Gordon and Louis (2005) and Wahlstrom and Louis (2008). Here the impact of student poverty, diversity and whether the school was a primary or secondary school significantly moderated the effects of school leadership. This finding brought attention to the importance of a leader's ability to sensitively combine and adapt his/her core practices in response to the contexts in which he/she is working.

Claim 4. School Leaders Improve Teaching and Learning Indirectly and Most Powerfully Through Their Influence on Staff Motivation, Commitment and Working Conditions

In Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) fourth claim, school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) literature review led him to conclude "that while school leaders

made modest direct contributions to staff capacities, they had quite strong and positive influences on staff members' motivations, commitments and beliefs about the supportiveness of their working conditions” (p. 10). When leaders implement the leadership practices of building vision and setting direction; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organization; and managing the teaching and learning program, there is increased influence on teachers’ classroom practices, but not necessarily on student learning. This finding suggests that it is important for leaders to develop staff capacity, as well as influencing staff motivation and improving working conditions, so that improved student learning is more likely to occur. Continued support for this claim is based on evidence from Leithwood and Beatty (2008) where teacher working conditions contribute to a large handful of teacher emotions and the effects of these emotions on student learning. As well, Leithwood’s finding were supported by Day, Stobart, Sammons, Hadfield and Kingston (2004) who found that working conditions had a powerful effect on teacher emotions and classroom practices.

In order to have a greater impact on student learning, the ideal situation would have principals finding the time and ability to provide meaningful feedback to teachers about their practice. This kind of leadership capacity and practice has not been found in the reviewed literature. Instead, a proposed form of shared leadership practice by teacher leaders and principals which combines both transformational and instructional leadership qualities have reported significant effects on student learning (Wahlstrom & Lewis, 2008; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008).

Claim 5. School Leadership has a Greater Influence on Schools and Pupils When it is Widely Distributed

Leithwood et al.’s (2006b) fifth claim is that school leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed. He offered a description of possible sources of

leadership that identified individual teachers, staff teams, parents, central office staff, students and vice-principals as well as the principal, as the combined or “total leadership” from all sources. His review of the literature identified that, despite the popularity of this kind of leadership practice, in reality the evidence supporting its positive outcomes on schools is not as extensive as one might wish or expect. He found that while the British study was being conducted, there were many more studies undertaken that offered more insights and evidence into the impact of distributed leadership on schools.

In studies of distributed leadership by Leithwood, Mascalla and Strauss (2009) and in a special issue of the *Journal of Educational Administration* (Harris, 2008), the evidence indicated that leadership distribution is common in schools, that it coexists with more focused sources of leadership that are unique to the individual leaders and that the relationships between individual and distributed leadership sources vary depending on the contexts in which they are enacted. The works reviewed (Gronn, 2009; Harris, 2009; MacBeath, 2008; Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2009) provided different dimensions along which leadership distribution might follow. The evidence also revealed that these dimensions offer several factors which influence the extent to which leadership is distributed, including the degree of expertise of both the leader and staff members, the policies and regulations that influence the direction of leadership work in schools, the kinds of leadership functions to be performed, and the scope of the goals to be accomplished.

The research on distributed leadership suggests that it is often influenced by external pressures and that when greater leadership distribution occurs, it is dependent on the individual and intentional intervention of those in formal leadership positions (Leithwood et al., 2009). Some factors which influence the leadership distribution include acknowledging the importance of distributed leadership,

providing time to exercise leadership, creating opportunities to develop leadership skills and encouraging people to take on leadership tasks which have been made clear to those assuming a leadership role.

Claim 6. Some Patterns of Distribution are More Effective than Others

In the sixth claim, Leithwood et al. (2006b) asserts that some patterns of leadership distribution are more effective than others and more influential than others on impacting positively or negatively on teacher performance and students' learning (Harris & Strauss, 2004). The findings from the available research indicate that schools with high levels of leadership influence from all sources attribute the leadership to positively impacting their high level of student performance. Conversely, schools with low levels of influence from all sources of leadership have low student achievement. Schools with high and low levels of student achievement differed most in their ratings of influence of school teams, parents and students. Lastly, principals are found to have the greatest negative or positive effect on schools. These findings, also supported in earlier evidence, claims that there is no loss of power on the part of principal when the power and influence of others in schools increases.

This claim was further supported by limited new research conducted after the initial literature review was completed. Mascal, Leithwood, Strauss and Sacks (2008) found a significant relationship between a form of distributed leadership and a teacher variable they identified as "academic optimism" (Woolfolk, Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Academic optimism referred to the combined measure of staff trust in parents and students, teacher efficacy and organizational citizenship behaviour. They labelled the form of distributed leadership as "planned alignment" (Woolfolk, Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008) and described it as a form of leadership where members of a leadership group collaboratively plan their actions and review and revise accordingly, resulting in distributed leadership that is strategically

coordinated (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Individually, each of these variables has been positively and significantly associated with student achievement.

Claim 7. A Small Handful of Personal Traits Explains a High Proportion of the Variation in Leadership Effectiveness

At the beginning of the first phase of the study, Leithwood et al. (2006a) found there was limited research in school settings about the personal traits that may account for leadership effectiveness. However, much of the research conducted to study leaders' efforts reflected evidence from private sector studies on leadership (Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004). These findings suggested that the claim could be made "the most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are also flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent (e.g. in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment, learning and achievement for all), resilient and optimistic" (Leithwood et al., 2006b, p.14).

Upon completion of the study, the seventh claim had little new evidence added to the initial body of research which supported this claim. However, there is evidence that most successful leaders are open-minded and flexible in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent, resilient and optimistic, all traits which explain why leaders are able to push forward when faced with challenging situations.

Leithwood et al. (2006b) asserted that, although there is a paucity of research on school leadership, the information that has been gleaned from the existing research is used as a catalyst for future research on leadership in a variety of schools.

Ultimately, the research demonstrates that principals in more effective schools are successful in improving pupil outcomes because of "their values, virtues, dispositions, attributes and competences -

the strategies they use, and the specific combination and timely implementation and management of these strategies in response to the unique contexts in which they work” (Leithwood et al. 2009, p.15).

Importance of the Study

Leithwood et al.’s (2006b) study provides guidance for principals who seek to use research to guide their instructional leadership practices. As the core purpose of schooling is to improve student learning, and the impact of the instructional leader is second only to the teacher’s impact on student learning, I was interested to learn how five school principals characterize their role and efforts in improving student learning as related to Leithwood et al.’s (2006b) seven claims.

In my role of school principal, along with school staff, I undertook the process of improving teacher’s instructional practices for the purpose of improving student learning. Our efforts were successful for a number of reasons, many of which were more readily identifiable and consistent with the practices described in the seven claims of instructional leadership practice (Leithwood et al., 2006b). There are other behaviours that I have exhibited that likely have had an impact on the process that are inevitably as a result of specific actions and interactions, but are less obvious or identifiable to me, especially at a conscious level. However, these behaviours may be apparent only to those with whom I’ve worked as they are related to the personal and socio- emotional dimension of my work as a school principal. I believe that these traits or personal characteristics, perhaps less obvious than the leadership behaviours in the other six claims should be recognized by principals for their value in the arena of leadership practices. In addition, I believe there is much merit in reflecting upon leadership practice and that principals (and therefore students) benefit from their conscious application and awareness of the seven claims in their daily work.

In addition, as I reflected on my experiences as a classroom teacher and subsequent involvement in school initiatives to improve student learning, I recalled only a few specific experiences where my school principal explicitly articulated to me the role that I would play in the initiative to improve student learning. In fact, there were times when I wondered if the leadership that other teachers and I assumed in implementing the initiative was consciously shared by the principal or whether it existed for a different set of reasons. The leadership may have emerged by: (a) chance; (b) the intentional fostering by the principal, although not articulated to the teachers; (c) the emergence of distributed leadership which was unforeseen by the school principal, but was allowed to develop; and, (d) teachers showing leadership because principal leadership appeared to be lacking.

My examination of the seven claims and the implication of their conscious application as a school principal led me to want to examine the practice of school principals and their understandings of the nature and impact of instructional leadership. Specifically, I was interested in discovering how school principals came to enact their instructional leadership, what they did as they developed initiatives to improve student learning, why they did what they did and what impacts they believed they had as they attempted to affect student learning.

The findings of this study offered insight to principals in their work as instructional leaders as it provided information about which of the seven claims principals considered or used the most at a conscious level. It revealed new leadership traits and practices that were not mentioned in Leithwood's review (2006b). This information provided insights about leadership practices that could be useful in the development of mentorship or other leadership development programs. It also provided consideration of alternate or expanded views of instructional leadership not presently offered in Leithwood's seven claims.

Summary

The review of the literature on instructional leadership practices led me to agree with the seven claims made by Leithwood et al (2006b). This study was derived from my interest to better understand how the seven claims of leadership practice, as identified by Hallinger (2001) and supported by Leithwood et al.'s (2006a) research, are manifested in the work of principals in five elementary schools in an urban school division. The next chapter delineates the research methods that I used to guide my study.

Chapter Three

Introduction

Qualitative research aims at understanding one thing well (Stake, 2010). The researcher is an instrument, observing action and contexts, often intentionally playing a subjective role in the study, using his or her own personal experience in making interpretations. In the field of education, qualitative research fits nicely because in studying areas of the teaching profession, and other areas of social practice, such as nursing and social work, the goal is not to separate the knowledge of practice, clinical knowledge, and professional knowledge (Stake, 2010). Instead, the qualitative inquiry is inherently interpretive, experiential, situational, and personalistic thus allowing the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's' experiences. Each researcher will likely conduct his/her research differently, but in qualitative studies, researchers strive to work very hard at their interpretations by attending to the complexity of individuals' backgrounds, trying to convey some of the subject's story in experiential terms and the individuals are treated as unique (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The key characteristics of qualitative research as provided by Stake (2010) are described as: interpretive, experiential, situational, personalistic, and well-triangulated. The researcher makes strategic choices, leaning one way or the other toward: knowledge production or assisting policy development and/or improving practice; aiming to represent typical cases; advocating or providing advocacy for a point of view; emphasizing a most logical view or laying out multiple realities; working toward generalizations; or providing findings or moving toward making improvements.

Anthropologist Frederick Erickson claimed that the primary characteristic of qualitative research is the priority given to interpretation. He said that the findings are not just findings but “assertions” (Stake, 2010. p 55). These assertions are the best-developed meanings we give to the most important things, including “how they work” and the researcher puts forward a personal interpretation, an assertion. Alternative interpretations and multiple realities are expected. Thus, an ongoing, subjective, interpretive role of the researcher is common in the work of qualitative research.

Qualitative studies, which rely primarily on human perception and understanding, are best at examining the actual, ongoing ways that persons or organizations are doing their work. The findings of qualitative studies are not intended to provide support to generalize how things work, for example as in this study, for all principals. Rather the studies aim to concentrate on how things work for certain people, in certain contexts and at certain times (Stake, 2010). Through the research process, choices of action are reached through interpretation and those interpretations will depend on the experiences of the researcher, the experience of those being studied, and the experience of those to whom information will need to be conveyed (Stake, 2010). It is no wonder that qualitative research is often known as interpretive research and is best represented as a struggle with meanings (Stake, 2010).

The researcher in qualitative studies uses a microinterpretation of how things work, more specifically for an individual in a specific context. This is in contrast to a macrointerpretation where the researcher's understanding would apply to how things generally work rather than be attributable to an individual's experiences (Stake, 2010). The researcher will also use empathy, in an effort to understand how things work. Lucy Candib (1995) spoke of qualitative research as "connected knowing" and wrote that connected knowing is the embodiment of empathy, using personal experiences and relationships to inquire how others see how things work (cited in Stake, 2010, p. 47). Using face to face interviews provides the researcher with the opportunity to learn about the experiences of the participants. Personal judgement is usually the main source for assertions about how things work so the researcher places a heavy reliance on the interview process and the subsequent examining of the experiences of those being studied. Qualitative researchers seek to gather the experiences of others and to better understand a situation and by doing so be able to contribute to policy development and/ or professional practice.

For this study, the qualitative methodology was selected because this approach provided the researcher with an opportunity to explore the many perspectives that the participants, elementary school principals, presented as their reality. The context in which the participants experienced their reality was also believed to be critical to the research in understanding the phenomenon being investigated (McMillan, 2008). In qualitative studies, the researcher's biases and perspectives must be understood and used in interpreting the findings. This is important to support the validity of the researcher's findings as qualitative research depends largely on providing a convincing account. In the report, the reader must be able to distinguish the data, the analytical framework used and the

interpretation and be able to establish in the report that the reader can trust in the integrity and fairness of the research methods and analysis.

Naturalistic inquiry is one method used for conducting qualitative research. This research approach was initially explained by Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1985) and is based on two assumptions: first, that people cannot be separated or removed from the physical, social and cultural elements of the environment and second, that human beings constantly seek to influence their environment and are in turn influenced by it, and behaviour can be explained in terms of the person-environment interaction (Bell, Fisher, Baum, & Greene, 1990; Hasselkus, 1978). Later on, Lincoln and Guba characterized their naturalistic inquiry framework as a “constructivist paradigm” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). They recognized that constructivist and naturalistic inquiry are similar notions. In the constructivist philosophy, “the constructions are resident in the minds of the individual” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 128). Guba and Lincoln (1989) said of the constructions: “They do not exist outside of the persons who create and hold them; they are not some ‘objective’ world that exists apart from their constructors” (p. 143). Therefore, the findings of the inquiry are a construction of the inquiry process.

The following research question framed this study: In what ways are Leithwood et al.’s (2006b) seven claims of instructional leadership manifested in the experiences of five principals in urban elementary schools? In this study, the perspectives of how principals experienced their work as instructional leaders was best represented through a naturalistic inquiry approach where semi-structured interviews were conducted in the principal’s natural setting of the school. The goal was to understand the practices and decisions of school principals within their work contexts, how they influenced those work contexts, and how they in turn were influenced by their work contexts as they provided instructional leadership.

Research methodology that attempts to investigate the perceptions of people must find a means to access their internal beliefs and knowledge in order to develop an understanding of the world from their own viewpoint (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, a naturalistic inquiry approach was selected in order to permit me to interpret and describe the participants' experiences with instructional leadership practices as they perceived them. This method of study typically involves the use of personal, in-depth, semi-structured or unstructured taped interviews and the subsequent coding of participant responses which form the basis for the researcher's descriptions and meanings. Given the subjective nature of the questions under consideration, the researcher must continually confront his or her opinions and prejudices with the data when making interpretations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The semi-structured interviews of this study were designed specifically to gather data that revealed the way that principals understood their experiences as instructional leaders.

Naturalistic inquiry consists of five axioms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which are detailed below and described within the context of the nature of this study. The first axiom of naturalistic inquiry suggests that reality consists of multiple constructed realities that can be understood to some extent but cannot be predicted or controlled and there are multiple rationales for doing so. Four levels of realities are outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985): Objective reality, also known as naïve realism and hypothetical realism, asserts that there is a reality and that by experiencing it, such reality can be known. Skagestad (1981) proposed that realities should be seriously considered and individual inquiries are only approximations, but eventually, convergence will occur. As a result, each inquiry raises more questions than it answers (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Perceived reality is based on the premise that there is a reality, but it cannot be fully known. Constructed reality refers to the notion that the realities are such only to those who have constructed

them. Others may agree on some portions of the described or defined reality, but at no point is there convergence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, created reality purports that there is no reality at all.

In this study, each participant responded to the questions related to instructional leadership practice from his /her perspective and was free to respond based on his/her experiences. There were assumed to be no right or wrong answers to the questions. Rather, the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the participants as they shaped each person's subjective realities were deemed to be equally of value. This also assumed that there may have been conflicting perceptions that had not been predicted at the outset of the study, but that add nuanced understanding to the analysis and subsequent interpretations of the data. The second axiom states that the inquirer and the object of inquiry interact and influence each other, so they are inseparable. Together, the researcher and the participant shape one another's behaviours and responses when in an interview or observations and thereby create the data of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The inevitability of this influence of the two parties on each other presents the researcher with the challenge of addressing it or ignoring its implications. Four possible responses to the situation include: ignoring it, which presents as an irresponsible solution, putting in place safeguards to eliminate its effects, acknowledging that despite making an effort to address the effect, the attempts will be inadequate to address it, and lastly, the researcher can capitalize on the phenomenon and benefit from the opportunities that arise as a result of the interactions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The purpose of the interview process was to permit the principals to share their practices and understandings of their practices as they have developed as administrators. The study was conducted using face-to-face and semi-structured interviews. The principals and I exerted some influence on each other. It was not possible, despite every effort made in the face-to-face interviews, to eliminate all

aspects of influence during the interview process. The slightest facial movements or body language could have been nonverbal signs of communication and were left to the interpretation of the participant and interviewer. The tone of voice used by either the participant or the interviewer was also a possible agent of influence. In the section on research rigour, I explained more fully the procedures put in place to help offset some of the influences that may have occurred in order to provide credible and trustworthy processes for accessing data and interpreting them.

The third axiom of naturalistic inquiry acknowledges that knowledge can only be described ideographically as a working hypothesis that describes an individual case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, it is believed that there always exist factors that are unique to the situation being researched that make it “useless to try to generalize therefrom” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 123). Therefore, only time and context bound hypotheses are possible. In this study, through the interview process, the principals shared their individual experiences. Each of the principals has been influenced by a host of factors some of which were their past experiences, personal biases, personal professional development, and years of service. The resulting data from each interview provided individual perspectives, thus making it impossible to construct generalizations on what constituted a definitive “answer” on the nature of instructional leadership. This study focused on the individual experiences as reported by each participant. The participant’s individual responses were respected as an individual case study. The individual studies were then synthesized for recurring and isolated themes, and some individual responses did not lend themselves to thematic analysis. These themes were not perceived to be generalizable across different contexts even though it was hoped they may have resonated with or offered possible avenues of exploration for individuals working within other school contexts. Although generalizations were not possible under the conditions of this study, the information gathered

will provided further insight in this area of study.

