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Principals' Perceptions of Successful Leadership

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Principals' Perceptions of Successful Leadership

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The purposes of this qualitative multiple case study were to determine the catalysts and pathways that

caused principals to move from managers to effective leaders. Data were collected through a series of

interviews with 4 principals who were selected through a purposeful sampling procedure. The interviews

were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using inductive coding to determine themes. Findings

were presented for each theme within the context of reviewed literature.

National polls indicate that 6 out of every 10 of the nation's schools need major changes or an overhaul.

Can improving the skills of their leaders make a difference in the performance of these schools? Research

repeatedly supports the importance of a principal's leadership to the overall success of a school. It also

tells us that effective leadership is in short supply and that there is a need to initiate leadership

development. The underlying task in this study was to determine how to help those who want or need to

become better principals or how they can help themselves.

Several themes emerged from data analysis, and each is important to consider when working on

improving principals' leadership abilities: the impact of mentors; university administrative certification

programs; on the job experience; personal motivation; tacit knowledge; state, local, and private leadership

development programs; and pathways to improvement. Specific recommendations for practices to

improve principals' overall effectiveness included incorporating more and lengthier mentoring in the

early part of principals' careers or as part of performance improvement plans; increasing study of cultural

and instructional leadership in administrative certification programs; providing more field experiences in

administrative certification programs; and developing individualized leadership improvement plans based on needs, interests, and learning styles of principals. The need for additional quantitative and qualitative research was also suggested.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated first and foremost to my wife Emily and children Carrie and Matthew. Without their unwavering support and encouragement over all the years this project took to complete I would not have been able to keep the wind in my sails nor had the stamina to finish the journey of becoming a Doctor of Educational Leadership. It is also dedicated to my mother and father Elsie and Lloyd Childers and sister Gail Killian of who both supported and encouraged me in their own way to pursue this life goal. To each of you, thank you and I love you!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I did it for twenty-seven years. I want to give back. I want to share what I have learned. I want to add to the body of knowledge. I want to contribute to the overall good. I still want to help students and teachers. I want to determine how principals gain or develop the leadership skills necessary to take schools to the "top."

Many schools in North Carolina and the nation are doing well; however, we know many schools' performance is not what it could or should be as reflected in a 2010 Wall Street Journal NBC poll in which 6 of 10 people said the nation's schools need major changes or an overhaul (Carnevale, 2010). The people in these schools are not satisfied with this statistic but do not have what it takes, or do not know what to do to achieve the desired performance. Can improving the skills of their leaders make a difference in the performance of these schools?

During a 2009 state-wide webinar among retired, successful, veteran high school principals and superintendents working as "school transformation coaches" for principals in schools identified as the lowest performing in North Carolina, a participant asked, "How do we facilitate change in behaviors of our principals that will help them make their schools better?" A few days after that session, as I was riding from a meeting with the principal with whom I worked in one of those schools, the conversation turned to the lack of adequate preparation principals have for all they are expected to accomplish. These two events further reinforced my belief that there was need for research into what avenues principals follow to learn how to do their jobs better and to make their schools more successful. Going back to the webinar, the real essence of the conversation was the range of abilities and attitudes among the principals with whom we were working. Some of the men and women were great at all aspects of being effective

principals; some were effective managers but lacked the ability, desire, or knowledge to become true instructional leaders; and some were perhaps clueless, unmotivated, incapable, or uncaring about the need to become better at their work.

Because emphasis in this study was placed on determining how principals improved from being managers to leaders, it is important to clarify what is meant by these functions. Northouse (2010) summarized the activities of management as focusing on planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling. He described leadership as encompassing the subset of management skills while simultaneously being involved with the general influence process, constructive change, proactive initiatives, team building, and emotional involvement (p. 13).

The underlying task in this study was to determine how to help those (or how they should help themselves) who want or need to become better principals. Here again is an indicator that research was needed to determine how principals move to higher levels of performance. Fullan (2001) claimed that effective leadership is in short supply. He further added that we should expect to see leadership development initiatives dominating the scene over the next decade (p. xii). This view is reflected in a Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) publication (Bottoms & Egelson, 2012) indicating that over a 10-year period in states where policy-makers and educators followed SREB's policy footprints, better-prepared principals emerged. Guiding this decade of work were six learning-centered leadership indicators developed by SREB in 2002. These indicators were state leadership standards, identification of prospective school leaders, learning-centered leadership preparation programs, quality leadership internships, performance-based, tiered licensure system, and multiple pathways to school leadership. Additionally, in 2010 four more indicators were added that reflected the growing research in the area of better preparing principals for effective leadership. Those four indicators were specialized services for principals of low-performing schools, working conditions that sustain principal success in improving student learning, principal evaluation based on effective

practice, and state data collection systems that support leader development and succession planning (Bottoms & Egelson, 2012).

The importance of a principal's leadership to the overall success of a school has been repeatedly emphasized. Hall and Hord (2001) stated, "Administrator leadership is essential to long-term change success…" in schools (p. 13). Hasuman and Goldring (2001) reported that "…reformists have turned their attention to the principalship as the key to school improvement" (p. 400). They further stated, "[T]he behavior of the school principal is the single most important factor supporting high quality educational programs" (p. 400). In a recent study using administrative data constructed as part of the University of Texas at Dallas Texas Schools Project it was found that successful principals raise the achievement level of students in their school from 2 to 7 months of learning each year (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013).

Additionally, as writers began examining the impact of standardized curriculum and standards based testing ushered in by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), the need for school leaders to be more than managers emerged even more clearly. Will school leaders improving their skills to the point that they become more than managers of accountability standards help address this need? They need the ability to lead the talented professional educators with whom they work to meet the challenges that at least two of these writers spoke to. Armstrong (2006) wrote about the need for movement away from what he calls the "Academic Achievement Discourse" (p.8) toward the "Human Development Discourse" (p.8). We need to have leaders with the skills to do the "job of integrating human development issues with academic achievement goals" (p.152). Zhao (2009) in writing about his assessment of the current trends in American education suggests that we need to hold to the "traditional strengths of American education – respect for individual talents and differences, a broad curriculum oriented to educating the whole child, and a decentralized system that embraces diversity" (p. 182)

instead of abandoning them to standardization. School leaders with skill sets beyond the management functions will be needed to meet the challenges of this emerging era.

Because we know how important school leadership is, it would seem to be essential for school principals to be or become effective leaders. The overriding questions I seek to answer are: How do they really do this? What happens extrinsically or intrinsically that causes or enables them to achieve higher levels of effectiveness? What kind of leadership practices, abilities, motivations, and knowledge must they have? My beliefs were that early and mid-career administrators who were trained in, and learned to apply, transformational and instructional leadership skills as well as understood school culture could grow from primarily being managers to being leaders who could lead their schools to greater levels of success.

Colleges provide pre-service training, state agencies provide principal performance guidelines, and local school systems provide in-service training, all for the purpose of providing principals with the tools they will need to successfully lead schools. It seems all that should be enough to provide principals with what they need to become effective leaders; however, in reality, it is not because we still find instances where principals have received all this support but still do not, cannot, do not know how, or do not care to effectively lead. Why is this? One possibility is stated by Day, Harris, and Hadfield (2001)

> It is our view that the failure of existing leadership theory to capture, explain and represent current leadership practice lies in a reluctance to acknowledge that leadership is a complex, messy and, at times, wholly nonrational activity that is value laden and value driven. The complexity of the role they faced and the tensions and dilemmas that they managed meant that no single theory could explain existing practice but that the leadership practices adopted reflected diverse and often competing theoretical perspectives. Values, more than the power of context, dictated the leadership approach adopted by principals in the study. (p.55)

The current study is not for the principals in the "do not want to" or "do not care to" categories. Those will be left with superintendents who hopefully will have the courage to move them into other types of employment. This study is for the vast majority of principals who want to

become better leaders (and the superintendents who want to support them), similar to principals

described by Day et al. (2001) in the following statements:

> The principals in this study were not effective only because they had raised students' levels of achievement or received a favorable inspection report. 'Effectiveness' for them, their staff, students, parents and governors was much more than this. These principals were effective because they held and communicated clearly visions and values which were shared by all the stakeholders in the school. They empowered staff by developing climates of collaboration, by applying high standards to themselves and others, by seeking the support of various influential groups within the school community and by keeping 'ahead of the game' through ensuring that they had a national strategic view of what is and what is to come. They managed tensions between autocracy and autonomy, between caution and courage, between maintenance and development, often at great personal cost. Their focus was always upon the betterment of the young people and staff who worked in their schools. They remained also, against all the odds, enthusiastic and committed to learning. (p. 55)

To provide a context for this study I reviewed literature in the areas of history or

evolution of school principals' leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership,

and school organizational culture and provided an overview of other commonly recognized

leadership styles identified as used by school principals.

A historical view of school leadership principals evolving from independent, autonomous

managers to instructional leaders engaging in participative or shared leadership roles. Classical

studies of school administration described school leadership as providing "structure" and

"consideration" (Halpin, 1966). Huber and West (as cited in Stewart, 2006) provide a

chronology of the evolution of school leadership by delineating four broadly defined phases.

> The first phase is the personality or trait theory of leadership, whereby successful leaders are seen as possessing particular qualities and characteristics typical of good leaders. …Leaders are expected to study the lives of these leaders and then attempt to emulate their behaviours and attitudes. …The second phase includes examining what good leaders actually do. In this phase, certain traits are believed to relate to successful leadership; … Following these two phases is a situational approach to leadership. … Researchers attempt to isolate specific properties of leadership situations that relate to the leader's behaviour and performance. The fourth phase that includes linking the culture of the organization to the leader is encompassed in the transformational model of leadership. (p. 5)

Much has been written to define the best model for educational leadership. Two primary images of school principalship have prevailed in recent decades, instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Hallinger, 1992). Further affirmation of the need for principals who want to improve knowing and applying transformational and instructional leadership skills plus understanding culture is reflected by Murphy (2002) who indicated that linking leader behavior with school culture has become a focus of research. It is increasingly important for effective principals to understand current effective leadership trends and school culture. Barth (2002) summed it up best:

> Probably the most important—and the most difficult—job of an instructional leader is to change the prevailing culture of a school. The school's culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, 'the way we do things around here.' A school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the president of the country, the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal, teachers, and parents can ever have. (p 8)

As I stated earlier another belief I have is that a principal needs to have some knowledge of several theoretical frameworks of leadership to become more effective. Even though I put emphasis on transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and school culture, it is my opinion that no "one trick pony" principal can help a school become more successful. Schermerhorn (1997) provided support for this thinking in his article in the *Mid American Journal of Business* by acknowledging that leaders needed to possess transformational characteristics to promote effective change in schools but also by indicating that other theoretical frameworks of leadership have to be discussed and considered because principals and school leaders possess many different leadership practices. "The evidence from research clearly indicates that there is no single all-purpose leadership style" (Schermerhorn, 1997, p. 5).

To provide understanding of some of the other identified leadership frameworks used by school leaders brief discussions of the following styles were included in the literature review section of this study: transactional, participatory, situational, and integrated.

Theoretical Foundation

The purpose of this study was to find out what principals do (or what happens to them) that really caused an improvement in their leadership abilities. Perhaps another way to state the purpose was to find the catalysts and pathways that caused principals to move from managers to effective leaders. To accomplish this I identified principals who had gone through recognizable improvements as leaders subsequently causing their school's students' performance to improve. To help make these determinations I used key school leadership functions that the Wallace Foundation has determined to be reflective of principals who could develop a team that improved their school's academic effectiveness (Harvey & Holland, 2012). These principals had noticeably evolved beyond the basic management function of principals in areas such as: building management and maintenance, rules and regulations enforcement, materials purchase and distribution, budgeting, scheduling, paperwork, etc. They had demonstrated increased levels of ability and amounts of time working in areas associated with effective transformational and instructional leadership such as: shared vision development, positive and academically oriented climate and culture development, cultivating shared leadership among school staff, and improving instruction. After identifying the principals I conducted interviews with them to discern what caused the change from manager to leader. The primary goals of the study were to find out what motivated principals to want to improve and what caused their actual improvement. What was their journey? Following this I will seek commonalities from which to generate a model or guidelines for others to follow.

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The theoretical framework that works best is the case study. The following quotation is from Creswell's (1998) book, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design,*

> A case study is an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied-a program, an event, an activity, or individuals. … Multiple sources of information include observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, and documents and reports. The context of the case involves situating the case within its setting which may be a physical setting or the social, historical, and/or economic setting for the case. … When more than one case is studied, it is referred to as a collective case study. (Stake as cited in Cresswell, 1998, pp. 61-61)

In my study the multiple cases are the principals who have transitioned from managers to leaders. The bounded systems will be the period of time during which the transitions occurred. The context for the cases will, of course, be the schools in which they work. Creswell (1998) recommended purposeful sampling to determine the cases to include in the study and further recommends the researcher choose no more than four cases. He continued by explaining that through the collection and analysis of the data collected the researcher identifies themes that emerge then makes assertions about the cases. "In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) mention, the 'lessons learned' from the case" (Creswell, 1998, p. 63); therefore, I selected four principals through a purposeful sampling process and provided a detailed description of each. Then I gathered data from multiple sources that was followed by a thematic analysis across the cases. In the final phase of the study I ascertained the themes that presented themselves and made assertions about events principal went through that caused them to become more effective leaders. These lessons learned I hope will provide guidance for those wishing to improve their own leadership or help others improve theirs.

Statement of the Problem

Not every person who wants to become a principal, who will be asked to be a principal, or is currently a principal is a leader capable of leading schools to high levels of success. At best many of these may be good managers. Where will we find these "Gandhis" and how will we develop them? Much attention has been given to the role of school leadership but much still has to be learned about how principals become the leaders communities want and need in their schools. With growing understanding of the importance of the principal "it is clear that now is the time to step up efforts to strengthen school leadership. Without effective principals, the national goal we have set of transforming failing schools will be next to impossible to achieve" (Harvey & Holland, 2012, p. 14).

The purpose of this study is to determine what caused principals who were considered managers to evolve into leaders who facilitated positive academic improvement in their schools. Because it has been suggested, and it is a personal belief, that transformational and instructional leaders are the most effective at helping schools achieve their true potential (Schermerhorn, 1997), I also attempted to determine if knowledge of, and skills in, these leadership theories were required to develop into effective school leaders. A secondary purpose was to determine if principals who are not transformational and instructional by nature can evolve into this type leader. My hope is this research will provide help to those current, or soon to be, principals who want to be successful leaders and to those who strive to help them.

Research Questions

1.   What themes are common among principals who have transitioned their practice from managers to effective leaders?

2.   What knowledge (innate, tacit, or explicit) of organizational leadership, instructional

improvement, organizational culture, and change do successful or effective principals share?

3.   What processes or experiences have principals engaged in that actually caused their

development into effective leaders?

Significance of the Study

School systems are facing a shortage of administrators. In a Wallace Foundation paper it

was stated "that a principal should be in place about five to seven years in order to have a

beneficial impact on a school. In fact, the average length of a principal's stay in eighty schools

studied by the Minnesota-Toronto researchers was 3.6 years" (Harvey & Holland, 2012, p. 13).

As stated earlier, not every person who is a principal, wanting to become a principal, or who will

be ask to be a principal is a leader. At best most of these may be good managers.

Successful schools need leaders not managers. Factories are managed. Management is

about maintaining the status quo. Schools need leaders who have the skills that enable them to

lead responsible educational endeavors. Our latest federal education initiative, Race to the Top,

emphasizes this by making part of one of its four core reform areas about improving school

leadership. This one of the four core educational reform area states, "Recruiting, developing,

rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals; especially where they are needed the

most" (United States Department of Education, 2009, p. 2). Many principals want the schools

they serve to be more successful but lack the leadership training to move the schools to their

desired level of performance. This study identified the leadership improvement processes of

principals who enabled schools to achieve increased academic success. It also determined if the

principals having knowledge of or innate abilities in, transformational leadership, instructional

leadership, and culture shaping had positive bearing on their becoming effective leaders. These processes, knowledge, and abilities can be shared with principals who wish to help their present schools achieve greater levels of success and with those responsible for improving the performance of principals in their schools.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided to ensure understanding of these terms throughout the study or define potentially unfamiliar ones. Definitions not accompanied by citations are cited within the dissertation or developed by the researcher.

Explicit knowledge – Knowledge that is formalized and codified. Generally it is easy to identify, store, and find through books, other documents, or on the web. It is the opposite of tacit knowledge (Frost, 2013).

Inductive coding – Codes that are generated by the researcher by directly examining the data during the coding process (Christensen & Johnson (2012).

Innate knowledge – Suggests that we are aware of some things inherently even when there is no way of explaining how we arrived at the idea (Al-Rodhan, 2010).

Instructional leadership –Leadership in the areas of curriculum and instruction with the primary task of improving and developing teaching and learning.

Learning climate – All those things within a school that positively or
 negatively affect the quality of students' and staff's experience. They can include policies, administrative and classroom practices, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, safety, and organizational structures (National School Climate Center, 2013).

Preservice training – Classes taken, course work completed, and field experiences completed during the process of obtaining a degree or certification and prior to working in one's chosen field.

School Culture – Assumptions and beliefs shared by the faculty and staff that reflect the school's organizational values, ideals, attitudes, signs, symbols, policies, and actions.

School transformation coach – A term coined by the North Carolina High School Turnaround Project to describe an outside agent who works with the principal to improve academic performance of the students in a school (NCDPI, 2012).

