Senior Administrators' Perceptions of the Impact of Educational Bureaucracy on School Efficacy

by

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Abstract

This study explores the question of how educational bureaucracies impact school efficacy, from the perspectives of senior administrators, a group made up of superintendents and assistant superintendents. The literature review defines the terms *educational bureaucracy* and *systems coupling*, which provide a theoretical framework for the study and serve as a lens through which the data, anecdotal reports contextualized by real-life experiences, are analyzed and the theme of school efficacy is explored. Understanding the unique perspective of the senior administrator's role with regards to educational bureaucracy and its impact will provide a basis from which the structure of school systems is explored more deeply, and the ways in which systems coupling and elements of bureaucratic structures might be used as tools to improve school efficacy. The aim of this study is to better understand the specific functions of educational bureaucracies that have a perceived and/or measured effect on school efficacy. Rather than using a uniform measure of school efficacy, which could serve to limit the experiences shared by participants, the secondary aim of this study is to develop possible definitions/conceptualizations of *school efficacy* based on the anecdotal reports provided by participants, through the application of grounded theory. The findings of this study and the implications for practice will be of interest to those studying the sociological foundations of education and to stakeholders who wish to know more about the functioning of educational bureaucracies at the systemic level, and how they impact school efficacy.

Keywords: bureaucracy, systems theory, systems coupling, school efficacy, school effectiveness, senior administrators, school systems

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

If there is one singular aim of education that encompasses all others, it might be *improvement*. Whether one considers a child learning the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy, a learner developing a deeper knowledge and expertise of a subject of personal interest, adults who continue their learning through professional development, or leaders who advance a field of study forward through new research and innovations, all educational undertakings are characterized and defined to a large extent by the improvement that occurs and the process by which it occurs. So too, improvement is the social aim of education. Societies build educational institutions into their structure with the vision of becoming more culturally and economically refined, knowledgeable, efficient and developed. Moreover, education has no logical end point – it is designed to continue and to build upon itself indefinitely. In this way, it might even be argued that education is a fundamental component of our cultural and global evolution.

However, the coin that is education has two sides. Education must function within certain parameters set out by the larger society of which it is a part, and while learning has no end, systems do have their limitations. It is possible, if not probable, that the education system will perpetuate and build upon the constructs and mythologies of society that go unexamined, and that the potential of education will be limited by a society's capacity to evolve. To avoid falling into this trap, and to ensure that the larger aim of improvement is realized, education has the important job of applying a critical lens to the larger system of which it is a part. Therefore, it is the responsibility of those within the education system to question the degree to which their goals and the mechanics of the systems in which they

operate are compatible, and to make critical and informed decisions to adapt either the goals or the systems when they are not. In the hopes of better understanding this dynamic and how a balance is struck, this study will explore the impact of educational bureaucracies as perceived by senior administrators, individuals with valuable experience at various levels of the school system, a degree of influence within the system, and access to data at the system-wide level.

Purpose

This study explores the question of how educational bureaucracies impact school efficacy, from the perspectives of senior administrators, a group made up of superintendents, assistant superintendents, consultants, coordinators, program directors and other professionals who play diverse and important roles at the administrative levels of school divisions. From a systemic perspective, the primary function of a school division is to create and support schools that can be considered effective and successful according to a variety of criteria that are both self-determined and imposed by outside social and political interests. Senior administrators occupy the positions from which these internal and external criteria must be measured and balanced as the school system carries out its work. As those who organize and implement policies and programming for schools at the macro level, senior administrators must be accountable for the efficacy of the schools under their authority. Naturally, it is in their best interests to create educational bureaucracies that support the growth of healthy, effective institutions, in which authentic, researched and progressive teaching and learning practices occur. At the same time, senior administrators are integral actors within educational bureaucracies that measure criteria and produce data that can be empirically measured, and which complement the values of the dominant society. In most cases, these values are imposed by stakeholders external to the school

system that may be governmental, corporate, or societal in nature, as well as by community members and individuals.

Hall (1963) drawing on the work of Max Weber, defines bureaucracy as including the areas of policy, authority/hierarchy structures, data management, working capacity, expert training, and organizational culture (p. 33). Each of these factors acts as a sub-system within the school system, which is in turn a sub-system of the larger society that it serves. This nested systemic model creates the socio-political context in which schools must carry out their duties and mandates. The troublesome aspect of the larger societal context within which school occurs, is that it lies outside the control of any societal sub-system and is thereby ignored, neglected, or is simply beyond the scope of most people's awareness. This results in the common perception that it is slow and difficult for individuals to affect systemic change within bureaucracies.

Research that claims to evaluate the efficacy of a school system, cannot do so without adopting measurement tools that pre-assume the validity of constructs created by this larger socio-political context such as marks, grade point averages, or graduation rates. Likewise, senior administrators must assume the validity of such constructs if schools are to be perceived as accountable and relevant to the needs of society, because like the larger society they must deal in some form of capital. The adoption of dominant social constructs at the administrative level of the school system inevitably filters down to schools and classrooms, in which teachers and students must struggle to balance their own autonomy with the larger institutional and social agendas that confront them.

Structuring systemic environments that support institutional and individual success is a complex challenge in schools because educational bureaucracies are typically more dynamic than other bureaucracies (Fusarelli, 2002; Lima, 2007; Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978; Tyler, 1987; Weick, 1976, 1982;

Weick & Orton, 1990) because they deal largely with human relations and have a multitude of competing "bottom lines". Being situated within a more rigid socio-political context can create internal conflicts for educational institutions. The self-interests of a school division may be driven by a variety of goals and desired outcomes originating from autonomous sub-systems within the institution. However, these self-interests may conflict with those of the larger society, or even with each other, based on the rules and mythologies by which they are governed (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). It is not an exaggeration to say that educational institutions will significantly impact the identity and quality of life of the individuals who are subject to their practices from their formative years through to early-adulthood. As the roles of schools evolve, their purpose becomes less about the reproduction of an existing labour force and more about the development of adaptable, self-directed individuals who can meet the needs of a dynamic society and labour market. Schools are under more pressure to provide differentiated instruction and individualized learning experiences that will meet the developmental and learning needs of all students, while instruction and assessment methods intended to ensure success for the greatest number of students possible. Nevertheless, society still expects schools to produce institutional capital in the form of grades and achievement indicators that will yield stratified results, which can be exchanged for other forms of capital such as higher education, careers/employment opportunities, and social status.

Historically, the school system has served to reproduce patterns of social stratification and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973; Bowles, 1971; Collins, 1979; Kerckhoff, 2001) whereas today, the aim is to do the opposite. Conservative educational theory suggests that all students should reach a certain level of achievement on a set of common, pre-determined outcomes and standards (Marzano & Waters, 2009; Schmoker & Marzano, 1999; Spady, 1994). Reformist educational theorists have long argued for restructuring the school system to value and foster alternative knowledges, intelligences, forms of capital towards the purposes of social justice, citizenship and self-actualization (Freire, 1970; hooks,

1994; Westheimer, 2008; Yosso, 2005). This dichotomy itself is an example of the internal conflict that schools face as a result of being situated within a socio-political context that has been largely defined by capitalism and industrialism. In the input-driven traditional/industrial model of education (Allee, 1999; Marshak, 2003; Robinson, 2003), the system was fixed and students either passed or failed, while in the emerging model, the system adapts in order to produce standard levels of achievement among classes of varied compositions (Kohn, 2000; Sacks, 1997; Smith, 1991; Valenzuela, 2005). Neither scenario, in a strongly polarized form, produces the best quality of education for students or advances the efficacy of schools across the board, but they illustrate a will at the administrative and societal levels to honour diversity, citizenship and authentic teaching and learning practices while creating streamlined and highly predictable patterns and outcomes reflective of tightly-coupled systems.

Most rational bureaucratic structures are highly centralized around specific and uniform goals and can thus be described as *tightly coupled*. Schools and school systems, however, can be defined as *loosely coupled* organizations, meaning that they are highly dynamic and focus on a broad range of academic and social goals that vary in formality, specificity, consistency, and permanence (Weick, 1976). In a school setting, the students who are required to meet uniform curricular outcomes are also extremely diverse, and may change greatly on both group and individual levels throughout their school careers. The loosely coupled nature of schools must be taken into account in the application of bureaucratic models, as bureaucracies have a tendency to reproduce themselves and their original systemic outcomes indefinitely and with high reliability. On the one hand, many are critical of the traditional model that reproduces patterns of stratification and cultural capital, while on the other hand a trend towards outcome and standards driven education pressures schools to become more tightly coupled in nature. This study will explore senior administrators' perspectives on how school efficacy is

impacted by educational bureaucracies and systems coupling as they converge to form the context in which schooling occurs.

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional experiences of senior administrators in order to better understand how school efficacy is impacted by bureaucratic structure and systems coupling. Specifically, this study will seek to address the following research questions, and to discuss the implications of the findings for practice and theory:

1. Do senior administrators observe links between each of Weber's six elements of bureaucracy and their own perceptions of *school efficacy*?

    a) In what ways do policies contribute to/impact school efficacy?

    b) In what ways do authority and hierarchy structures impact school efficacy?

    c) In what ways does document management contribute to/impact school efficacy?

    d) In what ways does expert training (in the form of teacher education, mentoring programs and professional development) impact school efficacy?

    e) In what ways does working capacity contribute to/impact school efficacy?

    f) In what ways does organizational culture contribute to/impact school efficacy?

2. In what ways do larger contextual/systemic factors, such as systems coupling, affect how senior administrators perceive the impact of bureaucracies on school efficacy?

3. What else can we learn about school efficacy and the impact of educational bureaucracies from the perspectives of senior administrators?

The literature review found in Chapter 2 defines the terms *educational bureaucracy* and *systems coupling*, which provide a theoretical framework for the study and serve as a lens through which the data can be analyzed and the theme of school efficacy can be explored. Analyzing the data gathered from senior administrators will help to develop an authentic understanding of the importance and impact of educational bureaucracies on school efficacy and will provide a window into the organizational structure of the school system. Understanding the unique perspective of senior administrators' roles with regards to educational bureaucracies and their impact will provide a base from which the structure of school systems can be explored more deeply, and the ways in which systems coupling and the bureaucratic structure might be used as tools to improve school efficacy.

Rationale

The perceptions and experiences of senior administrators with respect to educational bureaucracies could serve to reveal important indicators of school efficacy and help identify ways that educational bureaucracies impact school efficacy, making the findings of this study relevant to a variety of stakeholders. This study will be of particular interest to senior administrators, policy makers and educational professionals in leadership positions.

This research will be of interest to senior administrators. Superintendents and assistant superintendents working at the administrative level of the school system play a key role in the design and implementation of policies and programs that are applied broadly across the system within a range of differing contexts and environments. School systems need to operate within bureaucratic structures that accommodate the unique needs of schools and of the individuals within those schools. Compartmentalizing and exploring the individual elements of bureaucracy and considering how they have contributed to experiences and lived examples of school efficacy will provide a basis from which

senior administrators will be able to examine their own professional practices. Applying the lens of educational bureaucracy to the authentic experiences of senior administrators may also result in the emergence of common themes and criteria for school efficacy that had not previously been considered, or are not yet established in the educational literature. The small number of senior administrators, compared to other professional groups within the school system, also makes this study relevant as it may provide insights into perspectives that are not shared or understood as commonly as those of teachers, or even school administrators. In a sense, this study will provide a forum for these perspectives and through the analyses of the interviews, a dialogue may emerge that will bring the unique point of view of the senior administrator into focus.

As this study will help to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of senior administrators, it will be of interest to other groups as well, including other educational professionals, provincial/governmental bodies concerned with educational policy and curricula development, and academics in the area of educational leadership.

While senior administrators occupy a special place in the hierarchical structure of the school system, they do not develop, implement, and maintain educational policy and programming in isolation. They are surrounded and supported by specialists, consultants, program directors, trustees, communication officers, teachers' associations and many other professionals who impact educational practices in a variety of ways. Often the titles and roles of these individuals vary significantly from one school division to another, and many of these professional positions are created by senior administrators as part of the hierarchical structure of the school division. For this reason, the findings of this study could bear directly on the individuals who fulfill these roles within school divisions. The experiences shared in this research may provide valuable insight and information for those working

alongside senior administrators at the organizational level about their roles within school divisions as examples of educational bureaucracies and more importantly, how their practices impact school efficacy.

School administrators make up another, possibly larger group, to whom this research may be significant. While senior administrators plan broadly for a school division, school administrators are responsible for bringing policy and programming to life within individual schools. As school leaders, it is critical for principals and vice-principals to have clear and effective means of communicating with senior administrators, and to feel supported in their efforts to create and support effective schools. School administrators who are identified by senior administrators as effective leaders will likely be aligned with the goals established at the divisional level. They will have some understanding of the importance of the senior administrators' roles and will have developed a certain level of proficiency in navigating within educational bureaucracies. This study may provide an enhanced understanding of the relationships that develop between leaders at the divisional and school levels as well as the forms of institutional and social capital that are valued at the systemic level and seen as having a significant impact on school efficacy.

Perhaps the largest group to whom this research may appeal is teachers. Teachers are the front line in the implementation of educational policy and programming, and they are the individuals within the school system who have the most significant and direct impact on students. In many ways, it can be argued that teachers and the quality of their instruction are the most significant factors contributing to student success, and in turn, school efficacy (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hanushek, 2009; Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2009); however, it can also be argued that factors such as teacher quality, job satisfaction, and professional practice are greatly impacted by feelings of autonomy.

Teacher autonomy can potentially be supported or threatened by educational bureaucracy, making this perhaps the most significant consideration of this study for all involved. While exploring the narratives of senior administrators to identify specific factors of educational bureaucracy that have led to school efficacy, the theme of teacher autonomy will provide an additional lens through which the data will be viewed, and which will also be of fundamental importance to the identification of systems as "loosely" or "tightly" coupled. Teachers will develop a deeper understanding of how their interests relate to and are affected by the roles and obligations of senior administrators who must consider the school system at the divisional level, and within a broader socio-political context. Most importantly, teachers may see why, in some cases, teacher autonomy must compensate for other institutional objectives. A simple understanding of this dynamic has the potential to reframe teachers' understanding of their professional roles in a larger systemic and societal context, whereby the sacrifice of one's autonomy under certain circumstances may be understood as a duty or responsibility rather than as a personal attack or a professional devaluation.

Government bodies, such as provincial departments of education, may find this study valuable as it explores the perspectives of those who are directly responsible for interpreting and implementing provincial standards, policies, documents, and expectations at the systemic level. While school divisions operate with a certain amount of institutional autonomy, many of the elements of an educational bureaucracy are directly impacted, and in fact, mostly determined by the government. Educational bureaucracies are enacted through a team of senior administrators, but it would not be inaccurate to say that they are primarily created by governmental bodies who act to represent the public interest. The "bureaucrats" working at the governmental level may find value in this study as it will provide a deeper understanding of how their designs translate from theory into practice and specifically, which elements of the bureaucracy are having a positive impact on school efficacy and why. Likewise, the

perceptions and experiences shared by senior administrators may shed light on areas in need of improvement, false assumptions about what actually works in schools, and inefficiencies that may obstruct school efficacy.

The relatively small number of senior administrators within the school system naturally results in less research focused specifically on this group and their contributions towards school efficacy. This study will build on the existing literature on senior administrators which will make it significant to academics and researchers who have an interest in exploring senior administration and its impact on the school system. Semi-structured interviews will be used to collect primary data from current senior administrators, which may be of interest to academics and researchers wishing to analyze the data presented in this paper from another perspective. Researchers who wish to aggregate studies or conduct meta-analysis of themes related to school efficacy, educational leadership, or systems coupling may also take an interest in this study and its findings.

Finally, those involved in the production and publication of educational products and resources may be interested in this research as it may provide an often unexplored, but highly influential point of view with regards to the design and implementation of educational practices. Publishers who are interested in appealing to current practices that are perceived to be effective may find the experiences shared by senior administrators insightful and valuable. Developers of educational products and resources may also be working outside of educational settings and it may be useful for them to develop a deeper understanding of how educational bureaucracies function so that they can aim to create products and resources that will complement and enhance effective educational bureaucracies.

Definition of Terms

In this study, "bureaucracy" is discussed as the sociological construct established by Weber (1948) of an ideal type of organizational structure that is made up of: 1) policies, 2) authority and hierarchy structures, 3) document management, 4) expert training, 5) working capacity, and 6) organizational culture. "Systems coupling", which is defined at length in the works of Marzano and Waters (2009) and Weick (1976, 1982), can be conceptualized as a continuum that refers to the degree of uniformity and formality that characterizes an organization, where high degrees of uniformity, formality and specificity of goals are "tightly coupled" and lesser degrees of uniformity and formality are "loosely coupled." More specifically, *systems coupling* refers to the degree of dependence between one specific goal or part of the system and all of the other subsystems within the whole.

Throughout this study, the term "school efficacy" refers broadly to any essential, productive, or constructive element of a school, identified by the participants or inferred by the researcher, as an institution that successfully meets pre-determined goals. The term may be used in one context to reference formalized data such as marks or graduation rates, and in another context to describe certain institutional qualities that are not part of a formalized set of outcomes, but which are identified in real life experiences as essential to a school's success, such as factors related to a school's social climate or the internal politics among staff. These terms will be explored and defined in greater depth in the following chapter.

Delimitations

The research took place in four urban public school divisions in the province of Manitoba (Canada) during 2012 – 2013. Six subjects were interviewed including superintendents and assistant superintendents. All of the school divisions included in this study are bilingual school divisions, which

include English, French and dual track schools from K-12 and consist of 30 – 40 schools in total per division. The school divisions and participants in this study are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the proposed study including scope and sample size, researcher bias, participant bias, and reliance upon a theoretical framework. The proposed study is designed as a short term study that will consist of data gathered from a single semi-structured interview with each participant. All participants will be active in senior administrative roles within their respective divisions, so the participant pool will likely be comparatively small and made up of individuals who might have shared common perspectives on the theme of school efficacy due to working within a similar professional context, namely a K-12 metro school division in the province of Manitoba. The perspectives of school administrators, teachers, support staff, students, school trustees, and other stakeholders in these educational communities are not represented in this study, but should be explored in future research. The method of data collection used in this study will be qualitative and will consist of semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 1 hour each. No quantitative data about educational bureaucracy or systems coupling will be collected prior to, or during this research, however future studies should explore the inclusion of a quantitative or mixed methods approach.

Researcher bias may be present in this study as I will be interpreting the data provided by respondents as a classroom teacher without any of my own administrative experience. I am also employed by one of the four divisions in the study. It is possible that, as an employee, senior administrators may have reservations about speaking openly about certain topics. In this study, I have chosen to seek out participants in senior administration positions based on the assumption that they

would have more extensive experience working with, adapting and creating bureaucratic structures as well as deeper conceptualizations of bureaucracy and a greater capacity to understand the dynamics of systems coupling, including their impact on the efficacy of a school division. Senior administrators are also the most likely group to have knowledge of/access to data related to the impact of specific policies and organizational structures at the divisional level, information that is critical to the findings of this study. It is possible that by focusing specifically on the experiences and perceptions of senior administrators, that other perspectives of importance to this area of research may be omitted from this study, and should probably be explored in more depth in future research so as to add to the relevance of the findings and discussion that follow.

In this study, I will rely heavily on a theoretical framework in the design of the study, creation of the interview schedule, and interpretation of the data. I do not plan to analyze the data outside of the frameworks of educational bureaucracy and systems theory. While the application of this theoretical lens may narrow the discussion of the findings and the implications for practice, it will be important to frame the study in sociological terms in order to properly address the research questions and to respect the sources of data as originating from the systemic/organizational level of the school system. Reliance on a theoretical framework may also appear to contradict the use of grounded theory, however, in this case the framework being used provides a context in which grounded theory can be applied to develop a definition of the term *school efficacy*.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into the following chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Conclusions. Chapter One includes the purpose and rationale of the study, definition of terms, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study and the organization of the

proposal. Chapter Two includes a thorough literature review of the areas pertinent to this study including bureaucracy, systems theory and school efficacy as well as the conceptual framework for the study. Chapter Three reviews the methodology of the study, which is qualitative and makes use of grounded theory. Chapter Three also provides detailed information on the sources of data and the process of data collection, descriptions of the study environments, the process of participant selection, research positioning, the process of data analysis and issues of confidentiality and ethics. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter Five presents the conclusions of this study with a summary and discussion of the findings, conclusions and implications of the findings and questions for further study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature that is relevant to the study of educational bureaucracy and systems coupling in educational organizations. It is not the explicit aim of this study to draw conclusions about educational bureaucracies or systems coupling, but rather to use these concepts as a lens through which the construct of school efficacy is explored. To this end, the focus of this literature review is on the concepts that frame the study and the analysis of the data more than the existing literature in the area of school efficacy; however, an emphasis is placed on literature that explores the concepts of bureaucracy and systems coupling within educational contexts. In this literature review, bureaucracy will be explored in historical and sociological contexts with a focus on the ideas of Max Weber and their persistence in modern organizational theory. Systems theory will then be explored as the context within which bureaucracies exist and function with an emphasis on organizations and institutions. The primary focus on systems theory will be with regards to the specific area of *systems coupling* and its significance to educational theory.

Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies are typically cast in an overwhelmingly negative light. Historically and even currently, the term is most often used pejoratively to reference large, inefficient and sometimes oppressive institutional barriers. While there is nothing inherently good or bad about 'bureaucracy' as a

sociological construct, these negative perceptions are almost always related to real world experiences in which individuals or groups have had their goals and/or their autonomy impeded or threatened by some part of a bureaucratic structure.

Considering the origins of bureaucracy as a sociological concept, it should come as no surprise that it has been and continues to be viewed in a negative light. According to Etzioni-Halevi (1983), the term 'bureaucracy' predates the existence of sociology as a discipline. It was coined in 1745 by Vincent de Gournay, and "originally used pejoratively for government by officials and for excessive official power. In 19th century Europe… Honore de Balzac referred to bureaucracy as a gigantic power set in motion by dwarfs; Frederick Le Play saw it as a diseased form of administration, whereby officials are accountable to no one and citizens are turned into children" (p. 9).

Etzioni-Halevi (1983) also points out that Karl Marx, one of the first sociologists to contribute to the analysis of bureaucracy, also saw it in a negative light. According to Marx, the role of bureaucracy is to mediate between state and civil society, but it is controlled by the state and "purports to advance the common welfare, but under the cloak of universality it actually furthers its own [materialist ends]" (p. 9). Following a similar train of thought, Brown (1978) in *Bureaucracy as Praxis* notes, "the bureaucratization of industrial life, though alienating in itself, also brought workers together physically, psychically, and eventually politically. Thus Marx viewed productive relations under capitalism as a present evil that would result in a long-term good: the proletarian revolution" (p. 365). In this assessment it is clear that from a Marxist perspective, the proletariat and the bureaucrat stand in dualistic opposition to one another, and that the difference between the two is a power imbalance that favours the bureaucrat. The only real value attributed to bureaucracy is its potential to incite a revolution, or in the context of a school system, radical reformation in education.

The above conceptualization of bureaucracy is limited because it rests on a foundation of highly subjective assumptions about the relationships and power dynamics between the proletariat and the bureaucrat as well as rigid divisions between people, institutions and the state. A more objective assessment of bureaucracy is essential if we are to understand the concept in non-pejorative (and possibly empowering) terms. Sociologist Max Weber effectively offers such a definition and still emerges as an authority on the concept after more than six decades. Weber (1948) defines bureaucracy as "Modern officialdom functioning in the following specific manner:

I. There is the principle of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is, by laws or administrative regulations…
II. The principles of office hierarchy and levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones. Such a system offers the governed the possibility of appealing the decision of a lower office to its higher authority, in a definitely regulated manner…
III. The management of the modern office is based upon written documents, which are preserved in their original or draught form. There is, therefore, a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts… [which] make up a 'bureau'…
IV. Office management… usually presupposed thorough and expert training.
V. When the office is fully developed, official activity demands the full working capacity of the official, irrespective of the fact that his obligatory time in the bureau may be firmly delimited…
VI. The management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned…" (p. 197-198).

Weber's definition of bureaucracy is an improvement over the Marxist conceptualization because it objectively describes the basic and naturally occurring elements of any organization, including policies and procedures, hierarchy and authority, management, training and expertise, division of labour and organizational culture without placing any value judgements on the system as a whole, or upon any of its parts. It must be noted though, that this list of characteristics is still limited in that it provides a complex, highly specific ideal-type of bureaucracy that can be characterized as "top-down", and in which many 'real-world' organizations and institutions may not see themselves reflected. In this respect, while objectivity has been achieved, there is a dynamic element to bureaucracy-in-practice that is not sufficiently addressed through Weber's top-down conceptualization. To illustrate the limitations of the ideal-type bureaucracy, each element can be discussed in the context of school organizations, which are related in structure, but highly diverse in practice.

Policy. Weber's first element of bureaucracy, policy, is a varied and complex element of school settings. In Canada, since the establishment of the British North America Act of 1867 there have been uniform *laws* that apply to education at federal and provincial levels, starting with the basic constitutional right of all people to receive an education. Beyond legislation, uniformity of *rules and policies* may or may not be present at the levels of government departments, school divisions, individual schools, or even departments within a single school. The level of uniformity of rules and regulations varies not only *between* and *within* these institutions, but *across time* as well. The structure of schools is also such that transparency regarding how and when rules and policies are being followed is nearly impossible to achieve, as most educational professionals self-report such information, and usually do so only when necessary.

Authority and Hierarchy. When we consider education at the macro level, a certain amount of uniformity can be seen in the hierarchical structure of authority. All school systems are governed to a certain degree by a federal body, while specific curricula and models of education are designed and implemented by a provincial/state body. Often a region will be sub-divided into school districts or divisions managed by superintendents and senior administrators, and within each division smaller catchment areas and school families exist. Finally, an individual school is managed by a school principal, who may or may not bestow certain "unofficial" positions of authority upon groups and staff members within a school. When examined more closely, this broad picture of authority is also more dynamic than it originally appears, and the uniformity of the system may or may not be apparent in the lived experiences of educational professionals. One way of understanding the inconsistent patterns of uniformity in the hierarchies of actual schools is through deconstructing the sociological concept of authority.

In *Practice Teaching: Survival in a Marginal Situation*, Clifton (1979) explains Weber's three different types of authority within the context of schools. The first type, predominant at the macro level, is "rational-legal authority", further broken down into *expert* (rational) and *official* (legal) authority, which are accompanied by "traditional authority" and "charismatic authority". According to Clifton's summary of Weber,

> "Official authority is inherent within an organizational position; whoever occupies such a position… is granted the legal or official right to exert power by virtue of the office… expert authority relies upon technical knowledge and experience… traditional authority means that the legitimacy that an individual has is based upon both his and his followers' attachment to

> established customs and practices… [and] charismatic authority is based upon the respect that individuals have for the extraordinary powers and performances of an individual" (p. 64).

Clifton explains that educational professionals rely on certain forms of authority more than others, but also recognizes that they are not mutually exclusive and that they are embodied by individuals at varying levels (Principals, Teachers, Student-Teachers, Secretaries, Librarians, Students, etc.) of the hierarchical structure. Institutional authority is made up of two types, "Legal" and "Traditional", while "charismatic" authority is a form of social or individual authority. Senior administrators rely on both of these types as they enact their roles within the bureaucracy. For example, everything a senior administrator does in a professional capacity embodies legal and traditional authority, based on the power of the role or title under which they perform their duties. At the same time, however, the respect that colleagues and employees of the school division have for a senior administrator may be based more on expert authority and charismatic authority than traditional and legal authority. Likewise, senior administrators likely rely on their own expertise and charismatic performances to effect change to a much greater degree than legal and traditional authority. Observing Weber's multi-dimensional concept of authority and Clifton's point regarding the complexity of an educational hierarchy, it is evident that in many cases, the lived experiences of professionals may not reflect the order and uniformity apparent at the macro level of the school system.

Document Management. Issues related to document management in a school system may be the most abundant of all. The organizational culture and administration of a school division require entire departments of staff in areas including human resources, information technology services, couriers, secretarial staff, library staff, senior administrators and related program departments to name only a few. The plethora of data managed by Human Resources, constantly revised professional

contracts, self-reported professional growth data, and inter-agency communications (school divisions, program departments, teacher associations, teacher unions, etc.) only scrape the surface of a mountain of professional documents that pertain to the operations and the staff of a school division. This mountain becomes exponentially larger when students are factored into the system. Personal documents, health documents, cumulative files, psychological reports, and many others often arrive at a new school with a student, and if they are missing they must be generated. The classroom brings an added dimension as students often spend much of their time in school creating documents of an informal variety that translate into legal documents such as report cards, and in some cases, individualized student plans. All of the informal documents produced by students are managed by teachers and inform the legal documents (report cards) that follow students to higher grades. Further still, educational professionals have to manage a growing number of official and unofficial documents in the forms of emails, agendas, websites, class profiles, funding applications, curricula documents and other communications.

To complicate the matter of document management, in many of the cases listed above there is no systemically uniform way of processing these documents. Again, it is a situation where each school, and in many cases each classroom teacher, approaches document management in a personalized way. Even in cases where the physical documents in question are identical, for example a divisionally or provincially standardized report card, different schools and teachers will apply their own practices and interpretations to them. The documents themselves may even run counter to the beliefs and practices of teachers, and in a study on teachers' experiences with bureaucracy (Volk, 2011) it was reported that highly standardized and mandated reporting documents were detrimental to perceptions of self-efficacy in one's professional practice. Informal, self-directed document use, however, was reported as having a positive impact on professional practice. This indicates that especially in the area of document

management, the loosely coupled nature of schools and the related issue of autonomy is prevalent, and highly relevant.

Expert Training. Teacher training begins at the post-secondary level and once teachers begin their professional careers, they put their post-secondary education into practice, but they also immediately embark upon a career-long journey of professional development. Today, professional development is largely designed and delivered through school division resources. New teachers enter the field with roughly the same level of education and experience; however, there may be significant differences in teacher training programs at different universities. It is also quite common for teachers who have received training in one place, to move to different cities, provinces and countries, which also contributes to differences in teacher training experiences. At the divisional level, teachers are expected to plan and carry out their own professional development plans. Each school year, teachers are required to submit professional development plans to school administrators and to apply for appropriate funding if it is necessary/available. Often these plans are multi-dimensional and involve practices inside and outside the classroom, meeting with colleagues in professional learning communities, attending large scale divisional workshops, travel to conferences, and in some cases, graduate and post-graduate studies.

Within this structure, there is often discontinuity between schools and school divisions, as much of the professional development that teachers participate in is self and/or peer directed. While there are opportunities for professional development beyond the school or school division that an educator works in, they are rarely mandatory, and for teachers who do not have the means or desire to travel to conferences or attend graduate school, fairly inaccessible. For many teachers this is not a concern as there is often a preference for self-directed professional development or small communities of practice,

and research which suggests that large-scale professional development and school reform movements are ineffective, when not coupled with these smaller learning communities (Bruce, et al, 2010; Shlager & Fusco, 2006). In the area of training we see again that a hierarchical ideal type bureaucracy is at odds with the reality of professional practice in schools – the level of consistency *across* institutions horizontally is low, while *within* institutions there are often different preferences between teachers (for self-directed PD) and administrators (for school/system-wide PD).

Working Capacity. According to Weber, a bureaucratic organization calls for a certain level of professional commitment, even beyond defined working hours and formal schedules. For many teachers this is true to the extent that one's teaching career becomes part of the very fabric of one's identity. Teachers will frequently report that they come to work early, stay at work late and take marking home with them, but for many teachers the idea of working capacity goes beyond the extra time required for these kinds of tasks. Teachers also carry with them the relationships formed with their students, and one's working capacity is often called upon when students bring social and emotional needs into the classroom. Aside from standard academic and extra-curricular programming, many schools run additional programs focused on character education, community outreach, after-school and breakfast programs, and much more.

In addition to the many academic and classroom management demands on a teacher's working capacity, are the social expectations placed on teachers. Historically, teachers were expected to live in certain types of quarters, limit personal relationships, and follow strict rules regarding public conduct and dress. While these rules have changed and in many cases significantly loosened, teachers still fulfill a social role accompanied by social expectations and norms that reach into their personal lives. Some of these social expectations are legal and others are institutional. For example, teachers must be able to

produce clean criminal record checks, hold a valid teaching license, and act 'in loco parentis' (in location of the parent) when students are in their care. Meanwhile, at the institutional level, teachers are expected to follow certain rules and codes of conduct regarding communications with students and parents outside of school settings as well as avoid and end any interactions that may potentially take place in a non-educational setting. Teachers are also reminded of the implications of online accounts and electronic profiles that are common to social networking, the use of email, etc. For teachers, Weber's notion of *working capacity* is all encompassing, and perhaps extends beyond the definition of the term in his ideal type bureaucracy as it shapes a teacher's identity and impacts personal behaviours and relationships.

Organizational Culture. When Weber discusses the general rules that are followed in the management of an office, he is referencing what might also be called *organizational culture*, a term referring to the generally stable rules governing an office and the technical training and skills required by professionals. The organizational culture of an institution can be thought of in this way as a context, framework or backdrop within which all daily activities unfold. The value of organizational culture is heavily subject to one's perspective within an institution. A new and inexperienced person will likely notice the rules and norms of a new institution as they are taught or as they learn through their own missteps, while those with extensive experience may never think about them having long ago internalized and automated the norms of the organizational culture in which they participate.