The fourth axiom of naturalistic inquiry suggests that identifying cause from effect is impossible because all entities simultaneously shape each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Guba and Lincoln term the concept where everything influences everything else, mutual simultaneous shaping (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The concept includes the following points: (a) All elements in a situation are in continual and mutual interaction; (b) Each element is activated by the influence of the other elements; (c) The judgement one makes about plausible explanations is a result of the observer's purpose and the circumstances of the situation being observed which makes it impossible to imply predictability or control, and; (d) All explanations are at best accounts of what has happened at a particular time and might never present in the same way again. Here, the elements are implicated in any given action and each element interacts with others in ways that change them and result in something that we, the observers, label as outcomes or effects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, the principals reported on their practices and interactions with others within the school setting. Their interpretations of how their work affected or influenced others were recounted through their perceptions of what happened in any given situation. No definitive statements about cause and effect were presented by the researcher. Given the complexity and contextuality of school leadership, I attempted to access how participants experienced and enacted their understandings of instructional leadership. In order to minimize some of the contextual variables that influence this complexity, this study examined elementary principals' experiences only, but made no claims about the direction of causality between variables effecting principals' experiences.

The final axiom of naturalistic inquiry assumes that all inquiry is value-laden. The inquiry process is influenced by four forces: the values of the inquirer, the beliefs or axioms that underlie the

theory as well as the methodology that underlie the inquiry, and the values of the context in which the inquiry is undertaken (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It is important to acknowledge that these four areas are influenced by values and accept that although the study's findings cannot provide absolutes for those who avail themselves of them, it can be said that the research provides "constructions, that also have value dimensions, and such constructions are useful even if they are not absolute" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 184). The responsibility of the researcher is to admit that values play a role in the inquiry, identify and explain them, and make every attempt to account for them and their influence on the study.

The researcher's biases were stated in the researcher positioning portion of the research paper and provided some indication of the values underpinning the design of this study. In addition, participants brought with them some value judgements related to their perceptions of the relationships they had with the researcher, or the nature of the content. All of these affected the nature of the data that was presented and recorded, as well as how they were analyzed. Therefore, the section on data analysis more fully developed the protocols put in place to ensure that the data remained credible and trustworthy.

Data Sources

Researchers use a variety of data sources when conducting studies. In qualitative studies, interviews are commonly used as a significant data source. Some researchers will take field notes after an interview but field notes can have limitations as it can be difficult to capture all of the participant's comments and to record a participant's statements after an interview. In qualitative studies, where long interviews are being conducted, some researchers rely on one data source, the taped interview transcript (McMillan, 2008).

The interviews used in qualitative studies vary in the degree in which they are structured by the interviewer. Some interviews are relatively open-ended although focused around a particular topic or guided by some general questions (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007), while others may be conducted using an interview guide. In either case, qualitative interviews offer the interviewer latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the participant a chance to shape the content of the interview.

There is debate about the effectiveness of either structured or unstructured interviews. In the case of semi-structured interviews, there are both positive and negative benefits for the interviewer (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). The positive effects are that these interviews provide the interviewer with comparable data from the participants. Conversely, the nature of semi-structured interviews allows the participant to reveal how he/she may structure the topic within the study. Each participant may interpret the researcher's questions in his/her own way which can lead to a structuring of the topic in a unique way. This also leads to the potential for the researcher to see new insights or to ask questions on a topic on which she had never considered as being related to the general topic but that could provide valuable additional insights. In this situation, the researcher's goal will be to listen attentively and seek to understand the meaning the participant brings to answering the questions.

Semi-structured taped interviews captured on a digital voice recorder were the main data sources for this study as they provided an opportunity to meet in person with the participants and to collect comparable data across subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This interview method of data collection is familiar to many people, but in qualitative research, the interview takes on a shape of its own (Burgess, 1984; Fontana & Frey, 1994). Semi-structured interviews were used to conduct this study to collect data based on structured questions (Appendix A), but also allowed the interviewer or the participant to speak to issues that may have been missed in the initial design but emerged in more

open-ended discussion. In this study, and consistent with qualitative studies and semi-structured interviews (Merton & Kendall, 1946), general questions guided the interview process as they were aligned with the seven claims of leadership and supporting literature (Table 1). However, some latitude was used to probe and pursue topics that surfaced throughout the interview process. In addition, the interviewer asked questions that were developed spontaneously and intended to probe the participants' responses for deeper meaning.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with elementary school principals of approximately one hour in duration were conducted in face-to-face interviews with each of the five participants in a setting where the participants felt most comfortable and where anonymity was afforded. The taped interviews were transcribed, coded and then analyzed after the participants had the opportunity to member-check their transcripts.

Table 1 **Seven Claims of Instructional Leadership**

Seven Claims of Leadership	Data Sources	References
School Leadership is Second Only to Classroom Teaching as an Influence on Pupil Learning.	Literature Review	Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins (2006b); Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou & Kington (2009); Edmonds, Brookover, & Lezotte (1979); Purkey & Smith (1983); Hallinger & Heck (1985); Heck et al (1990); Waters et.al (2003)
There are Basic Repertoires of Leadership Practices upon Which Almost all Leaders Draw	Question 3 of the Interview Protocol	Goldring & Rallis (1993), Leithwood & Montgomery (1982); Marcoulides & Heck (1993); Leithwood (2006); Smith (1980); Leithwood (2003); Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer & Wisenbaker (1979)
The Ways in Which Leaders Apply these Leadership Practices, Not the Practices Themselves, Demonstrate Responsiveness to, Rather than Dictation by, the Contexts in Which they Work.	Question 1 of the Interview Protocol Question 3 of the Interview Protocol	Goldring (1986, 1993); Hallinger & Murphy (1986a; 1986b); Coleman & Hoffer (1987); Purkey & Smith (1983); Goldring (1990, 1993); Goldring & Pasternak (1994); Heck et al. (1990); Scott & Teddlie (1987); Heck & Hallinger (1996a; 1996b); Hallinger (2001; 2005); Gordon & Lewis (2005); Wahlstrom & Louis (2008)
School Leaders Improve Teaching and Learning Indirectly and Most Powerfully Through Their Influence on Staff Motivation, Commitment and Working Conditions	Question 2 of the Interview Protocol	Leithwood (2006); Leithwood & Beatty (2008); Day, Stobart, Sammons, Hadfield & Kingston (2004); Wahlstrom & Lewis (2008); Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe (2008)
School Leadership has a Greater Influence on Schools and Pupils When it is Widely Distributed	Question 4 (a-f) of the Interview Protocol	Barth (2002); Day, Harris, & Hadfield (2001); Jackson (2000); Lambert (2002); Marks & Printy (2003); Southworth (2002); Hallinger (2001); Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss (2007); Gronn (2009); Harris (2009); MacBeath, (2009); Spillane, Camburn & Pajero, (2006)
Some Patterns of Distribution are More Effective than Others	Question 4 (g) of the Interview Protocol	Harris & Muijs (2004); Mascall, Leithwood, Strauss & Sacks (2008); Woolfolk, Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz (2008); Leithwood (1999)
A Small Handful of Personal Traits Explains a High Proportion of the Variation in Leadership Effectiveness	Question 5 of the Interview Protocol	Zaccaro, Kemp & Badder (2004); Leithwood (2006); Leithwood (2009)

Study Environment

The study took place in an urban public school division in English language schools in Manitoba as the researcher's experience was exclusively in English language schools. The interviews took place in a location mutually agreed upon by the researcher and each participant.

The urban school division and the schools with students who ranged from grades K-8 were selected for convenience purposes. Its location was in close proximity to the researcher which allowed for easy travel access to the participants for the purpose of the face to face interviews. The division was chosen as it had a student population with representation from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in its schools thus eliminating any known atypical student populations from impacting the study.

In conversation with divisional personnel and in reviewing the division's strategic plan and job description of divisional coordinators, it was known that there was ongoing professional development in the area of instructional leadership for all administrators. As well, divisional coordinators in the area of curriculum, instruction and student services provided support to teachers in the development of their instructional practices and programming and to administrators to assist in the development of their instructional leadership capacity.

Participant Selection

The participants were purposefully selected, as may be the practice in qualitative studies (McMillan, 2008). Purposeful sampling ensures that the researcher will have participants who will be particularly informative about the research topic (McMillan, 2008). With the approval of the university's ethics research board procedures, the initial contact to gain access to participants began. To gain access to research subjects, a letter of introduction and intent was mailed to the superintendent

of the school division in which the principals were employed. The superintendent was asked to provide his/her signature on a letter which granted permission for the distribution of an email letter of invitation to all English school elementary principals in the division. Elementary school principals, for the purpose of this study, included all school principals working in English schools with any combination of grades from kindergarten to grade 8. Upon receipt of the superintendent's approval of the study, letters of invitation were emailed to all elementary school principals within the division. The participants selected for the study were the first five elementary principals to respond directly to the researcher through email indicating their willingness to participate in the interview process.

Researcher Positioning

In qualitative research there is concern that the researcher's attitudes and beliefs will bias the data and that there may be effects from the researcher's subjectivity on the resulting paper he/she writes (Le Compte, 1987). In fact, in qualitative studies there is an assumption that there exists no value free or bias-free design (Janesick, 1994). My attitudes, beliefs and practices come from a variety of experiences, some more influential than others. The following are some of the experiences that have shaped my understanding of instructional leadership practices.

For the past 11 years, I was the principal of two elementary schools consisting of kindergarten to grade 8 students. Prior to becoming a principal, I worked for two years as a student services teacher and in one of the two years in that position I had the additional responsibility of being a teaching vice principal. The remaining 20 years of teaching experience were spent in a variety of elementary schools, in grades two through eight, in two urban school divisions. The only exception to these experiences in elementary schools consisted of 4 years of teaching at a local hospital. The students were the resident teens who were in treatment on an inpatient psychiatric unit.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

All of my school experiences impacted my perception of how instructional leadership is manifested by school principals. As a classroom teacher, I worked with a number of different principals and experienced instructional leadership in a variety of ways. Each of the principals with whom I worked exhibited some of the leadership qualities that contributed to my efforts to develop as an instructional leader. While working in the hospital setting, I had the opportunity to work more closely with school based support staff and administrators and in a different role than I assumed as a school based classroom teacher. As a result of the experiences, I became profoundly conscious of three issues that have impacted my perceptions of the work of school leaders.

The first issue was the awareness and appreciation of the impact that a school principal can have on the school success of students, particularly the at-risk students. As the classroom teacher in the hospital, one of my responsibilities was to facilitate the return of students to their home school after their discharge from the hospital. The potential positive or negative impact the school principal had on the potential success of the students as they transitioned back to their home school became very apparent to me. The interactions I had with school principals, and/or school support staff, when I assisted students to re-enter the school they'd attended prior to receiving in-patient care at the hospital, provided me with insight about the principal's role in the transition process. In the transition process, the involvement of principals of different schools varied greatly. Some principals chose to meet directly with the hospital team and demonstrated care and concern for the students. Many worked collaboratively with hospital staff and the school staff to plan a successful re-entry program for the returning students. Other principals only sometimes chose to meet directly with the hospital team and conveyed the message that there was little interest in having the former student return to the school

setting. And, in some situations, the principal never met with the team either at the hospital or in the school.

In the situations where the principal played a positive role in the student's reintegration plan, the students expressed optimism about their return to school and believed that they had support from the school principal and staff. The positive perceptions the students had about the principal and staff made for a much higher likelihood that the students would have a chance to be successful in their return to school. It was evident in the transitions that I facilitated that the principal is able to convey a significant message to the students and staff by being actively involved in the planning process, by setting an example for staff members, establishing a positive relationship with the student and exhibiting a sincere interest in the student's well-being.

I also recognized the power and necessity of team work in facilitating student success. The hospital students needed a tremendous amount of school support in the area of academics and their social emotional well-being. It was important that school support staff understood the student's needs and were prepared and able to access any outside supports to ensure appropriate programming for the returning student. In situations where the school team, which consisted of the school administration, classroom teacher and student support staff, met to plan for the student's successful return to school, the conversations were rich. Many ideas were generated and discussed and there was a sense of collective responsibility and interest in planning for the student's success. In these conversations, the student was invited to participate and was able to be a part of the process and also witnessed the active involvement of the school staff.

Lastly, I became aware of the importance of the range of skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective instructional leader as I listened to the quality of the questions that were asked by the

school principals when meeting to discuss student transition planning. In some situations, the principal presented him/herself as solely the administrator in the school, focusing his/her comments on issues of a disciplinary nature and how those issues could possibly impact the returning student. Other principals exhibited a depth and breadth of knowledge, and interest in the student's well-being, by asking questions of school support staff, hospital staff and of the student that related to areas of academics, such as the student's programming, learning needs and preferences, social emotional needs, and physical well-being. Through the use of questions and by demonstrating knowledge in a range of areas the principal demonstrated instructional leadership qualities to the staff members and played a key role in planning for the student's success. The awareness I gained during the time at the hospital proved to be significant influences on my continuous journey to be an instructional leader.

As well, I was influenced by my work as a school principal in two elementary schools for the past 11 years. The professional growth I gained in through my daily work and the professional knowledge I gained through formal studies and personal professional growth impacted my views of instructional leadership.

I was interested in conducting this study because it afforded me the opportunity to develop an understanding of how other school principals initiated and exhibited instructional leadership practices. I believe limited time and opportunity exists in our current organizational contexts for principals to have in depth conversations with fellow school principals about the ways in which instructional leadership practices are played out on a daily basis. This study focused on Hallinger, (2003) and on the seven claims of instructional leadership practice as identified and supported by the research of Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006b).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Prior to analyzing the transcribed taped interviews, each participant was given the opportunity to review his/her transcribed interview and to make additions or deletions to the transcript. Participants were provided with the opportunity to add or revise the transcripts, as necessary, to increase the accuracy of the transcription, and the participants were permitted to convey their experiences as they intended to the interviewer. After receiving both the participants' revisions, if any had been made, and their final approval of the transcript, the data analysis began.

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the data collected in the study that answer the research questions under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). The goal of analysis is to discover patterns, ideas, explanations and "understandings" (McMillan, 2008, p. 283) in the data. The data analysis will be conducted by developing a coding system based on the answers to individual questions from the interview guide. Initially I attempted to utilize the seven claims of leadership and the categories of instructional leadership found consistently in the literature which included: (a) setting directions; (b) developing people; (c) redesigning the organization, and; (d) managing the instructional program. However, I was also open to emergent themes that fell outside of the instructional frameworks supported by Leithwood et al. (2006b) and/or Hallinger (2003). The coding provided a means for sorting the data so that the different pieces of information could be separated from one another and at the same time combined with like items emerging from the total data collected. Then the data was reviewed and I sought to summarize the data by looking for emerging themes and

conclusions that were used to explain the trends and findings in the data. Summary statements were written to provide a brief explanation of the entries that had the same code. Finally, a category was formed from the “coded data as a more general and abstract idea that represented the meaning of similarly coded information” (McMillan, 2008, p. 285).

In the data interpretation phase of the research process, I attempted to develop ideas about the study findings and related them to literature and broader concepts and concerns (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). I also explained and framed the ideas in relation to other scholars’ works and existing theories. Finally, the information was presented and arranged thematically utilizing Lincoln’s and Guba’s (1985) three categories: (1) consensus themes – when the majority of participants mention the same idea; (2) supported themes – when approximately half of the participants mention an idea, and (3) individual themes – when an idea is only mentioned by a small minority of the participants was selected.

Validity and Credibility of Results

In qualitative studies, it is important that researchers demonstrate that their studies are credible because qualitative research is interpretative (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The basic question addressed by the notion of trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is simple: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" (p. 290).

It is also important that the researcher is self-reflective about his or her role in the research (Creswell, 2008). Some authors have provided various procedures for ensuring the validity of a study (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998). Methods and procedures such as disconfirming evidence, researcher reflexivity, prolonged engagement in the field, collaboration,

employing member checking, triangulation, peer audits, external audits, and thick description are used in qualitative studies (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The most commonly used methods are triangulation, member checking and auditing (Creswell, 2008).

Triangulation refers to the researcher's use of several kinds of data or methods to compare different approaches to the same thing (Denzin, 1978) and to search for convergence among the themes or categories in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The four basic types include: data triangulation where evidence from a variety of data sources in a study are corroborated, investigator triangulation which uses several different researchers or evaluators to examine the research, theory triangulation where multiple theories are used to interpret a single set of data and methodological triangulation where multiple methods are used to study a single problem (Janesick, 1994).

Member checking occurs when researchers check their findings with participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account. The participants review the findings and are asked about many aspects of the study such as whether the themes are accurate to include, if the descriptions are realistic and complete and if the interpretations are representative and fair (Creswell, 2008). In an external audit, the researcher asks a person outside the project to review the entire study and provide written feedback identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the project (Creswell, 2008).

In this study, member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was the main procedure used to ensure validity. Members were given a copy of the transcribed interview to check for accuracy and it provided them the opportunity to make revisions. This process of checking served a number of purposes: it provided the opportunity to establish what the participant intended when providing information about his/her actions or words; it gave the participant the opportunity to correct errors

about facts; it provided the participant with an opportunity to offer additional information; it provided a record of the participant having verified what has been recorded, thus making a challenge to the researchers work more difficult later on; it provided an opportunity to summarize data as a part of the data analysis process, and; it provided the participant with the opportunity to assess the overall adequacy of the information as well as to confirm individual data points (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition, disconfirming evidence and researcher reflexivity was used as well to check across the interviews for data that is at cross-purposes between individuals or between individuals and the literature. I was at all times reflective of my own experiences as a principal and allowed the data to align with, or disconfirm my own suppositions about instructional leadership and let the data (and participants) speak for themselves. The methods I used were described within this paper, and I insured that I thickly described the contexts and supporting evidence provided by participants in their words so that their experiences were not misrepresented in the study.

Confidentiality and Ethics

To ensure participant confidentiality, no identifying features of the participants, participants' schools or division were used in the research paper. As well, participants were not identified to each other or to any other individuals. All participants' responses were recorded and their identity and responses were kept confidential throughout the study. The data of the recorded interviews was stored on a password protected computer to which only I had access. A transcript of the interviews was made and upon completion of the transcription of the interview, the participants were provided with a copy for their review. Participants had the right to remove or alter any quotes or comments they felt were misrepresented or inaccurate. The transcripts were deleted and the recordings were destroyed one year following the completion of the study.