Tacit knowledge – Knowledge based on insights, observations, and internalized information that is largely experience based. It is intuitive and often referred to as know-how. It is the opposite of explicit knowledge (Frost, 2013).

Transformational leadership - A collaborative partnership between leaders and followers based on mutual respect in which each party promotes the vision and mission of the school in such a way that they raise one another to higher levels of motivation.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

The focus of this study is on helping principals who want to move from the realm of management to leadership. I investigated four principals who improved from being managers of their schools to effective leaders who facilitated a positive impact on students' achievement. I asked them to reflect on what internal and external experiences and formal training caused their transition from management to effective leadership. I purposefully avoided studying existing preservice preparation programs or aftermarket leadership development programs due to their

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"one-size-fits-all" tendencies. It may be useful to know how many principals become more effective school leaders and the personality types that benefit from going through these programs, but doing so does not lead to those underlying motivational aspects that are so important to understand.

Limitations

Two limitations are immediately apparent in this study. The first is the small size of the purposeful sample. Obviously the conclusions would be considered more reliable if a larger number of principals' cases could be studied. Also, the findings could be considered more comprehensive if the cases studies were spread over a larger number of sites with demographics that reflected greater variety of situations in which leadership emerged. An additional limitation that potentially exists is that the small number of principals represented in the study does not allow for exploring the impact gender or ethnicity may have. A person's gender or ethnicity may cause leadership development paths to differ.

The other limitations readily apparent are the researcher's potential biases and assumptions. I was a school principal and found my journey to be one of moving from a manager to a leader. I was vigilant in my efforts not to make this autobiographical or to project my own experiences into the cases being studied. Also, through studies at ETSU and my professional work experiences I have become convinced that to be highly effective school leaders must have knowledge of and ability to apply information learned in the areas of school organizational culture, transformational leadership, and instructional leadership. They also need to understand other leadership frameworks. To put these assumptions in proper perspective within the study I

acknowledged them in the introduction and literature review plus embedded them in the second

research question.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of professional literature is intended to provide support for, and insight into, the aspects of leadership upon which I have based this study. In this review I attempt to provide evidence of the importance of school principals to the success of schools, a brief history of the evolution of our understanding of leadership, and descriptions of a variety of leadership strategies and frameworks available for school principals. Because it is my belief that to become highly effective, school leaders must have knowledge of, and ability to apply, information learned in the areas of school organizational culture, transformational leadership, and instructional leadership, I provided expanded information in these areas.

Importance of Principals' Leadership

The importance of the principals' leadership to the overall success of schools has been a central topic of discourse in educational research. Hausman and Goldring (2001) reported "…reformists had turned their attention to the principalship as the key to school improvement" (p. 400). Additionally, in their article on school leadership Day et al. (2001) reflected that a great deal of research had been done on the positive and negative effects of school leadership on the culture and performance of schools and they stated that "…principals exercise a key role" (p. 39).

Leadership Evolution

Acknowledging that the principal plays an important role in the overall success of the school, it is important to point out that this role has changed over the years. The term "principal" came from the early days of public schooling and the need to designate one of a school's teachers as the lead teacher. Around the 1850s as schools became larger and more administrative and clerical duties emerged the lead teacher started becoming called the "principal teacher" (Olson, n.d.). Eventually, as teaching responsibilities were eliminated the teacher part of the title was dropped and the people in these roles were called "principals." The role, or actions, of school leaders have continued to evolve over the years just as leadership in general has. Huber and West (2002) delineated leadership into four broadly defined stages. The first phase is the personality, or great man, phase. In this phase successful leaders are seen as possessing qualities and characteristics of good leaders. Those wishing to be good leaders are to study the lives of great leaders such as Gandhi, Churchill, Thatcher, Mandela, etc. and emulate their behaviors and attitudes. The second phase is the study of what good leaders actually do. The theory is that if these behaviors are copied by others they will in turn become effective leaders. The next two phases move into more current theories of leadership and are referred to as situational leadership approaches. These approaches look at the context in which leadership is exercised. The earlier approaches to situational leadership focused on the efforts leaders put into task completion and people centered behaviors. The fourth phase includes linking the culture of the organization to the leader. This is encompassed in the transformational model of leadership and what this researcher hopes to determine principals having knowledge of causes significantly improved leadership in schools.

Leadership means many things. The literature contains many definitions and descriptions about the concept of leadership. Some of the basic ingredients of more contemporary definitions include the development and facilitation of a vision, building a coalition, understanding an organization's culture, and maintaining trust and bringing people and communities together (Beyer & Ruhl-Smith, 1996, p. 79). Brubaker (1994) described leadership as a need to take action so that things may be accomplished. Depree (1992) began his book with realistic and insightful perspectives on leadership. He said,

> Leadership is, as you know, not a position but a job. It's hard and exciting and good work. It's also a serious meddling in other people's lives. One examines leadership not with techniques but rather with premise, not with tools but beliefs, and not with systems but with understandings. (p. 7)

Another perspective on leadership is from the work of Leithwood and Riehl (2003). These authors discussed how effective school leaders involved not only developing their organizations but also developing the people within their organizations. This idea brings a human touch to the notion of what leadership is about. School leaders provide people (teachers) with "intellectual stimulation" and individual support (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 4). Leaders have to establish positive working relationships with adults and students to promote school improvement and change. Leaders have to provide mental, physical, and intellectual support for people. Glover (2013) asserts that principals,

> … must do more than manage. The goal of management is to enable LTL (the lead, teach, learn triad) processes among the children and the adults within the school. Principals must manage and lead. More accurately, they must manage to lead. The work of the principal and other school leaders is to manage so that learning occurs and improves. (p. 120)

As the literature shows, leadership can take many forms. The following section highlights some of the better known conceptual frameworks of leadership.

Leadership Frameworks

The review of leadership frameworks is an important component of this study. Several conceptual frameworks of leadership are discussed in this section to offer comparison. One assumption of this study is that successful principals need to know and apply tenets of transformational and instructional leadership; however, another tenet is that other frameworks of school leadership have to be understood because principals possess many different ones. "The evidence from research clearly indicates that there is no single all-purpose leadership style" (Schermerhorn, 1997, p. 5). In the following paragraphs several styles of leadership are defined and explained. There are certainly other leadership styles that exist but the following are considered the most important. Transformational and Instructional leadership will receive a more thorough review due to their predicted importance to this study.

In order to be clear about leadership style a definition is needed. Based on the numerous styles that are discussed in this section, leadership style can be very complex and may include multiple types of leadership behaviors. In an article by Sun (2004) leadership style is defined as, "…sets of leadership behaviors or actions that can be measured or compared" (p. 18). For this study I define leadership style as the behaviors and actions administrators engage in as they carry out their responsibilities as building-level leaders.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership can be thought of as a collaborative partnership between leaders and followers. Burns (1978) defines the transformational leaders as follows,

> The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual

stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may covert leaders into moral agents. (p. 4)

Hall and Hord (2001) said that transformational leadership involved the sharing of power and sharing in the process of leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1998) state "…this form of leadership assumes the central focus of leadership ought to be to the commitments and capacities of the organizational members" (p. 35). Leithwood and Duke (1998) also discussed Bennis and Nanus's interpretation of transformational leadership as "the ability of a person to reach the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings and inspires human intent that is the source of power" (as cited in Leithwood & Duke, 1998, p. 35). The underlying assumption of transformational leadership in education is that there is a need to form a partnership between principal and teachers. That partnership is one of mutual respect in which each party promotes the vision and mission of the school. It is not a top-down management approach in which teachers are viewed as followers (Fullan, 1997). Instead, teachers are considered to be important members of the leadership team involved in making decisions for the school. Transformational leaders help teachers develop their own leadership potential so they can better aide in the process of leading the school.

Leithwood (1994) described tenets of transformational leadership that may help us form a better understanding of this leadership style. The first tenet is that the means and ends for school restructuring (i.e. improvement) are uncertain. Leithwood (1994) said that the purpose of school restructuring and the ways in which to accomplish it were unclear (p. 499). With that uncertainty comes the need for transformational leadership. Leithwood used the phrase "commitment rather than control." The basic idea of transformational leadership – as he explained later – was the idea

that people would follow leaders when they were committed to the vision. People would not

necessarily respond as favorably to control or being controlled by someone else.

Transformational leaders were said to "inspire followers to pursue organizational goals in

lieu of self-interests" (Barbuto, 1997, p. 689). As Burns (1978) discusses in his work,

transformational leaders "engage others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one

another to higher levels of motivation or morality" (p. 20). This is certainly not the idea of

control but of mutual investment to help the greater good of the school.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership was a style that emerged in the 1980s during the Effective

Schools movement (Marks & Printy, 2003). The focus of an instructional leader was to serve as

the sole leader of curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, 2003). Instructional leadership

"typically assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviors of teachers as

they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (Leithwood & Duke, 1998, p.

34). The goal was to standardize teaching methods and thus improve student achievement. This

style of leadership placed principals at the top of the organizational chart with teachers in the role

of followers (Hallinger, 2003). The notion of shared leadership or empowerment of teachers had

not yet emerged as a desired practice. The principal was the only source of leadership in the

school because he or she was viewed as the primary expert. Hallinger (2003) described

instructional leaders as "hands on people, 'hip deep' in curriculum and instruction" (p. 332). The

primary task of the principal (as instructional leader) was to improve and develop teaching and

learning.

The instructional leadership component of a principal's job contains several components that are important to know about in order to better understand this style of leadership (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). First, instructional leaders develop a mission and set goals focused on curriculum and academic achievement. Second, instructional leaders manage the instructional program through monitoring and evaluating instruction. Third, instructional leaders promote a "positive school-learning climate" (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1998). Finally, instructional leaders provide a supportive working environment for teachers in order to promote academic achievement. In the first aspect, the principal as leader develops the mission and defines the goals for the school. The mission and goals are then communicated to the faculty and staff and expected to be carried out in their (teachers') classrooms. The second aspect promotes the principal as the expert in the areas of curriculum and teaching. The principal serves as evaluator of teachers and monitors their performance and work in the classrooms. In the third aspect the principal is the primary person who affects the climate of the school. It is the principal's job to create the learning environment needed for academic success. In the fourth aspect of instructional leadership, the principal's role is to create an environment in which teachers can perform their duties in the classroom.

According to instructional leadership philosophy the principal is supposed to be the all-knowing expert of curriculum and instruction and is expected to be able to communicate that to his or her staff. With the principal as primary expert, there is little room for sharing leadership responsibilities among the staff. The "principal as expert" as the sole model of leadership used in a school has come to be seen as archaic and "dependent on docile followers" (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 373). The four aspects of instructional leadership create a top-down approach to leading a school that is basically management instead of leadership. The principal coordinates and

controls all aspects teaching and learning under this model, which is in conflict with today's movement to empower teachers.

Integrated Leadership

Up to this point I have reviewed and discussed two predominant educational leadership styles referred to in the literature and adapted by school principals during the 1980s and 1990s. As my reading for this study began, I was pleased to learn that a new leadership style had been identified. This is the blending of instructional and transformational styles and has been named integrated leadership. It is not surprising this should emerge. The demands placed on principals require leadership in many areas and, through my own experience, I have learned there is no one best way to do all that is required. The more I have read about this style of leadership, the more I believe it will emerge as important to the objectives of this study. This concept was introduced in a study by Marks and Printy (2003) and a literature review by Hallinger (2003).

A principal who is considered to use an integrated style of leadership possesses the qualities and traits of both a transformational and an instructional leader. This person has a clear focus on instructional issues. Marks and Printy (2003) described this type of principal as a "transformational leader that accepts their instructional role and exercises it in collaboration with teachers" (p. 376). They are able to maintain that instructional focus by empowering others in the school to make decisions and "think for themselves." In schools where an integrated form of leadership is being practiced, principals and teachers share leadership for instruction. A learning community exists where teachers offer solutions to issues through collaboration and intellectual stimulation. The principal is not viewed as the instructional expert in the school but as a partner in helping teachers become innovative in their approaches to instruction.

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In a 2007 conference paper Hallinger synthesized findings from empirical studies of two of the foremost emerging models of learner centered school leadership, instructional and transformational leadership. In this paper he speculated that the points of connection between the models are sufficient enough to allow "development of an integrated and more sophisticated model of educational leadership" (Hallinger, 2007, p. 5).

Participatory Leadership

Participatory leadership is a style that involves others in the decision-making process. Participatory leadership "assumes that the decision making process of the group ought to be the central focus for leaders" (Leithwood & Duke, 1998, p. 38). Participatory leaders focus on the team approach to solving problems and empower team members to make decisions (Kezar, 2001). The assumption is that teachers will be more committed to what is happening in the school when they are involved in the decision making for the school. Furthermore, in the proper culture teachers will be more collaborative when they are involved with the decision making.

In Bolger's (2001) study a quantitative questionnaire using Likert-type scales was administered to 940 teachers with the purpose of determining the impact of principals' leadership styles on their perception of their occupation. The findings from Bolger's (2001) study indicate that principals who practiced participative decision-making had higher teacher satisfaction ratings than did principals who used autocratic decision making. The inclusiveness of participative decision-making leads to a sense of ownership by teachers. Teachers feel like they have a say in what goes on in their schools when principals release some of the power of decision making. This process helps to create pride for the members of the faculty. Teachers feel good and express feelings of satisfaction when they claim ownership in a school decision.

Situational Leadership

The idea that "successful leaders are those who can adapt their behavior to meet the demand of their own unique situation" (Schermerhorn, 1997, p. 5) comes from Paul Hersey. Hersey's description of situational leadership came from his book, *The Situational Leader.* This style of leadership "is based on an interplay among (1) the amount of direction a leader gives (task behavior), (2) the amount of socio-emotional support a leader provides (relationship behavior), and (3) the readiness level that followers exhibit on a specific task" (Schermerhorn, 1997, p. 6). The amount of direction a leader gives is described as task behavior (Schermerhorn, 1997). This has been explained as how much communication a leader engages in to direct followers. This communication is described as one-way. The degree to which a leader is engaged with two-way communication is described as relationship behavior (Schermerhorn, 1997). The behaviors used by the leader are contingent on the situation with which they are confronted. Depending on the degree of significance of the situation the leader will invoke each specific behavior as necessary. One situation might call for task behavior and less relationship behavior or if the readiness level of the follower is low the leader might use more two-way communication. This notion of contingency leads to another description of situational leadership.

Leithwood and Duke (1998) discussed the model of contingent leadership. Their model is described as "how leaders respond to the unique organizational circumstances or problems which they face as a consequence of the tasks to be undertaken" (Leithwood & Duke, 1998, p. 42). Their description of contingent leadership parallels situational leadership as described by Hersey. The central focus is that a leader may respond using different skill sets or strategies depending on the particular task or situation at hand and the readiness of the followers to undertake them.

Transactional Leadership

In contrast to transformational leadership, the idea of transactional leadership "refers to exchange relationships between the leaders and their followers" (Bolger, 2001, p. 663). Transactional leaders have three characteristics (Bryant as cited in Hay, 2006). One of those characteristics is that they work with teams to set goals then ensure that the workers on those teams get rewards for achieving those goals. A second is that they provide rewards and or promises of rewards to the workers for their efforts. An additional characteristic they exhibit is responding to the immediate self-interests of the workers if they can be met while the job is being done. "Transactional leadership does not bind leaders and followers in any enduring way; therefore it results in a routinized non-creative but stable environment as compared to the responsive and innovative environment that the transformational leader brings about" (Bolger, 2001, p. 663).

School Culture

Understanding the forces at work within a school that enhance or impede success is paramount for its leader. As stated earlier in this review, I believe that understanding school culture and that applying knowledge of such to help improve performance is one of the areas that demonstrates a principal's movement from manager to leader. Johnston (1996) studied forms of educational leadership that he found in use in today's postindustrial society and observed that "cultural leadership may be a more thoroughly sociological theory of leadership" (p. 222) than the previously dominant forms of transactional and transformative leadership. Although no concrete statistics or percentages were presented by Johnston, he adopted the stance that cultural leadership was the more typically used form of leadership in American education at that time.

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Cunningham and Gresso (1993) expressed this belief as follows: "[C]ulture must be at the center of all administrative efforts if we hope to continuously improve organizational effectiveness" (p. 33).

Culture Defined

From the sociological concept of culture grows the specialized area of organizational culture. The forces that manifest themselves as a result of organizational culture are formidable. The power of organizational culture need to be recognized, acknowledged, understood, and consistently taken into account by leaders who wish to be maximally effective with school improvement efforts. Most school leaders can provide a definition of school culture. Often their definitions will make reference to the environment or climate of a school (which are part of it), but the concept is not easily defined without study. With study and understanding one finds the meaning goes deeper. With that in mind, several aspects of organizational culture are examined to provide a more complete definition.

Organizational culture may be thought of as a set of rules that evolves over time related to the norms of a particular group (Schein, 1968). These rules, according to Goodenough (1981), determine who gets what and why as competition or collaboration among individuals develop. A set of observed behavioral regularities represents another possible conceptualization of organizational culture (Goffman, 1959). Schein (1985) defined organizational culture as a set of "basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization" (p. 6). He went on to describe the process of culture formation as one in which "a number of people simultaneously face a problematic situation and have to work out a solution together" (p. 183). Perhaps the simplest definition of organizational culture states that it represents "the way we do

things around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 4). Cunningham and Gresso (1993) reflected the same language in their basic definition then went on to state, "[C]ulture is a powerful yet ill-defined conceptual thinking within the organization that expresses organizational values, ideals, attitudes, and beliefs" (p. 20). The underpinnings of these definitions focus on the values and behaviors of the members of the organization. These values are so compellingly strong that, "a corporation's values will affect all aspects of the company" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 31). These core values are so deeply embedded that they "operate unconsciously, and define in a basic 'taken for granted' fashion, an organization's view of itself and its environment" (Schein, 1985, p. 6).