This can certainly be the case in schools where there is often a divide in both practice and rhetoric between new and experienced teachers; however, there are other ways in which organizational culture impacts schools. Newman (1989) found that the organizational factors that had the greatest influence on school efficacy included "students' orderly behavior, the encouragement of innovation,

teachers' knowledge of one another's courses, the responsiveness of administrators, and teachers' helping one another" (p. 221). In contrast, a previous study on teachers' perceptions of bureaucracy found that participants reported an overwhelmingly negative impact on their professional practice when recalling experiences with organizational culture in school settings (Volk, 2011). This could again be due to the fact that schools display relatively little uniformity compared to other institutions. Using Weber's (1948) notion of ideal types, a bureaucracy is governed by rules that are relatively stable and exhaustive. In school settings, rules and policies are often changing respective to the situations and individuals that are involved, as well as the authority held by those individuals. In dynamic settings such as schools, the impact of organizational culture is heavily influenced by those in leadership positions, and by the way leaders are perceived by subordinates. Using Weber's concept of bureaucracy, the assumption is made that office management is efficient and predictable, and that it is not in actuality the practice of office *mismanagement.* Unfortunately, in what can become the unregulated world of organizational culture, bureaucracy can break down and be replaced by political game-playing, leading to complaints involving unclear communication, inconsistent polices, the erosion of autonomy/professionalism, and a host of other hindrances. In this sense, organizational culture is ubiquitous, and may go unnoticed, unless there is something wrong, thus becoming negatively perceived through association.

Criticisms of Bureaucracy

The problems that can arise when applying Weber's concept of bureaucracy to real-world situations are many. They have been recognized, discussed, and often attacked in critical theory and radical reformist literature, both inside and outside of educational circles, by feminist theory (Ferguson, 1984; Luke, 1996), democratic pedagogy (Osborne, 2001; Portelli & Solomon, 2001; Solomon & Allen, 2001), and anti-racist pedagogy (Champagne, 1998; Hermes, 2005; Swisher, 1998; Vickers, 2002).

Perhaps this is due to the close relationship bureaucracy has to traditional authority structures and political power; however, these criticisms can be deeply flawed as they often rely on pejorative definitions of bureaucracy that are laden with assumptions about the contexts in which bureaucracies operate.

Feminist theory/pedagogy offers some salient examples of how bureaucracy has been coupled with other traditionally oppressive social constructs. Overt criticisms of bureaucracy can be found in *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* by Ferguson (1984), who follows Webers' main points in her definition of the concept, but goes on to express that,

> "[Bureaucracies] aim at arranging individuals and tasks so as to secure continuity and stability and to remove ambiguity in relations among participants, but are nonetheless usually beset by a variety of internal conflicts. In fact, bureaucracies are political arenas in which struggles for power, status, personal values and/or survival are endemic. They are oligarchical (ruled by the few) and recruitment is at least partly done by cooptation (selection of successors by the elite themselves)" (p. 7).

Unfortunately, there are a multitude of problems with Ferguson's critique of bureaucracy, the first of which is that she has used an adaptation of Weber's definition, and then cited problems that have nothing to do with that definition. Specifically, she indicates that recruitment is done by cooptation, which we are to assume is a problem, as it presupposes the advancement of men before women, while Weber's definition would have argued that recruitment ought to be based on expert knowledge, training and credentials. Ferguson's claim that bureaucracies are oligarchical is subject to the same flaw in that Ferguson is criticising oligarchy, not bureaucracy, for there is nothing about democratic organizations precluding them from being bureaucratic.

Luke (1996), in *Feminist Pedagogy Theory: Reflections on Power and Authority*, proposes that feminist pedagogy is

> "a more gender-sensitive pedagogical model, one characterized by a rejection of power and authority, and a celebration of women's differences, feminist knowledges, and cooperative and egalitarian pedagogical relations among equal, but culturally differently situated subjects" (p. 284).

She also notes,

> "Central to feminist critical practice is the importance of enabling and listening to women's voices... and, importantly, engaging in noncoercive, non-hierarchical, "open" and "equitable" relations with students…[and] non-hierarchical administrative models..." (p. 292).

In Luke's assessment of feminist pedagogy, we see a number of overt references to bureaucratic concepts, especially with regards to authority and hierarchy. Perhaps quite rightly, Luke is suggesting that female scholars ought to be the authorities on feminist theory, but it may be argued that she is mistaken in assuming that feminist pedagogy ought to (or would be able to) operate outside of hierarchical structures.

While perceptions of bureaucracy from the perspective of feminist pedagogy seem purely negative, in practice one can observe a number of bureaucratic concepts at work, including the authority and hierarchy structures that in theory were condemned. First, Luke (1996) indicates that a feminist pedagogy should follow a number of general rules relating to texts, research topics, and research models. These rules may not be fixed jurisdictional areas or laws, but they are observed and practiced. Second, while feminist pedagogy may argue against hierarchical models, teachers are

nonetheless endowed with expert authority and institutional authority over students when they coexist in a classroom setting (Cook, 2001; Knight, 2000; Luke, 1996; Wallace, 1999). Feminist texts and knowledges are also endowed with power and authority and, in the sense that feminist pedagogy stands in opposition to dominant patriarchal culture, also risks disavowing other perspectives. Finally, when the feminist pedagogue steps out of the classroom, she or he almost certainly enters back into an institutional role that is highly dependent on the elements on bureaucracy.

Similar perceptions of bureaucracy and rigid social dichotomies are latent in the literature on democratic education (Osborne, 2001; Portelli & Solomon, 2001; Solomon & Allen, 2001) and anti-racist education (Champagne, 1998; Hermes, 2005; Swisher, 1998; Vickers, 2002), where a marriage between bureaucracy and imperialist/colonialist traditions is assumed and the two constructs are equated to one another. Critical pedagogy presents overt and subtle perceptions of bureaucracy that are inherently negative and can only exist in a rigid dichotomy. The key flaw in their critiques is the notion that bureaucracy cannot exist objectively, separate from the dominant patriarchal social context to which they are opposed. As such, they overlook their own dependence upon the elements of bureaucracy that make it possible for organizations and institutions to exist with some degree of stability. Recognition of this flaw is not a condemnation of critical theory/pedagogy, but it is important to note, as bureaucratic systems inherently play a significant role in legitimizing these schools of thought in academia.

This participation in bureaucracy by otherwise subversive practitioners illustrates that the concept of bureaucracy is useful, practical and has its own agency, or as Olsen (2005) points out, that it can be seen as an institution in itself. Rather than condemning bureaucracy for its historical role in a dominant culture that also happens to include patriarchal and imperialist structures, I believe that we ought to reclaim it as an objective sociological construct that can have positive impacts when effectively

applied in organizations such as schools. Bureaucracy is present within critical pedagogy because underlying principles of organization are still present, even though the theory challenges dominant structures. In fact, it could be argued that bureaucracy plays a large role in empowering critical pedagogy and is essential to its continued practice within larger cultural institutions and its objectives towards improving the state of education. Moreover, bureaucracy has clearly been an empowering tool in the evolution of traditional social structures, and a more balanced approach to the concept may help us understand how it can be applied to current notions of school efficacy.

In Support of Bureaucracy

While negative perceptions of bureaucracy are common and widespread, the sociological construct has persisted and remains relevant to organizations and society. The elements of bureaucracy identified by Weber are still easily identifiable aspects of any institution. Viewed objectively, the concept has evolved, and in many ways it has become even more applicable to schools and school systems.

In *Models of Bureaucracy that Permit Conflict*, Litwak (1961) attempts to expand on the sociological construct of bureaucracy by pointing out that while Weber's definition of bureaucracy works well for 'uniform' events, meaning those that are "recurrent and important" (p. 178), it does not effectively explain 'non-uniform' events. Litwak identifies "human relations" as an organizational type that deals more effectively with 'non-uniform' events within organizations that involve more social skills, and "professional bureaucracy" for organizations that deal with both 'uniform' and 'non-uniform' events such as hospitals, schools and research organizations. According to Litwak, "the distinguishing characteristics of the professional model is its inclusion of contradictory forms of social relations" and its relevance to "occupations that demand traditional knowledge as well as social skills" (p. 181). Simply by

distinguishing the events that occur within institutions as more or less uniform, Litwak reconceptualises bureaucracy in such a way that it can easily be viewed as separate from the specific institutions through which it has come to be viewed so negatively. Interestingly, the notion of more and less uniform events within organizations parallels the concept of loosely and tightly coupled systems, which will be discussed later in terms of their importance to the application of bureaucracy to educational settings.

Another attempt to expand on Weber's model of bureaucracy can be found in *The Concept of Bureaucracy: An Empirical Analysis*, in which Hall (1963) identifies six dimensions of bureaucracy that are "based on frequency of citation and theoretical importance. They are:

1. A division of labour based upon functional specialization
2. A well-defined hierarchy of authority
3. A system of rules covering the rights and duties of positional incumbents
4. A system of procedures for dealing with work situations
5. Impersonality of interpersonal relations; and
6. Promotion and selection for employment based upon technical expertise" (p. 33).

These six dimensions seem to closely parallel the elements identified by Weber, but Hall elaborates with the important distinction that no organization embodies (or lacks) all of these dimensions fully, and that bureaucracy is, therefore, a set of measureable continua. In the real world, each dimension is practiced to a greater or lesser degree of formality within any given institution. For example, in schools, which are very humanistic and social institutions in which non-uniform events take place frequently, a high degree of *impersonality of interpersonal relations* would seem impractical for many, and in some circumstances might be detrimental to professional relationships and learning environments. At the same time, *a division of labour based upon functional specialization* is practiced strictly in every school, as certain individuals are legally licensed and professionally certified to teach,

while others are not. By situating the elements of bureaucracy in the context of a continuum (see Figures 1a and 1b: Elements of bureaucracy on a systems coupling continuum), Hall addresses the difficulty of applying a rigid ideal type model to real-world bureaucracies. He goes beyond Litwak, noting a variance in the degree to which bureaucratic concepts are practiced in different environments, not just in the types of events to which bureaucratic concepts are applied.

In *Two Types of Bureaucracy: Enabling and Coercive*, Adler and Borys (1996) address the clearly negative terms in which bureaucracy is often viewed, and its potential benefits by labelling it 'Enabling' or 'Coercive':

> "According to the negative view, the bureaucratic form of organization stifles creativity, fosters dissatisfaction, and demotivates employees. According to the positive view, it provides needed guidance and clarifies responsibilities, thereby easing role stress and helping individuals be and feel more effective" (p. 61).

Adler and Borys's labels of *enabling* and *coercive* point to yet another dimension of bureaucracy in that they reconceptualise it as a means, which is consciously or unconsciously applied to a situation, in order to achieve a desired end. Objectively, one could argue that using either coercive or enabling means is not of much significance, provided the desired end is achieved, however, Adler and Borys argue in favour of enabling bureaucracy and "the assumption... that work can be fulfilling, rather than a disutility", claiming that "if employees see at least some overlap between their goals and those of the organization... they might also welcome the potential contribution of formalization to efficiency" (p. 63). They frame their notions of coercive bureaucracy as a type that alienates employees, and enabling bureaucracy as a type that enables employees to perform better, which still situates bureaucracy within a dichotomy of "good" versus "bad", but does so in a new way.

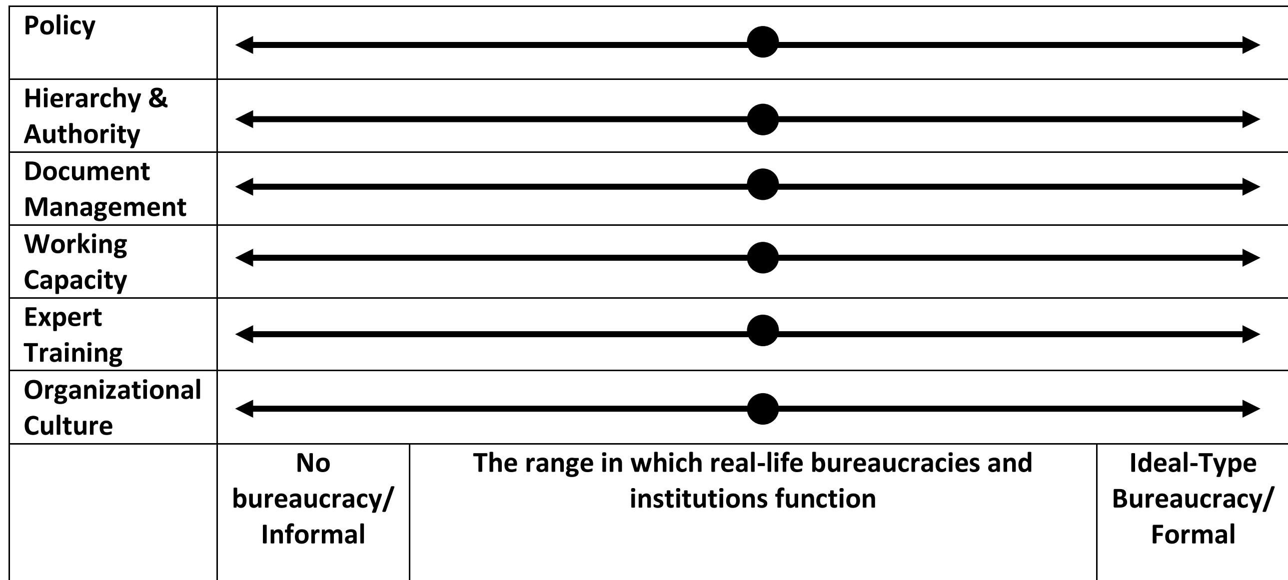

Figure 1a. Elements of bureaucracy on a systems coupling continuum. Hall's (1963) continuum might be conceptualized as a set of sliding variables (Weber's elements of bureaucracy) each located at some point along a continuum that represents the degree of systems coupling that characterizes a bureaucracy, ranging from an entirely informal and un-bureaucratic system in which none of the elements of a bureaucracy are observed, to a highly formalized bureaucracy resembling Weber's ideal type.

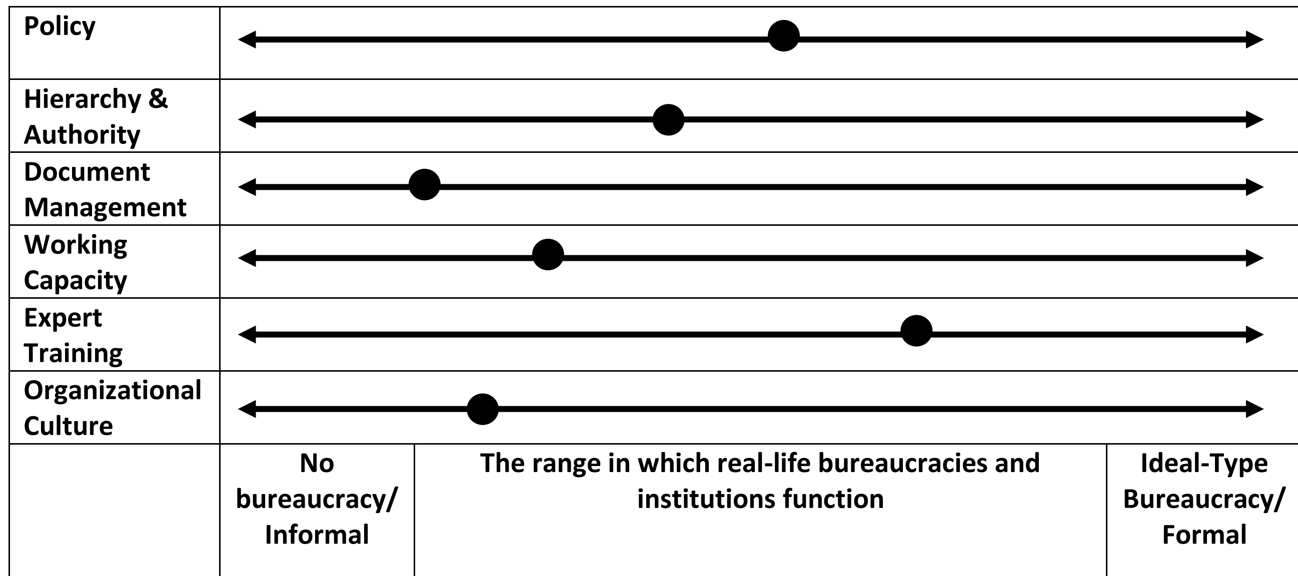

Figure 1b. Elements of bureaucracy on a systems coupling continuum (example). Perhaps we can imagine a typical school looking something like the arrangement above in which rules and policies are fairly static, but also interpreted differently at the school level, authority structures vary, a large number of vastly different document management systems are practiced, working capacity is inconsistent within and between schools and professional roles, training is relatively uniform but still diverse, and organizational culture varies greatly from one school to another.

Unlike those who would argue that "bureaucracy is bad, and [insert alternative] is good", Adler and Borys emphasize that bureaucracies can function in both 'good' and 'bad' ways regardless of the outcomes desired by an organization. It logically follows that bureaucracies are neither good nor bad inherently, but that these perceptions are shaped by the larger organizational, social, political and cultural contexts in which bureaucracies function.

Again, it is important to note a relationship between the enabling and coercive types of bureaucracy to the concept of systems coupling. As will be discussed, much of the debate over systems coupling as it applies to education, lies in the argument over whether schools function more effectively as tightly coupled or loosely coupled institutions. Adler and Borys would suggest that how loosely or tightly coupled the system was, would be inconsequential. They argue that,

> "the enabling versus coercive distinction suggests that we can characterize organizations along two dimensions: type and degree of formalization. The type of formalization can be conceptualized in the terms we have just identified. The degree of formalization can be conceptualized in the now conventional terms of... Hall (1963), as the extent of formalized rules governing work behavior." (p. 77).

Adler and Borys submit that positive attitudinal outcomes can be expected in organizations when the type of formalization is enabling, and that negative outcomes will result when formalization is coercive, regardless of the *degree* of formalization. While this does appear to negate the importance of systems coupling, it also highlights another theme that is prevalent in the literature on systems coupling in educational settings, which is autonomy. Underlying Adler and Borys's observations about formalization is the implication that coercive bureaucracies erode autonomy, while enabling bureaucracies nurture, or at least respect it. The argument also exemplifies the important role that bureaucracy plays in school

efficacy. By shifting the focus to the enabling/coercive dichotomy, Adler and Borys draw attention to the aspects of bureaucracies that impact autonomy such as rules and policies, authority structures, and especially the organizational culture of a school.

In *Maybe it is Time to Rediscover Bureaucracy*, Olsen (2005) defines the bureaucratic organization as "part of a repertoire of overlapping supplementary, and competing forms coexisting in contemporary democracies [along with] market-organization and network-organization," and argues that

> "rediscovering Weber's analysis of bureaucratic organization enriches our understanding of public administration… in particular when we (a) include bureaucracy as an institution, not only an instrument; (b) look at the empirical studies in their time and context, not only at Weber's ideal types and predictions; and (c) take into account the political and normative order bureaucracy is part of, not only the internal characteristics of 'the bureau'" (p. 1).

Olsen's contribution is important in terms of providing a comprehensive definition of bureaucracy because he suggests first, that we view bureaucracy as an objective sociological construct that naturally emerges as a part of any organization and second, that we think about bureaucracies within the context of the real world. Further to this, Olsen proposes that we view bureaucracy not only as some collection of tools, but as an institution unto itself, which can have a positive impact upon the efficacy of an organization when managed in an appropriate way.

Olsen defends Weber's bureaucracy against a pejorative popular opinion, pointing out that it has "organizational and normative principles [that are] part of society's long-term commitment to a... procedural rationality for coping with the conflicts of power differentials," and that it is an "expression of cultural values and a form of governing with intrinsic value" (p. 3). Perhaps most importantly, Olsen

separates the sociological construct of bureaucracy from the actual bureaucrats, who supposedly wield all the power, reminding us that "bureaucrats are supposed to obey, and be the guardians of, constitutional principles, the law, and professional standards... and 'speak truth to power'" (p. 3). According to Olsen, Weber's definition of bureaucracy needs to be liberated so that the institution of bureaucracy can fulfill its potential to enable just and effective institutions and so that bureaucrats can function in a service-leadership capacity for the good of others.

A synthesis of the above conceptualizations of bureaucracy establishes a much more complex and nuanced understanding of the construct that frees it from its historically negative image and recasts it as something that has the potential to be designed and applied to organizations in such a way that it supports positive outcomes. The perceptions and experiences of educational professionals who work at the administrative level of school divisions may provide important insights into how bureaucracy can best be applied towards the goal of increasing school efficacy. This is especially the case in school settings where models of servant-leadership are becoming the norm and student achievement is the primary *raison d'être* of the school system as a whole. Today's education system puts bureaucrats in the position of acknowledging that bureaucracies must place the needs and interests of those they would have traditionally 'coerced', as the highest priority in the system.

Summary of Bureaucracy

The term "bureaucracy" has commonly been used pejoratively to describe inefficient, tedious, top heavy, highly formalized, and self-interested systems. The precedence for this view is largely historical as the usage of the term appeared long before it was developed as a sociological construct by Max Weber (Etzioni-Halevy, 1983). Although others have replicated the construct, argued against it, and expanded upon its basic tenets to bridge the gap between the ideal type and the actuality of

bureaucracies that function in the real world (Adler & Borys, 1996; Ferguson, 1984; Hall, 1963; Heckscher, 1994; Litwak, 1961; Olsen, 2005), Weber's definition of bureaucracy, which consists of policies, authority and hierarchy structures, document management, expert training, working capacity, and organizational culture, has continued to remain at the core of almost all sociological discussions of bureaucracy.

The significance of bureaucratic factors and how they are administered remains great and has been addressed in the educational literature. Studies have been conducted on teachers' perceptions of bureaucratic and professional role orientations (Chauvin & Ellett, 1994); standardized achievement tests (Urdan & Paris, 1994); gender bias and systemic discrimination in public schooling bureaucracy (Jull, 2002); goal structures and autonomy support (Ciani, Middleton, Summers & Sheldon, 2009); administrative change and support (Easthope & Easthope, 2001; Russell, Williams & Gleason-Gomez, 2010); and the *No Child Left Behind Act* (Gordon, Yocke, Maldonado, & Saddler, 2007; Evans, 2009). Other studies have taken a pejorative stance on bureaucracy but have discussed its impact on educational communities, suggesting that bureaucracy derails educational reform (Lewington & Orpwood, 1995), and that ministries of education and school boards are obsolete, leaving Canada with an educational disaster (Lawton, Robertson & Freedman, 1995). This study uses the framework of bureaucracy in a neutral manner, placing the elements in the larger context of systems coupling, and seeks to determine whether senior administrators' experiences within the elements tend to be related to the priority of school efficacy, and which dimensions of bureaucracy have the greatest potential to improve school efficacy.

Systems Theory

In the process of defining bureaucracy and relating the concept to educational institutions it becomes evident that bureaucracy always functions within, and is profoundly affected by the larger context in which it is situated. An inquiry into the impact of bureaucracy on school efficacy would be incomplete if the contexts that shape the institutions and the experiences were not part of the analyses. In this study, the impact of bureaucracy are examined through the lens of systems theory, with specific attention to two elements of systems theory: *systems coupling* and *openness*.

Systems Coupling. Systems coupling is a fundamental aspect of the structure of any institution. As an underlying organizational principle, it shapes the contexts in which 'school efficacy' is defined. Systems coupling is conceptualized along a continuum of *tight* to *loose* (Weick, 1976). In a tightly coupled system, all elements or sub-systems are 'tightly coupled' to a very specific goal or outcome, while in a loosely coupled system they are less tightly coupled to goals or outcomes, which may also be more general and/or dynamic. In a tightly-coupled school system, one would expect to find a high degree of uniformity in professional practices and outcomes at different schools, and between different stakeholders (teachers, superintendents, principals, councillors, etc.). In a loosely-coupled system one would expect to find a great deal of diversity with respect to these groups (Marzano & Waters, 2009; Weick, 1976, 1982).

The concept of systems coupling was in large part developed by Robert B. Glassman (1973) in his paper, *Persistence and Loose Coupling in Living Systems*, which explored independence in living systems from cellular to societal levels. Karl E. Weick, an organizational theorist, was the first to apply Glassman's ideas to educational settings. Weick (1976) felt that the term *coupling* captured something that no other term did – that in a system "coupled events are responsive, *but* that each event also

preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness" (p. 3). Weick felt that loose coupling was especially evident in schools and that it was crucial to their ability to function effectively.

Systems coupling is a useful framework through which to examine bureaucracy because it provides a continuum and acts as a context within which bureaucracy is administered. Weick (1976) characterized schools as organizations in which "less rationalized and less tightly related clusters of events" were the norm (p. 3). He used schools as primary examples of loosely coupled systems because, while there are many points of high variability and vastly different administrative styles among educational institutions, they exhibit a remarkable constancy over time and in different contexts. In his own words Weick explains that "despite variations in class size, format, locations, and architecture, the results are still recognizable and can be labelled schools" (p. 2). In *Administering Education in Loosely Coupled* Schools, Weick (1982) goes on to assert that, "Schools are *not* like other organizations; consequently, they need to be managed differently. Much of their uniqueness derives from the fact that they are joined more loosely than is true for other organizations" (p. 673). It is important to note that Weick is not criticizing schools for embodying these qualities; he is simply pointing out that these are some of the realities that make schools different from other organizations. Weick (1982) even lists the strengths associated with loosely coupled systems including that "[they] preserve novelty, ...[they] can adapt to small changes in an environment... and they allow the school to adapt quickly to conflicting demands" (p. 674).

Nonetheless, Weick's (1982) own prediction that the elements of a loosely coupled system would be misrepresented as "evidence of fallible management, indecisiveness and the need for administrators to run a tighter ship" (p. 674), has begun to present itself as a reality in the present

landscape of educational leadership. For example, in *District Leadership that Works: Striking the Right Balance,* Marzano and Waters (2009) argue that schools should operate as tightly coupled systems in order to be more effective at preventing failure. They suggest that student achievement is directly related to quality of instruction in the classroom, and that "any perturbations in student achievement should signal a need to shore up instruction in classrooms... [and that success is a product of] non-negotiable goals, decreased pedagogical variability and a systematic and systemwide approach to instruction" (p. 20-21). For the purposes of this study it is important to note that the measure of student achievement used by Marzano and Waters is limited to rankings on large-scale standardized tests such as PISA and thus provide a very narrow view of school efficacy, a weakness that this study will attempt to address by using a grounded theory methodology to construct a broader and more inclusive definition of the term.

Openness. Related to systems coupling, but worth defining in terms of its own, is the concept of 'openness' in a system. Again, systems which are theoretically referred to as 'open' or 'closed' are located somewhere along a continuum between the two, but it is important to distinguish a system's openness from its coupling style, as they do not occupy the same continuum. That is to say, that a closed system is not necessarily a tightly coupled system, nor is an open system necessarily loosely coupled – a loosely coupled system can also be closed and a tightly coupled system can be open, and this will have a pronounced impact on the social context in which politics and bureaucracy are practiced within that system.

Closed systems are systems that assert a universal and authoritative perspective, beyond which there is no potential for change, growth or development. In *The Ghost in the Machine*, Koestler (1967) defined a closed system as, "a cognitive matrix, governed by a canon, [with] three main peculiarities… it

claims to represent a truth or universal validity …it cannot be refuted by evidence …[and it] invalidates criticism" (p. 263). He goes on to explain that in a hierarchical structure, there is a tendency for over-excited parts of the system with their own autonomy to assert themselves to the detriment of the whole, resulting in pathological cognitive structures at individual and group levels (p. 265). In *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, Wilber (2000) describes an open system as a type of hierarchy in which, "the lower sets the possibilities of the higher; the higher sets the probabilities of the lower" (p. 61). He also points out that in an open hierarchy, new levels of hierarchical structure *emerge* and that each new level "transcends but includes its predecessor(s)… each new [level] includes its preceding [level] and then adds its own new and defining pattern or form of wholeness" (p. 59). In this sense, an open system creates an association between group and individual success and encourages growth and development, where a closed system would have inhibited it. In simple terms, closed systems exist for the purpose of reproduction and do not allow change to occur, while open systems change, develop and grow in order to better achieve their objectives in a way that respects the interests of the individual and of the whole. It is easy to imagine that the openness of an educational system will play a large role as a shaping context in the potential for either an enabling or coercive bureaucracy (Adler & Borys, 1996) to emerge.

In *The Presence of the Past*, Sheldrake (1995) describes that in any hierarchy, "Higher levels act upon lower levels in such a way that their probability structures are modified… out of the many possible patterns of events that could have happened, some now become much more likely to happen as a result of the order imposed by the higher levels" (p. 120-121). It is evident that the degree of openness found in a hierarchical structure will have a profound impact on the outcomes of that system. In this study, the degree of openness in a system is a crucial consideration as it plays a large role in defining the context in which a bureaucracy operates, especially in relation to the point of authority and hierarchy

structures. School settings present an interesting problem with respect to system openness, because on one hand the system wants to limit students to a predetermined set of desirable outcomes, and to reproduce these outcomes over and over. On the other hand education serves the higher purpose of tapping into an individuals' limitless potential and helping them to determine their own course for success and self-actualization. Again, the individual/group dynamic that emerges in relation to system openness highlights the theme of autonomy within the system, which is often the point of contention that individuals have towards bureaucracy. Examining the data in this study through the lens of system openness is important to developing a deeper understanding of the contexts and environments in which senior administrators' experiences with bureaucracy take place and through which definitions and examples of school efficacy are constructed.

School Efficacy

While many studies in education measure the impacts of different variables on *school efficacy*, the term is not clearly or consistently defined in the educational literature. As in the case of Marzano and Waters (2009), school efficacy is viewed by many as strictly academic, and measured by standardized tests in the areas of numeracy and literacy. For others, the notion of school efficacy is centered not on student testing, but on teacher instruction. In fact, there is much research indicating that the main factors contributing to student achievement are teacher quality and instruction (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Cohen, 1981; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012; Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997). There is also extensive literature on how almost all educational practices impact student achievement and thus school efficacy, including family/parental involvement (Henderson & Berla, 1994), staff development (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Joyce & Showers, 2002), educational technology (Lee & Lind, 2010, Lee & Lind,

2011; Townsend, 2012), leadership (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003), school resources (Greenwald, Hedges & Laine, 1996), peer ability (Hanushek, Kain, Markham & Rivkin, 2003), and class size (Hoxby, 2000). There are also considerations related directly to student behavior and characteristics including attendance, homework practices, motivation, enrollment in post-secondary education, and general attitude that cannot be ignored in our consideration of school efficacy (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Schools set out to achieve a multitude of goals and outcomes, and they do so across a wide variety of contexts, making it difficult to discuss school efficacy without using terms that are either broad and general and thereby difficult to ground in practice, or so highly specific that they leave out large and important parts of the teaching/learning process and context. Perhaps the most comprehensive discussion about measures of school effectiveness comes from Britain, where school effectiveness research has its roots. According to Reynolds and Teddlie (2000) in the *International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research*, there are three major strands of school effectiveness research (SER):

> "*School Effects Research* – studies of the scientific properties of school effects evolving from input-output studies to current research utilizing multilevel models;
>
> *Effective Schools Research* – research concerned with the processes of effective schooling, evolving from case studies of outlier schools through to contemporary studies merging qualitative and quantitative methods in the simultaneous study of classrooms and schools;
>
> *School Improvement Research* – examining the processes whereby schools can be changed utilizing increasingly sophisticated models that have gone beyond simple applications of school effectiveness knowledge to sophisticated 'multiple lever' models" (p. 3).

Reynolds and Teddlie's categories are useful because they provide a framework within which the many variables of effective schools can be organized and discussed, while also implying a continuum that

begins with models, moves into the study of actual school practices, and arrives at an examination of how schools can be improved. This framework is also quite adaptable, in that it does not dictate the variables to be measured, or use a theoretical model of an effective school as a yardstick to which real schools must be compared. However, for the same reasons it also falls short of providing a definition for the term 'school effectiveness', and it has been criticized for being "almost entirely devoted to quantitative SE studies" (Wrigley, 2004, p. 228).

It is possible that the openness of the SER model also leads to the main critique against it – its tendency towards reductionism. In *'School Effectiveness': the problem of reductionism*, Wrigley (2004) points out that the criticism of school effectiveness measures being reductionist have resurfaced periodically since the 1990s, citing that "managerial goals are being offered as a substitute for ... curriculum and pedagogy," and that SER "takes no account of the nature of the situation in which these variables are identified and measured" (p. 227). Also exposing the problem of reductionism, Hopkins (2001) characterized school effectiveness research as:

- a pragmatic response to policy initiatives;
- a commitment to quantitative methods;
- a concern with the formal organization of schools rather than with their more informal processes;
- a focus upon outcomes which were accepted as being a 'good' that was not to be questioned; and
- a focus upon description of schools as static, steady-state organizations generated by brief research study. (p. 57).

Hopkins (2001) does identify the field of *School Improvement* research as 'bottom-up', qualitative, and dynamic (p.6). Wrigley (2004) accepts this distinction, but is critical of the fact that "*school*

improvement has been all too ready to accept the quantifiable outcomes privileged by school effectiveness research" (p. 228).

In *Recent School Effectiveness Counter-Critiques: Problems and possibilities*, Thrupp (2012) expresses that "a disturbing trend... has been the way [SER] advocates have responded to external criticism... they have studiously ignored it, acknowledged but not tried to counter it, or simply denied the claims of critics" (p. 443). In an effort to clarify the complex debate around SER, Thrupp's paper goes on to examine some of the major critiques and counter-critiques in the literature including SER's reliance on pragmatism and lack of a theoretical base, SER's ability to consider the impact of social class, tensions over methodologically correct studies, and the incorporation of SER into government policy. While none of these issues is satisfactorily addressed in the current literature on SER, Thrupp claims that "with substantial concerns about SER starting to be aired from positions closer to as well as beyond SER, a shift in the nature of SER seems likely... in what direction remains to be seen" (p. 455).