The transcripts were shared only with my advisor and no defining information about the participants was included in the findings. Pseudonyms of participants, schools and the school division were assigned for any written or oral summary, analysis or interpretation of results. Direct quotations were used in the interpretation of the data though no identifying data was used in any dissemination of results. The results of the study may be shared in the future in some other form, such as a journal article or workshop presentation. Participants were asked to keep confidential any comments made during the study. At the completion of the study, participants will be provided with access to the final report

The participants were informed that their written consent to participate in the study did not waive their legal rights nor did it release me or the university from legal and professional responsibilities. They were told that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions they preferred to omit, without prejudice or consequence, and they were free to ask for clarification or new information throughout their participation. There were no risks to participants other than what they normally assumed in the work they did in schools as principals as a result of their participation in the study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to better understand how five elementary school principals understood their work as instructional leaders through the daily work they undertook in their schools. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews and the use of questions that were related specifically to the seven claims of instructional leadership. Chapter four provides an outline of the findings as they related to the research questions under study.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the themes derived from the interviews conducted with the five principals regarding their perceptions of their instructional leadership practices related to Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) seven claims. Claim one, which states that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning, is developed in the literature review section of this thesis.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Lincoln's and Guba's (1985) model was used to identify and categorize the themes. The three types of frequency of responses are: (1) consensus themes – occur when the majority of participants mention the same idea (in this study, four or five participants); (2) supported themes – occur when approximately half of the participants mention an idea (three participants), and; (3) individual themes – occur when an idea is only mentioned by a small minority of the participants was selected (one or two participants).

Context

Before detailing the study findings, this section describes the context of the five schools represented in the project, including the respondent administrators' backgrounds, specific school initiatives and school visions as articulated by the principals.

School Context and Administrative Background

The administrative experience of the five principals ranged from 1 to 20 years. All of the principals taught or worked in elementary schools in the years prior to becoming principals and had some experience as vice principals in an elementary school. Two of the principals also had experience in student support positions at the board office level prior to becoming school administrators.

The years of service for the teaching staff in all five schools ranged from new professionals with little or no experience beyond their pre-service university training to those with more than 20 years in the classroom. The principals described the staff as committed and hard working. In four of the five schools, the principals stated that staffs work collaboratively, albeit to varying degrees of success and consistency, to achieve common goals and beliefs. In the remaining school, teachers were described as somewhat isolated from each other and the principal perceived staff members may have worked this way for many years.

The principals reported common demographic characteristics in each of the schools' population. Although the student populations in the schools differed from each other in their total enrolments that ranged from 150 to 350 students, the schools shared similar populations from disparate socioeconomic backgrounds and culturally diverse origins. The administrators described school populations as being comprised of students from lower income families to those from middle to upper middle class backgrounds. The cultural diversity was reported to include students of Aboriginal heritage and new immigrants to Canada, for whom English was most often an additional language. One principal's description of the school community, which was echoed in the comments of other principals, included the following:

It's primarily middle class... there's a Manitoba housing complex that we do draw on. So there's a wide range of two parent professional kinds of families, to single parent working class, on assistance kind of families. It's (a) fairly wide range.

All of the principals identified having students with special needs as a specific demographic component of the school population. They commented that having students with special needs as well

as the culturally diverse populations impacted, to some degree, on the teachers' senses of self-efficacy.

One principal described the impact:

Due to the composition of our student body, the high level of transiency, high level of poverty, high level of Child and Family Services involvement, high level tardy and absent students, it is both a very demanding and stressful school to teach at but also a very rewarding one teachers see firsthand the difference they are making in a lot of children's lives.

The principals described the members of the school communities as being supportive and interested in school activities. Parents were reported to feel comfortable calling or visiting the school and attended school functions in good number. The principals reported that they made an effort to invite parents to school activities. It was mentioned by one principal that the timing of school assemblies was planned to accommodate working parents, such that, "Assemblies are first thing in the morning, the last Tuesday of every month, that way if parents are going to work they can make it."

Discipline

All principals suggested that they managed discipline issues as a part of their daily work. One principal spoke of the diminished need to respond to discipline issues because of the school's focus on developing students' social skills which resulted in greatly improved student behaviour: She said:

And there's always the discipline component that you get at least once or twice a day. I have been here 10 years and my first two years I did nothing but discipline all day, the fights on the playground were unreal, and we have completely turned that around.

Three principals reported that they supported the staff who supervised at recess time. They either helped supervise outside or they assisted inside with students who struggled with the unstructured nature of recess. Principals also assisted teachers in the classroom to help with students who had

difficulty managing their behaviour; they supported teachers by occasionally having students work in the office under the principal's supervision. One principal worked without a vice principal, and referenced that this impacted upon his role as principal because all the responsibility for student discipline fell to him in addition to his other roles.

School Visions

All of the schools' visions focused on working in the best interests of students and on improving learning. Four of the principals reported that school visions were developed prior to their arrival at the school. All of principals understood that the vision was developed by some staff members years earlier and they believed that the parent community was involved in its development to some degree. One principal mentioned that the vision was reviewed each year at a staff meeting, and another talked about reviewing it during the school planning process undertaken each year. However, none of the principals reported that they and the staff revised the school's vision during the time the principals had been in their current positions.

The only participant who was in his first year as a principal articulated how his newly appointed status impacted his work as an instructional leader. His "outside" perspective made him recognize a lack of common vision within the school. He said:

When I came here I was presented with the idea that well there are many ways to do things and Happy Times School embraces all ways. I can get behind that, but without a uniting kind of principle or vision I think you're just going to get what we have right now. Which is a lot of good things happening, but...I don't see it as focused and as united as it could be. It's something that I'm trying to do as leader is to sort of unite my staff under sort of some common ideals or common vision.

This comment, and the fact that most principals were not attending to the school's vision in overt ways may beg the question of the extent to which visions were considered to be relevant and meaningful or primarily generalized rhetoric. Only the first year principal indicated that he planned to re-examine the school's vision after he'd been at the school for a number of years.

School Initiatives

Principals were asked to describe initiatives that allowed them to demonstrate their understandings of instructional leadership. All of the principals described circumstances under which school initiatives were undertaken to improve the teaching and learning environments in the schools. Four of the initiatives had a specific literacy focus and were made accessible to the schools as a result of the same divisional initiative. The rationale for having participated in the initiative varied, as did the school's degree of participation. The second type of initiative had an environmental focus.

The impetuses of the initiatives were external to the school. The environmental initiative was advocated by a non-divisional person from a large community-based project who invited the principal to get involved in the project. One of the four literacy projects was initiated by school division board office personnel who invited the principal to participate. The school was selected for its participation because of its demographic profile. The remaining three schools' literacy initiatives were driven by a set of factors that are related to each other and together constituted the impetus for and circumstances under which the initiatives took form. Firstly, schools reviewed their literacy beliefs about what students should be able to achieve in both reading and writing and identified a school goal of improved students' reading and writing. Secondly, a divisional initiative was taking place in other schools and was focused on improving students' literacy skills. The divisional initiative provided the ideal opportunity for teachers and administrators in other schools to benefit from the professional

development offered in the area of literacy instruction. One principal offered, “I took a school team to see her (external consultant leading the divisional literacy initiative) and it looked like it was a match for what we wanted. It was good instruction to impact on students’ learning.” As a consequence, the principals had access to professional development offered by the resource person and materials associated with the divisional initiative. The third contributing factor was the staffs’ review of the schools’ literacy data and their subsequent decision to find a way to improve student’s performance in reading and writing. One principal said:

One of our internal focuses is that we recognized our difficulty with student writing for several years now and we have had a school goal three, four, five times all around student writing and we’ve tried various things and the impact for all that we’ve done there hasn’t been the pay off that we thought there would be.

All of the principals believed the initiatives they undertook improved the teaching and learning environment of the respective schools. The principals involved in the literacy initiatives identified three ways in which the teaching and learning environment improved. Firstly, students improved in their reading and writing as evidenced by improved reading level scores and the improved quality and quantity of the students’ writing. Secondly, there was increased enthusiasm evidenced by both the teachers and students in literacy teaching and learning, and thirdly, the teaching staff began to take ownership of their professional learning and, as a consequence of their actions, played a role in moving the initiatives forward.

In the environmental initiative, the improvement in the teaching and learning environment was noted through the data collection process. The reduction in waste material and the number of student initiated environmental projects were two examples of the data the staff and students collected to

evidence improvement. The data showed progress was achieved as related to the goal of developing the students' and staff members' level of understanding in the area of eco literacy. The teachers' purposeful integration of all curriculum areas and the student's ownership and demonstration of their learning were also cited as examples of an improved teaching and learning environment. The students' enthusiasm and efforts were provided as indicators of the project's success. Although it could be argued that many factors outside of the individual principals' efforts helped to achieve the successes claimed, these individuals felt that at least some of the success could be attributed to their leadership in the implementation, facilitation, and support of those initiatives.

Administrators' Work

The principals reported that they arrived early for work and that their days were long. Although not all principals reported leaving the school at a late hour, they all expressed that their work day didn't end when they left the school. They reported that if there was some school work to which they attended in the evening hours, it usually involved activities such as responding to emails, reading professional material, and writing reports and evaluations.

All of the principals reported that they spent a portion of their day conducting and/or attending meetings which they initiated or were requested by others. Meetings with teachers occurred throughout the day and often took place during teacher preparation times and at lunch time at the teachers' requests. Parent meetings were both prearranged and spontaneous. All of the principals understood and/or accepted that spontaneous meetings are a part of their job.

Principals were busy throughout the lunch hour; they attended noon hour student committee meetings and teacher committee meetings. They met individually with teachers and attended to managerial tasks. They responded to email, completed paperwork, wrote staff evaluations or prepared

reports, and attended to required professional reading. The principals commented that their attention to managerial tasks took place usually at the end of the day, when the students were gone and the school had “quieted down”. Sometimes the tasks were attended to later in the evening. A few principals worked at home, “Then my evenings, I usually, that’s when I return emails because I don’t during the day a lot, so at night is when, because that’s something you can do when you’re sitting and relaxing.” One principal reported that he worked one day on the weekend and said it was an alternative to working at night during the week. He considered this an inevitable reality:

I don’t like to take work home. I arrive very early. I’m usually here before 7 each day and I typically don’t leave until after 5. And I come in usually one day on the weekend but once I get home I don’t check my email often. I try not to think about school.

Generally, the principals said that they tried not to take work home.

Challenges

The five principals identified a number of the challenges they experienced in their leadership roles. Two principals, one new to the role of principal and the other with more than five years of administrative experience, strove to balance the managerial demands of the job and their desire to be effective instructional leaders who worked with teachers in classrooms. The experienced principal stated:

Well, I guess it’s just that balance, right, between that balance between the work that you’re expected to do in the way of reports and being in classrooms..., so I think it’s finding that good balance between modeling that and getting your work done.

The first year principal identified the following challenges that he’d experienced in his new role: developing a personal understanding of the existing school culture, experiencing the first year in a

principalship, building trust with staff and the parent community, working without an administrative partner, being reluctant to ask for help, having a different style than the past administrator, and coping with exhausting demands of the position. He perceived that staff members were set in their ways and limited in their opportunities to work collaboratively. The following comment illustrated the frustration he experienced in his new role as he attempted to work as an instructional leader with teachers who were unwilling to change their practice:

“That’s the way I do it in my class. It’s never been like this before...” that comment is such a weird way to start any statement to me. Earlier on this year, I would go on home and just feel terrible because it was like, what am I doing wrong? But also (I) think it’s because a lot of people didn’t even know what was going on in different parts of the school necessarily. They sort of knew their section, but they didn’t have a lot of idea of what was going on before.

The new principal also identified the challenges of staffing issues such as working with newly hired staff, the transfer process and leaves of absences. He said:

I’ve had staffing stress leaves, sick leaves. But the majority of the staff is quite young and because of that there’s a high turnover because they’re in prime family creating ages. Like there are lots of maternity leaves, in and out, and in and out, there’s a high turnover ... so I have three going out on maternity leave this year and two coming back. So it’s challenging.

Though he was not disparaging of staff that left for maternity or other reasons, there was recognition that constant staff turnover created some challenges for creating consistency in instruction.

Summary

Ultimately, the contexts in which the principals worked have impacted on how they work with staff, students and parents. The principals are prepared to work with staff to address present or

emerging challenges and initiatives intended to support the teaching and learning environment. They believe they are able to respond to students and parents because of their understanding of the contexts in which they find themselves.

Only one of the principals in the study spoke of conducting a vision-building exercise with staff, and that had been done a number of years prior. The remaining principals worked with existing visions, even when, as the new principal suggested, it appeared that staff were not necessarily working towards a common vision. None of the schools had revised the school vision in the past few years. The development of school visions is often undertaken with the involvement of all staff, students, parents and administrators and can take a significant amount of process and time to develop. However, given time and staff turnover, there may be a need for schools to develop a more explicit process for re-examining the school's vision over time. The process should also include the students and parents as well as staff as a part of the review process so that the vision remains a relevant representation of current members' vision of learning.

Finally, the principals played a key role in bringing the learning initiatives to the attention of the staffs in all five schools. Four of the initiatives were chosen because they offered teachers the instructional literacy strategies that would lead to improved student learning. Each initiative had support materials which could be purchased for school use and their specific focus was considered to be a good fit for each of the four schools' goals. Interestingly, however, the initiatives tended to be embraced primarily because there had been an external impetus (or reward) for doing so rather than something taken on by the school as a local initiative.

Claim 2: Repertoires of Leadership Practices

The following characteristics were mentioned by participants as being characteristics of instructional leaders: collaboration; transparency; developing a shared vision of learning; embedding self in teaching and learning (classroom); communication; prioritizing children's needs; engaging in one's own professional growth; building staff capacity; being able to provide instructional supervision; identifying learning and instructional needs; and, being professionally informed. All of these areas were mentioned by almost all of the participants, and therefore stand as consensus themes regarding the characteristics of instructional leaders.

Collaboration

This section presents the principals' efforts to collaborate with others and describes the rationale for and the impact of their collaboration on the teaching and learning environment and on school partners: parents, external agencies and divisional board office staff.

All of the principals identified that they collaborated with staff members, school partners, and divisional personnel who provided support to schools. One principal held regular meetings with the school resource team: "I think it's key as an instructional leader. So...I meet with our resource team once a cycle as well ...and we problem solve." Another principal spoke of how she collaborated with classroom and resource staff to identify students' literacy needs: "There's a lot of collaboration around that because we're taking the data every two months."

Four principals collaborated with divisional personnel who provided leadership to the teaching staff in the areas of curriculum and instruction, specifically related to the literacy initiative undertaken in the schools. One principal collaborated with divisional experts so that teachers' knowledge about literacy would be increased:

I work very closely with teachers; I work with them on our various goals, our various instructional practices. But I also work with outside, they're not agencies. They're outside people that are with our division. We have curriculum specialists that come in and we work very closely with them. But staff are also very comfortable working with these outside people that come in regularly. They have a special expertise that we do not all share. So I work very closely with teachers, I work with them on our various goals, our various instructional practices.

Another principal spoke about developing partnerships between the school and the director of the child care centre located in the school. Their collaboration was focused on the development of an outdoor learning center. The principal said with some pride, "We have a joint goal right now to build an outdoor learning centre and it's started with just me working with the child care centre."

At times the collaborative process was initiated by teachers and supported by the principal. In one situation, a principal identified an instance when a group of teachers asked for time at the staff meeting so they could present something they had been doing in the classrooms that was related to the school's literacy initiative. The principal mentioned that "...they brought their examples and their chart papers; I was just, that is just so good, it's just it in action. They were able to share and get feedback from each other."

The principal involved in the environmental initiative invited the instructional assistants to participate in a staff sharing session, suggesting, "This Friday afternoon we have an opportunity for educational assistants and teachers to come together and share something on eco literacy. Everyone is bringing something to share with others to motivate again and keep it alive." Most of these examples suggest that, although the principals collaborated with others, typically the collaborations are those

which had been initiated exclusively by the principals based on their understanding of the needs of the school, staff or students. Only one example spoke of others' attempts to initiate collaborative interactions.

Transparency

All of the principals reported that they were open and transparent with staff. Four principals identified transparency as one of their leadership practices. One principal believed it was important to be open about areas she was targeting for her own self-improvement and said, "I'm very open with the staff about what I'm working on what I want to get better at." A second principal responded by saying, "Instructional leadership is being out there and open with your staff so that they see you interested in what they're doing and what they're teaching and being right there, and a part of it..." A third principal modeled openness so that teachers would exhibit this quality: "I model what I want our teachers to be: open, transparent, and professional." The comments suggest that principals believe that transparency is an inherent characteristic of instructional leaders.

Developing Shared Visions of Learning

All of the principals had school visions which had been developed with the staff and previous administrators. Though they had not revised the schools' visions, they did suggest that it was important to, "really, really work hard at trying to internalize and radiate a deep sense of purpose and vision."

Three principals identified that the process of reviewing the school vision helped to ensure it was enacted. It was through the review process that one principal engaged in conversations with staff to examine if what was happening in the school was aligned to the vision. One principal shared, "We visit our statement periodically throughout the year (during staff meetings) to ensure we are on the

right path and to see if there is any tweaks we want to make to the wording of it.” In this way, the vision was used as the “yardstick” for determining the extent to which practice was measuring up to espoused beliefs.

Four principals spoke of the need to articulate their core beliefs around visions of learning. One principal described his communication with staff, “I feel that as an instructional leader, it is vital for me to communicate my beliefs with staff regarding students and learning and that we are able to have open dialogues to cement our schools beliefs.”

Principals also believed that when teachers see a principal engaged in learning and instruction, the principal gained credibility while also promoting the instructional vision. They reported that their belief in enhancing learning influenced their decisions. For one principal this belief influenced how school committees were developed; for a second principal this goal led to the adoption of specific initiatives in the areas of literacy and numeracy; and for a third principal this focus impacted the decisions about the kinds of co-curricular and enrichment activities that students were offered. Principals also described how they made managerial decisions to advance student learning. One principal suggested, “You always have to bring it back to the learning.” This sense of purpose was articulated by another principal:

All decisions I make, that I make in collaboration with my staff, regarding everything from budget, to staffing, to timetabling, to PD, to school based initiatives, our whole school reading initiative for example, are centered on student learning.

Another principal expanded on this theme and described how his administrative decisions in three areas impacted on student learning:

Through our dialogues I am able to make administrative decisions to assist the teachers in their work - timetabling considerations, budget considerations and PD considerations. My motto when it comes to these decisions is "as long as it is instructionally sound and good for kids I'll say yes" (until I am out of money - then I say "yes - next year").