In helping leaders develop their understanding of culture it is important to take them below the surface reflections of a school's culture such as its signs, symbols, artifacts, and climate. We must also delve below the next level of cultural reflections that are the school's policies, procedures, and practices. These too emerge from the values and behaviors the group shares which, in turn, define the development of the underlying culture from which all these manifestations emerge. Managers work more with surface-level understandings of school culture resulting in being reactionary to its forces. Principals whose understanding of school culture is deeper know they can help shape and influence the school's culture therefore lead instead of react. The following is a partial listing Cunningham and Gresso (1993) share as additional vestiges of culture expressed through shared values and beliefs, heroes and heroines, rites and rituals, priests and priestesses, stories and myths, symbols, norms, practices, legacy, customs, and traditions. Some of these are elaborated upon to help develop even further understanding of the forces that make up, drive, influence, or develop a school's culture. Understanding these social processes may help principals develop the leadership skills to assess when their schools'

culture is promoting high academic achievement and overall positive development of students and the skills to impact change when it is suppressing them.

Heroes and heroines publicly display the effects of attachment to the values of the organization as they go about the business of conducting their activities within the cultural setting. In addition to this public display the heroes and heroines serve in multiple roles. They provide role models for others within the organization and have a way of conveying the message that success is attainable because their actions are "out of the ordinary, but not too far out" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 37). The mystique surrounding heroes and heroines also serves to communicate to the outside world the essence of the organization. They function as a type of human symbol representing what is important and valued to the organization. The actions of these persons also become important as a means of setting a standard of performance to which other employees may aspire. The rewards that accrue to the individual thought of as a hero or heroine may also serve to motivate others to achieve that same status.

Associated with the heroes and heroines are each organization's set of rites, rituals, and ceremonies. These activities are extremely important because, "[A] corporate culture-and the values it embodies-must be ritualized and celebrated if it is going to survive" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 59). Such rituals and rites may be grand gestures at elaborate formal occasions or simple acts of recognition. Regardless of the type of activity, the significance is that the rites, rituals, and ceremonies help the cultural values be perceived and transmitted. In other words, rites, rituals, and ceremonies afford an opportunity for the emotional attachment to specific beliefs to be publicly proclaimed in the hope that commitment to them will be shared by others within the cultural setting.

In addition to the information transmitted by heroes, heroines, rites, rituals, and ceremonies, information has been conveyed by persons thought of as "priests" within the organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). The significance of those priests and priestesses is that they must essentially bless the proceedings. This blessing is crucial to the success of an organization. The telling of stories is another important function of priests and priestesses. As stories related to the history of the setting are told over and over, they become embedded within the fabric of the culture. Gaining the support of the priests and priestesses within a setting and then encouraging them to carry on with the telling of stories is an effective means of transforming as well as transmitting cultural values. As this process continues, systems of overlapping customs become evident in the form of institutional expectations. These institutionalized expectations serve to form the basis of the organizational culture and the regularly reoccurring routines associated with that specific cultural scene.

"What makes culture an exciting concept is that its analysis forces one to take an integrative perspective toward organizational phenomena, a perspective that brings together key ideas from psychology, sociology, anthropology, social psychology, systems theory, and psychotherapy" (Schein, 1985, p. 314). Whereas all of the forces mentioned here apply to everyone within the setting, the leader of the organization is in a key position in relationship to the convergence of these forces hence the importance of a school principal knowing and understanding them. The following section reflects on the role of leadership in organizational culture.

Leadership in Organizational Cultures

After having examined some of the characteristics of organizational culture and some of those individuals who are instrumental to the development, preservation and passing on of the cultural values, a closer examination of the role of the principal with regard to the culture of his or her school is informative. Although it is true that, "all schools have a culture of one kind or another," one should be cautioned that, "the culture of a school is not necessarily and, assuredly, not automatically, supportive of education and achievement" (Deal, 1987, p. 4). The question then becomes one of determining how a principal may influence an existing culture so as to shape it into a more positive force that supports educational objectives. This is not a simple undertaking. In fact, "changing any important feature of the school culture is no easy affair, a conclusion that may well be the understatement of the century" (Sarason, 1996, p. 333). While it is difficult, however, "[O]ne might go so far as to say that a unique function of leadership, as contrasted with 'management' or 'administration,' is the creation and management of culture" (Schein, 1985, p. 171).

As noted earlier, culture often evolves as a result of a group of people working together to solve a problem. Even under those circumstances, however, "the principal is the most influential individual in a school" (Sarason, 1996, p. 139). The skillful principal will take advantage of problem situations as they naturally arise to shape the culture in specific directions. This requires that the principal be both patient and vigilant. Patience is required so that the change in the culture evolves as a natural reaction to a problem situation and not a forced move on the part of one individual. Remaining aware of the cultural influences impacting the performance of a school is important so that opportunities for change are not overlooked. Being vigilant and patient allows a principal to carry out leader activities. Sergiovanni (1991) stated,

Leader activities associated with the cultural force include articulating school purposes and mission; socializing new members to the culture, telling stories and maintaining and reinforcing myths, traditions, and beliefs; explaining the way things operate around here; developing and displaying a system of symbols over time; and rewarding those who reflect this culture. (p. 30)

Once a decision has been made that a change in the way of conducting business is necessary and that the appropriate time has arrived, it helps if the principal recognizes that, "For many employees, change is neither sought after nor welcomed. It is disruptive and intrusive. It upsets the balance" (Strebel, 1996, p. 86). This is due, in part, to the fact that the principal is seeking to change the cultural paradigm of "the way we do things around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 4). In other words, "any attempt to introduce change into the school setting requires, among other things, changing the existing regularities in some way. The intended outcomes involve changing an existing regularity, eliminating one or more of them, or producing new ones" (Sarason, 1996, p. 96). If culture can be thought of "as the outcome of group learning" (Senge, 1990, p. 9), the first step for the leader is to begin to guide the group through a learning process that starts with learning about the reasons for the proposed change. This is a difficult task on at least two levels. First, even admitting that a problem exists within a cultural environment that may require change is troublesome for those who have depended on the culture to have the capacity and the capability to answer questions and solve problems within the existing cultural context. If "the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality" (DePree, 1987, p. 11), the leader must find a way to articulate or demonstrate successfully to the organization that the existing situation is in need of change. When change is being considered, the security of having cultural customs and routines to depend upon is being threatened. Overcoming this fear of the unknown is no small task. Second, "the primary institutions of our society are oriented toward controlling rather than learning, rewarding individuals for performing for others rather

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than for cultivating natural curiosity and impulse to learn" (Senge, 1990, p. 7). Educational settings have certainly traditionally fit into this model. Teachers and principals are quite often reluctant to try approaches that are not already imbedded in the existing culture. Also, teachers or principals who perform tasks in unique and novel ways, even if their approaches are successful, may be discouraged by peers or higher ups who may not view these methods as serving their purposes well.

After the process of recognizing and defining reality has progressed substantially, the leader must take advantage of the cultural network in order to communicate beliefs, emphasize the specific direction of the desired cultural change, and seek support by both celebrating those who champion the cause and by recognizing their accomplishments publicly. This cultural network may be thought of as the communication infrastructure. Although memos and directives are important, wise leaders "recognize and tap into this cultural network to accomplish their goals" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 86). The types of anecdotes and stories being told and the number of different people telling the same ones represent important pieces of information for the leader to consider. The leader must function in such a way as to make strides toward "breaking the tyranny of the old culture" (Schein, 1985, p. 321). One effective aid in this process is the addition of new and different anecdotes and stories to the content of the cultural network. Additionally, grand symbolic gestures represent a potentially powerful method of making these additions.

As the leader is attempting to shape or transform the culture of the organization, it is important to recognize, and deal with, the linkages and compacts that exist within the a setting. Linkages exist in two forms. "Bureaucratic linkages are the formal, enduring arrangements in an organization that guide its operation. Examples of bureaucratic linkages could include the

provision of resources, funds, time, or access to consultants. Cultural linkages include the system

of collectively accepted meanings" (Wilson & Firestone, 1987, p. 19). Cultural linkages could

include such things as attempts to promote team building, sharing, and collegiality among

teachers. Careful influencing of these linkages may lead to significant cultural paradigm shifts

and is an important part of leadership.

It is also important for the leader to recognize that personal compacts exist and will

undergo change if the culture is altered. Personal compacts exist between employees in

organizations and represent "the reciprocal obligations and mutual commitments, both stated and

implied, that define their relationship" (Strebel, 1996, p. 87). Regardless of whether a principal is

pursuing change or the change is being forced by some other group or individual, it is imperative

to recognize the cultural implications. "In communities, for example, the connection of people to

purposes and the connections among people are not based on contracts but on commitments"

(Sergiovannni, 1994. p. 217). Even these connections and commitments, however, are examples

of personal compacts. They are no longer based so much on personal gain and monetary reward

as they are an outgrowth of mutual pursuit of common goals, but they still exist. For example,

the extent to which collegiality exists within an educational setting represents an effort to pursue

common goals. The extent to which a particular school has moved from an organizational

perspective to a community perspective represents a major cultural shift of some proportion. The

greater the amount of shift, the more the leader asks the questions that enables the group to re-

examine the culture underlying the inner-workings of the group to re-examine what may be right

or wrong. Failure to analyze and take into account these differences in the personal compacts

could lead to derailment of the desired change in culture.

From the information described in this chapter it is obvious that for a principal to become the most effective leader he or she can, a shift in thinking must occur. This shift in thinking must include understanding the school's culture and how to move it toward higher levels of success. "The task of leadership is to create and support the culture necessary to foster an attitude of effectiveness in everything that is done within the school" (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993, p. 25). Leading this requires knowing, and paying attention to, all the cultural components previously discussed as well as the interactions among them. Manipulation of culture, therefore, should be viewed as a unique and essential function of leadership (Schein, 1985, p. 317). Sergiovanni cautions that cultural leadership provides principals with powerful tools that can be used for manipulation and control (Sergiovanni, 2006, p.15). He then issues this challenge to leaders in schools: "to engage oneself and others in the process of decision making without thought to self-interest. … without regard to whether we will be winners or losers" (p.16).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Through this research I attempted to ascertain what principals choose to do, what happens to them, or what is done to them that actually caused an improvement in their leadership abilities. Perhaps another way to state the purpose was to find the catalysts and pathways that caused principals to move from managers to effective leaders. To accomplish this I identified principals who went through recognizable improvements as leaders whose schools subsequently improved academic performance as measured by North Carolina End of Grade or End of Course tests. After identifying these principals I conducted interviews with them to discern what caused the change from manager to leader. Following this I identified commonalities among their experiences and generated guidelines for others to follow.

Theoretical Basis

I believed the best way to do this was through in-depth discussions with representative principals. According to Creswell in his book *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (1998) this type of research is best done through qualitative inquiry. He stated that the following were compelling reasons to undertake a qualitative study. In abbreviated form the reasons are; (a) the research question starts with a how or what; (b) the topic needs to be explored; (c) a detailed view of the topic needs to be presented; and (d) individuals need to be studied in their natural setting. All these reasons apply to the topic I have selected.

Multiple Case Studies

Because I planned to look for common events or actions that led to improvement of principals working in different schools, multiple case studies appeared to be the best qualitative approach to take with this research. The following quotation by Stake is cited in Creswell's (1998) book; *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design:*

> A case study is an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied-a program, an event, an activity, or individuals. Multiple sources of information include observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, and documents and reports. The context of the case involves situating the case within its setting which may be a physical setting or the social, historical, and/or economic setting for the case. When more than one case is studied, it is referred to as a collective case study. (pp. 61-62)

In my study the multiple cases were the principals who transitioned from managers to leaders and the bounded system was the period of time during which the transition occurred. The context for the cases were the schools in which they worked. Creswell (1998) recommended purposeful sampling to determine the cases to include in the study and further recommended the researcher choose no more than four cases. He went on to explain that through the collection and analysis of the data collected the researcher identifies themes that emerge then makes assertions about the cases. "In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) mention, the 'lessons learned' from the case" (Creswell, 1998. p. 63).Therefore, I selected four principals through a purposeful sampling process and provided a detailed description of each. Then I gathered data from multiple sources and conducted a thematic analysis across the cases. In the final phase of the study I ascertained the themes that presented themselves and made assertions about events principals go through that cause them to become more effective

leaders. These lessons learned, I hope, will provide guidance for those wishing to improve their own leadership or help others improve theirs.

Population and Sample

The population to be studied was the principals of North Carolina public schools whose students' performance had dramatically improved over a period of 4 to 5 years. More specific to this study, the objective was to identify principals within this population in a variety of settings, who, through their growth as leaders facilitated improvement to their schools' ability to provide students with greater academic success.

Purposeful sampling of the population was used to determine the principals to be interviewed. The goal in purposeful sampling, according to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) is to determine cases that will provide the best information for the study. The particular strategy of maximum variation sampling was used to establish the participants. Patton (2002) stated, "[T]his strategy…aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation. … Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (pp. 234-235).

As stated earlier, four cases were selected for this study. To achieve the maximum variation desired, I selected four principals, male and female, who were of varying ethnicities and ages serving in a variety of school settings. The best-case scenario was to find such principals serving continuously in schools having experienced 4 to 5 years of continued improvement in student performance that run the gamut of large and small, rural and urban, elementary and high.

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The purposeful sampling process began by surveying a group of professionals belonging to the Leadership Group for the Carolinas. This organization, of which I'm a member, is made up of retired principals and superintendents who have been working with principals in underperforming schools across the state of North Carolina. I sent an e-mail to the leaders of the group asking permission to survey the membership for recommendations. The e-mail to the group's leaders contained a sample text to the membership describing the study, the characteristics of principals I needed to interview, and a request for referrals. After obtaining permission from the leaders, I sent emails to the general membership requesting referrals. A draft of these emails is included in the addendum. These emails contained information to help clarify the type principals I wanted referred as cases to study that were the key school leadership functions that the Wallace Foundation distilled as reflective of principals who can develop a team that improves schools academic effectiveness (Harvey & Holland, 2012). The Wallace Foundation information stated specifically that these principals will have noticeably evolved beyond the basic management function of principals such as building management and maintenance, rules and regulations enforcement, materials purchase and distribution, budgeting, scheduling, paperwork, etc. They will have demonstrated increased levels of ability and amounts of time working in areas associated with effective transformational and instructional leadership such as shared vision development, positive and academically oriented climate and culture development, cultivating shared leadership among school staff, and improving instruction. Through this purposeful sampling process I received 11 referrals from the Leadership for the Carolinas Group membership.

From the referrals received by the group's membership, I applied the criteria earlier described to determine the four cases to be studied. I did this by using string to outline a map of

North Carolina on the living room floor and placed each referral's name in its geographic location. Next step was to analyze the distribution to determine how I could get the greatest diversity by age, sex, ethnicity, school type, and school size. The results are shared in detail in Chapter 4 of this study. Had the results from the survey of the Leadership Group for the Carolinas not yielded the samples needed, I had a secondary plan to broaden the search by reviewing the end-of-grade and end-of-course test data for all the public schools in North Carolina. All schools that had shown 4 to 5 years of positive academic growth would have been included in the search to identify other cases needed to complete the study. This information is provided on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's website.

Once the principals were identified, a letter was sent to their superintendents requesting permission to approach the principals about participating in the study. In the letter to the superintendents the purpose and design of the study was outlined plus an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality was given. Once superintendents' approval was secured I made personal contact with the principals explaining the study, why I had contacted them, and requested a meeting to further explain their role. During the personal contact I explained in more detail the purpose of the study, why they were selected, the phases of the study, and what materials might be requested and provided an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity for them and their schools.

Instruments

It was important that each principal interviewed responded to the specific areas for which information was being sought. Therefore, a standardized open-ended interview format was used

to guide the interviewing process. According to Patton in his book, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (2002),

> An interview guide is prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed. The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus, the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined. (p. 343)

Additionally the concept described by Gall et al. (1996) called "emergent design" (p. 705) was employed to allow the researcher to explore new insights that emerged as the interviews progress. Appendix A contains the standardized open-ended interview guide I followed.

To ensure effectiveness of the principals' interview guide a field test was conducted. To test the principals' interview guide I conducted interviews with three principal volunteers who had read and critiqued the guide. Following each test I made revisions found necessary to achieve clarity for the instrument.

Phases of the Study

Approval from East Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board was obtained before any of the candidates for interviews were contacted. Once the Institutional Review Board granted permission to do the process of contacting the identified principals began.

The first step in the communication process was seeking approval of the principals' superintendents to conduct the research in their systems. A letter of introduction was sent to each superintendent containing a brief explanation of the research and why I was asking permission to include a principal from his or her school system. The letter also contained an assurance that

schools and personnel would remain anonymous in the study, that no identifying data would be included, that confidentiality would be maintained, Board of Education policies governing research would be followed, and a notice that I would call for an appointment in the near future. Once approval by the superintendent had been attained the next step was to make an initial contact with the principal to be studied. I followed a similar process used with the superintendents and made the initial contact by letter. Again, the letter contained a brief explanation of the research and why I was asking this particular principal to be a part of it. It also contained an assurance that the school, principal, and faculty would not be identified by name in the study, a commitment to abide by any guidelines the principal required as a guest in the school, and a notice that I would call for an appointment in the near future. During the first meeting with the principal a copy of the proposal was presented along with a review of why the person was selected for the study and an explanation of the phases of the process. After approval of the principal had been attained and the informed consent document was signed the data collection phase of the study began.