The criticisms of school effectiveness research point out that when certain variables are studied in a model of reductionism, stripped of their context, the product is highly quantitative and lacking a theoretical base. This is problematic because it is context that defines the school environments that most need improvement. A shortcoming of school effectiveness research is that it produces quantitative results that may be difficult or impossible to relate back to a school setting in which the problems are dynamic and social in nature. This problem is explored by Muijs, et al (2010) in *Improving Schools in Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Areas – A Review of Research Evidence*, in which the authors raise that "in many cases schools perceived to be failing due to their performance on high-stakes tests are actually adding value to their disadvantaged intake (p. 149)". The challenges for schools in contexts of multiple disadvantages are acknowledged, but the focus of the study is on the strategies that do benefit these schools, including "a focus on teaching and learning, effective distributed

leadership, creating an information rich environment, creating a positive school culture, creating a learning environment and a strong emphasis on continuous professional development" (p. 168). For the purposes of this study it is important to note that none of the strategies that add value to disadvantaged schools are directly measured by quantitative assessments, but that all correlate with the model of bureaucracy that has been outlined, as illustrated below (*Figure 2. Relationships between value added strategies for disadvantaged schools and Weber's elements of bureaucracy*). This would suggest that the structure of educational bureaucracies plays a major role in school effectiveness, albeit in a way that is difficult to measure by quantitative tools.

As a relatively new field of educational research, SER is often highly quantitative in nature. This study will provide an opportunity to explore the theme of school efficacy through a qualitative lens through the use of a grounded theory approach. There is no universally agreed upon definition of the term *school efficacy*, perhaps due in large part to the loosely coupled nature of schools and the diverse range of goals they aim to achieve. In many cases it is a term that institutions and individuals define for themselves through their own experiences, constructs and theoretical lenses. Often in the academic literature, school efficacy is implied with whatever factor is measured, be it grades, test scores, attendance, student engagement, graduation rates, etc. For the purposes of this study it would not be worthwhile to do an exhaustive review of how the term has been defined in previous literature, as the term 'school efficacy' will only be explored in the contexts in which it is described by participants.

Rather than attempting to provide a definition of school efficacy at the outset, one will be constructed through an analysis of the experiences reported by senior administrators using a grounded theory approach (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). In this way, participants can be free to draw on their own

Mujis, et al (2010) – Strategies that add value to disadvantaged schools		**Weber's Elements of Bureaucracy**
Focus on teaching and learning	→	Rules and policies, working capacity*
Effective distributed leadership	→	Hierarchy and authority structures, working capacity
Information rich environment	→	Document management, organizational culture
Positive school culture	→	Organizational culture
Learning environment	→	Rules and policies, document management, organizational culture
Professional development	→	Expert training, working capacity

*Figure 2. Relationships between value added strategies for disadvantaged schools and Weber's elements of bureaucracy. *With regards to working capacity, Mujis et al suggest that in contexts of multiple disadvantages, teachers "must work much harder and be more committed than their peers in more favourable socioeconomic circumstances" (p. 150).*

experiences when discussing bureaucracy and how it has had an impact on school efficacy, and in the analysis it will be possible to include a wide variety of factors that might be effective measures of school efficacy.

Framework of the Study

This is the first study, to the best knowledge of the researcher, that situates the sociological concept of bureaucracy within the context of systems coupling and applies this framework to data collected from a community of senior administrators. This study also applies a theoretical/sociological framework to the definition of the term 'school efficacy' and aims to develop a deeper understanding of how educational bureaucracies are structured around the priority of school efficacy. The framework of bureaucracy is objectively and directly applied to an exploration of school efficacy. The elements of bureaucracies (rules and policies, authority and hierarchy structures, document management, working capacity, expert training and organizational culture) were used to construct the interview questions, form the guiding research question in the study, and are applied in the analysis of the data and

findings/discussion of the final study in terms of how they are perceived to impact school efficacy. Evidence of loosely or tightly coupled systems emerging within the data provide an additional context through which the impact of educational bureaucracies is examined.

This paper will outline the findings of six interviews with members of the senior administration community in Winnipeg, Manitoba and analyze them through the lens of systems theory. The interview questions answered by participants relate to the six elements of bureaucracy identified by Weber and focus on experiences that have been significant in relation to school efficacy. The systems theory lens is applied to the situations described after the fact by the researcher as a way of providing deeper insight into the educational bureaucracies described by the participants.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The central aim of this study has been to analyze the experiences and perceptions, reported by senior administrators in Manitoba, regarding the impact of educational bureaucracies on school efficacy. The data was analyzed through a constant comparison method in order to construct a picture of what constitutes school efficacy, and which elements of the educational bureaucracy are most instrumental in school success. This study focuses on individuals who work at the senior administrative level based on the assumption that they hold positions which are central to the creation and functioning of educational bureaucracies, and that allow them to see how policies and programs play out in a variety of educational settings over time. While the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders such as school administrators, teachers, support staff and students would also be of value and should be explored in future studies, they have less access to, and are less immersed in data collected at the divisional level and were therefore, not the focus of this study.

Grounded Theory

This study uses a qualitative methodology including semi-structured interviews for data collection and grounded theory, which has been specifically used to develop a definition of the term 'school efficacy'. Grounded theory is a methodology that originated in the discipline of sociology and was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the "discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research... [and] a way of arriving at a theory suited to its supposed use" (p. 2-3).

According to Creswell (2009), "two primary characteristics of [grounded theory] are the constant comparison of data with the emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and the differences of information" (p. 13).

In this study, the method of data collection was a single semi-structured interview with each participant. The anecdotal data provided by participants has been analyzed through constant comparison with a primary focus on instances in which the theme of school efficacy is discussed by the participant or interpreted by the researcher. Wherever, and in whatever form school efficacy is reported, connections to educational bureaucracy were explored, whether stated by the participant or inferred by the researcher, which may be of significance to the research question. Anecdotal data was used to make inferences about systems coupling and the systemic context in which the bureaucracies operated. The picture of school efficacy that emerges from these analyses provide insight into what educational professionals at the divisional level perceive as important when defining school efficacy, and provide a basis upon which researchers can begin drawing connections and correlations between educational bureaucracy and school efficacy. While the theoretical framework of bureaucracy/systems theory is essential in providing a context for this study, the analysis of the data as it pertains to 'school efficacy' was not limited to the framework of bureaucracy. Any data that may assist in developing a more complete conceptualization of 'school efficacy' has been included in the findings, even if it is not connected to the elements of an educational bureaucracy.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), "the interrelated jobs of theory in sociology are: (1) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; (2) to be useful in theoretical advance...; (3) to be usable in practical applications...; (4) to provide a perspective on behavior...; and (5) to guide and provide a style for research on a particular areas of behavior" (p. 3). In following with these aims, it is my hope

that through the use of grounded theory, a broader definition of school efficacy will emerge from a unique perspective within the school system, which will provide a basis upon which educational stakeholders can not only deepen their appreciation for the necessity of educational bureaucracies, but also expand on conventional notions of school efficacy.

Sources of Data

The sources of data in this study derive from semi-structured interviews with educational professionals working at the divisional level of the school system, herein referred to as 'senior administrators'. This group is made up of superintendents and assistant superintendents, who at the time of this study, worked at the senior administration level, supervised a number of schools within a school division, and come from a teaching background. There were six participants from four metro Manitoba school divisions taking part in this study.

Description of Study Environment

The school divisions from which participants were selected are metro school divisions within the province of Manitoba. The school divisions are similar in size and scope, each with between 30 – 40 schools, between 12 000 – 15 000 students, approximately 2000 employees and annual budgets between 120 – 150 million dollars. All divisions also have English, French Immersion, and dual track schools from K-12. This study was limited to school divisions with similar profiles to ensure the reliability of comparisons drawn between those divisions.

At the time of this study, each metro school division invited to participate had one Superintendent and several assistant superintendents who were in charge of specific areas such as teaching staff, non-teaching staff, program areas, etc., and who may have supervised specific schools

within their respective divisions. Overall, the financial profiles, client bases and administrative structures of these school divisions is fairly uniform, which is positive for the purposes of this study as the anecdotal reports from individuals in different divisions need to be comparable for the purposes of analysis.

Participant Selection

A letter of invitation to participate in this study was sent to superintendents with the request that it also be forwarded to all assistant superintendents within the division. In addition to this invitation letter, purposive sampling was used in this study. According to Palys (2008), purposive sampling involves making "strategic choices about with whom, where and how to do your research." (p. 697). Tongco (2007) describes the purposive sampling technique as a process by which data is gathered from "people who can and are willing to provide information by virtue of knowledge or experience" (p. 147). Palys identifies "criterion sampling" and "expert sampling" as two types of purposive sampling that enable a researcher to include participants who meet specific criteria, have necessary life experiences, and particular areas of expertise of value to the research. Purposive research was of benefit to this study because senior administrators are a relatively small group, which makes them naturally more homogeneous than larger groups in the school system (i.e., school administrators, teachers, etc.) and because they have many demands placed upon them. Purposive sampling is a powerful tool in this study because it allows the focus to remain on a specific group of individuals who share a unique perspective within the school system, which relates directly to the research questions and the phenomenon being studied. It also allows room for the solicitation of individual interviews in the event of a low response rate to the initial invitation letter. Palys also identifies "maximum variation sampling" as a type that "cover[s] a spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to the

phenomenon one is studying" (p. 698). This is likely the most significant implication for the concerns of this study. Because senior administrators make up a relatively homogeneous group, it is important to take measures to include and represent diverse perspectives and backgrounds whenever possible. Purposive sampling made it possible to invite any senior administrators who represent alternate perspectives with regards to gender, race, pedagogical background and overall professional experience.

All of the individuals who participated in this study did so voluntarily. Letters of invitation (Appendix A) were sent to the superintendents of each school division with a request the invitations be forwarded to all senior administrators. Those who contacted the researcher to express an interest in participating were selected on a first come, first serve basis until no further respondents were forthcoming. A number of the individuals fitting the profile of the study, who did not respond to the initial invitation, were contacted and invited to participate, but all further invitations were declined or received no response. Participants signed a letter of consent (Appendix B) and an interview was scheduled at a time and place of their choosing. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and upon transcription by the researcher were followed by a member check, allowing participants to change or omit any of the comments made during the interview.

All participants who volunteered to take part in this study were included and no available participants were turned down, nor did any participants withdraw from the study. Six participants from four metro school divisions volunteered for and participated in the study. Three of the participants were senior administrators from the same school division and three participants were senior administrators from other school divisions. Of the six participants, two were head superintendents and four were assistant superintendents. The participants ranged in experience from several months to several years in their senior administration roles and two participants retired between the collection of

data in 2013 and the completion and publication of this study in 2014. Of the six participants four were male and two were female.

One participant was a superintendent who began teaching n 1980. After approximately ten years, this participant became a vice-principal and later the principal of the same school. After five years in school administration, this participant became an assistant superintendent and later superintendent in a private school system. After four years, this participant became an assistant superintendent in a public school division, and eight years later, became the superintendent. At the time of this study this participant had been the superintendent of the school division for six years.

Another superintendent participating in the study indicated having experience as a teacher, vice-principal, principal, and assistant superintendent prior to the role of superintendent. This participant had taught for five years and worked in the provincial government in the area of education, later becoming the vice-principal of a middle years school, principal of a different middle years school, and principal of a high school prior to moving to the current division as a high school principal. This participant later became an assistant superintendent and then superintendent and had been in the division for a total of twelve years at the time of this study.

One participant was new to the senior administration role. This participant moved from a successful teaching career across a wide variety of educational settings into a vice-principal role and later principal role in within the same school division. After approximately a decade as a middle and early years' principal, this participant moved into the role of a senior administrator, several months prior to the time of this study.

One assistant superintendent related personal school experience abroad and discussed becoming a teacher in inner city London. This participant accepted a teaching position in

Newfoundland, Canada and moved to Manitoba three years later. This participant moved from middle years into a high school setting, teaching at that level for nine years. After completing a post-baccalaureate, this participant became a vice-principal, and then served two principalships before becoming a director for the school division. At the time of school division amalgamation in Manitoba, this participant applied for an assistant superintendent position. This participant completed a Masters' degree in the first year as an assistant superintendent and remained in the role for ten years, retiring shortly after the completion of this study.

One participant expressed that successful experience as a teacher influenced the decision to take leadership courses. This participant earned Level 1 and 2 administrators' certificates, then went on to complete a Masters degree. This participant worked as a vice-principal for nine years, and then moved directly into the senior administration role occupied at the time of this study.

One participant began a career with five years as an early years' teacher, followed by another four years as a half-time teacher and half-time vice principal in a bilingual school. Next, this participant became the vice-principal of an early/middle years' school, then spent two years as a principal at two different schools. This participant then moved into the role of an assistant superintendent and described the responsibilities of the role as evolving over time.

Researcher Positioning

The researcher is a graduate student at a large Western Canadian University and a full time middle-years teacher employed in one of the school divisions in which the research was conducted. Possible limitations of this study include researcher bias, the small sample size, and high reliability on established theoretical frameworks. As a teacher in the same province, city, and school division as three of the participants, it is possible that the researcher's interpretation of the data has been impacted by

his own experience with the issues that emerged in the interviews. Being familiar, from the perspective of a teacher, with many of the changes, initiatives and practices discussed by participants, it is likely that the researchers' own professional experiences, biases and attitudes have impacted the analysis and interpretation of the data in this study. In order to at least partially account for this bias, the analysis, discussion and conclusions of this study are firmly based in the theoretical models of bureaucracy and systems coupling.

The scope of this study is small, including only six participants and taking place over the course of a few months, during which time each participant was interviewed once. It is worth noting that the study is focused on senior administrators in metro school divisions, and that the six participants represent approximately twenty percent of the population of senior administrators in this category. Due to the number of senior administrators in rural school divisions in Manitoba, however, this sample may not be representative of the views of all senior administrators. This study relies heavily on theoretical frameworks related to bureaucracy and systems coupling, which may be viewed as a limitation in a study that uses grounded theory to explore the concept of school efficacy. No attempt will be made to organize or analyse the data outside of the context of these frameworks.

The rationale for using a theoretical framework in a study that also uses grounded theory is that one allows for a deeper understanding of the other. The framework of bureaucracy and systems coupling provides a universally recognizable context in which school efficacy can be discussed with some objectivity. Likewise, a grounded theory approach to defining school efficacy allows participants to draw on authentic experiences without being limited to the discussion of specific factors such as test scores. This is also important due to the fact that the study environment (Manitoba) does not rely heavily on

standardized testing, or publish standardized test results, making a discussion of these factors less relevant to this study and less appropriate as measures of school efficacy.

Research Instrument and Data Analysis

The research instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher in the form of a semi-structured interview consisting of two questions about participants' personal definitions of the term *school efficacy,* and one main question for each of Weber's six elements of bureaucracy with follow up questions, which were used as prompts when needed (Appendix C). Interviews were proposed to last a maximum 60 minutes, with the possibility of arranging two shorter interviews if it should better suit the participant. The actual interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 80 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded, and later transcribed by the researcher. Participants received transcripts of their interviews for the purpose of a member check and were given one week to review them and notify the researcher of any changes or omissions that needed to be made. With the exception of some minor clarifications and edits, participants indicated that they were satisfied with the contents of the transcripts.

Upon completion of the member check, reductive analysis (the identifying, coding and categorizing of data into meaningful units) was used to identify themes and patterns in the data. Each transcript was analyzed for evidence of Weber's elements of bureaucracy, and the perceived impact these elements have had on school efficacy. The data was also analyzed for any evidence of school efficacy as described or implied by the participant so that a definition of the term could emerge through a grounded theory approach. The findings related to the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy were analyzed and discussed through the lens of systems coupling and systems theory in the final chapter.

Because the data collected in this study is anecdotal, and the responses were framed by the subjective interpretations of school efficacy provided by participants, grounded theory has been chosen as a method of arriving at a definition of the term *school efficacy*. The other questions in the interview are based directly on Weber's six elements of bureaucracy, including policy, hierarchy and authority, document management, expert training, working capacity and organizational culture.

In the analysis of the data, the transcripts were organized into lists of individual statements about school efficacy, the elements of bureaucracy, and the impacts of bureaucracy on school efficacy in context with the interview question. Each statement was then coded according to theme, and the common themes were arranged in order of the frequency with which they were discussed in the context of each interview question. Frequency was determined by how many individual statements were made about a specific theme. In cases where themes were mentioned with the same or similar frequency, the number of different participants, as well as the number of participants from different school divisions was also considered. While the frequency with which themes were mentioned does not alone imply importance, it does provide a sense of significance and consensus with regards to the themes discussed. In other words, the frequency with which themes are discussed is not meant to directly imply importance or a lack of importance, but to illustrate that the theme was discussed in depth and was noted as significant by a number of participants. Even themes that were mentioned once by single participants were included in the findings. The themes discussed in Chapter 4 are presented in order of the most frequently discussed to the least frequently discussed.

In the coding process, direct quotations by participants were also collected in context with the interview questions. Whenever possible, direct quotations were used to clarify and articulate the themes being discussed. There were also a number of quotations that made direct reference to, or

implied the presence of, loosely and tightly coupled systems. These quotes were separated and referenced in the discussion of systems coupling in Chapter 5.

All of the comments relating to school efficacy from throughout the interview, especially the first and last questions, which focussed on the definition of school efficacy, were coded according to their common themes. The frequency with which these themes were discussed was used to establish a definition of the term *school efficacy* through grounded theory. Throughout the interviews, when discussing the impact of educational bureaucracy, any anecdotal stories of actual experiences were analyzed for the themes of school efficacy provided in the definition established by participants.

The specific method of data collection used in this study is a semi-structured interview. According to Patton (2002), "in-depth, open ended interviews... yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge... Data consist of verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpretable" (p. 4). In this study, the interview questions are based on Weber's six elements of bureaucracy, which provides a context for participants when drawing on experiences. By sharing details of the working environments in which experiences took place, further context is established through inferences conclusions about the systems coupling that was in place, or perceived to be in place, by the participant and how this might relate to the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy.

After the use of grounded theory to arrive at a definition for the term *school efficacy*, the anecdotal evidence provided by participants was examined through the lenses of bureaucracy (Adler & Borys, 1996; Hall, 1963; Litwak, 1961; Olsen, 2005; Weber, 1948), and systems coupling (Marzano & Waters, 2009; Weick, 1976) to better understand how the implementation of bureaucracy in educational settings benefits school efficacy. The findings of this study establish a foundation of

qualitative data related to the perceived impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy and will be of interest to educational stakeholders who seek a broadened definition of school efficacy and an understanding of how educational bureaucracies can be structured at the organizational level to improve levels of school efficacy.

Confidentiality and Ethics

The researcher was not in a position of power over any of the participants in the study, however participants may be perceived as in a position of power over the researcher. As senior administrators, the participants perceived little or no risk in participating in these interviews with the researcher. Informed consent to participate in this study was obtained from the superintendents of each school division and the individual senior administrators that agreed to be interviewed. The letter of informed consent outlines the nature of the study and the nature of subject participation.

All participants in the study were provided with transcripts of their interview for verification purposes. A summary of the findings of the study was also provided to each of the participants, and they were informed in the consent form that the data provided would used for the purposes of informing presentations, publications and this thesis. No deception was used in this study, no information was deliberately withheld or deliberately misleading, and no deceptive feedback was provided in the debriefing.

The participants in this study come from a relatively small pool, in that there are far fewer senior administrators than there are teachers or school administrators, and in many cases these individuals know one another and/or work together to varying degrees. Due to the small pool from which participants will be drawn, it was important to provide anonymity and confidentiality for participants.

Through the consent form, participants were made aware that all responses and data provided will remain anonymous and confidential, and that all identifiers would be stripped from the analysis and dissemination of the results of the study. All participants were designated with pseudonyms and are identified only as superintendents, assistant superintendants, senior administrators, or by a similarly general term that provides the basic contexts of their professional role. During interview data analysis, all responses were collated for the purposes of generalization by administrative role and by the elements of bureaucracy that they addressed in their anecdotal reports. No one individual will be identifiable or identified by the results. Any comments that suggested the identity of a person were not used in the results. All data was stored in a locked safe and/or on a password protected computer in the residence of the researcher and was available only to the researcher and the faculty advisor overseeing this thesis. Each participant was instructed that participation in this study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study or not answer any question at any time prior to its completion without penalty, and that the anonymity of all individuals will be assured in the final document.

Summary

This study focuses on senior administrators' lived experiences and personally held perceptions of educational bureaucracy and seeks to address the practical question of how systemic factors impact school efficacy, as well as the phenomenological question of how constructs of school efficacy come to be defined at the divisional level. Due to the subjective and anecdotal nature of the data being collected, a qualitative methodology has been chosen. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection and a member check was provided to ensure validity. Constant comparison and grounded theory were used for the analysis of the data, and a summary of findings were provided to participants for comment/feedback.

The interview protocol for this study was constructed by the researcher around Weber's six elements of bureaucracy and designed in such a way that participants were able to share personal experiences regardless of the depth of their knowledge in areas of bureaucracy and systems theory. Supplementary questions, and in some cases unscripted questions or prompts, were used throughout the interviews when more information or clarity was needed. After the data was collected and verified by participants, it was carefully coded and analyzed through reduction analysis and constant comparison (Creswell, 2009). The interview transcripts were broken down into meaningful units of information and categorized and compared based on elements of bureaucracy, the professional role of the participant, which school division they belonged to and what evidence they provided of school efficacy. Drawing on information from the anecdotal reports, inferences were also be made about the type of systems coupling that was in place in the work environment in which the experience took place so as to identify a context in which the bureaucracy was implemented, and also to compare how notions of school efficacy might be constructed differently in loosely vs. tightly coupled educational settings.

The aim of this study is to address and bring to light the specific functions of an educational bureaucracy that have a perceived and/or measured effect on school efficacy. Rather than using a narrow, rigid, and uniform measure of school efficacy, it is the secondary aim of this study to use grounded theory to make observations about the definition of school efficacy that emerges through the anecdotal reports provided by participants and to situate these definitions within the frameworks of bureaucracy and systems coupling. The findings of this study and the implications for practice will be of interest to those studying the sociological foundations of education, to stakeholders who wish to know more about the implementation of educational bureaucracies at the divisional level, and to those who seek to structure educational bureaucracies on a more broadly defined, comprehensive and emergent definition of school efficacy.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter will report the findings of this study. We begin with the grounded theory definition of the term *school efficacy*, as all of the subsequent questions about educational bureaucracy relate to impacts on school efficacy, as perceived by the participants. Once this definition has been established and its significance has been discussed, the impact of each of the six elements of bureaucracy (including policy, hierarchy and authority, document management, expert training, working capacity, and organizational culture) will be reported.

School Efficacy

"You're always working on those last few kids... You can't compromise on your goal to meet the needs of 100% of the kids."

-Participant

It is essential to the research questions framing this study, that the term *school efficacy* be defined by the participants as it provides a fundamental benchmark and a broader context in which the concepts of bureaucracy and systems theory are examined. To use a definition of school efficacy that might be inconsistent with the views and experiences of the participants could compromise the validity and integrity of the data collected. For this reason, a grounded theory approach to defining the term *school efficacy* was used. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest, grounded theory provides "...a way of arriving at a theory suited to its supposed use" (p. 2-3), and in this case allowed participants to reflect upon and discuss their own professional experiences and insights. At the outset of the interview, participants were asked to share their personal definitions of school efficacy and to reflect upon the

characteristics of highly effective schools. The following synthesis and summary of their responses acts as a working definition of school efficacy as it is conceptualized by leaders in metro school divisions in Manitoba. The aspects of school efficacy are presented in order of the frequency with which they were discussed, beginning with the most frequent.

The most frequently mentioned aspect of school efficacy was that of clear goals, vision and mission statements. Goals and vision/mission statements were mentioned a total of twelve times by the six participants in response to the first interview question. Collectively, participants placed the greatest emphasis on the idea of goals and vision/mission statements being clear and understood by all. One participant mentioned the importance of uncompromising goals, reflected in the quote at the beginning of this section. Another participant discussed the measurement of goals and priorities as an important aspect of school efficacy, which was noteworthy as the question of how the impact of bureaucracy on school efficacy is measured, was a recurring theme throughout the interview.

The second most frequently discussed aspect of school efficacy was that of *relationships*. Relationships were discussed as a fundamental aspect of school efficacy by five of the participants. They collectively referenced relationships eleven times, often using the descriptors “strong” and “positive”. Participants made specific reference to students having “positive relationships with their teachers and peers”, “relationships in the school”, “Partnering between families and schools”, “home-school relationships”, “strong relationships between teachers and administrators”, and “strong relationships with parents”. A number of other relationship-oriented comments were also used as descriptors of school efficacy, such as clear communication, adults who love working with kids, and schools being welcoming for students and parents.

Professionalism and teacher quality were the third most frequently referenced aspects of school efficacy, mentioned a total of nine times. While the actual terms *professionalism* and *teacher quality* were never used by any of the participants, there were frequent comments about the desirable behaviours and attitudes of teachers. Participants said that in highly effective schools, "...staff explore new ways of doing things... staff are creative and innovative", "[teachers are] internally driven", "[teachers] reflect on data", "...you don't see them resting on their laurels". Comments alluding to the responsibility of the school divisions to support professionalism and teacher quality were also made. For example, one participant made reference to "...improving the instruction of teachers", while another indicated that "professional learning communities around need and interest" contribute to school efficacy.

Fourth, all of the participants referenced academics and student achievement as indicators of school efficacy a total of 8 times. In some instances, the reference was simply stated as "academics", "academic success", or "academic needs" without any further explanation. Some comments were not phrased using the word "academics", but made reference to student learning and curricular expectations. A number of comments referred to student achievement and student success, terms that imply, but are not limited to, academic success. One participant discussed student achievement as broadly defined and inclusive of all aspects of school life.

Four of the participants made reference to the importance of individualized and differentiated learning experiences, some more than once in their responses. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the six references to individualized learning were almost the only direct references to pedagogy throughout the discussion of school efficacy. With the exception of some general comments on educational literature, which are discussed in more detail below, there was no reference to specific pedagogical models.

Rather, participants made more casual references to "...bringing out students' individual gifts and talents", "...taking kids from where they're at... getting out of the mindset of one-size-fits-all", "...[working with] one child at a time... not generalizing or categorizing students", "seeing the good in everyone", and "...providing multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning".

The structural-organizational aspects of schools were mentioned five times in total, but were only discussed by two of the six participants. One participant made direct reference to "structural-organizational pieces" and indicated that knowledge of routines and organizational structure is important to school efficacy. The same person also made a less direct comment about the importance of predictability, specifying that it did not imply a rote or stasis environment, but that it was important for people to feel "...relaxed, familiar and comfortable". The second participant to mention the structural-organizational components of schools made reference to "embracing change" and using "technology as a change agent". The former, embracing change, implies that the mindsets of individuals towards organizational culture can impact school efficacy, while the latter implies that technology can act as a catalyst for change within the organizational structure.

Four direct or implied references to the environment or atmosphere in which learning takes place were offered by three of the participants. Two participants made reference to social aspects of the learning environment, one stating that it was important for everyone to feel appreciated and for learning environments to be inclusive, another describing an "atmosphere in which all people are learners" as important. The third participant simply indicated that a safe environment was an important aspect of an effective school.

Two participants mentioned *data* a total of three times when discussing school efficacy. One participant stated that effective schools regularly examine their data. Another indicated that effective schools frequently monitor and report on student progress.

Engagement was mentioned twice by the same participant when describing the common characteristics of effective schools, indicating that one would see "student's imaginations being stretched" and "students excited about their learning."

There was also one reference made to the educational literature on effective schools. A superintendent mentioned Lawrence Lezotte's (2011) work on the seven effective school correlates, including:

- Safe and orderly environment
- Climate of high expectations for success
- Instructional leadership
- Clean and focused mission
- Opportunity to learn/student time on task
- Frequent monitoring of student progress
- Positive home-school relations

This participant indicated the basic feeling that these correlates aligned with a personal definition of school efficacy. With the exception of the reference to instructional leadership within the work of Lawrence Lezotte, only one other participant mentioned instructional leadership as an important aspect of school efficacy. "Student voice" and the relevance or "practical application of learning in the real world", were also both mentioned once as indicators of school efficacy.

At the end of the interview, participants were asked to consider and comment on any factors not covered through a discussion of the elements of bureaucracy that might impact school efficacy. After approximately forty-five to sixty minutes of discussing educational bureaucracy, participants discussed a number of other themes that they felt related to school efficacy. One participant discussed the "change process", making reference to the work of Michael Fullan and the importance of understanding change and creating the right conditions for change. Another participant from the same school division also made the observation that the "balance is always changing", and expressed that it is important for schools to be flexible. This participant also offered the perspective that "school efficacy revolves around student achievement," where student achievement included test scores, graduation rates, engagement, development of skills, pursuit of passions, excitement about learning, peer and teacher relationships, leadership opportunities, trips, creativity and innovation and "the broadest education possible." Two participants from different school divisions made reference to the fact that community relations, "small-p politics", the values and influences of society, and legislation all have some impact on school efficacy. Another participant made what might be read as a reference to Bourdieu's social reproduction theory (1973), saying that,

> "Sometimes the fact that all of us have been through school to some degree and our parents have been through school and our grandparents have been through school, and they've had a variety of experiences, sometimes colours the big picture conversations around educational policy and educational practice."

To summarize, the definition of school efficacy and the common characteristics of effective schools as conceptualized by the participants in this study, as well as the definition of the term *school efficacy* implied throughout this study, is multi-faceted and complex. School efficacy includes and is

impacted by all levels of the school system from the senior administration offices, to classroom teachers, to families and communities as well as the behaviours, interactions and relationships that exist between these parties. In order of the frequency with which they were mentioned, the common characteristics of effective schools include:

- Clear goals and vision/mission statements;
- Strong positive relationships between all stakeholders;
- Teacher quality;
- Academics and achievement;
- Student centered pedagogy;
- Organizational structure;
- Safe and inclusive learning environments;
- Student data (collection, reflection and reporting);
- Engagement;
- An understanding of the change process;
- Leadership; and
- Student voice.

This complex, multi-dimensional definition highlights the importance of using a critical lens and avoiding superficial generalizations when discussing how a given variable might impact school efficacy. Certainly, one cannot isolate a specific point within the school system, such as test scores or graduation rates, and draw meaningful inferences about the characteristics of effective schools listed above. For example, low scores on a divisional or provincial assessment may allow for broad generalizations about teacher quality, but they would not help us make inferences about the goals of individual schools,

teacher-student relationships or pedagogical variety, all of which could also impact scores. Likewise, there are a number of characteristics in this definition that may significantly increase the efficacy of a school, but may not show up in empirical data such as test-scores. Consider, for example, a scenario in which significant changes to the organizational structure of a school are made after a change in leadership. If the consequences included the school running more efficiently, stronger relationships with the community, a higher level of professionalism among staff, and new extra-curricular offerings for students, no one would likely argue that the efficacy of the school had not improved, yet none of these changes would necessarily translate into higher achievement on standardized assessments.

In using the example of standardized test scores, which are widely considered to indicate the efficacy of educational programming in the literature (Clark, 2014; Prytula, Noonan & Hellsten, 2013; Webber & Lupart, 2012; Webber, Scott, Aitken, Lupart & Scott, 2013) and by the broader public, it is interesting to also consider what participants did *not* include in their definitions of school efficacy. While academics and student achievement were broadly included, no mention was made of specific tests or assessments at the divisional or provincial level. Performance indicators on national and international achievement assessments such as PISA and PCAP were also absent. No explicit references were made to marks, grades, graduation rates or almost any other standardized, empirical, measurable achievement indicators. There was also no reference to legislation or the use of provincial curricular documents. While this does not necessarily imply that such indicators are unrelated to school efficacy, it certainly implies that they are of relatively less significance to the participants in the study. Perhaps this is due to the fact that, compared to some, Manitoba does not generally place a large emphasis on standardized assessments, or perhaps it was simply coincidental that this group of participants had similar views towards standardized assessments.

The contrast between the characteristics that participants discussed, and those they did not discuss, is interesting in the context of this study. When considering school efficacy, participants discussed the "big picture" and the people and relationships in a school, placing a strong emphasis on the non-uniform events and the human relations that define a "professional bureaucracy" (Litwak, 1961). Less emphasis was placed on the notion of a traditional ideal-type bureaucracy focussed on systemic bottom lines and institutional goals without considering the experiences of the people within the organization.

In the reporting and analysis of the impact of bureaucracy on school efficacy that follows, it is important that the reader keep the nuances of school efficacy in mind. When clear references to specific aspects of school efficacy are made they will be reported in context. When references to specific aspects of school efficacy are subtly implied, ambiguous or absent, they will be inferred or left to the inference of the reader and discussed in a more general sense.

Policy

"Policy is not the leading edge. If it is, it's usually unsuccessful."

-Participant

In a bureaucratic structure, policy documents act as a set of official rules and procedures that can be referenced by autonomous agents within an organization, which will ideally inform and direct decisions and actions in such a way that the system continues to work as designed. Policies are the closest thing to laws in an organization and in many organizations, schools being one example, policies are often informed by and extensions of legislation. In Manitoba, the Public Schools Act is the primary piece of provincial legislation upon which all public school division policy is based. Other authoritative bodies such as the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education may also

play a role in influencing the development of school division policy. Ultimately, school divisions have the autonomy to develop and implement their own policy documents, provided they do not subvert or contradict provincial legislation.

Senior administration teams, working with school boards, have the responsibility to ensure that policy parallels and enforces the Public School Act (Manitoba, 2014), and the authority to develop their own policies when they believe it will benefit or safeguard the system. In this study, participants were asked about the impact of policy on school efficacy with a focus on the policies that are developed at the divisional level. Participants were asked to explain how they go about predicting how a new policy will impact school efficacy, how they know or measure the impact of new policies when they are introduced and to share experiences in which they observed first-hand the impact of policy on school efficacy.