These comments suggest that principals think about and can articulate how it is their decisions impact directly or indirectly on student learning, based on examples which included: providing increased access to teachers for professional development, practicing creative timetabling to facilitate collaboration time for teachers, and budgeting to support specific initiatives.

Embedding Self in the Teaching and Learning Enterprise-Classroom

All five principals described their efforts to be personally involved in the teaching and learning in classrooms. The principals reported that as a typical part of their school day they made an effort to visit classrooms. While this was a commonly shared practice among the five principals, their purpose for visiting classrooms varied, as did the type of visit and the degree of engagement experienced with the students and/or the teachers. Two principals referred to wanting to be visible to staff and students and used their visitations as an opportunity to touch base with others or to provide the teachers with positive feedback. One principal commented that, "(I) try to at least poke my head in classrooms or at least circulate through the hallways at least a couple of times a day." Another principal commented:

I'm as visible as I possibly can be and staff see me with the community. At each gathering and assembly, I am ever conscious of acknowledging and thanking everyone who's there. I always emphasize how important their support is to our children.

Two other principals described their daily involvement in terms of their active engagement in teaching and professional development. The first principal said, "I really believe as leader that I need to be

more in classrooms and less in my office.” She said, “I teach at least one class a day, I really believe that that makes me credible with the teachers. I can say this is what I tried or I can get excited with them.” She believed this was “showing them that I value being with the children and supporting them. I think it’s key as an instructional leader.”

The second principal said, “I believe that I have to model the behaviour and change that I want to see in my teachers - attending the same PD sessions so that we are all on the same page, reading the same professional readings and providing time at staff meetings to have conversations about the important things.”

Two principals identified that they are usually on a daily basis actively involved as teachers of reading to support the achievement of the school’s literacy goals. Both of the principals had experienced the literacy focused professional development, along with teachers, and used the same strategies in their instruction as the teachers.

Communication

All of the principals used different modes of communication to share information with others and to share the schools’ visions. The principals viewed communicating with others through newsletters, announcements, and the comments they’ve shared publicly as being an important element in effective leadership practice. One principal wanted the students, parents and teachers to share the school’s vision and communicated this to them by, “doing a lot of talking, a lot of advertising in our newspaper.” Principals also noted that they invited parents to school functions such as: winter concerts and school assemblies, evenings designed to advance parents’ understanding of student learning and different teaching strategies, and events to recognize students’ accomplishments and specific celebrations. One principal said:

We host a variety of information sessions for parents and try to do so in a way that includes the students (and usually food). We make sure that we link the educational component with a fun activity and try to use the students to draw the parents in.

Another principal conveyed messages to teachers by providing teaching staff with written information and photos of examples in the school that reflected the school's instructional aims.

The principals also communicated through their interactions with parent councils. They commented that parent communities supported school initiatives and that parents played an active role on the parent councils. Principals provided verbal reports at the parent council meetings and apprised parents about topics such as teacher professional development, the school plan and effective teaching strategies. A principal provided this comment:

Well, at every parent council meeting I give a principal's report and I like to rather than just talk about the bake sale... I also like to say what we're doing for PD or how the teachers are assessing in their classroom.

Another principal shared that he made himself available to parents and that he listened to their comments on a variety of issues:

I have an open door policy; they believe it, because they come through it enough and more, than I thought meetings this year. People do come in and want to sit down and talk to me about issues. So I should say the community is interested in the school and not afraid to, at least a good part of the community, is not afraid to voice their concerns.

Another principal told of the parents who worked as lunch supervisors and how she invited them to attend special functions, such as staff luncheons. The principal further explained how the teaching

staff benefitted from the interactions they had with the supervisors while they were attending the staff functions:

We have staff luncheons at various times and always, lunch staff are included.....Together we listen and learn. What's happening at these times is networking and understanding with each bringing their background to the gathering and it helps us understand what they're dealing with and vice versa.

What should be noted in many of these examples, however, is that communication tends to be driven by the principal with the intent to inform other groups; only two of the above examples suggest that communication attempts are conducted in order to promote meaningful dialogue and/or to encourage input.

Prioritizing Children's' Needs

The principals described how they focused their decisions and conversations on meeting the needs of the whole child. One principal identified that she was motivated to work because she valued children. She suggested, "I'm in this for kids and I need to do what I need to do." A second principal demonstrated how she valued children by being in classrooms and teaching on a daily basis: "So this is what I value, you know I value the time with the children." A third principal shared, "We need to work to ensure successful learning for the whole child." A fourth principal suggested that when it comes to making decisions, "My first priority is how this will impact on children." The fifth principal said:

Most importantly, ensuring that every interaction that I have with parents, regardless of how upset they may be at the beginning, ends in a positive manner with them knowing that we/I have their child's best interest at heart and that we are on the same team with the same goal.

The principals also identified that the close examination of staffs' beliefs about teaching and learning as a consequence of the implementation of the learning initiatives led to a change in the way that teachers viewed children. One principal said, "So we did shift our thinking and we see children in a more holistic way. They're our kids, not your kids all the time, and it creates a lot of good dialogue." This shift in thinking impacted the way that teachers supported students' learning. According to the principals, the initiatives helped teachers focus their interventions on the individual student's needs.

Engagement in Personal Professional Growth

One principal specifically identified that she pursued professional growth to satisfy her needs as a learner. She shared that her ongoing professional growth was motivated by her desire to be well informed about her work as an educator as well as her need to supervise staff. She said, "(I) go home and I read professional research." She also spoke about her practice of borrowing videos from the professional development library and taking them home for viewing during the summer months.

The remaining principals also mentioned that their focus on personal professional development was directly related to their role as supervisors of instructional practice. Although there may have been more depth underlying their pursuit of professional learning, their comments focused on how their involvement in professional learning played into their supervisory roles. It was unclear whether their desire to be effective managers overshadowed their efforts to develop themselves professionally to act as instructional leaders. It can be argued that professional learning, from whatever purpose it is derived, leads to enhanced learning for the principals. However, how a principal engages in dialogue with teachers can reflect whether the principal is passionate about their learning for the purpose of engaging with others in constructive thought provoking and open conversations about improving the

teaching and learning in a school as compared to having conversations for the purpose of enacting teacher supervision.

Building Staff Capacity

This section presents how principals described their efforts to build staff capacity, including teaching and support staff. One principal invited the staff to join school committees with the intention of developing teachers' leadership capacity. She commented:

I changed staff "committees" to staff "leadership" teams. At this point we have a math leadership team, a literacy leadership team," and that involvement on the teams takes place in this way. I don't have to sit at every meeting, but I do definitely connect with the leaders, the team leaders on the leadership team. I don't appoint them, I do however invite people who are interested in the various teams to come and talk to me. If teams are not filled in, then I will seek staff.

Another principal strove to find a way to challenge a highly competent teacher to further increase the teacher's capacity. The principal said "... how do you move a master teacher along? ...So it's always challenging to find ways to help them move along. That I find a challenge."

Two principals talked about the focused approach they undertook to enhance professional learning experiences for teachers. One described, "We watched videos, discussed beliefs and went in-depth into how we taught writing." Another spoke to the organizational changes the principal ensured were in place so that the staff had regular opportunities to engage in professional conversations and stated, "So we dedicated our 3rd Tuesday each month by combining classes, we had one hour of PD each month."

Principals reported that they increased collaboration opportunities among teachers. In one school the principal created the conditions to support a co-teaching model that resulted in teachers implementing improved instructional practices. The principal invited teaching staff to participate in the professional development offered to principals, "...and what I've done is I've invited teachers that I've been coaching to become administrators and they come to those sessions. Last year they came and this year they will come, as well." Another principal sent a teacher to a professional conference so that she would bring back information and share it with other teachers.

One principal identified how she supported the staff so that they were able to grow professionally:

So, the time that is spent invested in some of the preplanning, understanding people's area of concern, understanding their predominant learning styles and trying to soften some of the concerns that they may have so that growth can take place. So far, we've been reasonably successful.

The principals' comments revealed their commitment to working with staff in a non-judgemental and patient manner providing time, supports and resources as needed to assist them with acquiring the skills and knowledge to employ new teaching strategies.

Being Able to Provide Instructional Supervision

All of the principals identified that they typically conducted either classroom visits or "walkthroughs" on a daily basis. Through these visits and walkthroughs, the principals enacted one aspect of their instructional leadership role, that of supervising teachers. One principal suggested that the walkthroughs afforded her the opportunity to engage in conversations with the students and to make observations about the teacher's practice, as "I sit next to a child and I'll say what are you

learning and can you tell me and then I'll give it back to the teachers.” The principal talked about the students' reaction to her positive feedback to the teacher, given in front of the students, “You know you can see the teacher and you can see the kids kind of listening to what Principal X is saying that their teacher did and I think that it is something that really demonstrates instructional leadership.” She added that she looked for evidence of the staff's core values, provided positive feedback to the teachers and modeled for the students the language of the learning that she observed. She said, “For me, what I want the end result to be is so that if we say these five things are our core values then when I come to do a walkthrough I want to see those five things, right?” Lastly, she used the walkthrough process to focus follow up conversations with teachers in order to “...move the teacher along in their thinking with regards to what the students are learning.”

A second principal said:

And then I'm going in and observing the lessons that they're doing and then we sit back and discuss how their guided writing went. And I'm coming in at various times, it's not just one lesson you see. They're long lessons, so, and you know, so the subtle pressure is obvious, you know it's coming from me that I think that this is the way that I think we need to be going.

She added, “When I do walkthroughs, when I do classroom observations, it's part of our dialogue with the staff member afterwards.”

The principals also spoke about their need to be professionally informed in their role as instructional leaders. Their professional knowledge was reported as important to them in their role as supervisors of instruction. A principal stated, “Instructional leadership means that I have to be very well informed about the various instructional practices that teachers need and do.” This principal also identified that an instructional leader will, “...know a lot about them (instructional practices), what I

should be seeing in the classrooms.” Another principal described the benefits of being informed as, “you can be part of the conversation and the dialogue, that I’m not simply the evaluator or the litigator or the decider.” All of the principals met with teachers and provided them with feedback about lesson observations. They also reviewed formal evaluations which were a part of the division’s teacher supervision process.

Identifying Learning/Instructional Needs

The principals described how they applied their skills to improve student learning and teachers’ instructional practices. One principal believed that setting direction around learning was important; another commented that setting direction was about taking leadership roles in areas where change was necessary:

I’m a team member but also with the role of uniting us, bringing us all together, as instructional members and pushing forward whether it means report card results or deciding why we have so many problems on the playground, or whatever’s the issue. That’s where I can provide the leadership.

Another principal helped to improve student learning by setting direction through the identification and targeting of interventions:

We have really come to the belief that we are all responsible for all the students in the school - not just the students you teach on a daily basis. This has allowed us to implement some early intervention strategies at the younger grades with the intermediate teachers feeling that there will be a benefit later on, instead of grumbling that they are not getting the same level of support.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

A third principal conducted the class review process and used a more transparent approach than in previous years. She shared the profile data for each of the classrooms with all of the staff: “We did class reviews with all classes and then getting back to that transparency we showed everybody everyone’s class profiles.” The staff’s awareness of the existing needs in each classroom was heightened and, “Well, as a result, I had classroom teachers come and say, you know I have two educational assistants in my room, I don’t need both of them, after seeing that, you could take one and put them half time with this teacher and half time with that teacher...” In this way, teachers could see how data could inform the staffing practices necessary to support instruction in a systematic fashion.

A fourth principal spoke of the way that she and teachers implemented a plan to provide literacy support to early year’s students:

Kids are regrouped every two months based on their performances in reading....Younger kids 20-25 minutes, the older kids 25-30 minutes, and they work on very specific reading skills. There’s a lot of dialogue ... we need to be working on this strategy; they’re not doing this kind of thing, so the teacher will focus in...

The principals placed a high priority on the goal of improving learning by identifying individual student learning needs as was evidenced by the specific plans they put in place and interventions they undertook to achieve this goal.

Summary

The principals’ description of their day to day actions and interactions revealed that they shared similar leadership characteristics and practices as they enacted their roles as instructional leaders, though variation existed in how they enacted each of these characteristics. These variations represented the

principals' responsiveness to the unique contexts of the school communities and each principal's personality and beliefs. In spite of these personal differences and the school's context, the principals shared the belief that their leadership actions have, among other accomplishments mentioned in this Claim, improved student learning, built staff capacity, and developed relationships with school partners.

It is interesting that only one principal referenced her investment in her personal professional growth as occurring because she loved to learn. While every principal mentioned he/she needed to be professionally informed, the rationales provided for this pursuit were because they needed to be knowledgeable to supervise staff, or so that staff saw them as learners. Two other noteworthy observations were that all five principals were privy to the professional development the teachers received and that only two principals reported that they were actively engaged in the teaching enterprise with students. Such findings affirm those of Leithwood et al. (2004) who suggest that principals are more apt to indirectly influence student learning through their work with others in the school.

Claim 3: Responsive to Context

The following section identifies the findings related to the principals' understandings of context as being that of the particular school environment in which they worked, of themselves as individual administrators, and of the particular initiatives they described to help them frame their instructional leadership practice.

Particular School Environment

The section describes how the principals responded to different issues and made decisions based on their understanding and sensitivity to the demographics and the particular school environments in which they worked. These issues included the school population, staff and community demographics,

the uniqueness of early years school environments, impacts of socio-economic status, staff complements and divisional characteristics.

The principals were first asked to clarify who they considered to be a school community member. They identified teachers, parents, students, divisional support staff such as consultants, coordinators and clinical services personnel, and agencies external to the division as a part of the school community. The groups that are considered outside agencies included child care centre personnel and community businesses (both local and city), provincial organizations and any other persons not employed by the school division.

One principal acknowledged that the relationships with others took time and energy to build. She believed the collaboration with external agencies provided the school staff with access to other people's experiences and knowledge. She said, "As chair, I was able to foster connections which became supportive of the school. I have worked hard at making sure that the community feels welcome and that we are working together." She also said, "So we looked at bringing the consultant from the environmental committee. I made a connection with a [district] school board, a couple of schools and connected with those administrators, showed my staff how you do this. You network with people, you talk with people."

Another principal recognised staff needed additional supports at the school level to move the literacy initiative forward. She described that staff have benefitted from the expertise and knowledge of divisional support staff when they collaborated on the school literacy initiative. She suggested, "I work very closely with teachers; I work with them on our various goals, our various instructional practices. But I also work with (the) outside, they're not agencies. They're outside people that are with our division." To further describe the nature of the relationship the principal added, "Teachers

are very comfortable working with outside, that's a loose term, they're not here in our building, and they're outside." She also stated, "But staff are also very comfortable working with these outside people that come in regularly. They have a special expertise that we do not all share."

A third principal identified how she worked collaboratively to address a concern that she had related to the parent community. Five years ago, when she first came to the school as principal, she observed that the parent community did not appear to feel welcome at the school, particularly those who represented newcomer Canadians or non-Western ethnicities. She shared that she has made a concerted effort to welcome the parents to the school:

I'm as visible as I possibly can be and with the community, and staff see me with the community. At each gathering and assembly, I am ever conscious of acknowledging and thanking everyone who's there. I always emphasis how important their support is to our children.

One principal's comments, that cannot be shared as they might jeopardize anonymity, revealed racial bias despite the principal's concerted emphasis on demonstrating a high degree of inclusivity. In reality, the efforts specifically focused on one group may have created more instances of exclusion. It is unclear the degree of awareness or the sentiments the rest of the community had about the principal's efforts to be inclusive, but if they were conscious of the principal's focus, those who were not part of this specific group may have felt excluded. There are times when attempts at inclusion can unintentionally have the opposite of the intended effect. However, it is evident that the principals demonstrated an openness to understand what the staff and community needed, tried to be inclusive, and demonstrated that they are prepared to seek out supports as necessary. The aforementioned responsibilities are not easily achieved. These principals are working at developing their capacity to

respond to the complex contexts and the inherent interactions which underlie the work of principals as they respond to school staff with the communities in which they work.

Particular Initiatives

In this section, the types of decisions the principals made in response to the particular initiatives are presented. For example, one principal recognized that some of the work that happened in schools occurred: "...because they are a division initiative. ...and the expectation is that you align with the thrusts and policies coming from the division." This principal made the decision to follow a specific path of professional development because the division was focused on a specific form of literacy intervention.

One principal cited the divisional thrust as one part of the school's rationale to become involved in the divisional literacy initiative. She felt that it would be best if she aligned the school's instructional practices with those of the division. She cited the frustration that the staff and she experienced in the past as they attempted to improve students' reading scores. This principal used the divisional literacy focus and paired it with the school data to guide her in choosing the literacy intervention best suited the school's needs.

As a result of the initiatives, the principals also made specific managerial decisions to facilitate improved instructional practices such as: arranging timetabling to provide common preparation time and incorporating literacy blocks in the teachers' timetables. They also provided staff with release time so that they could engage in collaborative work. One principal described how she organized the timetable to facilitate professional development time for teachers, stating, "We have our buddy classes set up, so, say we were buddies, you would take my children for two periods so I could go do a Regie Routman session, then I'm going to take your kids for two periods and so you could go (engage in

professional development).” Another principal “dedicated our 3rd Tuesday each month by combining classes, we had 1 hour of PD each month. The guidance teacher, phys. ed. teacher and music teacher took the students for an additional half hour.”

All of the principals described changes in the delivery of and planning for school based professional development. As well, they described the positive changes in the quality of the dialogue between teachers and with teachers and administrators. One principal implied how professional development had been ineffectively organized and experienced at the school previous to the initiative with the comment, “... I think we’re done with those the one day PD sessions.” The principal explained how during the initiatives, professional learning became integrated in all aspects of improving instruction in her comment that, “I always try to think of, ok, how we can weave it into other things that we do?” The principal provided an example of how staff planned and then provided supports for students based upon their collaboration to identify students’ individual learning needs. For example, the teachers grouped students differently than in previous years in order to maximize the use of professional staff and to more effectively target students’ learning needs.