Three visits to the sites to conduct interviews with the principals were made. The length of the interview during each visit depended on the principals' schedules. The goal was for each interview to last approximately an hour. I was able to accomplish that goal within a few minutes either way with each principal. Each session was recorded and I took notes as well. Following each visit I analyzed the data by noting topics or themes that emerged during the interview. After the first rounds of interviews were completed an initial attempt was made to identify any common themes or topics that emerged. Using emergent design the interview guide was modified prior to the next round of site visits. Again, following the second round of visits,

attempts were made to identify or add to any common themes or topics that were emerging. During the third round of visits the principals underwent their final round of interviews.

Following the final round of interviews the final analysis of the data occurred. The analysis of the data was ongoing from the time the interviews began. An external auditor reviewed the analysis. Following the review by the auditor, themes that held up to this validity check emerged reflecting the "lessons learned" from the study. These were used to develop implications for use by principals seeking improvement in their leadership, superintendents seeking effective strategies to improve their principals' leadership, or institutions of higher education seeking improvement in their school leadership training programs.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded and notes taken during each session. Following each session the recording was played back by the researcher. Any additional pertinent information was added to the notes from the interview. After the note taking was completed for each session, the data were organized for analysis.

For case study research Stake (1995) advocated that a researcher develop collection of instances from the data called categorical aggregation with the hopes that issues with relevant meanings would emerge. He also suggested that in a case study the researcher should establish patterns and look for correlations between two or more categories. He further suggested that the last phase of case study analysis called for the development of naturalistic generalizations from which people can learn (Stake, 1995).

Creswell (1998) described the process of analyzing qualitative data as a spiral beginning with organizing and conversion of the data followed by a description of what the researcher has

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seen. The description of the data is the place from which to begin the classifying portion of the analysis.

> Classifying pertains to taking the …information apart, looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of information. …Interpretation involves making sense of the data. …At this point in their analyses, researchers step back and form larger meanings of what is going on in the situations or sites. In the final phase of the spiral, researchers present the data, a packaging of what was found in text, tabular, or figure form. (pp. 144-145)

Using the above guidelines for direction and following the completion of the note taking process, I organized the data into categories, themes, areas of correlation, and topics.

As themes emerge from the data analysis I shared them with the participants during the subsequent second and third rounds of interviews to determine their agreement or disagreement until redundancy, meaning no generation of new information (Patton, 2002, p. 246), was achieved. Once the collection of data was completed from the interviewees I began the interpretation phase. The interpretation involved making sense of the data that had been collected and analyzed or, as has been referenced earlier, determined the lessons learned from the study of the cases.

As part of the final phase of the study each of the cases are described in detail and comparisons of the cases are presented in Chapter 4. It is my hope that the findings that emerged show definite steps principals can take to improve their leadership ability. Those findings and recommendations are presented in Chapter 5 of this study.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness of the study, I employed several procedures that are considered standards of quality and verification. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the terms "credibility," "transferability," "dependability," and "confirmability" to describe what it took to achieve

trustworthiness in a qualitative study. One standard I employed in the study was member checking that involved sharing the analyses, interpretations, and conclusions with the participants so they could judge the accuracy and credibility of the work (Creswell, p. 203). I also provided thick description that enabled transferability to other settings. Finally, peer review by a person with a doctoral degree in educational leadership was used to provide an external audit of the collection and analysis of the data.

Summary

This chapter presents the rationale for using qualitative research and provides an explanation of why multiple case study appears to be the best approach to use. The population studied and the how the sample was determined are discussed. A chronology of the phases of the study is provided along with descriptions of the instruments that were used. An explanation of how the data was collected and analyzed is included along with the standards for ensuring trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to find out what principals did (or what happened to them) that actually caused an improvement in their leadership abilities. Another way to state the purpose was to find the catalysts and pathways that caused principals to move from managers to effective leaders. More specifically the study explored what motivated principals to improve, what processes they engaged in that helped them improve, how knowledge of organizational leadership and culture may or may not have contributed to their improvement, and what commonalities existed if any in their transitions.

The initial design of this study called for identifying four principals, male and female, of varying ethnicities and ages serving in a variety of school settings who had transformed into successful leaders. These four principals were then to go through three rounds of interviews with the interviewer using an emergent design process to refine the focus of each subsequent round of interviews. It was thought that these principals would still be serving the schools in which their leadership improvement occurred, but as it worked out the purposeful sampling procedure rendered cases that were no longer in those schools.

A written request was sent to members of a North Carolina statewide organization of educators asking them to refer principals who matched the profile outlined earlier in the study. The profile stated that these principals will have noticeably evolved beyond the basic management functions of principals such as building management and maintenance, rules and regulations enforcement, materials purchase and distribution, budgeting, scheduling, paperwork, etc. They will have demonstrated increased levels of ability, and amounts of time, working in areas associated with effective transformational and instructional leadership such as shared vision development, positive and academically oriented climate and culture development, cultivating shared leadership among school staff,

and improving instruction. Eleven referrals were received ranging geographically from one end of the state to the other. The purposeful sampling procedure yielded the results it was designed to provide. From these 11 referrals the strategy of maximum variation sampling was used to establish the participants resulting in:

- a younger white male with high school experience, who was referred to as principal 1, from a large rural high school that was referred to as school 1,

- an upper middle age white female with primary and elementary school experience, who was referred to as principal 2, from a mid size rural elementary school, that was be referred to as school 2,

- a middle age white female with high school and elementary school experience, who was referred to as principal 3, from an small city elementary school that was referred to as school 3,

- and a middle age African American male with middle and high school experience, who was referred to as principal 4, from an urban middle school that was referred to as school 4.

The purpose of the coding system was to maintain the anonymity of the participants and their schools.

Written permission via email was obtained from either the Superintendent or the Research Approval Committee of each school system. Following school system approval prospective participants were officially contacted to see if they were willing to be included in the study and all accepted. The audio taped interviews took place in the participants' offices where they were currently employed. The Informed Consent process was explained to each participant. They were

then provided the Informed Consent letter, asked to read it, and asked if they had any questions. Following this the letters were signed and a copy was provided to each person.

Case Profiles

The following sections provide more in-depth information about the principals who were selected for the study and the schools they were serving during the time of their transition to higher levels of leader effectiveness. The enrollment and test data used for all the schools were taken from two web sites developed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (Education First NC School Report Cards, 2012) and (The ABCs Accountability Model, 2012). Ethnicity and economic information used for the schools was taken from a web site provided by a national nonprofit organization that provides information to parents about schools in the United States (Great Schools, 2013).

Principal 1

Principal 1 is 32 years old and is currently serving as assistant superintendent of a school system in the north, northeastern part of North Carolina. His educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration from a college, a Master of Education in Instructional Technology from a university, an Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership from a university, and a Doctorate of Education of Educational Leadership from a different university. At the time of the leadership growth that was documented for this study he had completed the educational specialist degree in educational leadership. Professional development in which he had participated pertaining to school leadership included the North Carolina High School Turnaround Program, School Administrators as Instructional Leaders (SAIL), Resource

Management Academy, Learning –Focused Schools, and Synergizing Classrooms for Teachers and Administrators.

Principal 1 moved relatively quickly from a beginning teacher position to the principalship. His first year he taught drafting and special education, his next 2 years were in a different school system teaching engineering and assisting as a basketball coach. He began the next year in a different school system as an instructional technologist but left at mid-year to become an assistant principal for curriculum and instruction in yet another school system. He served 2 years in that position before being promoted to interim principal for the remainder of the year. At the end of that year he was named the principal of the high school in the same system and remained there for the next 5 years. This is the school in which his transition from management to leadership occurred.

The high school he led to higher levels of student achievement is a public high school containing grades 9 through 12 that averaged 1,060 students enrolled during the time he was principal. The school is considered to be fringe rural, is located just outside a medium sized city, and serves students from rural and city. The diversity of the student body breaks down as 73% minority and 27% white. The minority break down is 65% black, 6% Hispanic, and 2% other. Based on free and reduced lunch data 84% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged.

Improvement in student achievement was dramatic from the end of Principal 1's first year through his third year. This improvement was maintained through his forth year but dropped back some during his fifth year, which was his last at that school.

The percentage of passing scores on the North Carolina End-of-Course tests (EOCs) was 55.2 at the end of his first year. This was a composite of all the End-of-Course tests taken in

English I, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, Physics, Civics and Economics, and US History. The 4-year cohort graduation rate was 58.8%, which was 12% below the state graduation rate. Due to that level of performance the school was identified as a Priority school under North Carolina's school performance designators that meant that 50% to 60% of its students were performing at grade level and placed it in the bottom 25% of the high schools in the state.

By the end of his second year the students had improved their percentage of passing scores on the EOCs to 61 %, an improvement of almost 6%, on the same 10 tested subject areas. The 4-year cohort graduation rate increased to 68.2%, which was almost a 10% increase that brought them within 3.5% of the state graduation rate. This improvement in performance was enough to move them out of the North Carolina Priority School designation but they were still in the lower half of the state's high schools at 46%.

The greatest improvement in student achievement occurred during his third year at the high school with 79.7 % passing scores on the End-of-Course tests. This was an increase of almost 19% from the previous year and 25% from the time he became principal. That year the state removed Chemistry and Physics from the content areas that were required to be included in the EOCs. This did not likely account for the improvement in overall student performance because these two content areas had been two of the schools highest performing subject areas averaging around 90% passing rate on their EOCs in both of the previous years. The 4-year cohort graduation rate increased to 71.5%, which was up slightly over 3% from the previous year and approximately 3% below the state's rate. Due to the increased student achievement during this year the school achieved the designation of a School of Progress, which meant that between 60% and 80% of its students were achieving passing rates on their EOCs, and the school had met the

expected growth in student achievement established by the state. This also raised the schools ranking in the state into the top half at 51%.

The fourth year's performance remained high with students achieving 78.7% passing scores on the EOCs. Additional high points during year 4 were that the students exceeded the expected growth set by the state on their EOCs and increased the 4-year cohort graduation rate by another percentage point.

Year 5, and principal 1's last year at this school, revealed some interesting achievement results. The overall performance on EOCs dropped back to 67.8%, which was a reduction of approximately 11% from the previous year. However, the students exceeded the state's expected growth targets for the second year in a row and the 4-year cohort graduation rate increased again to its highest percentage rate of 75.6 %. Explanations for the drop in EOC performance may be explained by the fact that the state eliminated all but three content areas from the required testing program. Therefore this year's results were based on EOC scores only from English I, Algebra I, and Biology. Because the school achieved higher than expected growth on the tests one may be able to assume that the incoming freshman class came to the high school with an overall lower achievement level and made greater growth than expected.

Principal 2

Principal 2 is 59 years old and is currently serving as principal of a K-5 elementary school in the central part of the state. Her educational background began with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from a university and was followed 3 years later with a Masters in Art Education from an Institute of Technology. Fourteen years after receiving her MA in Art Education she returned to a University to earn her principal's certification then 16 years later earned a Masters in Reading

Education, K-12. At the time of the leadership growth documented that was documented for this study she had not completed the Masters in Reading Education. Other professional development activities in which she participated were Facilitative Leadership Training, Madeline Hunter's Instructional Theory Into Practice, three Total Quality Management training sessions, and Building Professional Learning Communities. She participated in all of these with the exception of Building Professional Learning Communities prior to, or during, the time this study focuses on her leadership growth.

Principal 2 began her educational career as a teacher spending 13 years in the classroom. She first taught art in a university then in a different state's School for the Deaf. She relocated and taught art in K-5th grade classrooms in another state before moving to North Carolina where she taught art to middle school students. During part of her classroom years she also was a program trainer for "Reading Through the Arts" program. After teaching middle grade art she accepted a position in a middle school as a Lead Teacher for 1 year, then as the Director of Instruction for the next 3 years, and culminated her experience there as its assistant principal for 1 year. The following year she was named principal of an elementary school in the same system and remained there 7 years. This was the school at which we focus on her leadership growth in this study. Her next assignment was to open a new elementary school in the same school system. She served as principal of that school for 11 years and was then asked to open another new elementary school in the same system where she currently serves as principal.

The elementary school she led to higher levels of student achievement was a public elementary school containing grades K-5 with an average enrollment of 460 students. The school is located in the central part of North Carolina and serves students from a mixture of rural and small townships. The diversity of the student body breaks down as 50% minority and 50% white.

The minority breakdown is 30% black, 18% Hispanic, and 2% other. Based on free and reduced lunch data, 54% are considered economically disadvantaged.

Principal 2 reports that when she became principal of this school there was a great deal of lethargy, hostility, and dysfunctionality among the faculty, and high student achievement levels were not considered attainable. There was no test data readily available for her school the first 2 years she was there. She reports that achievement levels in math and science were below what should have been expected and that writing results were in the single digits. At the end of her second year the composite score for all those tests was 75.9 % passing. The composite score dropped slightly her third year to 74.9 % passing. From that year the composite score increased to 77.9%, which was her fourth year, to 80.3 % in her sixth and final year there. The last year's achievement scores provided the school with the North Carolina designation of School of Distinction which meant that between 80% and 90 % of its students were performing at grade level.

Principal 3

Principal 3 is 46 years old and currently serving as principal of a mid size high school in the central western piedmont or foothills part of North Carolina. Her education background includes a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from a college, a Masters degree in Elementary Education from a university, and a Masters degree in School Administration and a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from a different university. At the time of the leadership growth documented in this study she had completed the master's degree in school administration. Professional development in which she had participated pertaining to school

leadership included the North Carolina Principal Fellows program, the Center for Creative Leadership,

Principal 3's educational service has all been in the same small city system. She began her educational career teaching all content areas in a fifth grade classroom. She served in that position for 4 years then became principal of a K-5 elementary school with an enrollment of 350 students. After serving that school for 3 years she moved to a larger K-5 school with an enrollment of 490 students. She stayed at that school for 3 years before moving to a central office position. While at that school the students achieved North Carolina's designation as an Honor School of Excellence. The time spent as leader of this school is what this study focuses on pertaining to the principal's leadership growth. In her central office position she served 1 year as director of accountability then 5 years as director of curriculum and instruction. From that position she was named as principal of the system's high school and currently remains in that position.

The school she led to higher levels of achievement is a public K-5 elementary school that averaged 470 students enrolled during the time she was principal. The school is considered to be urban, located in a small city, and serves students from within the city limits. The diversity of the student body breaks down as 37% minority and 63% white. The minority break down is 22% black, 10% Hispanic, and 5% other. Based on free and reduced lunch data 37% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged.

The school's student achievement level was high when she became principal. It had already achieved the North Carolina designation of a School of Distinction meaning that between 80% and 90% of the students were scoring at grade level. At the end of her first year the students' achievement level maintained the designation of School of Distinction. With overall

passing reading scores of 87.6 % and math of 92.1 % the school also achieved higher than expected levels of learning achievement by the State's standards.

At the end of her second year the school achieved North Carolina's highest school designation as an Honor School of Excellence meaning that at least 90% of students were at grade level. The overall passing scores in reading increased to 88.3% and math to above 95% meaning that the school's students achieved higher than expected levels of learning again that year. This pattern continued during her final year as principal with the schools' overall passing scores in reading and math increasing again. Reading test passing rates increased by 2.4% to an overall passing rate of 90.7% and overall math scores once again achieved a passing rate of over 95%. This continued high level of student achievement maintained the school's designation as an Honor School of Excellence and for the third year in a row was recognized as having achieved higher than expected levels of learning achievement.

Principal 4

Principal 4 is 47 years old and currently serving as principal of a large city high school. His education background includes a Bachelor of Science in Education from a university and a Masters in School Administration from a different university. At the time of the growth that was documented in this study he had completed his Masters degree. During the documented period he was also participating in professional development pertaining to school leadership. The programs in which he was participating included the North Carolina Turnaround Project, 360 Degree Leadership, Marzano's instructional leadership program, and annual county summer leadership institutes.

Principal 4 began his education career as a social studies teacher in a city high school. He taught in the same high school for 10 years until his administrative career began. He rose fast through the ranks becoming an assistant principal in a rural elementary school in the same school system in which he taught. He spent 1 year as an assistant in that school then became the principal of an elementary school in a different rural community in that system. After 2 years as principal of the elementary school he became principal of an inner city middle school and remained there for 3 years. This is the school in which we focus the study on his leadership growth. Following his 3 years at the middle school he became principal of the high school he currently leads.

The middle school he led to higher levels of student achievement is a public middle school containing grades sixth through eighth. The school's enrollment averaged 500 students during the time he was principal. The school is considered to be inner city and serves students from one of the largest cities in North Carolina. According to North Carolina rankings it was one of the lowest performing middle schools in the state. The diversity of the student body breaks down as 95% minority and 5% white. The minority break down is 66% black, 22% Hispanic, and 7% other. Based on free and reduced lunch data 71% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged.