When asked how senior administrators might predict the impact of new policies on school efficacy, a number of indicators emerged, including practicality, flexibility, autonomy, planning, creation/maintenance of order, the source of the policy, the extent to which the policy might provide protection or insurance for the school division, and the role of policy in supporting progress. The notion of taking a minimalist approach towards policy and size/volume of policy documents was also noted by participants. In other words, they expressed that the most successful policies are practical, flexible and support autonomy at the school level and originated at the school level. They also indicated that policy documents are extensive in length, and that they do not necessarily look for opportunities to add to them if it is not necessary to do so.

The most generally discussed indicator of how policy might impact school efficacy was practicality. Five of the six participants made a total of six references to the practicality of policies in

terms of the extent to which they might actually make a difference, or how they might translate from the board/divisional level to practice in schools and classrooms. Questions that senior administrators ask with regards to the impact of new policy include; Will the policy actually make a difference? Is it general enough to be applicable to all? Can the policy be referenced or used at different levels within the system? Is the policy generally supportive of school operations? And, can we point to examples of the policy in classrooms? Other comments indicated that linking policy to practical operations can be challenging. For example, one participant indicated that policies are usually more management oriented than student achievement oriented. Another participant mentioned early on, that "policy shouldn't be passed until we are confident that it will work," and that, "Policy is often good at achieving relatively simple ends." The potential disconnect between policy makers and school staff was highlighted by one participant's comment, "...there will always be a struggle between the development of policies at the divisional level and the actual implementation at the school level." This statement is of particular interest, as it implies not only a clear division between the perspectives of board/senior administration and school level staff, but an implied ambivalence with regards to the hierarchy and authority structure of the school system.

The next indicator to be discussed frequently (six times) by a range of participants was that of flexibility. In all instances, the implication was that the more flexibility a policy offered in terms of interpretation and implementation, the more successful and positive its impacts on school efficacy would be. Two participants directly indicated that the flexibility of a policy helped to predict its impact. One participant expressed the innate need for flexibility through statements such as "...consistency is difficult", and "...nothing is so inconsistent as consistency." This sentiment was echoed by another participant who stated that the impact of policy had much to do with "...translation from provincial expectations to divisional level to school based level." Even when participants were not making overt

reference to the need for flexibility in the area of policy, there was a general tone throughout the interviews which indicated that policies were less likely to be successful if they were perceived as being rigid and imposed in a top-down manner.

Related to the need for policies to be flexible, the theme of autonomy was discussed as a significant predictor of the impact of new policy. Three participants (all from the same school division) made references to autonomy being a predictor of the impact of new policy. One participant expressed that policies would be less successful if they took away staff autonomy or "caused upheaval". Another indicated that the area of policy creates an "idea of us and them", and that it is a challenge "...to keep the connection between the trustees, the senior admin and teachers." It was the superintendent of the same school division who said policies that are "...too detailed, oriented towards micromanaging, can have a very negative impact on schools." Further to this, he said that when trying to predict the impact of a new policy, it is important to consider "...if the policy will narrow the scope of a principal's decision making capabilities", or restrict decision making in general, in which case he indicated that it was probably not the type of policy he would want to support. These comments are interesting as they align with the view that policy needs to be flexible, and rather overtly characterize restrictive policies as inherently negative. They seem to imply that instead of being viewed as clearly defined directives that are meant to be followed with a high degree of accuracy and consistency, policies are more effective when left somewhat open to interpretation at the school level.

Planning was only discussed by two participants; however, one, a superintendent, discussed the importance of planning almost exclusively in response to the question of how senior administrators predict the impact of new policies on school efficacy. Interestingly, this participant shifted the focus to what happens *before* a new policy is created rather than the impact of the policy *after* its

implementation. The response was filled with statements such as, "...policy trails behaviour", "...policy is not leading, it's trailing your more progressive forces", and "...policy is not the leading edge. If it is, it's usually unsuccessful." It was also indicated that good policy is not speculative, as the participant discussed the importance of getting broad support in the school division for all elements of the policy and implementing it over a long period of time (although he did not offer details on how to achieve this). Another participant indicated that when working on a new policy, "...implementation has to be carefully thought out... Who is involved? How will it be implemented? What kind of follow up will there be? What support materials are needed?"

Two participants indicated quite strongly that the source of a new policy was often a predictor of how it would impact school efficacy. In fact, one participant's answer focused exclusively on the source of the policy, indicating that the key predictor was whether the policy came from legislation or teaching staff, which he characterized respectively as "top-down" and "bottom-up". It was expressed that in personal experience, bottom-up policies take hold sooner and are more broadly valued because they come from teaching staff and "...come up through the system as opposed to coming down...", a perspective that parallels the superintendent who described policy as trailing practice. Another participant made brief reference to the same top-down/bottom-up dynamic in her response. Again, these responses reinforce the observation that directive policies intended to shape practice are generally seen in a negative light, while policies emerging from existing practices are predicted to have a more positive impact on school efficacy.

Three participants made reference to the purpose of policies as having to do with creating or maintaining order within the organizational structure, however, they did not elaborate on how this might help to predict the impact of a policy on school efficacy. Rather, these participants seemed to feel

that it was necessary to characterize policies as having a limited and specific function. For example, one participant stated that policy provides a "place to hang your hat." Another stated that policies are "...supposed to guide what we do," and "[act] like a framework." A third participant shared the perspective that, "divisional documents deal less with academic success, more with conduct and guidelines." To an extent, these comments almost seem to have been offered as qualifiers, implying that policy in general, may not be an area that has a great deal to do with school efficacy in the first place. Rather, policy serves to support an organizational structure in which individual autonomy is assumed in the role of the professional, and this autonomous professional practice is what actually determines school efficacy.

This would seem to be supported by comments from three participants, which indicated that policy more often acts as a form of insurance than a force that drives practice. One participant said that policies provide a "...third point that takes some of the responsibility off the shoulders of administrators," and that "policies are good when you need them – *'but there's a policy in our school division that says...'*". Another participant said that "Policies are almost like a defense shield... when something doesn't go well, you look to a policy to be able to support what you do." A third participant explained that often, "[policies] prevent people from doing really ill-considered things that most people don't need a policy to prevent them from doing," and agreed when asked if, for the most part, policy was more of a precautionary measure than a force that drives professional practice.

Perhaps this is why three participants, two of them superintendents, characterized their school divisions as taking a minimalist approach towards policy, in all cases beginning their responses with comments such as, "We haven't been a policy rich school division – we've taken a minimalist view on it", "I have a minimalist view of policy," and "We don't see ourselves as a policy driven school division."

Twice, these comments were accompanied by references to the size of policy documents, expressing that they are already "massive documents" and that there are "...binders full of them". In other words, some participants seemed to see policy documents as so extensive already, that the development of new policies is not an area of focus.

While much of the discussion generated by this question seems to imply that educational policy is perhaps not a strong driving force with regards to school efficacy, it is worth noting that one participant did make reference to policies having a progressive element. This participant indicated that policies related to "21st Century learning and assessment have driven us forward in what we do," and that policies have "...had an effect on peoples thinking."

Next, participants were asked to explain how senior administrators know about or measure the impacts of policies post-implementation. They made reference to a number of factors including time, practice/application in the field, reporting, organizational structure, pushback, collaboration and observation. They also discussed policies that are not measured in any way and policies that are mandated.

All six participants, in some way, discussed the importance of time after the implementation of a policy. The reference to time emerged in a variety of contexts including situations where the initial response to a policy was negative but changed over time and policies that required ongoing learning and research to develop. One participant discussed experience as a principal when a new policy had created tension, saying "...we were able to work through it, and things improved as teachers started talking about it." A superintendent talked about "taking baby steps" when implementing a new policy and "moving forward as it suits the school community." Two other participants made reference to the need to revisit policies after a set amount of time. One said that, "Many policies need revisions after two or

three years,” and another discussed using a “...cyclical process, so that policies are reviewed with staff frequently.”

Three participants from three different school divisions made as many references to practice in the field as were made to time. One participant, reflecting on practice, asked the question, “Is the policy enforceable and will it achieve its intended purpose?” The same superintendent who discussed practicality as the main predictor of success continued to focus on the theme of practice, saying that “Policy can be an exemplar, but practice is a stronger exemplar. If people aren’t comfortable with the practice, they won’t touch the policy... We see the impact of practice before a policy is born.” Another participant referenced practice in the field as an indicator of a policies’ success, saying, “Pragmatic policies are easy to measure because problems arise immediately when they are not followed... Sometimes one finds out about compliance or [non-compliance] when something doesn’t work out that well.”

References to practice in the field were accompanied by comments on how the information was actually communicated. Two participants made reference to systems of formal and informal reporting, while one referenced direct informal observation. One participant indicated that schools report annually on several criteria to the school division, who in turn reports to the province. Another participant made reference to a feedback loop through teachers and cyclical three year surveys conducted with different stakeholders in the school division. Related to reporting and observation, but discussed as a distinct example on its own by one participant, was the idea of *pushback*, school staff resisting the implementation of a new policy due to a perceived loss of autonomy.

It is noteworthy that again, several comments were made about the role of policy in the organizational structure of school divisions, and again they were offered in the form of qualifiers,

intended to clarify the limitations of policy. Comments such as, "Policies are more about management than educational philosophy", and "...[Policy] helps people to find meaning, purpose and coherence", seem to imply that there are certain contexts in which policy has an impact, but that outside of these contexts it is less important.

Four participants made reference to the impact of policies often not being measured. One participant stated that it would simply be too "unwieldy" to try to measure the impact of policy documents. A superintendent reported having seen the changes that result from new policy, but didn't think they were really measured in a traditional sense. One participant made the interesting comment that, "Many policies, *because they're legislated*... there's no real follow-up" (Italics added). Perhaps this means that with broad province-wide legislation, there is an assumption that the school divisions are ensuring that the policy is being implemented; however, in the discussion of some specific examples, it appears that in at least some cases, there is a system of follow-up after the implementation of a new provincial policy.

In the final question on policy, participants were asked to describe an experience in which they had observed the impact of a new policy on school efficacy at the division-wide level. The examples that were discussed included a provincial nutrition policy and divisional policies such as mobile device and "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) policies, a tobacco policy, an Aboriginal education policy, a field trip policy and a technology policy.

In the case of the nutrition policy, a provincial mandate required that all school divisions develop nutrition policies and that schools report on the new policies through their school plan documents. The participant indicated that there was a significant amount of pushback from staff when the policy was introduced, but that over time, benefits could be seen. The benefit that was detailed in

this example was recovered teaching time. This was a school specific example in which the policy required an early years’ school to end the tradition of a parent community that involved celebrating birthdays at school with cake, which had the potential to create in excess of 20 half-hour interruptions to teaching and learning time throughout the school year. The participant also indicated that staff demonstrated more effective collaboration and communication over time as they adopted a change that was initially unwanted.

Two participants from the same division discussed the evolution of a divisional mobile device policy. One participant described the development of the policy over time; “Our initial thinking was to put a policy in place to stop [students] from using their cell phones... Then we stopped and rethought because the learning environment has changed... The policy changed before it even went out... We realized through feedback from administrators and teachers that our initial thinking just did not cut it... The policy has evolved over time.” The second participant indicated that the policy eventually transformed into a BYOD policy and said that, “Bring your own device gave permission for schools to develop in a way that suits the school community.” According to this account, the benefit of this policy came through the additional autonomy it provided to schools and communities to assess their own needs in moving forward.

A third participant also referenced technology related policies, but focused on acceptable use in general rather than on mobile devices. This participant said that the technology policy shapes the way students interact with technology and causes staff to think about how they use it in their teaching practice. It was stated that, “Lots of things that probably reach the closest to the classroom are more often documents that would not be official policy, they’re under guidelines. Those things are evolutionary and you want the flexibility for them to evolve over time.

The participant who consistently focused on policy trailing practice, provided two examples in which divisional policies were developed out of practices and research that took place over a long period of time. Reference was made to a successful tobacco/non-smoking policy and to an Aboriginal education policy, but the participant expressed that the benefits came from programs, practices and research that preceded the creation of the policies. The policies, in his words, where just created to "tie it all up in a package."

One participant made reference to the overhaul of a field trip policy. Reference was made to the policy not being well received at the time of its introduction, implying that over time it was accepted. The participant expressed the view that the policy was a sign and a product of our society becoming more litigious, but did not provide any specific examples of how the policy impacted school efficacy.

In summary, the main themes that were discussed regarding the impact of policy on school efficacy included autonomy at the school level, the amount of planning leading up to the creation of the policy, the practical application and flexibility of the policy, and the source of the policy. The main way in which senior administrators know how an existing policy is impacting school efficacy is through formal and informal systems of reporting and observation of actual practices in schools. It was indicated that the allowance of time is an important factor in determining the impact of a new policy, especially in situations where there might be initial tension or pushback from certain stakeholders in the system. It must be noted that throughout the interviews, participants made a number of overt and subtle comments that downplayed the impact of policy on school efficacy so far as it relates to student achievement and actual teaching and learning practices. All participants expressed the sentiment that they either had a minimalist view towards policy, or that they felt policy trailed practice rather than

leading it. There was also a general consensus among participants that educational policy acts in large part as a form of security or insurance to direct decision making when something goes substantially wrong. Participants also made some reference to the large volume of policy documents that exist, indicating that the majority do not have a direct bearing on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. As one participant stated, "If a teacher read [the policy manual] cover to cover, I'm not sure it would make them a better teacher."

Authority and Hierarchy

"Hierarchy can really get peoples' backs up, even just the word, because people look at it like a dictatorship"

-Participant

When asked to share their thoughts on how hierarchical structures in school divisions impact school efficacy, the answers varied between participants. There were, however a number of common themes that arose, some casting a negative light on hierarchy, others drawing out some of the positive impacts. The majority of participants made at least one reference to hierarchy having a negative impact on school efficacy, or at least being ineffective in achieving goals related to school efficacy. Most balanced their responses with comments or allusions to certain aspects of bureaucracy that have a positive impact, or are perceived as necessary. One participant made reference only to the negative impact of hierarchy, while another participant made reference to only the positive impact. Interestingly, these two participants were from the same school division.

Three participants discussed the potential for hierarchical structures to be antagonistic. The participant who only discussed hierarchy in negative terms equated hierarchical structures to a

dictatorship, as per the quote at the beginning of this section. This response focused primarily on how people perceive hierarchy and as such had a strongly subjective tone. It was indicated that people don't feel hierarchical structures are consultative or collaborative, that they don't support school efficacy because they "get people's backs up" and that they create the perception of a threat and cause people to "close their doors". Another participant expressed that if a hierarchy becomes too directive it may cause resentment, and that someone in a senior position within the hierarchy must "...guard against being distanced from the people you're trying to influence." A third participant said that, "hierarchy can really get in the way" by causing contention between the board office and teachers. The same person also said that hierarchy can contribute to "Them and Us" ways of thinking that "...can get in the way of schools moving forward in producing better student learners and opportunities for teachers to improve."

Three participants also made comments about hierarchical structures being ineffective. One participant explicitly stated, "I personally do not think hierarchical structures work." Another participant elaborated to say that hierarchical structures that follow a "command/control model" are ineffective. A third participant, whose response was framed primarily in the context of collaboration and informal organization, implied that hierarchy is generally not useful with regards to school efficacy through the statement, "Hierarchy *may* be useful in deferring to policy or protocol when dealing with problems."

Three participants also made comments about creating a "flattened hierarchy", in part acknowledging that a hierarchical structure exists, but downplaying its importance and redirecting their answers towards themes of collaboration and relationships. One participant went into detail on the importance of relationships, people working together, focusing on institutional goals rather than professional roles, collaboration and committee work and a leadership model in which, "the senior

administrator team is involved, but not driving initiatives." This participant then stated, "I like to think we've created a flattened hierarchy... It's not who you are, it's how you work with people that is important." Another participant described school divisions as relatively flat organizations, while a third expressed that the flatter the hierarchical structure, the more likely there will be buy-in at the school level. While these comments appear to provide a somewhat neutral commentary on hierarchy at first, they imply that there is a spectrum of hierarchies from flat to vertical. They also imply that the flatter (and less hierarchical) a hierarchy is, the more positively it impacts school efficacy, while the more vertical it is, the more negatively it impacts school efficacy.

A number of the comments made by participants were indeed quite neutral, as they described hierarchical structures without elaborating on positive or negative impacts. For example, three participants spoke about hierarchical structures being either directive or non-directive. Two participants spoke about the need to balance direction with support for autonomy. Another indicated that in the school system, more is accomplished by being non-directive through providing resources and removing constraints. Two participants spoke about culture, expressing that it needs to be collegial and shaped over time. Participants also mentioned collaboration and relationships with some frequency. Perhaps the reason that many of these comments are neutral in the context of hierarchy, is that they don't in fact have much to do with hierarchical structures. They have more to do with the politics and social behaviours that take place within the professional environment, and while they acknowledge that the environment is to some degree framed by a hierarchical structure, they do not (or do not want to) see hierarchy as defining the scope of their professional roles.

There were also some comments implying that hierarchical structures have a positive impact on school efficacy. Two participants made reference to the importance of leadership within a school

division. One superintendent said that, "leadership provided by senior administrators can impact school efficacy," and went on to discuss the role of the school board in providing a focus through the identification of expectations and priorities that acted as a "North star" and got all schools "pointing in the same direction." This participant also indicated that when school plans and goals are set exclusively at a grassroots level, there is often a lack of clarity and vision. Another participant, after discussing the balance between direction from senior administration and teacher autonomy, said, "...my gut is that hierarchy is important... there's certainly a place for it."

Despite being somewhat divided on how hierarchy impacts school efficacy, all participants acknowledged that school divisions do have hierarchical structures, and were next asked what kinds of qualities individuals in positions of authority should embody. At this point it is worth noting that four types of authority were elaborated on in Chapter 2; Official/legal authority, traditional authority, expert authority and charismatic authority. To some extent, these types of authority can be used to examine the responses to this question.

The first, and perhaps most interesting observation, is that by far the most referenced qualities were personal in nature, or as one participant called them, "soft skills." These qualities are less professional in nature and speak largely to the kind of personality that is required to fulfill a position of authority. It is likely that these personal qualities would be most evident in the area of charismatic authority, the area concerned with relating to, motivating and influencing others. The personal qualities that participants mentioned can be categorized further as character oriented, relationship oriented, and communication oriented.

Character oriented qualities and virtues were the most commonly mentioned and included intuition, understanding, patience, perseverance, courage, integrity, caring, empathy, being a learner,

thoughtfulness, being reflective, optimism, hopefulness, and belief in people. Relationship oriented qualities included being a collaborator, identifying with others, a love for young people, ability to build relationships, and the ability to understand challenges faced by students. Communication oriented qualities included basic communication skills, being comfortable communicating with others, the ability to dialogue with staff, listening skills, and negotiation skills.

There were also a number of comments that would directly imply that charismatic authority is essential. One participant, a superintendent, mentioned the importance of being an "inspiring" leader twice, implying that it is important to influence people through motivation, rather than through official power. This participant also said that someone in a position of authority should be motivational to others. Another participant said that someone with authority should have the ability to move staff. Two participants talked about the importance of a leader as someone who has a strong influence on others in their circle.

After charismatic authority, expert authority was by far the most referenced type of authority, as it was mentioned a total of twenty times and by all six participants. References that would fall under expert authority had to do mainly with specific knowledge and experience related to schools. One participant mentioned the importance of knowing and being able to articulate a mission. One participant made six references to specific types of experiences and achievements including a proven track record, success leading a school and moving student achievement in a school forward. This participant also explicitly stated the belief that experience is greater than "qualifications on paper". A superintendent made several references to expert authority in the context of a modeling, saying that leaders model best practices, effective relationships and instructional practices. Another superintendent echoed, saying that leaders "help teachers to do their best". Other allusions to expert

authority included the building of knowledge over time, the ability to innovate and create, a strong understanding of curriculum and how students learn, expertise in problem solving and conflict resolution, an understanding of current research and practice and an understanding of "the big picture".

There were very few occasional references made to official/legal authority. One participant questioned this form of authority, saying that, "...[we] need to think about some of the benchmarks/yardsticks we are putting into place for certain positions," indicating that he felt experience is often more valuable than credentials. Another participant referenced official/legal authority by simply stating that leaders must observe due diligence in their jobs.

The only reference made to any form of traditional authority was by the participant who has already been mentioned, who stated that a person in a position of authority should have "academic qualifications," which was followed with, "however, some people without credentials are very good at what they do... sometimes the balance is tipped to heavily." In essence, the only mention of traditional authority was to imply that academic qualifications are important, but not very.

Finally, participants were asked how they think senior administrators use their authority to impact school efficacy. Interestingly, when we look at these responses through the lens of authority types, we do not see the same distribution of heavily favoured charismatic authority and expert authority versus official/legal authority, implying that participants may depend on the latter more than they perceive.

Participants mentioned a total of seventeen ways they perceive themselves having an impact on school efficacy that loosely fit into the category of expert authority in that they require the individual to do their job with a high level of competence. The comments all fell into the larger categories of offering support to others, collaboration, building vision/mission/goals, leadership and mentorship.

The next most commonly referenced way in which participants perceived their impact on school efficacy was in the area of building and ensuring accountability. This is interesting because it seems that ensuring accountability would be a largely official/legal role in a senior administration position, and while it was the second most referenced way in which senior administrators impact school efficacy, it was barely mentioned in the previous question about the qualities of an effective leader. Nonetheless, participants discussed accountability in a number of ways including ensuring that divisional protocol is followed, building of accountability and responsibility among staff, showing others the possible consequences and rewards of their actions, making decisions and using judgement, acting in a transparent manner, and managing contentious/conflicting priorities.

Charismatic authority, which was the most referenced quality of a person in a position of authority, was only mentioned four times in connection to how senior administrators impact school efficacy. One participant made reference to inspiring others and creating hope. Another participant framed the role of a senior administrator as a charismatic role in which, "Influence is the most powerful form of authority." This participant discussed the importance of influencing situations by providing others with inspiration as opposed to directing their decisions and actions. It was stated that "...the power of the role [official/legal or traditional authority] is a last resort." With the exception of this final comment about the power of the role, none of the participants made any reference to traditional authority.

In summary, participants discussed both negative and positive impacts of hierarchy on school efficacy, with somewhat more of an emphasis on the negative. When discussing authority and what types of authority have a positive impact on school efficacy, there was a strong emphasis on charismatic

authority and expert authority. When participants described their professional roles, there was some reference to official/legal authority. No direct references to traditional authority were made.

Document Management

"Very often when we're talking about accountability, we're talking about a political conversation with people who have no experience with the school system, and we can marshal all kinds of data and all kinds of test scores and people are going to believe what they want to believe… So, I think we need to be very careful with data and its purposes."

-Participant

When participants were asked about the challenges a school division faces with respect to document management, no definition of the term *document* was specified. Participants were free to discuss specific documents, or to speak more broadly about the actual management of documents, both of which occurred. The first question asked participants to discuss the greatest challenges that document management posed for school divisions. Some answers were naturally framed in terms of negative impacts on efficacy, but this was not always the case. Many of the examples referenced by participants discussed challenges as areas in which ongoing efforts to streamline and refine processes are being made.

The most frequently discussed challenges in the area of document management were centered on the theme of technology. Technology was mentioned a total of eight times by five of the participants. The first participant to mention technology made specific reference to the challenges of transitioning to a paperless system, indicating that the increased use of technology did not seem to reduce the amount of paper documents in a significant way. Another participant discussed the

challenges of assessing and choosing document management software packages and the movement to electronic storage of documents. Other participants discussed various challenges related to technology including the transition from paper to electronic systems, integrated software solutions and the cost of technology. One participant also noted the rate of change that technology has introduced, saying that "There are questions that we have to work through that wouldn't have had even five years ago."

Efficiency, processing, and storage of documents were three aspects of document management that were all mentioned several times each, and which are all closely related. *Efficiency* refers directly to the manner in which documents are processed, *processing* refers to the actual procedures and personnel that are involved in the management of documents and *storage* refers to a stage in the processing of a document during which it is kept on record, but not actively used. Efficiency was discussed specifically in terms of the streamlining and coordination of assessment data and the duplication of data within the system. A number of general comments about managing documents efficiently, "seamless management" and "...trusting the system that is in place" were also made. With regards to the processing of documents, participants indicated that many documents follow different processes, require written and financial reports, and at some point require destruction. One participant made specific reference to a federal program that required the documentation of personal interactions, which interfered with relationship building in communities. Two participants also made general comments about the processing of documents and the ease of operations being challenges. Storage was only discussed as a challenge in general terms, such as the different amounts of time that documents must legally be retained and the resources required to physically and electronically store documents.

The volume of documents within a school division was referenced as a challenge by five people. Participants often made comments like, "...there are documents everywhere", "...we have binders full of them", "...the proliferation of documents", at the outset of their responses to the question. One participant made specific reference to the large number of documents associated with grant applications that school divisions must process. Another participant elaborated on the many communiqués that create "...additional workloads and expectations."

The costs associated with document management, legal obligations, coordination with other agencies and consistency at different levels of the school system were all discussed as challenges twice each throughout the responses.

Next, participants were asked to discuss the role of documentation processes in relation to professional accountability and school efficacy. Again participants discussed a variety of documents from formal assessment documents and division wide surveys, to procedural documents for registration and student information, to informal communiqués such as email. Participants touched on many ways in which document management impacts school efficacy, but some clear themes emerged.

Planning and assessment were the most referenced area in which we see the impact of document management. Three participants shared that documentation often informs planning, guides practice and helps to identify strengths, weaknesses, needs and supports. Participants also referenced the collection of divisional assessment data and the implementation and measurement of programs and interventions. One participant alluded to how data might inform planning and assessment in order to "...move indicators such as attendance, graduation rates, postsecondary entrance and student engagement".

Mentioned almost as frequently as planning and assessment, was the theme of transparency. Three participants made general comments indicating that they believed certain documentation processes made the operations of their school divisions more transparent. One participant indicated that documentation helps ensure transparency in community reports. Two participants also made comments about teacher accountability, which were slightly different in tone. Rather than indicating more transparency overall, they indicated that there was an increased accountability on the part of teachers to the division. It is interesting that one of the comments about teacher accountability was made by the same participant who had said only negative things about hierarchical structures and had plainly stated that they do not work. In the commentary on documentation increasing teacher accountability, the tone had shifted significantly as the participant said, "...it does hold teachers accountable... *we* should be holding people accountable. *We* hire a teacher these days and it's a $2 million investment and *they're* affecting the kids of our future – that's important." (Italics added). The positioning of administration and teachers as *us* and *them* is quite strong in this statement and instead of an overall increased level of transparency, it implies a one-way transparency that places teachers in a subordinate position.

While only one participant, a superintendent, discussed document management impacting the progress of a school division, almost the entire response was centered on this theme. The participant focused on data collection documents and explained that data should serve a purpose and that local data should be used to inform change in schools, with the caveat that documents and data are only as important as peoples willingness and capacity to change. In a sense, this participant also downplayed the importance of data and documents by referring to them as a means to an end, explained through the quote at the beginning of this section:

> “Very often when we’re talking about accountability, we’re talking about a political conversation with people who have no experience with the school system, and we can marshal all kinds of data and all kinds of test scores and people are going to believe what they want to believe… So, I think we need to be very careful with data and its purposes”.

In a way, this sounds as though documentation and data have the capacity to be used as constructs to support the ideologies of political stakeholders who wish to influence the school system despite the fact that they may have no direct experience working in it. The cautionary tone of this participant seems to indicate that school divisions should be protective with data and strive to invest their time and resources in the documentation of data that will help schools and the school division make meaningful progress, and not be caught up in political game-playing or the agendas of outside interests.

Another participant spoke uniquely, but in significant depth about the impact of the school plan document. It was suggested that it is a “...living document that continues to be reviewed by staff throughout the school year, and when used in that way... it guides practice and it guides decisions...” She elaborated on why she felt that this was important saying that,

> “...sometimes we have to say, ‘this is a really good idea, but it needs to go on hold, or if we’re going to incorporate it, it’s going to be a deliberate decision’... As a profession, I’m not sure we really have a strong history of doing that well, because we get excited about stuff and we tend to layer on. I think learning to peel back the layers and stay true to a core of decisions and practices, and ways of measuring, and expectations around professional learning, is sometimes more of a challenge than to keep adding on.”

Here we see a clear benefit in terms of an organization’s ability to focus on its goals when its natural tendency is to have many divergent goals that may run the risk of becoming unmanageable.

Impacts of document management on school efficacy that were mentioned less frequently (one or two times) included increased efficiency, safety, improved organizational culture and historical records that track changes and provide some insurance against accusations or challenges that may arise.

Finally, on the topic of document management, participants were asked how senior administrators know if document management is negatively impacting school efficacy. Informal anecdotal reports and slightly more formalized forms of feedback were discussed with notable frequency, while a number of other indicators were mentioned once or twice by the participants.

Anecdotal reports and feedback were mentioned a total of nine times and tended to be casual and conversational in nature. Participants referenced "anecdotal reports from school administrators" and "structures that allow for anecdotal feedback". A number of responses were also offered in the form of examples of what one might hear from the school level, including comments like, "I just can't get to this," and "people feel like they're drowning." One participation spoke about a "feedback loop between schools, school divisions and the province," indicating that feedback follows a systemic path. Another participant indicated that senior administrators know that school efficacy is being impacted when they experience "backlash or pushback from schools and principals," and went on to differentiate between the voices that bring forward specific problems with proposed solutions and those that are "just whining".

Participants also mentioned that impacts on school efficacy might be noted through data in information management systems, inconsistencies in reporting to stakeholders, directly presenting questions to schools and teachers, administrators observing student work in classrooms, student progress, evaluation processes, teacher evaluations and monitoring over time as procedures are repeated.

<u>Expert Training</u>

"Professional development for the sake of professional development can be hit and miss... [Teachers] have to make a case for how PD is going to fit into the larger perspective of the division... It really has the board at a comfort level... we were all over the map before."

-Participant

In Weber's (1946) model of bureaucracy, expert training would typically refer to specialized training related to one's profession. While some teachers choose to continue their formal training through post-baccalaureate and post-graduate studies, for most practicing teachers, additional professional training is typically accessed through professional development opportunities offered through the school divisions, the province, the Manitoba Teacher's Society, or supported through professional development funds. Two questions were directed at exploring senior administrators' perceptions of the impact of expert training with a specific focus on divisional professional development models, but first, participants were asked what they look for in an individual who is being hired into the organization or promoted into a leadership position. This opening question was slightly more open ended, in that it did not restrict participants to only speaking about training, although it was established as the context of the coming questions. The responses were particularly interesting for two reasons; they differed somewhat from the similar previous question about the qualities that a person in a position of authority should have, and the emphasis was on professional experience rather than on training.

When participants were asked about the training and expertise senior administrators look for when staff are hired or promoted to leadership positions within the school division, the overwhelming emphasis was on professional experience, which was mentioned a total of twenty-seven times by the six

participants. Two clear types of experience emerged in the responses – performance and leadership experience. Performance was mentioned a total of fourteen times and included comments along the lines of "effectiveness of current teaching", "past professional success", "successful experience", "experience working with children", "classroom experience", and "skilled in their areas", to quote just a few. Leadership experience was mentioned or alluded to a total of 13 times with criteria such as, "leadership at the school level", "participation in divisional committees", "involved in workshops and professional organizations", "experience as an administrator", "able to supervise", "providing professional development for teachers", "demonstrating the capacity to lead colleagues", and "experience as a team leader, department head, teacher in charge, etc.".

Education was the next most frequently referenced aspect of expert training, although it was only mentioned eight times, significantly less frequently than experience. References to education ranged from general to specific and addressed a variety of levels of education. For example, one participant, a superintendent, made reference to "an extensive education... a Masters degree at least..." and discussed the importance of being well-researched in the field of education. Another participant, also a superintendent, made no mention of specific degrees but referenced coursework that takes place in the schools within the school division as important. Another participant simply indicated that "academic background" is a consideration when hiring someone for a position within the school division.

Relationship management was frequently referenced (seven times), although none of the participants directly contextualized expertise in the area as being developed through either training or experience. Again, in a similar manner to the question about the qualities of a person in a position of authority, general types of relationships were mentioned. One participant referenced relationships with students, relationships with colleagues and relationships with parents. Another participant discussed

the importance of being "respected by colleagues", while a third also specified relationships with colleagues and with parents among general comments about "relationship skills".

Another area that was mentioned a total of six times, but which does not inherently have to do with training or experience might be referred to as *personal qualities*. The qualities that participants indicated as important included a passion for education/their area of work, enthusiasm, "interest in expanding their influence", and a positive outlook.

Other factors that were referenced once or twice throughout the responses included a resume, professional references, self-reporting documents, assessment with a profiling tool and "best fit" for the job.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the responses to this question as a whole is that only a narrow range of responses actually made reference to education. All the other responses pertained to the expertise that might be developed through professional experience and on-the-job training or to personal qualities and attitudes that a person may embody. Even more interesting than the infrequency of references to education was the almost total lack of discussion around participation in professional development opportunities offered through the school divisions. One participant referenced professional development in the context of creating/delivering opportunities and another mentioned coursework that takes place in the schools, but no other specific references were made to divisionally initiated professional development programs.

This is of particular interest in the context of this study, because the following questions dealt specifically with divisional professional development models. The next question asked participants if they felt that it was important to have divisionally set priorities for professional development and why. While none of the participants had focused on professional development as a key area of expert

training, they all felt that professional development should be based on divisional priorities. Some participants provided general explanations of how their professional development models are structured, while some focused more clearly on explaining why they felt that divisionally identified priorities were important. Participants also provided a number of qualifiers as to what they meant by "divisional priorities" and rather than explaining why they are important, explained why they should not be viewed as restrictive.