The principals allocated time for professional dialogue at staff meetings and at other scheduled times during the school day. One principal built time into staff meetings so that, “They were able to share and get feedback from each other.” In reference to daily discussions and meetings related to the initiative, a principal said, “And then at the mentor meetings, we would sit in on those and guide the week to week discussions.” Another spoke of how conversations about the initiative “were the basis of all PD for last year.”

The allocation of both human resources and financial resources were also impacted by the initiative. All of the principals allocated financial resources to support ongoing professional

development opportunities for staff and for the acquisition of materials. The principals also allocated staff in specific ways to support the student learning goals that were developed in collaboration with staff. One principal provided additional instructional time for students who would benefit from daily individualized literacy instruction: “I bumped up our reading recovery to five (students) because we have a strong belief in putting in as much support in grade 1 as much as possible.”

These examples indicate that the types of changes that were made and the way they took place were consistent regardless of the initiative’s focus, either literacy or environmental. Principals described the nature of the changes that occurred, how they were manifested as a result of the initiatives that were undertaken, the managerial decisions that supported the changes, and the staff’s role in the change process.

Summary

The principals made decisions in response to the context within which they worked. They focused on maintaining positive morale with staff, potentially at the expense of having high expectations of staff. They strove to welcome communities to the schools, although their efforts placed the community members in a role that does not reflect the dynamic and multi dimensional relationship that can develop between schools and communities. They availed the schools of the opportunities which presented themselves either through community or divisionally based initiatives which demonstrated their responsiveness to the schools’ needs. The motivation underlying the schools’ initiatives though rested on the acts of others upon the school rather than the schools’ drive to develop their own solutions. This comment is not to suggest that benefitting from others is not a wise act, but it does prompt one to wonder about the degree of creativity and sense of collective efficacy that exists in each of these schools and where and how these may be manifested.

Claim Four-Foster Commitment and Motivation of Staff

This section describes how principals used their instructional leadership skills to motivate staff and foster staff commitment to achieve school visions. Table 4 provides the consensus, supported and individual themes related to this claim.

Table 1

Themes of Practices to Foster Commitment and Motivate Staff

Consensus	Supported	Individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building trust • Consequence of an exciting initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being comfortable with resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting specific members

Building Trust

The section presents how the five principals described the importance of building and maintaining trust with staff and the ways that they developed a sense of trust with teachers and community members. One principal built trust through the development of strong teaching teams to support children's learning. To build the teams she maintained teachers' assignments over time. She said "...so very strong teams that I don't see dividing if I don't need to...again we'll keep as consistent as we can because it all goes back to trust. Right?" Another principal built trust by being fair and non-judgemental. He said:

I'm fair with other people I would say my most unfairness and strictness judgement to myself.

I'm really helpful in the sense that I'm not threatening, I'm inclusive, I want people to feel comfortable and safe and share their ideas and accepting feedback.

It was striking to hear the principals speak about their willingness to wait for staff to come on board with school and divisional initiatives. Overall, the high level of patience and understanding described may be symptomatic of other issues such as the principals' need or desire to reduce conflict at all costs and the principals' emphasis on maintaining a congenial workplace as opposed to a collegial working environment. Their efforts to maintain calm may be a factor that prevents the schools from realizing the growth in student learning and teachers' professional practice that they all express as their ideal.

Principals demonstrated to community members that they were welcomed in the schools and that principals wanted to be open and available to the community members. A number of principals commented on the way they demonstrated their efforts to build trust with the community. One principal who believed in working with staff and parent community talked about the power of people working together. She said, "Collectively we're stronger than we are individually." She also identified that fear was a result of a lack of trust and she worked to ensure that trust is developed:

My biggest challenge is people who fear change and people who are stuck because of that and resistant. I understand where it comes from, but breaking that down, building trust, and I know that they're afraid of change because (of a) lack of understanding and (a) fear of that. She explained that "I think that it's by letting people know that relationships are built on trust, valuing and not just saying it, but making sure that you're showing that. Listening, listening, and listening."

She believed that “..., trust provides a forum for thinking together always, and as I said over and over, the majority of problems come from misunderstandings.”

Consequence of an Exciting Initiative

The principals identified that staff were also motivated as a result of their excitement with the school’s initiative. One principal described the impact the initiative had on students, and consequently, on staff. She shared that during the literacy initiative the students chose writing as a favourite literacy activity. Prior to the initiative, the students were unmotivated to write and found writing difficult. Their interest in writing positively impacted teachers’ motivation in the project.

The staff’s enthusiasm for the initiative also impacted on how they became a part of school based professional development. The principal noticed a difference in the staff’s level of willingness to lead professional development sessions, as compared to in previous years when they were less inclined to take on a leadership role at the school level. She shared, “So in September, I just passed around a clipboard saying which (strategy) you would like to share on... And so they signed up and it’s been powerful...So I think that that’s really made it real for teachers.”

Another principal invited the instructional assistants to participate in a staff sharing session. Her goal was to, “have an opportunity for educational assistants and teachers to come together and share something on eco literacy. Everyone is bringing something to share with others to motivate again and keep it alive.” The initiative motivated instructional assistants and teachers to work more closely together as well as build a united vision for eco literacy within the school.

Being Comfortable with Resistance

Three principals identified the need to be comfortable with resistance. Two principals identified that they were able to deal with staff resistance, because they believe they understood its

origin. One principal viewed staff resistance as “Covert aggression, because of the fear.” To help the staff cope with this fear, she commented that “it is important that staff is not made to feel exposed for what they don’t know”; rather, the principal “wants to encourage them” in their own learning and understanding. However, she identified that encouraging the staff was also a challenge.

Another principal shared that “There are some teachers that aren’t comfortable with change and that does create some headaches.” She referenced how the teachers responded when required to collaboratively develop programming for children with special needs. She said, “It took a good couple of years for people to be very comfortable with it.”

As principals are confronted with resistance, whether passive or aggressive in nature, they are challenged to find the most effective ways to channel it in a positive direction. The principals’ demonstrated a high level of understanding of staff resistance. It appears that this general acceptance of resistance is as an inevitable by product of change, and likely impacts on the development of effective teaching and learning in schools.

Specific Staff Members

Two principals selected specific staff members to provide leadership to the staff because of their perceived ability to motivate others. One principal told of making a conscious decision to select a staff member along with the school’s vice principal to lead the initiative at the school level. It was the principal’s belief that key people would be needed to play a significant role in moving the project forward before she invited the remaining staff members to embrace the initiative, “So I took my designate and one grade five teacher because I thought I would never take this on as a whole school. But if I was going to take it on, I would start with two people who I knew ...”

These two principals demonstrated that they used criteria to inform their decisions to involve a teacher in a leadership role and to select who they would invite to participate.

Summary

Five strategies, building trust, responding to the benefits or consequences of a specific initiative, responding to staff needs, being comfortable with resistance, and selecting specific staff members were identified by principals that helped them foster commitment and motivate staff. It is likely that each of the strategies had an impact on individual staff members and as well on the principal. The impact on staff and/or principals can be both positive and negative. For example, in a situation where a principal demonstrates patience and support for resistant staff members, others on staff who are ready to move forward can interpret the principal's patience as being ineffective. For the resistant staff member, such patience is likely well received. In addition, when one staff member is selected and provided with additional release time and professional development opportunities, some staff may look on the staff member with resentment while others may see it as their motivation to become more involved in particular areas of professional growth because of the opportunities they see may be provided. Perception is reality, and for that reason, the ability of the principal to be transparent with the rationales for his/her decisions becomes very necessary.

Claim 5 and 6: Patterns of Distribution

Both Claims 5 and 6 will be developed in this section. I will describe the role each leadership source played in the development of the initiatives as well as the level and degree of their involvement in the initiatives and their impact on student learning.

Table 2 represents the sources of leadership identified by the principals that played a role in moving the school initiatives forward.

Table 2*Sources of Leadership*

Consensus	Supported	Individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divisional support staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based support staff-educational assistants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching staff • Division senior admin • Specific staff members 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • External agency • Parent Council

Administration Driven

The principals are the main leaders in all of the school initiatives. They were deeply involved in ensuring they are moved forward and adequately supported. They also determine who is involved, how they participate and to what degree they are able to exert their influence. One principal commented, “I had a big involvement,” and “I had to convince a few people that were there what needed to be done.”

All of the principals supported the initiatives in a number of ways. They made budget allocations to support the purchasing of resources, provided release time for teacher collaboration, fostered staff support to ensure its implementation and organized professional development to support the staff’s professional growth. One principal formed a professional book club with staff, and the teachers were invited to share during the meetings. She also asked staff to take turns and be

responsible for presenting at the monthly staff meetings. This was one way she moved the initiative forward and empowered the teachers.

Teaching Staff

The teachers were involved in a leadership role in so far as they led their personal professional growth. They attended professional development sessions and collaborated with their colleagues. Some teachers led professional discussions with their school-based colleagues. One principal spoke about a time when three teachers approached him and requested an opportunity to make a presentation at a staff meeting related to the school-based initiative. The principal gladly provided them with this opportunity and felt this indicated the staff's excitement for the initiative.

Divisional Senior Administration

One specific member of the division's senior administration supported four of the schools by providing access to the experts who led the main instructional professional development for both the administrators and the teachers. The divisional supports created the conditions for schools to have multi-year involvement in the initiatives in order to create a lasting improvement in teachers' instructional practice. The involvement of the senior admin can best be characterized as substantive in the provision of release time and access to professional development, and peripheral to the overall implementation for the schools' initiatives.

Specific Staff Members

Specific staff members were selected and played a leadership role in three initiatives by offering their combined set of professional and personal qualities to support teachers. Principals selected teachers and created the conditions where these individuals were able to provide support and leadership to teachers. The specialized expertise, knowledge and personal characteristics of the

specific staff members are the qualities that influenced the principals' decision to distribute leadership to the teacher leaders. One principal selected a staff member because of her confidence in the staff member's ability and capacity to see the project through to completion. Another principal spoke of the teacher designate and the specialized training in which he'd participated. As a result of his expertise, he was provided with release time and met with teachers and supported their efforts. A third principal identified the resource teacher's special capacity in the area of literacy and the support that she offered to elementary classroom teachers. In each case, the leadership efforts of these individuals helped to motivate, and support, teacher needs in instructional areas in ways that the principals knew they themselves could not support. They enlisted individuals with specialized skills or knowledge to help facilitate instructional change.

Overall, classrooms teachers were the key participants in the initiatives but they contributed a low level of leadership in the initiatives, primarily because principals did not extend multiple opportunities for them to take on leadership roles. This was true with the exception of a few teachers who were acknowledged to be useful to ensuring teachers came "on board" with the initiatives, or in terms of taking more ownership of their own professional growth.

Divisional Staff

Divisional staff played a key role in the initial offerings of the literacy focused initiatives, and then continued to offer financial support throughout the initiative's implementation. They provided leadership as they offered instructional professional development to classroom teachers and facilitated professional development for the administrators. Although their involvement was from a distance, this involvement significantly contributed to the success of the implementation because of their contribution of resources to support schools. They also supported classroom instruction through the

provision of learning resources and ongoing consultations with the teachers and principals. Principals recognized that in their role as instructional leaders' they must be aware of their areas of expertise and where they cannot provide the instructional knowledge needed by the teachers. They must seek out and make accessible the experts who can facilitate professional learning for the benefit of themselves and the teachers.

Support Staff

One principal shared that it was through the school's initiative, that the educational assistants seized the opportunity to increase their capacity. As a part of the school initiative, educational assistants created a tool which organized student participation in recess activities. The principal shared, "Well, it was the educational assistants who decided to put together a poster for every classroom and they had pictures of all of the various stations which rotate at different times..." She commented that she invited the educational assistants to share something related to the initiative at a school based professional development session, along with the other staff members.

Students

In the four literacy initiatives there is little evidence of leadership being distributed to students in any significant manner; however, there was a high level of student involvement in all of the initiatives, because of their position as students in the schools. Although the students did not play a significant leadership role, principals reported that because of the students' positive attitudes and willingness to participate, the learning environment was improved. Each of the schools had some form of data to support the claim of achieving improved student learning.

Students were also mentioned as part of the change process, but only in terms of their participation in the initiative, rather than their direct input into its development. There were two

specific examples the principals described when the students became more actively involved in the initiatives. In one of the schools, at the encouragement of the external literacy expert, the students in some of the elementary classrooms were given the opportunity to reorganize the classroom library. This occurred only in the classrooms where, as the principal said, teachers were comfortable with “giving up the reins.” In another school, the principal arranged for the students to make a presentation related to the school’s initiative to a community group in which she was a member.

There was a minimal level and degree of the students’ input into instructional change which may be indicative of either one or both of the lack of the teachers’ willingness to seek their input, and/or the teacher’s inability to construct meaningful ways to invite the students’ participation and then make use of their efforts. However, in all of the initiatives, students’ involvement can best be described as being acted upon rather than contributing to the initiatives.

Parents

Parents were presumed to play a supportive role only in all of the initiatives. Primarily, they offered their moral support and, in some circumstances, they provided financial support. Parents also demonstrated their support by attending school events, such as a literacy evening held in one school and assemblies in other schools. In one initiative, the parent council played a role in purchasing items for all of the students. While the parents in one school purchased items to support the school’s efforts, their involvement came as a result of the school’s solicitation of their support.

The parents can best be described as cheerleaders or fundraisers in the school initiatives. These two roles have, in many school communities, become the hallmark of what constitutes a supportive parent community. Unfortunately, this role results in minimizing the potential overall impact of

parental engagement in schools. Their meaningful involvement in schools should be a challenge that all principals take up as an important part of their work.

External Agencies

External agencies offered financial assistance to support one school initiative and they also provided professional learning supports for the principal and the school's staff members. They were important to the environmental initiative because they provided the opportunity for the principal to become involved. However, they did not directly contribute to improved student learning. The principal recognized the advantage of having outside supports which augmented the school's ability to undertake a particular initiative.

Assessing Distribution Patterns

The individuals or groups of individuals identified as those to whom leadership was distributed are consistent with the literature on distributed leadership (Leithwood et al., 2005). The principals believed that they, along with the combined or total leadership of the others, comprised the effort which contributed to the success of their initiatives. There is an abundance of evidence that the principals led staff with the goal of improved student learning. The five principals expressed they had the best interests of teachers and students at the core of what they did in the schools. They wanted to build staff capacity and ensure improved learning for all students. As instructional leaders they indicated they wanted to be inclusive of teaching staff and to help students learn. While they demonstrated some aspects of inclusive or transformational leadership, their main mode of leading was to create the conditions to support the initiatives, the staff and students, and to build the capacity of a limited number of teachers, all the while protecting the staff from any hardships, challenges and/or issues that might interrupt or impact adversely on their practice.

They provided teachers with professional development to support the growth of their instructional practices with support in the form of release time, the provision of resources, timetabling considerations, and recognition for their efforts. The teachers have embraced the goals of the initiatives and collaborated with principals. They have practiced the instructional strategies specific to the school initiative and have contributed to their own professional growth and that of others. The students are engaged in their learning as supported by school data. The parents are minimally involved in any kind of leadership role but they are committed to the school's endeavours.

In summary, the principals can be described as being deeply and personally involved in the initiatives. However, the data of this study demonstrate that there is significant opportunity for principals to extend an increased voice to the staff, students and parents. By distributing the leadership to others, the principals have a greater opportunity to increase a broader range of teacher's capacity. The teachers and students, along with the parents would benefit from the increased involvement that parents could bring to the learning environment. The students have the capacity to be involved as partners in their learning where they are more actively engaged in the teaching and learning process rather than only as recipients or targets of the initiatives.

Claim Seven- Personal Traits

Principals believed that four personal traits contributed to their successful instructional leadership: child-centeredness, approachability, inclusiveness, and patience. No supported or individual themes were noted.

Child Centeredness

All of the principals identified that "the child" was the focus of their work as an instructional leader. For example, one principal said, "I love watching kids play, learn, they're fascinating."

Another principal stated, “I’m doing it for kids. It’s all for kids that’s why we exist.” The remaining principals’ comments echo similar sentiments. Their collective comments provided clear evidence that they believe their responsibility in schools is to lead in order to benefit children. Their lack of opportunities for students to be meaningfully involved in their learning suggests the principals care for children and enjoy watching them learn, but they do not, perhaps because of their ages, see the greater potential for children to act as agentic participants in the learning process.

Approachability

Three principals described that they exhibited the trait of being approachable. One principal said, “I want people to feel comfortable and safe and share their ideas and accepting feedback.” Another principal described, “I’m really helpful in the sense that I’m not threatening. I think I’m approachable.” And a third principal shared, “I want [others] to know who I am and that I’m a visible and approachable person in the school.” The value of the principals being approachable has benefit for school community members such as parents, teachers, students, business and agency affiliated members, and for the principals, themselves. The community members are able to express their thoughts, offer new ideas about specific initiatives and provide feedback for areas of improvement or change. The principals have the opportunity to communicate important messages about the school’s mission and vision, impart knowledge in face to face interactions and potentially get immediate feedback about issues, and to build relationships. Approachable principals have the opportunity to act instructional leaders by inviting others to act, to challenge process, and to share their thoughts and feelings. The principals can share and show what has inspired them to lead.

Inclusiveness

Three principals described themselves as *inclusive*, and said that they demonstrated this trait by valuing and respecting the differences in people. They also referred to being inclusive of all adults, staff and community members, and spoke of the importance of modeling this trait to others. One principal said, “I think I respect and value all.” Another principal said, “I’m inclusive,” when he spoke about the school’s children, staff and parent community. However, there was some evidence to suggest that though principals’ hearts were in the right place, there may be times when their efforts actually underscore their own privilege in relation to other groups. One principal commented:

Yes, so one thing is being visible, being receptive, seeking people where they’re at. But to sit in a winter concert or any one of our assemblies and see the mother in the hijab the mother in her little hat from Sudan or Ethiopia the Italian community is prevalent here the Pilipino community and actually see the world represented side by side in our school gymnasium is a wonderful thing. It’s very wonderful. So we celebrate the diversity and together we’re stronger.

I think that’s a little way of telling you I accept everyone. It doesn’t matter if they’re wearing the hijab or they have the work clothes on, or whatever, and modelling that is really helping others to see that, and accept that.”