The year before principal 4 became principal of this school, it had received the North Carolina designation of a Priority School meaning 50% to 60 % of its students were achieving at grade level, or less than 50% were at grade level, and the students' had not achieved the level of growth expected by the state. At the end of his first year the student performance on their tests in reading and math actually dropped below the previous year's with the exception of Algebra I End of Course test which increased by 22% passing rate. At the end of his second year due to the

renorming of the End of Grade reading test data the students' performance in reading dropped by more than half its previous performance level from an overall rate of 69.7% passing to 30.6% passing. Interestingly the students' performance in math increased more than half from an overall rate of 24.2% passing to 51.8% passing. Additionally the performance on the Algebra I EOC test soared to a 92.6% pass rate. The students also exceeded the state's expected rate of growth but the school was not able to move out of the State's designated Priority School rating.

The results of the state tests from his third and last year at the middle school again showed across the board improvement with the school's students achieving the expected rate of growth set by the State and improvement across the board in reading and math scores. The overall percentage of students passing the reading test increased from 30.6 to 39.8 which was an improvement of more than nine percentage points. Reading was slightly more than a 30% improvement. The number of students overall who passed math improved from 51.8 to 62.5 which was an improvement of more than 10 percentage points. The Algebra I scores dropped from the previous year's level but remained high at 85% passing. Unfortunately the school had not been able to move out of the State's Priority School designation.

Findings from Interviews

An in-depth interview method using an eight-part open-ended guide was the method of inquiry. The guide was field tested by sending it to three experienced principals and asking them to read the questions as though they were being asked them during an interview. After allowing them time to read and reflect on the questions I met with each principal and received their feedback. The suggestions for improvement to the instrument included providing examples of what was meant by external and internal factors that drove improvement as I asked the third

question and provide the names of some leadership styles as I asked the fourth question. These suggestions were followed. Emergent design was employed in the interview process to allow for the pursuit of in-depth inquiry or to allow pursuit of new insights that emerged during the course of the interviews. Three rounds of interviews were conducted over a period of 8 weeks. To promote trustworthiness an independent external auditor reviewed fieldwork notes and subsequent analysis and interpretation. Additionally, a process called member checking was consistently used to ensure the data collected were accurate. This process also contributes to the trustworthiness of the research. Member checking involves asking the participants to review the data collected to confirm they are accurate representations of their responses. Following the first interview I provided each principal a copy of the notes I transcribed from the audio recording of their interview. I asked them to read the notes and tell me if there were any inaccuracies. Following the second round of interviews I read my notes from the audio recordings to the participants and asked them to correct any inaccuracies they heard. During the final interview I reviewed the handwritten notes from the interview and again asked for any inaccuracies to be pointed out. In all cases the participants indicated the data were accurate. All transcribing of the audio recordings were done by me. This aided in the categorization, coding, and analysis of the data.

The information gathered in response to the eight areas contained in the open ended survey was analyzed using inductive coding to help determine the answers to the three research questions proposed in the study. The analysis of participants' experiences and insights led to the findings discussed in Chapter 5. The participants' responses to the eight areas are discussed in the following section of this chapter.

The first interview for all participants began with a review of the criteria used to select the cases for the study and asking if they saw themselves as successful, effective principals whose leadership did improve over time. All participants responded that they were managers, learners, observers, or some combination of those processes when they began as principals and that their leadership had improved over time. All principals were reluctant to say they were successful. Instead they used expressions such as: "I was always trying to be the best"; "I grew over time in terms of school leadership"; "I've been able to achieve some goals and if you want to make that synonymous with effective, then so it is". They were humble and indicated they continuously worked at getting better. Principal 1 said, "Once you think you're good you stop improving and become complacent." One of Principal 4's beliefs was, "We're always striving to get better so everything we do can be improved." Having confirmed with each principal that he or she met the criteria set forth in the sampling process, I proceeded to conduct the first round of interviews using the following questions from the interview guide.

Interview One

S-1 Describe how you believe you developed into the effective/successful principal you have become.

Each principal readily admitted that he or she started out as a manager. Principals 1 and 2 had brief stints as assistant principals and principals 3 and 4 had been principals for 3 years before becoming principals of the schools that were the focus of this study. The reasons for focus on management varied. Principal 1 said he was a micro-manager because his name was attached to the school and he was going to be involved with everything. Principal 2 stated that it was an easy thing to turn to as she built relationships. Principals 3 and 4 spoke to the need to focus on improving the safety and appearance of the facility to improve climate and begin impacting the

culture. However, in each case, as they focused on these issues they were also assessing their staffs and looking for people to train to take over management processes so they could focus on instructional improvement as soon as possible.

Listening to their teachers was mentioned by principals 1, 2, and 4 as part of what contributed to their effectiveness. Principal 1 expressed it in the following words: "I listened carefully and tried to let the stakeholders determine the best way, but when necessary I made the hard decisions." Principal 4 stated: "The true development came from being in the hallways and classrooms every day." He indicated he used this as a way to survey what the teachers needed and what it took to get them on board.

Some of the principals mentioned professional learning experiences that they felt contributed to their improvement. Principals 3 and 4 indicated that their masters program in school administration contributed to their success. Principal 3 indicated that North Carolina's Principal's Executive Program for new principals and the Center for Creative Leadership were both helpful to her improvement. Principal 3 stated that, next to her mentor, the Center for Creative Leadership was very helpful to her personal leadership journey.

> "I had heard that another principal from our system had gone through and had benefited so I applied. It is mostly for business leaders. What's neat is that you have to go through a lot of psychological tests going in the door. Some were the Myers Briggs and FIRO-B which was about how you handle change and group stuff. You received 360 degree feedback from my teachers and peers. They have psychologists on staff and they work you though it. They put you in leaderless group activities and observe you through a two way mirror then the psychologist gives you feedback. It really pushed me to think about my style and natural inclinations toward leadership and where my weaknesses were and how I needed to be growing. It was hugely important."

Principal 4 reported that he liked direct feedback and constructive criticism such as that provide by his central administrative supervisor who became like a mentor to him. Principals 2,

3, and 4 indicated that reading professional leadership material on their own was helpful to their improvement. Principal 4 mentioned Stephen Covey's and Ruby Payne's writing as very helpful.

Principals 2 and 3 referenced their desire to help people as factors influencing their improvement. All the principals at some point during the interview made reference to the improvement of their schools not just being due to their efforts. Principal 4 reflected this well when he shared his response to his school receiving the award for being the most improved high school in his school's system. When he was asked how he did it his response was: "I didn't do it. I have outstanding, hardworking teachers committed to children."

S-2 Do you think the process of becoming a successful/effective leader is similar for individuals or do they take different paths?

Three of the respondents reported that they clearly thought the process was different for every individual with principal 3 indicating it could be different. Principal 3 said that he did not think the path taken to improvement was as important as determining how you get an ineffective principal to "flip over" and go down a path. She indicated that "drive" has to be there and suggested that there has to be opportunity to reflect then decide what area you need to improve to take your leadership to the next level. Principals 2 and 4 indicated that individuals have different strengths and tend to use them to mold their leadership. Principal 1 stated "some people learn by watching and listening, some learn by doing and making mistakes." He indicated the path to improvement depends on the individual's learning process.

From these comments it is apparent that these principals believe leadership improvement is an individualized process. Principal 4's comments support this assumption well. He said, in reference to principals, "We don't think alike. Our approaches are different. What's a strength

for me may be a weakness for a colleague." For improvement, principals need to know their weaknesses and determine how to improve them in order to build upon their strengths. The principal, or whoever is working with him or her toward improvement, also needs to know his or her learning process or style and what motivates him or her to want, or see the need for, improvement. According to all the principals, another factor that impacts the path to improvement principals take has to do with the school they are serving. Principal 1 stated, "The organization you are in determines the path you take." All this implies needing a different, more individualized, path to improvement for each principal wanting or needing to improve.

S-3 Was your improvement driven by external factors, internal factors, or a combination of the two?

Each principal declared that his or her improvement was driven by both internal and external factors and gave the greater weight to internal motivators. The amount of internal motivation ranged from slightly better than half to approximately 80%. All the principals indicated they were driven by a desire to help the children, the community, or both.

Principals 1, 2, and 4 had been placed in extremely low performing schools and were driven by expectations for change and improvement in student performance. However, they were also internally motivated by not wanting to fail the schools or themselves. Principal 1 stated it this way: "I didn't want to fail the community, because they were banking heavily on me, but I also didn't want to fail myself." Another factor that may be considered one that helped with their improved effectiveness was that each principal spoke of becoming more confident in his or her leadership ability as schools' staffs and students' achievement began responding positively to their efforts.

In terms of external drivers of their leadership improvement I received mixed responses. Principal 1 indicated that nothing in his Ed. S. or Ed. D. helped him with being successful in turning around a low performing school. He stated that theory had nothing to do with it. Commons sense and practical ideas and actions were what made the difference. Conversely principals 3 and 4 spoke highly of the influence of their masters in administration program. Principals 2, 3, and 4 indicated that their mentors [official and unofficial] were extremely important in their leadership development, especially during their first year. Principal 4 also shared that her experience in the Center for Creative Leadership's program very positively impacted her leadership growth.

After analyzing the responses to this question it became evident that I did not guide the respondents well enough to gain a deeper understanding in each case of what drove their improvement. I accepted more general responses and did not probe enough to determine specific internal and external drivers of their increased effectiveness. The information was helpful but this area required follow-up during the second round of interviews.

S-4: To become an effective or successful principal, what kind of leadership style, abilities, motivation, and knowledge must one have?

Each principal spoke about what kind of leadership style he or she worked towards or preferred but indicated, to a person, that the conditions in the school they were leading dictated the leadership style they adopted. Principal 4 stated directly: "The leadership style you use is dictated by the school you're in. … It depends on the cards you've been dealt in that particular school." This implies they had knowledge of different leadership approaches and when to use them. I did not probe enough during this round of interviews to determine the extent of their

knowledge of various leadership styles so intend to learn more about this during the second round.

Principal 1 stated that his leadership style would go from situational to empowering to servant. He stated that he felt the biggest thing for a principal to be able to do was motivate every person, every day to achieve the set goals. As for what knowledge was needed to be an effective leader he stated that it was knowing when to lead and when you do not have to. This meant that when the staff was making good decisions and you shifted into a servant leader providing them what they needed to accomplish what they determined was the best way to achieve the set goals.

Principal 2 referenced her preferred leadership style by saying, "when you're on an even keel with your staff and you're in the ditches together." I would broadly label this comment as referencing collaborative and participatory leadership. As for an ability she has that helped her become more effective, she commented on reflection. She mentioned that she always analyzes how she can do better.

Principal 3 indicated that she believed there were several different leadership styles that could be effective. She identified her leadership as collaborative saying that was effective for her. However she said, "you still need to be authoritative when people won't fall in line and do what they need to do." Another interesting opinion she had was that there has been an evolution in the principalship toward collaborative and participative styles of leadership because the "way we do school has changed."

Principal 4 did not endorse one specific leadership style but instead said, "You incorporate pieces of all those characteristics." He said that he thought the ability to do research on the school and evolve a vision was important for an effective principal.

During the second interview I needed to probe further into how they knew there were different styles and how they knew when to adopt them.

S-5 Is knowledge of transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and school culture necessary for principals to become successful?

In response to this question all the principals indicated that knowledge of all three was important to being successful. Principal 4 said, "Absolutely, don't pass go if you don't". All four principals indicated that knowledge of transformational leadership was important but none of them elaborated on why they thought so. All four reported that instructional leadership was important to develop but had different perspectives as to how to become more effective at it. Principal 1 said that he thought many principals were afraid of being an instructional leader. He said that one does not have to know everything about each subject. He said that there were basic things to understand "that will get you there." Principal 2 stated that it was important for her to read about instructional and curriculum issues in which she was not already competent. Her suggestion is that the principal should be the most knowledgeable so you can teach your staff what they need to improve. Principal 3 said, "You can't change a school unless you know good instruction."

Cultural leadership drew more in-depth and emphatic responses. Principal 1 said, "If you don't know the school's culture you need to pack up and go to the house!" Principal 2 emphasized the importance of culture leadership was in understanding the differences in people at the school and how to work with those differences to get everyone together. Principal 3 also spoke to understanding school culture in terms of knowing who is "running the show behind the scenes." Along the same lines she indicated that cultural leadership involved knowing the

"politics" of the school and community it serves as the principal works with outside groups like Rotary, Athletic Boosters, Central Administration, etc. She also spoke to the need for celebrations as part of culture building.

In my second round of interviews I wanted to find out more about the principals' understanding of all three of these areas of leadership, especially transformational. I also wanted to learn more about how they acquired the knowledge they have of each area.

S-6 & S-7: What qualities / skills / attributes are required for each of the leadership styles listed in the last question? Can these qualities / skills / attributes be learned, or are they innate?

Questions 6 and 7 from the survey wound up being asked together due to time running short for each case. I had scheduled an hour with each principal and due to earlier questions running longer I had to speed up near the end. As a result of this the responses were not as in-depth as I was looking for.

I had very few specific qualities, skills, or attributes mentioned because the principals tended to focus on the second question more than the first. Principal 1 did mention listening and communication as important skills. Principal 2, in response to earlier questions, had mentioned the importance of being a good listener as well. Principal 3 focused on one's ability to be reflective as a quality necessary for improving his or her performance. She also spoke about having the "desire or propensity to grow" as a quality necessary for leadership improvement. Principal 4 shared that he had a skill he observed in his grandfather who had also been a principal. That was an innate ability to interact with people in a way that caused them to "want to do" because of how he treated them.

When asked if these things can be learned or were they innate the responses varied. Principal 1 responded that he did not think you could learn qualities such as common sense or loyalty. He said, "You either have it or you don't." Principal 2 stated that they can be learned but qualified her response by saying that there needed to believe in it and have the passion to want to learn. Her comment was, "Anything you can know about, but if you don't believe in it you only give a certain amount of effort toward it." Principal 3 almost mirrored principal 2's remarks on this matter. She said that a lot of the skills can be learned but said, as quoted previously, "If you don't have the desire or propensity to grow then you can do the reading, but I don't think it will take."

Again, I do not think I asked about this area skillfully enough to get helpful insight into how acquisitions of import skills, qualities, and attributes were acquired as they improved their leadership effectiveness. I sought further information about this during future interviews.

S-8: Are they best learned through structured programs offered by university, state, and local systems; or through the individual pursuits of the principal?

This area was of particular interest to me. One of my research questions deals specifically with wanting to know what processes or experiences principals engage in that actually have a positive impact on their leadership development.

When asked this question principal 1 stated that the only thing the university programs helped with was meeting the state's certification requirements to become a principal. He said that he felt the best learning was "trial by fire." He said that the degree did not make him an effective leader. He stated that improved effectiveness came through experience. Principal 2 supported principal 1's observation that the university settings were not as helpful to her growth as were "seeing it in action." She said that university settings are "very dry". She said that she felt you

learn more by observing a master principal. Principal 3 was positive about her master's experience and said it had contributed to her leadership progress. However, she stated that the program through the Center for Creative Leadership had a greater impact due to its comprehensiveness. Principal 3 said that he believed strongly that principals can learn skills and grow as leaders if: "…you really want to grow and have the propensity to think about yourself and want to adapt, then you can figure out how to grow." Principal 4 gave even greater endorsement that his university experience had positively impacted his leadership growth. He had two classes that provided particularly impacting experiences. One was a philosophy class with a professor who encouraged them to be a change agent for children, which meant that sometimes leaders take risks. Another was a class that provided a textbook with case studies of actual principals' experiences that the class would analyze. He also reflected that programs provided by the state were most helpful when they provided opportunities for principals to learn from each other. "There's nothing like getting together with colleagues doing what you do and talking about what's working and what's not." He, along with principals 2 and 3, also reflected that the desire to get better had to be part of your DNA. He said it was "nonnegotiable."

From the responses received during this first round of interviews, I determined that digging further into the events that influenced their improvement was necessary. It was evident after analyzing the responses to survey questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 that I had not given the principals the guidance they needed to fully share the processes they went through as their leadership rose to higher levels of effectiveness. Therefore, I decided to restructure the questions in the second interview to allow the principals to go into more depth about what was impacting their leadership development each year they were in the school on which the study was focused.

Interview Two

The second interviews began with me presenting notes from the first interview for the principals to review. This was part of the trustworthiness procedure for the study. The principals were to look them over at their convenience and let me know if they saw anything that was not an accurate representation of the discussion from the first interviews. Following this I explained that what I felt needed to be done during the second interview was to go deeper into some of the areas discussed during the first interview. I explained that I thought a good way to do that was to ask them to describe their dominate leadership style their first year in the school on which we were focusing. Then I asked that they explain how their leadership style changed and their effectiveness improved year by year. As they described this progression I tried to draw out what external and internal factors were at work and what knowledge of leadership they had, or gained, that were positively impacting their improvement.

For the analysis of data from interview two I attempted to compare the principals' experiences chronologically. This comparison began in their first year at the schools under study and compared their progressions through the time served in those schools. The length of time served for the principals varied from 3 years to 8 years. What I found was that all the principals' progressions were very similar during the first 3 years. The two that were in schools longer than 3 years tended to settle into the leadership style they had evolved to during the first 3 years but continued to be motivated to improve their leadership and the schools' academic performance.

During their first year in the schools on which this study focused they described their leadership styles as follows. Principal 1 described himself as a micro-manager and a servant leader, meaning doing what he could to provide what the teachers needed. Principals 2 and 3 described themselves as predominately managers following established routines. Principal 4

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described himself as very rigid and direct. He had been placed in a situation that required him to dismiss several ineffective teachers soon after he started the job. However, all of them, in one fashion or another, spoke about being learners, observers, and listeners. They were gaining an understanding of the schools' needs. These assessments came under two categories. One was academics and the other was organizational culture. The academic assessments were focused on determining if instruction aligned with curriculum, test data analysis, and which teachers were effective. The cultural assessments had to do with the climate and environment of the school and the attitudes of the staff and students. Even though none of them expressed that they had been taught how to be instructional or cultural leaders, these actions implied an understanding of how to begin the process of improving both these areas of extreme importance to school success.