Improving the quality of professional development/education was mentioned or implied by participants most frequently, a total of fourteen times all together. Participants indicated that the setting of divisional priorities impacts the quality of professional development and teaching and learning in the following ways:

- Increased focus on student achievement;
- Consultants/coordinators better able to help at school level;
- Ongoing coaching and mentoring at the school level;
- Improved meeting of needs of schools and clientele;
- Ensures best practices;
- Supports early interventions in literacy and numeracy;
- Guides distribution of resources/budgets;
- Increased reflection on data;
- Informs some hiring practices;
- Professional development is more purposeful; and
- Increased teacher leadership.

Some of these benefits, for example focus on student achievement, involvement of consultants, and coaching/mentorship were mentioned more than once and by more than one participant. Certainly, from the perspective of senior administration and a board of trustees, this is a compelling list of benefits, and it lends a sense of accountability and alignment to a divisional professional development model.

Alignment of goals between teacher, school, school division and province was the next most frequently referenced reason as to why divisional priorities are important. Participants indicated that this alignment has historically been missing with comments like the one at the beginning of this section and "...the link to PD hasn't quite been there". Participants stated beliefs that "...school goals and divisional goals need to be balanced", that "...professional growth supports divisional priorities" and that "...school based correlations need to be incorporated into the school plan".

While the quality and alignment of professional development formed strong arguments of the importance of divisional priorities around professional development, participants also offered a large number of qualifying statements (thirteen in total) intended to clarify the role of divisional priorities and to emphasize that they do not necessarily impede upon autonomy at the school or classrom levels. One participant was deliberate in explaining that some professional development is still driven by schools and clientele, and that divisional priorities are "...based on what is heard in schools" and developed through a process of community consultation. Another participant stated directly that "...teachers should have flexibility and autonomy to direct their own professional learning," and that "...professional growth shouldn't have to be directed". One participant, a superintendent, differentiated between "having priorities" and "giving directives". This participant indicated that in the division in question there was less focus on setting priorities and more emphasis on "having a focus over time". It was also

expressed that directives are unlikely to succeed and that it is more effective to "...hold up good examples of practice". Another participant indicated that priorities are like "...a large umbrella," and "...not restrictive". This participant explained that there is "...room for staff to have input... and to go outside the box every now and then."

Accountability was discussed by one participant who indicated that "...principals should assess teachers' PD plans" to see if they fit with school goals. In a similar context, a different participant mentioned data in the form of "...schools measuring goals and priorities and connecting them to a divisional plan."

When participants were asked about how they know if professional development models are impacting school efficacy in a positive way, they discussed two main themes, data and anecdotal feedback. Participants referenced a number of different kinds of data that they believed to be indicators of the impact of professional development. Report cards and student data were mentioned the most frequently. Other types of data that related more directly to teachers, such as the "take-up on available PD days," and "professional development resumes/portfolios," were also referenced occasionally. Some of the comments about data were quite general, for example that "...data informs instructional practices", "...data is explored on a fairly regular basis", and "...we need to get better at/more comfortable with looking at data". One participant also referenced educational literature as a way of knowing that professional development models are working, stating that senior administrators "...depend on the research that defines what effective PD is."

Anecdotal feedback was referenced a total of nine times. Participants described anecdotal feedback as "more qualitative than quantitative", "more through conversation", and as "one big spiral of

conversation". They described these conversations taking place informally as general anecdotal feedback and formally in "level-specific meetings" and "meetings with consultants".

Working Capacity

"I never questioned where the job ended. The ending was where I chose to put it, in many ways"

-Participant

When Weber (1948) discussed working capacity, he discussed the role of the professional extending beyond the hours of a work day and the walls of the institution. Participants were asked to discuss the working capacity of teachers in terms of how far their professional duties extend, how the division of labour might impact school efficacy, and how senior administrators, being somewhat removed from the classroom, might know if working capacity was impacting school efficacy in a negative way. As the quote at the beginning of this section indicates, it was common for participants to draw from their own experiences as teachers and to define the teaching profession as one that extends well beyond the walls of the school and the hours of the school day.

Some of the most commonly discussed themes with regard to the working capacity of teachers included professionalism, non-teaching duties and out of school obligations, and time commitments. There was also some discussion of how school is defined in terms of a physical location, what constitutes realistic expectations for teachers, autonomy in defining the extent of one's own duties, the notion of a generation gap between older and younger teachers, the terms of collective agreements, and the equitable division of labour.

Professionalism was referenced a total of twelve times in a variety of contexts as a benchmark by which the duties of a teacher are defined. One participant made repeated and explicit reference to

teaching being a "...professional job, requiring a professional working day. Many duties is part of being a professional." Elaborating on what it means to be a professional, this participant made comments such as "[teachers should] dress well for it... work for it... learn about it." One superintendent made strong reference to a sense of professional dedication with comments like, "...someone dedicated to the success of students will do what it takes to address learning needs...", "...dedication of professionals is an important part of their life...", and "...[teaching] is way more than a job – it is a profession, a vocation, a calling." Another participant made reference to "a professional's responsibilities", demands that are "required if you want to be perceived as a professional", and "doing the job to the best of your ability." Interestingly, a superintendent also made a comment that subtly negated the traditional notion of professionalism, saying that, "One of my favourite teachers was a pretty lazy guy, but he just had a way of getting kids working."

With specific regards to professional duties extending beyond the hours of the work day, participants made seven references to out of school obligations and non-teaching duties being part of the role of a teacher. Five comments by different participants directly referenced obligations on evenings and weekends including extra-curricular activities and meeting/communicating with parents. One participant also discussed non-teaching duties in the context of teachers taking on a parenting role, saying "I worry when teachers start to see themselves as substitute parents... we want to support parents in doing a good job of parenting... [but] we need to push other systems (healthcare, mental health, child-family services)... we struggle with engaging those other systems as well as we need to".

Time commitments were also discussed a total of seven times. Comments about the time that teachers commit to their duties tended to be general in nature. One participant discussed the idea of a "9:00 – 3:00" day being "a very dated view of education" and expressed his belief that in reality, the

school day is not defined in hours. A superintendent expressed that, "The part [of school] that takes place within school hours is actually a pretty small part, I think". Another participant said that, "...most professionals go beyond the 5.5 hours specified in the public schools act. We see much evidence of that..." Another superintendent also referenced time commitments, however, did not imply that a greater time commitment necessarily meant a higher degree of professionalism. Rather it was stated that, "We can't equate effectiveness in hours... Teachers spending extra time in the classroom doesn't always equate to a better experience for kids."

Three participants made reference to the idea of maintaining realistic expectations of teachers. One participant acknowledged that despite the many demands teachers face, "no one can give 100% all the time." Another participant expressed the same belief, commenting, "...it doesn't mean you can just expect *anything* from people". A third participant indicated that one must "...respect when [teachers] can't go beyond the 5.5 hours due to life circumstances".

Three participants discussed the autonomy of teachers in setting their own boundaries in the area of working capacity. One participant discussed personal experience and the importance of striking a healthy balance between professional life and family life. Another participant echoed the importance of a work/family life balance and indicated that the balance can be different for everyone. A third participant also made a statement about "...individuals defining their own jobs".

Two participants made reference to the notion that the time teachers spend in their professional capacities is not limited to the time during which they are physically in the school. One participant said that there are "...certainly times when work goes beyond the walls of the school." Another questioned the changing notion of what it means to be *in school* in a world where learning and communication are so accessible through technology.

There were also two references to a perceived generation gap between older and younger teachers. One participant reported to have observed, "...a different mindset in younger teachers entering the profession... Young teachers want more of a family life and don't want to put in as much time." Another participant made a similar comment, stating that "...this generation coming through has a different view of the world, and maybe a healthier one – the jury is still out on that." These comments were interesting in that they seemed to partially acknowledge the benefits of a healthy balance between one's professional and personal life, but at the same time had a negative connotation about the perceived work ethic of younger teachers.

Collective agreements were also mentioned by two participants as official documents that are honoured by senior administrators and which define the working capacity of teachers to in an official/legal context.

The equitable division of labour was discussed in some depth by one participant who posed the question of, "...how two educators working different amounts deserve to be paid the same?" This participant expressed that schools are most effective when everyone contributes and when work is equally shared.

When participants were asked what indicators they might look to in order to determine how workloads might be impacting school efficacy, they mainly referenced formal and informal feedback and observation in a variety of contexts, and careful implementation of systemic changes. Teacher burnout and the personal responsibility of teachers to set their own limits were also discussed.

Four participants indicated that senior administrators primarily use observation of different factors and the feedback they receive from schools to determine the impact of workloads on school efficacy. One superintendent indicated that "the only way to know is to monitor for something

particular", and referenced the example of a new provincial report card that required training for staff and one additional reporting period in the school year. Another participant made reference to using school level data to determine the impact of workloads. There were also general comments that implied an ongoing informal observation process. The importance of receiving feedback from a variety of sources was discussed more deeply. Participants made reference to feedback from principals, teachers, and teachers' associations. There were also many comments that described the role of the senior administrator as one who "creates feedback loops", asks many questions, listens, maintains positive relationships with stakeholders, is responsive to requests and engages in constant dialog with various groups.

The next most discussed factor related to the impact of workloads focused on the careful planning and implementation of systemic changes and prevention, rather than how to measure impacts after changes have taken place. Only two participants elaborated on this theme, but they did so in significant depth. The participant who provided the example of the new provincial report card discussed the fact that it was a "top-down" change and that senior administrators recognized that it was going to require extra work. It was indicated that the process of implementing the new report card was of great importance to its success. Another participant made reference to the prevention of problems related to workload through specific elements of the implementation process. This participant indicated that it is important to "provide support for schools, provide release time and training for teachers, allot time for professional development early in the change process, provide level-specific supports, work with administrators to identify school needs, allow sufficient time for implementation, develop concrete plans, make decisions collaboratively and be responsive on a system scale."

The two participants who did not mention observation and feedback, made reference to teacher burnout as an indicator that workloads are having an impact on school efficacy. They also made comments suggesting that it is an individuals' own professional responsibility to determine when workload is having a negative impact and on practice with comments such as, "...teachers have to know where the boundaries are and set them themselves", and "...you've got to find a realistic balance... be conscious of your workload... have the ability to say 'no'". These comments are interesting as on one hand they imply that teachers have autonomy in determining their own workloads, while on the other they inherently fail to acknowledge professional obligations that are not optional.

Finally, on the topic of working capacity, participants were asked how senior administrators, who are naturally somewhat removed from the classroom, know when working capacity is impacting school efficacy. The overwhelming majority of comments directly referenced some form of communication with teachers and administrators at the school level. Other comments implied that there was some direct observation on the part of senior administrators, that in some cases senior administrators do not know how working capacity is impacting school efficacy and that personal experience, data, and professional duties provide some insight into the impacts of working capacity.

Participants made a total of 19 comments throughout their responses that directly referenced some form of communication with school staff or a teachers' association as a means by which senior administrators might know how working capacity impacts school efficacy. Many comments were general and simply referenced "communication", "dialog with people directly", "feedback from people", and "staying as connected as you can". Other comments referenced communication with specific stakeholders, often administrators or teachers at the school level, such as, "talking to administrators", "senior administrators talking to each other about what they see in schools", "working with student

services", "dissatisfied people at the school level", "feedback directly from teachers", and "feedback from the teachers' association".

A comparatively small number of comments, five in total, indicated that senior administrators make direct observations in school settings or observe data and research. One participant mentioned "[being] out in schools a lot", and referenced analyzing the demographics of the school division. Another participant made a very general reference to "doing research" on how working capacity impacts school efficacy. A superintendent said that senior administrators, "try to get out to schools to see evidence of student learning and student achievement," which does not necessarily indicate any connection to working capacity.

One participant offered an anecdotal narrative about being related to a new teacher, through which she was aware of the workloads faced by teachers, then indicated that the school division provides special support for new teachers and new administrators, but made no reference to systemic means by which the impact of working capacity was measured.

Of some significance, is the fact that two participants made a total of five references to the fact that senior administrators may simply not know how working capacity impacts school efficacy. One participant said that, "senior administrators are removed from the classroom and don't necessarily know the needs." A superintendent also stated that, "senior administrators don't necessarily know..." He indicated that the role of a senior administrator was a "...different reality [and] a different set of responsibilities." He expressed that in his professional role, he can "...demonstrate that we provide good working condition and resources, but it's not about making the adults in the building happy... a bit of the dilemma of proponents of 'servant leadership' is that they end up serving the noisiest constituency, which tends to be the adults in the building."

<u>Organizational Culture</u>

> *"...each school is really interesting... if it is well managed you can smell it when you come in the building... you can feel it... there is something in the bricks and mortar of every building."*
>
> *-Participant*

In this study, organizational culture was framed as the many processes and routines that take place in schools, which may be carried out very differently from one school to another, but generally meet similar ends. General management, such as school based office procedures, assignment of duties and responsibilities at the school level, and the de facto rules and guidelines by which the school operates would be some examples. Participants were asked to identify and describe the aspects of organizational culture that impact school efficacy and which might help a senior administrator to determine if a school is well managed. They were also asked how senior administrators might recognize if management/organizational culture were having a negative impact on school efficacy and how they might intervene.

When participants were asked to identify the aspects of organizational culture that have the greatest impact on school efficacy and to describe how they recognize these impacts, they made reference to social patterns and behaviours, the culture/climate of the school, student behaviours, buildings and grounds, intangible aspects of the school, and pedagogy.

Participants made a total of twenty references to social patterns and behaviours in a school as an important indicator of school efficacy. While social patterns themselves may not be directly managed in a school, they were discussed as a sign of effective management. A large number of general references were made to "interactions between people", "communication", "conversations", and

"positive relationships". Some specific social patterns were also mentioned by a number of participants including, "how the secretary greets you", "how you are greeted at the door", "students opening the doors for adults", and "the staffroom atmosphere". Participants also made a number of references to social interactions occurring between specific stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents and administrators.

Participants also made a total of fourteen references to the culture/climate of a school that were not specifically focussed on social interactions. Participants occasionally made direct reference to "culture" or "climate", while one participant described some schools as having a "healthy buzz". In other comments, participants mentioned specific aspects of school culture/climate including the general organization of the school, "visual signs of belief and culture", a "sense of family", showcases and displays of student work, openness, celebrations of success, signs of sustainable development, a respectful atmosphere, common expectations around conduct and treatment of others, and a sense of pride.

The behaviours of students were specifically mentioned by participants a total of nine times. Again, students' behaviours are not directly managed in the sense implied by organizational culture, but they were considered a sign of effective management. Three participants made reference to students being engaged and aware of their goals, and two participants mentioned students appearing to be happy and having fun. There were also comments generally indicating that "observing what students are doing" provides some insight into how a school is managed.

Buildings and Grounds were mentioned a total of five times and provide an example that is directly managed at the school level. Participants indicated that appearances, cleanliness, lighting, and safety are all direct signs of how a school is being managed and that they have a significant impact on

school efficacy. Two participants also discussed the importance of physical accessibility for all and cultural accessibility through such provisions as greetings and instructions in a variety of languages.

"Intangibles" were also mentioned a total of five times by three participants. It was noteworthy that all three of these participants made what seemed to be thoughtful, reflective comments about the intangible elements of schools at the outset of their responses. One participant expressed the sentiment as quoted at the beginning of this section, "...each school is really interesting... if it's well managed you can *smell* it when you come in the building. It's not a *smell*, but you can feel it... there is something in the bricks and mortar of every building." Another participant described "...intangibles you can sense, but there is really no hard data about it." A third participant began her response by saying, "I suppose *gut sense* isn't a good answer is it...I mean there are lots of things that come together." The repeated discussion of the intangible elements of schools and the instinctual responses described by participants indicates a deeply internalized level of experience in school settings and implies that the impact of organizational culture on schools is complex and far reaching.

Pedagogy was the last theme discussed by participants, a total of four times, as an indicator that a school is well managed. A superintendent made specific reference to "current pedagogy" as a sign of good management. Another participant made reference to a "focus on learning" and "students and staff working together", while a third simply referred to "academics" as an indicator of effective management.

When participants were asked to discuss how senior administrators might know if organizational culture was having a negative impact on school efficacy and how they might take action or intervene, they discussed themes of communication and mentorship, and to a much lesser degree staffing and direct supervision/intervention.

The majority of the comments, twenty-two in total, made direct reference to communication or alluded to the process of communication. Participants indicated that they might recognize problems with organizational culture through "asking the right kinds of questions", "asking a lot of questions", "hearing concerns from parents", and the inaccessibility of administrators. Four of the six participants described a process of intervention that was heavily framed by communication. They described making primary contact with a principal and having "a lot of conversation... over a long period of time", "consulting with others", "sitting down with an administrator", "putting issues on the table for discussion", "providing ideas", "acknowledging and discussing mistakes", being honest, listening, asking questions, "preparing to hear answers I don't want to hear", "acknowledging the possibility of my own role in the problem", "providing time to think about problems", and "having difficult conversations".

Generally, the same participants went on to discuss the process of providing mentorship, guidance, or coaching to administrators in an effort to improve the situation. The majority of these comments were general references to mentorship, "acting as a guide", acting in a "coaching role", and "walking alongside" colleagues. Some specific examples of mentorship included "...supporting new principals in relations with staff", "providing examples, advice and research", and "looking at the situation in a realistic way, helping to plan for next steps... and working together over time".

The two participants who did not focus on communication and mentorship, both discussed making changes to staffing arrangements in schools. A superintendent discussed "changing a principal's location", "suggesting retirement", and "obliging all staff who request transfers and allowing the principal to hire new staff." Another participant made a similar comment about "...decisions at a senior administration level about movement of principals and vice-principals." The same participant made reference to administrators being formally evaluated on a five year cycle to "highlight areas that need

improvement", and expressed that there have been cases in which administrators undergo "supervision for growth." Another superintendent in the study made reference to direct interventions, but specified that one should only "exercise the power of the [superintendent] role in an emergency"; that he would "intervene if students' safety or education is at risk", but that "...it would be unusual to see something and want to intervene right away."

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the interviews used in this study was to explore senior administrators' perceptions of the six different aspects of bureaucracy and their impact on school efficacy, and to arrive at a definition of school efficacy that emerged naturally from the experiences, perspectives and values of the participants. This summary will briefly report on the main findings of the study reported in detail in Chapter 4. A condensed summary of the main themes discussed in relation to each of the six elements of bureaucracy is provided in *Table 1: Summary of Findings*.

Participants offered many thoughts on the meaning of the term "school efficacy" and identified it as a complex and dynamic concept that encompasses almost all aspects of school life. Participants discussed the common characteristics of effective schools including clear goals and vision/mission statements, strong relationships between all stakeholders, teacher quality, academics and student achievement, student centered pedagogy, a stable and open organizational structure, safe and inclusive learning environments, collection and reporting of data, student and staff engagement, an understanding of the change process, leadership and student voice. No reference was made to student or school performance with regards to specific assessment tools or standardized tests. There was also no mention of education legislation, specific pedagogical models, or the use of specific learning resources, programs or curricula. This indicates a strong emphasis on the non-uniform events and the human relations that define a "professional bureaucracy" (Litwak, 1961). Little emphasis was placed on the notion of a traditional ideal-type bureaucracy that focuses on systemic bottom lines without considering the needs and experiences of the people within the system.

	Policy (p. 74-85)	**Authority & Hierarchy (p. 85-91)**	**Doc. Management (p. 92-97)**	**Expert Training (p. 98-103)**	**Working Capacity (p. 104-110)**	**Organizational Culture (p. 111-115)**
Most to least frequently discussed themes with regards to impact on school efficacy	• Practicality (application in the field) • Flexibility (open to interpretation) • School/ teacher autonomy • Planning • Source (top-down vs. bottom-up) • Insurance	• Antagonism • Inefficacy of hierarchy • Flat hierarchy • "Soft Skills" • Character • Charismatic Authority • Expert Authority • Official Authority	• Technology (integrated systems, duplication) • Efficiency (processing & Storage) • Volume of documents • Associated Costs	• Professional experience • Education • Relationship management • Personal qualities • Resume & references • Assessment using profiling tool	• Professionalism • Out of school obligations • Time commitments • Expectations for teachers • Teacher autonomy • Generation gap • Collective Agreements • Division of Labour	• Social patterns & behaviours • School culture/climate • Student behaviour • Buildings & grounds (cleanliness, lighting, safety) • "Intangibles" • Pedagogy
Most to least frequently discussed themes with regards to actual practice and measurement of impact on efficacy	• Time • Practice (trial and error) • Annual reports • Cyclical surveys • Impact of policy not measured • School plan • Anecdotal feedback	• Expert Authority (support, leadership, mentorship • Official Authority (Building Accountability) • Charismatic Authority (Inspiration)	• Planning & Assessment • Transparency • Progress • School Plan Document • Anecdotal feedback • Information management systems • Inconsistent reporting • Observation of student work • Teacher evaluations	• Improving PD • Alignment of goals • Qualifiers (statements differentiating divisional "priorities" from "directives") • Accountability • Anecdotal feedback • Data (report cards, use of PD days, for instruction and assessment	• Communication with stakeholders • Focused observations • School level data • Planning for change • Teacher burnout • Impact of working capacity not measured	• Communication & conversation (phone calls, emails, face to face with parents, teachers' associations, school staff) • Mentorship (of school administrators) • Changes to staffing (reassignment of principals)

Table 1. Summary of Findings. This table presents a summary of findings. The table is organized horizontally by the six elements of bureaucracy and vertically by the frequency with which themes were discussed when reporting impacts on efficacy, as well as themes connected to actual practice and the measurement of impacts on school efficacy.

The main themes that were discussed regarding the impact of *policy* on school efficacy included autonomy at the school level, the planning and development of the policy, the practical application and flexibility of the policy, and the source of the policy. The main way in which senior administrators know how an existing policy is impacting school efficacy is through formal and informal systems of reporting and observation of actual practices in schools. It was indicated that the allowance of time is an important factor in determining the impact of a new policy, especially in situations where there might be initial tension or pushback at the school level. All participants expressed the sentiment that they either had a minimalist view towards policy, or that they felt policy trailed practice rather than leading it. There was also a general consensus among participants that educational policy acts in large part as a form of security or insurance to direct decision making when something goes wrong. Participants also made some reference to the large volume of policy documents that exist, indicating that the majority are management oriented and do not have a direct bearing on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Authority and hierarchy structures were discussed as having both negative and positive impacts on school efficacy. The traditional notion of a hierarchical structure was identified by some participants as antagonistic and ineffective due to being too directive and creating distance between stakeholders within the system. Participants discussed the notion of a "flattened hierarchy", downplaying the importance of the various roles within the school system and replacing it with a focus on institutional goals, such as student success and achievement. There were some comments implying that hierarchy has a positive impact on school efficacy by providing a structure for leadership and creating a clear, focussed vision throughout a school division. When discussing the skills required of a person in a position of authority within the school system, participants discussed charismatic authority and expert authority extensively. Little reference was made to official/legal authority, and there was virtually no

mention of traditional authority. Participants focussed heavily on soft skills related to character, relationships and communication, which may be considered elements of charismatic authority. Knowledge and demonstrated success in specific areas such as leadership, effective instructional practices, problem solving, and curriculum also emphasized the importance of expert authority. The discussion of official/legal authority and traditional authority as types of authority that depend more on institutional credentials and the power of particular roles was limited to participants who questioned the relevance of these types of authority. Participants indicated that they have an impact on school efficacy through their senior administrative roles by ensuring accountability, inspiring others, and at times using the power of the professional role.

Participants discussed a number of challenges related to *document management*. Technology was the most frequently discussed challenge, specifically the transition from paper processes to electronic ones and the complexity of choosing integrated software packages that meet all the needs of a school division. The efficiency of handling, processing and storing documents was also discussed frequently. There were a number of references to the large volume of documents at the senior administrative level and across the various levels of school divisions, the financial costs of document management, legal obligations, and coordination with outside agencies. When asked about how specific documents might impact school efficacy, participants discussed planning and assessment documents with the most frequency. Participants also discussed the roles of various documents which provide transparency and act as records of local data to guide practice. Participants suggested that senior administrators depend on anecdotal feedback, pushback from the school level, and inconsistencies in data and reporting to determine if document management is having a negative impact on school efficacy.

Expert Training was discussed first in the context of the criteria used to determine who would make a quality educational professional, and second, in the context of professional development for practicing professionals. Participants indicated a strong emphasis on the importance of professional experience. The themes of education, relationship management skills, and personal qualities that an educational professional might possess were mentioned about half as frequently. Initially, participants did not mention professional development in connection to expert training, but when asked about it they unanimously expressed that it is important to set divisional priorities for professional development at the school/teacher level. They indicated that setting divisional priorities for professional development had a number of positive impacts including improved training, alignment of goals, and increased accountability. Throughout their responses, participants also offered a significant number of qualifying statements intended to distinguish *priorities* from *directives*, indicating that the former are broad and provide room for autonomy and flexibility at the school level. Participants identified anecdotal feedback as the primary way in which they assess the effectiveness of professional development models, and also referenced data in the form of report cards, use of PD days, and instruction and assessment data.

The discussion of *working capacity* began with the question of how far the duties of educational professionals extend beyond the walls of the school and the hours of the school day. In their responses, participants discussed professionalism, non-teaching duties and out of school obligations, and time commitments. There was also some discussion of how school is defined in terms of a physical location, what constitutes realistic expectations for teachers, autonomy in defining the extent of one's own duties, the notion of a generation gap between older and younger teachers, the terms of collective agreements, and the equitable division of labour. When participants were asked about indicators that might help to determine the impact of workloads on school efficacy, they mainly referenced formal and

informal feedback and observation in a variety of contexts, and careful implementation of systemic changes. Teacher burnout and the personal responsibility of teachers to set their own limits were also discussed. Participants indicated that senior administrators might know when working capacity is impacting school efficacy through communication and feedback from administrators and teachers at the school level, and through direct observation in schools. Some participants expressed that they do not always know how working capacity impacts school efficacy.

When participants were asked about the impact of *organizational culture* on school efficacy, they discussed social patterns and behaviours, the culture/climate of the school, student behaviours, buildings and grounds, intangible aspects of the school, and current pedagogy. When asked how senior administrators might know if organizational culture was having a negative impact on school efficacy and how they might intervene, the most common responses related to communication and anecdotal feedback. Participants discussed feedback and communication from various stakeholders as the main channels through which they might become aware of negative impacts, and communication, discussion, and conversations as the initial form of intervention. Participants also frequently discussed the theme of providing mentorship, guidance and coaching for school level administrators struggling with issues related to organizational culture. To a much lesser degree, staffing arrangements and direct supervision/intervention on the part of a senior administrator were also discussed.

<u>Discussion</u>

In the previous chapter, the findings of this study were reported in detail, within the context of Weber's (1946) six elements of bureaucracy. The findings were organized according to the frequency with which common themes were discussed and included direct quotes from the participants whenever possible in order to provide a clear representation of what was said about each element of bureaucracy.

In this chapter, the findings will be analyzed and discussed through the theoretical framework of loosely and tightly coupled systems (Fusarelli, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009, Weick, 1976; Weick, 1982). Framing the analysis within the context of systems coupling achieves four things:

1. It provides a larger systemic context within which the individual elements of an educational bureaucracy are administered. This helps us avoid the tendency to view and discuss the elements of bureaucracy as isolated entities and encourages us to think of them as interrelated parts of a whole.
2. It allows us to make observations about similarities, differences, and inconsistencies in terms of how loosely or tightly coupled the elements of bureaucracy are within and across the school divisions that participated.
3. It allows us to examine how loosely or tightly coupled each element of bureaucracy is to school efficacy as defined by the participants, and to discuss how loose and tight coupling in these areas impact school efficacy.
4. It provides the basis for a richer discussion of the dynamics of systems coupling in schools. Educational bureaucracy provides a set of structural-organizational elements that are common to all schools, regardless of how loosely or tight coupled they are. Systems coupling has been discussed in relation to education policy (Fusarelli, 2002) and professional development (Lima, 2007), but at the time of this study, to the best of the author's knowledge, no one has discussed each individual element of Weber's bureaucracy in the context of systems coupling in school organizations.

In this analysis, the systems coupling of each element of bureaucracy will be analyzed in two ways:

1. How loosely or tightly coupled it appears to be, in terms of being centralized and uniform across a school division, or across the different divisions that participated, and

2. How loosely or tightly coupled it is to the specific goal of school efficacy (i.e., the degree to which school efficacy depends on the proper functioning of a given element of bureaucracy).

This will help to differentiate between events that appear to be centrally controlled and highly uniform from those which have the strongest connection to school efficacy, as the two are neither synonymous, nor mutually exclusive.

School Efficacy. In this study, *school efficacy*, as defined by the participants, represents the systemic goal to which the sub-systems of an educational bureaucracy are loosely or tightly coupled. Participants' offered a broad and dynamic conceptualization of school efficacy, one that is not based on standardized academic achievement indicators. The focus of school efficacy might change significantly based on the context and situation of a given school, classroom, or even individual. It is important that when discussing systems coupling, we acknowledge the difference between the definition of school efficacy used in this study, and those that reduce the concept to a single indicator, such as student achievement on performance assessments (Marzano & Waters, 2007, 2009; Fusarelli, 2002).

For example, in *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*, Marzano and Waters (2007) performed a meta-analysis targeting "[quantitative] studies involving district leadership... that... reported a correlation between district leadership... and student academic achievement... [which] used a *standardized measure of student achievement or some index based on a standardized measure of student achievement*" (p. 9, italics added). This working paper was based on the same study that informed the book *District Leadership*

that Works: Striking the Right Balance, in which Marzano and Waters (2009) argue for tight coupling in educational organizations.

In *Tightly Coupled Policy in Loosely Coupled Systems: Institutional Capacity and Organizational Change*, Fusarelli (2002), discusses a shift towards more tightly coupled education policy in the United States, intended to "raise academic standards... and increase student performance" (p. 569). He goes on to describe some of the changes to have come out this reform, including that,

> "Every state except Iowa has a state mandated test, and 18 states require exit tests. Some states such as Texas have revised and improved their testing and accountability systems over time, indicating that some degree of systemic policy learning is occurring" (p. 569).

In the case of New York State, Fusarelli (2002) observed that, "Patterns of resistance are beginning to change as states and local districts publish test scores... and create new and improved accountability systems" (p.569). The author provides a number of other examples that focus on tests and achievement scores, which are supposed to indicate "...growing evidence that state and federal systemic reform efforts are having an impact on education at the local level" (p. 569).

By reducing school efficacy to a single variable – achievement scores on standardized tests – the examples above provide superficial conceptualizations of tightly coupled educational organizations. This creates a dichotomous framework in which organizations are either loosely or tightly coupled, and implies that one may be better than the other, a problematic dynamic that is discussed further in the conclusions of this study. The participants in this study have offered a more dynamic, broad, and inclusive definition of the term school efficacy, making it possible to discuss the elements of an educational bureaucracy along a continuum of systems coupling, which is not dichotomous and which doesn't imply value judgements.

Recalling the definition of school efficacy that we are using in this study, it may initially seem to be indicative of a loosely coupled system, in that it includes a variety of goals that may potentially come into conflict with one another at times. The reality, of course, is that no school is entirely focused on all of these goals at once, but rather is likely focused on certain goals at certain times based on need and context. As one participant phrased it, "School efficacy, in my world, would be the ability of the school to effect what it is trying to accomplish." This almost tautological statement indicates high degrees of autonomy and flexibility in determining school efficacy goals. In terms of school divisions in Manitoba, one might expect to see more loosely coupled educational organizations with less emphasis on standardized testing than in the United States, or even some other Canadian provinces. This does not, however, imply that the entire school system or the school divisions that were represented in this study are loosely coupled, or that certain elements of the school system cannot be tightly coupled to the goal of school efficacy. In other words, a broad and dynamic definition of school efficacy does not preclude it from being a goal to which the elements of an educational bureaucracy might be tightly coupled. In the following discussion of each of the elements of bureaucracy, I will attempt to highlight any and all directly stated and/or implied references to their degree of coupling to the goal of school efficacy.

Policy. Through their collective discussion of policy, the participants indicated that in general, education policy is loosely coupled to the goal of improving school efficacy, however, they also indicated some specific examples of policies that are more tightly coupled to the goal of school efficacy than others. Loosely coupled policy seems counter-intuitive, as the very word *policy* often conjures images of official rules, regulations and even laws that govern organizations. Indeed, education policy is tightly coupled in the sense that it is centrally controlled and uniform throughout the province due to the fact that every school in every division must adhere to the Manitoba Public Schools Act (Manitoba, 2014), which provides an outline of the duties of school employees, safety provisions, and general operations

of schools and school boards. Beyond this, however, the majority of the comments from participants indicated that at the divisional level, policy is loosely coupled.

Participants did discuss some specific examples of policies, which they felt had an impact on school efficacy, but none of the examples were reported to have had a direct impact on academic achievement. Some examples included a nutrition policy, a cell phone/mobile device policy, and a smoking/tobacco policy. These examples were reported to have had positive impacts school efficacy in terms of health, school culture, and reclaimed instructional time, but no concrete links to academic achievement were discussed.

Practicality and flexibility were reported to be the main predictors of a policy’s success. Loosely coupled policies, in the sense of being less centralized and uniform across the organization, were predicted to have a more positive impact than tightly coupled policies. This may simply be due to the fact that they can more easily be interpreted, adapted, and implemented at the local level. This would also be supported by the comments indicating that the origin of a new policy (bottom-up vs. top-down) is a predictor of its success, where the former will tend to be more successful than the latter. One participant indicated that,

> “A policy is a policy, but it doesn’t mean that there might not be a little bit of flex with it, because we’re dealing with human beings, and with human beings, there has always got to be flexibility.”