As identified in Claim 3, the principals’ descriptions of their inclusive practices demonstrate they define groups of individuals by different aspects of their culture, appearance and socio-economic status. It is with good intention, and pride, that the principals describe themselves as practicing inclusivity. However, the principals’ individual meaning of inclusivity, as interpreted by others, may be perceived differently, and may in fact underscore privilege rather than minimize it. Therefore, it is

with a high degree of humility and caution that the term of inclusivity should be used to describe oneself.

Patience

The principals described themselves as being patient. They used their patience to help them manage conflict, work with resistant staff and to provide time and space for teachers to increase their capacity. One principal suggested that instructional leaders had to be patient “no matter what the crisis.” Two principals spoke of how their patience has positively influenced how they managed and viewed staff resistance. The principals understood resistance as an understandable, fear based reaction by staff and one that they, as principals, helped the staff to work through. One principal said:

My biggest challenge is people who fear change and people who are stuck because of that and resistant. I understand where it comes from but breaking that down, building trust, and I know that they’re afraid of change because lack of understanding and fear of that. Fear of I won’t measure up or if somebody knows what I don’t know.

Another principal viewed patience as a way of permitting the time and space for people who need to build their capacity. By demonstrating patience, she believed that growth in teacher capacity can take place.

Summary

The principals described themselves as child centred, approachable, inclusive and patient. They identified that that their traits positively impacted their effectiveness as instructional leaders. They described how they used these characteristics in a purposeful manner which reflected their understanding of how the application of personal traits must be mindfully applied as instructional leaders. Some of the examples suggested that even with the best of intentions, it may be that

ostensible practices towards inclusion still are understood fundamentally in terms of seeing certain groups as “the other” and therefore may not ultimately foster the authentic inclusion of all in the school community. In addition, it must be noted that these are self-reported claims and that no observations of actual practice or interviews with school groups were conducted to determine if the “walk” matches the “talk.” Confirmation was instead attempted by asking people to speak of their practice in relation to daily examples of their practice.

Chapter Five of this thesis will summarize the study’s key findings as a result of an analysis of themes created from the participant’s responses as related to Leithwood’s Seven Claims of Instructional Leadership. It includes recommendations related to leadership practices for the consideration by school principals and possible areas for further research.

Chapter Five

Conclusions, Recommendations for Future Studies

Chapter Five provides my conclusions about Leithwood et al.’s (2006a) seven claims of instructional leadership and specifically how they were manifested in the daily work of five elementary principals in their roles as instructional leaders. I also offer a critique of aspects of Leithwood et al.’s (2006a) model of instructional leadership represented in six of his Seven Claims and propose areas for future studies in the field of instructional leadership.

Claim 2 Repertoires of Leadership Practices

In Claim 2, Leithwood et al. (2006a) identified four sets of leadership practices from which instructional leaders draw. All of the principals reported that they acted in ways consistent with the specific leadership behaviours identified by Leithwood et al. (2006a): building vision and setting direction, redesigning the organization, developing people, and managing the instructional program.

Building Vision and Setting Direction

All of the principals decided to work with an existing school vision when they became leaders at the schools, with the exception of one. This principal worked through a vision-building exercise with staff at the onset of her tenure that is still in use years after it was developed. One new principal indicated that staff were not working towards a common vision but felt that as a new administrator, he needed to wait a year before engaging the staff in revisiting of the school's vision and mission. The remaining principals were comfortable with the school's existing vision and had no immediate plans to revise them. Findings such as this suggest that, rather than acting as vision builders, the principals in this study tended to "inherit" established visions that were used to set direction. Their efforts were not centered on creating new visions; rather, they worked within existing school cultures to enact or modify established visions of learning. While the existing visions at the schools are arguably not "wrong" or "bad," the findings suggest that principals may have a tendency to be cautious about setting new directions which could cause discomfort to staffs or facilitate radical changes to the ways teachers are currently working.

Regardless of how or when the school's vision was developed, all of the principals in this study practiced behaviours that helped build upon existing school visions and set direction. Most common among the responses of principals was role modeling that supported the school's vision, and regularly communicating the school beliefs for the benefit of others, which included the school and divisional staff, the parent community and those involved in business and community based agencies. Their practices tended to align with and support the visions in existence at the school, and communication strategies were put in place to ensure that the messages groups received regarding what was important

about instruction and learning were consistent. In this regard, principals appear to be better “implementers” than “visionaries.”

In Leithwood et al.’s (2009) study, principals’ leadership practices used to set school direction were influenced by the school’s stage of crisis or level of need. By comparison, in this study, the principals’ ability to set direction and communicate vision was impacted by their personal perceptions of their stage of readiness as instructional leaders as well as by the schools’ level of need. The principals identified that the schools had significant needs which required their attention. They responded to the transient nature of a portion of the school population, the issues related to poverty affecting many families within the community, the influx of English as an additional language learners, and the move toward more inclusive education. As a result of these needs, three of the schools were afforded special opportunities by the division. The supports came in the form of the provision of additional professional development opportunities for staff and full day kindergarten programs to enhance early years students’ learning opportunities. In all of the schools, the principals identified that some or all of these needs resulted in increased instructional (and other) pressures being placed on the staff.

For principals in the first three years as a school administrator, there appeared to be less focus on moving an initiative forward and more focus on developing an understanding of the school climate and culture. This is understandable, as a new principal or a principal in a new school setting needs time to assess the teaching and learning environment in which he/she is leading. Though the sample size was small, only two of the five principals spoke overtly about either completing a visioning exercise with staff or wanting to do so. The new principal in this study was the only one of the five

who articulated that his lack of experience in the role and the need to learn more about the existing culture was a factor in his decision about when to engage staff in a visioning exercise.

Future studies which focus on principal's career path and their ability/willingness to engage in vision building would help to extend the current literature on instructional leadership. Divisions may want to consider succession planning models that facilitate the development of new visions for learning while also targeting the kinds of supports that need to be provided to administrators at various stages in their careers, or when they move into new placements. The leadership succession research (Macmillan, 2000) has shown that unplanned principal succession is one of the most common sources of schools' failure to progress, in spite of what teachers might do. Studies demonstrate the significant effects of unplanned principal succession, especially on initiatives intended to increase pupil achievement (Fink, & Brayman, 2006). In addition, the successful appointment and retention of a principal is emerging as one of the most important strategies for turning around struggling schools (Matthew, & Sammons, 2005). In response to this finding, divisions can provide supports that may be based internally at the school level with existing staff and/or provided through external supports in the division such as the senior administration. In addition, a formally developed mentorship program for principals designed to build their ability for "unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organisation" (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006b, p. 5) is another example of support to be offered to administrators as they strive to build visions that set the appropriate directions necessary to improve student learning.

Understanding and Developing People

The second leadership practice of understanding and developing people emerged as principals talked about developing teachers when they provided opportunities for teachers to collaborate with one

another, structured committees for teachers to grow professionally by engaging in collegial discussions, and provided feedback to teachers about their instructional practices. All of the principals recognized their responsibility to provide opportunities for teachers to grow professionally and used committees as a way to provide professional learning opportunities. The more experienced administrators were able to describe why they structured the school committees in a particular way. For example, one of the more experienced principals renamed the math committee and called it the math leadership team to develop teacher's sense of empowerment.

The principals were not only concerned with developing teachers; they strove as well, to develop themselves. Their professional growth was achieved primarily through their participation in professional learning with the staff, and was motivated by: their responsibility to supervise teachers, their intent to be viewed as a role model, and their desire to competently lead and engage in professional dialogue with others. However, only one principal characterized herself as a learner; the rest characterized their professional growth in terms of developing themselves as instructional supervisors. Regardless of the years of experience or schools' contexts, the principals made conscious decisions to develop staff and understand their needs.

The principals also made well intentioned efforts to engage community members. They wanted the parent community to feel welcome and engaged in the school, and to be comfortable approaching the principal and teachers about areas of concern. However, their efforts typically resulted in the parents acting in a passive role as observers or fundraisers at school based events. The principals did not mention any specific efforts made to heighten the parents' level of involvement to the degree that it may have impacted on student achievement. It is important that the principals acknowledge and respond accordingly to the research that provides evidence of the significant

influence the involvement of parents and community members can have on improving student learning (Leithwood et al., 2009). The benefits are most evident in elementary schools where parental and community involvement impacts positively on raising pupil's achievement (Leithwood et al., 2009). The findings of this study suggest that the parent community is not involved to the extent that it could be in areas of instruction, and principals should consider implementing strategies that would more authentically engage parents in the teaching and learning environment.

Redesigning the Organization

Leithwood et al. (2006b) suggests that leaders redesign organizations by creating the working conditions whereby teachers are “able to make the most of their motivations, commitments and capacities” (p. 7). All of the principals in this study strove to create a learning culture within the schools. They supported the development of strong working groups. They fostered staff motivation and commitment by building trusting relationships, and practiced a patient and caring approach when managing resistance. They provided staff with time to collaborate and worked alongside teachers as they engaged in professional development. Their efforts were focused on defining positive staff interactions and providing the opportunities for improvements in teaching practices to take place. The school with the environmental focus provided the strongest evidence of a principal striving to redesign the organization. Through the initiative, the principal, staff and students achieved a level of awareness and practice that would reflect a high level of eco literacy, one of the principle reasons for undertaking the initiative. This change required a significant shift in how things were done at the school and in the community. In the four literacy initiatives, the principals advanced teachers' abilities to provide the students with meaningful literacy instruction; however, their efforts were instrumental in supporting incremental growth in the areas of literacy and student learning. The schools' involvement in the

initiatives did not redesign the ways things worked; they tended to “tweak” what already existed and to varying degrees made some changes to the way things were done. Not all schools experienced the same level of change in teaching practices, and the degree that teachers, students and parents were involved in the initiatives differed as well.

The principals built positive relations with the community by sharing information about school initiatives with its members and they made efforts to connect with the community. They applied strategies to reach those parents who were less likely to attend school events or be involved in school based projects. For example, principals ensured that teachers informed parents about assemblies where the parent’s child would be receiving recognition. The principals’ primary focus was on developing relationships with parents who would in turn support the students and staff. The principals did not identify specific ways that they intended to engage the parent and larger community in a plan directly related to improving instruction or student learning. In the environmental initiative, a more specific plan was made to engage the students which resulted in a higher level of active student participation and ownership of their learning.

Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment

Leithwood et al.’s (2006b) claim that principals manage the teaching and learning environment was evident in this study. The principals sought out initiatives that would lead to improved student learning. They released teachers from their teaching responsibilities to provide time for collaboration and worked closely with teachers to grow professionally and to model their understanding of instructional practices related to their initiatives. In some schools, the principal regularly engaged in teaching, specifically in early years reading instruction. They worked with teachers to identify and prioritize student needs based on a review of student data and teachers’ anecdotal reports. They

purchased materials and accessed divisional and outside experts to provide teachers with the necessary supports to improve their instructional practices. They strove to build staff capacity through school based and divisional professional development opportunities. They communicated with individual teachers to provide specific feedback about their teaching and communicated with all staff to achieve the goal of developing a shared vision of learning. Lastly, the principals provided instructional supervision throughout the year thereby improving teachers' instructional practices and their own capacity to provide instructional supervision.

However, one area identified by Leithwood et al. (2006b), the recruitment of staff to ensure that staff capacity was maintained, was not mentioned by the principals as one of their responsibilities. However, most school divisions in Manitoba utilize centralized hiring practices whereby principals may or may not have much input into who is hired for any divisional position. It therefore may not be surprising that principals would not mention staff recruitment in their interviews, even though the issue is very important for capacity building. One of the most important responsibilities that principals or school division personnel have is to recruit the best teachers possible. When principals are not given this responsibility, or in some situations perhaps do not view this as an important responsibility, the likelihood is greatly diminished that the teachers hired will share the principal's vision and embody that vision in their daily work.

Claim 3 Responsive to Context

The schools in this study shared similar demographic contexts, although the principals' experiences and years of experience varied. Despite these differences, all of the principals selected the school initiatives they described in this study because they recognized the needs of the school in order to grow in those identified areas. During the implementation of the initiatives, they invited selected

teachers to participate in leadership roles to develop the potential they saw in those teachers. As a group, the principals are well intentioned in their efforts to respond to their local contexts, and they are of the belief that they share their leadership responsibilities with others. However, ultimately, their comments demonstrate that they maintain a high degree of control over the school teaching and learning environment, which may be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, the principals identified that the student body was growing in diversity and learning needs, which resulted in increased teacher workloads. Their comments demonstrated their desire to support staff, not only through the acquisition of resources, but also for emotional and moral support. Their actions are similar to those described in the research (Leithwood et al., 2009) where principals working in challenging contexts have been known to expend their energies and place focus on maintaining and establishing school wide policies in areas such as behaviour management, the physical environments, improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and establishing cultures of care and achievement. Discipline was an issue mentioned by the respondents of this study, though generally it was not a significant problem except to the extent that it took them away from completing other administrative duties. Neither was there mention of performance concerns with teachers, although principals spoke of their needs to develop their supervisory capacities. Their most important focus was on the support they provided to staff to increase their instructional capacity, and buffering teachers from what they perceived to be outside demands.

This does not mean that all well-intentioned responses to context are those that are appropriate. To illustrate, one principal described the school as ethnically diverse by referencing a particular group by its ethnic dress. Her efforts to promote inclusion were demonstrated with direct references that objectified the very group she was trying to accommodate, and could have compromised how the

remainder of the community perceived their place and role in the school. Leithwood et al. (2009) identified the need for leaders to have specific training to meet the needs of pupils from disadvantaged communities to promote their engagement, motivation and attainment. It can be said that it is equally true that principals who are working with the parents and children who come from diverse cultural backgrounds would benefit from cultural awareness training so that their good intentions do not in effect reaffirm privilege and/or exacerbate “othering.”

In another school, a new administrator assumed the principalship following the retirement of a long serving administrator who was well known and respected in the community. His entry into the position was fraught with tension in not being able to “fill the shoes” of his predecessor. In addition, within the first few months at the school, the new principal observed that staff members functioned in isolation and did not engage in collaborative endeavours, but neither did they desire to change their ways of working despite his efforts. He did not have an administrative team-member with whom to work, or any system in place to access his own support. Though he articulated the need to respond to the negative environment which was impacting upon the teaching and learning environment of the school, he felt ill-prepared to deal with the contextual issues at play due to his own inexperience. This new administrator’s experiences highlight the importance of ensuring support for new principals. This support must involve ongoing specific training beyond the managerial aspects of the job, to include how to develop vision and staff and/or organizational capacity to improve student learning.

Lastly, only one principal reported that there was any involvement by specialist teachers in the school initiatives to improve student learning (i.e. music and physical education specialist teachers). This leaves one to question whether the omission of their involvement was coincidental or a reflection of a generalized notion that these teachers’ work is peripheral to the “core” functions of teaching and

learning. More research needs to be conducted to determine the roles that specialist teachers play in fostering student learning and the extent to which they are included in school improvement efforts.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that school leaders in this study tended to enact leadership that was benevolent, caring and protective in nature. However, because of this, there is a danger that their desire to control the environment to minimize the stresses put on others might actually overshadow any significant efforts to truly empower teachers or community members to respond to their local environments on their own.

Claim 4 Fostering the Commitment and Motivation of Staff

Leithwood et al. (2006b) claim that leaders' influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions can indirectly improve the teaching and learning environment emerged in the examples the principals provided which illustrated their practices to accomplish these ends. As a group, the principals ensured that teachers were provided with material resources. They also made managerial decisions and provided the necessary resources to support a high degree of staff collaboration and participation. Some efforts were made to increase motivation by involving staff in leadership opportunities. Most often in these cases, the principals selected specific staff members to play a leadership role in different aspects of the schools' initiatives because they recognized specialized knowledge or ability to lead others towards the same goals.

The principals identified that building trust was an important aspect of their work with teachers. One principal believed she built trust with the staff by developing teaching teams and maintaining the teams over time. All of the principals developed trust and commitment by responding to teachers' concerns in a non-judgemental manner. They viewed teacher resistance to change as a

normal part of their work as leaders and attributed a fear of change to be at the root of most staff members' resistance.

Leithwood et al. (2006b) also contended that for there to be a greater impact on student learning, leaders must find the time to provide meaningful feedback to teachers about their practice in order to foster the motivation to improve. Four of the principals provided teachers with feedback on their practice, as a part of the school initiative's guidelines. However, their reflections revealed that they used the feedback process more-so as a means of meeting the demands of their supervisory responsibilities rather than for motivating teacher commitment. In Leithwood et al.'s (2006a) study, the principals felt they had less influence on improving teacher's performance; this is consistent with how these principals conveyed their motivations underlying the feedback process they used with teachers. Principals must be acutely aware of their motivation underlying their provision of feedback to staff. To achieve the goal of improved student learning, principals must be engaged in authentic conversations that will lead to improved learning. A sophisticated level of understanding of the pedagogical practices which are targeted for improvement and the ways to engage staff in these conversations must be understood, if the goal is to act as an instructional leader and ultimately improve teacher performance and student learning.

Claim 5 Patterns of Distribution

Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) fifth claim is that school leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed. However, despite all that is written on the topic of distributed leadership, there is little research confirming the direct influence of specific patterns of distributing leadership. More recently, Leithwood, Mascall and Strauss (2009) wrote it is unlikely that distributed leadership will be "the answer to what ails schools" (p. 269).

In this study, there were many people involved in initiatives, including parents and divisional staff, as well as classroom teachers who played the most significant role. However, it was evident that only a select few in each school were given the opportunity to play a leadership role. This was consistent with the more recent studies (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009) where leaders, based on the school's context, distributed leadership to specific staff members. In most cases, the principals made their selection because they perceived the specific staff members had the trust of their colleagues were reliable, and capable of leading the staff. Each of the principals identified why they distributed leadership to the specific members, thus giving support to the notion that leaders, as identified in the literature (Gronn, 2009; Harris, 2009; MacBeath, 2008; Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2009) are influenced by factors such as the expertise of staff members and the kinds of function to be performed. Only two principals reported that staff members undertook specific leadership responsibilities. However, all of the principals spoke of teachers as partners in the process of school improvement. Despite the principals' comments that they are prepared to and actively engage in sharing their leadership with others, the release of responsibility to staff was limited in both the depth that the leadership was distributed and the breadth of the staff who were given the occasional opportunity to lead. The findings of this study suggest that there was an absence of a comprehensive or planful distribution of leadership in these schools.