While gaining understanding of academics in, and culture of, their schools they were also taking actions to make improvements that could be made during that first year operating with what would be described as less effective leadership styles. Principal 1 focused on improving things that promoted improved instruction such as scheduling and student discipline. He also worked on improving the climate by helping clean the building, get rid of trash, and spruce up the grounds. He wanted it to be known from the beginning that he was willing to help work at whatever he determined needed to be done to improve the school. Principal 2 brought evaluation files and procedures up to date and took back control of the budget allocation process. She had inherited a situation in which a bookkeeper has been granted authority to allocate money by the previous administration and this power was being used to discriminate among the staff causing conflict along racial lines. Principal 3 had inherited a school in which there was lack of trust in administrators, so she focused on gaining the trust of the people in the school. She also worked on making the school safer by securing the entrances and restructuring the way the public

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accessed the building. Principal 4 said he knew he had to "change the culture of the school quickly". Some steps he took during that first year were to get a new, more attractive fence around the school and plant new shrubbery to quickly give the students something to be proud of. He also focused on increased professionalism from his staff by insisting they dress professionally, attend meetings, be on time for meetings, and return parent calls quickly. He also said he and his administrative team focused on student discipline that first year indicating "the chaos that existed had to stop."

Going into their second year, actually beginning by the end of their first, similar transitions in actions and leadership style were occurring among the principals. One thing they had in common was that they were all noticeably transitioning into instructional leadership activities. By the end of year 1 Principal 1 had determined that standardization of instructional activities was the key for improvement in his high school. He started letting teachers know that standardization of teaching the state's curriculum, assessing that curriculum, and standardizing lessons and activities was what he was going to be expecting in the second year. During that second year he did not dictate how they would accomplish this standardization. He told them, "I want standardization as our ship but, Teachers, you build that ship." Principal 2 decided that their school's worst performance area would be what she focused on first. In the second year she searched for programs and strategies that would help improve performance in writing. She found two people who were piloting a new approach to writing instruction and trained her faculty in this approach. Principal 3's concern about instruction was to determine how to get a high performing school to improve. She analyzed the school's test data and determined that math performance was lagging behind other areas and decided to make that the school's focus. She selected some key faculty members to assist her in determining what should be done to improve

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math performance. After researching the issue and doing a school visit to observe the program, they decided to implement the Accelerated Math program. During his second year Principal 4 created an in-school tutoring program that required all staff members to tutor small groups at some point during the day, reduced the number of class changes to increase instructional time, and reinstated Professional Learning Communities with which he met weekly to discuss data and instructional strategies.

The other common action that emerged was their attention to the people with whom they worked. Each principal was assessing instructional and leadership abilities of his or her faculty members and how to use the stronger ones to assist with school improvements. They were also assessing noninstructional impacts staff various staff members exerted on the overall climate and culture of the school. They stated that they understood that staff members could be, or create, barriers to improvement efforts though their negative belief systems or actions against change. They began allowing or seeking more input and involvement from their faculties but kept control of setting priorities and final decision making. Principal 1 focused on getting the best people in place and good hiring to stimulate change his second year. Principal 2 had to remove some traditionally weak teachers for the beginning of her second year. She said this was tremendously difficult for her personally and it made her work harder because of having to then try to win over friends of the teachers who were released. Due to this she worked hard on "getting people on board" her second year. As mentioned earlier, principal 3 determined that the greatest need to address in the school was relationships. She had inherited a staff that did not trust administrators due to previous experiences and stated that she worked diligently at establishing relationships with people who mattered in the school. She also said that it helped her gain professional credibility with her staff by the way she did the observation and evaluation process. Additionally

she said her leadership was "getting more skillful at working through other people" and more "confident at pulling in other people as teacher leaders." She was learning that change came easier if other staff members were helping with the process instead of the principal being the one to say what would be done. In her words, "That never works!" Principal 4 said that by his second year "he knew who the core of his staff he could run with." He indicated that he started trusting his administrative team to handle management issues and disruptions so he could focus on instruction. He also started putting key faculty members in key positions and began allowing more input from staff on instructional decisions. He began encouraging the staff on the leadership team to "have a voice." He stated that he wanted them to speak up. Teachers were beginning to "buy in" during his second year. Something very interesting he and principal 1 shared during their interviews was that as things started looking up during their second years the teachers who had never given up on their schools started stepping up and putting their support behind efforts.

What seems apparent about all these principals was that they understood and worked at two things that directly impact school improvement by the end of their first year and beginning of their second even though none of them indicated that formal training or instructions from others caused them to do so. They knew that a focus had to be kept on improving instruction. They also knew that improvement was more likely to occur when they knew, and used, the strengths of their faculties and worked at building support among staff members for the change efforts. Analysis of this information reveals important findings.

Two of the principals, 1 and 4, were involved with North Carolina's School Turnaround project, so beginning in their second year a school transformation coach was assigned to meet with them periodically. They reported that test data analysis was an emphasis in the Turnaround

project. However, they had already started assessing instructional needs prior to the coaches being assigned to them. I didn't do well in this part of the interview in determining how they knew what to do in the area of instructional leadership. I followed up on this in the third interview.

Even though none of the principals indicated any depth of exposure to the study of organizational culture, principal 1 demonstrated that he understood some tenets of it when he spoke of "nay-sayers" and "sacred cows" or when he used the example of "all paddling in the same direction." Similarly principal 2 spoke to the importance of "getting people on board." In like fashion, principal 3 stated it was a priority to "fix relationships" in her school and to become more skillful in learning to accomplish goals through others. She also demonstrated her understanding of organizational culture's official leadership structures and unofficial power wielders when she stated, "Even though there's a leadership team…there's others you check on." Principal 4 demonstrated his understanding of shaping culture through awareness that faculty and students needed to celebrate even the small successes to help change perceptions from failure to success. Principals 3 and 4 indicated they had been exposed to school culture in their masters programs but had not been taught tenets of culture shaping.

Year 3 again brought similar progressions in leadership style among all the principals. Through the interviews it was apparent that they were becoming more open to, and seeking, teacher input in determining how to accomplish improvements in student achievement. I would describe their styles as becoming more participative or collaborative. Their focus remained on improving student achievement through improved instructional practices. It is also apparent that all principals maintained control of determining what would be the focus in their schools and would stay at the forefront of instructional leadership.

In his third year principal 1 said that he had to fight complacency since they had achieved some degree of success during his second year. He said he constantly had to encourage attaining higher achievement levels. This was the year they really focused on using a software package they had developed to analyze their assessment data. He instituted weekly instructional team meetings and used them to "talk instruction." He laughingly said that they met until they were sick of him. He also indicated after instituting the standardization practices in the second year he became more flexible in the third and subsequent years about how the teachers achieved results around those standards. He also indicated that as teachers became more focused on finding ways to attain higher student achievement he became more servant oriented in his leadership, again meaning he sought to provide what they needed to accomplish the goals. The fourth year he described as "the year we were on steroids." He said they were trying every good idea being "thrown on the table" and he was still primarily in the roll of servant leader, "but possessed to make sure all pistons were firing." He said it was the year they all knew the school would achieve North Carolina's School of Distinction rating, but they fell short by 15 students. He said they were crushed but not defeated by this and during his fifth and final year they were exhausted but still accomplished monumental things, one of which was being ranking as one of the top 100 high schools in the nation in the *Times* magazine ratings.

Principal 2 shared that her leadership style really started changing in the third year. She stated that she really believes in site based management and felt that due to there being more "two way trust" and better faculty decision making she could move that direction. As a result of those tings she implemented two faculty groups to help establish this process. She established a School Leadership Team to assist with instruction and a Faculty Council to assist with

relationship concerns. The remaining years she was in the school she shared that she "had more and more site based but on some things you still had to be in charge."

Principal 3 indicated that in the later part of her second year and through her third, and last, year at the school her leadership in instruction was knowledge based. She stated that she was "hitting her stride" and had become an accepted member of the community. It was during that year she started thinking, "what next" and decided to pursue her doctoral degree.

Principal 4 indicated that during the third year his leadership was still "inspect what you expect" but there was more teacher empowerment and input happening. He paid the teachers to come in during the summer prior to his third year and work together as teams to set goals, plan activities to achieve them, and develop lesson plans around what they were implementing. He would still say to the staff, "Here's what's expected." However, now he would "paint broad brush strokes and told them how you get there is up to you." He also encouraged them to be creative. Principal 4 also shared that he began believing in the system they had put in place. The following year he was asked to transfer to the principalship of one of the system's largest high schools.

During discussions with the principals I was able to hear what motivated them as they continued to improve their leadership skills and what actually helped them with that process. Principal 2 mentioned a leadership program she attended during her first years as a principal called Facilitative Leadership. She said the component of that program that was most helpful was the part that taught her how to work with other personality types and "help get them to buy in." She also indicated that her assigned mentor was very helpful with developing her leadership ability. Principal 3 reflected that she thought the ability to work on improving climate and culture was learned through experience. When asked what drove her to make the school better and

become an effective leader was her internal motivation. She indicated that when she went to the school her mandate was to "help that staff come together," but she said that she was not under a microscope. She wanted to do a good job because she is a motivated person, a pleaser, a team player, and wanted to satisfy her superintendent who trusted her with the responsibility. Principal 4 shared that a class he took in grad school that provided case studies for them to analyze contributed to his understanding of different leadership styles and when they best worked. He also said that part of his progression was "common sense." When asked what drove him to work so hard he said that his pride was hurt after that first year and he was angry. This made him work even harder for improvements. Another factor that he said contributed to his leadership improvement was the mentoring from the North Carolina Turnaround Project and collaborating with other principals.

More detailed descriptions of the leadership activities in which the principals were engaged from their first year through their last in the schools under study were gained during this second round of interviews. After analysis of this information I felt there was still need to inquire further about how the principals knew, or where they learned, what to do and when to do it during their progression of years in their schools. Also, to provide more in-depth information for my research questions, I wanted to learn more about the principals' knowledge of specific leadership styles and what has most influenced their leadership growth. These areas were the focus of interview three.

Interview Three

Interview three began as interview two did with a member checking strategy. I read my notes from interview two to the principals and asked if they agreed with how I had captured our

conversation from that session. Every principal confirmed that my notes were accurate. As mentioned, this round of interviews focused on understanding better how principals learned, or knew, how to lead instructional improvement and move to higher levels of leadership effectiveness. Time was also spent on accessing how much knowledge they had, and where they learned, about transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and cultural leadership. I also delved again into determining what type of learning experiences most effectively helped the principals improve their leadership abilities.

When the principals were asked how they knew how to be an instructional leader, a culture shaper, participatory leader, etc. it was often difficult to get to the underlying question. This was due to the propensity to tell what they did in those roles instead of explaining how they came to know what to do. I often had to refocus the conversation or ask the question again trying to state it in a different manner. Through this interview process I learned that it is difficult for these principals, as it may be for anyone in leadership positions, to connect their actions to the source of knowledge from which they are drawn. I began each interview with an open-ended inquiry about the sources of knowledge used to inform the principals' leadership actions. After that I transitioned to a more direct line of inquiry with each of them about their study of leadership. The following is the reflection of those conversations.

Principal 1's self-described leadership style in his first year was micromanager and servant leader. During the latter part of his first year and into his second he described his leadership style as situational but still a servant leader as well. When asked how he knew what leadership style to adopt he said it was based on "what he's hearing teachers say they are needing." Principal 1 also shared that he always thinks about how he could do something differently. He said he constantly thought about "how we can improve." He was able to become

more involved in instructional leadership his second year. When asked how he knew how to be an instructional leader, principal 1 said it was acquired based on day-to-day observations of the school. After he elaborated on his comment, I asked if that meant he knew what to do instructionally through his experiences. He said yes, "I listened to the teachers and in various ways they were telling me what they needed." Principal 1 had done many things to shape the culture from "we can't" to "we can." When asked how he knew what to do to accomplish this he said he took pride in himself as a listener. He said, "That is a good skill for cultural leadership." Principal 1 emphasized the importance of understanding school culture by saying, "If you don't know that school culture you need to pack up and go to the house!" He said, "You listen to the culture…they're telling you what they need to be successful."

At this point in the interview I transitioned to more direct questioning about the kind of study principal 1 had in leadership theory and styles. He said that he had taken classes in organizational theory but was "confident he didn't use anything he learned in them". He also shared that he had not done any individual reading in the area of leadership. My next line of inquiry involved reading out loud a list of recognized leadership styles and asking him to identify any that he though reflected his operational leadership style. The list included autocratic, participatory, instructional, transformational, transactional, situational, and integrated. He replied that his servant leadership encompassed all of them with the exception of transactional. He said that "his whole thing is what's best for the organization." He stated that "the biggest things was to evaluate the organization, see where it is and where you want it to go." When I asked where this knowledge came from because it did not come from book learning, he said that a lot of what he did was common sense. He also acknowledged that some came from experience. After further questioning about how qualities, skills, and attributes he had acquired were best learned he said

they had been through his individual pursuits. He stated, "If I don't know something I'm going to find someone who does and learn how to do it." When asked if he had been involved with any professional leadership development programs outside his master program that had positively impacted his effectiveness, he mentioned the North Carolina Turnaround Project and the UNC School Leadership Program. He did not elaborate on how they positively impacted his development.

Principal 2 described her leadership during the first year as a lot of observing and learning. She started transitioning to a site-based decision making leadership style during her second year and was well entrenched in that style by her third year. I asked how she knew how to be a site-based decision leader. She explained that her it came from her training as a lead teacher during North Carolina's implementation of the Basic Education Plan. Her county had been a pilot site for this. She moved quickly into instructional leadership during her second year. When asked how she knew how to be an instructional leader, she said that she thought it was something she taught herself. She said that she was not formally taught any instructional improvement strategies in her administrative classes. Her instructional leadership skills carried over from her work as an art teacher and lead teacher. She indicated that she rose slowly into the principalship and the bulk of her movement from classroom to principal's office was involved with instruction. In those roles, when an instructional need arose, she would gather people together to research and determine the course of action. She would always do a lot of the research herself because, as she stated, "I was really into that." She had also had to work hard at changing the culture in the school. I asked how she knew how to do that and she gave much of the credit to being a good listener. She said she had always been "someone who listened". Principal 2 said that her ability to positively influence the school's culture came more from watching, listening,

evaluating, and asking herself, "How am I going to get them to buy in?" She also learned to process what she was hearing from the staff before determining what leadership action to take. Two outside sources of help for her with cultural leadership were her mentor and the training she was going through called Facilitative Leadership, which helped her learn how to work with different personalities in the workplace.

At this point in the interview with principal 2, I transitioned into the more direct questioning on leadership study. She shared that her preservice training had not contained any leadership theory studies. The only professional training she had that included a leadership component was the Facilitative Leadership program mentioned earlier. Principal 2 also shared that she had not done any independent reading in the area of leadership. When I read the list of leadership styles and asked her to identify those that reflected how she operated as a leader, participatory, instructional, integrated, and situational were selected. I asked where she learned the skills, qualities, and attributes that had helped make her successful. She said that they came from her own pursuits. However, she did give her mentor and other principals with whom she communicated credit as well.

Principal 3 began her first year in the school upon which this study focused primarily as a manager but was also focused on efforts to build back the faculty's trust in administration. She worked at developing trust, improving campus safety, while also assessing where to focus her leadership with instruction. She quickly moved into an instructional leadership roll by her second year. When asked how she knew different leadership styles and how to choose which to operate by she answered in two parts. She gave credit for learning about different leadership styles in her masters program and through the Center for Creative Leadership. Principal 3 shared that she learned what type leadership style to operate with by practicing the skill of reflection that she

learned through the Center for Creative Leadership. She would reflect on what was needed and be deliberate about which approach to use. When she moved into active instructional leadership, she described her style as knowledge based leadership. Enough curricular and instructional competency had been demonstrated to the faculty during the first year to make her feel they trusted her and were ready for movement in that direction. Principal 3 indicated that she had studied instructional leadership in her masters program but it was not in depth. They got the discussion around use of student data and teacher observation but "not a lot more than that." When asked she said her classroom experience had been drawn on to help with instructional leadership. Principal 3 had worked at rebuilding trust between teachers and administrators during the first and second years in the school. When asked how she knew what to do to accomplish that she said it was "just sizing up the view of the people in the building and what they were open to." She stated the belief that culture was important and reflected her understanding of that through comments such as, "You have to celebrate. It comes down to the little things. Folks are different. You have to figure out who's running the show behind the scenes." She said she did not have protocols or assessment tools. Her main response was, "I guess it was intuitive."

At this point in the interview I transitioned to the more direct questions about how her knowledge and skills were acquired. As principal 1 had mentioned before, her masters program and study through the Center for Creative Leadership had given her good exposure to leadership theory and various leadership styles. When asked if she had studied transformational leadership, cultural leadership, and instructional leadership in those programs, she replied that they had been part of a survey chapter so had not had in-depth exposure to them. However, it is of interest to note that she could articulate more information about these leadership styles than the other principals in the study. A factor that may have contributed to this may have been the recent

completion of her doctoral degree in educational leadership. As I read the list of different leadership styles she was conversant in all with the exception of transactional and integrated. She stated that her preferred leadership style is collaborative for decisions as complex as the teaching and learning process but went on to explain that in a complex organizational structure decisions on simpler matters can be made autocratically. We concluded the interview with the question of what additional influences have contributed to her effectiveness as a principal. Beyond what had been shared about the positive impact of graduate school and the Center for Creative Leadership, she shared two other important areas of influence and learning. She said that learning from experience accounted for about a third of her accumulated skills and gave the same amount of weight to "watching others." She emphasized that it was important to do "a whole lot of watching to see what works and what doesn't."