This statement draws a direct connection to Litwak’s (1961) notions of *human relations* and *professional bureaucracy*, which are able to deal effectively with non-uniform events, and to Weick’s (1976) observation that schools are more loosely coupled than other organizations. Another participant provided insight into the degree of variation that exists in schools with regard to policy, saying that,

> "Schools are very, very good at finding their own versions and their own ways of doing anything. Being consistent in school to school across the division is also very, very difficult. One of the things I've really come to believe over my years in education is that nothing is as inconsistent as consistency. I could give you lots of examples of how schools will find a way of being inconsistent with something they're supposed to be consistent with."

This quote indicates that even when one would expect to find consistency across the division, interpretation and implementation of policy is varied to meet needs at the school level.

Another factor that might contribute to loosely coupled policy is that schools are not only organizations that deal primarily with human beings and non-uniform events, but the actors within the system operate with relatively high levels of autonomy. Weick (1976) described that in loosely coupled organizations, "coupled events are responsive, *but* that each event also preserves its own identity" (p. 3). This could also be said of the professional roles within a school. Weick (1976) provides the example of a principal and a counselor:

> "The image is that the principal and the counselor are somehow attached, but that each retains some identity and separateness and that their attachment may be circumscribed, infrequent, weak in its mutual effects, unimportant, and/or slow to respond" (p. 3).

This very idea was offered by a superintendent in the study, who said that, "All of those decisions around assessment, instruction, building relationships, building classroom community, keeping kids engaged; those are all teacher decisions." This comment acknowledges the reality that school organizations face with regard to implementing policy, namely that neither a school principal, senior administrator, school board member, nor the Minister of Education can effectively monitor all teachers to ensure that they are using consistent practices in the areas of instruction, assessment, or

engagement. It is important to note that this comment was not made as a complaint or offered with any negative connotation, but simply stated as a fact. Another participant made a comment with the same underlying assumption, saying that,

> "Lots of the things that probably reach closest to the classroom are more often in documents that would not be official policy. They'd be under guidelines, they'd be under those other titles, because sometimes those things are evolutionary and you want the flexibility for them to evolve over time. It wouldn't be as tightly framed as an actual policy statement."

Even Marzano and Waters (2009), who argue for tighter coupling and defend the virtues of policy reform, found that *defined autonomy*, the allowance of autonomy for school administrators (but not necessarily teachers) "*within the boundaries defined by the district goals"* (p. 8), had a positive correlation with student achievement.

These comments draw out what is perhaps the most significant and compelling theme related to the discussion of policy, which is that the participants did not think of policy as having a significant impact on school efficacy. As reported in the findings, a number of references were made to the notion of policy as a security measure or a form of insurance for the school division in the event that something should go significantly wrong. One participant, another superintendent, even made an explicit reference to policy having a negative impact on school efficacy, saying that,

> "If policy becomes too detailed, too oriented towards micromanaging, it has a very negative impact on school operations and the learning environment... Is [policy] going to restrict decision making? Is it going to be narrowing the scope of a principal's decision making capabilities? If so, I would probably not go that way."

Not only do all of these responses seem to indicate that the participants see policy as loosely coupled, but also that they do not feel that loosely coupled policy has a negative impact on school efficacy, or that policy should be more tightly coupled. In fact, they have even made fairly strong statements indicating that tightly coupled policy could have negative impacts, such as the comment above and the comments of another superintendent, reported in the findings, including, "We shouldn't pass policy until we are confident that it will work", "Policy is not leading, it's trailing the more progressive forces", "Policy is not the leading edge. If it is, it's usually unsuccessful", "If people aren't comfortable with the practice, they won't touch the policy", and "If a teacher read [our policy manual] cover to cover, I'm not sure it would make them a better teacher."

It is interesting to consider this finding in contrast to the movement that can be seen in the United States to improve school efficacy almost exclusively through policy reform (Evans, 2009; Fusarelli, 2002; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012; Marshak, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Schmoker & Marzano, 1999; Valenzuela, 2005; Westheimer, 2008). Participants in this study observed that that tightly coupled policy does not take into account the human, non-uniform events in educational organizations, which sheds light on the arguments from both proponent and opponents of policy reform in the United States.

Proponents of policy reform tend to base their support for reform on the assumption that policy ought to be tightly coupled to school efficacy, and that school efficacy can be exclusively defined as student achievement on standardized assessments (Fusarelli, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Schmoker & Marzano, 1999). Accountability practices, such as ranking schools and publishing standardized test scores, also seem to imply that if student achievement indicators do not improve as a result of policy reform, that the problem must lie with the quality of teachers and their instruction (Barber & Mourshed,

2007; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012; Marzano & Waters, 2009). What the opponents of policy reform often attempt to point out is that the problems may actually originate with the policies themselves, the underlying assumption that policy reform is an effective way to improve school efficacy, and/or the notion that school efficacy can be defined by a single variable (Evans, 2009; Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008; Marshak, 2003, Valenzuela, 2005; Westheimer, 2008).

If indeed, policy is naturally loosely coupled in educational organizations, proponents of policy reform may be placing all of their eggs in one basket, unaware of (or unwilling to acknowledge) the fact that other baskets even exist. While the participants in this study occasionally made general references to the fact that education policy does serve some practical purposes, the indication is that improved school efficacy is not one of them, or at least it is not very high on the list. Rather, education policy is conceptualized as the organizational rules laid out in the Manitoba Public Schools Act, a security/insurance measure when something goes wrong, and a set of guidelines that may influence practices related to school efficacy.

Authority and Hierarchy. There was some variance among participants in terms of their perceptions of the degree to which authority and hierarchy structures impact school efficacy. It is important to note that some of this variance may be due to partial or biased understandings of the term *hierarchy* on the part of some participants. For example, a number of the comments about negative impacts on school efficacy were speculative, rather than based on actual experiences, and in some cases participants equated the term *hierarchy* to a dictatorship. In Weber's bureaucracy, and in the context of this study, authority and hierarchy are not inherently negative, simply due to the fact that they imply an unequal distribution of power. An unequal distribution of power within an organization is not unnatural, and taking the professional roles and responsibilities of various parties into account, cannot

even be described as a power imbalance, because in a hierarchical system certain agents are expected to have more power than others in order to effectively fulfill their duties. Nonetheless, it is interesting to discuss negative accounts, denials, and attempts to reconceptualise constructs of authority and hierarchy as they have been interpreted by participants.

One of the prevalent misconceptions participants had about hierarchical structures was that they are inherently antagonistic. The fact that certain participants were more focused on this, than on the actual purpose of a hierarchical structure, is very interesting and raises some compelling questions about how participants view their professional roles within the larger system and how well they understand the components of an educational bureaucracy. For example, one participant stated that,

> "...hierarchy can really get peoples' backs up – even just the word – because people look at it like a dictatorship sometimes, and people don't feel it's consultative or collaborative. That's the image it has, I think. I personally do not think hierarchical structures work. That's not how I've ever operated in anything I've ever done in my life. I don't think that it really supports school efficacy because I think schools get their backs up. In fact sometimes I think it creates places for people to tunnel in and you get what I call 'the little red school house effect', where everybody closes their door and nobody wants anybody in... Bolt it up and keep them out, because the hierarchy is going to come in... and maybe it even goes to back to the old days of school supervisors or inspectors coming in and inspecting if you were on *page 33 on April 4th*, or whatever you needed to be doing."

Other participants also offered speculative comments about the potential for a closed, top-down system with too many directives to cause resentment and contribute to "Us vs. Them" thinking between stakeholders in an educational organization.

While participants indicated that a dictatorship-style hierarchical system would be ineffective, even harmful in terms of school efficacy, there were a number of comments that described a *flattened hierarchy*. Participants described such a hierarchy as one in which professionals work together to achieve common goals, regardless of their titles or roles within an organization. It is interesting to consider that the participants who made these comments occupy some of the highest positions within their organizations, and yet claim that flat hierarchical structures will be more likely to have positive impacts on school efficacy. Perhaps this is because the participants all come from teaching and school administration backgrounds and likely identify with these levels of the organization as well.

In organizational theory, a flat hierarchy is referred to as a *heterarchy*. In *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, philosopher Ken Wilber (2000) eloquently summarizes the differences between a hierarchy and a heterarchy. He also points out a logical flaw with the latter, which cannot be ignored in a discussion of systems and organizations;

> "In a *heterarchy*, rule or governance is established by a pluralistic and egalitarian interplay of all parties; in a *hierarchy*, rule or governance is established by a set of priorities that establish those things that are more important and those that are less." (p. 24).

According to Wilber, social theorists tend towards favouring heterarchical models;

> "On the one side we have the champions of [heterarchy], who see all creatures as equal nodes in the web of life, and who... inveigh against harsh social ranking and domination, arguing instead for a pluralistic wholeness..." (p. 24).

Wilber continues to offer a counter perspective from the sciences, which argues that,

> "...you cannot have *wholeness* without *hierarchy*, because unless you organize the parts into a larger whole whose glue is a principle higher or deeper than the parts possess alone... then you have heaps, not wholes... 'Hierarchy' and 'wholeness,' in other words, are two names for the same thing, and if you destroy one, you completely destroy the other." (p. 24).

In education, a flat hierarchy (or heterarchy) would seem to imply that all educational professionals occupy the same level of the organization, that there is only one level to the organization, and that the significance of roles has been replaced by the significance of goals and organizational objectives. The logical problem that this theoretical arrangement presents is that there is no longer anyone responsible for setting organizational goals and objectives. In Manitoba, we know that this is not the case as the participants in this study have identified priorities in the areas of engagement, literacy and numeracy and graduation, which drive professional development and school goal planning.

In order to resolve the semantic confusion that surrounds the notions of hierarchy, theorists have identified two types of hierarchies: Normal/actualization hierarchies (also known as *holarchies*), and pathological/domination hierarchies (Eisler, 1987; Koestler, 1967; Wilber, 2000). Wilber (2000) describes that in a natural holarchy we see, "the sequential or stagelike unfolding of larger networks of increasing wholeness, with the larger or wider wholes being able to exert influence over the lower order wholes... If the higher levels can exert influence over the lower levels, they can also overdominate or even repress and alienate the lower levels. And that leads to a host of pathological difficulties, in both the individual and society at large." (p. 30).

Some of the comments in the findings of this study would indicate that, although participants had a tendency to associate the term hierarchy with the notion of a pathological hierarchy, they are also aware of some of the benefits and necessities of hierarchical structures. Whether they believed that

hierarchies worked or not, all participants acknowledged that school divisions are somewhat hierarchical in their organization. They discussed the need to balance direction with autonomy, to provide support and remove constraints, and to build and support positive school cultures. There were also comments that fully acknowledged hierarchy and spoke of its potential to have a positive impact through leadership, alignment within and between the levels of a school division, and the development of clear goals.

While the discussion of hierarchical systemic structures was varied and a range of understandings and attitudes were evident in the responses, the discussion of *authority* was somewhat more focused and relatable to the experience of the participants. As negative conceptualizations of hierarchy were somewhat more common than positive ones, it might not come as a surprise that participants indicated "soft skills", which might fall into the category of *charismatic authority,* to be the most referenced qualities of importance to a position of authority within a school division. They were referenced in a total of twenty-seven comments in response to the question, "What qualities do you think a person in a position of authority should have?"

If frequency is any indication of importance, the extent to which soft skills and charismatic authority were discussed would certainly support the conclusion that participants see authority as loosely coupled to school efficacy. Based on the emphasis participants placed on charismatic authority, it is conceivable that an individual might advance within an educational hierarchy based on their personal qualities and charismatic virtues, rather than expertise in their field, their effectiveness as an educator, or their capacity to improve school efficacy across a school division. In comparison to expert authority, legal authority and traditional authority, the basis of charismatic authority has less to do with professional expertise or the significance of institutional roles and more to do with relationships and

impression management. Clifton (1979) says that, "Charismatic authority is based upon the respect that individuals have for the extraordinary powers and performances of an individual." (p. 64). In his paper, *Practice Teaching: Survival in a Marginal Situation*, he states that,

> "Given the fact that most teachers as well as student teachers are quite ordinary individuals, they cannot rely upon this mode in order to maintain control within a classroom. It may, however, be a mode of authority which a few teachers and student teachers may be able to use, and for them this mode of authority may be very effective." (p. 65).

From this, the conclusion might be drawn that school administrators, and thus senior administrators, tend to emerge from a pool of individuals who exhibit strong soft skills and charismatic authority. These individuals would be good communicators who effectively build and maintain relationships, earning the respect of their peers and the confidence of their superiors. We might then ask, does this mean that senior administrators within educational organizations are simply the most charming and charismatic individuals? Do they also embody expert authority, legal authority, and traditional authority in the execution of their roles?

To begin answering this question, it would appear that indeed, expert authority was considered by participants to be at least as important as charismatic authority, as both were mentioned twenty or more times each by the six participants. Clifton (1979) states that,

> "Expert authority relies upon technical knowledge and experience; an individual is granted a legitimate right to exercise power within a defined set of activities because of his recognized competence and expertise." (p. 64).

As reported in the findings, participants directly reported specific areas of knowledge and experience that they considered important for someone in a position of authority, including a proven track record, success in previous positions, modeling of effective practices and a strong capacity for leadership and mentorship.

It is noteworthy that, compared to the twenty or more references to expert and charismatic authority, participants made almost no reference to traditional or legal/official authority. According to Clifton (1979),

> "Traditional authority means that the legitimacy that an individual has is based upon both his and his followers' attachment to established customs and practices. In essence, it is the tradition which sanctifies the authority of an individual," and, "Official authority is inherent within an organizational position; whoever occupies such a position in the structure of the organization is granted the legal or official right to exert power by virtue of the office." (p. 64).

In other words, none of the participants expressed the point of view that their authority ought to be accepted purely on the basis of their official title, or the traditional role of power associated with their title. It may not be surprising that participants would indicate that the basis of their authority lies predominantly in the domains of charismatic and expert authority, as opposed to official/traditional authority. It is, however, intriguing that when asked about how they, themselves, impact school efficacy, participants provided examples of expert authority most frequently, followed by examples of legal/official authority, while providing only a very few examples of charismatic authority.

Primarily, the participants suggested that they impact school efficacy through providing school administrators with leadership, mentorship, and opportunities to work collaboratively. Next, several references were made to ensuring accountability, ensuring that protocol is followed, showing others the

possible consequences of their actions, and managing priorities. Only a few general references were made to charismatic authority, including inspiring others, creating hope, and influencing others. This apparent contradiction might suggest that while the participants viewed themselves as charismatic experts in their field, who rely very little (or not at all) on official/legal authority, they do in fact use the powers of their roles more than they perceive when drawing on actual examples and behaviours through which they impact school efficacy. This is not to suggest any flaw in the participants, or for that matter, to imply any devaluation of official/legal authority. While charismatic and expert authority may be more flattering to one's own perception of self efficacy, it is entirely plausible to assume that in the day to day realities of institutional operations, official/legal authority plays a significant role, and may at times be an important and effective means of achieving specific objectives.

Document Management. Anyone who has worked in an educational organization will be familiar with the proliferation of documents that range from very formal, legal documents, to transient informal documents, and that judging which of these documents actually have a significant impact on school efficacy is a very daunting task. Partly for this reason, participants were originally asked to comment on the greatest challenges with respect to document management in a school division. After providing the opportunity to identify and discuss challenges, participants were asked more pointedly about how document management relates to accountability and school efficacy, and how they might know if document management were having a negative impact on school efficacy.

Before we discuss the participants' responses, it is important to elaborate on the details that distinguish document management in educational organizations from Weber's notion of document management in an ideal-type bureaucracy. Weber (1948), described document management as the management of,

> "...written documents ('the files'), which are preserved in their original or draught form... The body of officials actively engaged in a 'public' office, along with the respective apparatus of material implements and the files, make up a 'bureau'. In private enterprise, 'the bureau' is often called 'the office.'" (p. 197).

In every school there is an office, and in every school division a board office. These 'offices', however, are not the only locations within which documents and files are created, accessed or stored. Perhaps not unique to schools, but certainly very pronounced, is that documents range immensely in formality. Compared to Weber's ideal type, document management in schools is not tightly coupled in the sense of being highly centralized and uniform throughout a school division, or even a single school.

Weber also indicates that, "...the modern organization of the civil service separates the bureau form the private domicile of the official, and, in general, bureaucracy segregates official activity as something distinct from the sphere of private life." (p. 197). This point may also be of interest later on in the discussion of working capacity, however, in the context of document management it suggests a division of the personal and professional roles that many educational professionals may not feel represents their experience. Weber provides examples including, "Public monies and equipment are divorced from the private property of the official... the executive office is separated from the household, business from private correspondence, and business assets from private fortunes" (p. 197). While the examples of money and 'business assets' may hold true, most educational professionals would be unlikely to describe their working environment and correspondences as completely separate form their personal lives. Teachers build relationships with colleagues and students and develop a personal interest in their students' well-being and growth, which almost certainly impacts how they view, document and report student data. Again, compared to Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy, it would

appear that document management in educational organizations is not always highly centralized or tightly coupled to 'the office'.

In many ways, participants indicated that the loose coupling of document management results in many challenges for school divisions. Participants identified the transition from paper to electronic document management systems, the efficient processing of documents, the large volume of documents, the storage and destruction of documents, legal obligations, consistency of procedures, and the costs associated with document management as some of the main challenges. In other words, almost all areas of document management pose challenges, and all of the challenges appear to be directly related to attempts to create more tightly coupled document management systems – systems that are more uniform, more centralized, more efficient, and less costly. Based on these findings, it would seem that there was a latent assumption among participants that document management should be more tightly coupled in the sense of being more centralized and uniform at the divisional level.

The line of questions on the topic of document management were intended to provide insight into whether document management is, or ought to be, loosely or tightly coupled to the specific goal of school efficacy. Specifically, the questions asked about how official documents impact professional accountability in schools and how senior administrators might know if document management systems were having a negative impact on school efficacy.

Participants did express the opinion that an important link exists between documentation and school efficacy, primarily regarding planning and assessment, and transparency. This is interesting as it suggests a certain degree of balance between the two goals of school efficacy and accountability. On the one hand, participants focused on documents that include assessment data and feedback from surveys that might inform planning and identify needs, which would support school efficacy. On the

other hand, participants also expressed the importance of documents in relation to transparency and accountability through discussion of community reports, and specifically, teacher accountability to students and to the school division.

The two goals of school efficacy and transparency may be related, but they are not one and the same. The use of data to inform planning at the school level is something that happens well before any form of reporting occurs and is directly focused on the goal of improving school efficacy. Transparency, on the other hand, can only really be determined after plans have been implemented and their impact has been observed. In a sense, transparency and accountability are afterthoughts, which provide some assurance or justification for why an organization functions in the way that it does. We might say that the goal of school efficacy is concerned with an organization actually succeeding in achieving its goals, while transparency and accountability have more to do with reinforcing expectations and explaining why the organization behaves in the way that it does. While these goals are related, it is possible for them to be addressed independently. For example, a school may plan effectively and fully meet the needs of clientele, but fail to document or report on its activity, and thus appear to outside stakeholders to be lacking in transparency. Likewise, a school may fail to meet the needs of clientele, but document its planning and decision making meticulously and nonetheless appear very transparent to outside stakeholders. In other words, when it comes to school efficacy and transparency/accountability, it is possible to have one without the other. It is important to note that participants also discussed consistency, progress, efficiency, safety and a number of other factors related to document management.

The focus on two separate goals related to document management, as well as a number of other factors that were not mentioned as frequently, would suggest an interesting finding: That while

participants expressed the opinion that document management should be tightly coupled in terms of being highly centralized and consistent across a school division, they did not express the opinion that document management should be tightly coupled to a single goal or outcome for the organization.

One might predict, given the emphasis placed on transparency, that participants would make reference to some of the specific documents that provide transparency when asked how they would know if the demands of document management were having a negative impact on school efficacy. It may be a surprise to note that the most frequently discussed means by which participants reported knowing such information, was not through any formal documentation at all, but through anecdotal reports. These reports included conversations, anecdotal reports from school administrators, and general comments from stakeholders. After anecdotal reports, other forms of feedback, some of them document based, were most frequently mentioned. They included reports on student achievement, teacher evaluations, and general references to information systems within school divisions. This would also indicate a certain degree of loose coupling, as rather than looking to actual data points to determine the impact of document management, participants reported that they rely more on word of mouth and anecdotal feedback from school administrators.

Overall, the findings in the area of document management indicate some inconsistencies in the area of systems coupling. Participants seem to indicate that organizations face a number of challenges related to inconsistencies in the area of document management, and suggest that it should be more centralized and uniform. At the same time, they indicate that document management is loosely coupled, in that it deals with a variety of institutional goals and objectives. Finally, they imply that the primary way in which they know about the impact of document management on school efficacy is not through documents, but through anecdotal reports that vary in formality.

This might suggest that the participants do not place a strong emphasis on documents or document management systems when measuring school efficacy. If this is indeed the case, it may not be a surprise that they observe inconsistencies and a lack of uniformity throughout school divisions in this area. Perhaps this suggests that document management might be an area in which school divisions could explore opportunities for tighter coupling, especially when considering documents that are related to school efficacy, such as school plan documents, documentation of professional development, report cards, and other reports on student achievement. This is not to suggest that school divisions should encourage *more* documentation in these areas, but that they should place a stronger emphasis on these documents as indicators of school efficacy. For example, school divisions may look for correlations between school plan documents, professional development plans, and student achievement data (broadly defined to include grades, academic progress over time, attendance, engagement, etc.). If correlations and patterns appearing to support school efficacy are observed, school divisions might be able to explore ways to reproduce successful initiatives. It could also potentially impact organizational culture by encouraging other stakeholders to place a greater emphasis on creating more uniform, and perhaps more meaningful, documents for planning and implementing effective practices.

This being said, one participant proceeded with a cautionary tone, warning that the "political conversation with people who have no experience with the school system," cannot effectively be mediated with data, and argued that, "we need to be very careful with data and its purposes." This participant also placed a consistent emphasis on the idea that local school data is the most useful data in terms of moving school efficacy indicators. We might add to our conclusions in the area of document management, that efforts to become more tightly coupled must be connected to school efficacy through the planning and implementation of programs and initiatives, and not through external accountability measures that quantify school performance, such as standardized achievement scores.

Expert Training. Expert training, in the context of education, would likely be seen as taking place in two main ways for the majority of educational professionals: First, through one's post-secondary training in a university education program prior to becoming a licensed teacher, and second, through professional development as a practicing teacher. In the context of Weber's model of bureaucracy, it might be fair to expect that those individuals with the most extensive and advanced training would be the best candidates for leadership positions and the most likely to be promoted within an organization. Expert training, however, was found to be of comparatively small significance when participants were asked about the criteria used to identify a quality teacher or administrator.

While education was only mentioned a total of eight times by the six participants, professional experience was mentioned over twenty-five times, more than three times as frequently as education. Surprisingly, participants also made no reference to specific professional development programs, aside from indicating that they might look for potential administrators to be involved in the planning and delivery of professional development on some level. It is important to note that no specific emphasis was placed on education and training in the initial question, except to preface it by explaining that the next series of questions would focus on *expert training*. The responses indicate that participants believe that experience in the field is substantially more relevant to one's professional abilities than their education and professional development. Based on this initial finding, one might predict that participants do not consider expert training to be tightly coupled to school efficacy; however, as the focus shifted towards professional development models, participants began to contradict such a conclusion.

Specifically, when participants were asked to discuss the importance of setting divisional priorities for professional development, they unanimously reported that it is important and that it has a

positive impact on the efficacy of schools and school divisions. We can recall the list of ways in Chapter 4, in which participants felt that divisional priorities for professional development were beneficial.

As participants elaborated on the benefits for school efficacy, there was no mention of achievement on standardized assessments or test-based performance indicators. Rather, all of the benefits relate to the ability to communicate, plan and improve practices on an organizational level. Participants were even deliberate in offering qualifiers in order to explain that divisional *priorities* were not *directives*, and that they were not restrictive.

Here we see examples of tighter coupling in two ways. First, there is consistency and uniformity across school divisions in terms of the divisional priorities, which one participant indicated, "...follow the provincial priorities," (i.e., they are highly centralized). Second, professional development is seen as tightly coupled to the goal of school efficacy. All professional development is expected to align with school goals, which are expected to align with divisional priorities.

For some, it might be a foregone conclusion that professional development would be tightly coupled to the goal of school efficacy. Logically, if an educational professional felt that a professional development opportunity was of no benefit, he or she would not choose to participate. Likewise, if organizers of larger scale, "mandatory" professional development events did not believe that an opportunity would serve the interests of a school division, they would not offer it. This logic, however, which also applies in the context of divisional priorities for professional development, presents a certain double-bind that might unintentionally create a closed system with regards to professional development.

One participant, somewhat unknowingly, exposed this double-bind while discussing the importance of divisional priorities for professional development, indicating that they are so general in nature that they cannot be argued with.

This statement reveals two important things: First, the claim that the priorities of the division cannot be argued with, and second, that the actual priorities (engagement, literacy and graduation) are so general in nature that they automatically negate any criticism. Let us consider again, the characteristics of a closed system defined by Koestler (1967) as, "a cognitive matrix, governed by a canon, [with] three main peculiarities... it claims to represent a truth or universal validity... it cannot be refuted by evidence... [and it] invalidates criticism" (p. 263). He also explains the tendency for "over excited" parts of the system with their own autonomy to assert themselves to the detriment of the whole (p. 265).

In this context, divisional priorities are indicative of a closed system, not because the priorities themselves are flawed, but because "over excited" or dominant stakeholders in educational organizations are able to use them to exert their influence over the whole organization, provided they can successfully link their agendas to the priorities. If a specific group within the organization decides to mandate certain practices in the area of professional development on the grounds that they support divisional priorities, any form of criticism will be discouraged as the critic will have to seemingly place him or herself in opposition to the priorities. Likewise, if someone does offer criticism, the dominant stakeholders can reply with, "Yes, but this supports the divisional priorities, and that is why we expect compliance."

In fact, some participants were asked how they might respond to a teacher who wanted to engage in a professional development plan that did not align with divisional priorities, and while they

tried to allow for autonomy, participants remained firm that alignment with divisional priorities was non-negotiable. For example, one participant indicated that, “it’s a pressure and support thing... support what the teacher wants to do, but pressure to make sure that the school and divisional goals are also met.” Another response was tightly framed as a way of supporting teachers, saying “...if *we* name some goals that *we* want to achieve, *we* actually support *our* people in terms of being part of this organization and helping the organization move towards those goals” (italics added). One participant replied with, “...we’d say, ‘Sorry... we’ll help you accommodate that in some other way, but you have a job here and you work for this school division and these kids.’” Another participant spoke about the measures in place to provide flexibility for professional development that would, “fall under the umbrella that we’ve created,” but indicated that, “...there’s still a significant group of people who would just prefer to do whatever they want, because, ‘I’m the professional’, and I understand that.” The same participant who expressed that no one could argue with the priorities discussed in the quote above, answered by saying, “...when the board first set the priorities, there was some pushback because that had *never* happened before.” It was explained as the outcome of a large scale consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders from throughout the community and the division, which was followed up on by administrators, which was shared with the school board, who then used the information to create the priorities. The participant, who had previously indicated a belief that hierarchical systems don’t work, said, “I don’t know if it was hierarchical, it was different though, because even with all those things that took place before hand there was still... People say, ‘What? Where did that come from?’ It was hard for people to relate all those experiences to what the result was.”

All of these responses attempt to provide some autonomy for the teacher whose professional development goals do not align with divisional priorities, but they also present a clear consensus among participants that alignment with divisional priorities is non-negotiable. At best, a teacher in this

situation might be allowed to do what he or she wants, as long as they also do what the organization expects. This example provides insight into how professionals might be pressured to conform to expectations by using divisional priorities to create a closed system. Teachers in this situation have only three choices – they can 'play along' and attempt to convince administrators that their professional development does support divisional priorities, they can abandon their plan and do something that they are directed to do, or they can express opposition to the priorities, which as we have already established, cannot be argued with because they are general motherhood statements.

It is significant to note that participants from a variety of school divisions have expressed such consistent views towards the importance of divisional priorities, especially considering the position of the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), as presented in the MTS policy handbook (Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2013), which states that, "Professional development encompasses formal and informal activities which teachers undertake to direct their own learning and to enhance their professional practice" (p. 59). The MTS policy handbook includes the following principles regarding professional development:

> "That the prime responsibility for determining professional development lies with teachers... That teacher autonomy in professional development is both a right and a responsibility of the individual teacher... That professional development must be conducted in a supportive climate of trust, peer support, open communications, collegiality and collaboration... [and] That teachers have an active voice in provisions made by school divisions for teachers' professional development" (p. 59-60).

While these principles illustrate quite clearly that teachers have the autonomy to determine their professional development plans, participants in this study seem to contradict MTS policy, at least insofar

as they believe that school divisions should set the limitations within which teacher autonomy can function.

This is of some concern, as for all the benefits that participants have elaborated on, from a systems theory perspective, mandated alignment with divisional priorities could have the undesired effect of encouraging less variety in professional development practices and result in professional development practices that are less relevant and meaningful to the individuals who must participate in them. In this way, two of the three peculiarities Koestler (1967) articulated – a claim to universal validity and the invalidation of criticism – can theoretically arise through tightly coupling professional development to divisional priorities. The question that remains is whether an organization can inadvertently use divisional priorities to refute evidence.

Evidence of the effectiveness of professional development models was the focus of the final question on the topic of expert training. It is interesting that the most frequently referenced form of evidence of effective professional development was student data, including achievement indicators, survey data, report card data and provincial assessment data. Data related to teacher feedback was only mentioned by two participants in the contexts of "take up on available PD days" and "teacher satisfaction." Anecdotal feedback from school administrators and teachers was also discussed, but not as frequently as student data. This may come as a surprise, as it implies that teachers, the group that directly participates in professional development and implements the training, is not the primary source of feedback regarding the quality and usefulness of professional development. Rather, the responses indicated that participants look primarily at student achievement data to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of professional development. This finding is also perplexing, in that direct reference to provincial assessment data and student achievement indicators are suddenly referenced as evidence of

efficacy, where earlier in the interview, even in the definition of school efficacy, they were largely absent.

Reflecting upon the perceived importance of divisional priorities for professional development and the emphasis on achievement indicators as evidence of effective professional development models, it would seem that there is currently a movement towards tighter coupling in the area of expert training across the school divisions that participated in this study. Not only are professional development models becoming more tightly coupled in the sense that they are more centralized and uniform due to the development of provincial/divisional priorities, they are also tightly coupled to school efficacy, with a specific focus on student achievement indicators. This is noteworthy, as no other element of educational bureaucracy thus far appears to be tightly coupled in both regards, and no other element of bureaucracy has been described as tightly coupled to achievement indicators. This might lead to the question; why tightly couple this one element of the bureaucracy and not the others?

Lima (2007), considers many schools to be loosely coupled organizations that "are often differentiated, complex [and] segmented into several subunits that isolate teachers from one another" (p. 295). In *Teacher Development in Loosely Coupled Organizations*, a study of professional development models followed by departments within the same school, Lima noticed that, "teachers in particular departments can sometimes experience their workplace in radically distinct ways" (p. 295). In one department, "extreme isolation of the department from its institution... made it difficult for staff members to construct a global conception of the school and to make proposals for its improvement... There was also virtually no talk about teaching and very little joint work among colleagues." (p. 295). Lima proposes that sometimes loose coupling may be problematic for schools and suggests that,

> "In schools loosely coupled in key areas, improvement efforts may vanish in the empty spaces that divide or distance teachers and departments from one another; they run the risk of slipping into the structural gaps that eventually exist in a school's networks. Loose coupling theories are generally silent about the conditions necessary for organizations to *improve*, and none explicitly argues that weak links among subsystems enhance the improvement of capacity of any organization as a whole" (p. 296).

If Lima's conclusion about one department within a school could be generalized to the larger organization of a school division, it might support the movement towards tighter coupling in the area of expert training described by participants. As one superintendent stated regarding the establishment of divisional priorities, "identifying these expectations has really caused a huge leap forward in efficacy for our school division, because suddenly we have a north star to aim for."

Returning then, to the question of whether divisional priorities create a closed system, we must conclude that in one sense they do not, but in another sense they do. While the divisional priorities discussed above are so general that they essentially establish themselves as universal truths that are difficult to criticize, they cannot be used to refute evidence. While it may be argued that such priorities are superficial and form a veil, one which might be used as a justification to further political agendas, eventually organizations must act upon data, such as student achievement indicators and report card assessment data. If such data indicates that systemic, division-wide problems exist, changes to professional development models might be one area in which school divisions explore opportunities to increase their capacity for improvement.

In another sense though, it might be argued that a tightly coupled system with a strong adherence to organizational priorities, refutes evidence by engaging in the calculated *creation* of the

evidence upon which it measures its own efficacy. Let us consider one of the most ubiquitous examples in educational organizations, that of literacy. Suppose a school division makes a large investment in a literacy initiative, in which a large amount of time and resources are spent training teachers to use a specific, standardized assessment tool. Every teacher in every classroom throughout the school division implements the assessment tool, and as a result, a large amount of consistent, uniform data is generated, which suggests that literacy levels across the school division are increasing throughout the school year.