In all of the schools, the selection of the initiatives was driven primarily, if not exclusively, by the principal, thus eliminating others from being involved in making key strategic decisions. Leithwood et al. (2008) found that effective distributed leadership depended on four factors: the leader's judgement of what was right for the school at different phases of its development, the leader's judgement about the level of staff readiness and ability of staff to lead, the extent to which trust had

been established, and the leader's own training, experience and capabilities. Leithwood et al.'s (2009) work revealed that principals in the early stages of their administrative experiences were more autocratic in their leadership style and more focused on developing a sense of trust and positive relationships with a broad range of staff before distributing leadership responsibilities to others, except for those in formal leadership positions in the school. It was only in the middle phase of their tenure that principals tended to distribute leadership to others, after establishing a sense of trust and an understanding of the skills and capacities to those to which the leadership is distributed. The findings of this study do not confirm Leithwood et al.'s work. Although two of the principals were new in their administrative positions, another two of the principals had less than 5 years of experience as principals and the fifth principal had more than 10 years within a school at the time of the study, there appeared to be no significant differences in the way they distributed leadership. In three of the schools, the administrators were beyond their first few years as principals. According to Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) study, these individuals should have been at the stage where they would begin to distribute leadership to others.

Overall, principals wanted staff to feel empowered but they did not provide a variety of opportunities for them to become leaders in any significant way. A lack of staff readiness was not reported as a reason for not sharing the leadership responsibilities. All five tended to maintain caring, but closely controlled (though not autocratic) styles of leadership rationalized by their views that teachers were under too much pressure to take on more initiatives and/or work. Though well-intentioned, it could be argued that such reasoning may maintain the power position of the principal at the expense of distributing leadership in ways that might build teacher capacity and/or more fully engage the expertise of those who could foster greater student learning.

Claim 6 Effective Patterns of Distribution

Leithwood et al. (2006b) asserts that schools with high levels of leadership influence from all sources impact positively on student performance. In this study, as mentioned in Chapter Five, leadership was not widely distributed. What may have created the conditions for the improved student learning described by the principals in these five elementary schools is the teachers' "academic optimism" (Woolfolk, Hoy, Hoy & Kurz, 2008). This, along with the principals' leadership and the leadership distributed to selected staff members, created the conditions for improved teaching and learning environments. Although the principals neither explicitly commented on the schools' improved student performance data, nor did they reference how it was used on an ongoing basis to plan for instruction to improve students' learning, they were able to describe a very positive staff learning culture, a supportive parent community and students who could articulate their learning. The impact of staff academic optimism may have influenced principals' perceptions of their own instructional leadership even though the findings suggest that more opportunities for distributed leadership could have been extended to a broader base of teachers, the students and potentially, the parents. The research (Leithwood et al., 2006b) supports that schools with the highest levels of student achievement also had increased ratings of influence from all sources, including teachers, parents and students. The challenge for administrators in this study is to develop purposeful ways to engage all constituents in the school community in the kinds of opportunities that will impact positively on student learning.

Claim 7 Personal Traits

Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) seventh claim is that only a small handful of personal traits can explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness. The most successful school

leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent (e.g. in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment, learning and achievement for all), and resilient and optimistic (Leithwood et al., 2006). The five principals in this study described themselves as approachable, child centered, inclusive, and patient. The latter three characteristics were not identified in Leithwood et al. (2006b) research.

The trait of being child centered was derived from comments where the principals described that they were motivated in their work because of the children. They expressed that they liked children, enjoyed watching them learn and play, and said that children were central to their work as educators. Much of Leithwood et al.'s (2006a) research on leadership traits was conducted in non-school contexts, which may explain why this trait of being child centred was not evident in his findings. As well, in the school based research, it is possible that the participants considered the trait of being child centred to be a function of the profession in which they worked and an assumption related to who they are as individuals; therefore they may not have mentioned it overtly as a trait that played into their efficacy as instructional leaders.

In this study, all of the principals described themselves as inclusive. This supported theme is not evident in Leithwood et al.'s (2006b) research. Although one might assume that if one is being inclusive, one is acting on one's core values, a trait Leithwood et al. identified in Claim 7, the way that the principals described this personal trait, deserved mention. The principals identified inclusivity as a personal trait and provided examples of the groups or individuals they included when they described their efforts to model it. This raises the question of what is a trait as compared to what the principals identify as an attitude they must consciously apply in their role as instructional leaders. There are a

number of factors which may have impacted the reporting of this trait. It can be attributed to the existing educational and political climates in Manitoba that are impacting upon educational practice based upon the inclusion in the Manitoba *Public Schools Act* of appropriate educational programming (§41.1.a.1). It leaves one to consider the impact that the focus on inclusive practices have had on leaders and staffs as they develop school culture and the capacity to improve student learning. Further studies should consider what the word “inclusive” means to principals and the extent to which “inclusive practices” are universally applied to all groups and/or individuals with differing backgrounds (cognitive style, culture, disability, economic background, education, ethnicity, gender identity, geographic background, language(s) spoken, marital/partnered status, physical appearance, political affiliation, race, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation).

The trait of being patient was the third trait that emerged in this study and was unreported by the principals in Leithwood et al.’s (2006a) literature review. One can postulate that this trait, in non-school contexts, may be less likely to be identified as contributing to effective leadership practices. As this study focused solely on elementary school principals, future research may explore the traits identified by principals in middle and high school settings as compared to their counterparts in elementary schools.

Two principals commented on being hardworking and willing to face a challenge. These traits are consistent with the traits that were valued and exhibited by leaders in non-school contexts in Leithwood et al.’s (2006a) review. It is surprising and interesting that only one principal identified herself as a learner. One might ponder whether principals are so concerned with their managerial role as “expert” that they fail to recognize their own role as a learner. Are they so involved with leading others and attending to their managerial responsibilities that they find they have little time to be a

learner in a more formal manner? Are they afraid to acknowledge the vulnerability of being a “learner” when by extension that means one is not necessarily an “expert”? Research that examines these possibilities would be beneficial and may impact on the extent to which such understandings could impact upon a principal’s ability to be an effective instructional leader. Principals must view their ongoing professional learning as a crucial element to their success as an instructional leader, and develop within staff a desire for ongoing professional development. It may very well be that not all principals are instructional leaders, and that not all instructional leaders are principals.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice and Research

Leithwood et al.’s (2006a) extensive literature review provided a framework of claims which has been utilized to examine the work of five elementary school principals in Manitoba. In this study the principals were asked to describe their role related to specific initiatives that improved the teaching and learning environments within the schools. The principals were committed to lead staff to accomplish the goals of the schools’ initiatives. However, two instructional leadership practices least revealed in the principals’ comments were the concept of distributed leadership and the desire and, possibly the capacity, to be visionary. The first concept, absence of significant distributed leadership, leaves one to consider what has impacted on its non-emergence as an instructional practice for these five administrators. It was revealed that the five principals reported a high degree of involvement in the professional development in which the staffs were engaged. They also expressed concern regarding the demanding workload of teachers and that of their responsibilities as principals. It is plausible that the dual role of instructional leader and school manager may be unduly influencing a principal’s ability and capacity to perform well in both roles. Enacting this dual role may be an unrealistic expectation of school leaders. As well, the teachers who may be interested in leadership

roles may be reluctant to take on these new responsibilities as a result of their workload. Ultimately these combined effects, principal capacity and years of experience and teacher attitude and capacity could have resulted in the absence of staff assuming a higher level of distributed leadership in these schools.

The second concept, of being visionary, was absent in the principals' reflections about the schools' visions and their personal reports of what they intended to accomplish in the schools. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the review of a school vision is a significant undertaking if all stakeholders are involved and an open-minded approach underlies the revision process. A principal must feel compelled to lead as a visionary and also must have the fortitude and capacity to facilitate a visioning process whereby others are invited to be a part of the process thus developing the strength and capacity of the organisation to enact the school's vision. The two concepts, distributed leadership and visionary capacity, are intertwined. The role of the principals can be seen as the "facilitator of a learning community" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 2). The principal must act as a catalyst for the development of others and for sustaining a professional collaborative environment within the school while affecting the practices and policies that can help improve student outcomes (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). Principals must design a culture where leadership is distributed to others and together they work to promote the school's vision which has at its core, the goal of improved student learning.

Leithwood refers specifically to the importance for principals to widely distribute leadership to multiple sources and to act as visionary leaders. As mentioned above, these two leadership practices were not evident in any significant way as reported by the participants. Therefore, they deserve closer examination for their relevance in a model defining the qualities and practices of an instructional

leader. For the first concept, distributed leadership, Leithwood (2006a) found little evidence supporting the positive impact of distributed leadership in schools. He wrote that it is unique to individual leaders and their capacity to enact distributed leadership in response to the context of a school. This suggests that school leaders, by virtue of whom they are, their personal capacity, the school and community context, and the tasks to be undertaken, are responsible for enacting practices to distribute leadership. However, it was later on that Leithwood et al. (2009) identified that greater leadership distribution often occurs when it is a result of influence from external pressures. This points to distributed leadership more likely occurring if the working environment includes external pressures in support of this leadership practice. Though not stated in Leithwood's model, I add that ideally, the divisions' senior administrators should model distributed leadership practices in their work with school principals as well. In this study, there is little evidence that Leithwood's claims about distributed leadership are evident, and even, perhaps, necessary, for the schools to be effective. To this extent, the model fails to represent the nuanced realities of school administrative leadership. In fact, the difficulties in balancing managerial and instructional tasks, along with the worry of staff overload, often serves to negate attempts from administrators from distributing leadership. This may not be due to issues of administrative control as much as it is care not to overburden staff.

The second concept, enacting visionary behaviours, may also benefit from closer examination. This concept, adopted by Leithwood for its application to school leaders, was derived from non school contexts, and applied to the work of principals. However, in this study, the five principals worked with their schools staff and, with only a cursory glance at the school's vision, undertook their work in the school by looking at short term goals to be accomplished through initiatives that could be achieved through the teachers' instructional practices. As principals strive to improve the teaching and learning

in their schools, in the immediate future, they may be determining that their work at setting short term goals is more significant than enacting visionary behaviours. These individuals also worked within the same division. The extent to which an established divisional culture superseded their ambition (or possibilities) for enacting individual school visions needs to be explored further. The effects of long-term, well-established divisional norms that exist in these schools may precede any individual school administrator's ambition (or possibilities) for enacting and/or changing individual school visions.

Leithwood's claims are based on the assumption that school leaders by virtue of their position, and not necessarily their training as a teacher, are able to do the important work for which they are responsible in their schools. If this assumption is valid, then it must be assumed that the principals are knowledgeable about what constitutes good teaching and learning. Leithwood does not reference the concept of good teaching and learning, thus leaving it to the individual leader to use her/his understanding of these practices to determine whether quality exists in these areas. In this study, the principals made no reference to specific teaching and/or learning practices that could have revealed what they valued as evidence of good teaching and learning. Thus, we are left to wonder whether the principals are able to determine what constitutes good teaching and learning at school. We are also left to wonder whether Leithwood's model necessarily perpetuates *instructional leadership* based on current understandings of what constitutes "good" teaching and learning, or *support for instruction* based on each individual principal's views of what that may be. Leithwood's model is then called into question as the specific references to quality teaching and learning are absent from his work and no guidelines are provided for their application in determining and/or assessing leadership behaviour.

Overall, the findings suggest that within Leithwood's claims there are elements that may benefit from closer examination and articulation as they are not necessarily reflected in the actual

experience of school principals who work in what are considered to be “good” schools, and/or the concept of what constitutes “good” instruction to improve the teaching and learning processes are absent from the discussion. These practices should be more clearly articulated as they relate specifically to the work of improving the teaching and learning in schools.

The quality and availability of current research on instructional leadership practices is undeniable. As with any profession, administrators should be compelled, at best and obligated at the least, to be apprised and more specifically, to be a student of the work they call their profession. To this end, principals must avail themselves of this information and, as they will likely extol the virtues of professional learning communities for staff, they must find ways and be prepared to assume some responsibility for developing their personal leadership capacity and that of others. Leadership organizations which exist both at the local and provincial level also have a role to play in developing leadership capacity in administrators. They have the ability to provide the structure for administrators by developing professional learning opportunities for their fellow administrators. For senior administrators, I believe there is a call and at the risk of making noise, a scream, from school leaders demanding that every effort is made to maximize the time when a division's leadership team members are called together. The development of instructional leadership practices must be central in the planning which determines how this time will be spent. The focus of the time administrators spend in each other's company should be spent discussing, challenging, questioning, and developing ideas. These conversations must be structured in a safe environment where principals can share their experiences and ask their questions without fear of evaluation or judgement. They must have the support of instructional leaders who act as facilitators and they must have demonstrated that they have improved teaching and learning at the schools. For the universities, a close examination of the

leadership preparation programs' course offerings must be undertaken and the programming offered should be revised to address what is required to prepare the school leaders of today and the future for their important work in leading instruction in schools.

As I engaged in the research and more specifically in the analysis of the interview transcripts, questions emerged which could not be answered within the scope of this study. For example, it would be interesting to study administrator mentorship programs, specifically to learn if and how they are designed to help prepare and support principals specifically in their role as instructional leaders. As well, the nature of elementary principals at varying stages of their administrative experience could be examined to determine whether there are characteristics of the elementary school principals and possibly elements within their environment, as compared to other levels, middle and high school, which impacts on the emergence of distributed leadership. Lastly, consideration should be given to the dual role of instructional leader and school manager; specifically, to examine the adverse impact this dual role may have on leaders committed to improving the teaching and learning environment in schools.

In conclusion, the research demonstrates that principals in more effective schools are successful in improving pupil outcomes through which they are, including their values, virtues, dispositions, attributes and strategies they use. It is the specific combination and timely implementation and management of these strategies in response to the unique contexts in which they work (Leithwood et al., 2009) that makes them successful leaders. We also know that school improvement trajectories evolve over time (Leithwood et al., 2009). We have the information that can help transform the teaching and learning in our schools. We know the role leadership plays in this transformation. We now must expect everyone actively involved in leadership and leadership

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development to use this knowledge to transform leadership practices, hiring strategies and leadership education. To ignore what we know is unprofessional and irresponsible. To respond with action is ethically correct.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

1. Please describe for me the context in which you work and your administrative background.
2. Describe the working conditions for teachers in this school?
 - a. You might speak to the grade level/structure of the school, enrolment of the school, school/student characteristics, the nature of the school division in which you work, the nature of the community in which you work, the length of time you've been an administrator, etc.
 - b. You can speak to anything that comes to mind that helps situate the demographic and social environment in which you work.
3. Describe *what you do* as a leader to accomplish instructional aims, *how you go about doing it*, and *why you go about this work* in the ways that you do?
 - a. What is your definition of instructional leadership?
 - i. How do use this understanding to improve student learning in your school?
 - b. What is your school's vision?
 - i. How is it developed?
 - ii. What do you do to ensure it is enacted?
 - c. In what ways do you work with members of your school community to improve the teaching and learning environment?
 - d. Describe a typical day as a school administrator.
4. Provide an example of a time when the teaching and learning environment was improved in your school and how do you know it was an improvement?
 - a. What was the impetus for the improvement?
 - b. Under what circumstances did this occur?
 - c. What changes were made and how?
 - d. Who was involved, to what extent and why?
 - e. What was your role in this process?

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- f. What factors influenced how the decisions were made, the changes that occurred and who was involved?
 - g. What factors (internal or external to the school) helped foster the success of the project and why?
- 5. What challenges have you faced as instructional leader in doing this kind of work?
- 6. Describe the personal traits that make you effective as an instructional leader?
- 7. Is there anything you would like to add to your comments about the nature of your role as an instructional leader and its effect on students?

Ethics Protocol Submission Form
(Basic Questions about the Project)

The questions on this form are of a general nature, designed to collect pertinent information about potential problems of an ethical nature that could arise with the proposed research project. In addition to answering the questions below, the researcher is expected to append pages (and any other necessary documents) to a submission detailing the required information about the research protocol (see page 4).

1. Will the subjects in your study be

UNAWARE that they are subjects? ___ Yes *No
2. Will information about the subjects be

obtained from sources other than the

subjects themselves? ___ Yes * _ No
3. Are you and/or members of your research team in a

position of power vis-a-vis the subjects? If yes,

clarify the position of power and how it will be addressed. ___ Yes * _No
4. Is any inducement or coercion used to obtain

the subject's participation? ___ Yes * _No
5. Do subjects identify themselves by name

directly, or by other means that allows you or

anyone else to identify data with specific subjects?

If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be

maintained. What precautions are to be

undertaken in storing data and in its

eventual destruction/disposition. *` __ Yes __ No
6. If subjects are identifiable by name,

do you intend to recruit them for future

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- studies? If yes, indicate why this is necessary
and how you plan to recruit these subjects
for future studies. _____ Yes * _ No
7. Could dissemination of findings compromise
confidentiality? _____ Yes * _ No
8. Does the study involve physical or emotional
stress, or the subject's expectation
thereof, such as might result from conditions
in the study design? _____ Yes * _ No
9. Is there any threat to the personal safety
of subjects? _____ Yes * _ No
10. Does the study involve subjects who
are not legally or practically able to give
their valid consent to participate
(e.g., children, or persons with mental health problems
and/or cognitive impairment)?
If yes, indicate how informed consent will be obtained
from subjects and those authorized to speak for subjects. _____ Yes * _ No
11. Is deception involved (i.e., will subjects be
intentionally misled about the purpose
of the study, their own performance, or other
features of the study)? _____ Yes * _ No
12. Is there a possibility that abuse of children or persons
in care might be discovered in the course of the study?

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If yes, current laws require that certain offenses against children and persons in care be reported to legal authorities.

Indicate the provisions that have been made for complying with the law.

____ Yes ____ * ____ No

13. Does the study include the use of personal health information? The Manitoba Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) outlines responsibilities of researchers to ensure safeguards that will protect personal health information. If yes, indicate provisions that will be made to comply with this Act (see document for guidance -

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia/index.html>). ____ Yes ____ * ____ No

Provide additional details pertaining to any of the questions above for which you responded "yes." Attach additional pages, if necessary.