Principal 4 had shared that his leadership style was very authoritarian in the first year. He shared that in his previous assignment he had been collaborative but determined he needed to adopt a top-down style based on data he had gathered and conversations he held with school stakeholders and previous principals. In his second year he maintained tight control but began the transition toward participative leadership and devoted a lot of time to instructional leadership. When asked how he knew how to use these various leadership styles, he said that he had become award of various leadership styles in his masters program but determined what to do based on the dictates of the current conditions and from becoming a reflective practitioner, a skill he had learned from his coach in the NC Turnaround Program. I asked specifically how he knew how to be an instructional leader. He shared that it was a combination of things and first gave credit to an instructional officer from his school system who worked with him in a "hands on" fashion. It also helped him by pairing with other middle school principals to observe effective instructional

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strategies in each others' schools. He also indicated that conversations with his NC Turnaround coach were helpful in that they were clinical. His coach also helped him learn how to better interpret data for use in instructional decision making. He had indicated earlier that his masters program helped him with many things but instructional leadership was taught as much as other areas.

Transitioning to more direct questioning about how his knowledge and skills were acquired I asked about his studies of leadership theory and styles. He stated that his graduate studies contained a lot of leadership theory and laughed saying that it seemed like every course required some type of paper applying leadership to some scenario. When asked if his program included the study of transformational, cultural, and instructional leadership, he indicated that they did but most emphasis was placed on cultural. He also shared that he does some reading about leadership and that Ruby Payne's work in teaching children from poverty and Covey's work on effective people positively influenced his leadership. He described himself as a motivator and empowering of people with whom he worked but said that is a process that has to be built to over time. When I read him the list of leadership styles he was familiar with all of them from his masters program. He said that he leaned toward saying that situational leadership best described his style because he said that he does not come to work every day saying "this is the way I'm going to be." As I asked what other factors or experiences may have positively affected his skills development as a leader he said that he had developed leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities from all the resources we had talked about but the he laughed and said. "but there's nothing like waking through the fire." He said that he couldn't say enough about the importance of experience as being the best way to learn.

Variations from Original Plan

There were very few differences from how the initial plan was proposed and how the project progressed. A few delays were experienced in the process of getting approval to approach the principals in two of the school systems but with patience in one case and processing of a great deal of paperwork in the other I was able to secure approval to approach the top four cases yielded from the purposeful sampling procedure. Another slight variation was in the questioning I followed during the interviews. Initially I thought the questions from the survey instrument would be the script for each interview. As the interviewer I assumed each question would remain the same and I would dig deeper into it for more information during each subsequent interview. However, after analysis of data from the first round of interviews I found it necessary to employ the emergent design process and reframe the questions in a way that would better help explore the research questions.

Themes

Many areas were explored as I sought the catalysts and pathways that caused principals to move from managers to effective leaders. I analyzed and described what motivated them to improve, what processes they engaged in that helped them improve, what explicit knowledge of organizational leadership and culture may have contributed to their improvement, what innate or tacit knowledge may have contributed to improvement, and what other influences may have contributed to their increased effectiveness. Thick description was used to present the themes from the perspectives of four successful principals. Information from the data analysis chapter was used to develop findings and implications for future research in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
AND FUTURE PRACTICE

Introduction

The transitions of four principals from managers to successful, effective leaders were

investigated in this qualitative study using a multiple case studies approach. Interviews were

conducted with principals who were selected through a purposeful sampling procedure resulting

in four principals, two males and two females of varying ethnicities and ages serving in a variety

of school settings who had transformed into successful leaders. These four principals went

through three rounds of interviews over an 8-week period with the interviewer using an emergent

design process to refine the focus of each subsequent round of interviews. Interviews were

conducted individually and audio taped. Interviews with the research participants revealed thick

descriptions of the factors that influenced their leadership evolution over a period of 3 to 6 years.

Transcripts of the audio were developed and then coded inductively by the researcher. The

comments and phrases with similar coding were categorical aggregated with hopes that relevant

meanings would emerge. Themes did emerged from these aggregations and provided the

organizational structure for the data analysis.

The study was an exploration of the processes and experiences principals went through

and what motivated them, to improve their effectiveness. It also was an explanation of how

knowledge of organizational leadership and organizational culture may have contributed to their

improvement. A large amount of information was derived through the review of literature

supporting the connection of the effectiveness of the leadership of the principals to the success of

schools (Day et al., 2001; Harvey & Holland, 2012; Hausman & Goldring, 2001). Even with the

requirement of a master's degree in school administration for a person to become a school principal, examples of schools not doing as well as they should are still found (Carnevale, 2010). For those principals who need or want to become more effective, a better process for developing their leadership effectiveness needs to be defined (Bottoms & Egelson, 2012).

Findings

The study was designed to explore specific areas that contributed to each principal's perception of knowledge and self-efficacy and to identify what contributed to their individual development. These areas included their university administrative certification programs, state and local leadership training events, independent leadership development programs, their own individual leadership research, mentoring, professional experience (learning by doing), internal motivation, and external pressure. The principals' tacit and innate knowledge of leadership were explored to determine how much of a principal's effectiveness is determined by knowledge not acquired through explicit experiences. All these areas were embedded in the original survey's questions and continued to guide the design of the emergent questions used to gather thick, rich data. Themes that emerged from the analysis of data in these areas were the impact of mentors; university administrative certification programs; on the job experience; personal motivation; tacit knowledge; state, local, and private leadership development programs; and pathways to improvement. Findings were presented for each theme within the context of reviewed literature. Conclusions and recommendations for future research or future practice were also related to findings from the study.

The underlying task in this study was to determine how we can help those principals who want or need to improve their leadership. An indicator that research was needed to determine how principals can move to higher levels of performance was noted by Fullan (2001) who claimed that effective leadership is in short supply. He further added that we should expect to see leadership development initiatives dominating the scene over the next decade (p. xii). One notable initiative was reported in a Southern Regional Education Board publication (Bottoms & Egelson, 2012) indicating that over a 10-year period in states where policy-makers and educators followed SREB's policy footprints, better-prepared principals emerged. Guiding this decade of work were six learning-centered leadership indicators developed by SREB in 2002. These indicators were state leadership standards, identification of prospective school leaders, learning-centered leadership preparation programs, quality leadership internships, performance-based, tiered licensure system, and multiple pathways to school leadership. Additionally, in 2010 four more indicators were added that reflected the growing research in the area of better preparing principals for effective leadership. Those four indicators were specialized services for principals of low-performing schools, working conditions that sustain principal success in improving student learning, principal evaluation based on effective practice, and state data collection systems that support leader development and succession planning (Bottoms & Egelson, 2012, p. 3). The results of this study supported the validity of several of those indicators. Additionally, findings surfaced that may indicate there are other indicators that, if applied appropriately, may facilitate the improvement of principals' leadership effectiveness as well.

Improvement through Real Life Experiences, or Learning by Doing

All four principals indicated that their greatest growth in leadership abilities came from experiences on the job. Each expressed it differently but the emphasis was there from all. Principals 1 and 4 stated it more emphatically than the other two. Principal1's statement was, "The best way to become a principal is trial by fire." Principal 2 said he gave credit to all areas of learning but: "there's nothing like walking through the fire." Principal 2 stated that she believed your skills and attributes are part of who you are and you develop them as a leader through experience. Principal 3 went so far as to credit two thirds of her leadership development as being influenced by her experience and by watching others. Principal 4 said his true development came from being in the hallways and classrooms every day. In discussions about their knowledge of how to provide leadership for instructional improvement or positive cultural change they all gave more credit to what they learned through experience than through formal educational activities. Principals 1, 3, and 4 gave further endorsements during their interviews with comments reflecting their beliefs that experience will give you the best learning or that the value of experience could not be emphasized enough. The importance of providing opportunities for principals to learn through experience is supported by a report from the Southern Regional Education Board publication (Bottoms & Egelson, 2012) listing six learning-centered leadership indicators they developed that when implemented by states or educators resulted in better prepared principals. Four of those indicators: identification of prospective school leaders, learning-centered leadership preparation programs, quality leadership internships, performance-based, tiered licensure system all reflect support in some way for providing experience based opportunities to better prepare principals for the responsibilities they will face.

Our latest federal education initiative, Race to the Top, emphasizes the need for improving school leadership by making it part of one of its four core reform areas. One of the four core educational reform area states, "Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed the most" (United States Department of Education, 2009, p. 2).   The Race to the Top's emphasis on developing principals reflects the thinking of Hasuman and Goldring (2001) who reported that "…reformists have turned their attention to the principalship as the key to school improvement" (p. 400). The interviews with all four principals reflected varying levels of need for their administrative certification programs to have provided more study and field experience in key leadership areas. It is probably important to note that the principals attended different universities to attain their administrative degrees at different times spread out over the past 18 years. When asked about the impact of their university graduate certification program on the overall level of effectiveness they had achieved, they all indicated that there was not a high level of correlation. The responses ranged from principal 1 stating that he did not think anything in his masters or doctoral programs had anything to do with him being a success. He said that all they helped him do was meet state requirements to be a principal. Similarly principal 2 did not credit her masters program with helping prepare her for what she would actually deal with. She stated, "Sometimes university settings are very dry." Principals 3 and 4 both reported that their masters programs had exposed them to leadership theory and had provided survey information on organizational culture and instructional leadership, The both also indicated that they had benefited from their studies in the programs; however, both indicated that they were not in depth enough to prepare them for immediate effective leadership upon entering the profession. Even though principal 3 gave her

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university programs high marks, she still indicated that they probably only accounted for 10% to 15% of her leadership development. Similarly principal 4 spoke highly of the program he came out of and of the positive influence of one of his professors to be an "agent for change" for children. He also spoke of the value of one of his classes in which a good deal of time was spent studying real life case studies of principals. Ultimately though, he said that his program was mostly theory. The importance of good administrative certification programs is supported by a report from the Southern Regional Education Board publication (Bottoms & Egelson, 2012) that lists as one of its six keys to development of better principals, learning-centered leadership preparation programs.

State, Local, and Independent Leadership Development Programs

All four principals in the study had attended state, local, or independent leadership development programs at some point early in their careers. They reported varying benefits from their participation ranging from help in one particular area to profound impact on overall effectiveness. The literature supporting the provision of quality leadership training for principals is the same referenced in the finding about university certification programs. Principal 2 reported that she learned a lot that helped her early in her career with understanding how to effectively work with different personalities, which was one component of a program called Facilitative Leadership. Principal 2 also reported that she learned the tenets of leading a site-based decision making organization through her participation in a state sponsored pilot program that developed the lead teacher concept. Principals 1 and 4 gave credit to components of the North Carolina Turnaround program as positively influencing their leadership. Both cited the support provided by an experienced coach and the growth provided by the opportunity to interact in a seminar

format with other principals in the program as helpful. It is of interest to note that their participation in the NC Turnaround program was mandatory due to both having become principals of schools that were deemed as underperforming by the state. The greatest endorsement of an independent program came from principal 3 who had participated in the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, NC. She stated that participation in this program was significantly influential in her leadership improvement. A few of the components that she described as helpful were learning different leadership styles, going through various leadership and personality assessments followed by 360 degree feedback, being taught how to be a reflective practitioner, and having time away from the job to reflect and be deliberate about the development the style of leadership she should practice. The principals all supported participation in programs such as these when what they were learning was relevant to what they needed to help their schools

Tacit Knowledge

Throughout the interviews all four principals spoke of using common sense to guide their leadership actions or decisions. They also spoke of "knowing when something wasn't right" or listening to your staff and then knowing what leadership action was needed. Additionally when being asked about how they knew how to provide instructional leadership or culture changing leadership, even though they had no formal training in those areas, they spoke of being able to figure out ways based on their observations or experiences. We know from the review of literature that highly effective principals need to possess command of many different leadership theories and practices. "The evidence from research clearly indicates that there is no single all-purpose leadership style" (Schermerhorn, 1997, p. 5). It also appears that principals cannot be

knowledgeable and competent in all leadership styles nor possess all the skills and attributes described by Northouse (2010). Northouse described leadership as encompassing the subset of management skills along with being involved with the general influence process, constructive change, proactive initiatives, team building, and emotional involvement. Through discussions with these successful principals there is implication that effective principals use their tacit knowledge in some, or many, situations to achieve success. Quotes such as the following serve to illustrate this point. Principal 1 stated that part of his success was based on listening to staff. He said if you listen to what's really being meant "they're telling you what you need to do to be successful." Principals 1 and 4 readily shared that their decisions of what to do as a leader came from common sense. When the interviews delved into the principals' knowledge of how to influence culture again many examples surfaced of these individuals showing understanding of how this is done without having formally studied the concept. The literature supports the importance of educational leaders understanding school culture. Murphy (2002) indicates that linking leader behavior with school culture has become a focus of research. He writes that it is increasingly important for effective principals to understand current effective leadership trends and school culture. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) express it as follows: "[C]ulture must be at the center of all administrative efforts if we hope to continuously improve organizational effectiveness" (p. 33). With the importance of cultural leadership being so paramount to greater success for schools successful principals appear to have tacit knowledge of how to deal effectively in this area. Examples specific to this were when principals 2 and 3 talked about knowing it was important to work hard during their first year at building relationships with the faculties of the schools to which they were assigned. When asked how she knew this was important, principal 3 said it was mostly instinctive. All the principals spoke about understanding the importance of building positive culture through celebrations, symbolic gestures, and positive

appearance of their campuses. They all also understood the need to learn which faculty members were the nay-sayers or power brokers and how to figure out ways to get the majority of the staff to buy in, which they were able to do over a period of a few years.

Additional Findings

During the course of collecting and analyzing data, additional findings emerged that had not been focused on in the review of literature. Due to their contents contributing to the insights being sought through the research questions, discussion of these findings is included.

Mentoring

The importance of mentoring, or any activity that placed three of these principals in a position to learn from other educational leaders, consistently surfaced as contributing to their increased effectiveness. In the early years of their principalships the assigned mentor was very important to principals 2 and 3. Principal 2 stated that in her first year "my mentor saved my life" and that she was a "major factor in my leadership development." Principal 3 said that in her first assignment she was "doing what she saw her mentor do" and that her mentor was one of the "key things that helped me develop." Principal 4 spoke of many experiences he had with professionals who acted more like mentors than supervisors with him and of the positive impact they had on his leadership development. Due to the school he was assigned to being a high priority school he had several people who worked with him to facilitate improvements. One was a central office instructional officer who came to his school regularly, another was a North Carolina Turnaround coach who met with him frequently, and the third was a central office administrative officer. In each case he shared that the conversations they had with him were "horizontal" and the relationships were collegial. He shared that these relationships and clinical conversations significantly contributed to his

increased effectiveness. Additionally, potentially pointing to the value of opportunities to improve

your effectiveness by learning from others; principals 1, 3, and 4 shared comments about their

leadership being improved by opportunities to meet with other groups of principals for the purpose of

learning from each other. Principal 3 emphasized that it was important beyond experience to watch

and learn from others. She said you can learn both what to do and what not to do by that process.

Principals 1 and 4 spoke of the value of meeting with other principals at school improvement

workshops and having the opportunity to discuss with each other how to best implement

improvement ideas at their schools.

Motivation

During the interviews it surfaced that all these principals were highly motivated to be good

principals and for their schools to succeed. Their motivation stemmed from various sources such as

the desire for their schools to do well, desires to help children, desires not to fail, competitiveness,

etc. When asked how much of their motivation was internally driven they estimates ranged from over

50% to totally internal. Another motivating aspect they shared with each other was their constant

assessment of, or reflection on, how they could do things better. During the interviews, while

discussing motivation, three of the principals questioned how you could get principals to improve if

they were not motivated. The next finding speaks to a possible answer to that question.

Pathways to Improvement

When asked if they thought the pathway to improved school leadership effectiveness was, or

should be, the same for every person the consistent response from all four principals was that it was

not. Principal 1 stated that it's different for different people. He went on to say: "Some people learn

by fire, some learn by watching and listening, some learn by doing and making mistakes." Principal

2's take on this was that "personalities are different from mine and their focus is different from

mine". She elaborated by explaining that "everybody takes their own strength and molds it to develop how they operate their principalship." Principal 3 stated that she thought it was clear that it could be different. Principal 4 said that we all take different paths and we all don't think alike. He said that "what's a strength for me may be a weakness for a colleague."

Implications for Future Practice

The questions this study answered were asked to determine what principals did, or what happened to them, that actually caused an improvement in their leadership abilities. They were:

1. What themes are common among principals who have transitioned their practice from managers to effective leaders?

2. What knowledge (innate, tacit or explicit) of organizational leadership, instructional improvement, organizational culture, and change do successful, effective principals share?

3. What processes or experiences have principals engaged in that actually caused their development into effective leaders?

The answers to these questions are found in the following implications for future practice.