In this simple example, the data that has been produced appears to indicate that the literacy initiative is working, because literacy levels are improving. The problem, however, is the *lack* of evidence that literacy levels were *not* improving prior to the new initiative. It is quite possible that the only thing the initiative has produced is divisionally uniform data. It is even possible that the implementation of the new literacy initiative has forced teachers to reduce pedagogical variety and to abandon practices that support literacy, in order to implement a standardized assessment tool; that for some students, improvement in literacy has slowed down, and yet the data that is produced through the use of a standardized tool creates artificial evidence of success. The question in this situation is, to what extent will a school division that has invested so much, still be objective about the results of their initiatives? And with such large investments of time and capital, are school divisions less open to considering contrary evidence?

There are benefits to tight coupling in the area of expert training, as described by the participants. There are risks that come along with loose coupling, as described by Lima (2007). Through the lens of Koestler's (1967) theory of *closed systems*, we can see that there are also risks to tight coupling, especially when the outcomes to which systems are tightly coupled are extremely general in

nature and subject to interpretation. Nonetheless, the findings of this study suggest that the chool divisions represented in this study are in the process of moving towards more tightly coupled models of professional development. The longer term risks and benefits of this movement, and whether it will eventually become more prominent in other areas of educational bureaucracy, have yet to be seen.

Working Capacity. Teachers face many demands and perform a wide range of duties beyond those set out in formal job descriptions and collective agreements, often voluntarily. Beyond planning, instruction, and assessment, many teachers would likely report that that they also work one-on-one with students, communicate with parents, meet with colleagues, and facilitate some form of extra-curricular activity. According to the work of Fernet, Guay, Senécal & Austin (2012) and Grayson & Alvarez (2008), the demands placed on teachers put them at greater risk of burnout than other professionals, and educational organizations experience higher attrition rates than other professional organizations, especially of new teachers. Therefore, it is challenging, but important, for educational organizations to understand how systemic factors might impact the working capacity of teachers.

Weber (1946) says that in a bureaucracy, "official activity demands the full working capacity of the official, irrespective of the fact that his obligatory time in the bureau may be firmly delimited" (p. 199). At first, this may seem to contradict Weber's own distinction between professional and personal life, when he said that (in reference to document management), "...the modern organization of the civil service separates the bureau form the private domicile of the official, and, in general, bureaucracy segregates official activity as something distinct from the sphere of private life" (p. 197). Reading the latter statement carefully, however, one notes that while Weber has claimed that professional and private life are distinctly *separate*, he has made no claim that one takes any precedence over the other.

In the former statement, speaking about working capacity, Weber has suggested that one's official capacity may take precedence over private or personal matters.

With regards to working capacity, this study seeks to understand how senior administrators perceive the working capacity of teachers, how the impact of workload on school efficacy is determined, and how they know when working capacity is having an impact on school efficacy.

Participants unanimously agreed that in their experience, it is rare to find a teacher whose professional duties are confined to the hours of the school day or the walls of the building. Teachers take on additional duties and responsibilities, participants say, based on a sense of professionalism. Participants expressed the view that the teaching profession is more than just a job, or even career; describing it as a *vocation* and a *calling*. The assumption that teachers ought to see their own roles in this way was implicit. A number of comments suggested that the working capacity of teachers can be called upon at almost any time beyond the working day. Participants discussed time investments as "out of school obligations" and "non-teaching duties", which mainly included extracurricular activities on evenings and weekends. Some participants even suggested that the view of school taking place within normal school hours is dated, and that what occurs within school hours is "...actually a pretty small part."

While participants reported observations of teachers going beyond their defined duties as the norm, they also balanced their responses with an understanding that teachers do have personal obligations that must be considered. Realistic expectations and the importance of respecting the limitations of others were discussed, and participants openly acknowledged the role of teacher autonomy in determining workloads. Two participants, however, made comments implying that there is a generation gap between younger and older teachers, with younger teachers placing a greater

emphasis on a balance between professional and personal life. These comments carried an ambiguous, but negative connotation regarding the work ethic of younger teachers.

Participants were also asked about systemic factors that might increase teacher workloads and how they monitor the impact of such factors on school efficacy. A common example used to give the question some context was the introduction of a provincial report card that required teachers to adopt a new assessment and reporting format, and in many cases required schools to write three report cards over the course of the school year, rather than two. One participant discussed the additional workload of introducing a new student management system at the same time as the new report card system. Participants discussed how they might predict and monitor the impact of working capacity, as well as how they might mediate it. In doing so, they provided some insight into what might happen in the *before*, *during* and *after* stages of a mandated practice resulting in a heavier workload.

In relation to the *before* stage, participants discussed the theme of implementation. They discussed the importance of planning, predicting success, preventing potential problems, and providing support in the forms of professional development, administration, consultation and collaboration. In the *during* stage, participants mainly discussed the importance of feedback from stakeholders including administrators, teachers, and teachers' associations. They also described the importance of specific behaviours such as listening, responding to requests promptly, asking questions, making direct observations of schools and school data, and looking for common areas of concern from different schools throughout the organization. In terms of working capacity having a negative impact, two participants discussed the *after* stage, indicating that teacher burnout and the unequal division of labour would indicate systemic problems.

When asked directly how senior administrators know if working capacity is having an impact on school efficacy, participants made frequent reference to a range of formal and informal modes of communication. Participants described school visits, conversations with administrators, phone conversations, emails, school profile meetings, direct feedback from teachers, and feedback from teachers' associations as channels through which they might become aware of the impacts of working capacity. It was significant that some participants made direct reference to not knowing if or how working capacity might be impacting school efficacy, indicating that it is a difficult area on which to gather information, and that determining limitations is largely the responsibility of the individual.

Upon reflection, it would seem that the area of working capacity is very loosely coupled in the participating school divisions, and quite likely in the field of education in general. While teachers do work under a contract that defines certain minimum legal obligations in the fulfilment of their professional roles, they also face a wide range of other expectations, sometimes systemic in nature, other times self-determined. Teachers also engage in a variety of voluntary activities, with essentially no means of assessing or reporting on what impact they may have on their professional teaching duties. Even if senior administrators did have some form of data on working capacity, it is questionable whether they would be able to draw conclusions about impacts on school efficacy due to the very broad and dynamic definition of school efficacy they describe. For example, imagine a new teacher who is obligated to implement a new reporting system, while continuing to fulfill his or her duties and choosing to start a new extra-curricular opportunity for students. One person might observe that the demands of the new reporting systems and extra-curricular activities impact negatively on the quality of instruction the teacher provides in the classroom, while another person might consider the extra-curricular activity to be important to students and have an overall positive impact on school efficacy. Still another person might conclude that while it creates a larger workload, more frequent and consistent reporting improves

school efficacy. Someone else might consider this a situation in which someone is doing too many jobs at once, and not doing any of them well. Unless we reduce the notion of school efficacy to an easy to measure variable and devise a consistent way to measure working capacity for a highly diverse population (i.e., teachers), it is difficult to imagine a way in which working capacity could be tightly coupled to school efficacy.

The general assumption might be made that greater working capacity on the part of teachers will translate into increased school efficacy. We might also note that loose coupling provides a fair amount of teacher autonomy in setting limitations with regards to working capacity. It might be argued that the ability to decide for one's self when an extra workload can be taken on provides flexibility within the system, and that when one person may not be able to carry an extra workload, others can compensate. While this may be true, it does not account for the fact that school divisions can play an active role in developing and supporting the working capacity of individuals within the organization and it provides senior administrators with little or no data about how demands on working capacity might impact the various aspects of school efficacy.

With respect to these points, perhaps the most compelling theme to arise in the discussion of working capacity was that of preparation and implementation of new initiatives. When school divisions have the time and the resources to carefully plan the implementation of new systems and initiatives, they may be able to predict increased workloads. At the senior administration level, in cooperation with those at the school level, planning for appropriate infrastructure, staffing, professional development, and other supports will likely play a critical role in improving the working capacity of teachers. Perhaps through more research into how the working capacity of teachers can be systemically supported and developed, a deeper insight can be gained into its potential impact on school efficacy.

Organizational Culture. Weber never used the term *organizational culture*, but he identified a sixth element of bureaucracy, which he referred to as *management*. According to Weber (1948), "The management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned" (p. 199). The idea of general rules and norms within an organization, along with the shared values and schemata held by the individuals within the organization has come to be known in the literature as *organizational culture*, a concept that has been thoroughly discussed in a variety of contexts over the past several decades (Cheng, 1993; Denison, 1990; Halpin & Croft, 1962; Hofstede, 1980; Needle, 2010; Oreilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006; Thomas, 1976). Much of the discussion of organizational culture is removed from the context of bureaucracy and presents what might appear to be a replacement for bureaucracy, where organizations are described through cultural elements. For example, Deal and Kennedy (1982) described organizations based on systems of feedback, rewards, and risk-taking. Denison (1991), later proposed that four characteristics, including mission, adaptability, involvement, and consistency define organizations. While these models provide some compelling observations about how organizations function, they tend to neglect the elements of bureaucracy identified by Weber, despite the fact that the elements of bureaucracy are obviously present in the organizations they describe.

Olsen (2006) questions the movement away from the bureaucratic model, calling bureaucracy "an organizational apparatus for getting things done, to be assessed on the basis of its effectiveness and efficiency in achieving predetermined purposes" (p. 3). In reference to public administration, Olsen asserts that,

> "An ideal bureaucratic structure is assumed to contribute to unity and coordination, precision and speed, predictability, obedience and loyalty, impartiality, reduction of friction and of

> material and personal costs, knowledge of files and an institutionalized memory, and continuity across changes in government" (p. 8).

In other words, a bureaucracy ideally creates a well-managed organization and contributes to a productive and effective organizational culture. While Olsen acknowledges that organizations do not in actuality reflect Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy, he argues for the desirability of bureaucracy as an analytical concept and proposes the notion of bureaucracy as "an institution with a raison d'être and organizational and normative principles of its own" (p. 3).

This study's the findings indicate that there is a strong link between the concepts of management and organizational culture. When participants were asked how senior administrators might know if a school is well managed, they made over thirty references to organizational culture and climate, with a strong emphasis on the social elements of a school's culture. Social indicators of effective management included a range of examples, some as basic as being greeted when entering the school, encountering helpful people, seeing teachers conversing, and the atmosphere in the staff room. Other social indicators were more institutional in nature, including parent contact with teachers, school celebrations, and involvement in community events. Other elements of culture, not as directly based on social interactions, included cleanliness, safety, signs of school pride, showcases and displays, openness, and visible displays of common values and expectations. With the exception of a few comments about observations of students and pedagogical models, all comments directly referenced or alluded to elements of the organizational culture of a school. This suggests that organizational culture, especially the social element, is the primary indicator of how well a school is managed.

It is interesting that the majority of participants mentioned the intangible qualities of a school, or having a "gut-sense" about how well a school is managed. This seems to indicate that participants

have a broad, big-picture view of school management, and that it is *sensed* or *felt*, rather than determined through quantifiable indicators or a list of criteria. This supports the view that management in schools is loosely coupled in the sense that it is fairly decentralized and non-uniform across a school division. It is likely, however, that this flexibility makes it possible for organizational culture and management to be more responsive and reliable in ensuring school efficacy on a more localized level. While management styles in different schools can differ significantly, they may be best suited to the needs of local settings, a dynamic that is lost in quantitative assessment of school efficacy. At the divisional level we see loose coupling, in that school management is a non-uniform event, while at the school level we may see management styles as being responsive (i.e., tightly coupled) to specific school goals and local needs.

Two participants, in particular, made a number of comments that provided additional insight into the management of schools, how schools are unique from other organizations, and the impact (for better or worse) of loosely coupled management styles. These participants identified the areas of supervision, communication, and "bottom lines" as important dimensions of school management.

One superintendent characterized supervision in school organizations as inherently loosely coupled, saying that,

> "The managerial literature will say that one person can supervise no more than about eight people properly. The schools are structured on a much, much looser basis than that and always have been, and I think were we trying to run them without appreciating that, we'd get in real trouble."

This point of view clearly asserts that loose coupling and autonomy are woven into the fabric of school organizations. This echoes an earlier comment by the same participant about teacher autonomy in

which he said that, "All of those decisions around assessment, instruction, building relationships, building classroom community, keeping kids engaged; those are all teacher decisions." In terms of supervision, school divisions have unique managerial structures in that those who occupy "management" positions, oversee large groups of professionals who perform a range of duties, including teachers of different grade levels, specialist teachers, and educational assistants to name a few. Likewise, senior administrators supervise and oversee many schools that serve different communities and clientele.

Due to the fact that those in management positions within school organizations oversee such large and diverse groups who function with a certain degree of autonomy, it is important for administrators and senior administrators to ensure that they are not distanced from the realities of schools and classrooms. As one participant said, "Communication is huge because the further removed you are from the classroom, the less you know the needs." Another participant expressed that,

> "There are lots of *small-p* politics in education because it's never clear what the priority should be; what's valued; so acknowledging that and having open kinds of conversations about what we stand for, what we value, what our job is; I'd say those are very important to the organizational culture that you develop."

Indeed, communication has been a recurring theme throughout this study. With regard to each element of bureaucracy, when participants were asked how they know what they know, or how impacts are measured or assessed, answers have included (at times almost exclusively) communication, conversations, and anecdotal feedback from stakeholders. On a number of occasions, it was specifically mentioned that the main contact and source of this feedback is the school level administration. The acknowledgement of a certain degree of distance between senior administrators and teachers at the

school level, and the dependence upon clear channels of communication between the two via school level administrators, also supports the common view that schools are loosely coupled, and necessarily so, based upon the hierarchical structure of the system.

Communication was also the main theme discussed when participants were asked how they might intervene in a situation when they feel that organizational culture is having a negative impact on school efficacy. The six participants made almost twenty references to conversations, emails, phone calls and other forms of communication being the primary way in which they might become aware of a problem in the first place. They also indicated that the most common intervention in such a situation would be an initial conversation with a school administrator, followed by mentorship, a process defined by one-on-one communication and coaching for the purpose of capacity building. Again, these findings imply loosely coupled management structures. Rather than having a centralized and uniform way of identifying and dealing with problems in the area of management, participants describe the necessity of a case-by-case approach that depends primarily on communication, anecdotal feedback, and relationship building with stakeholders.

While the themes of supervision and communication seem to imply that loose coupling is inherent to the structure of school organizations, it is interesting to note that when participants discussed the notion of "bottom lines" in education, a new tone was introduced, which seemed to indicate that there may also be some downsides to loosely coupled systems. As one participant phrased it, "Part of what complicates management in education is that you don't have a single bottom line. You've got multiple, and they're contentious, and sometimes in conflict with each other." This comment implies that management in school divisions is messy and that the "complications" arising from multiple

bottom lines create problems and challenges. This participant drew a comparison between loosely and tightly coupled organizations, stating,

> "...in business there is a very clear profit motive. In street maintenance you've either got pot holes or you don't. In most other endeavors there are clear and less contentious bottom lines than we would have in education. Sometimes you're working with dilemmas where you're choosing the less bad alternative, or you're choosing between competing goods."

While this participant seems to feel that that loose coupling with regards to multiple bottom lines can be the source of challenges and problems, he does not seem to be implying that loose coupling is a problem, in and of itself. His comments still seem to imply that loose coupling is simply a reality of educational organizations. A second participant, however, made comments of a similar nature, which seemed to imply that loosely coupled management and multiple bottom lines might actually be a systemic weakness and an area of potential improvement for school divisions. She spoke of the general mindset, or schemata, that is created by a loosely coupled organizational structure, claiming that,

> "Sometimes we have to say, *'this is a really good idea but it needs to go on hold, or if we're going to incorporate it, it's going to be a deliberate decision...'* As a profession, I'm not sure we have a strong history of doing that well, because we get excited about stuff and then we tend to layer on... I think learning to peel back the layers and staying true to a core of decisions and practices, ways of measuring, and expectations around a variety of areas, is sometimes more of a challenge than to keep adding on top of that."

This comment is distinct from the first, in that it states the claim that the efficacy of school organizations could be improved through tighter coupling of sub-systems to organizational goals. Whether intentional or not, this participant is suggesting that less autonomy at the school level with regards to systemic

goals and bottom lines, or what Marzano and Waters (2009) refer to as *defined autonomy*, would improve school efficacy. Perhaps this observation is connected in some way to the finding that participants support professional development models driven by divisional priorities, which again raises the question of whether we might see a trend towards tighter coupling in Manitoba school divisions.

Taking the elements of bureaucracy into account, as they have been described by participants in this study, let us finally reconsider Hall's (1963) notion that each element presents a continuum and not a fixed-state or ideal-type bureaucracy. If we revisit *Figure 1a: Elements of bureaucracy on a continuum*, and apply what we have learned about each element presented in this study, we might imagine the educational bureaucracy represented in *Figure 3: Elements of bureaucracy on a continuum for metro school divisions in Manitoba*. This figure helps us visualize the varying degrees to which the elements of bureaucracy are fixed and formalized across the organizations that participated in the study. In depicting how formalized each element of bureaucracy, the figure also captures one dimension of systems coupling, in that higher levels of formality (towards an ideal-type bureaucracy) suggest greater degrees of centralization and uniformity. However, the figure cannot capture how tightly coupled each element of bureaucracy is to the goal of school efficacy, which will be addressed in the following conclusions.

Conclusions

The findings and the subsequent discussion in this study allow us to draw some conclusions about systems coupling, school effectiveness, and educational bureaucracies. They also highlight areas in which further research is required.

Systems Coupling. An important aspect of Weick's (1976, 1982) conceptualization of schools as loosely coupled organizations is that while they are often managed differently from one another and embody a

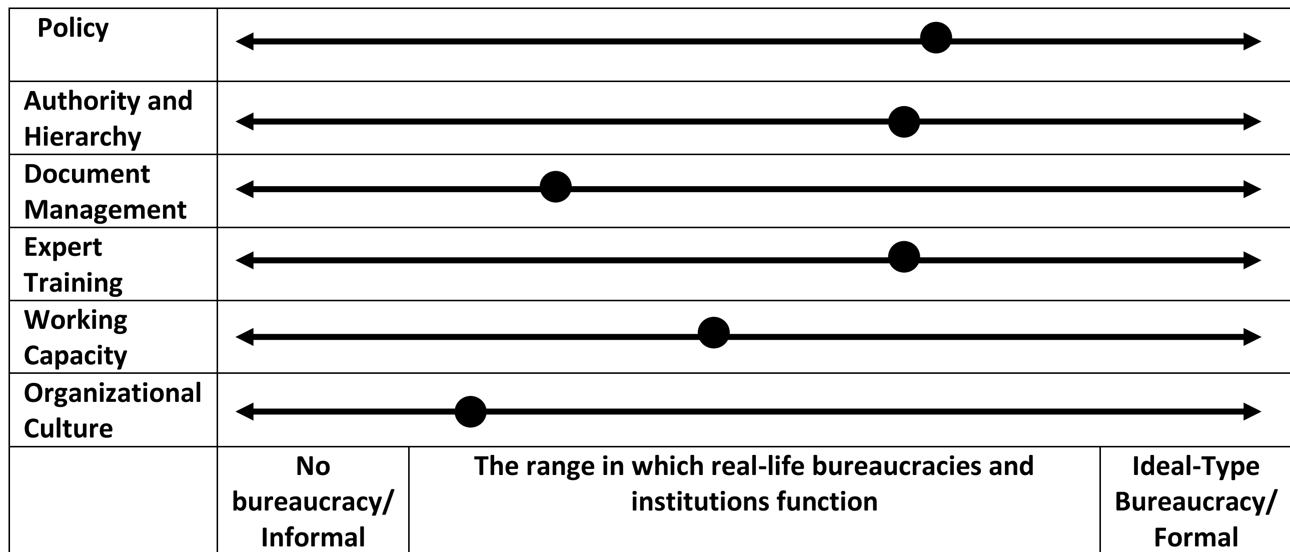

Figure 3. Elements of bureaucracy on a continuum for metro school divisions in Manitoba. The formality of each element of bureaucracy, from completely informal to highly formalized, is represented by the position of the dot with its corresponding element. Policy is largely based on education legislation and applicable to all stakeholders, but there are still policies that operate more as guidelines than as fixed rules. Authority and hierarchy generally follow the same structure across school divisions, but participants reported that actual practices are not as hierarchical as organizational charts indicate. Document management is complex and varies somewhat from school to school within a division, while document management at the senior administrative level is significantly different from school level document management. Expert training is fairly uniform across organizations, but there is room for autonomy within defined parameters. Working capacity is formally defined by legislation and collective agreements, but was characterized by participants as largely self-determined and variable over time. Organizational culture is complex and non-uniform, but there are common characteristics that make schools recognizable as schools.

broad range of characteristics, they also possess qualities that make them instantly recognizable as schools.

Consider how each of the elements of educational bureaucracy as presented in this study play an important role in providing this fundamental level of consistency across organizations:

- The policies and rules in schools across Manitoba are largely based on the Manitoba Public Schools Act (Manitoba, 2014);

- School divisions are structured hierarchically with senior administrators at the head of the organization supervising school administrators, who in turn supervise school level staff;
- Schools follow certain protocols around document management and maintain a central office with dedicated office staff;
- Professional duties are defined by the Manitoba Public Schools Act (Manitoba, 2014) and collective agreements, but the working capacity of educational professionals generally extends beyond the hours of the working day and the physical location of the building;
- Educational professionals have fairly consistent pre-service education and training, and professional development is increasingly driven by uniform divisional priorities; and
- School based management is loosely coupled, based to some extent on centralized divisional practices, with a significant degree of autonomy on the part of administrators, office staff and teachers at the school level.

Weick's (1976, 1982) conceptualization of schools as loosely coupled systems does not simply claim that school organizations are defined by differences and inconsistencies; it includes the observation that there are many important commonalities between them. He recognized that just as educational organizations vary in terms of uniformity and centralization, they also deal with a range of dynamic and often competing and contentious goals. While Orton and Weick (1990) discussed the view of a continuum of loose to tight coupling in organizations, which they referred to as the "unidimensional interpretation of loose coupling" (p. 205), it was never proposed that school management ought to be viewed through a dichotomous lens, with loose coupling and tight coupling as competing organizational structures.

It is only more recently, along with policy driven education reform movements in the United States, that the argument for tighter coupling in schools, and conceptualizations of schools as "high reliability organizations (HROs)," has emerged (Marzano & Waters, 2009). This model of education poses some fundamental dilemmas in terms of how we understand school organizations because it aims to close the dialectic that loose coupling enables, it defines the efficacy of school organizations in terms of reliability, and it demands a reductionist view of school efficacy.

First, to conceptualize schools as tightly coupled HROs, one must abandon the dialectical interpretation of loose coupling, which accounts for the ability of school organizations to respond with adaptability and flexibility, and adopt the unidimensional interpretation in which loose and tight coupling are portrayed as endpoints on a scale. Orton and Weick (1990) have described the dialectical interpretation of loose coupling in terms of the technical levels of a systems being closed to outside forces (producing stability), and the institutional levels of a system being open to outside forces (producing flexibility). According to the authors,

> "The image that *should* emerge from this discussion is the following. If there is neither responsiveness nor distinctiveness, the system is not really a system, and it can be defined as a *noncoupled system.* If there is responsiveness without distinctiveness, the system is tightly coupled. If there is distinctiveness without responsiveness, the system is decoupled. If there is both distinctiveness and responsiveness, the system is loosely coupled" (p. 205).

The problem with the unidimensional interpretation of loose coupling is that it eliminates the dialectical space that defines the concept. Rather than appreciating the notion of a system or organization as something that exists both in theory and in reality, both of which are distinct and equally valid, we are left only with the organization as it is defined in theory, as either loosely coupled or tightly coupled. It is

also evident that within the dialectical interpretation, there is already a dichotomy drawn between tightly coupled and *decoupled* systems, not between tightly and loosely coupled systems. Essentially, the unidimensional interpretation replaces the term *decoupled* with the term *loosely coupled*. In the dialectical interpretation, loosely coupled systems are clearly defined as being both *responsive and distinctive*.

In the context of educational organizations, no school or school division can, in reality, be purely responsive (i.e., closed to outside forces). The application of the unidimensional interpretation replaces the claim that schools are loosely coupled with the claim that they are decoupled (i.e., they lack stability), and thus sets up an easy argument in favour of tighter coupling. Doing so also closes the dialectic space in which we can discuss school organizations from both theoretical/subjective and practical/objective perspectives.

Next, tightly coupled HROs are defined by the concept of *reliability*. Weick and Roberts (1993) described examples of "organizational performance in situations requiring nearly continuous operational reliability," pointing out that "some organizations require nearly error-free operations all the time because otherwise they are capable of experiencing catastrophes" (p. 357). They provide the example of an air-craft carrier. Marzano and Waters (2009), who call for tight coupling and "suggest that districts and schools should continually strive for HRO status" (p. 20), also reference other examples including electric power grids, air traffic control systems and nuclear power plants. Weick (1987) points out that because the risks associated with error and failure are catastrophic in HROs, they have certain limitations as learning organizations. He indicates that they cannot afford to learn from trial and error, highly stressful and demanding training can be a source of accidents, and "less complicated humans

[must] manage more complicated systems" (p. 114). Further, he states that reliability is a dynamic non-event:

> "Reliability is both dynamic and invisible, and this creates problems. Reliability is dynamic in the sense that it is an ongoing condition in which problems are momentarily under control due to compensating changes in components. Reliability is invisible [because] people often don't know how many mistakes they could have made but didn't... [and because] reliable outcomes are constant, which means that there is nothing to pay attention to" (p. 118).

In other words, in HROs, operators spend long periods of time focusing and concentrating on ensuring that everything is happening as it always does, or as Weick points out, from the operators' perspectives *nothing* is happening.

For many, it may be difficult to relate this concept of reliability to school organizations. As Weick indicates above, HROs are limited in their ability to improve through learning, as learning is almost always associated with making mistakes. In schools, learning not only occurs through trial and error, but students are frequently encouraged to take risks and to learn from mistakes – trial and error is modeled and promoted within the system. When HROs are achieving reliability, *non-events* are observed, but in schools, educators and students are encouraged to explore new opportunities and challenges and to consistently move along a continuum of learning, rather than to stay in one place and produce the same results indefinitely. It could even be argued that traditionally, schools have a stratifying effect on the population, and that this meets certain societal needs. The goal of school organizations has not traditionally been to produce students as products with identical, standardized levels of achievement, but to produce a diverse workforce with a range of skills and abilities that meet the needs of a dynamic

and changing labour market, which would imply that as students move through the education system, their achievements should become less standardized and more specialized.

This leads directly to perhaps the greatest problem with the notion of tight coupling in school organizations; that the concept of school efficacy must be reduced to a narrow set of quantifiable indicators so that practices can be tightly coupled to uniform outcomes. In this study, participants have provided a broad, dynamic and multidimensional definition of school efficacy that encompasses virtually all domains of life within a school organization. To tightly couple "achievement and instruction" (Marzano and Waters, 2009) to this definition of school efficacy would be challenging and unwieldy due to the range of variables that define the term, the loose relationship of many of the variables to academic achievement, and the difficulty of accurately measuring all of the variables of school efficacy in any consistent and meaningful way. The only alternative is to reduce the concept of school efficacy to a narrow range of quantifiable variables, such as standardized achievement scores or quality of instruction. Subscribing to such a narrow view of school efficacy might serve a limited purpose in that it allows for the observation and measurement of the impact of controlled interventions. In such cases, it would be desirable that researchers refer to specific variables without going so far as to use them synonymously with the term *school efficacy*.

Based on the findings of this study and the preceding analysis of loosely coupled systems, we might draw the conclusion that the school organizations described by participants in this study are, by definition, loosely coupled systems. Through the discussion of the elements of educational bureaucracy, many examples of both the *responsive* and the *distinctive* aspects of school organizations have been provided. The fact that all participants have provided definitions of school efficacy that are dynamic and multi-dimensional, with a de-emphasis on qualitative indicators such as standardized achievement

indicators, suggests that it would be inappropriate and even damaging to reconceptualise schools as tightly coupled systems by limiting their potential to respond to events with flexibility and autonomy. Rather than suggesting that schools be reconceptualised as tightly coupled systems that strive for HRO status, it might be more reasonable to suggest certain key areas within loosely coupled systems, where a greater degree of reliability might have positive impacts. Some examples of such areas will be identified in the concluding discussion of bureaucracy, but more research in this area is needed. The important question, which is discussed in the following concluding discussion of school effectiveness research, is what kind of research is necessary, and what methodologies should be used in conducting this research?

School Effectiveness Research. In terms of school effectiveness research (SER) (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000), this study lends support to the literature that has suggested that SER has a tendency towards reductionism (Hopkins, 2001; Thrupp, 2012; Wrigley, 2004). Research, the like of Marzano and Waters (2009), which is highly quantitative and suggests interventions in instruction and assessment from the senior administrative level, fits Wrigley's (2004) description of "managerial goals... being offered as a substitute for... curriculum and pedagogy... [and taking] no account of the nature of the situation in which these variables are identified and measured" (p. 227). Hopkins' (2001) critique of SER also applies, including such characteristics as,

> "A pragmatic response to policy initiatives, commitment to quantitative methods, concern with formal organization of schools rather than with their more informal processes, a focus upon outcomes which were... not to be questioned, and a focus upon a description of schools as static, steady-state organizations generated by brief research study" (p. 57).

The dynamic, multi-dimensional definition of school efficacy that has emerged in this study indicates that there are many areas of school effectiveness that are not sufficiently addressed through SER. This is due in part to the fact that the majority of the literature in SER deals with *School Effects Research* and *Effective Schools Research*, which have a tendency to be quantitative in nature. This study may help to draw the conclusion that there is a need for more work in the area of *School Improvement Research*, a part of SER that Wrigley (2004) describes as bottom-up, qualitative, and dynamic, especially studies that do not readily accept the "quantifiable outcomes privileged by SER" (p. 228).

This study used a grounded theory methodology to build a definition of school efficacy, and it also relied heavily on the established theoretical frameworks of bureaucracy and loosely coupled systems to explore the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy. Qualitative research of this type is important to the discussion of school effectiveness, as Thrupp (2012) has indicated that SER has a tendency to ignore or deny the claims of critics, to rely heavily on pragmatism, and to lack a theoretical base. With regards to Thrupp's (2012) claim that, "a shift in the nature of SER seems likely... in what direction remains to be seen" (p. 455), this study may offer support for such a change and provide some direction for further research. The findings presented in this study would suggest that there is room to develop a theoretical base in SER, and to apply established theories to SER. Taking into account that most of the literature in SER is quantitative in nature, it would appear that there is a need for more qualitative research that will help to establish and grow a theoretical base for SER. More studies that employ the methodologies of grounded theory, semi-structured interviews, and narratives based on the lived experiences of professional in the field are necessary.

Educational Bureaucracy. This study indicates that the various elements of bureaucracy, including rules and policies, authority and hierarchy, document management, expert training, working

capacity, and organizational culture, impact school efficacy in a variety of ways, and to varying degrees. On a fundamental level, this may seem needless to state, as without the elements of educational bureaucracy, there would be no educational organizations. The elements of bureaucracy form the basic core routines, structures, documents, and practices by which schools are recognizable as institutions and enabled to carry out operations.

That said, academic literature spanning nearly the last half-century (Weick, 1976, 1982; Orton & Weick, 1990), along with this study, finds that schools are highly representative of loosely coupled systems. This means that the various elements of bureaucracy do not have a consistent and uniform impact on school efficacy, and that structures and practices are often decentralized and non-uniform across school divisions. For this reason, it is important to conduct further research in this area to better understand the impact of the elements of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy. On the one hand, they shape every aspect of an educational organization, while on the other they are so ubiquitous that it often goes unnoticed and taken for granted.

Overall, the findings in this study indicate that some aspects of educational bureaucracy are more tightly coupled than others in terms of being more centralized and uniform across schools and school divisions, including policy, authority and hierarchy, and expert training.

In the sense of uniformity, *policy* is fairly tightly coupled because it is fundamentally based on the Manitoba Public Schools Act (Manitoba, 2014). A minimalist approach to policy was a common theme discussed by participants, which even went so far as to suggest that school divisions should lead with practice rather than policy, as the latter tends to be unsuccessful. This was also expressed by participants via the observation that top-down policy implementation typically results in pushback from schools and requires more time to take hold, while grassroots policy initiatives, based on successful

practices, tend to be well-received at the school level and take hold more quickly. According to the anecdotal reports provided by participants, the conclusion might be drawn that a uniform approach to policy based on provincial legislation is positive because it provides consistency across school organizations; however, when new policies are introduced, it is beneficial if they have a basis in existing successful practices in schools.

In terms of uniformity, *authority and hierarchy structures* are fairly consistent across the school divisions that participated in this study. All of the participating school divisions had the same general hierarchical structure including a senior administration team made up of a superintendent and assistant superintendents, divisional consultants and student services staff, school administrators, and school teaching and non-teaching staff. The participants from different school divisions also provided generally similar descriptions of professional roles and communication patterns between stakeholders. Some of the participants' statements indicated that this uniformity provides consistency, stability, and routine; however, it is difficult to conclude that this has a positive impact on school efficacy due to the lack of other hierarchical structures with which to compare the standard. Perhaps, based on frequency with which participants discussed heterarchy and referenced the undesirable effects of hierarchical structures on relationships, one recommendation of this study might be for school divisions to explore opportunities for the restructuring of educational hierarchies.

Expert training is the third area in which a significant degree of uniformity between participating school divisions can be observed. Again, this is a largely systemic effect, due to the fact that teacher training at the post-secondary level is a prerequisite for professional certification. Participants also indicated uniformity in the area of professional development, unanimously reporting that it is important to establish divisional priorities to guide professional development for teachers. There were even

common themes present in the divisional priorities. For example, literacy and numeracy were mentioned several times, and one participant made reference to literacy and numeracy being provincial priorities. Participants expressed a strong belief that tighter coupling in the area of expert training through the establishment of divisional priorities has had a positive impact on school efficacy, citing that before the introduction of such priorities professional development lacked focus and direction. Additional research with other stakeholders would be required to draw the general conclusion that the benefits reported by participants are in fact correlated to divisional priorities for professional development. More research into the possibility of systemic problems related to the use of very general motherhood statements as the priorities that justify system-wide practices would also be valuable. Based on the fact that participants reported the use of student assessment data to determine the efficacy of professional development models, one recommendation of this study would be to expand the collection of feedback and data from teachers in this area.