In my judgment this project involves: * minimal risk

☐ more than minimal risk

(Policy #1406 defines "minimal risk" as follows: "... that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater nor more likely, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in life, including those encountered during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

25_ / 11 / 2011_

dd mm yr

Signature of Principal Researcher

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

Review your submission according to this:

Checklist

Principal Researcher: __Tia Cumming_____

T	Item from the Ethics Protocol Submission Form
*	All information requested on the first page completed in legible format (typed or printed).
*	Signatures of the principal researcher (and faculty advisor, or course instructor if student research).
*	Answers to all 13 questions on pages 2-3 of Ethics Protocol Submission form.
*	Detailed information requested on page 4 of the Ethics Protocol Submission Form in the numbered order and with the headings indicated.
*	Ethics Protocol Submission Form in quadruplicate (Original plus 3 copies).
*	Research instruments: 4 copies of all instruments and other supplementary material to be given to subjects.
*	Copy of this checklist.

NOTE: For ease of reviewing it would be much appreciated if you could number the pages of your submission (handwriting the numbers is quite acceptable).

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

1. Summary of Project

Background

Principals are believed to have an impact on schools (Heck & Hallinger, 1996). Their impact is believed to touch on many aspects of schools such as creating school culture (Deal, 1999), impacting on students' achievement scores and teacher instructional practices (Fullan, 2001), developing community partnerships (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) and building capacity among staff members (Reeves, 2009).

Although there is agreement among many scholars that principals influence certain areas of schools, there continues to be debate about the degree of influence and the areas on which the most impact is experienced. John Dewey (1938) wrote in his book *Experience and Education* that, "It would not be a sign of health if such an important social interest as education were not also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical" (p. 5). Seven decades later, Dewey's words reflect the current discourse among academics, politicians, parents, and educators about the purpose of education and the responsibility principals must assume if children are to benefit from their education.

Scholars have delved into educational research and explored the different aspects of leadership theory exclusive to school settings. Kenneth Leithwood's and Daniel Duke's (1999) review of 121 educational literature articles revealed that 13 articles mentioned instructional leadership. They concluded from their literature review that instructional leadership was the only one of six leadership approaches that did not have a counterpart in non-school literature. This suggests that the role of the principal as the instructional leader is unique and defined through a more narrow body of primarily school based research.

This study draws from the research conducted by Leithwood to focus on the role and actions of the school principal as an instructional leader. Specifically, the purpose of the research is to better understand how seven claims of instructional leadership practice are manifested in the work of principals in five elementary schools in an urban school division (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, 2009). The research question that underpins the design of the study is, “In what ways are Leithwood’s seven claims of instructional leadership manifested in the experiences of five principals in urban elementary schools?”

Purpose

It’s important to study instructional leadership practices for a number of reasons. The research shows that school leadership, especially by the principal, is the second most important factor (next to the teacher) when it comes to having an impact on student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In addition, principals have never before been under the immense pressure they feel today to ensure that students are learning (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2007). Goldering et al (1990) shared that today’s principals who demonstrate instructional leadership behaviours impact on student learning by shaping the school’s instructional climate and instructional organization (Goldering, & Pasternak, 1994; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990) and Marcoulides’ and Heck’s (1993) research indicated that the principal’s instructional leadership in the school in the areas of building school climate and organizing instructional programs are significant predictors of academic achievement. As principals work to shape the school’s instructional climate and the instructional organization they must inherently engage in decision making in their role as instructional leaders. Principals must understand and be able to articulate both the rationale and motivation for their decisions and more specifically the potential impact the results will have on student learning. Murphy (2002) in Jazzar & Algozzine (2006) shared

that if “student achievement is to significantly improve, close, consistent, and coordinated communication between instructional leaders is essential” (p. 104). As principals at all levels make decisions that affect the organization, and ultimately may influence the students’ performance, it is essential that school principals understand how to be effective in their instructional leadership practices.

Secondly, the principal is often faced with critical issues to which they must respond effectively. As well, school administrators are evaluated on the results of their decisions (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008) and therefore the quality of the decisions they make related to teaching and learning is important.

Finally, the study of principals’ instructional leadership practices could provide important input for curricula development for leadership preparation programs and mentorship programs designed to support new and aspiring principals. Professional organizations such as the Council of School Leaders (COSL), the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), school divisions that offer local administrative preparation programs and universities that house leadership programs could all benefit from understanding more about how principals characterize and enact their roles as instructional leaders, and the circumstances under which support for effective practices might be developed.

Methodology

The research will be a qualitative study, more specifically a naturalistic inquiry. It will be a study where individual, taped, semi-structured interviews will be the primary method of data collection. Specific themes and trends will be derived from the participants’ interview transcripts. The

interpretation of the results will include reference to related literature, the use of direct quotation of participant responses, when appropriate, and the discovery of emerging themes.

The participants will be purposefully selected, as is the practice in qualitative studies (McMillan).

Purposeful sampling ensures that the researcher will have participants who will be particularly informative about the research topic (McMillan). With the approval of the university's ethics committee, the initial contact to gain access to participants' will begin. To gain access to research subjects, a letter of introduction and intent will be mailed to the superintendent of the school division in which the principals are employed. The superintendent will be asked to provide his/her signature on a letter which will grant permission for the distribution of an email letter of invitation to all English school elementary principals in the division. Elementary school principals, for the purpose of this study, include all school principals who work in English schools with any combination of grades from kindergarten to grade 8.

Upon receipt of the superintendent's approval of the study, letters of invitation will be emailed to all elementary school principals within the division. The participants selected for the study will be the first five elementary principals to respond thorough email indicating their willingness to participate in the interview process.

Each principal will be emailed a letter explaining the purpose and methodology of the research study, the interview questions, and a Letter of Informed Consent. Upon receipt of an electronic response to the Letter of Informed Consent, the researcher will contact the participants to establish and confirm a location and a date on which the interview will be conducted.

2. Research Instruments

Interview Questions for Principals (See Appendix A).

3. Study Subjects

The study subjects will be 5 elementary school principals who work in an urban Manitoba school division. There are no special characteristics of the subjects that make them especially vulnerable or require that extra measures be exercised in the study.

4. Informed Consent

I will first proceed by obtaining permission for the study from the assistant superintendent of one urban school division for which such permission must be gathered (Appendix A). After receiving permission, through email communication via the participating school division's public emails for principals, each potential principal participant representing K-8 schools in the division will be provided with a Letter of Informed Consent to participate (see Appendix C). The first five principals from the urban school division who agree to participate will be chosen for the study. The interview questions before the interviews so that they may have the opportunity to prepare their thoughts prior to the interview being undertaken.

Participants will be provided with the assurance that their interview content will be kept entirely confidential. Participants will also be asked to contact the researcher to arrange possible times and dates on which the interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon location. Participants will be asked to contact the researcher by a specific date.

To ensure participant confidentiality no identifying features of the participants, the participants' schools or the division will be used in the research paper. As well, participants will not be identified to each other or to any other individuals. All participants' responses will be recorded digitally on a laptop computer and their identity and responses will be kept confidential throughout the study. The files will be stored on a password protected computer to which only I have access. A transcript of the interviews

will be made and upon completion of the transcription of the interview by me, participants will be provided with a copy for their review. Participants will have the right to remove or alter any quotations or comments they feel are misrepresented, inaccurate and/or that they wish to have deleted from the transcript. Participants will be notified in the consent form that they will have two weeks to review their transcripts, after which I will assume they are comfortable with the content and I will proceed with analysis. The recordings and transcripts will be deleted upon the completion of the program requirements for the Masters of Education degree, July 2012.

The transcripts and audio recordings will be shared only with my advisor, if necessary, and no defining information about the participants will be included in the findings. A pseudonym will be assigned for any written or oral summary, analysis or interpretation of results. It is likely that direct quotations may be used in the interpretation of the data. The results of the study may be shared in the future in some other form, such as a journal article or workshop presentation. Participants will be asked to keep confidential any comments made during the study. At the completion of the study, participants will be provided with access to the final report.

The participants will be informed that their written consent to participate in the study **does not waive** their legal rights nor does it release me or the university from legal and professional responsibilities. They will be told that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence, and they are free to ask for clarification or new information throughout their participation.

There are absolutely no ramifications for participants who decide not to participate in this study; they may withdraw from the study at any time, and their data will be stricken from the analysis.

5. Deception

This research study does not involve deception.

6. Feedback/Debriefing

At the completion of the study, at the participant's request, a summary of the findings will be provided. The use of pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants and no other identifying characteristics will be included which could identify the participants' past or present school or community in which they have worked. Transcripts will be returned to participants in order that they may verify, add, delete or change their comments so that they feel their transcripts best depict their views.

7. Risks and Benefits

There are no risks to the participants in this proposed study, as participants are simply asked to report upon their perceptions of the work they do within the context of their everyday employment as principals. The participants may derive benefit from the study as they will have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and contribute to the knowledge base on instructional leadership. Responses will be recorded and the identity and responses will be kept confidential throughout the study. A transcript of the interview will be made and, upon completion, the participants will be provided with a copy of the transcript for their review. They will have the opportunity to delete any comments that they do not want to remain a part of the study. They will have the right to remove or alter any quotations or comments that they feel are misrepresented or inaccurate. At the end of the study, the recordings and transcripts will be destroyed, July 2012. The transcription will be analyzed and kept in a secure password-protected file in a computer at the home of the interviewer. Only the researcher and perhaps her advisor will have access to the transcripts. No one else will see the transcripts, though in the write

up of the study, some direct quotations from the transcripts may be used to communicate the explicit meaning that can only be captured by using a participant's exact words.

up of the study, some direct quotations from the transcripts may be used to communicate the explicit meaning that can only be captured by using a participant's exact words.

8. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. My advisor may have access to the contents of the transcript and/or digital recordings. The names of the school division and the participants will be substituted with pseudonyms and any identifying markers will be changed to protect the participants' true identities. Should any information potentially identify individuals, it will not be used in the analysis or reporting.

9. Compensation

The participants will not be compensated for their participation.

10. Legal Age

All participants are of legal age and can give their consent.

11. Deception

There is no deception involved in the study.

12. Abuse of Individuals

There is no abuse of individuals.

13. The use of personal health information

There is no use of personal health information.

For further clarification of this study, please contact:

Tia Cumming

Superintendent Consent Form



Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Boards

CTC Building, 208 - 194 Dafoe Road

Winnipeg MB R3T 2N2

Tia Cumming

Research Title: Principals' Perceptions of their Instructional Leadership Practices

Researcher: Tia Cumming, M. Ed Student, University of Manitoba

Research Supervisor: Dr. D. Wallin, University of Manitoba,

wallind@cc.umanitoba.ca

Dear Assistant Superintendent,

My name is Tia Cumming and I am a student in Master's Program in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Manitoba. I am requesting your permission to conduct a study within your school division for my Master's Degree in Education. Under the supervision of Dr. Dawn Wallin, I am conducting my study to understand administrators' perspectives to the following research question: How do principals perceive their instructional leadership practices?

I am interested in interviewing a total of five elementary principals who work in English elementary schools with any combination of grades from K-8. For this study, the first five principals who agree to participate will be chosen for this study.

Below is the Research Project Consent Form that provides information for participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, and the strategies used to ensure confidentiality.

Your signature on the Superintendent's Consent Form that follows this information letter will authorize your approval for me to conduct my study should you choose to grant my request to

interview principals in your division. As well, with your approval, I would like to be able to email elementary principals within your division, asking for their participation. Should you agree to provide me with permission, I will require the email contact information for all elementary principals in English schools in your school division. I can be reached by email me at tia.cumming [REDACTED].

The principals will be asked to orally respond to a number of prepared questions that will be provided to them via email before our meeting. The interviews will be approximately one to one and one-half hours in duration and are expected to be conducted in person and completed in one sitting. The interviews will take place at a time and place convenient to the administrator participant, outside of the regular school hours of operation.

Responses will be audio recorded on a computer and the participants' identity and responses will be kept confidential throughout this study. A transcript of the interview will be made and upon completion of transcribing the interviews, each participant will be provided with a copy of his/her interview for his /her review. The review of the transcript should take no more than 30 minutes. The participants will have the opportunity to delete any comments that they do not want to remain a part of the study. They will have the right to remove or alter any comments that they feel are misrepresented or inaccurate, and add any information that they would like to provide at that time. They will have two weeks to provide this feedback, after which I will presume that they are comfortable with their information and I will proceed to analysis.

The information collected will be stored on a locked password-protected computer in my office. I and perhaps my thesis advisor, Dr. Dawn C. Wallin, will be the only persons who will be privy to the data. However, the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the Research Quality Management/Assurance Office may also require access to the research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. The electronic data will be erased or trashed, and the hard data will be shredded once the study is complete, which is July, 2012.

All participants will be assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities and any identifying characteristics will be masked or changed when the data are reported. At this time, it is possible that these data may be reported in journal articles or conference presentations.

There are no identifiable risks associated with this study. The participants may derive benefit from the study as they will have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and contribute to the knowledge base on instructional leadership. Subjects will receive no remuneration for their participation in the study.

There are absolutely no ramifications for participants who decide not to participate in this study. Their participation is completely anonymous and confidential. If participants decide to participate in this study but decide later to withdraw from participation, they are asked to simply to

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contact the researcher by the method of their choice informing her of his or her decision. Any data that have been collected up to that point will then be destroyed.

The Education and Nursing Research and Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba have approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Tia Cumming Email: tia.cumming

Dr. Dawn Wallin Email: wallind@cc.umanitoba.ca

W: 204-474-9741

If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the study, please let me know and I will send you a summary at the conclusion of the study.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Tia Cumming

***MASTER'S THESIS RESEARCH PROJECT
SUPERINTENDENT'S CONSENT FORM***

Research Project Title: Instructional Leadership: A Naturalistic Study of the Instructional Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals

Researcher: Tia Cumming (M. Ed student, University of Manitoba)

Date: November 25, 2011

Sponsor: University of Manitoba

Advisor: Dr. Dawn C. Wallin (University of Manitoba)

I hereby give permission for the research study, Principals' Perceptions of their Instructional Leadership Practices to be conducted in the (SCHOOL DIVISION) in the months between January 6, 2012 and June, 29 2012. I understand that you will be conducting interviews with five elementary school principals as a means for collecting data and that a copy of the data analysis and summary will be distributed to participants, who express interest in receiving a copy, upon completion of the thesis.

Signature of Superintendent

Date

Feedback: If upon completion of this study you wish to see a summary of the results of the research a copy will be made available for your perusal. Please indicate your wishes by checking the appropriate box below.

_____ Please provide me with a summary of the results upon completion of the research.

_____ I do not require a summary of the research results.

Please maintain a copy for your records and mail a copy of this signed consent form to:

Tia Cumming



Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Boards

CTC Building, 208 - 194 Dafoe Road

Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2

Letter to Participants

Tia Cumming

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

January 4, 2012

Research Project Title: Principals' Perceptions of their Instructional Leadership Practices

Researcher: Tia Cumming (M. Ed student, University of Manitoba)

Sponsor: University of Manitoba

Advisor: Dr. Dawn C. Wallin

Date: November 25, 2011

Dear Participant,

My name is Tia Cumming and I am a student in Master's Program in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Manitoba. I am inviting you, as an elementary school principal, to participate in my thesis study being conducted for my Master's of Education Degree at the University of Manitoba. The study will examine principal's perceptions of their instructional leadership practices. The first five principals who agree to participate will be chosen for this study.

The Assistant Superintendent of your school division is aware of this study and has provided permission for this research. The interviews will take place in schools, or similar locations of your choice, in face-to-face meetings. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with each of the five principals involved in the study that should take no more than 60-90 minutes of your time.

Should you agree to participate in this study, this consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

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The purpose of the research is to explore the ways in which instructional leadership practices are manifested in the daily experiences of five principals in elementary schools in an urban school division. There are no risks to the participants in this proposed study, as participants are simply asked to report upon their perceptions of the work they do within the context of their everyday employment as principals. Subjects will receive no remuneration for their participation in the study. The participants may derive benefit from the study as they will have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and contribute to the knowledge base on instructional leadership.

You will be asked to orally respond to a number of prepared questions that will be provided to you via email before our meeting. The interviews will be approximately one to one and one-half hours in duration and are expected to be conducted in person and completed in one sitting. Responses will be audio recorded on a computer and your identity and responses will be kept confidential throughout this study. A transcript of the interview will be made and upon completion of transcribing your interview, you will be provided with a copy for your review. The review of your transcript should take no more than 30 minutes. You will have the opportunity to delete any comments that you do not want to remain a part of the study. You will have the right to remove or alter any comments that you feel are misrepresented or inaccurate, and add any information that you would like to provide at that time. You will have two weeks to provide this feedback, after which I will presume that you are comfortable with your information and I will proceed to analysis.

The information collected will be stored on a locked password-protected computer in my office. I and perhaps my thesis advisor, Dr. Dawn C. Wallin, will be the only persons who will be privy to the data. However, the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the Research Quality Management/Assurance Office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. The electronic data will be erased or trashed, and the hard data will be shredded once the study is complete, which is July, 2012.

All of your information will be kept anonymous and confidential. A pseudonym will be assigned for any written or oral summary, analysis or interpretation of results. If any information identifies you, your school, school division, or others, that information will either be masked via pseudonym or, if identification is still possible, not used in any dissemination of findings. I ask that you also consent to keep the comments you make during the study confidential. At the completion of the study, I will send you a summary of the findings, at your request, by signing on the request for summary at the end of this letter of consent.

Your signature on this form will indicate that you have understood, to your satisfaction, the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me or my advisor at the information provided on this form, and/or refrain from answering any

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questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Once again, your participation is voluntary. Should you wish to participate, please sign the consent form that follows this letter. **Keep one copy for yourself, and mail the second copy to me for my records at the address listed below.** If you do not wish to participate, please discard this information. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time simply by contacting me at the address below, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence.

Tia Cumming Researcher, Student, (M.Ed.), University of Manitoba

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Phone:

Dr. Dawn Wallin, Thesis Advisor (University of Manitoba)

Phone: (204) 474-9741 or Email: wallind@cc.umanitoba.ca

The Education and Nursing Research and Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba have approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tia Cumming

Consent Form

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's School: _____

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

I _____ hereby consent to be interviewed for the study mentioned in the Letter of Informed Consent.

I can be reached at _____ (H) _____ (W)

Email: _____

I am available on the following dates after 4:00 p.m.

1.

2.

3.

I do _____ do not _____ want to receive a summary of the study.

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