One of the greatest common influences on the leadership improvement of the principals in this study was the real life experience they had in their schools. This, getting better as we learned by doing, theme was consistently supported throughout the series of interviews conducted. The concept of providing more experience based learning can be better ingrained in the administrative certification programs universities offer by embedding more field experiences that allow the future principals opportunities to actually head up projects under the direction of a master principal through internships in schools. There could also be inclusion of real life case studies and seminar discussions lead by successful principals in these certification programs. To assist with accelerating the

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effectiveness of principals earlier in their careers more and lengthier mentoring by successful principals could be incorporated. A program of shadowing successful principals could be implemented to provide earlier sustained guidance. Additionally, there could be a process developed by local school systems for early identification of teachers who might be potential candidates for principal positions in the future. The purpose of early identification would be to provide these potential future leaders opportunities in their schools with administrative roles that would enable them to start developing an experience base of knowledge earlier.

Another common factor among the principals was that they did not think the program of study from their university certification programs were that helpful to them as they became more effective in their jobs. They shared that their studies in the areas of leadership theory and styles, instructional improvement, and organizational culture ranged from nonexistent to good theory and survey classes but fell short of providing strategies and protocols for how to be instructional or culture leaders. These responses imply a possible need for revision to some of the administrative certification programs to incorporate more field experiences and real life case studies. They additionally imply that there may be need to provide more in-depth study about how you become leaders in the areas of instructional improvement and organizational culture.

An experience all principals said helped improve their effectiveness under the right conditions was participation in some leadership development programs after they had become principals. Successful experience in a leadership program may be more likely when targeted to the specific leadership growth needs of the individual. Also, the program may be more beneficial if the individual is immersed in self-assessment and reflection and if it is tailored to the individual needs of the principal such as was done for principal 3 at the Center for Creative Leadership. A recommendation that may make participation in leadership development programs more effective is to make sure that participation is targeted to a program that addresses a

leadership improvement goal that is part of an individualized improvement plan based on objectives determined through personal reflection and suggestions from the administrative supervisor.

These four principals' leadership actions were more often informed through their tacit knowledge than through what had been learned in their formal studies. The explicit knowledge gained from their university certification programs ranged from very little to good but not always practical, or applicable, to real world application. This finding was surprising to me because an assumption made was that principals were more effective if they had knowledge, and could apply tenets, of transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and organizational culture shaping. The implications are that not everything a principal needs to know is taught in certification programs. Therefore, a recommendation is to find ways to help build principals capacity in these areas through extended mentoring programs and seminars with more experience successful principals around topics such as culture shaping and instructional leadership.

Mentoring and opportunities to learn from other educational leaders were consistently noted as important contributors to the leadership growth of these principals. The implication to be drawn from this information is that these strategies should be used more in principal improvement plans. The concept of less effective principals learning from more effective principals in a safe setting such as seminars or paired school visits could be helpful. Additionally, the idea of principals who are already doing well meeting periodically to learn from each other with the goal being increased effectiveness for all is worth considering.

The implications that may be drawn from the last two themes discussed in this study, motivation and pathways, overlap. The theme of motivation to do well surfaced as a factor that stimulated principals to be open to or seek opportunities to improve. From the discussion of the paths principals take to increase their effectiveness it was concluded that they differed among principals

due to several factors. A conclusion is that principals may be more likely to seek ways to improve if they are motivated by needs or interests. The implications from this are that leadership improvement for principals should be individualized and based on areas of need derived primarily from self-reflection. Other components that surfaced in discussion of the previous themes that could be considered for inclusion in a leadership improvement plan were tailoring it to the individual principal's learning style and include the potential for mentoring or learning from other educational leaders.

Implications for Future Research

Several areas needing research surfaced as the search for finding ways to help principals improve their leadership continues. A review of the literature on what contemporary university certification programs are providing is needed to determine if research is necessary to determine how these programs can do more to impact leadership effectiveness once their graduates are in a principal's position. In conjunction with this, research on the existence, relevance, and effectiveness of field experiences in the university certification programs may be needed.

Of special interest was the emergence of the role principals' tacit knowledge plays in their leadership decision making and actions. Further research is called for to help better understand this concept and determine how principals' capacity in this area can be improved.

Further research in the use of mentors to improve principals' leadership skills would be helpful. More specifically the study of how the mentoring concept could be revised to assist principals' further improvement after their first couple years of service. The concept of promoting masters' level discussions, or seminars, and using the sports analogy of champions having coaches could frame this research aimed at providing growth opportunities after having been a principal for a few years. In conjunction with this, research is called for to determine how principals can mentor

each other while in some instances they compete for resources, central administrative support, and accolades.

Summary

This qualitative multi-case study explored factors that lead to increased effectiveness in principals' leadership capabilities. The literature reinforced the importance of the role principals' leadership plays in the overall success of schools, reflected the importance of developing principals' leadership skills, and provided information on current trends for improving their development. Themes emerged from multiple interviews with four principals who had demonstrated their transition to effective educational leaders. The impact of mentors; university administrative certification programs; on the job experience; personal motivation; tacit knowledge; state, local, and private leadership development programs; and pathways to improvement emerged as themes that were important to consider when working on improving principals leadership abilities.

Chapter 5 concluded this research study. Specific recommendations for practices to improve principals' overall effectiveness included incorporating more and lengthier mentoring in the early part of principals' careers or as part of performance improvement plans; increasing study of cultural and instructional leadership in administrative certification programs; providing more field experiences in administrative certification programs; and developing individualized leadership improvement plans based on needs, interests, and learning styles of principals. The need for additional quantitative and qualitative research in the areas of university certification programs, use of tacit knowledge in leadership decision making, and use of mentors was also suggested.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide for Principals

1. Describe how you believe you developed into the effective/successful principal you have become.

    i. What was the process?

2. Do you think the process of becoming a successful/effective leader is similar for individuals or do they take different paths?

    i. Elaborate

3. Was your improvement driven by external factors, internal factors, or a combination of the two?

    i. Explain

4. To become an effective/successful principal, what kind of leadership style, abilities, motivation, and knowledge must one have?

    i. Respond to each area

5. Is knowledge of transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and school culture necessary for principals to become successful?

    i. Respond to each area

6. What qualities / skills / attributes are required for each of the leadership styles listed in the last question?

    i. Respond to each area

7. Can these qualities / skills / attributes be learned, or are they innate?

    i. Elaborate

8. Are they best learned through structured programs offered by university, state, and local systems; or through the individual pursuits of the principal?

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Principals: Second Interview

1. Describe your leadership growth during the first year

    a. Describe your dominate leadership practices

    b. In what ways did you improve?

    c. What caused these improvements?

        -External catalysts

        -Internal catalysts

2. Describe your leadership growth during the second year

    a. Describe your dominate leadership practices

    b. In what ways did you improve?

    c. What caused these improvements?

        -External catalysts

        -Internal catalysts

3. Describe your leadership growth during the third year

    a. Describe your dominate leadership practices

    b. In what ways did you improve?

    c. What caused these improvements?

        -External catalysts

        -Internal catalysts

4. Repeat questions though final year in that school

Appendix C

Interview Guide for Principals: Third Interview

1. How did you know how to be an instructional leader?

   a. Studies in certification program
   b. State or local staff development
   c. Independent programs or conferences
   d. Experience
   e. Others – mentors, peers, teachers, supervisors, etc.
   f. Common sense
   g. Other ways

2. How did you know how to be a culture shaper?

   a. Studies in certification program
   b. State or local staff development
   c. Independent programs or conferences
   d. Experience
   e. Others – mentors, peers, teachers, supervisors, etc.
   f. Common sense
   g. Other ways

3. How much and what type study have you had in leadership theories and frameworks? (Inquire specifically about transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and cultural leadership if not mentioned by the principal.)

4. From the following list select the one, or ones, that best describe your operational leadership style. (Read the list first and ask if any need defining.) Integrated-Situational-Transactional-Transformational-Instructional-Participatory-Autocratic

5. Were your leadership qualities, skills, knowledge, and attributes learned through structured programs offered by university, state, and local systems; or through your individual pursuits?

Appendix D

Text of Email to Leaders of the Leadership Group for the Carolinas

Dear Gus and Bob,

As you know I've been working on my doctoral program at East Tennessee State University for some time now. The time has finally come to do the research for the dissertation phase of the program. As you might guess, the topic for my research is one near and dear to my heart, the school principal.

The reason I'm informing you of this is to seek your approval for, and assistance with, identifying principals who fit the profile I need for my study. The following statement is from my proposal and reflects the gist of the research.

The purpose of this study is to find out what principals do [or what happens to them] that actually causes an improvement in their leadership abilities. Perhaps another way to state the purpose is; to find the catalysts and pathways that cause principals to move from managers to effective leaders. To accomplish this I want to identify principals who have gone through recognizable improvements as leaders subsequently causing their school's students' performance to improve. To help make these determinations I will use key school leadership functions the Wallace Foundation have distilled that are reflective of principals who have become those who can develop a team that improves schools academic effectiveness (Harvey, J., & Holland, H. (2012, January). These principals will have noticeably evolved beyond the basic management function of principals such as; building management and maintenance, rules and regulations enforcement, materials purchase and distribution, budgeting, scheduling, paperwork, etc. They will have demonstrated increased levels of ability, and amounts of time, working in areas associated with effective transformational and instructional leadership such as; shared vision development, positive and academically oriented climate and culture development, cultivating shared leadership among school staff, and improving instruction. After identifying these principals I want to conduct interviews with them to discern what caused the change from manager to leader. I want to find out what motivates principals to want to improve and what caused their actual improvement. [what was their journey]? Following this I hope to find commonalities from which to generate a model or guidelines for others to follow.

My research, called a multiple case study, calls for identifying and interviewing four principals fitting the description above. From the supervision and oversight the two of you provided as we worked with principals in the NC Turnaround project, many fitting examples may come to mind. If they do, I'd appreciate your recommendations. If you have any concerns about identifying individuals, please know that my research design calls for the principals and their schools remaining anonymous and all information gathered confidential. Also, my research design calls for contacting the superintendent of any principal referred as a potential candidate to make sure the school system, and its leader, are comfortable with that person being part of the study.

If your recommendations do not generate a large enough pool to get the distribution I'm looking for I'd also like to ask permission to contact the members of The Leadership Group for the Carolinas to seek their recommendations. I am attaching, for your critique, the proposed text I would send to request their recommendations. Please review it and suggest any additions, deletions, and/or revisions you think need to be made.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and the assistance I know you'll provide.
Gratefully,
Gary

Appendix E
Text of Email to Members of the Leadership Group for the Carolinas

Dear Colleagues,

I hope all of you have remained healthy and able to continue in service to public schools of our state since we last saw each other in Asheboro! As you may remember, I've been working on a doctoral degree at East Tennessee State University for some time and am finally ready for the dissertation phase of the program! The reason for this communication is to ask for your help in that process.

My Doctoral Committee approved the nature of our work and the geographic distribution of our membership as a legitimate network from which to draw a valid purposeful sample. Additionally, Dr. Martin and Dr. McRae have given permission for me to contact our membership and ask for assistance. So here's my request. I need to identify four principals who have demonstrated an evolution, or transformation, over a three to five year period from being a manager to a successful, effective school leader. The following is an excerpt from my proposal that provides a more thorough explanation.

The purpose of this study is to find out what principals do [or what happens to them] that actually causes an improvement in their leadership abilities. Perhaps another way to state the purpose is; to find the catalysts and pathways that cause principals to move from managers to effective leaders. To accomplish this I want to identify principals who have gone through recognizable improvements as leaders subsequently causing their school's students' performance to improve. To help make these determinations I will use key school leadership functions the Wallace Foundation have distilled that are reflective of principals who have become those who can develop a team that improves schools academic effectiveness (Harvey, J., & Holland, H. (2012, January). These principals will have noticeably evolved beyond the basic management function of principals such as; building management and maintenance, rules and regulations enforcement, materials purchase and distribution, budgeting, scheduling, paperwork, etc. They will have demonstrated increased levels of ability, and amounts of time, working in areas associated with effective transformational and instructional leadership such as; shared vision development, positive and academically oriented climate and culture development, cultivating shared leadership among school staff, and improving instruction. After identifying these principals I want to conduct interviews with them to discern what caused the change from manager to leader. I want to find out what motivates principals to want to improve and what caused their actual improvement. [what was their journey?]. Following this I hope to find commonalities from which to generate a model or guidelines for others to follow.

My research, called a multiple case study, calls for identifying and interviewing four principals fitting the description above. From the supervision and mentoring so many of you have provided through your work as superintendents, state department leaders, principals, consultants, and members of The Leadership Group for the Carolinas many fitting examples may come to mind. If they do, I'd appreciate your recommendations. If you have any concerns about identifying individuals, please know that my research design calls for the principals and their schools remaining anonymous and all information gathered confidential. Also, my research design calls for contacting the superintendent of any principal referred as a potential candidate to make sure the school system, and its leader, are comfortable with that person being part of the study.

I look forward to receiving referrals from many of you in the very near future! Should you have any questions or concerns please e-mail or call at 828-264-1875 (home) or 828-773-8788 (cell). Let me thank you in advance for the any help you can provide.

Gratefully,
Gary Childers

Appendix F

Letter to the Superintendent of a Principal being considered for the Research

Dear   :

        I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University doing research in the area of improving principals' leadership skills. Through a purposeful sampling process a principal in your school system, [insert principal's name] has been identified as one who may fit the profile for a case study in my dissertation. The following excerpt from my dissertation proposal briefly describes the study and the principals I wish to include.

        The purpose of this study is to find out what principals do [or what happens to them] that actually causes an improvement in their leadership abilities. Perhaps another way to state the purpose is; to find the catalysts and pathways that cause principals to move from managers to effective leaders. To accomplish this I want to identify principals who have gone through recognizable improvements as leaders subsequently causing their school's students' performance to improve. To help make these determinations I will use key school leadership functions the Wallace Foundation have distilled that are reflective of principals who have become those who can develop a team that improves schools academic effectiveness (Harvey, J., & Holland, H. (2012, January). These principals will have noticeably evolved beyond the basic management function of principals such as; building management and maintenance, rules and regulations enforcement, materials purchase and distribution, budgeting, scheduling, paperwork, etc. They will have demonstrated increased levels of ability, and amounts of time, working in areas associated with effective transformational and instructional leadership such as; shared vision development, positive and academically oriented climate and culture development, cultivating shared leadership among school staff, and improving instruction. After identifying these principals I want to conduct interviews with them to discern what caused the change from manager to leader. I want to find out what motivates principals to want to improve and what caused their actual improvement. [what was their journey?]. Following this I hope to find commonalities from which to generate a model or guidelines for others to follow.

        The study calls for conducing four case studies with principals who meet this description. My requests to you are; first, to confirm that you believe [principal's name] matches the description provided above, and second, to ask permission for me to contact him/her to determine if they are willing to be part of the study. In considering this it may help you to know that my research proposal states assurance that schools and personnel will remain anonymous in the study, that no identifying data will be included, that confidentiality will be maintained, and that I will abide by any guidelines the Board of Education have in their policies governing research in your school system.

        I will contact you, or your secretary, in the near future for an appointment so we can discuss this further in person. At that time I will address any questions or concerns, and seek any suggestions, you may have. Should you want to contact me prior to that time please feel free to email at gchilders1@bellsouth.net or call at 828-773-8788. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Childers
Retired Principal, Watauga County Schools

VITA

GARY L. CHILDERS

Personal Data: Date of Birth: February 4, 1947
                   Current Address: 173 Leah Drive, Boone, NC
                   Marital Status: Married

Education: A. A. Wingate University, Wingate, North Carolina, 1967

                   B. A. Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, 1969

                   M. A. Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, 1973

                   Ed. S. Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, 1975

                   Ed. D. East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2013

Professional
Experience:

                   Fifth and Sixth Grade Teacher, Hardin Park Elementary, Boone, North
                        Carolina, 1973-1978

                   Assistant Principal and Sixth Grade Teacher, Parkway Elementary, Deep
                        Gap, North Carolina, 1978-1979

                   Principal, Bethel K-8 Elementary, Sugar Grove, North Carolina, 1979-
                        1986

                   Principal, Parkway K-8 Elementary School, Deep Gap, North Carolina,
                        1986-2001

                   Principal, Watauga High School, Boone, North Carolina, 2001-2005

                   Adjunct Professor, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina,
                        2005-2006

                   Independent Consulting and of Member of "The Leadership Group of the
                        Carolinas," Boone, North Carolina, 2005-Present

Honors and Awards:

                   Honor Student Teacher at A.S.U.

                   Outstanding Young Men of America, 1983

                   Watauga County Principal of the Year, 1985

                   Watauga County Principal of the Year, 1991

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Watauga County Principal of the Year, 2001

Watauga County Principal of the Year, 2003

Northwest North Carolina Principal of the Year, 2003

One of three finalists for North Carolina Principal of the Year, 2003

Special Projects in Education:

Co-piloted a writing program for Watauga County Schools, 1981

Committee chair, Watauga County Middle School Task Force, 1988

Conducted School-wide Effective Schools Training. 1989

Implemented Odyssey of the Mind Program, 1989

Copiloted a distance learning program, 1992

Committee chair, Watauga County Strategic Planning Task Force

Implemented, a public school pre-school pilot program, 1999

Member of ASU/Public School Partnership Steering Committee, 2000

Advisory Council member of ASU Math-Science Education Center, 2001-2005

Coauthored article on "Composite Scheduling" published in NASSP Journal

Chaired North Carolina Southwest Principal of the Year Selection -2004

Community Leadership Activities:

Board of Trustee, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, currently serving

High Country United Way Board of Directors, currently serving as Vice-Chairman

High Country Vision Council Steering Committee member and co-leader of its Education Vision Council, currently serving