This study's findings indicate that some aspects of educational bureaucracy, which are not necessarily uniform or centralized, are more tightly coupled to the goal of school efficacy than others, including document management, expert training, working capacity and organizational culture.

Document management is a large and complex operation in a school division, one which poses a number of challenges. Documents come in a wide variety of forms, serve vastly different purposes, may be connected to outside organizations, require processing and storage, and increasingly need to be converted into or integrated with electronic data management systems. Furthermore, document management in a board office may be completely different than in a school, and document management can be practiced very differently from one school to another within the same division. According to the participants in this study (and likely for anyone with experience working in schools) it

can be concluded that document management systems are not highly centralized or uniform within or across organizations.

While document management can be described as fairly non-uniform, it is somewhat more tightly coupled to school efficacy than some other elements of the educational bureaucracy. This is especially evident when we consider the role documents play with regards to planning and accountability in the school system. Participants indicated that document management helps to establish consistency across a school division, informs planning and assessment, guides progress and decision making in a school division over time, and ensures transparency and teacher accountability. While participants did identify challenges associated with document management, they did not make any reference to document management having specific negative impacts on school efficacy. When asked how they might know if document management was negatively impacting school efficacy, participants reported anecdotal/informal feedback as well as formal feedback from consultations and cyclical surveys with stakeholders.

Participants indicated that the main challenges in the area of document management arise from attempts to achieve more centralized and uniform practices. With respect to the overall loosely coupled nature of school organizations, one recommendation of this study might be for school divisions to consider placing less emphasis on trying to achieve uniformity across school divisions. More emphasis on supporting document management procedures that best help schools collect and use local data might impact school efficacy more substantially, despite the fact that it might appear less streamlined and efficient at the divisional level. More research into how to achieve a balance between division-wide and school level document management systems would be valuable in developing a deeper understanding of how data can best be used to support school efficacy.

Expert training, which was found to be increasingly tightly coupled in terms of centralization and uniformity, was also described as more tightly coupled to the goal of school efficacy than some elements of bureaucracy. The main impacts on school efficacy described by participants were greater alignment in the area of professional development throughout school divisions and better quality in terms of the professional development opportunities that are offered. Participants described a shift away from a somewhat looser professional development model in which professional development plans were directed by teacher autonomy, the results of which were described as "PD for the sake of PD", "hit and miss", not linked to divisional priorities, "very invitational", and "all over the map". The current trend is characterized as being based on divisional and provincial priorities, especially literacy and numeracy. Most participants described a somewhat more directive approach to professional development, one that seems to closely resemble Marzano & Waters' (2009) notion of *defined autonomy*, where priorities set by the school division inform school goals, which act as the boundaries within which teachers can have some choice regarding their professional development plans.

It is easy to understand how, from the perspective of senior administration, the emerging professional development model is superior to the former. By aligning professional development practices, a school division is able to set and monitor longer term goals, collect more uniform data about instruction and assessment, identify and support effective practices with professional development opportunities, and monitor the professional development of teachers with a greater degree of transparency (but at what cost is unknown).

While participants draw the conclusion that priority driven professional development supports best practices, increases focus on student achievement, allows for more effective distribution of support services, and delivers more focused interventions in literacy and numeracy, they don't offer any

concrete evidence that professional development driven by teacher autonomy accomplished these objectives any less effectively. What has changed is that in a priority driven model, senior administration teams have more control over, and more consistent data about these objectives than they had before. In order to determine whether or not their conclusions are valid, more research with other stakeholders, especially the teachers who participate in professional development opportunities, would be necessary. Based on these findings, it is recommended that school divisions continue to collect feedback from teachers with regards to their professional development experience. While student assessment data may provide some insight into the effectiveness of professional development models, teachers would likely be able to provide valuable feedback about the benefits and drawback of priority driven professional development.

Working capacity, while not identified as centralized or uniform beyond the duties outlined in the Manitoba Public Schools Act (Manitoba, 2014), was described as having a strong impact on school efficacy. Participants acknowledged that the vast majority of teachers go beyond their basic duties in terms of time and professional responsibilities, offering extra academic support and extracurricular opportunities for students, communicating with parents, and meeting with colleagues. While participants linked the concept of working capacity to the issues of teacher burnout and unequal divisions of labour, they also indicated that beyond the legal requirements of the role, teachers have a great deal of autonomy in terms of deciding when and how much of an extra load they are willing to take on.

Perhaps the most interesting thing to note about working capacity is that it has a strong and definitively positive impact on school efficacy, and yet it is an area where participants acknowledge a high level of teacher autonomy. On account of the fact that professional duties are outlined by legal

documents and collective agreements that cannot be broken, senior administrators do not have the option of imposing rules or directives with regards to working capacity, and yet they report that they routinely observe teachers going above and beyond their duties in order to improve the quality of schools and the experiences of students. In a previous study (Volk, 2011), it was found that teachers also reported predominantly positive impacts on professional practice when discussing experiences related to working capacity. While teachers mentioned some negative impacts related to high workloads, they tended to describe negative impacts on their personal lives and families, while reporting neutral impacts on professional practice. Additional research analyzing and comparing the perceptions and experiences of various stakeholders within the school system would be valuable, and might provide further insight into the possibility of a relationship between high levels of teacher autonomy and positive impacts on school efficacy.

Organizational culture, perhaps the most decentralized and non-uniform element of educational bureaucracy, was also characterized as having a profound impact (i.e., more tightly coupled) to school efficacy. Participants in this study described the organizational culture of schools as inconsistent, unique to school buildings, and acutely sensitive to environmental factors and contextual events. The findings in this area are compelling because participants identified the characteristics of well managed schools as very predominantly connected to the culture and climate of a school, with a specific emphasis on the social culture between teachers, school administrators, students and the community. Participants described the effect of organizational culture as intangible, a "gut sense", and "something in the bricks and mortar of every building", and yet none of these characteristics can be measured or observed through student assessment data. Participants also pointed out that school culture cannot easily be changed through direct, short term interventions, but usually require ongoing communication, mentorship, patience, and time.

Another intriguing aspect of this finding, which poses some confusion, also emerges from a comparison to a previous study (Volk, 2011), in which teachers discussed workplace management. Interestingly, teachers tended to describe workplace management as increasingly centralized and tightly coupled, and reported negative impacts on professional practice almost exclusively. In fact, a small group comprised of only three teachers, referenced a total of almost forty negative impacts on professional practice related to workplace management.

This raises the question: How can senior administrators describe organizational culture and management as extremely decentralized and non-uniform with a strong impact on school efficacy, while teachers viewed workplace management as centralized, restrictive and predominantly negative in terms of its impact on professional practice? Neither of these studies is large enough to draw any general conclusions regarding this inconsistency, however, it might be argued that senior administrators would have a broader view of school divisions and more opportunity to see the big picture regarding the myriad differences between schools and the impact of organizational culture. It is likely that both groups would have something to learn from one another's perspectives, and this would almost certainly be a prime area for further qualitative studies of the perceptions and lived experiences of educational professionals as they relate to a broad and dynamic view of school efficacy.

Finally, certain elements of educational bureaucracy stood out as being more decoupled from school efficacy than others, including policy and authority and hierarchy structures.

In a number of ways, *policy* is more tightly coupled in terms of centralization and uniformity than some elements of bureaucracy, but according to the accounts of participants in this study, it is quite loosely coupled to the goal of school efficacy. At first this may seem like a contradiction, as we typically think of policy as the fundamental rules and guidelines that govern an organization. One would

expect educational policy to be the bedrock of school organizations, and in terms of the legal definitions of duties and responsibilities this is true. In terms of pedagogy, instruction and assessment, engagement, student achievement and all else that comes along with the notion of school efficacy, however, participants expressed that policy is not the leading edge.

First, participants indicated that policy is generally a good means of achieving the most practical of ends. Participants indicated that policy development is not an effective way to address big-picture goals around teaching and learning, but better suited to managerial objectives. On the rare occasion that policy was discussed in relation to teaching and learning, participants expressed that policies should be practical in the sense that they should make an observable difference to classroom practices. More frequent were references to the large volumes of policy documents that exist in school divisions, many of which deal with rules around professional conduct and protocols for divisional procedures. Participants suggested that these types of policies are useful when they are needed, and provide some assurance when something has gone wrong, but that they do not play a significant role in improving school efficacy. For example, certain elements of the school system, such as transportation, safety protocols and emergency plans, are highly policy driven and almost purely responsive, but they are seen as having very little direct impact on the quality of the day-to-day teaching and learning that occurs in classrooms.

Second, participants discussed how they might predict the impact of new policies on school efficacy, and they primarily discussed the source of the policy, the flexibility of the policy, and the degree to which it might impact autonomy. Participants tended to agree that the source of a new policy can be a significant predictor of its success. Policies that are implemented in a "top-down" fashion were characterized as taking hold more slowly and associated with more pushback from the school level,

while policies that are implemented in a "bottom-up" fashion were characterized as more successful, taking hold more quickly, and generally acknowledged as more valuable and important. The flexibility of the policy itself was another predictor of success. Participants generally suggested that the more flexible a policy is in terms of its interpretation and implementation at the school level, the more successful it will be. It was also fairly widely agreed upon among participants that the less restrictive a policy is, the more broadly in can be applied across the levels of the school system, and the less it limits autonomy at the school level, the more positive its impact on school efficacy will be.

On the one hand, these findings imply that policy can have a positive impact on school efficacy, however, the predictors described by participants all seem to indicate that the less rigid a policy is, the more positive its impact will be. The question might be asked, if a policy is bottom-up, open to interpretation, general enough to apply to everyone, and as non-restrictive as possible, can it be characterized as a policy? Rather, it seems that participants are suggesting that general *guidelines* are more effective than rules and policies in relation to school efficacy.

These findings are important considering the current political climate around education policy. School effectiveness is being studied around the world and an increasing emphasis is placed on the ranking of education systems using national and international standardized tests (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Fusarelli, 2002; Valenzuela, 2005). In the United States, the media projects an education system that is defined by policy reform with a great deal of contention over policies like the "No Child Left Behind Act" and "Common Core". These observations suggest that some stakeholders may not hold the same opinions as the participants in this study with regards to education policy. With a strong movement towards policy driven reform so close to home, more research in the area of education policy in Manitoba, with a focus on the benefits of loose coupling would be timely.

Authority and hierarchy structures were generally described as uniform, but loosely coupled, and by some participants as almost decoupled from school efficacy. Participants agreed that there is a generally accepted view of hierarchy within the school system, and most indicated that they had some form of organizational chart depicting a hierarchical network with senior administrators at the top. They were, however, often reluctant to acknowledge that this hierarchy translated into practice, and even expressed that this hierarchical model has negative impacts on school efficacy.

One participant characterized hierarchy as ineffective and antagonistic, only discussing its negative impacts on school efficacy. It was more common for participants to negate the idea of hierarchy through descriptions of a "flat hierarchy", in which everyone works together on common goals regardless of their position within the organization. The emphasis on teamwork, consultation and collaboration was a theme throughout the discussion of hierarchy, and there was minimal discussion of leadership. It is difficult to draw conclusions from these findings because of the positioning of the participants. A small sample of individuals who occupy the highest organizational levels of school divisions is not sufficient to draw the conclusion that hierarchical structures are ineffective or to suggest that alternative organizational structures should be considered. It is, however, interesting to consider their perspectives in relation to their positions. It certainly suggests that more research in the area of hierarchy should be conducted so that the perceptions of other stakeholders can be explored. If further research indicated that hierarchical organization is indeed ineffective, it might be recommended that school divisions explore alternative organizational structures. One way to start doing this might be to experiment with the restructuring of organizational charts, which typically depict the hierarchical pyramid of authority.

When discussing authority, participants offered a more thorough and consistent view of how it impacts school efficacy and provided a range of comments that drew distinctions between the types of authority that are valued within school organizations. Participants primarily referenced personal qualities and virtues that align with the concept of charismatic authority and expert authority, while rarely or never mentioning traditional and legal authority as important. This is consistent with the de-emphasizing of hierarchy, as participants seemed to value forms of authority that are innate to the individual, rather than to the hierarchical position they occupy. It would also suggest that the participants view authority through a lens of meritocracy; however, it is difficult to draw conclusions along these lines, again due to the positioning of the participants, as they would be unlikely to suggest that they occupy their current positions for reasons other than their own merit. More research into the perceptions of other stakeholders in educational organizations would be valuable as they may or may not confirm the views of participants in this study; that authority is based primarily on one's charismatic performance, expertise and personal merit.

These observations are summarized in *Figure 4: Elements of bureaucracy in a systems coupling context.* The elements of bureaucracy are arranged on a scatter plot that represents both dimensions of systems coupling, the horizontal axis indicating the degree of centralization and uniformity (which parallels *Figure 3*), and the vertical axis indicating the degree to which each element of bureaucracy is coupled to the goal of school efficacy. This figure, based on the data provided by participants, may help to visualize how these two dimensions of systems coupling are distinct from one another. It is particularly interesting that the elements of bureaucracy that are highly centralized and uniform tended to be described as less tightly coupled to the goal of school efficacy and vice versa, with the exception of expert training.

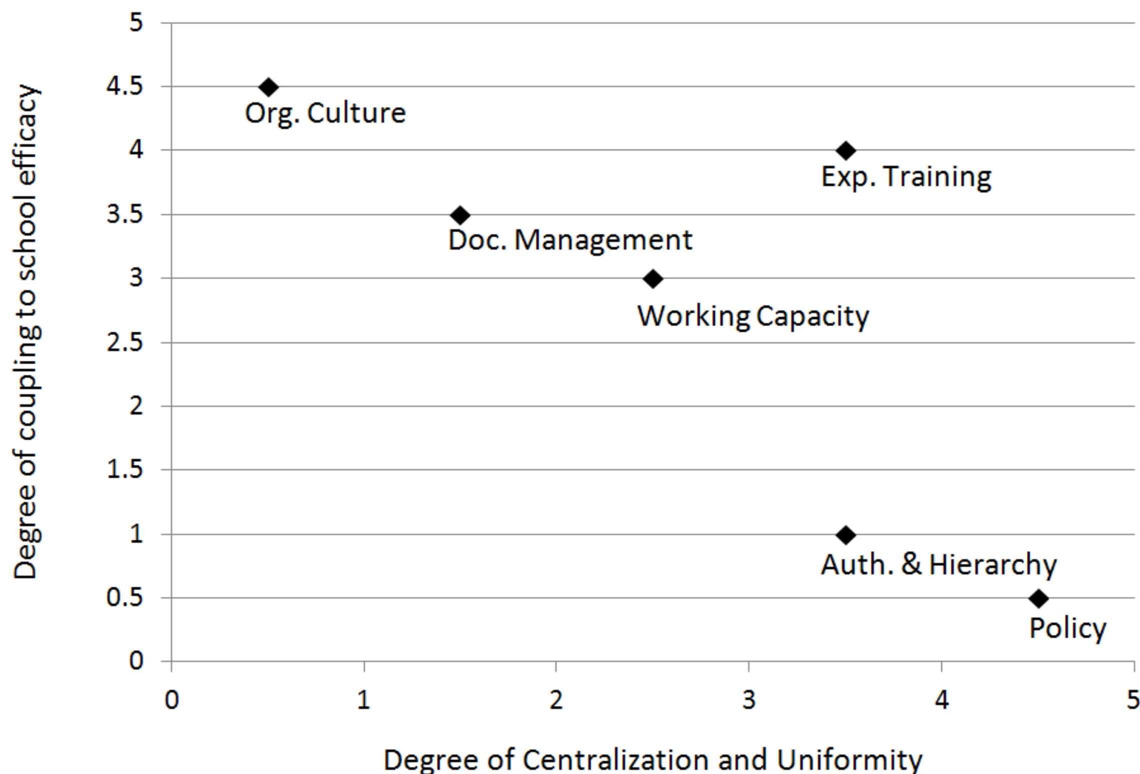

Figure 4. Elements of bureaucracy in a systems coupling context. The horizontal axis represents systems coupling in the sense of centralization and uniformity, while the vertical axis represents the systems coupling of each element of bureaucracy to school efficacy. Based on the data provided by participants in this study, those elements with a higher degree of centralization and uniformity tend to be less tightly coupled to school efficacy, with the exception of expert training, which was described as fairly uniform across the participating school divisions and more tightly coupled to school efficacy than other elements of bureaucracy.

Studying the elements of educational bureaucracy has provided an ideal opportunity to apply qualitative methodologies to school effectiveness research because they impact schools so broadly and their impact is not limited to isolated variables such as standardized achievement indicators. Rather, the elements of educational bureaucracy impact a wide range of variables that impact school efficacy, and which can be described in depth through the relation of the lived experiences of educational professionals. While this study focused on the experiences and insights of senior administrators in metro Winnipeg school divisions, further research with other stakeholders in other educational settings would be valuable and should be conducted to enhance local understandings of the impacts of

educational bureaucracy, and to extend the scope of school effectiveness research in the academic literature.

Implications for Practice

Taking the discussion and conclusions from this study into account, a number of implications for practice can be suggested. The implications for practice will be presented within the context of school efficacy and the six elements of bureaucracy.

School Efficacy is multi-dimensional. It is a complex and dynamic concept, including facets which cannot easily be measured by empirical or quantitative means. Academic literature that reduces school efficacy to the measurement of standardized test scores and achievement indicators should be examined critically before being used to inform policy reform or systemic changes within schools and school divisions. There are many qualitative elements of school efficacy that should be considered and examined through the collection and analysis of local data at the divisional and school levels before reform initiatives take place. There is a clear need for more qualitative research in the area of school efficacy in the academic literature.

According to participants in this study, *policy* should not drive school efficacy, but should trail effective practices. It was suggested that the greatest factor influencing the success of new policies is sufficient time for them to be adopted at the school level. It was also suggested that the source of a new policy may be a predictor of its success. Policy that is based in practice and emerges from a grassroots level is suggested to be more effective and more quickly adopted than policy that is delivered in a top-down manner. Further, it was suggested that the majority of policy is pragmatic in nature and does not have a direct or measurable impact on school efficacy, but that general *guidelines* tend to impact school efficacy more directly. This suggests that school divisions should take a minimalist

approach to policy development, while being aware of effective practices at the school level that may be beneficial to the system as a whole.

Authority and Hierarchy are an area of some contention and should be considered seriously by senior administrators in terms of their impact on school efficacy. This is suggested by the inconsistencies reported between senior administrators participating in this study. For example, while all school divisions acknowledged the existence of a general hierarchical structure with senior administrators at the top, there were also a number of references to hierarchy being ineffective. There were also comments suggesting that in practice, the hierarchical structure of school divisions is flat. In other words, participants did not perceive themselves as being in positions of significant power over others. Likewise, participants expressed the opinion that the most important aspects of authority are charismatic authority and "soft skills". However, when asked how they use their authority to impact school efficacy, they spoke mainly about expert authority and official authority, expressing the importance of ensuring accountability within the system.

These observations are significant for two reasons. First, the perception of a flat hierarchy indicates that senior administrators may not fully acknowledge their positions of privilege within a hierarchical structure, which could have the potential to compromise relationships and trust with those at lower levels of the hierarchical structure. Second, the inconsistency between the emphasis on charismatic authority and official authority indicates that senior administrators may rely more on official and traditional forms of authority than they perceive, while viewing themselves as highly charismatic individuals with exceptional relationship management skills.

The potential risk herein, is that senior administrators may underestimate the impact of their own power, especially with respect to the power of the official and traditional authority roles they

embody. Given that the hierarchical structure of school divisions is widely acknowledged and very uniform across the participating school divisions, it might be suggested that senior administrators acknowledge their positions within the power structure more openly, inquire about how other stakeholders perceive the hierarchical structure of school divisions, and examine the potential impacts of official and traditional authority structures that may exist.

Participants discussed challenges in the area of *document management*, specifically with respect to the process of centralizing document management systems. At the same time, parts of the discussion shifted from the management of documents to the purposes of the data they contain. Some of the participants expressed that this data is most useful at the local/school level. Taking these points of view into consideration, it might be worthwhile for school divisions to consider how great the benefits of more centralized data management systems are. Perhaps, if data is most useful when generated and examined at the school level, there may be more useful applications of resources than the development of centralized, uniform document management systems at the divisional level.

The discussion of e*xpert training* posed something of a paradox. First, when asked about expert training, participants spoke primarily of professional experience and made virtually no mention of professional development. Then, when asked about professional development, participants unanimously agreed that it should be guided by divisional priorities, rather than left to teacher autonomy. The paradox is that the belief in divisionally set priorities was expressed even by those participants who had expressed that school divisions did not operate hierarchically. Here we see a practical example of the risks that may come along with complacence towards hierarchical structures and official/traditional authority structures. On the one hand, participants expressed that in practice,

school divisions are not hierarchical, while on the other they espoused the importance of divisionally set priorities that could be restrictive to teacher autonomy.

Working capacity is defined largely by the Manitoba Public Schools Act (Manitoba, 2014) and collective agreements between school divisions and teachers' associations. Beyond these binding documents, teachers have a large degree of autonomy over the extent of their professional roles. It is noteworthy, however, that senior administrators discussed working capacity largely in terms of the tasks and duties that teachers take on voluntarily, such as extra-curricular activities. They did not discuss the theme of working capacity in terms of the daily professional tasks that teachers must fulfill regardless of the additional time and effort they may require. Systemic changes, changes to reporting and assessment procedures, implementation of new infrastructure and technology, lesson planning, preparation, and communication with students and parents can all place demands on teachers that extend far beyond the hours of the school day and walls of the classroom, but participants indicated that there is very little measurement of the impact of working capacity on school efficacy. Perhaps school divisions, for their own interests, should conduct some level of research into how these changes and demands actually impact quality of instruction, teacher performance, and student achievement. This may also be a compelling area for continued academic research.

Another paradox emerged in the area of o*rganizational culture*, not due to inconsistencies between the participants in this study, but through comparison to a similar study (Volk, 2011) that was conducted with teachers. While senior administrators described organizational culture as extremely decentralized and non-uniform, with a strong impact on school efficacy, teachers described workplace management as centralized, restrictive and predominantly negative in terms of its impacts on

professional practice. One must ask why these distinct and dichotomous viewpoints in the same area of educational bureaucracy exist between these two groups.

One possible answer implied by this study, might be that teachers and senior administrators have significantly differing views of the hierarchical structure of school divisions. This explanation would also support the assertion that senior administrators may downplay the official/traditional power attached to their roles and be unaware of the extent of their privilege within the power structure. Again, in the area of organizational culture, we see that the perspective of a flat hierarchy/heterarchy on the part of senior administrators may risk alienating other stakeholders within the system who perceive their autonomy as limited. While participants in this study expressed that the impact of organizational culture is largely an instinctive/intuitive sense, this paradox might suggest that further research and examination into this area on the part of school divisions would be beneficial. Additional qualitative research into the perceptions of other stakeholders with respect to the impact of bureaucracy on school efficacy would also be of great value to the academic literature.

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Appendix A
Superintendent Permission
(On University of Manitoba Letterhead)

Letter of Consent for Superintendent of School Division

Research Project Title: **Senior Administrators' perceptions of the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy**

Researcher:	**Andrew Volk, Masters of Education student at University of Manitoba and Grade 6 Teacher in Pembina Trails School Division**
Sponsoring Institute:	**University of Manitoba**
Faculty Advisor:	**Dr. David Mandzuk, Associate Dean of Education <mandzukd@cc.umanitoba.ca>**
Program:	**Social Foundations of Education**

Date, 2012

Dear Superintendent:

My name is Andrew Volk, and I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Education (Administration, Foundations & Psychology) at the University of Manitoba and a Grade 6 teacher in the Pembina Trails School Division. I am writing to ask permission to conduct a research study with Senior Administrators within the Winnipeg area focused on their perceptions of educational bureaucracies, and the impact they have on school efficacy.

The project is entitled, "Senior Administrators' perceptions of the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy" and is a part of my M. Ed. thesis in Social Foundations of Education at the U of M. Study results may also be used for presentations and publications related to my thesis. The research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba.

The purpose of this research is to examine the perceptions held by Senior Administrators on elements of bureaucracies and their impact on school efficacy. A project of this type will provide insight into how educational communities and systems are impacted by bureaucracy and how the elements of bureaucracy might be used as an enabling tool for fostering best practices at the school-wide and division-wide level.

To help me in this study, I am requesting your support in the form of permission to interview you and/or any assistant superintendents, coordinators, consultants, etc. willing to participate. I am requesting that you forward an invitation letter to assistant superintendents, directors, coordinators and consultants (or equivalent working at the divisional level, and with prior experience as an educator) via e-mail or physical mailboxes, should you grant me permission to do so. The individuals who choose to participate will agree to an interview approximately 1 hour in length, and will of course have the right to answer only the questions they are comfortable addressing and to withdraw from the study at any point before its completion, in which case all data related to that participant will be destroyed. All responses will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential. Neither the Administrator's, nor any school's or school division's name will appear anywhere in the results of the study. I have attached a copy of the consent form that would be sent to Assistant Superintendents so that you may have a greater understanding of the parameters of the study.

If you would be willing to grant your permission for me to proceed with this study, please complete and return the following Superintendent's Consent Form to the address below. If you would prefer that the Senior Administrators

within the division not become involved, I thank you for your willingness to consider my request. Regardless of your division's formal involvement, I would be happy to forward a copy of the final report by mail or e-mail once the study is complete. If you would like more information regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact information below.

Andrew Volk

Sincerely,

Andrew Volk

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN EDUCATION RESEARCH PROJECT
SUPERINTENDENT'S CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: Senior Administrators' Perceptions of the Impact of Educational Bureaucracy on School Efficacy

Dear Mr. Volk

I hereby give permission for the research study: *Senior Administrators' perceptions of the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy* to be conducted in the _________________ School Division during the months of DATE 2012 to DATE 2012. I understand that you will be interviewing Senior Administrators in the division for data collection; and that a copy of the data analysis and summary will be distributed to participants once the study is complete. I understand that my signature below indicates that I have understood to my satisfaction the information regarding participation. In no way does this letter or my signature waive my legal rights nor release the researcher, sponsor, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. I am free to withdraw my consent from the study at any time, and I am free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the study.

X___________________________________ X___________________________________

Superintendent's Signature Date

I would like to receive a copy of the results of this study. To that end, my mailing address or email for receipt of a copy is included below.

____

Mailing or Email Address

Appendix B
Participant Consent Letter
(On University of Manitoba Letterhead)

***Research Project Title:* Senior Administrators' perceptions of the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy**

Researcher:	**Andrew Volk, Masters of Education student at University of Manitoba and Grade 6 Teacher in Pembina Trails School Division**
Sponsoring Institute:	**University of Manitoba**
Faculty Advisor:	**Dr. David Mandzuk, Associate Dean of Education <mandzukd@cc.umanitoba.ca>**
Program:	**Social Foundations of Education**

DATE, 2012

Dear Participant,

My name is Andrew Volk and I am a Masters student from the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology at the University of Manitoba and Teacher in the Pembina Trails School Division (PTSD). I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project that will study the impact of educational bureaucracy on school efficacy as perceived by Senior Administrators. I have been granted consent from the Superintendent of your School Division to invite Assistant Superintendents, Directors, Coordinators, Consultants, and others working at the organizational level to participate in this study. Below is a Research Project Consent Form that provides the information for participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, and the strategies used to ensure confidentiality.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the 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.

The purpose of this research is to examine perceptions held by Senior Administrators with regards to elements of bureaucracy and its impact on school efficacy. A project of this type will provide insight into how educational communities and systems are impacted by bureaucracy and how the elements of bureaucracy might be used as an enabling tool for fostering effective practices at the school-wide and division-wide level.

Should you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a one hour interview that will ask questions about your professional experience in relation to the elements that make up a bureaucracy, including policies, hierarchy and authority structures, document management, training and

organizational culture. All interviewees will be asked to provide anecdotal examples and reflect on instances in which the elements of bureaucracy impacted their perceptions of a school's efficacy. In order to allow you to prepare for the interview you will be supplied with the interview questions via email no less than 48 hours prior to the arranged interview. Pre-reading the interview questions should take no more than 15 minutes. To ensure your comfort, the interview will be scheduled at a time and place of your choosing.

Due to the generality of the elements of bureaucracy being explored and a small sample size, there is no risk in your participation in this study. You will be given a pseudonym and an identification number to guarantee your anonymity and any direct quotations used in the dissemination of findings will be masked with pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality of others. No real names will be used anywhere in the results. Finally, the interview will be transcribed by me and a copy of the transcript will be provided to you for verification, at which time you may delete any comments from the study you wish. Reviewing the transcript should take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour of your time. If you wish to provide an address so that the transcripts can be mailed, you may do so.

The interview will be recorded on a handheld digital recorder. No additional confidential materials or information will be used. During the study, all information will be stored on disk in a locked safe and/or on a password protected computer at the residence of the researcher. Only the researcher, and his academic advisor will have access to the interview materials which will be coded to protect the identification of those involved. At the conclusion of the study, an executive summary of the study will be provided to you should you wish to receive one. If you wish to provide an address so that the report can be mailed, you may do so on this consent form. The interview materials will be kept by the researcher for a maximum of 2 years (DATE) so that this study can be expanded upon in further thesis work.

If at any point you should choose to withdraw from the study, all data collected including audio tapes will be destroyed. You may also choose to not answer any or all questions in the interview. You will not be compensated for participation in the study.

The data will be examined for what it might offer to our understanding of research and practice of educational bureaucracy and its impact and potential uses for improving school efficacy. The findings of this study will be used thesis work and may be used for presentations at professional conferences, professional meetings and submissions to professional and scholarly journals for publication.

Your signature on this form indicates 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 researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions for their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence simply by contacting me at the contact information listed on this consent form. 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. In doing so, please contact me or my advisor:

Researcher: **Andrew Volk**

Advisor: **Dr. David Mandzuk**
Telephone: (204) 474-9015
e-mail: mandzukd@cc.umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. If there are any concerns or- complaints about this project 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.

If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the study, leave your name and address (either mail or e-mail) and I will send you a summary at the conclusion of the study.

I have read the above and understand the conditions of participation in this study.

X____
Participant's Name (Print)

X____ X____
Participant's Signature Date

X____
Researcher's Name (Print)

X____ X____
Researcher's Signature Date

I would like to receive a copy of the results of this study. To that end, my mailing address or email for receipt of a copy is included below.

____
Mailing or Email Address

Appendix C
Research Instrument

Interview schedule:

All participants will be interviewed individually between April, 2013 and December, 2013. Each interview will last a maximum of 60 minutes with the option of two shorter interviews if the participant prefers. Interview appointments will be set through a telephone call or email message and will take place at a time and place convenient to the participant. All participants will sign a consent form and respond to an identical set of questions, indicated below with numbers and letters. Participants will receive an electronic copy of the questions no less than 24 hours prior to their interview in order to prepare. Depending on the nature of the answers that are provided, additional questions may be asked to provide clarification when needed. Prompts to elicit more information are indicated below with bullets:

Interview Protocol:

1. What do you personally see as some of the common characteristics shared by schools that you consider to be highly effective, and what does the term school efficacy mean to you?
2. The impact of policy on school efficacy:
   a) When creating or reviewing divisional policy documents, how do you predict/determine the impact they will have on schools?
   b) When policies are implemented, how do you know if they are impacting school efficacy?
   c) Describe an experience in which you observed the impact of a new policy on school efficacy at the division-wide level.
3. The impact of hierarchy and authority on school efficacy:
   a) What are your thoughts on how hierarchical structures impact school efficacy?
   b) What qualities do you think a person in a position of authority should have?
   c) Share an experience in which you were able to use your authority as a senior administrator to impact the efficacy of a school/schools.
4. The impact of document management on school efficacy:
   a) In your opinion, what are a school division's biggest challenges in terms of document management?
   b) What role do you think divisional documentation processes play with regards to professional accountability and school efficacy?
   c) How do you know if/when the demands of document management are having a negative impact on school efficacy, and how does the system respond?
5. The impact of expert training on school efficacy:
   a) What criteria do you use to determine who would make a quality administrator or teacher, and how are these criteria connected to school efficacy?
   b) In your experience, is it important to set divisional priorities for professional development? Why?

   c) How do you know that the professional development model in your division is having a positive impact on school efficacy? How do you measure/monitor the impact of professional development on school efficacy?

6. The impact of working capacity on school efficacy:
   a) Explain your views on if/how the duties of educational professionals extend beyond the walls of the school and the hours of the school day.
   b) What factors do you consider to be important when determining the impact of work load on school efficacy? How do you measure/monitor the impact?
   c) Describe an experience in which you felt certain that working capacity was a factor impacting school efficacy.
7. The impact of organizational culture on school efficacy:
   a) When you walk into a school, what factors/characteristics help you to determine if it is well-managed?
   b) In your opinion, what aspects of organizational culture have the greatest impact on school efficacy?
   c) Describe an experience in which you, as a senior administrator, felt that organizational culture was negatively impacting school efficacy. How did you recognize the problem? If there was an intervention, how did it positively impact school efficacy?
8. This interview has focussed on how the various elements of educational bureaucracies, including policies, hierarchy and authority, document management, expert training, working capacity and organizational culture impact school efficacy. Are there any other factors that you perceive as having an impact on school efficacy that you would like to discuss?